

Gender Equality Action Plan

2024-27



Foreword by Anna Booth

Gender equality is an ideal that is close to my heart. I chose gender segmentation in the workplace as the topic to research for my thesis in my honour's year in 1977 at the University of Sydney. Ten years later in 1987 I was elected as the first female federal secretary of the Clothing and Allied Trades Union. It was a tremendous privilege to represent clothing workers - they were overwhelmingly female and worked extremely hard for the low wages they received. And the increase over those years in women representing women, at all levels of the union, is something that I am proud to have been associated with. Forty years on, by 2027, the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman's Gender Equality Action Plan 2024–27 (the Plan) aims to achieve gender equality within the organisation that promotes all women workers in Australia being treated fairly and with respect across all Australian workplaces.

Gender equality is not just a moral imperative. The FWO must reflect the diversity of the workplaces we regulate. Gender equality is critical to FWO's success and our ability to innovate. We must embrace the different views and experiences that our diverse team members bring to our work, and gender equality is a key pillar of that diversity. To achieve this, we must challenge cultural norms about diversity in the workplace and recognise how diversity and equality are accelerators rather than handbrakes to workplace productivity and progress.

Research consistently shows that organisations that prioritise gender equality are more innovative, more effective, and better equipped to meet the needs of their customers. Our Gender Equality Action Plan is designed not only to fulfill our responsibility to lead by example, but also to harness this power to drive our organisation forward.

This Plan outlines our commitment to creating a workplace where everyone – regardless of gender – has equal opportunities to succeed. It is a comprehensive roadmap that sits within the overarching FWO Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and is intended to complement our other diversity and inclusion strategies.

The Plan has been developed by a working group of dedicated FWO employees to ensure our staff are at the centre of the objectives and actions we have set ourselves to achieve. The Plan aims to include all genders, to be mindful of intersectionality, and to respond to the needs of the FWO workforce.



I am conscious that a plan is only as good as its execution. Achieving gender equality requires a collective effort. It demands active participation from every member of our Agency. As such, it is my pledge as Fair Work Ombudsman that the FWO team engages and embraces the commitments set out in the Plan. I will encourage people to speak up and share their insights, participate in discussions, and embrace the path forward that we are taking. It is through our collective action that we can challenge ourselves to get better and create a workplace that reflects our values and that is a beacon of what can be achieved through creating more diverse and equal workforces.

There will be challenges along the way in this journey. But I'm confident we have the skills, experience and maturity within the FWO to confront these challenges head on. We must create an environment where open conversations about gender equality can take place – where everyone feels empowered to voice their thoughts and experiences.

As we move forward, we will regularly assess our progress and hold ourselves accountable. Transparency will be key; we will share updates on our achievements and areas for improvement. By doing so, we not only honour our commitment but also build trust within our Agency.

I want to express my gratitude to the FWO team for their dedication to this important cause. Together, we will build on the already strong foundations we have that not only support gender equality, but also sets a standard for other workplaces in Australia. Wherever we can, we will embrace opportunities to create a more inclusive environment where every employee can thrive and contribute to our collective success.

I am excited to see the positive impact we will create together.

Anna Booth

Fair Work Ombudsman.

Message from our Executive Champion for Gender Equality, Louise Peters

As Executive Champion for Gender Equality, it is my privilege to present the Gender Equality Action Plan 2024–27. This Plan represents a significant step toward shaping a more inclusive and equitable workplace through transparent and collaborative action.

Achieving gender equality is a shared responsibility that requires ongoing commitment, reflection and action from all staff. This Plan builds on the progress we've made so far, fostering a positive and respectful workplace where everyone feels empowered. By reflecting on our past commitments, we can see where we've advanced and identify areas where further effort is needed to achieve our vision.

The Plan aligns with the APS Gender Equality Strategy's objectives, which focus on leadership accountability, shifting gender norms, embedding gender equality in all we do and creating a culture of respect and inclusion.

Success for us means a workplace free from genderbased harm, where flexibility is normalised, and where opportunities are equal for all. It means leaders at every level taking ownership of gender equality, fostering inclusive environments and supporting our staff to realise their full potential and excel in the workplace.

