

VICTORIANombudsman

GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Victorian Ombudsman pays respect to First Nations custodians of Country throughout Victoria. This respect is extended to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge their sovereignty was never ceded.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

OUR VISION

OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

BASELINE AUDIT ANALYSIS

GENDER REPRESENTATION AT ALL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

GENDER PAY EQUITY

WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

RECRUITMENT BY GENDER

LEAVE & FLEXIBILITY

GENDER SEGREGATION

MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

CONSULTATION PROCESS

CASE FOR CHANGE

STRATEGIES AND MEASURES / MEASURING PROGRESS

LEADERSHIP AND RESOURCING THE GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

MESSAGE FROM THE VICTORIAN OMBUDSMAN

I'm delighted to present our first Gender Equality Action Plan: gender equality being a longstanding personal passion and commitment of mine. Some may wonder why the Victorian Ombudsman needs such a plan, given the unusually strong female representation in the top tiers of the office, but we must remember that gender equality is something we can never take for granted. Nor is it only about female representation in the workplace, It is about improving representation across all genders, cultures and preferences with an intersectional lens.

So while I am immensely proud of the work the office has already done to promote and lead by example on gender equality, I know we can do more, and this plan sets it out.

My vision for the office is to ensure fairness for all in their dealings with the public sector and to improve public administration; that vision of fairness is also a vision of equality. At every level, so many countries and organisations have a long way to go to achieve true equality, but every step towards equality counts. I want my office to be a shining beacon of equality; to demonstrate by actions that equality matters.

Like every vision of equality, every aspiration, this is a journey that never ends.

Deborah Glass
Victorian Ombudsman

OUR VISION

The Victorian Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament.

The purpose of our office is to ensure fairness for all in their dealings with the public sector and to improve public administration. We do not advocate for members of the public or authorities. We form opinions based on evidence and operate in accordance with the Ombudsman Act 1973 (Vic).

Our day-to-day work involves:

- taking complaints from the public about actions and decisions of state government departments, bodies established by legislation (e.g. WorkSafe, VicRoads), local councils and some private organisations acting on behalf of those bodies.
- making enquiries and resolving complaints informally or by conciliation where possible
- investigating when needed and making recommendations for change
- examining systemic problems in public administration
- reviewing complaint handling by public bodies
- conducting training, and encouraging improvement in public administration and complaint handling by authorities
- receiving and investigating public interest disclosures about the conduct of the above authorities under the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 (Vic).

OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Our Vision

To ensure fairness for Victorians in their dealings with the public sector and to improve public administration.

Our Intent

Ensure Fairness

- ensuring fairness through independent and impartial complaint resolution
- encouraging fair and reasonable decision making within the public sector

Enhance integrity and accountability

- enhancing accountability by independently investigating serious matters
- reporting on improper conduct and poor administration

Support innovation and improvement

- supporting innovation and continuous improvement methods to assist public organisations in learning from complaints and investigations
- investigating systemic issues and identifying solutions

Protect Human Rights

- protecting human rights by investigating whether an action or decision is incompatible with human rights
- making it easier for vulnerable people to complain.



LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires defined entities such as the Victorian Ombudsman to address its obligations to promote gender equality in the workplace, consider gender equality when developing policies and programs and delivering services that impact the public.

The Victorian Ombudsman will deliver its 2021-2025 action plan through continuous improvement initiatives. This extends to:

- policies and procedures that ensures gender equality is a recognised prerequisite in all planning functions
- conducting gender impact assessments, and
- reporting to the Gender Equality Commission every two years.

BASELINE AUDIT ANALYSIS

The Victorian Ombudsman's gender analysis and findings are based on a workplace gender audit submitted in accordance with The Gender Equality Act 2020 for the reporting period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

It also comprises data attained through the People Matter Survey 2021 and the Intersectionality Report 2021.

The Victorian Ombudsman's analysis covers the seven indicators identified to form the broader action plan. The below summary is an overview on the findings based on the analysis guidance provided by the Commission.

