

gender equity strategy

2015-2020



access & equity
framework 2015-2020

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Mayor's Message

I am pleased to present Monash's inaugural Gender Equity Strategy. Monash Council has had a longstanding commitment to, and leadership role in, promoting gender equity and preventing violence against women. This Strategy provides a strong framework for us to build upon and further our commitment.

Monash Council aims to ensure that everyone in the Monash community enjoys the same opportunities, rights and respect, regardless of their gender. Achieving gender equity is critical to improving the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities and is a core principle of a fair, safe and inclusive community.

As you will see in this Strategy, Council is committed to promoting gender equity through our numerous roles as a leader, advocate, capacity builder, employer and arm of government.

With the foundation provided by this strategy, we will continue to explore new avenues and approaches to promote gender equity. We will maintain close and dynamic partnerships with State and Federal government departments, women's health services, community organisations and peak local government organisations.

Together with our local community, we look forward to creating a respectful, safe and inclusive community for everyone in Monash.

Councillor Paul Klisaris
Mayor

Acknowledgement of Country

Monash Council acknowledges local Aboriginal Indigenous Australians, with the Wurundjeri people and Boon Wurrong clans of the Kulin nations, as the original custodians of the land now known as Monash and pays respect to their elders, past and present.

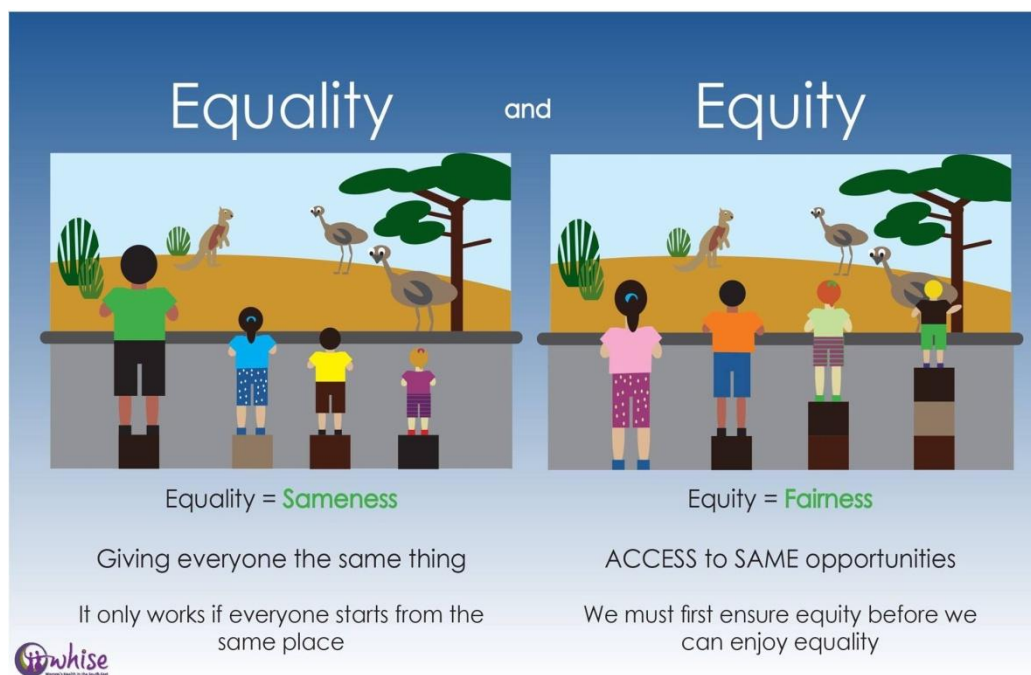
Introduction

Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development. Girls and women have made major strides . . . but they have not yet gained gender equity. The disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, labour market, etc — with negative repercussions for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice¹.

Monash Council is committed to supporting gender equity in our community and in our workplace. We aim to ensure that everyone in the Monash community enjoys the same opportunities, rights and respect, regardless of their gender.

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. Gender equity recognises that within all communities, women and men have different benefits, access to power, resources and responsibilities². To ensure fairness, strategies must often be available to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on an equal playing field³. Gender equity leads to gender equality, where there are equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.