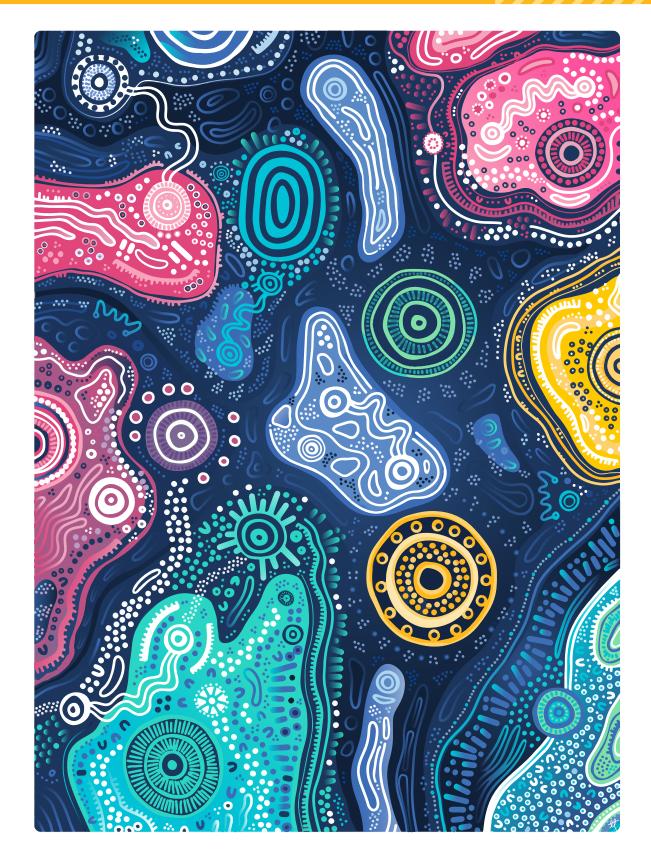


I would like to extend my thanks to everyone who contributed to the development of this Plan. A special thanks to our Fair Work Ombudsman, Anna Booth, for her invaluable support in endorsing this initiative, helping to create an environment where gender equality is not just an aspiration, but a fundamental aspect of how we operate.

Together, we are building a workplace where everyone, regardless of gender, can thrive and contribute fully to our collective success.

Louise Peters

Executive Champion for Gender Equality



Acknowledgment of Country and Traditional Custodians

The FWO acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters, skies, and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures, and Elders, past and present.

We also respectfully acknowledge FWO's First Nations employees, customers, partners, stakeholders, and visitors.

Background

Who are we?

The FWO is Australia's workplace regulator, and our purpose is to promote harmonious, productive, cooperative, and compliant workplace relations. We regulate around 12 million workers and 2 million workplaces around Australia. The community expects the FWO, as the national workplace regulator, to uphold Australian workplace standards and protect the most vulnerable workers in our community. We are here to help all workers and employers in Australia to understand their rights and responsibilities at work.

We have a workforce of approximately 1,000 employees nationally, with offices located in all capital cities and 14 regional locations.

The FWO's functions are set out by the *Fair Work Act* 2009 (the Act) and require us to:

- provide education, assistance, advice and guidance to employers, employees, outworkers, outworker entities, and organisations
- promote and monitor compliance with workplace laws
- inquire into and investigate breaches of the Act
- ▶ take appropriate enforcement action

 perform our statutory functions efficiently, effectively, economically, and ethically.

Diversity and inclusion

We respect and value the diversity of our workforce. We are committed to creating an environment that values a diverse range of views, knowledge, and experiences, and uses these to maximise our service delivery.

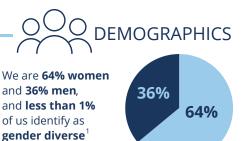
Our vision for diversity includes:

- Creating employment and career opportunities that are free from barriers.
- Promoting our commitment to sustainable and flexible careers.
- Supporting and maintaining open and transparent communication channels.
- Making the best use of the diverse talents of our people through robust workforce planning and talent management initiatives.

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Actively supporting the careers and cultural needs of our employees.

