



Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities



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Stronger Together:

WA's Plan for Gender Equality

Progress Report 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

We particularly acknowledge the caring strengths, resilience and central role of Aboriginal women within their families.

Language

Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may be referred to in the national context.





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Minister's foreword



The WA Government is committed to implementing Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality by supporting a range of programs and projects across the public sector. Our aim is to build a better, fairer and more equitable community in Western Australia.

As we progress the Second Action Plan 2021–25, I take this opportunity to reflect on our achievements to date, while also recognising that those successes are just part of a bigger picture. Long-lasting cultural change cannot be achieved by the State Government alone. It takes commitment from public, private, education and community sector organisations to build accessible and effective paths to progress gender equality. Importantly, it also requires an understanding of the need for change and this takes an understanding of what gender equality looks like – how it manifests in workplaces, in the home and in the community.

This Progress Report details the actions of the State Government during 2023 to continue on the path towards gender equality. We are building on the actions in the Second Action Plan and developing new initiatives to ensure women's safety at work, drive women's economic independence and support women's health and wellbeing.

I am proud of the progress we are making in WA to deliver gender equality initiatives but I know there is still much work to do. We recently expanded the Stronger Together Implementation Group with a new structure that includes community organisations, academia and the business sector. The breadth of expertise and experience in this group will contribute to driving innovative actions across all sectors through the members' experience and connections with their stakeholders.

Gender equality won't happen just because we want it to. Changing culture takes time and it is essential that we keep moving in the right direction. We are all responsible for creating positive change and taking a stand for gender equality.

Hon Sue Ellery MLC

Minister for Women's Interests

Introduction

Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality (Stronger Together)¹ is the Western Australian (WA) Government's 10-year framework for coordinating effort and resources across government, business and community sectors to build a better, fairer and more equitable community.

Launched in January 2022, the Second Action Plan 2021–2025 includes 55 actions being undertaken across WA Government agencies to support women and drive gender equality within workplaces, homes, education and training institutions, the justice system and health system. Implementation of Stronger Together is led by the Department of Communities (Communities).

This 2023 Progress Report provides updates on the gender equality programs and actions in the Second Action Plan, and introduces new actions being undertaken by public sector agencies.

Progress of agency actions is presented in this report under the overarching goals of the four priority areas of Stronger Together.

Stronger Together Priority Areas



Health and wellbeing

Women are healthy, active and lead fulfilled lives



Safety and justice

Women live safely and have appropriate access to adequate legal protections



Economic independence

Women can be financially independent across all life stages




Leadership

Women's skills, achievements and strengths are valued, enabling them to participate equally in the community, including at leadership levels

¹ www.communities.wa.gov.au/genderequality

Stronger Together Actions

Stronger Together’s Second Action Plan 2021–2025 includes 55 actions across State Government agencies.

All 55 actions have now been implemented, with 13 having been completed and two being annual activities. The remaining 40 implemented actions are ongoing, either on a fixed-term or open-ended basis. In 2023, nine of those ongoing actions were updated with new activities, and are marked in this report as  Updated in 2023

