

# Gender Equality Action Plan

2025–2028

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# Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Communities and Justice pays respect to the Traditional Custodians throughout NSW.

We listen and learn from the knowledge, strength and resilience of Aboriginal communities. We extend our respects to all Elders past and present, and to Stolen Generations Survivors and their descendants.

We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We recognise the important role that families and communities play in providing children with a sense of safety, belonging and resilience.

We extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are employed by the Department of Communities and Justice and recognise the unique and vital contributions they provide in keeping mob safe.

# Message from the Secretary

At the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), we recognise that fostering equality and diversity in our workplace is essential to support the communities we serve. As an agency made up of nine Divisions, our functions are broad, but our goals are the same: to help create a safe, just, resilient and inclusive NSW in which women, men, gender diverse and trans people have the opportunity to realise their potential. Our Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) also includes Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW). This GEAP demonstrates our commitment to playing a leading role in advancing gender equality in our communities. It ensures that gender equality is not just a goal but a fundamental part of how we operate.

## Developing the plan

To develop the GEAP, we gathered information through an evidence review, staff consultations, and workforce data using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach allowed findings from each phase to inform the next, capturing a wide range of experiences and perspectives. It ensured our analysis was thorough and reflective of the diverse identities and experiences within DCJ and CSNSW.

**Phase 1** – Baseline scans: Semi-structured interviews with eight DCJ Divisions and CSNSW to develop a baseline understanding of gender equality capabilities.

**Phase 2** – Staff focus groups and online written submissions: Staff provided insights on strengths, gaps, priorities, and opportunities for integrating gender equality considerations into policies, programs and services. Workforce data: A gender-based analysis of workforce data.

**Phase 3** – Leadership interviews: Conducted with executive directors from each Division and CSNSW.

**Phase 4** – Data validation: We confirmed our findings with GEAP Division Champions, Staff Network Members, and key internal stakeholders to ensure relevance and intersectionality. We also compared our findings with national and international evidence to build our case for change.

## Key enablers of success

Consultations identified common enablers that will be critical to the success of our GEAP:

**Honest leadership:** Leaders are willing to honestly confront gender equality issues within their area, transparently communicate challenges, and celebrate victories.

**Formal priorities:** When gender equality programs are operational priorities leaders can prioritise the work regardless of competing pressures.

**Flexibility to fail and improve:** Fostering a culture that recognises that change takes time and progress is not always linear.

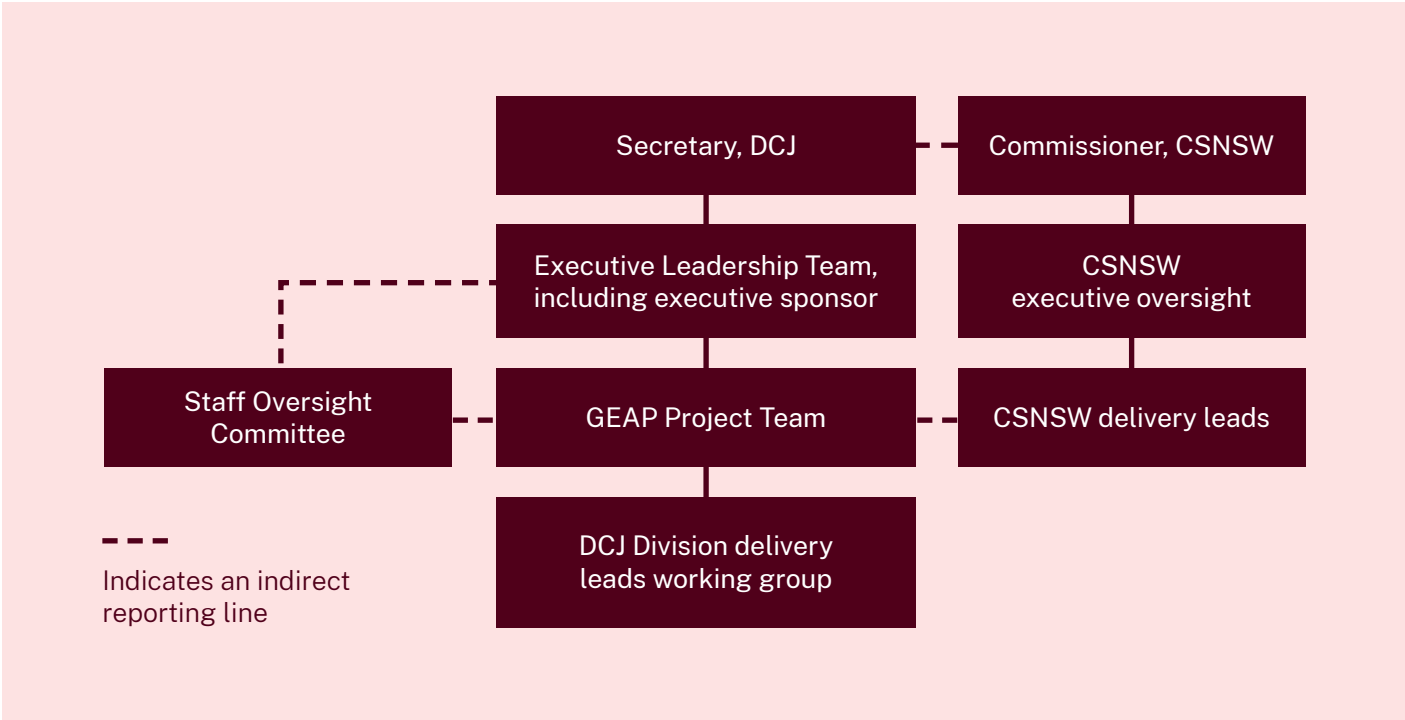
**Good data:** Data collection is difficult, but quality data is essential to properly understand a problem.

