



Office of the Public Advocate

Gender Equality Action Plan

2019-2022



Diversity Statement



The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) is a human rights organisation that promotes the diversity and inclusion of all people.

This is reflected in its mission for a just and inclusive society that respects and promotes the dignity and human rights of all people.

To enable that vision to be actioned, our staff and volunteers support people with disability and mental illness and promote and protect their rights. Our values of respect and compassion, integrity, rights and independence reflect and underpin our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

We respect the diverse range of life experiences, skills, abilities, cultural backgrounds and knowledge that staff, volunteers and clients bring to their interactions with us and understand that one size does not fit all. A diverse environment supports flexibility and adaptability.

We are committed to being inclusive and ensuring that everyone we interact with feels valued, respected and heard. We strive to empower all people to contribute and participate.

OPA's *Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2019-2022* sets out how, over the next four years, we will demonstrate our commitment to supporting our staff, volunteers and clients in an inclusive way.

The framework consists of five plans that seek to address the barriers that prevent some people who may face multiple disadvantages from accessing our services, or contributing to the organisation as staff or volunteers. These plans are:

- Disability Action Plan
- Gender Equality Action Plan
- Cultural Action Plan
- Koori Inclusion Action Plan
- LGBTIQ Inclusion Plan.

Each plan will contain four key strategies to facilitate a common focus and direction. These strategies are:

- systemic inclusion
- data and service improvement
- employment and economic participation
- community education and partnerships.

We strive to be a best practice organisation by creating a welcoming and inclusive culture. The strategies, goals and actions outlined in this framework ensure that OPA's work and culture is inclusive of all members of the Victorian community that it serves in line with its human rights vision.

Gender Equality Statement

Ensuring that staff of all genders feel that they are treated equally at OPA is a critical part of feeling safe and included in the workplace. Accordingly, and in line with the spirit of the State Government's proposed *Gender Equality Act 2020*, OPA has developed this *Gender Equality Action Plan 2019-2022*. It applies to us all.

While OPA's Gender Equality Committee will ensure its implementation, we are all responsible every day for treating our colleagues equally, regardless of gender. When we refer to gender, we include gender diverse people who may identify as non-binary, queergender or X-gender, for example. The work we do and the way we promote it, aligns with our commitment to gender equality and the prevention of gendered violence.

I thank the committee for its hard work developing the plan and I encourage you to read it carefully and keep it handy. I look forward to celebrating reaching key milestones of the plan with you all.

Colleen Pearce
Public Advocate



About the artwork

La Bella Figura, 2012
Acrylic and gauche on canvas
Artist Maree Roche

Artist Statement

There is a questioning that arises when we examine our life through a compassionate lens. Who am I really? How do I present in the world? I commenced painting this work in Florence, Italy, during a time when I was trying to find out who I was as a person with a lived experience. Part of that examination included what it meant to be a first generation Italian woman in Australia with Bipolar Disorder and all the invisible threads and ideals that culturally bind us together.

There is a saying in Italian that refers to 'la bella figura' which transliterates to 'beautiful figure'. It also means presenting well in society. This painting captures the dichotomy between the femininity I was raised to display versus the way I wished to express my individuality. What I realised is that, when we expand the definitions and when we broaden our cultural appreciation then almost, by default, we become softer and more inclusive.

Systemic Inclusion

What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
OPA will advance and promote gender equality in its structures, strategies and policies.	Senior management and leaders champion action to drive gender equality.	OPA Leaders Forum	July 2020
	OPA, through issues forums, training opportunities, guest speakers and internal communication promotes awareness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gendered violence the availability of family violence leave entitlements in accordance with the VPS Enterprise Agreement flexible working arrangements sex discrimination sexual harassment. 	Gender Equality Committee Education and Training Committee Communications Unit	At least once annually
	Senior management and leaders pledge a stated commitment to the prevention of gendered violence acknowledging that gender inequality is a precondition for the prevention of violence against women and genderqueer persons.	Leadership Team Gender Equality Committee	July 2020
	OPA Leaders' Forum articulate and demonstrate respectful and equal relationships.	OPA Leaders Forum	Ongoing
	OPA ensures that staff accessing parental and extended leave can maintain links and contact with the workplace.	Corporate Services OPA Leaders Forum	Ongoing
OPA will create a positive workplace culture that promotes equality and respect and embraces gender diversity.	Organisational awareness-raising communications about the foundations and causes of gender inequality, sexism, discrimination, unconscious gender bias and respectful relationships.	Gender Equality Committee Education and Training Committee Communications Unit	Ongoing