The Second Action Plan’s 55 actions



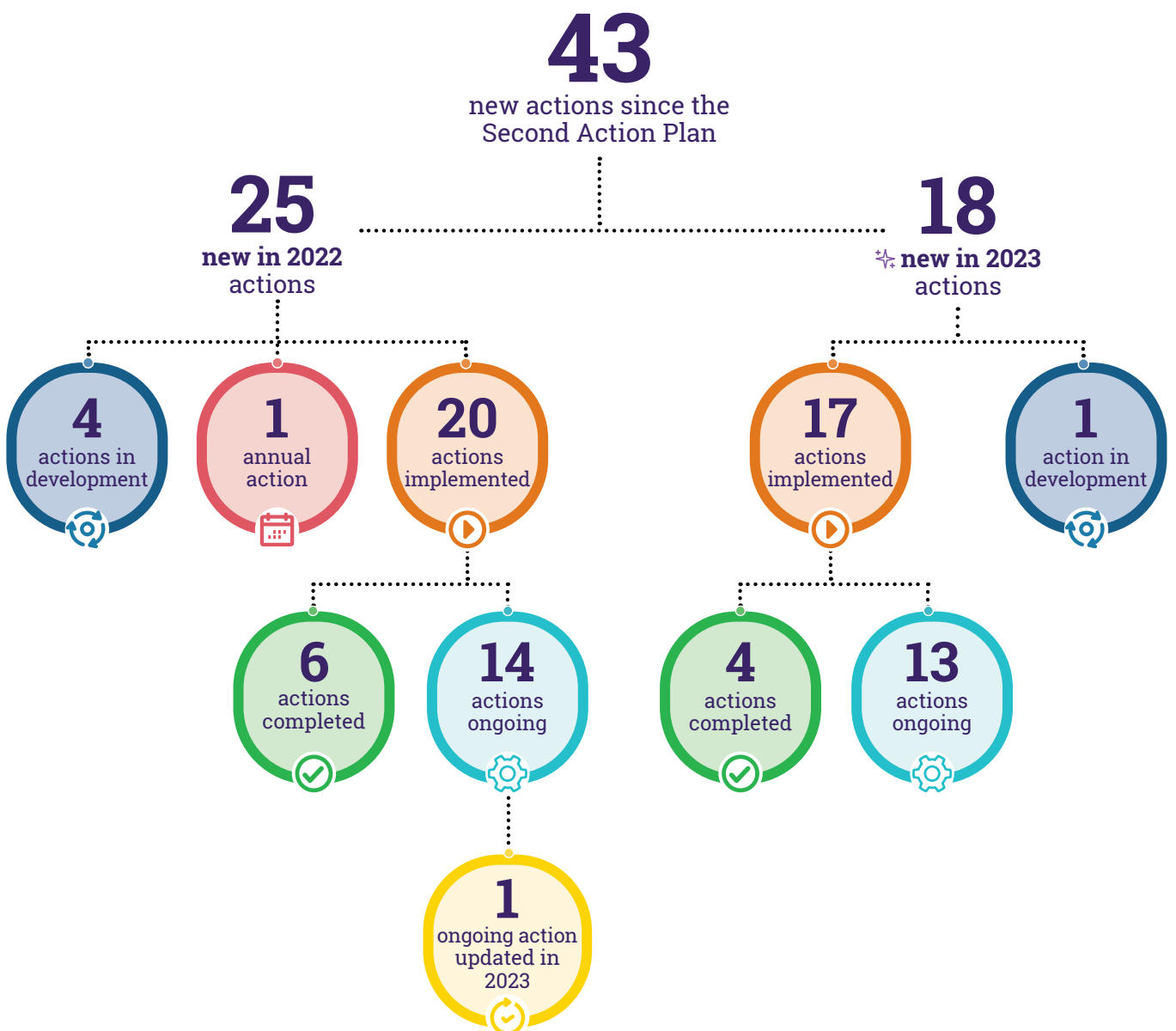
New actions in 2023

The State Government's commitment to gender equality is reflected in the many new gender equality actions that are being developed and implemented by government agencies on a continuing basis.

Significant progress has already been made through Stronger Together, and work is continuing with further initiatives that acknowledge and address the barriers to women's equal access to rights, resources, opportunities and protections.

A total of 43 new gender equality actions have been introduced in just over two years since the Second Action Plan was released, making a total of 98 actions under Stronger Together.

Eighteen new actions are reflected throughout this Progress Report and marked as ✨ **New in 2023**. These actions have strengthened the advances delivered by the 25 new actions included in the 2022 Progress Report.





Priority Area: Health and Wellbeing

Goal: Women are healthy, active and lead fulfilled lives

Key initiatives

Abortion Law Reform

✦ New in 2023

In September 2023, the WA Government passed legislation to reform WA abortion laws which had remained unchanged for 25 years. The modernised legislation addressed inequity of access in line with other Australian jurisdictions and removed clinically unnecessary barriers for women accessing an abortion.

The modernised laws have reduced the number of health practitioners required to be involved in most abortion care from two to one, abolished the Ministerial Panel requirement for later-term abortions, the mandatory counselling provision, and the requirement for Ministerial approval for a health service to perform late abortion. The gestational limit at which additional requirements apply has been amended from 20 to 23 weeks to best reflect current clinical practice and better align WA with other jurisdictions.

Health practitioners may conscientiously object, but they are required to transfer the patient's care or provide information on where to access that care. Abortion has been removed from the Criminal Code; however, it will still remain an offence for an 'unqualified person' to perform or assist with an abortion.

Free menstrual health products

✦ New in 2023

In January 2023, the WA Government initiative to provide to free period products at public high schools was extended to all TAFE campuses in WA. Rollout commenced in March 2023, with all public schools and TAFEs receiving their allocation by mid-year.

By making pads and tampons readily available and free in WA schools and TAFEs, the WA Government is challenging a long-standing stigma and removing a barrier to education, helping to support young women and girls so they can stay focused on their study and reach their full potential.

Deadly Sista Girlz Program

✦ New in 2023

Water Corporation engaged with Waalitj Foundation to support the Deadly Sista Girlz Programs. The investment supports girls across years 7–12 to participate in the program which focuses on advocating for young female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in a culturally appropriate way, and aiming to engage, educate and empower girls to make positive choices about their futures. Water Corporation have funded the program until 2024.

Alcohol. Think Again. 'One Drink' campaign

The Mental Health Commission's Alcohol. Think Again 'One Drink' campaign aims to increase awareness of the risks associated with alcohol use during pregnancy and decrease the prevalence of consumption of alcohol during pregnancy. This campaign is working to prevent and reduce the incidence of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in WA. The campaign ran state-wide on all major media channels during 2023.

Maternity Care

🕒 Updated in 2023

The next stage of the Birthing on Country project – Connected to Country, Birthing on Country, On Country We Grow commenced in 2023. This project aims to provide culturally safe and secure maternity care services for Aboriginal women and their families and is a collaboration between the WA Health's Health Networks team and Aboriginal communities.

GirlsRock!

Funded by The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), West Australian Music (WAM) held GirlsRock! camps in both Geraldton and Perth in 2023. The camps took the form of week-long day camps and included instrumental instruction, band rehearsals, workshops, and fun activities designed to empower and inspire aspiring young female, trans, and non-binary musicians. The initiative aims to create personal and social change, expand opportunities for girls and women, find positive approaches to fighting sexism and use collective voices to further the mission of diversity through contemporary music.

Sports

✦ New in 2023

In 2023, eight WA women's sports teams received a total of \$320,000 in grants to help with costs of national league competitions. The Women's National League Grants Program funding supports sporting pathways for women to reach high-performance level and remove barriers to women participation.

Sports Facilities

DLGSC allocates specific funding for refurbishments and upgrades to women's toilets and changerooms at sports facilities to ensure they are more accessible for women and girls, and enable their participation in sport. In 2022-23, \$6.5 million was allocated to 13 female facility projects.