A useful analogy to demonstrate the difference between gender equity and gender equality is to imagine being at a zoo. Equality is providing everybody with a milk crate, regardless of their height, so they can stand on it and see the animals with an uninterrupted view. Equity is recognising that some people are shorter than others – through no fault of their own – so they'll require an additional crate to see properly and be on the same level as everybody else. This is illustrated by the following image⁴:



Equality does not always mean treating people the same. There are two types of equality - formal equality and substantive equality. Formal equality is often referred to as equal treatment, where people are to be treated exactly the same in all circumstances. Treating everyone equally assumes that everyone is the same and that they are starting from a position of equality within society. As a result, this approach fails to take into account structural barriers faced by women, people with disabilities and other minorities⁵. Formal equality may involve equal treatment, but rarely results in equal outcomes. Substantive equality is concerned with the outcomes of the way people are treated, and therefore, recognises and accommodates differences. This approach questions assumptions about the existing 'level-playing field' that is inherent in a formal approach to equality and recognises that often special affirmative measures may be required to overcome structural disadvantage and past inequality⁶.

Purpose of the Gender Equity Strategy

Whilst the Gender Equity Strategy is the first Monash policy specifically focused on gender equity, Monash Council has had a longstanding commitment to and leadership role in promoting gender equity and preventing violence against women. Council is a signatory to the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter.

It is the intention of this Strategy that Council will strive towards an integrated, whole of Council approach to gender equity. Through the application of this Strategy, it is the expectation that gender equity is considered and prioritised in all current and future Council planning, policy, service delivery and practice. Council commits to promoting gender equity through Council's role as a:

- **Leader** – we will provide leadership to our community and partners on gender equity. To affect community change, we need to ensure our culture, policy, planning and programs demonstrate gender respect and equity.
- **Advocate** - we will advocate for gender equity and the prevention of violence against women at a local, regional, state and national level
- **Capacity builder** – we will support Council, our partners and the Monash community to understand how they can promote gender equity in their everyday work and lives.
- **Employer** – ensuring Council as a workplace provides equitable opportunities for its male and female employees and maintains an organisational culture which supports gender equity.
- **Arm of government** – ensuring that our decision making, resource allocation, planning, policy and service delivery addresses gender inequalities and is evidence based.

The Strategy provides Council with five priorities to advance gender equity. These priorities are:

- **Leadership**
- **Advocacy**
- **Research**
- **Building the capacity of staff, partners and the community**
- **Partnerships**

Why has Monash Council developed a gender equity strategy?

Gender equality is a critical human rights and social justice issue. Achieving gender equity is critical to improving the health and wellbeing of individual women and men, families and communities and

is a core principle of a fair, safe and inclusive community. Balancing the scales of gender equality has immense social and cultural benefits and supports equal opportunities for men and women to contribute equally at home, the workplace, in decision making and in the broader community.

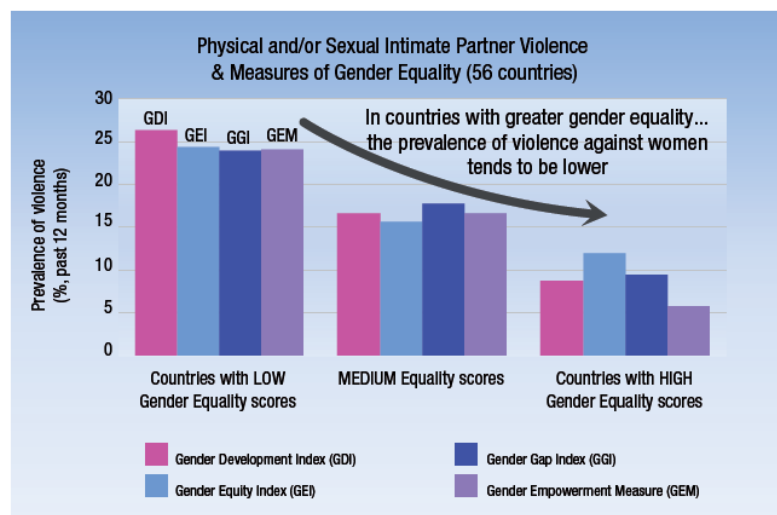
Council believes that individuals should not be advantaged or disadvantaged due to their gender and that all community members should be treated fairly and equally. By considering gender equity in all of our services, policies, programs, planning and decision making, Council can better meet the needs of our entire community. We recognise gender equality will be achieved through a range of approaches, including those which break down rigid ideas about how women and men, girls and boys should behave.

Enhancing gender equity has significant economic and productivity gains, which impact local, state and national economies. Research shows that increasing female participation in the workforce by 6% has the potential to add \$25 billion annually to the Australian economy⁷.