Our current state



LEADERSHIP



54% of our EL2s are women

53% of our SES are women

This meets the targets set out in our last Gender Equality Action Plan 2018-21





EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

For externally advertised roles...3

65% of successful applicants were women

65%

Gender imbalances exist in some of our branches

58% of applicants interviewed were women

58%

In five branches, women make up three quarters of the branch²

54% of applications submitted were from women

54%



PAY

Our gender pay gap was **2.5%**, notably below the APS average gap of 5.2%



FWO 2.5%

Our pay gap is likely driven by higher proportions of women at lower classifications 5

FLEXIBILITY & CARING



	Women	Men
Accessing part-time work	29%	8%
Accessed primary carer's parental leave ⁶	10%	1%
Accessed carer's leave ⁶	55%	44%

INTERSECTIONALITY '

While we have gender parity in our senior leadership, only 14% of our EL2 and SES identify as CALD and/or **First Nations**

But 19% of the agency identify as CALD and 1% of the agency identify as First Nations

There's an opportunity to examine barriers for women experiencing intersectionality



14% of EL2 + SES

20% of agency

Interpreting the data

- ▶ The FWO acknowledges that there are genders other than men and women. There was less than 1% of staff who identified as indeterminate/intersex/ unspecified. Due to low numbers and to ensure anonymity, they have not been reported on for the purpose of this analysis.
- ▶ Data is captured as at 31 December 2023. unless otherwise stated.

^{1.} There was less than 1% of staff who identified as indeterminate/intersex/unspecified.

^{2.} There is an opportunity to further examine possible drivers of this imbalance.

^{3.} This result was also consistent for internal women applicants.

^{4.} As at 31 December 2022.

^{5.} Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) indicated the APS average gap is primarily driven by higher proportions of women at lower classifications. While an examination of FWO's pay gap has not been undertaken, we follow a similar pattern to the APS in terms of having a higher proportion of women in lower classifications.

^{6.} Based on average data from 2023.

^{7.} Intersectionality is how some people experience compounded discrimination due to multiple marginalising and interlinked characteristics. CARM women in leadership - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)

Introduction

The FWO Gender Equality Action Plan 2024–27 (the Plan) is aligned to the **APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021–26** (the APS Strategy). Other contributing resources include:

- Working for Women A Strategy for Gender Equality
- The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Commonwealth Public Sector Reporting Guide
- Diversity Council of Australia gender research material.

The APS Strategy provides 3 objectives and 6 action areas around which agencies can build their action plans.

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The objectives are:

- Objective 1: To see leaders at all levels hold themselves and others to account for demonstrating gender equitable and inclusive behaviour.
- Objective 2: To shift gender norms and normalise respectful workplaces and access to flexibility for all.

Objective 3: To embed gender equality and inclusion in all that we do.

The action areas are:

Leadership and accountability that progresses gender equality through individual and collective action.

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Respectful workplaces and empowered people that prioritise our people's safety and wellbeing.

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- Shifting gender stereotypes to support the career and life choices of our people.
- Flexible ways of working to give our people more choice and enhance their contributions at work.
- **Gender data** that ensures our efforts are informed by the evidence base and progress is visible.
- Leveraging our external influence to champion gender equality in our everyday work.

The Plan has been structured around the 6 action areas of the APS Strategy and supersedes the FWO Gender Equality Action Plan 2018–21. It sits within the overarching FWO Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and is intended to complement other diversity and inclusion strategies. It was developed via a working group of dedicated employees using principles of human centred design. The Plan aims to include all genders, to be mindful of intersectionality, and to respond to the needs of FWO employees.

FWO Objectives

Looking Back		Looking forward
Gender Equality Action Plan 2018–21 Objectives	How did we do? (current state)	Gender Equality Action Plan 2024–27 Objectives
		APS Gender Equality Strategy - Objective 1 To see leaders at all levels hold themselves and others to account for demonstrating gender equitable and inclusive behaviour.
Achieve greater gender equality in senior leadership (EL2 and SES)	 The current representation of women in senior positions (EL2 and SES positions) meets the targets set out in the Gender Equality Action Plan 2018–21 at 54% and 53%, respectively. However, Diversity Council of Australia research indicates culturally and racially marginalised women face more barriers in occupying leadership positions⁸. 19% of the agency identify as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and 1% of the agency identify as First Nations. Yet only 14% identify as CALD and/or First Nations in the EL2 and SES positions⁹. 	 Maintain minimum of 40% women and 40% men in senior leadership (20% people of any gender). Increase CALD and/or First Nations representation in the EL2 and SES cohort to 20%, with a focus on increasing the representation of women and gender diverse people who identify as CALD and/or First Nations.
		APS Gender Equality Strategy - Objective 2 To shift gender norms and normalise respectful workplaces and access to flexibility for all.
Drive a culture where gender equality is valued and considered in planning and decision making	 FWO Priorities include vulnerable and 'at risk' workers; aged care services; and disability support services. These workforces are women dominated¹o. 90% of respondents believed the FWO supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture¹¹. 	 Maintain FWO Priorities that support vulnerable and 'at risk' workforces and groups. Maintain and improve flexible work conditions and our workplace culture so that all genders are included and have equal opportunity. Increase positive responses to the APS Census question 'FWO supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture' to 95%.
Increase the uptake of flexibility arrangements amongst all employees	 There remains a notably higher proportion of women (29%) accessing part-time work compared to men (8%). 94% of respondents are satisfied that the flexible work arrangements they currently access are suitable for their individual needs¹². In 2023, on average: 10% of women accessed primary carer's parental leave compared to 1% of men¹³. > 55% of women accessed carer's leave compared to 44% of men¹⁴. 	▶ Increase the uptake of part-time work, carers leave, and parental leave use by genders other than women by 10 percentage points each.