Women's World Cup

 New in 2023

Perth hosted five Women's World Cup matches in July and August 2023, highlighting women's elite sport and showcasing women as role models, with Matildas' games capturing record attention for Australian sport. The tournament has created a legacy for women's sport by boosting participation and encouraging girls and young women to play at all levels. It also prompted discussion about the gender gap between men and women in sport, including equal rights, recognition and pay.

Government support for the Women's World Cup included investment of \$35 million to upgrade the Perth Rectangular Stadium, where the matches were held.

Further funding was provided to undertake upgrades to the State Football Centre, which has been renamed the Sam Kerr Football Centre in recognition of the WA football star. The facility was used as a training ground by teams competing in Perth during the World Cup tournament. The upgrades by DLGSC included building gender neutral changerooms, which were designed to ensure equal functionality and access, regardless of gender.

Case Study

Expansion of eating disorder treatment services Updated in 2023

Research indicates that rates of eating disorders are on the rise in Australia. Eating disorders are a group of serious and complex mental illnesses characterised by problems associated with disordered eating, body weight control and severe concern with body weight and shape. Eating disorders primarily, but not solely, affect women and girls, with the highest prevalence among teens and young LGBTQI+ people.

In 2021, the State Government committed \$31.7 million over four years for a new state-wide eating disorder treatment service for those aged 16 years and above, referred to as WA Eating Disorders Specialist Services (WAEDSS).

WAEDSS initially included two dedicated treatment hubs in the north and south metropolitan catchment areas. Subsequently, a further \$8.5 million was provided by the Commonwealth Government to establish a hub in the east metropolitan catchment area.

The service expansion takes a shared care approach to the provision of eating disorder services in WA, bringing together clinical and community services and helping consumers to access and navigate the appropriate care throughout their recovery journeys.

The three dedicated multidisciplinary hubs plan to deliver a triage service, intensive day programs; intensive clinical monitoring to provide support to people in the community;



and specialist multidisciplinary outpatient clinics that includes a step-down service for inpatients with eating disorders. Each health service has a phased implementation strategy commencing with the inpatient step-down service prior to opening the service to community-based referrals.

WA Country Health Service and the Child and Adolescent Health Service both have a dedicated Patient Transition Coordinator role to assist in the coordination and transition of care for individuals living in regional communities and children transitioning into the adult mental health system.

Limited services that commenced in the north metropolitan catchment in November 2022 have continued to expand. The east and south metropolitan treatment hubs also commenced limited services in August 2023 with plans to expand to community-based referrals late 2023/early 2024.



Priority Area: Safety and Justice

Goal: Women live safely and have appropriate access to adequate legal protections

Key initiatives

Women's Workplace Safety Information and Resources Hub ✨ New in 2023

In 2023, Communities launched the Women's Workplace Safety Information and Resources Hub. The Hub provides a range of information for employers, employees and victims of sexual harassment in the workplace to ensure they can appropriately and effectively address, respond and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Preventing and addressing workplace sexual harassment is central to ensuring women's physical and psychological safety, improving workforce participation, career progression and access to leadership opportunities and economic security.

Primary Prevention Implementation

🕒 Updated in 2023

Communities released a competitive grant round for primary prevention initiatives tackling violence against women. Approximately \$3 million in grants has been awarded to community groups and sector organisations to deliver 17 projects, commencing in early 2023.

In November 2023, the WA State Government committed an additional \$72.6 million investment to tackle family and domestic violence, including more than \$13 million to boost efforts around primary prevention and early intervention.

Respectful Relationships

🕒 Updated in 2023

In January 2023, a two-year pilot of the Respectful Relationships Sport and Recreation Program commenced, based on the successful Teaching Support Program. There are eight confirmed organisations participating in the pilot: four state sporting associations, two youth sport and recreation organisations and two regional local governments.

The WA Respectful Relationships Teaching Support Program is a primary prevention program which focuses on building respectful relationships and an understanding of gender equality from an early age. The aim of the program is to prevent family and domestic violence before it starts. The program is currently being delivered in primary and secondary public schools across Western Australia. In 2023, 47 schools participated; of these 24 were metropolitan and 23 were regional.

A further commitment of \$1.5 million announced in November 2023 will see the Respectful Relationships Teaching Support Program enhanced, including the development of online training content for teachers and culturally appropriate content for Aboriginal children and young people. The program will also be expanded to independent and Catholic schools. The Minister for Education has indicated a commitment to include compulsory respectful relationships and consent education in the WA curriculum.

Integration of legal services and women's health services ✨ New in 2023

A trial to integrate legal services with women's health services was rolled out in Kalgoorlie and Northbridge in 2023 – boosting support for women who have experienced family and domestic violence. This innovative partnership will help clinicians identify and respond to women experiencing domestic and family violence, and make specialist legal services more accessible to those who would otherwise not access this information and assistance. It also gives lawyers a better understanding of their clients' health concerns in relation to their legal matters.

Respect in Mining

Communities is leading the development and implementation of the Respect in Mining program, which supports small to medium-sized mining companies to address sexual harassment and increase awareness of the gendered drivers of violence. Using a whole of organisation approach, the program seeks to embed gender equality practices and policies to benefit all employees.

In October 2023, a suite of 19 tools and resources was launched, including tools for gaining leadership support, assessing risk, developing appropriate policies and reviewing and improving practice. A supporting implementation guide provides directions to organisations in understanding how each tool can be put into practice and how to monitor the overall shift in workplace culture. A pilot with Gold Fields Australia in the Eastern Goldfields region of WA will commence in 2024.