Promoting gender equity within the workplace also has significant benefits to Council's productivity and its ability to deliver high quality and responsive services for the Monash community. Organisations which promote gender equity, such as flexible workplace conditions for male and female employees; an equitable approach to recruitment and promotion; and a culture of equality and respect, are more likely to attract top candidates and retain staff. Research shows that organisations with greater gender equality have better organisational performance⁸.

Violence against women - an extreme outcome of gender inequality

National and international research shows that gender inequality is a key driver of violence against women⁹. Data shows that in countries with greater equality between women and men tend to have lower levels of violence against women¹⁰. This is illustrated in the diagram below.



Therefore enhancing gender equity prevents violence against women. Men's health and wellbeing also benefits from gender equity, for example, through an increase in supportive social norms and complementary changes in policies and procedures for men to be engaged in their family life and as carers.

The role of local government in promoting gender equity

As the arm of government closest to the community, local government has the capacity to influence many of the determinants of health and wellbeing, including gender. Local government is extremely well placed to promote gender equity through its role in planning, providing community facilities and public spaces, service delivery and partnerships which cut across the social, economic, environmental and cultural domains of civic life. Research shows that actions to prevent violence against women are most effective when multiple messages and strategies which promote gender equity and respectful relationships occur across different levels in communities and reinforce each other.

Local government plays a key leadership role in local communities and have extensive reach, influence and partnerships across the community, including workplaces, sporting clubs, the media and schools. For example, Council has great ability to promote respectful relationships through diverse areas including youth services through our partnerships with local schools, to new parents through maternal and child health services, and to local sports clubs through education and training. These settings have been identified by VicHealth as critical to create the attitudinal and behavioural change needed to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity.

Gender equality in Australia

Despite achieving significant gains in gender equity in Australia in recent decades, inequalities for women remain across many areas of life, restricting their ability to fully and equally participate in community life. Due to social structures, norms, attitudes and behaviours towards women and their role in society, the ability for women to experience the same rights, opportunities and privileges as men can be limited.

It is important to acknowledge that women and men are not homogenous and there is significant diversity within and between women and men. As a result, women may face very different experiences and inequalities. For example, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities can face specific challenges and may experience racism and discrimination on the basis of skin colour, religious affiliation, ethnic origin and other identity characteristics such as dress codes. The intersection of gender inequality with other issues that women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities can face, may compound the risk, experience and impact of gender inequality and violence¹¹. Similarly, others characteristics such as disability, sexuality and age intersect with gender inequalities and can be the basis of discrimination.

The following statistics highlights some of the gender inequalities in Australia:

- The pay gap between women's and men's fulltime weekly earnings is 18.2 percent¹².
- Despite many women with children being in paid work, women continue to spend more than double the amount of time each day than men caring for children¹³.
- In the 2014 Order of Australia awards, 71.1% of recipients were male and 28.9% of recipients were female¹⁴.
- As of August 2015, women comprised 30.5% of all federal parliamentarians and 10.5% of federal cabinet members (2 out of 19)¹⁵.
- In Australia, 44% of women with disabilities are in employment, compared 53% of men with disabilities¹⁶.

- In 2009, 8.9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls had a disability compared with 4.8% in the general population. In the 35–44 years age group, 29% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women had a disability compared with 12.5% in the general population.¹⁷.
- Of the top 500 companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange in 2012, only 12 of them had female Chief Executive Officers.¹⁸.

For data on gender equality in the City of Monash, see Appendix One.

What is the relationship between gender inequality and violence against women?