Systemic Inclusion

What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
	<p>OPA commemorates and celebrates key relevant days such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Women's Day • International Men's Day • International Transgender Day of Visibility • Women's Health week 	<p>Gender Equality Committee</p> <p>LGBTIQ Committee</p>	Annually

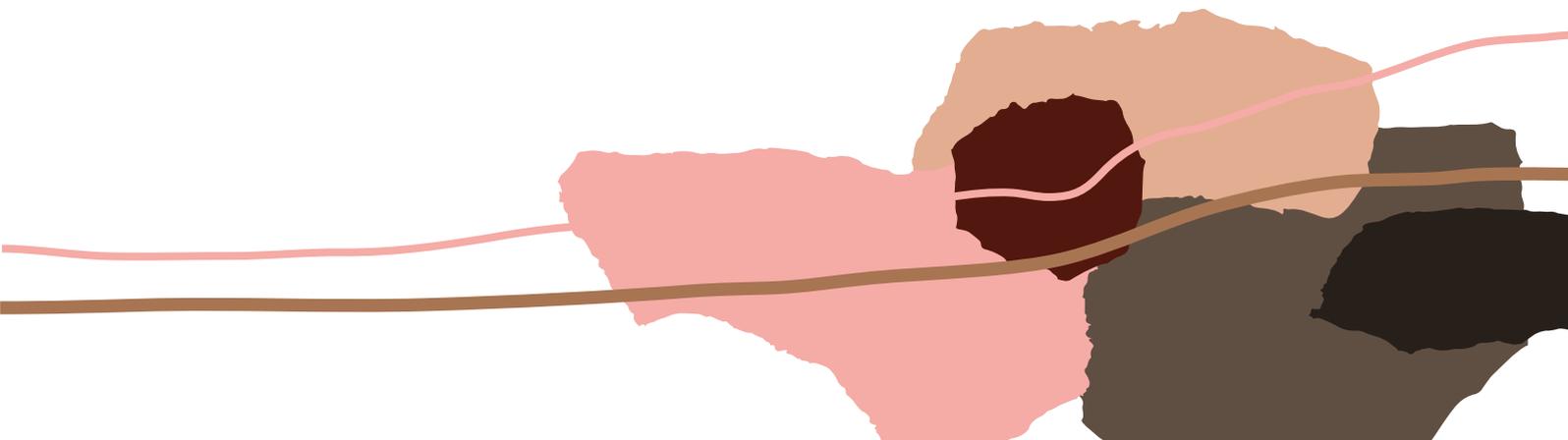
Data and Service Improvement

What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
Embed gender equality in recruitment, remuneration and promotion processes.	OPA captures and reports on statistics on recruitment and progression by gender.	<p>Corporate Services</p> <p>Gender Equality Committee</p> <p>Communications Unit</p>	At the end of the financial year
	OPA's Gender Equality Action Plan is promoted and explained in orientation for all new staff.	<p>Manager Quality and Audit/Member,</p> <p>Gender Equality Committee</p>	Monthly at Orientation
	Gender Equality has its own page under 'Diversity' on OPAnet incorporating information about the plan and relevant resources.	<p>Gender Equality Committee</p> <p>Communications Unit</p>	March 2020
	OPA will develop resources for staff to promote and deliver holistic service provision for people with disability.	<p>Gender Equality Committee</p>	June 2021
Improve the collection of data that can inform initiatives for improvement in service delivery	OPA will implement data collection for issues relevant to gender inequality including the prevalence of gendered violence and other abuse against women and genderqueer persons as experienced by its client base.	<p>Gender Equality Committee</p> <p>Data Analyst</p>	Ongoing

