



S A G E
SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality

SAGE Submission to the Consultation

19 April 2023

Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) is the national accreditation body for gender equity, diversity and inclusion (GEDI) in Australia's higher education and research sector.

We recommend addressing the following priorities in the Strategy:

- 1. Adopt intersectional approaches to data collection and impact assessment**
- 2. Strengthen gender-responsive procurement**
- 3. Build workplace safety through evidence-based responses to gendered violence**

These recommendations are further detailed below.

1. Adopt intersectional approaches to data collection and impact assessment

The Government collects considerable gender data, which helps identify gendered inequities, inform actions to address these and evaluate the success of those actions.

However, as the discussion paper acknowledges, people with multiple marginalised identities experience layers of compounding and often unique disadvantages. For example, someone may face barriers not solely because they are a woman or Indigenous, but because they are both.

While there is growing awareness of intersectionality, many organisations struggle to apply this concept in their GEDI practices. In consultation with diversity and inclusion experts, the Strategy should aim to develop and share best practice models for intersectional data collection and analysis. These models should then be consistently applied to all Government data collection and policy/program evaluation, not just those targeted at specific marginalised groups. Other organisations should be encouraged to align their own data collection with these models to enhance compatibility between data sets.

SAGE recommends expanding existing gender data sets to include, at a minimum, these demographic indicators: cultural background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, disability status and sexual orientation. All gender data should include categories for non-binary and gender-diverse people.

2. Strengthen gender-responsive procurement

The Government should leverage its considerable purchasing power and role as an investor by:

- requiring suppliers and grant applicants to report against their targets and action plans for gender equity, diversity and inclusion.
- periodically auditing suppliers and grant recipients on their GEDI performance. Continued funding may be contingent on meeting pre-determined performance targets.
- ranking projects more highly for competitive funding or contracting if they can demonstrate gender equitable outcomes. The European Union offers an example of this approach: to be eligible for Horizon Europe funding (the EU's key funding program for research and innovation), administering institutions must have a Gender Equality Plan; applications are also ranked on the gender balance of research teams.
- requiring grant recipients to be compliant with the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012.
- setting targets for addressable spend on businesses owned and led by women, trans and gender-diverse people.
- giving preference to suppliers and grant applicants who participate in schemes that support workforce participation and progression of women, trans and gender-diverse people, such as SAGE Athena Swan accreditation, Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace accreditation, Family Friendly Workplace accreditation, the Australian Workplace Equality Index and the WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation.

For examples of gender-responsive procurement models, see 'Gender equitable procurement: insight paper and guide' by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

3. Build workplace safety through evidence-based responses to gendered violence

Equitable workplaces are those where people of all genders are safe. Government should establish and implement best-practice responses to prevent and respond to gendered violence in the workplace, and provide direction and incentives to non-government workplaces to implement these approaches.

Respect@Work is leading with a pathway to respond to workplace bullying, harassment and sexual violence. Close attention must be paid to ensuring that organisations have the knowledge and support necessary to fulfil the intention of the Bill.

Care must also be taken to ensure that the role of the workplace in preventing and responding to domestic and family violence (DFV) is not overlooked. Working conditions can critically impact a person's capacity to escape violence and remain safe, and workplaces are an essential part of a whole-of-community response to supporting people experiencing DFV, providing an important source of income and social support. With around one in ten women taking some time off work due to violence from a current partner, and one in five taking time off due to violence from a previous partner, employers must understand the prevalence of this problem and recognise their responsibility to build strong workplace cultures of safety.

Recent legislative changes to make paid family and domestic violence leave available to all workers will improve economic security during periods of transition, but we can do more. Employees affected by DFV may be offered further flexibility and adjustments, including job redesign or changes to duties, changes to working hours or patterns of work, and alternative suitable employment in other teams, or locations. Workplaces should promote trauma-informed understandings among staff, offer privacy measures such as changes to email addresses and telephone numbers, and secure parking, and support victim-survivor disclosure, help-seeking and referrals.

Employers can also play a role in responding to perpetrators of DFV in the workplace by providing employees with training in awareness of the drivers of domestic and family violence, and identifying and responding to DFV in the workplace.

For further guidance on these policies and practices, see 'Employees who use domestic & family violence: A workplace response', by the Champions of Change Coalition (2020).