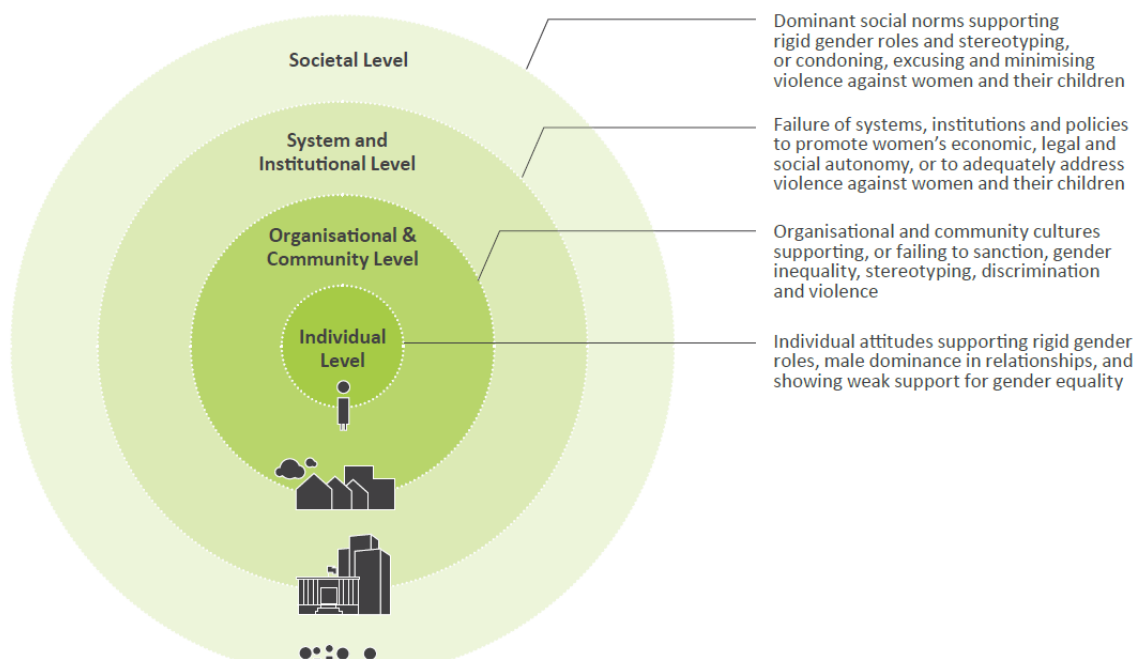
Men's violence against women is an extreme outcome of gender inequality. While the causes of violence are complex and multifaceted, the gendered drivers against women include:

- Condoning of violence against women;
- Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life;
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity; and
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women¹⁹.

This is illustrated in the following diagram²⁰:



Together these key drivers create a social environment in which women's lives are devalued, men's sense of entitlement is elevated and men's use of violence to maintain their power is excused. The following diagram illustrates how the permission or justification for violence is learned and reinforced through social, institutional, organisational and community and/or familial environments²¹.



Violence against women includes economic, psychological, emotional, physical and sexual violence²². Men's violence against women is a prevalent problem with serious health, social, cultural and economic ramifications. Violence against women is alarmingly widespread in Australia:

- One in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15.²³
- Just over one in five Australian women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.²⁴
- Almost every week, one woman is killed by her current or former partner.²⁵
- Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to preventable death, disability and disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15–44.²⁶
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are disproportionately impacted. In comparison with other women in Australia, Indigenous women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence²⁷ and almost 11 times more likely to be killed as a result of violent assault.²⁸
- It is estimated that violence against women will cost the national economy \$15.6 billion by 2021-2022 unless effective action is taken to prevent this violence.²⁹

Violence against women is a crime predominately committed by men known to their victim/survivors, while violence experienced by men is predominately committed by male strangers.³⁰ Violence against women cuts across culture, age, ability, and social and economic status. Due to a number of reasons including social stigma, fear of perpetrators and victim blaming, the extent to which violence against women occurs is perpetrated is significantly under-reported, therefore making the true extent difficult to determine.

How can we prevent violence against women?

There is international consensus that by addressing the drivers of violence against women, we can prevent violence against women from occurring in the first place.

Essential actions to address the gendered drivers of violence against women are:

- Challenge condoning of violence against women;
- Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships;
- Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles;
- Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships between and among women and men, boys and girls; and
- Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

This is illustrated in the following diagram³¹:



Monash Council is strongly committed to the prevention of violence against women. This is demonstrated through Council's commitment to prevent violence against women in our key strategic plans the Monash Council Plan (2013 – 2017) and the Monash Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan (2013 – 2017). Between 2012 – 2015, Monash Council was the lead partner in the Generating Equality and Respect program, an innovative prevention of violence against women program.

Generating Equality and Respect was a partnership program between Monash Council, Link Health and Community and VicHealth, with a vision for an equal and respectful Monash community where women are free from violence. For more information on the Generating Equality and Respect program see: <http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-Safety/Prevention-of-Violence-Against-Women/Generating-Equality-and-Respect-Program>.

Gender Equity Strategy 2015 – 2020

Vision: An inclusive and gender equitable city, where females and males are treated with respect and have equal opportunities, decision-making power and responsibilities, regardless of their gender.