**Tailored for context:** While universal actions might help build overall capacity, projects that are tailored for specific contexts, needs, or clients have more impact.

**Staff champions:** Projects often succeed where staff are passionate and championing the work. This reflects that leadership can happen at all levels.

# Governance

This GEAP is endorsed by the Secretary, DCJ, and the Commissioner, CSNSW. In doing so, both agencies recognise the need for accountability at the highest level. The following governance structure will be in place:



## Monitoring progress

**Reporting:** Monitoring progress will be critical to the successful delivery of the GEAP, enabling us to ensure accountability, track impact, and drive continuous improvement. The GEAP Project Team will coordinate high-level annual reports to inform DCJ executive leadership, the Staff Oversight Committee, and key stakeholders of project status.

**Resourcing:** We are committed to implementing the GEAP and embedding gender equality into our culture and operations. To support this, we will establish a dedicated project team and appoint a gender equality lead in each Division and CSNSW to help drive and coordinate the work at all levels of the organisation.

**A strategic approach:** DCJ and CSNSW operate across a wide range of areas – from child protection and housing services to community safety initiatives. This diversity requires that our actions be thoughtfully tailored to the specific contexts of our Divisions and the communities they support. For this reason, a key first step of our GEAP is to contextualise actions within each of DCJ’s Divisions and CSNSW. This will ensure that every business area is addressing the priorities most relevant to their work.



# The Plan

Our vision: A workplace that champions gender equality, embraces diversity and inclusion as core values, empowers every employee to feel respected and safe, and delivers services that effectively respond to the gender-specific needs of all clients.



## Pillar 1 – Our Leaders

Equip leaders to play a critical role in ensuring our work and workplaces are diverse, inclusive, and safe for all genders.

### Focus areas

1. Empower leadership at all levels
2. Establish strong governance and accountability mechanisms

### Why this matters

A visible leadership commitment is a critical driver of gender equality. When leaders actively communicate and model gender equality, it sets a standard for the entire organisation — and without this gender equality is unlikely to be prioritised by others.<sup>1</sup> In our consultations, staff consistently noted that leaders should take a more prominent role in promoting and modelling gender equality within DCJ and CSNSW. A critical part of demonstrating strong leadership is focusing on accountability: measurable actions, transparency, and strong governance.<sup>2</sup> For example, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency finds that establishing an effective governance structure at the executive level to oversee diversity progress is a prerequisite for success in advancing gender equality.<sup>3</sup> To achieve impact, leaders at all levels must be equipped with resources and support to fulfil their critical role in advancing gender equality.<sup>4</sup>

### What success will look like

Leaders have the knowledge and skills to promote and lead a diverse, inclusive, and safe workplace. They are guided by a coordinated and strategic governance mechanism that ensures activity aligns to the vision of a workplace that champions gender equality.



## Pillar 2 – Our People

Develop a better understanding of the impact of gender inequality in the workplace and implement good practices for recruitment, career progression, and workforce systems to promote a more inclusive and equitable environment.

### Focus areas

1. Foster an inclusive and respectful workplace culture
2. Provide equal opportunities and equitable career progression
3. Promote work–life balance for all

### Why this matters

Inclusive and diverse workplaces benefit from varied perspectives that help break down biases and barriers, including those related to gender. They better represent and respond to community needs — this was particularly evident in diverse service delivery teams that staff felt were more effective at addressing gender inequality and helped build everyone's capability to meet the gender-specific needs of clients. To foster an inclusive and diverse culture that improves gender equality, HR initiatives that promote gender balance in leadership are key, as research shows diverse leadership is more likely to tackle systemic issues like gender pay gaps.<sup>5</sup> Consultations also made it clear that flexible work and clear caregiving entitlements are a gender equality concern and remain a high priority for staff. This aligns with research that flexible work boosts workforce participation and career development — particularly for women.<sup>6</sup>

### What success will look like

An increased number of DCJ employees report they belong to a culturally safe organisation, where people treat one another respectfully, and a broad range of perspectives are valued. DCJ employees increasingly report their career advancement is supported, and they have access to flexible work arrangements.



