

AMES AUSTRALIA

GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2022-2025





AMES Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of this land on which we live and work. We pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and recognise their continuing connection to country, land, waters, sky, and cultures past and future.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



It is with great pleasure that I present to you AMES Australia's Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025 (GEAP).

Gender equality is an important social and economic goal. Societies with greater gender equality have lower rates of violence towards women and children, and better outcomes for all genders in terms of social, political and economic participation.

AMES Australia (AMES) is committed to drive progress in gender equality by reducing inequality and discrimination through promoting gender equality including increasing awareness of intersectionality in the community and within our own culturally diverse workforce and client base.

We aim to be leaders in modelling best practice and behaviours in the workplace and in our community to advocate for gender equality. We will do this by working with our communities, partners and consortiums in building a culture of respect and fairness, as each of us play a role in promoting gender equality.

We have outlined three key priorities for our organisation that we will work to achieve by 2025.

1. AMES to implement a seamless and meaningful way to collect gender data to positively influence diversity and gender equality across our workforce.
2. AMES to have a workplace culture that promotes gender equality and does not tolerate inappropriate behaviours of sexual harassment and discrimination.
3. AMES policies, processes and programs integrate inclusive gender equality practices.

The GEAP will guide planning, implementation and measure change in progress towards workplace gender equality.

AMES is actively working towards aligning our programs and services with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is committed to the Prevention of Violence against Women.

In establishing our gender equality strategy, we recognise and value diverse perspectives in working towards achieving AMES strategic priorities, along with our contribution to gender equality within the community more broadly.

Catherine Scarth
Chief Executive Officer
AMES Australia



EXECUTIVE SPONSOR COMMITMENT



I am proud to be the Executive Sponsor for AMES GEAP. Our key objective is to create an inclusive diverse workplace that enables all employees to contribute at their best.

The GEAP is AMES first Plan; and it will assist employees from all backgrounds to feel valued, supported and included in our organisation.

At AMES, our workforce comprises a majority of women (66%). Employees have responded positively to questions in relation to equal opportunity employment around gender and intersectionality with 91% of respondents to our People Matter Survey agreeing that gender is not a barrier to success in comparison to 86% for AMES comparator group.

While AMES performs well against gender equality indicators, we know there is more we can do.

Our GEAP outlines three key priorities, with targeted strategies and associated actions that we will implement to deliver meaningful change throughout our organisation. These were identified following analysis of data, research and consultation across our workforce.

AMES vision for gender equality is for all employees to:

- have access to and enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities, rewards, resources regardless of their gender and background;
- have a workplace that is safe and free from sexual harassment and discrimination; and
- be treated with respect and fairness.

AMES will continue to deliver a safe and inclusive environment with zero-tolerance to any form of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment, or exclusion. Consistent employment related processes, practices and decisions will be based on merit, and fair and transparent processes.

The GEAP will be lodged with the Gender Equality Commissioner in Victoria as a demonstration of our commitment to meet the objectives of the *Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020*. In adopting and implementing this Plan, AMES demonstrates how it values the richness of diversity in our organisation, and recognises its responsibilities to take organisation-wide transformative actions to enhance inclusion for all.

Catharine O'Grady
General Manager People and Development
AMES Australia



ABOUT AMES AUSTRALIA



Our vision is “full participation for all in a cohesive and diverse society.” AMES achieves this through innovation, advocacy, partnerships, influence and sustainability.

AMES Social and Economic Participation Framework focuses on short and long-term outcomes for individuals, families and the broader community. This framework drives AMES strategic priorities to:

- extend work to improve client outcomes including the economic wellbeing of women;
- apply digital technologies to achieve better outcomes;
- contribute to the evidence base to improve settlement policies and practices;
- promote the benefits of the diverse social capital of newly arrived communities to the broader society; and
- invest in the capacity, diversity, resilience and innovation of AMES, its employees and volunteers.