Employment and Economic Participation

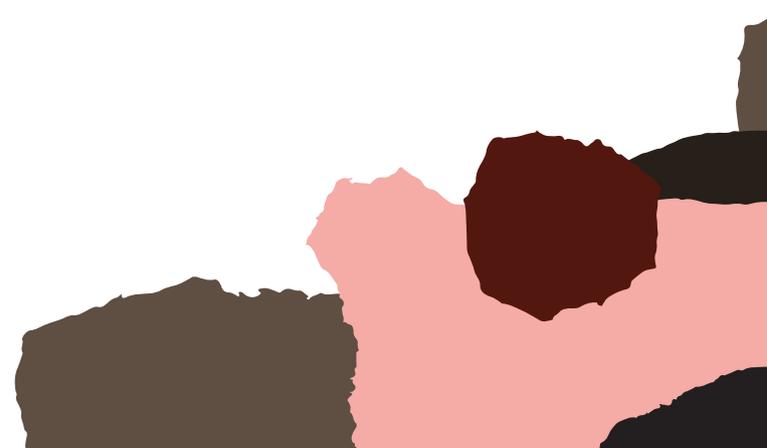
What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
Implement, maintain and advance structures and workplace practices that encourage and promote gender equality.	Leaders and staff are encouraged to request flexible working arrangements which will be reasonably considered subject to operational requirements.	Leadership Team Corporate Services	Ongoing
	Gender equality is included in the diversity statement in position descriptions.	Corporate Services Gender Equality Committee	Ongoing
	Promotion of the Respect in the Workplace policy by incorporating it in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nexus e-learn training modules • 'Healthy Workplace Behaviours' the Equal Opportunity Act training • All staff email communications • Training provided by 'Our Watch'. 	Leadership Team Education and Training Committee Gender Equality Committee Communications Unit	Ongoing
Provide opportunities for leadership and career progression regardless of gender.	Ensuring gender balance ¹ in selection processes by adhering to the consistent application of transparent and fair processes.	Leadership Team	Ongoing

1. Generally speaking, the concept of 'gender balance' relates to the balance between male and female. However, in this plan we aim to achieve a proportionate balance between the number of males, females and gender diverse people.



Employment and Economic Participation

What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
Acknowledge and address systemic gender equality issues to advance the employment opportunities and economic security for women.	OPA Leadership Team develops an affirmative action statement (under Diversity Framework) which promotes opportunities for women to take up leadership positions.	Leadership Team Gender Equality Committee	July 2020
	An identified target to increase the number of women in senior leadership positions to reflect an equal representation of genders.	Public Advocate/ Deputy Public Advocate Leadership Team	By end of 2022
	Development of strategies and initiatives to support women's participation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Public Advocate award for external coaching (annual) • mentoring opportunities • accompanying the Public Advocate and other leaders to relevant meetings with critical stakeholders. 	Public Advocate/ Deputy Public Advocate Leadership Team	By end of 2022
	Questions concerning gendered violence and gender equality are included in the next OPA staff survey in 2021.	Gender Equality Committee	Every two years from 2021



Community Engagement and Partnerships

What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
OPA will advance gender equality as a shared responsibility across the Victorian community	Partnerships are formed with relevant organisations and their expertise is sought where appropriate.	Gender Equality Committee	Ongoing
	Participation in relevant networks and forums.	Gender Equality Committee Systemic Advocacy Other OPA programs	Ongoing
	The Public Advocate hosts an annual Women's Networking Breakfast for female leaders including emerging leaders	Public Advocate	Annually
OPA will advance gender equality as a shared responsibility across the Victorian Community	OPA's systemic advocacy prioritises the gendered nature of violence against women with disability to effect change.	Systemic Advocacy	Ongoing



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