Respect in Mining is an initiative under the Mental Awareness, Respect and Safety (MARS) Program, a whole-of-Government initiative that aims to improve the mental and physical health, workplace culture, safety and wellbeing issues in the WA mining industry.

On 1 August 2023, the MARS Industry Summit: Driving Respect was held at Optus Stadium. It brought together board members, senior site executives and elected health and safety representatives to educate, inspire and empower leaders to drive respect and take meaningful action towards preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment.

Bindi Bindi mental health unit at Bandyup Women's Prison

The 32 bed mental health unit at Bandyup Women's Prison includes a high dependency area with six beds for women who are acutely unwell with complex mental health needs who may

require transfer to hospital (the Frankland Centre) or have recently returned from hospital. It also includes 23 sub-acute beds for women whose needs are less acute but cannot be safely managed in mainstream prison because of their mental illness and associated issues.

Several initiatives commenced in 2023 at the Bindi Bindi unit to support the unit's trauma-informed approach including establishment of an Australia-first sensory cell, environmental enhancement painting and landscaping projects, cooking, education and recreation programs.

Bindi Bindi is the Noongar word for 'butterfly'. It is a cultural storyline that represents resurrection, change, renewal, hope, endurance, courage and transformation.

Legislative Reform

 Updated in 2023

The Department of Justice is progressing a broad legislative agenda on behalf of the Attorney General, including reforms to advance the interests of women and gender equality. This includes a new Evidence Act that will introduce provisions to strengthen protections and support for victims of family and domestic violence. Legislative reform is also being progressed in WA family law, with several amending pieces of legislation being progressed.

The Law Reform Commission of WA's Project 113 examined sexual offences legislation with consideration of the legal concept of consent, the mistake of fact defence and maximum penalties in the Criminal Code. The Final Report for Project 113 has been submitted to the Attorney General for tabling in Parliament.

The Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime is also leading a review into the experiences of sexual violence victim-survivors and a review into criminal justice responses.

Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy

The Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime and Communities are leading the development of WA's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy (Strategy). The Strategy which will be informed by the experiences of victim-survivors, the WA community, and the professionals and services working to prevent and respond to sexual violence. The purpose of the Strategy is to improve outcomes for victim-survivors of sexual violence, focusing on primary prevention, support for recovery and holding perpetrators to account.

In 2023, a consortium led by the Australian Institute of Family Studies was engaged to support its development and support state-wide stakeholder consultation on the draft Strategy. The Strategy will take a whole-of-government approach to preventing and addressing the impact of sexual violence in the community and consider the full continuum of sexual violence, including sexual harassment, abuse and threats.

Development of the Strategy will align with the strategic direction of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032.

Case Study

Safer Venues

Safer Venues WA is a community driven initiative that aims to improve the standards of safety and inclusivity in Western Australia (WA) live music and entertainment spaces.

The initiative commenced in 2019 after a 2017 Safer Venues WA survey of 550 respondents across the music and hospitality sectors found that 68% of respondents had previously been harassed in a WA venue. Women and LGBTQIA+ communities were disproportionately affected, with 80% of female-identifying respondents having experienced harassment and 67% of trans/non-binary respondents.

Safer Venues WA was funded with \$60,000 over three years as a Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) Contemporary Music Fund (CMF) targeted initiative.

Safer Venues WA held workshops with contemporary music venues to equip them with the tools to improve inclusivity and safety at concert venues and nightclubs.

Venues actively involved included Freo. Social, Mojo's, Connections, The Bird, The Rechabite, Blueroom Theatre, Picabar, Percy Flint, Astral Weeks and Indi Bar.



After significant delays due to COVID-19 affecting all venues in WA, the project was completed in November 2023.

In August 2023, the Safer Venues WA website was publicly launched. The website provides practical information for all WA venues, such as advice on signage and house policy development, door and entry processes, end of night exit procedures, bathroom safety procedures, staff training and induction, and security briefing scripts.

The website features an extensive set of case studies and research, showcasing ideas and initiatives from around the world, classified under venue, artist and community initiatives, as well as research and reports, and legislation. There is also a downloadable harassment report form and after-care cards, along with links to training providers.

The Safer Venues WA website is at <https://www.safervenueswa.org/>

Customer Safety on Public Transport

Passenger feedback is collected by the Public Transport Authority (PTA) to assess perceptions of safety and security when using public transport. Measures to protect travellers, particularly those more vulnerable to harassment or violence, such as women, people with disability and LGBTQI+ people, include central monitoring via thousands of security cameras operating 24/7, long-range public address systems, upgraded lighting at stations, mobile security patrols and increased Transit Officer numbers.

Security information is provided to passengers via the PTA website and customer service hubs, and includes measures such as emergency call buttons, service tracking apps and the 'night alight' option on buses, which allows passengers to dismount at a suitable location between designated stops. The 2023 Passenger Satisfaction Monitor survey indicates that customer satisfaction remains high.

Study Safe

 New in 2023

North Regional TAFE implemented professional development training for lecturers to enable greater understanding and support for women's safety in training environments. The training includes consideration of intersectionalities such as diversity, disability, gender inclusivity and workplace sexual harassment and addresses attitudes, behaviours, social conditions, structures and practices that drive gendered violence.

Family and Domestic Violence Taskforce

 New in 2023

A Family and Domestic Violence Taskforce was established in 2023 to consider and provide advice about reforms, and identify actions to strengthen responses to family and domestic violence. Members of the Taskforce include senior State Government leaders, peak community organisations and an academic expert.