AMES works closely with a range of advisory and community groups that provide insight into ways to increase participation in AMES services to achieve outcomes for clients supported by AMES. These groups include those representing or providing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, young people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people experiencing homelessness, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer/questioning (LGBTIQ) and people with disabilities.

AMES is a national organisation with services delivered from multiple sites across metropolitan Melbourne, regional Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

AMES provides a comprehensive range of settlement and social participation programs and services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These include on-arrival settlement support, English language and literacy training, vocational education and training, and employment services.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF AMES AUSTRALIA KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

> **Measuring AMES Social Impact and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

AMES annual Social Impact Report requires purposeful measurement of the positive impact our programs and services have on our clients building from, and aligning with, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

AMES core services currently align with SDG goals: 3 - Health and Wellbeing, 4 - Quality Education and 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth. Additional alignment to Goal 5 Gender Equality, Goal 10 Reduced Inequalities, Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Goal 17 - Partnerships for the Goals are emerging in our operations and partnerships.

> **Prevention of Violence against Women (PVaW)**

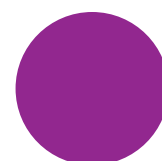
AMES contributes to state and national prevention of family violence initiatives by bringing added attention to the issues for multicultural communities. Since 2016, AMES has maintained a senior employee position leading its work in gender equity and PVaW in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. A highly respected PVaW Leadership course has been implemented since 2017 with 127 graduates gaining and advancing their knowledge and skills by engaging directly with their own communities in providing prevention of violence activities.

> **The Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)**

AMES is one of three agencies that support 41 MARAM newly prescribed multicultural and settlement services to implement the MARAM and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme reforms. AMES Settlement services are newly prescribed under the MARAM framework that ensures services are effectively identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk.

> **International engagement and influence**

Over the past 13 years, AMES has been represented on the Refugee Council of Australia Board of Management ensuring that the voices of refugees are heard at national and international levels. During this time AMES has presented and actively participated in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) annual consultations and forums, emphasising the intersectional disadvantage refugee women face - most recently as part of the Gender Audit team on diversity and gender equality at a World Bank forum in May 2021.





WHAT DOES GENDER EQUALITY MEAN?

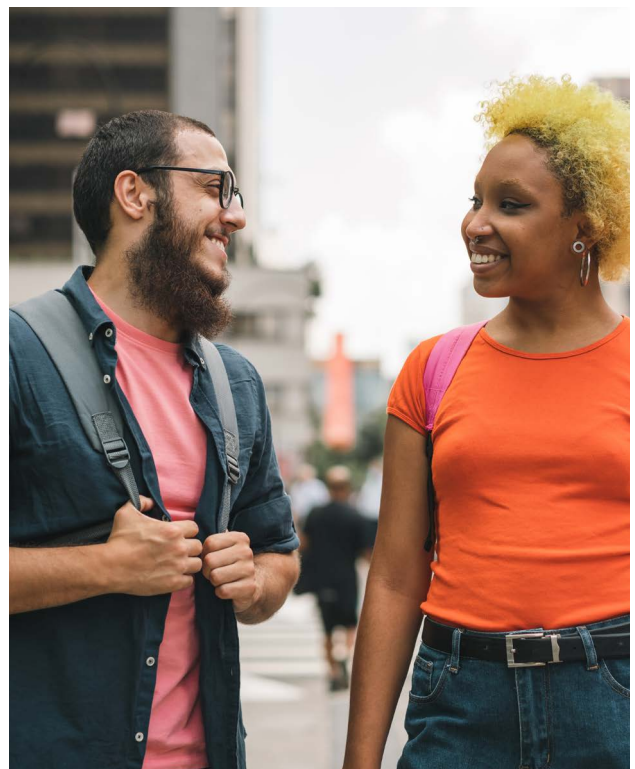
The Victorian *Gender Equality Act 2020* defines gender equality as “equality of rights opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between persons of different genders”. At a personal level this promotes individual freedom to develop personal abilities, pursue professional careers and make life choices free from gender stereotypes, roles or prejudices. **Gender equity** is the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender. **Gender equality** is a human right and a precondition to social justice. It means that equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, trans and gender-diverse people should not depend on, or be effected by, their gender. It expands further by removing limiting gendered expectations, creating equal, safe and strong workplaces.