- 8 **CARM women in leadership** Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)
- 9 Gender segregated data cannot be provided due to privacy risk associated with the small number of people in this cohort
- 10 Gender segregation in Australia's workforce WGEA
- 11 APS Employee Census 2024 OFWO
- 12 APS Employee Census 2024 OFWO

- $13\ \ This\ leave\ includes\ employees\ who\ left\ during\ the\ calendar\ year\ and\ therefore\ percentages\ are\ indicative$
- 14 This leave includes employees who left during the calendar year and therefore percentages are indicative

Looking Back		Looking forward	
Gender Equality Action Plan 2018–21 Objectives	How did we do? (current state)	Gender Equality Action Plan 2024–27 Objectives	
		APS Gender Equality Strategy - Objective 3 To embed gender equality and inclusion in all that we do.	
Incorporate measurement and evaluation of our progress reporting and communicate progress to the agency annually	 Gender balance, use of flexibility arrangements, and carers/parental leave are reported to Corporate Board twice a year. Gender pay gap data is reported to Corporate Board once a year in line with the WGEA reporting schedule. 	 Continue to report to Corporate Board on use of carers/parental leave, part-time work, flexibility arrangements, and any gender pay gap. 	
New objective	➤ As at 31 December 2022, FWO's gender pay gap was 2.5%, notably below the APS average gap of 5.2%.	Find Endeavour to reduce the FWO gender pay gap to ≈ 0 .	

Action plan

Leadership and accountability that progresses gender equality through individual and collective action.

Success is where inclusive leadership is demonstrated consistently with leaders at all levels reflecting on their leadership style and its impact on others. Success is all employees working in the APS having a sense of shared responsibility for progressing gender equality. Success is an APS which reflects, understands, and connects with the people and community it serves.

1	 Publish the FWO Gender Equality Action Plan 2024–27 on the FWO website and intranet. Launch the FWO Gender Equality Action Plan 2024–27 internally through an intranet article detailing our efforts to enhance gender equality and the practical measures we implement at the FWO. 	People and Internal Communications Branch Advice and Education Branch	December 2024 then annually
	 Publish an annual intranet article highlighting gender equality data and progress of the FWO Gender Equality Action Plan 2024–27. 		
2	Report FWO's advancement in gender equality and other diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in the FWO Annual Report.	People and Internal Communications Branch Corporate Services Branch	Annually in line with Annual Report publication
3	Senior leaders to continue committing to a 'panel pledge'. This pledge involves taking active steps to ensure equitable gender representation at internal panels, forums, committees, and events. When invited to participate in external events, this includes requesting confirmation of how gender balance will be achieved, supporting balanced participation across genders, and considering the gender of the FWO representative.	People and Internal Communications Branch All SES and EL staff Fair Work Ombudsman	June 2025
4	Host at least three senior leader 'listen and learn' sessions, where staff share their first-hand experiences of gender inequality with leaders. This could be one-on-one and/or in a group.	People and Internal Communications Branch All SES	June 2025
5	Incorporate recognition of leadership qualities into the agency recognition program, focusing on leaders who foster an inclusive culture and actively promote work life balance to achieve agency goals. This criterion applies to all leaders, including APS, EL, and SES positions.	People and Internal Communications Branch	June 2025
6	Maintain gender balance (minimum 40% women, 40% men) in the senior leadership (EL2 – SES B2) and the FWO's governing bodies.	Fair Work Ombudsman Corporate Services Branch People and Internal Communications Branch	Ongoing

Respectful workplaces and empowered people that prioritise our people's safety and wellbeing.