The first priority of the Taskforce has been establishment of a Lived Experience Advisory Group, which will ensure that the voices of victim-survivors are at the centre of policy and service design going forward.

The Taskforce is also responsible for identifying strategic areas for system reforms, advising on responses to key sector priorities and identifying options to strengthen case coordination across Government, through improved information and data sharing.

Establishment of the Taskforce was a key recommendation from a family and domestic violence forum held in 2023.

Case Study

Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy

✦ New in 2023

Launched at the end of 2022, the Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022–2032 sets the vision that Aboriginal families and communities in WA are safe, strong and happy, enabling future generations to thrive.

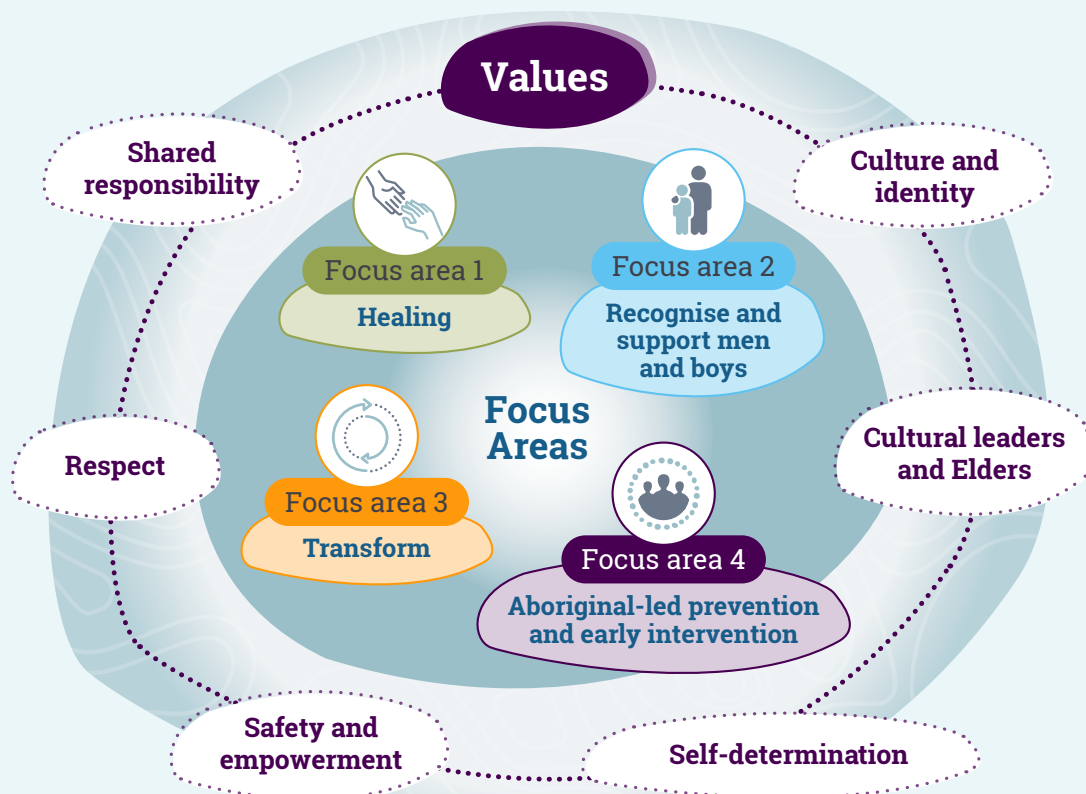
The Strategy has been designed in partnership with Aboriginal communities and stakeholders in WA to address the unique drivers and disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal women, children, families and communities.

Over a ten-year period to 2032, the Strategy commits the WA Government, Aboriginal people and the wider community to support Aboriginal-led responses to family violence through four focus areas:

- **Healing** – ensure healing is what guides prevention and the delivery of family violence services and practice.

- **Recognise and support men and boys** – recognise the unique roles and responsibilities of men, boys and fathers and support them to build strong communities and safe families.
- **Transform** – transform service provision and reform systems
- **Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention** – use culture as the frame for delivering primary prevention and early intervention programs.

The Strategy is a cross-Government initiative and is included in the Closing the Gap Jurisdictional Implementation Plan 2023–2025 for WA to respond to Outcome 13 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe. Implementation activities include a new \$6 million grant program to support Aboriginal-led responses to family violence across WA.





Priority Area: Economic Independence

Goal: Women can be financially independent across all life stages

Key initiatives


New Opportunities for Women

 Updated in 2023

From 2024, the New Opportunities for Women (NOW) Certificate I program will be fee free. The NOW program is a TAFE bridging course, developed specifically for women who may have had a break from the workforce and are looking to embark on a new career. It provides skills and support to a pathway for further study or employment, as well as computer and academic skills.

NOW is open to women of all ages and backgrounds and provides full-time or part-time training options with flexible hours to suit women with family responsibilities. The NOW program has also been expanded to Central Regional TAFE, in addition to North Metropolitan TAFE and South Regional TAFE.

Scholarships

 New in 2023

A new \$3 million TAFE scholarships program for up to 400 women to undertake training in non-traditional trade and technical occupations was announced in 2023 to commence in January 2024. The program aims to attract women into occupations that are traditionally male-dominated and provides a one-off \$5,000 payment to assist with covering training costs and other associated expenses.

The scholarships will be available for a range of STEM, building and construction occupations where women comprise less than 25 per cent of the workforce, to increase pathways for women to higher-paying jobs.