The data comprises of:

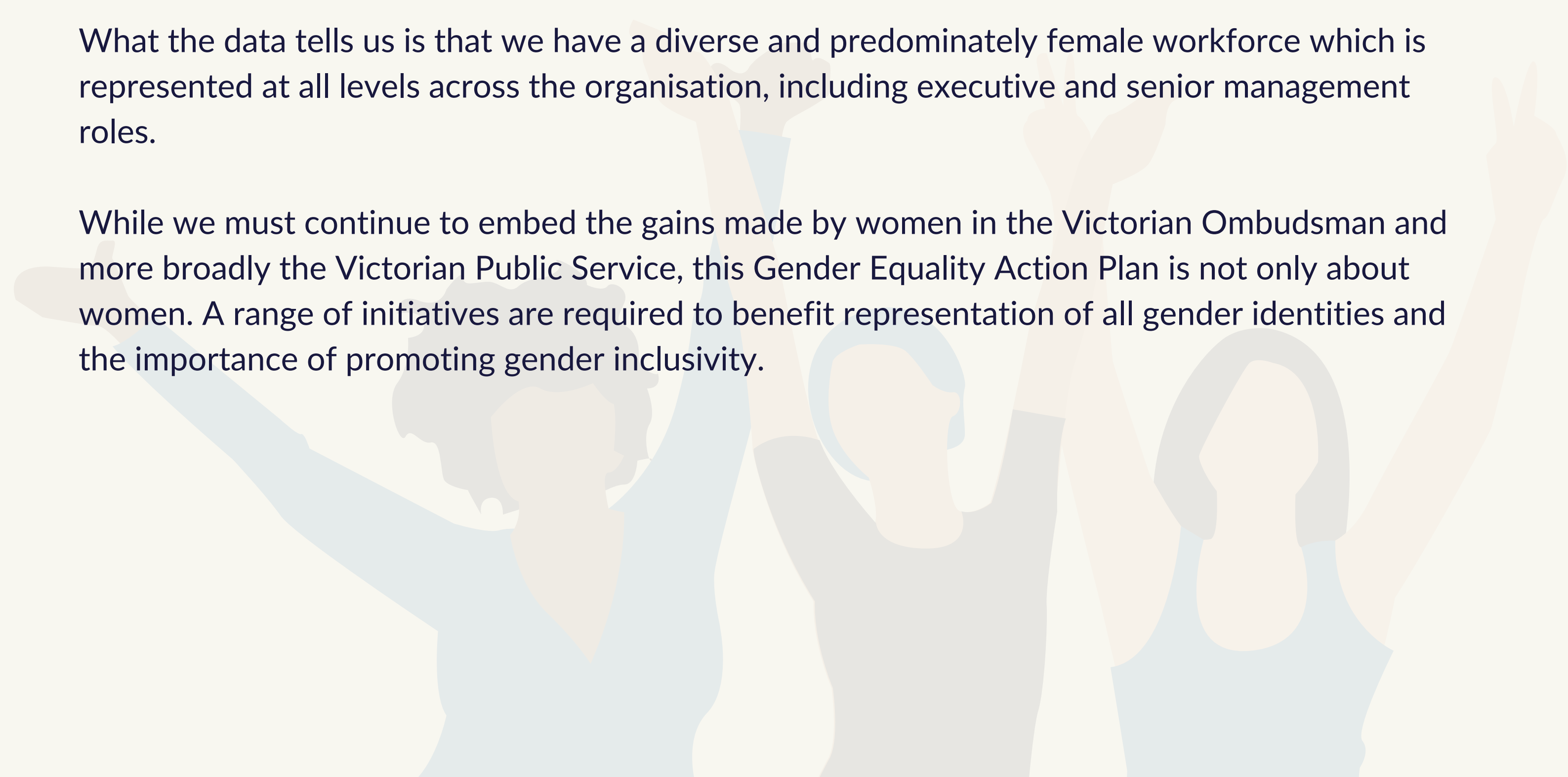
- 114 Employees between 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 (collated from internal payroll/HR systems)
- 84 employees who participated in the People Matter Survey 2021 and Intersectionality Report 2021

Insights and analysis have been conducted in accordance with the Commissions guidance and where applicable and appropriate the Intersectionality Report 2021 has been applied to support more targeted analysis.