For many, **gender inequality** is compounded by other forms of discrimination and disadvantage. It is important that we understand the full complexity of an individual’s barriers and how these can make it harder for them in the workplace.

AMES is a culturally diverse workplace that provides services to culturally and linguistically diverse clients. AMES recognises that employees may face multiple barriers that can affect their day-to-day work including linguistic, cultural, racial and religious discrimination. AMES must ensure all gender equality initiatives recognise the diversity of our employees and offer culturally appropriate resources.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The *Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act) passed in February 2020 and commenced in March 2021. This Act requires the Victorian Public Sector, including AMES, to address obligations enshrined in the Act to promote gender equality in the workplace, and to report on, plan for, and progress gender equality.



AMES GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

This is AMES first GEAP and builds on the organisation's gender equality efforts over the last few years. This Plan will formalise actions to drive long-term change, while guiding work that needs to be completed within the first three years. AMES will work to:

- have a seamless and meaningful way to collect gender data insights to consolidate a solid evidence base to inform all our work;
- continue to build on our workplace culture that promotes gender equality and respect, having a safe and inclusive working environment; and
- tailor our policies, programs and services to integrate inclusive gender equality practices across the organisation

AMES vision for gender equality

AMES vision for gender equality is for all employees to:

- have access to and enjoy equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities, and rewards;
- have a workplace that is safe and free from sexual harassment and discrimination; and
- be treated with respect and fairness regardless of gender and background.



Development of AMES GEAP



The development of AMES GEAP has been guided by the ten **gender equality principles** in the Act:

1. All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
2. Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
3. Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
4. Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
5. Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
6. Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
7. All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
8. Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation etc.
9. Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
10. Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

In line with the Act, these principles are supported by seven functional workplace **gender equality indicators** that reflect workplace processes and practices:

1. gender composition at all levels of the workplace;
2. gender composition of governing bodies;
3. equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender;
4. workplace sexual harassment;
5. recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace;
6. leave and flexibility; and
7. gendered segregation in the workplace.

Further informing the development of AMES GEAP has been consideration of intersectional factors which may compound gender inequality outcomes and are referred to as “intersectional gender inequality” by the Commission. For example, a person may experience disadvantage or discrimination based on aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion or sexual orientation and other attributes.

With this knowledge and understanding, AMES is in a position to further build the integration of gender, intersectionality and equality into our business practices, systems, rules and behaviours. This effort aligns with the AMES Victoria Public Sector values of Leadership, Respect and Human Rights.



Methodology

The process for developing the AMES GEAP involved analysis of AMES strategies, frameworks, policies and procedures; data from a workplace gender audit (June 2021) and the People Matter Survey (June 2021) data against the workplace gender equality indicators and intersectional factors.

In January 2022, AMES conducted two focus groups with a range of employees including management staff. All employees and union representatives were invited to respond to a draft of the GEAP through an open consultation process in February 2022. In addition, the Executive Team and AMES Board were also consulted as part of this process. Throughout this development process (refer to Figure 1) feedback has been incorporated into the AMES GEAP and has been reflected in the three Priorities, supporting Strategies and accompanying Actions.



Figure 1: Development of AMES GEAP

Audit insights

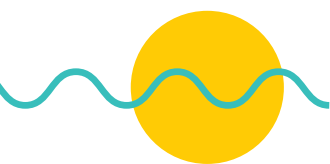
The workplace gender audit reviewed workforce data as of 30 June 2021 and the results from the 2021 People Matter Survey.

AMES response rate for the People Matter Survey was 68%.

AMES context, industry profile and employment conditions underpin the audit results:

- AMES provides services in female-dominated industries (e.g. education and social services);
- the majority of the workforce is female; and
- AMES workforce remuneration is covered by the AMES Australia Administrative Staff Agreement 2016, the AMES Australia Teachers Agreement 2020, the Educational Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020; and Executive employment contract remuneration structures.