Success is elimination of gender-based bullying, harassment, and assault in the workplace. For a culture of gender equality to flourish, all manifestations of harm need to be addressed and negative behaviour called out. Success is where inclusive leadership capabilities are embedded in the daily behaviours of all employees.

7	Annually review the FWO's Family and Domestic Violence Policy to ensure:	People and Internal Communications Branch	June 2025 and then annually
	 strategies for prevention, formal reporting, and review processes and consequences are consistent with best practice 		
	 there is access to support as appropriate for the employee's individual situation. 		
8	Develop a Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy.	People and Internal Communications Branch	September 2025
9	Publish an intranet article, update relevant intranet pages, and review policy wording to clearly communicate the privacy arrangements for Family and Domestic Violence Leave applications and associated evidence. This includes who sees the information, where it is stored, and for how long.	People and Internal Communications Branch	March 2025
10	Develop a plan and set of initiatives aimed at creating and enhancing a psychologically safe agency culture.	People and Internal Communications Branch	December 2025

11	Review FWO style manuals and language supplements to ensure the use of gender-inclusive language.	Engagement and Communications Branch	March 2025
12	Introduce bystander training, including education on the bystander effect, to ensure that employees feel empowered and supported to intervene when they witness inappropriate behaviour.	People and Internal Communications Branch	September 2025
13	Establish an annual 'Check Yourself' campaign, encouraging self-reflection/self-awareness and moderation of own terminology, language, behaviours, and assumptions. This should target both managerial and non-managerial staff. For example, behaviours and assumptions around who should complete ancillary tasks in FWO offices.	People and Internal Communications Branch	June 2025
14	Promote FWO's diversity employee networks and clearly communicate their value-add to the agency. Encourage participation in FWOGen by all genders.	People and Internal Communications Branch All Executive Champions	March 2025 and then annually
15	Review staff capability to support customers experiencing sexual discrimination and harassment and family and domestic violence, and managing matters related to these issues. Fill any identified gaps, in consultation with affected staff and business areas.	People and Internal Communications Branch Operations Group	December 2026
16	Make appropriate trauma-informed supports and processes available to ensure the safety of staff working on matters related to sexual discrimination and harassment and family and domestic violence. For example, ensuring that staff who are experiencing family or domestic violence are not allocated matters involving family or domestic violence.	People and Internal Communications Branch Operations Group	December 2026

Shifting gender stereotypes to support the career and life choices of our people.

Success is where all those working in the APS have equal choice with respect to balancing their work and caring responsibilities while being supported to pursue career opportunities. The APS does not make assumptions about an employee's skills and capability based on gender. Acknowledging that we never know what capability someone has until it is tested, all employees are provided equal opportunity to demonstrate how, what and when they can contribute.

17	Research and develop initiatives designed to encourage employees other than women to take parental and carers leave, work part-time, and use flexible working arrangements to support caring responsibilities. These should address actual and perceived cultural barriers.	People and Internal Communications Branch	March 2026
18	Provide training on merit-based recruitment practices and unconscious bias for hiring managers and recruitment panel members.	People and Internal Communications Branch	March 2025
19	Conduct a pulse survey to investigate the experience of staff across all intersectional identities, including: • their experience of gender discrimination	People and Internal Communications Branch	June 2026
	 the desire of part-time staff to increase hours, and any workplace barriers preventing this outcome 		
	 their team culture, including any existing gender bias and the culture's resilience to any non-inclusive imported culture from new recruits. 		
	Survey results must be filterable by intersectional identity and will inform the next Gender Equality Action Plan.		

Flexible ways of working to give our people more choice and enhance their contributions at work.

Success is enabling all employees to maximise their contributions at an appropriate time that suits both parties and in a location that delivers results. It is acknowledged that not all flexibility requests will be possible, however it is essential to have a culture where requests are given genuine consideration acknowledging the benefits to both employee and the organisation.