Complementing this is a Women in Non-Traditional Trades Scholarship from the Construction Training Fund, which includes 200 scholarships valued at \$5,000 for women enrolling in eligible apprenticeships and traineeships at participating private Registered Training Organisations.

Girls+ Engineering Tomorrow

 New in 2023

In July 2023, Water Corporation partnered with Curtin University to deliver the Girls+ Engineering Tomorrow Program. The program is an outreach initiative designed to inspire and connect like-minded girls and gender diverse students interested in STEM. Students learn about engineering by connecting with role models, participating in engaging workshops and receiving information on engineering study and career pathways.

Employment program

 New in 2023

A new Pilbara Ports marine pilotage employment program was launched in October 2023 to support a diverse talent pool for this highly specialised career pathway. The employment program aims to increase gender diversity in the maritime industry, where women account for less than two per cent of the global workforce.

The program aims to remove significant barriers to employment in the maritime industry with alternative pathways to skill development, including a marine simulator which contains digital replicas of nine different ports, providing a simulated training experience in a variety of vessels, as well as different locations, weather conditions, currents, tides, and times of day. Marine pilots provide an essential service at Port Hedland by navigating big bulk iron ore carriers safely in and out of the harbour.

Gender Equality in Procurement

 Updated in 2023

The State Government is implementing the first step in gender responsive procurement in WA through the Gender Equality in Procurement: WA Public Sector Pilot (the Pilot). During 2023, the Pilot was extended for a second year to mid-2024 and now includes 19 participating agencies, led by Communities with support from the Department of Finance.

Organisations tendering for government contracts with participating agencies respond to a range of questions during the procurement process about their workplace gender equality policies and initiatives.

An evaluation of the first 12 months of the Pilot was undertaken in mid-2023, with the data providing an early indication the Pilot had a positive impact on increasing awareness and improving understanding of workplace gender equality for both public sector staff and suppliers. Evaluation survey responses showed that 64 per cent of suppliers and 62 per cent of procurement officers reported they 'mostly understand' workplace gender equality, compared with 45 per cent and 44 per cent respectively prior to the Pilot.

Participating government agencies awarded a total of 165 supplier contracts in the first 12 months of the Pilot, at a total value of more than \$193 million. Through the procurement process, all suppliers tendering for those contracts were required to answer questions relating to workplace gender equality. Larger suppliers with 100 employees or more were asked to confirm their organisation's compliance with reporting obligations under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*. Smaller suppliers were asked about their policies and initiatives such as flexible work practices, paid family and domestic violence leave and policies around workplace sexual harassment.

The Pilot was shortlisted for an achievement award from the Institute of Public Administration Australia for its collaboration between government agencies. Communities is exploring options to include Government Trading Enterprises, such as port authorities and energy providers, in the next stage of gender responsive procurement in WA.

Voluntary reporting to WGEA

Communities continues to participate in the multi-year voluntary pilot to report complex disaggregated public sector gender equality data to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency

(WGEA). WGEA's purpose is to promote and improve gender equality in employment and in the workplace, and to do this it collects data with the aim of identifying key areas of gender disadvantage and discrimination.

In 2023, the Public Sector Commission worked with Commissions in other jurisdictions and WGEA on data definitions, alignment and consistency to further support expanded public sector WGEA reporting into the future.

WA is participating in the interjurisdictional Reporting Gender Data Group, which is developing a workplan for 2024 to progress the next stage of reporting by states and territories. The addition of public sector reporting to WGEA's world-leading private sector data contributes to a robust national dataset to inform policy aimed at improving gender equality across Australia's workforce.

Aboriginal Ranger Program

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Aboriginal Ranger Program supports individual and community capacity building in land and sea management, cultural site protection and traditional knowledge transfer. Since its inception in 2017, the Aboriginal Ranger Program has delivered more than 650 ranger jobs on country, with 95 per cent being Aboriginal people and almost half being women.

Young Aboriginal Women Rising

 New in 2023

North Regional TAFE has implemented a strategy to strengthen specialist re-engagement and development for young Aboriginal women, with a number of programs ranging from fully qualified accredited training to personal development programs. Examples include support and training to leverage their family caring skills and experience to gain employment in child care, including accredited training and industry placements. Also included is a tailored program contracted by the Department of Justice to re-engage and support underage young women who are at risk of reoffending in the Kununurra area.

Fierce Skills for Women

 New in 2023

The Fierce Skills for Women pilot program was hosted at South Regional TAFE's Albany Campus, to encourage women to push through any perceived barriers and 'have a go' at training in skills for trades and occupations that have historically been male-dominated. The first of the short course series saw women successfully complete training in operating a forklift, tractor and chainsaw.

X-TEND WA

The Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation's (JTSI) X-TEND WA Program provides funding for organisations that deliver innovator and/or investor educational programs. In early 2023, nine initiatives were funded, with five supporting women, regional and/or indigenous founders.

Employer Incentives

 Updated in 2023

The Jobs and Skills WA Employer Incentive and the Construction Training Fund (CTF) Employer Grants are available to eligible employers taking on trainees and apprentices. Both incentives

include loadings on top of the base grant for women apprentices and trainees, with the aim of increasing the numbers of women in apprenticeships and traineeships, including in the construction industry. New base grant and bonus payment amounts commenced in July 2023. A total of 66 women commenced the Civil Construction Apprenticeship Pilot Program in 2021–22, including nine women who converted their traineeship to an apprenticeship, and a further 36 women commenced in 2022–23. This represents a significant overall increase in women receiving training towards qualifications to work in the civil construction sector.