Audit data and People Matter Survey results were analysed and grouped under four key themes which informed the GEAP.



1. Gender profile of workforce

AMES overall workforce gender profile is comprised of women 66%, with women in the majority across all classification levels.

Below is a representation of AMES workforce gender composition across all classification levels.

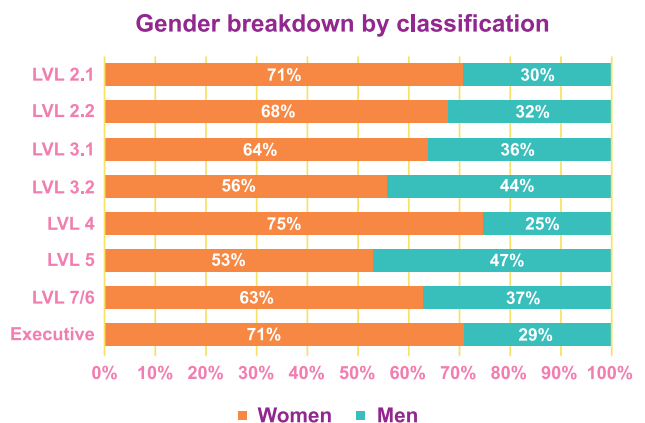


Figure 2: Gender breakdown by classification levels.

- Of 369 employees engaged on a full-time basis, 63% are women.
- Of 74 employees engaged on a part-time basis, 77% are women.
- Of 67 employees engaged on a casual basis, 73% are women.



2. Flexible work arrangements

AMES offers a variety of flexible working arrangements, supporting our workforce. While the audit indicated that 1% of employees had formalised flexible work arrangements, the People Matter Survey results indicated that 45% of respondents reported they used flexible working arrangements.

3. Complaints relating to workplace harassment

There were no complaints of sexual harassment in the reporting period. However, the People Matter Survey results indicated that 1% of respondents reported experiencing incident/s of sexual harassment in the workplace.

4. Recruitment and promotion processes in the workplace

Promotion processes for this reporting period, saw 52 employees appointed for career progression and higher duties opportunities. Of these, 60% were women on higher duties.

Further data insights show a higher percentage of employees working on full time arrangements accessing higher duties 88% in comparison to part time employees of which 8% were considered for career progression or higher duties.

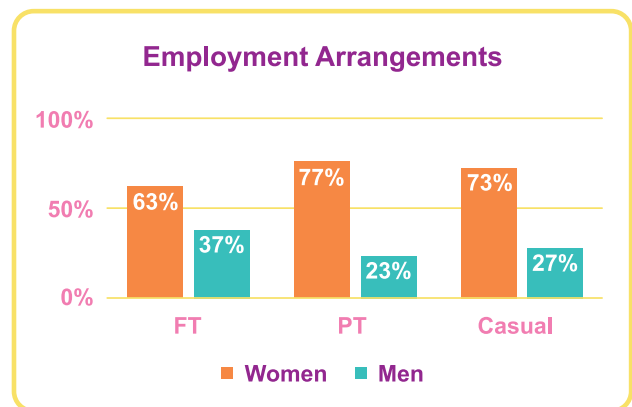


Figure 3 Employment Arrangements by gender

AMES Board comprises a majority of women (56%).

AMES Board Composition

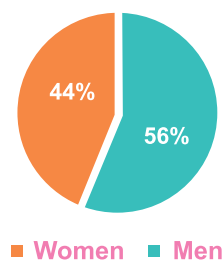


Figure 4 AMES Board Composition by gender



Priorities for AMES GEAP

The data collection and analysis represents a point in time. Accurate and timely data collection and analysis methods will need to evolve and be mainstreamed to align with the requirements of the Act.