Monash Council is committed to supporting gender equity in our community and in our workplace. It is the intention of this Strategy that Council will strive towards an integrated, whole of Council approach to gender equity. Through the application of this Strategy, it is the expectation that gender equity is considered and prioritised in all current and future Council planning, policy, service delivery and practice.

Through extensive consultation with our community and across Council and research, Monash Council has developed a Gender Equity Strategy with five priorities to guide the implementation of gender equity activity in Monash over the next five years. These priorities are:

Priority: Leadership – Council will provide leadership to our community and partners on gender equity. We recognise that to affect community change, we need to ensure our own workplace culture, practice, policy, planning and programs demonstrate gender equity and respect. We will ensure that the experiences of males, females and gender diverse people are considered in our consultation and decision making.

Priority: Research - We will routinely collect and analyse gender disaggregated data and use it to inform our decision making.

Priority: Partnerships - We will partner with other organisations and key stakeholders to promote gender equality and respect.

Priority: Advocacy - We will advocate for gender equity and the prevention of violence against women at a local, regional, state and national level.

Priority: Building capacity - We will support our staff, our partners and the Monash community to understand how they can promote gender equity in their everyday work and lives.

This Strategy forms part of a suite of strategies under Council's Access and Equity Framework 2013 – 2017, which provides a central context to the development of social policies within the City of Monash.

Implementation of the Plan

The Gender Equity Strategy provides the over-arching framework to guide the development of annual implementation plans. The Strategy is considered a live, adaptive document which recognises the ever-changing social, economic and political environments that impact gender equity in Monash.

It provides the flexibility to respond to rapidly changing environments, emerging research and best-practice. To action the Strategy's priority areas we will develop and implement annual action plans, capturing activities from across Council. Our progress in undertaking these actions and identifying priorities for the following year will be reported annually to Council.

Gender Equity Advisory Committee

A Gender Equity Advisory Committee will be established to support gender equity initiatives within the City of Monash and to provide advice to Council on the implementation and evaluation of the Gender Equity Strategy.

How will we know the Strategy has been effective?

The Gender Equity Strategy actions are designed to be mutually reinforcing, recognising that multiple strategies and a long term approach is required to achieve gender equality.

In alignment with Council's annual June reporting cycle of Council strategies, an evaluation report on the progress of annual actions will be developed by the Community Planning and Development Department, along with the actions for the coming year. It is intended the Gender Equity Strategy will inform the development of the annual Community Planning and Development Department Business Plan and the individual work plans of relevant staff across Council.

Monitoring our actions designed to promote gender equity will support Council to know we are on the right track to achieve our vision of an inclusive and gender equitable city, where females and males are treated with respect and have equal opportunities, decision-making power and responsibilities, regardless of their gender.

Key definitions

Drivers – the underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage³².

Gender: Refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours and attributes that society considers appropriate for women and men. Unlike the biological characteristics and differences between women and men known as sex, gender roles are socially learnt, differ among cultures and change over time.³³

Gender analysis: A method of assessing differences in the lives of women and men and the impacts that policies, programs and services may have on particular groups of men and women. A gender analysis takes into account the diversity among women and men by considering variables such as socioeconomic status, age, family structure, ability and cultural and linguistic background.³⁴

Gendered drivers – the specific elements or expressions of gender inequality that are most strongly linked to violence against women. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life. The gendered drivers are the underlying causes required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage³⁵.

Gender equality: refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men.³⁶

Gender equity: the process of being fair to women and men. Gender equity recognises that within all communities, women and men have different benefits, access to power, resources and responsibilities.³⁷ To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must often be available to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field.³⁸ Gender equity leads to gender equality.

Preventing Violence Against Women: Primary prevention of violence against women strategies seek to prevent violence before it occurs. Activities can be delivered to the whole population or to high risk population groups. Primary prevention focuses on changing behaviour and/ or building the knowledge and skills of individuals. The structural, cultural and societal contexts in which violence against women occurs is very important to target in primary prevention work. Strategies that do not have a particular focus on violence against women but address its underlying causes, such as gender inequality, are primary prevention strategies.³⁹

Gender disaggregated data: Presenting information separately for females and males, girls and boys in order to identify, understand and respond to issues as experienced by both sexes.⁴⁰

Sex: refers to biological differences; chromosomes, hormonal profiles, internal and external sex organs.