WA Group Training Program

One of the objectives of the WA Group Training Program is to improve outcomes, including completions, of apprentices and trainees from specific priority groups, with women in non-traditional trades included as a priority grouping. Under the program, Group Training Organisations (GTO) are funded by the DTWD to provide mentoring and wrap around support to apprentices and trainees. In the 12 months to 30 June 2023, 73 women commenced in a non-traditional trade under this program.

Women in Defence Industry Scholarship Program

Delivered in partnership with industry, the Women in Defence Industry Scholarship Program provides vocational training in electronics and engineering to prepare women from all backgrounds for employment in defence-related industries. To date, 36 women have completed the program, with recruitment underway for the 2023-24 intake.

Pathways into STEM

The JTSI State STEM Skills Strategy aims to build a globally competitive workforce with the skills to drive WA's technological future and create new job opportunities with a focus on increasing women's participation in the STEM industry workforce. The State STEM Skills Strategy drives the idea that it is essential that we ensure female students are offered opportunities to develop skills that will enable them to participate in the workforce of the future and are not excluded because of their gender.

JTSI has partnered with two WA universities and local councils to enable service delivery through innovation hubs which focus on cyber security, data science, artificial intelligence and creative technology, with funding from the New Industries Fund (2021–2025). The New Industries Fund recognises that diversity is essential in innovation and each hub has agreed to project principles which include increasing the participation of Indigenous Australians and women in their sector.

STEM Career Taster Program

 Updated in 2023

In 2023, the TAFE Girls in STEM program evolved into the STEM Career Taster Program, which launched for all year 9 students. The Career Taster program built on the success and approach of the Girls in STEM program where girls hear women professionals and industry leaders speak about their career journeys and participate in a range of STEM activities designed to build on their interest in pursuing a career in these areas.

Case Study

Women's Grants for a Stronger Future

On International Women's Day 2023, the Minister for Women's Interests announced an increase in funding for the Communities' Women's Grants for a Stronger Future 2022–23 Program (Women's Grants). The Program for 2022–23 increased resourcing to support initiatives that deliver better outcomes for women and girls wherever they might experience barriers – at school, in the workplace, in retirement, and in their homes and communities.

A total of 14 Women's Grants were awarded in 2023. Four approved grants had a dedicated Aboriginal women's focus, nine grants of up to \$10,000 were awarded for one-off activities or initiatives contributing to the Stronger Together priority areas and five Women's Grants of up to \$100,000 were awarded through a competitive grants process.

For many women, and particularly vulnerable women, their health and wellbeing is inextricably tied to their economic situation. To address this, grants have been awarded to initiatives that cross over the priority areas; such as:

- **Stronger Together – Older Women Connect, Learn and Share!** – A project which aims to promote health and financial literacy, social wellbeing and confidence among older Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) women 55+ through practical, educational workshops and social activities.

The following projects were awarded grants to carry out work that addresses the interconnection between women's economic circumstances and their safety.
 - The Financial Counsellors' Association of WA Inc. will develop and deliver the Strengthening financial futures of Women project. This project aims to pilot a new way of delivering economic empowerment education to women affected by, or at risk of, family and domestic violence.
 - Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA) Inc. were awarded a Women's Grant to run a Financial Abuse Roundtable with key WA stakeholders from community services, government and the private sector, to help identify the systemic barriers that women face when having to navigate financial abuse.
 - The Multicultural Services Centre of Western Australia Inc. received a grant to develop and deliver their Zero Tolerance: Creating safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces for women project. The project is aimed at preventing workplace sexual
- **Yorgas Wellness, Women Working in Community** – A wellness and Aboriginal Women's leadership program in Goldfields/Esperance for working indigenous women to undertake culturally safe, regular wellness activities to practice and prioritise self-care.

harassment for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds by raising awareness, by reducing barriers to reporting and by providing more responsive options for supporting workers who experience sexual harassment at work.

Women's economic independence and participation in the community in regional areas will be enhanced by grants-funded projects:

- Kalgoorlie-Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. for a women's leadership forum across the Goldfields, community focusing on career enhancement, promoting continuous engagement in education, and providing professional growth and development for businesses.
- Djereedjee Seeds, a project in the Wheatbelt which will create a micro social enterprise for the Noongar community. Led and guided by Elders, this opportunity will empower women to create a community-oriented business

that encompasses health and wellbeing and promotes economic and financial independence for First Nations women.

Aboriginal women's leadership is a focus area of the Second Action Plan. The Big hART Inc. Punkaliyarra project in the Pilbara has been funded to run an intergenerational cultural transmission project where young Aboriginal women work alongside senior women Elders, female artists and mentors to build new skills as the next generation of women storytellers and leaders in the community.

Highlight:

Our "Zero Tolerance": Creating safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces for women project will effectively address the key concerns that impact culturally and linguistically diverse women in WA. We are looking forward to working with a range of stakeholders to implement this important project, which aims to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.



Multicultural Services Centre of Western Australia staff including their CEO, managers, gender safety officers who are participating in the Zero Tolerance project.



Priority Area: Leadership

Goal: Women's skills, achievements and strengths are valued, enabling them to participate equally in the community, including at leadership levels.

Key initiatives

Public Sector leadership

✦ New in 2023

In 2023, the Public Sector Commission (PSC) launched the Women's Executive Leadership Development Experience initiative. This program enables women in the public sector to be appointed to a temporary leadership position for 12 months and have learning and networking opportunities to expand their networks and knowledge base.