Using the findings from the data insights and in consultation with employees and union representatives along with analysing best practice guides to address intersectional gender inequality in the workplace, three priorities with supporting strategies have been developed.

These priorities are:

- > 1. AMES to implement a seamless and meaningful way to collect gender data to positively influence diversity and gender equality across our workforce.
- > 2. AMES to have a workplace culture that promotes gender equality and does not tolerate inappropriate behaviours of sexual harassment and discrimination.
- >3. AMES policies, processes and programs integrate inclusive gender equality practices.

In delivering our plan, the below diagram demonstrates how AMES will realise its commitment to achieve gender equality.

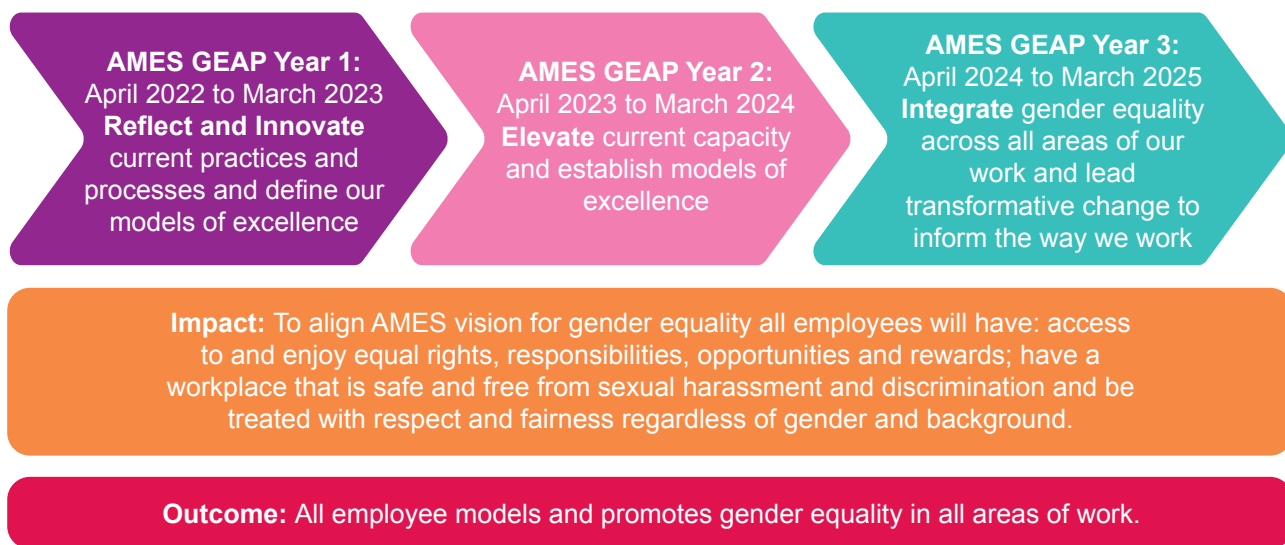


Figure 5: Implementation diagram





AMES AUSTRALIA GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2022 – 2025



Definitions of Responsible Areas referred to in the Tables below:

GEDI: Gender Equality Diversity and Inclusion Working Group(s), **P&D:** People and Development, **PVaW:** Prevention of Violence against Women Unit, **KC:** Knowledge Centre, **M&C:** Marketing and Communications, **A&A:** Accommodation and Administration, **IT:** Information Technology, **SASP:** Settlement, **Emp:** Employment, **Edu:** Education and Social Participation



Priority 1: AMES to implement a seamless and meaningful way to collect gender data to positively influence diversity and gender equality across our workforce.