## Pillar 3 – Our Work

Apply a gender lens to all our work in policy, programs, service delivery, procurement, and corporate services to deliver better outcomes for communities across NSW.

### Focus areas

1. Build capacity to apply a gender lens
2. Identify the gender-specific needs of clients

### Why this matters

Applying a ‘gender lens’ means we consider the intentional and unintentional impacts of a policy, program, or service on women, men, and gender diverse people. It would be rare that our work does not impact different genders in different ways. Instead, it is more likely the gender impacts were not considered (this is referred to as being ‘gender blind’). Gender blind policies, programs and services can maintain or compound gender inequalities. Recognised as global best practice, applying a gender lens to policies, programs, and services ensures they are better designed to meet community needs.<sup>7</sup> To do this effectively, our staff consultations highlighted the need for practical tools, ethical and sensitive data collection, and tailored support for priority groups — in particular for transgender people.

### What success will look like

Through improved systems and increased workforce capacity to apply a gender lens, DCJ better understands how gender shapes the experiences and outcomes for employees and clients.

## Guiding principles

### Intersectionality:

An intersectional approach recognises that gender inequality is often experienced alongside other forms of inequality, marginalisation, and discrimination. For example, discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or the ongoing effects of colonisation.

### Gender diversity and inclusion:

Gender categories must be expanded beyond the male–female binary. DCJ is committed to ensuring gender diverse and transgender people feel included in the vision and actions of this plan. To do so, we seek to meaningfully incorporate their viewpoints and experiences as we undertake this work.

### Applying a gender lens:

Integrating gender considerations into all aspects of work will ensure we build a more equitable and effective workplace and community.

## What this work looks like in practice

Since 2021, the Office of the Senior Practitioner in Child Protection and Permanency has run the LGBTQIA+ Practice Consultations service. The consultations are led by LGBTQIA+ casework practitioners at DCJ who meet with caseworkers and practitioners to discuss the unique experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth. By embedding practical and inclusive practices into frontline service delivery, the consultations foster safer, more supportive environments for LGBTQIA+ youth — who are at greater risk of marginalisation. All LGBTQIA+ consultants are volunteers with lived experience who are passionate about creating a safe space for their colleagues to ask questions and develop their casework practice.

# Actions

## Pillar 1 – Our Leaders

Equip leaders to play a critical role in ensuring our work and workplaces are diverse, inclusive, and safe for all genders



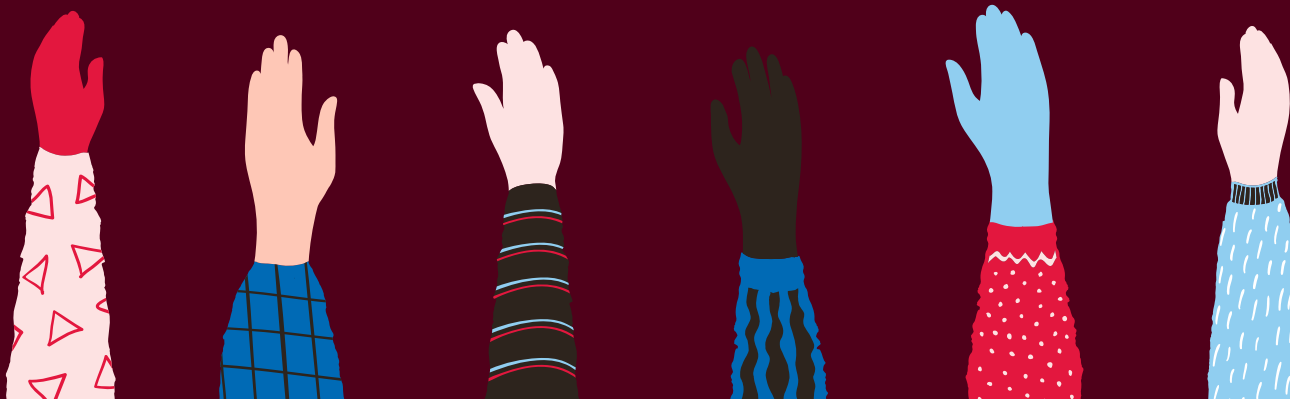
Focus area	Actions	Lead
Empower leadership at all levels	1.1 Leaders will set clear expectations that gender-based discrimination is unacceptable in the workplace, with clear actions and accountability relevant to their business areas. This includes a commitment to creating a workplace where transgender and gender diverse employees and clients feel safe and respected.	ELT
	1.2 Develop a gender equality training strategy for senior executives and managers that aims to: (1) build knowledge of key gender equality issues, (2) provide practical guidance on operationalising this in the workforce, and (3) includes an ongoing engagement and accountability mechanism.	CS / SPC (PT)
	1.3 Introduce gender equality KPIs in executive employment contracts and/or PDPs.	CS
Establish strong governance and accountability mechanisms	1.4 Appropriately resource the implementation of actions, considering the impact on Divisions and the need for centralised coordination and oversight.	ELT
	1.5 Empower leaders at all levels by establishing a GEAP Staff Oversight Committee that reports directly to either the DCJ ELT or executive sponsor.	SPC (PT)
	1.6 Continue to participate in national benchmarking initiatives and implement relevant recommendations to uphold commitments to gender equality initiatives, including those from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and the Australian Workplace Equality Index for LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion.	CS / SPC (PT)
	1.7 Develop a mechanism to ensure the GEAP is aligned with other DCJ strategies related to diversity, equity and inclusion.	CS

