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City of Wodonga

Primary Prevention examples:

1. A whole of organisation approach
2. Policy and strategy platform and campaigns
3. Improvements to infrastructure, identified through Gender Impact Assessments

A whole of organisation approach

Our People and Safety Department play a significant role in awareness and capacity through professional development, along with maintaining confidential and effective reporting systems.

Wodonga Council fosters a workplace culture emphasising open communication, respect, and safety. Clear family violence policies and procedures, including our Family Violence Policy and Family Violence Support Procedure, are available to all employees. Confidential reporting channels for employees to disclose family violence, including anonymity, have been established.

Our People and Safety team and employee support officers are trained to handle disclosures with sensitivity and confidentiality. Front-line staff are also trained to identify, and report suspected violence. We prioritise individual safety, especially for any children involved, seeking advice from the designated family violence advice line, or involving the police when necessary.

We offer support and information on available resources, including the Centre Against Violence and Employee Assistance Program. We consider psychological safety to prevent social isolation and provide flexible work arrangements that support staff.

Our three-year program aims to enhance processes by providing ongoing staff training to identify and respond to family violence, refine reporting and confidentiality procedures, and actively promote available resources and support. Our overarching goal is to cultivate a culture that encourages staff to utilise these resources when needed, while ensuring that our support staff are equipped to respond effectively.

A dedicated Staff Diversity and Inclusion Committee, headed by councils Deputy CEO drives internal initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and ensuring compliance with statutory obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020. This committee plays a

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pivotal role in developing policies and initiatives, related to flexible work arrangements, family violence leave, gender pay analysis and a review of recruitment strategies to eliminate gender stereotypes. Additionally, it has led to a range of internal primary prevention campaigns and events.

A Facility Audit conducted late 2022 made a number of recommendations to ensure our facilities are welcoming, easy to access, and culturally safe.

Policy and strategy platform and campaigns

The City of Wodonga's policy and strategy platform includes the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Gender Equality Action Plan, and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy.

In 2019, Wodonga Council secured funding for the community-wide campaign, "Reflect Respect: A Modern-Day Guide for Gentlemen" to challenge social norms and attitudes to promote respect and gender equality. The campaign's success was such that it was adopted by two other councils and the campaign was widely disseminated through multiple media channels, including television, radio, and print and gained recognition from the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Improvements to infrastructure, identified through Gender Impact Assessments (2022-23)

Pathway Solar Lighting

GIA confirmed the need to install solar pathways and underpass lighting at nine locations in Wodonga. Officer feedback noted the value in completing GIAs prior to or alongside grant applications and project development to ensure gender and diversity lens.

Les Cheesley Oval Lighting

Identified the need to:

- Seek funding for lighting upgrade to increase sense of safety for facility users and improve access for women and diverse people; and
- Work with facility users and clubs to ensure equitable access.

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A secondary outcome of completing the GIA is that it supported Council's grant funding application as it helped officers to better articulate the need for funding.

Bike Hub & Changing Places at Junction Square

The GIA points to legislation which directs compliance with access requirements in facility design to improve user experience, enhance safety and meet the needs of the community. The GIA identified several accessibility recommendations including:

- Inclusive all-gender cubicles
- Adequately wide egress around the facility to enable ease of wheelchair and scooter access
- The inclusion of infant change facilities
- Sanitary disposal units
- Safety in design, such as casual surveillance
- Proximity to disability parking.

The project did not proceed at Junction Square; a new site for facility is being explored.

Public Toilet Strategy

The GIA for the new Public Toilet Strategy was undertaken alongside a toilet audit. The GIA identified the need for public toilets to meet the current and future safety and practical needs of the community, in particular women and gender diverse people.

Some of the recommendations, that were included in the strategy (because of the GIA) were the inclusion of 'guiding principles' which included accessibility as a key consideration for future toilet infrastructure.

The strategy also resulted in recommendations be included in the strategy including that: Wodonga build Changing Places facilities; that location is considered so toilets are more accessible (e.g., no more than 400m apart in CBD); and more 'after-hours' or 24/7 toilets be made available in Wodonga. The GIA strengthened the new public toilet strategy – it ensured it had a stronger focus on how they can promote inclusion and safety, not only their practical purpose.

Community Engagement Policy

The GIA illuminated the need for stronger articulation of commitment to gender

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equality within the policy, alongside improved processes to elicit community feedback and participation of women and diverse community members in Council engagement activities. For example:

- Providing a variety of ways for community to give feedback and be consulted
- Initiating assertive reach to diverse communities
- Utilising existing groups (such as Wodonga Access Advisory Committee)
- Ensuring pop-up consultations are scheduled at hours accessible to diverse cohorts of the community (e.g., school hours, working hours, etc.).

Leisure Centre: Upgrade Wodonga Sports & Leisure Centre Bathroom & Change Rooms

The proposed improvements aim to create more inclusive, comfortable, and convenient facilities for all users of the Leisure Centre. Recommendations include:

- Use of Universal Symbols that are easily recognizable across different cultures, languages and reading abilities.
- Use of inclusive language, eg: 'all genders'.
- Use of clear and simple language, avoiding gender specific labels.
- Include Braille on all signs.
- Use of high contrast colours for text and symbols to improve visibility.
- Ensure signage is placed at eye level and within easy reach of individuals using wheelchairs or mobility aids.
- Incorporating Changing Places Design specifications into the tender documents.