20	Review recruitment guidelines to ensure:	People and Internal	September
	• all advertised jobs are flexible	Communications Branch	2025
	• gender diversity on recruitment panels		
	 advertising and position descriptions are gender inclusive 		
	 a minimum agency-wide timeframe for all internal and external positions/EOIs to ensure sufficient time for all applicants to apply, including those with reduced capacity due to disability and caring responsibilities 		
	 applications, interview questions, and reference checks include a focus on the individual's inclusive behaviour in the workplace. 		
1	Review processes related to extended leave to ensure:	People and Internal	March 2025
	 employees on extended leave are communicated with regarding key workplace changes and job opportunities 	Communications Branch Technology Branch	
	technology systems support an easy and streamlined return to work process.		
2	Conduct a pulse survey to identify business areas with any unnecessary obstacles to flexible work arrangements (for example, poor job design, unconscious bias). The survey will gather employee sentiments and enable issues raised by part-time employees to be identified.	People and Internal Communications Branch	June 2025
	Work with business areas identified as having any unnecessary obstacles to flexible work arrangements to remove these obstacles.		
3	Review FWO flexible work policies and practices to ensure they provide for a variety of contexts and settings and are expressed in gender inclusive language, including:	People and Internal Communications Branch Fair Work Ombudsman	June 2025
	 reviewing Inspector field work opportunities to ensure they are available to part-time staff and staff with other flexible working arrangements. This includes ensuring they are advertised with sufficient notice to allow part-time staff to participate 		
	 ensuring part-time staff looking to increase their hours of work are not required to increase their office presence 		
	 scheduling of reoccurring meetings to consider the availability of those with part-time or flexible working arrangements. 		
24	Conduct an internal information campaign to raise awareness of flexible working, which include:	People and Internal Communications Branch	June 2025
	case studies (including flexible working profiles), available support, and tips		
	 different caring types (including elderly parents, relatives with disability, neighbours, and friends) 		
	 sharing senior leader case studies of flexibility practices, including senior leaders authentically sharing when and why they are accessing flexible work, and using flexible work arrangements to achieve work-life balance 		
	 relevant information in new starter induction material to ensure all new employees feel empowered to access flexible arrangements. 		
5	Develop a comprehensive conversation guide for all employees, including those with part-time arrangements, on how to effectively discuss workload management with their managers and adjust flexible work arrangements as needed.	People and Internal Communications Branch	December 2026
26	Develop tools and resources to increase manager job design awareness and capability.	People and Internal Communications Branch	March 2027
27	Review all HR policies and guides to ensure they consider the needs of carers.	People and Internal Communications Branch	December 2025

Establish a carers intranet page providing guidance to carers. People and Internal December Communications Branch 2025

Gender data that ensures our efforts are informed by the evidence base and progress is visible.

Success is where data is collected, accessible (within agencies) and transparent. Agencies have disaggregated data (gender and other diversity and inclusion variables) across all people-metrics, including uptake of flexible work, carers leave, and parental leave, rates of promotion, internal mobility, higher duties, remuneration, recruitment, redundancies, and separations. Success is when gender equality is embedded in our business systems and practices (to ensure that gains don't slip and progress can't be undone)

29	Collect gender-disaggregated data across all classifications, geographical locations, business areas, intersectional diversity categories, and key APS occupations.	People and Internal Communications Branch	Ongoing
30	Continue to participate in WGEA Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Scorecard.	People and Internal Communications Branch	Annually in line with WGEA
31	Conduct an intersectional gender pay gap analysis, with results to inform the next Gender Equality Action Plan.	People and Internal Communications Branch	June 2026
32	Provide comprehensive diversity data, encompassing gender, on the employee intranet. This data will: • highlight gender imbalance	People and Internal Communications Branch	February 2025

- highlight gender imbalance
- explore intersectionality

- ▶ include data on harassment, discrimination, and bullying
- ▶ include data on promotions and engagements
- include data on the use of flexibility measures
- be updated either annually or biannually, depending on the metric.

Leveraging our external influence to champion gender equality in our everyday work

Success is an APS that has a positive reputation for prioritising gender equality. Our strong, APS-wide commitments to gender equality are well known. We draw on our positive workplace experiences and knowledge of 'what works' to shape approaches. Our efforts have a positive impact on our external relationships and help to affect change in other workplaces.

33	Review our procurement contracting templates to ensure compliance under the <i>Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012</i> .	Corporate Services Branch	June 2025
34	Representatives of the agency, including the Fair Work Ombudsman, SES and other spokespersons, will highlight gender equality in their public engagements, as appropriate.	Engagement and Communications Branch All staff	June 2025
35	Foster and maintain partnerships with other agencies or organisations to collaborate on gender equality initiatives, particularly those acknowledging intersectionality.	People and Internal Communications Branch	December 2026
36	Continue to promote our flexible working arrangements on the FWO external website.	People and Internal Communications Branch	Ongoing
		Digital Experience and Strategy Team	