During the program, women are part of their agency's executive decision making, governance and operations, and mentored by an executive leader to increase their strategy, policy and public administration capabilities.

Game Changers

✦ New in 2023

Game Changers: Trailblazing Stories from WA Women in Soccer was held at the State Library of WA in August 2023. The event featured a selection of stories about WA women in soccer including some of the sport's pioneering women and a timeline of the development of the sport in the State.

Game Changers was held to align with the FIFA Women's World Cup, with aim of shining a spotlight on elite, internationally renowned sportswomen, grassroots stars and community leaders who are using women's soccer as a community-building tool for people with disabilities, migrants and LGBTQIA+ communities.

Public Sector leadership

The PSC's Action Plan for Women includes a target of 50 per cent women in Senior Executive Service (SES) positions across the public sector. In March 2023, that target was reached. This was a significant achievement as just 5 years ago that figure was 33%, and parity was not expected to be reached until 2035.

The WA Government is committed to increasing diversity in the public sector workforce, including the percentage of talented and qualified women in leadership roles. While more than 70 per cent of WA Public Sector employees are women, they are overrepresented in lower levels and have long been underrepresented at leadership levels.

Gender Equity in Governance Policy

✦ New in 2023

The DLGSC is collaborating with the Australian Sports Commission and all other State and Territory Agencies for Sport and Recreation on the development of a National Gender Equity in Governance Policy (Policy). The Policy which seeks to influence change and improve gender equity in governance and leadership positions across sport.

Targets and timelines for increasing the representation of women in leadership roles across the Australian sporting sector are included.

Given the WA sporting industry's overall achievement of the women in leadership target, DLGSC was invited to present at the Gender Equity in Governance and Leadership Industry Workshop in Melbourne to share WA's challenges and successes in the implementation of the WA target.

The DLGSC has a continued responsibility to support the sport and recreation industry to maintain the target and work towards gender diversity at all levels.

Case Study

Gender Diversity Case for Change

Research shows there are immense economic, cultural, social, and health benefits to having more women and girls involved in all aspects of sport and recreation. Inclusive organisations are better able to attract and retain top talent and create an environment where everyone is set up to succeed.

In June 2019, the former Minister for Sport and Recreation communicated the requirement for Western Australian State Sporting Associations (SSAs) to have 50% representation of females on their board. There was a funding impact for SSAs who did not achieve the Target by 30 June 2022.

Target Results

As of the 30 June 2022 deadline, overall representation of women on SSA boards in WA had reached 49.8%, an improvement from the approximate 40% in 2018.

As of 31 March 2023, the overall representation of women on SSA boards had increased to 50.5%. This was the first time since representation figures have been tracked that the female membership on boards exceeded the male membership.

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) has supported the SSAs to achieve the target through a number of mechanisms, including:



Women of Sport Network

- learning and development opportunities, such as governance courses, leadership programs and professional development opportunities
- support to identify women potentially available for board positions
- assistance to review existing barriers within their constitution, policies and practices
- access to online resources such as the Case for Change and associated resources.

In addition, DLGSC supported SportWest, the peak body for sport in WA, to establish the Women of Sport Network and develop the Women of Sport Strategic Plan 2022–2024. The strategy aims to increase women in leadership roles, gender diversity and equity within the WA sport and recreation industry.



It was really great to get into a room and connect with women with the same aspirations or who are already in board positions. I was hesitant about applying as I felt that I wasn't at the point in my career to even think about board positions but I'm so glad I attended. It was the most comfortable I've felt at a workshop, and I think that may be because we opened up about our challenges and in way, our vulnerabilities.



Participant feedback from a 2023 DLGSC Women in Leadership Workshop

Stronger Together Governance

Implementation of Stronger Together looks beyond government to establish ongoing engagement with public, private and community sector organisations to develop accessible and effective pathways to progress gender equality.

The Stronger Together Implementation Group (STIG) meets regularly to drive coordinated implementation and ongoing monitoring of Stronger Together.

In August 2023, the Minister for Women's Interests invited representatives from the community sector, industry bodies and academia to join government representatives on STIG to form a collaborative forum to maximise efforts and expertise.

The expanded STIG met for the first time in November 2023 with the Minister for Women's Interest in attendance. Future meetings will pave the way for development of the Stronger Together Third Action Plan for the years 2025–2029.

Next Steps

Implementation of Stronger Together in 2024 will continue to be guided and supported by the expanded Stronger Together Implementation Group. Some significant milestones for 2024 will include:

- The release of WA's first Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy.
- The release of the fourth Landmark Study Report for the MARS Program, being undertaken by the Centre for Transformative Work Design at Curtin University. The report is due for release in early 2024 and will establish a baseline of workers' experiences in relation to the three focus areas of MARS.
- An evaluation encompassing the First and Second Action Plans under Stronger Together. Development of the Third Action Plan will be progressed, marking the halfway point of Stronger Together's 10-year focus.



Key Milestones 2024–30

2024

- ✓ Progress Report 2024
- ✓ Mid Plan Evaluation undertaken

2025

- ✓ Third Action Plan 2025–2029 launched
- ✓ Progress Report 2025

2026–
2028

- ✓ Stronger Together – Progress Report 2027
- ✓ Stronger Together Third Action Plan 2025–2029 evaluation and report
- ✓ Stronger Together – Fourth Action Plan 2029–2030

2029

- ✓ Fourth Action Plan 2029–2030 launched
- ✓ Development of next Gender Equality Plan

2030

- ✓ Stronger Together Final Report
- ✓ Next Gender Equality Plan launched

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