Workplace gender equality indicator(s)	What we want to achieve (strategy)	What we will do	How we will measure our success	Responsible areas	Timeline
 <p>1 & 2 > Gender composition at all levels of the workforce and governing bodies</p>	An evidence base to inform future actions and our way of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify AMES diversity profile by establishing data collection mechanisms to determine baseline data, monitor and report on the workplace gender equality indicators. Undertake a deeper analysis on the remuneration and gender composition of the workforce data to identify any barriers to equity. 	AMES efficiently and effectively captures the disclosure of intersectionality data to enable AMES to analyse diversity and gender equality data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEDI P&D KC 	Apr 2022 – Mar 2023 (Yr1)
 <p>3 > Gender pay equity</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather data to understand why employees (including potential employees) accept/seek part-time opportunities within AMES. 			Apr 2023 – Mar 2024 (Yr2)


Priority 2: AMES to have a workplace culture that promotes gender equality and does not tolerate inappropriate behaviours of sexual harassment and discrimination.

Workplace gender equality indicator(s)	What we want to achieve (strategy)	What we will do	How we will measure our success	Responsible areas	Timeline
 <p>6 > Utilisation of terms and conditions of employment</p>	<p>Organisational understanding of and engagement with the benefits of a gender inclusive workplace across all of AMES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, and have endorsed by the Executive, an AMES Gender Equality statement that aligns with AMES Vision. • Update all position descriptions to embed an inclusive workplace culture commitment including gender equality. • Review all AMES policies, procedures and communications to ensure inclusive language and images are included. 	<p>Endorsed Gender Equality statement is communicated to all employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEDI • P&D • M&C • KC • IT • PVaW • People Managers 	<p>Apr 2022 – Mar 2023 (Yr1)</p>
 <p>4 > Addressing Workplace Sexual Harassment and Discrimination</p>			<p>All employees including Board Members are fully trained and apply the use of gender equality practices in the workplace.</p>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a communication plan, with support messaging from the CEO and Executive, of zero tolerance for unacceptable behaviours in relation to sexual harassment and discrimination. • Review / develop and communicate a safe inclusive and accessible process for an employee or bystander to report unwanted or offensive behaviour in the workplace, or at work-related social activities, that is timely and action focussed. 			<p>Apr 2023 – Mar 2024 (Yr2)</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional training and resources to employees on gender equality, especially to increase awareness of intersectional factors. 			<p>Apr 2024 – Mar 2025 (Yr3) - Ongoing</p>

Priority 3: AMES policies, processes and programs integrate inclusive gender equality practices

Workplace gender equality indicator(s)	What we want to achieve (strategy)	What we will do	How we will measure our success	Responsible areas	Timeline
 <p>5 > Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace</p>	<p>The way we attract, develop and retain talented employees, is free from gender bias barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review relevant AMES recruitment processes and policies to identify where and why unconscious bias has the potential to occur. Ensure gender equality principles are embedded, support mechanisms are included and clear accessibility to these processes is provided. Extend access to a pool of diverse candidates, review and build partnerships with recruitment agencies and diverse community groups (including disability, LGBTIQ, Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander recruitment groups), universities and other agencies. 	<p>The Recruitment process & policy is reviewed, updated as needed, implemented and communicated ensuring all employees are aware that the process is based on merit and without bias.</p> <p>This process will be monitored through periodic analysis of the merit-based recruitment process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEDI P&D Edu Emp SASP IT People Managers 	<p>Apr 2022 – Mar 2023 (Yr1) - Ongoing</p>
 <p>6 > Utilisation of terms and conditions of employment</p>	<p>Increased awareness of the equitable use of flexible working arrangements and formalised uptake of these arrangements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure user-friendly processes for equitable access to flexible working arrangements. Actively promote opportunities to support part time working arrangements that achieve operational requirements. 	<p>Flexible working arrangements policy is reviewed, implemented and communicated to all employees.</p> <p>Flexible working arrangements requests increase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEDI P&D Edu Emp SASP IT People Managers 	<p>Apr 2022 – Mar 2023 (Yr1)</p> <p>Apr 2023 – Mar 2024 (Yr2)</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and promote Employee Self Service as the central register for capturing all different flexible working arrangements requests and whether they may be related to gender. Provide Managers with understanding as to the benefits and use of flexible working arrangements in line with operational requirements, using real life examples adopting equitable flexible working arrangement practices. 			