## Pillar 2 – Our People

Develop a better understanding of the impact of gender inequality in the workplace and implement good practices for recruitment, career progression, and workforce systems to promote a more inclusive and equitable environment



Focus area	Actions	Lead
Foster an inclusive and respectful workplace culture	2.1 Identify what is required to ensure facilities are gender inclusive and accessible for all employees.	All
	2.2 Understand the extent to which a gender lens has been applied to existing workforce safety programs.	CS
	2.3 Establish a working group to identify opportunities for streamlining internal IT processes to make it easier to affirm gender in SAP and downstream systems.	CS
	2.4 Explore opportunities for DCJ to participate in the NSW Pathways to Prevention: NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy workforce actions.	SPC
	2.5 Include a commitment to gender equality in recruitment and induction materials, including an expectation of all DCJ employees.	CS
	2.6 Deliver a sexual harassment prevention framework.	CS



<b>Provide equal opportunities and equitable career progression</b>	2.7 Develop strategies to fix leaky pipelines to leadership for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal women and explore ways to enhance recruitment and retention for other priority cohorts, including reviewing data.	CS / SPC (PT)
	2.8 Strengthen existing gender inclusive initiatives to support workforce participation and career progression, including opportunities for lateral career progression.	CS
	2.9 Develop strategies to address gaps in workforce data to better identify the reasons for gender pay gaps and areas for action.	CS / SPC (PT)
<b>Promote work-life balance for all</b>	2.10 At its next review, ensure a gender lens is applied to the DCJ Flexible Work Policy to assess gendered impacts and identify strategies to mitigate any unintended consequences.	CS / SPC (PT)
	2.11 Research and develop initiatives to encourage men to use paid parental leave, and evaluate the uptake and effectiveness of parental leave policies.	CS / SPC (PT)
	2.12 Develop a strategy to better promote all existing leave types and entitlements, and reduce any stigma associated with accessing parental and carers leave, and part-time work arrangements.	CS / SPC (PT)

## Pillar 3 – Our Work

**Apply a gender lens to all our work in policy, programs, service delivery, procurement, and corporate services to deliver better outcomes for communities across NSW**



Focus area	Actions	Lead
<b>Build capacity to apply a gender lens</b>	3.1 Develop Division-level GEAP implementation plans that provide context-specific guidance, relevant actions, tools and resourcing plans.	SPC (PT)
	3.2 Support Divisions to conduct gender impact assessments on all new budget measures over \$10m in accordance with Treasury policy.	All / SPC (PT)
	3.3 Pilot a comprehensive gender lens audit of a branch or work area to understand how policy development and service delivery program design may impact genders differently.	SPC (PT)
<b>Identify the gender-specific needs of clients</b>	3.4 Investigate ways to improve data collection to better understand client cohorts and gender specific needs.	All
	3.5 Identify opportunities to update client-facing IT systems to make it easier to affirm gender in primary and downstream systems.	CSNSW, Homes NSW
	3.6 Explore ways to build the capacity of frontline workers to respond to the gendered and intersectional needs of clients.	All / SPC (PT)

**ELT** – Executive Leadership Team   **CS** – Corporate Services   **SPC** – Strategy, Policy and Commissioning

**SPC (PT)** – GEAP Project Team   **CSNSW** – Corrective Services NSW

*DCJ wishes to thank the many staff across DCJ and CSNSW who generously gave their time and expertise to support the development of the Gender Equality Action Plan.*

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