Violence Against Women: The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in,

or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.⁴¹ Violence against women takes many forms and affects all communities, irrespective of socio-economic class, race or culture.

Appendix One: Gender equity in Monash

Employment and income

- 62.9% of males and 45.4% of females living in the City of Monash are employed. Of these, a much higher proportion of men are employed full time than women (67.9% compared to 46.5%).
- 6.2% of males and 6.2% of females are unemployed.
- In Monash, there is a greater representation of females in lower weekly income brackets and a greater representation of males in higher weekly income brackets. 32.4% of males earn more than \$1,000 per week, compared to 18.5% of women. This difference in individual incomes has far-reaching consequences for women over their lifetime, particularly given their longer life expectancies. Women often reach later years in life with far less savings and smaller amounts of superannuation than men.
- In Monash, there is a 34% income gap between women and men aged over 15 and in paid employment.

Caring and unpaid domestic work

- In Monash, males are more likely than females to spend less than 30 hours each week on unpaid domestic work. 3.3% of males spend more than 30 hours or more on unpaid domestic labour, compared to 14.5% of females. Males are more likely than females to do no unpaid domestic work during the week.
- Women in Monash are more likely than men to be carers, with 13.4% of female residents providing care and 9.5% of males.

Housing

- Women constitute 82.3% of the single parent households in Monash. Females heading lone-parent households have a younger age profile than their male counterparts, with higher proportions aged less than 45 years.
- As women have lower weekly incomes than men, housing stress is likely to have significant impacts for women on lower incomes, particularly single parent households.

Education

- More women in Monash left school before completing Year 11 (24.4%), compared to males in Monash (21.7%). However, more male residents under 35 years left school before Year 11 (18.2%) compared to women aged under 35 (12.4%).
- In Monash, females are more likely than males to have achieved a graduate diploma/certificate, bachelor degree, and advanced diploma/diploma as their highest level of education.
- Males are more likely than females to have achieved a postgraduate degree and certificate as their highest level of education.

Perceptions of safety

- In 2011, only 58.3% of females in Monash felt 'safe' or 'very safe' walking alone at night in their local area, compared to 86.5% of males.⁴².

Proficiency in spoken English

- The top ten languages other than English spoken by females in Monash are Chinese languages, Greek, Indo-Aryan languages, Italian, Southeast Asian Austronesian languages, Vietnamese, Tamil, Korean, Arabic and Russian. Females with languages other than English are generally less proficient in spoken English than males.

Health and disability

- In Monash, there are more women with disabilities (5.6%) than men with disabilities (3.9%).

Unless stated, all data is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 census.

Appendix Two: Research and consultation

In the development of the Gender Equity Strategy, we consulted with our community, examined national and local gender equity data, and worked in partnership internally and externally to develop our priorities for the next five years.

Consultation and research included:

- Gender equity survey with Monash Council staff – 2014
- Gender equity survey with Monash community members – 2014
- Gender equity survey with Monash community organisations – 2014
- A review of Monash Council plans and strategies
- Literature review of other local government gender equity strategies and plans
- Internal consultation
- Consultation with Council reference groups and advisory committees

Relevant plans and strategies

International	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010- 2022• Second Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2013 – 2016• National Women's Health Policy
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008)</i>• The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010 and Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i> • <i>Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> • <i>Local Government Act (1989)</i> • <i>The Victorian Government's Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2010- 2014</i> • <i>Victorian Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children 2012- 2015</i> • <i>Victorian Health Plan- Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012- 2022</i> • <i>Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2011- 2015</i> • <i>VicHealth Action Agenda for Health Promotion 2013–23</i> • <i>Preventing violence against women before it occurs: a framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria.</i>
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eastern Metropolitan Together for Equality and Respect: A Strategy to Prevent Violence Against Women in Melbourne's East 2013- 2017</i>
City of Monash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Council Plan 2013 – 2017</i> • <i>Access and Equity Framework 2013 – 2017</i> • <i>Health & Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2013 – 2017</i> • <i>City of Monash, Community Safety Framework, 2015 – 2020</i> • <i>City of Monash Youth Plan 2013 – 2016</i> • <i>Endorsement of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter</i>

Violence against women and family violence support services

If you or someone else are in immediate danger please call 000

1800 RESPECT is a National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence counselling helpline, information and support 24/7. The service is available to victim survivors of violence, friends, family members and colleagues seeking advice. **1800 737 732** or **www.1800respect.org.au/**

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