Workplace gender equality indicator(s)	What we want to achieve (strategy)	What we will do	How we will measure our success	Responsible areas	Timeline
 6 > Utilisation of terms and conditions of employment (continued)	Ensure equal opportunity of career progression and development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess Performance Planning Review and Development (PPRD) data to identify any potential gender inequalities that may exist within the process. 	PPRD, learning and development and career progression data is collated, analysed and reported to identify any possible inequalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEDI P&D K&C People Managers 	Apr 2022 – Mar 2023 (Yr1) - Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and assess the AMES Australia learning and development opportunities /strategies to identify if gender inequality exist, including to identify whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All employees understand how to develop their skills and experience or attain relevant qualifications to lead to potential career pathways; and Managers actively support and practise equitable career development conversations with their employees. 	<p>People Matter Survey results on employee satisfaction towards learning and development.</p> <p>Employees have access to relevant resources to assist their learning and development.</p> <p>The development of an assessment toolkit for managers and employees to identify the skills and capabilities required for potential career advancement irrespective of gender.</p>		Apr 2023 – Mar 2024 (Yr2)

GOVERNANCE



Monitoring and evaluation of progress

AMES is committed to adopting the GEAP and dedicating the necessary resources to implement, monitor, evaluate and report on the Plan. Operational workforce plans will be supported by the Senior Leadership Group with ongoing monitoring and reviews with the Gender Equality Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Working Group(s) to monitor progress.

Ultimately, all AMES employees will be responsible for engaging with gender equality as implemented in everyday culture, values and practices. Appropriate systems will be put in place to collect relevant data, and to analyse and report on progress. This will support reliable reporting of statistics and commentary

on workforce participation and experience, according to the principles of gender equality and intersectional characteristics, as required under the Gender Equality Act 2020.

Due to the breadth and scope of this plan, specific Gender Equality projects will be selected for evaluation of their process and project outcomes. Evaluation will be based on the following questions:

- Has this project achieved the desired change?
- Is this project having the influence we expected?
- What worked well and what needs improvement?

To build accountability and transparency to drive our GEAP commitments, the following governance will be established.

Strategy	What we will do	How we will measure our success	Responsible areas
Establish and maintain an effective GEAP Working Group to drive the governance of the GEAP.	Form a cross organisational AMES Gender Equality Diversity and Inclusion Working Group which will drive the gender equality action plan.	• AMES Steering Committee and GEAP Working Group operating across all Hubs and Terms of Reference established.	• GEDI • P&D
	Complete and submit progress reports to the Victorian Gender Equality Commissioner.	• Timely submission of progress reports to the Gender Equality Commissioner.	• P&D
		• Mainstream Gender Impact Assessments completed on policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public.	• GEDI • P&D





GLOSSARY: KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Diversity	In the workplace, diversity means having employees from a range of backgrounds. This can include having employees of different ages, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, religious belief, work experience, educational background, and so on.
Gender Equality	Is defined as the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men, trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on, or be effected by, their gender ¹ .
Gender Equity	Entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances ¹ .
Gender	Refers to the way in which a person identifies or expresses their masculine or feminine characteristics. Gender is generally understood as a social and cultural construction. A person's gender identity or gender expression is not always exclusively male or female and may or may not correspond to their sex ² .
Trans and Gender Diverse	Is an umbrella term used to describe all those whose gender identity is at odds with their biological sex ³ .
Intersectionality	Intersectionality acknowledges that everyone has their own unique experiences of inequality which may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion or sexual orientation and other attributes ⁴ .
Workplace gender audit	A workplace gender audit is a review of an organisation's workforce gender data and profile as at 30 June 2021.



References

1. *Victoria State Government, Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy, 2016.*
2. *Australian Human Rights Commission, Addressing sexual orientation and sex and/or gender identity discrimination, 2011.*
3. *TransGender Victoria, Definitions, accessed June 2018*
4. <https://www.ywboston.org/2017/03/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/>