The Victorian Ombudsman's workplace gender audit results provided key insights into our people's perception of gender equality and the positive interactions and environment that the Victorian Ombudsman continues to deliver, to ensure we provide a fair and inclusive environment for all genders and cultures.

What the data tells us is that we have a diverse and predominately female workforce which is represented at all levels across the organisation, including executive and senior management roles.

While we must continue to embed the gains made by women in the Victorian Ombudsman and more broadly the Victorian Public Service, this Gender Equality Action Plan is not only about women. A range of initiatives are required to benefit representation of all gender identities and the importance of promoting gender inclusivity.



GENDER REPRESENTATION AT ALL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Source: Gender Audit Analysis



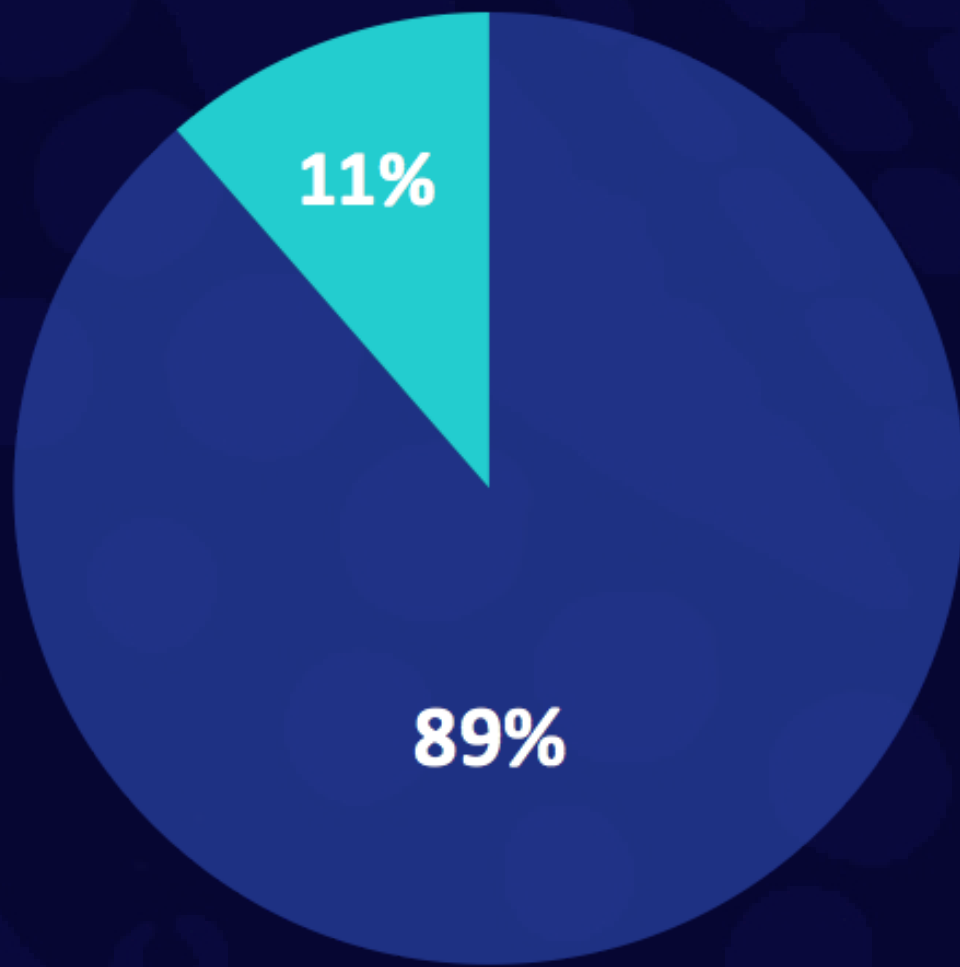
114 FTE



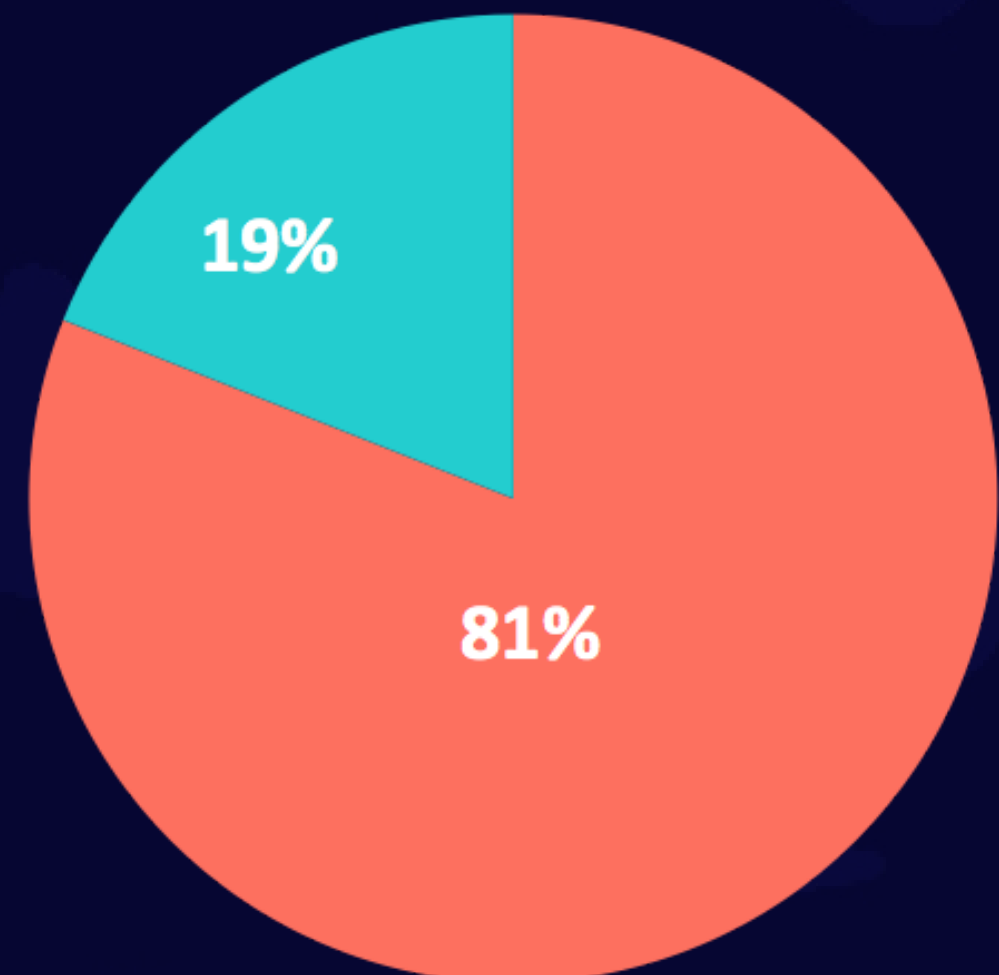
30.7% MALE



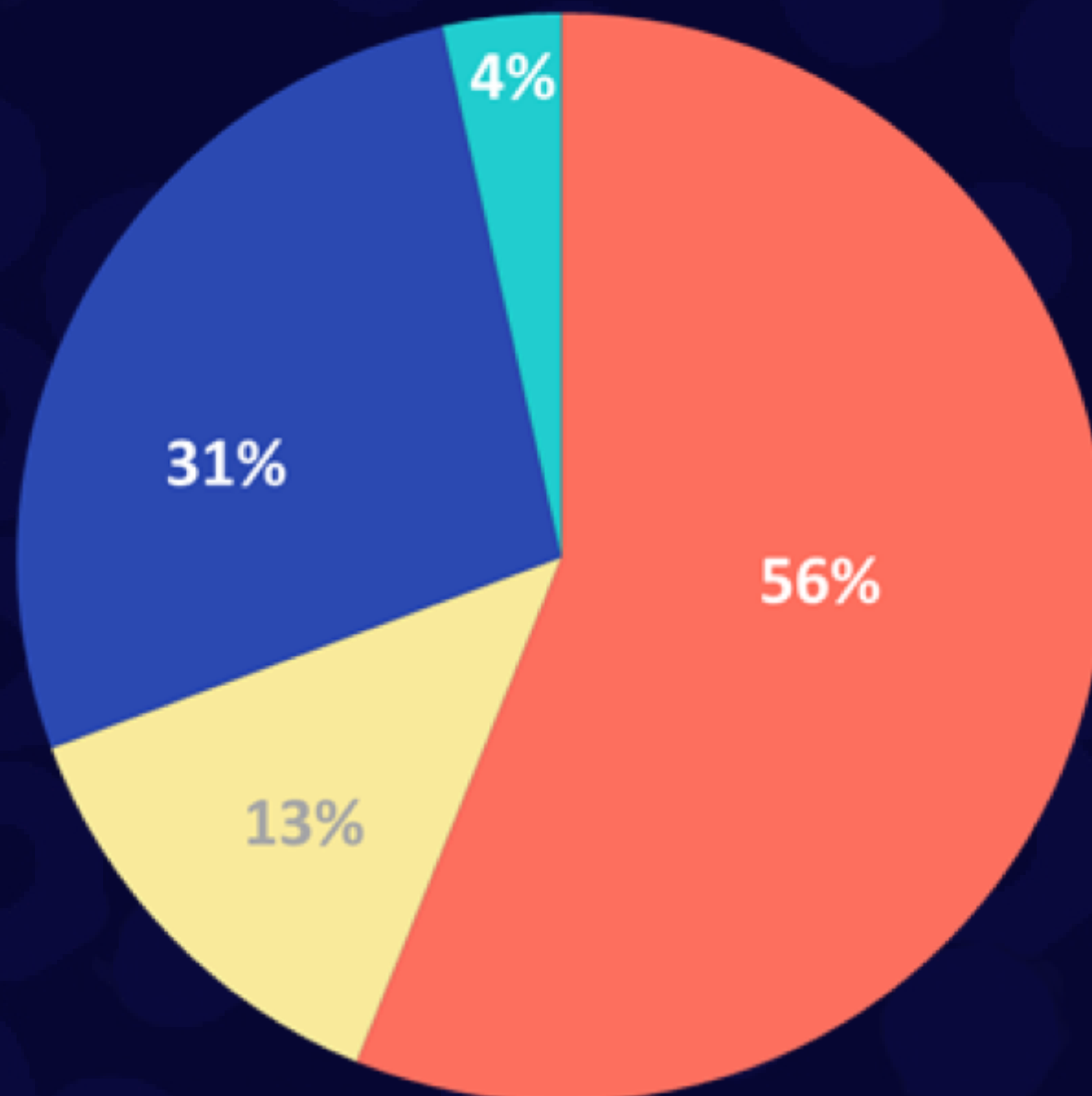
69.3% FEMALE



■ Male FT ■ Male PT



■ Female FT ■ Female PT



■ Female FT ■ Female PT
■ Male FT ■ Male PT

VO '21

COMPARATOR AVG.

There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees of different sexes/genders

92%

81%

GENDER PAY EQUITY

The gender pay gap is the difference between male and female employees' average median total remuneration across all levels and occupations, expressed as a percentage of male earnings.

One of the key findings of the analysis highlighted that females average median total remuneration across all levels and occupations is 7.5% less than men.

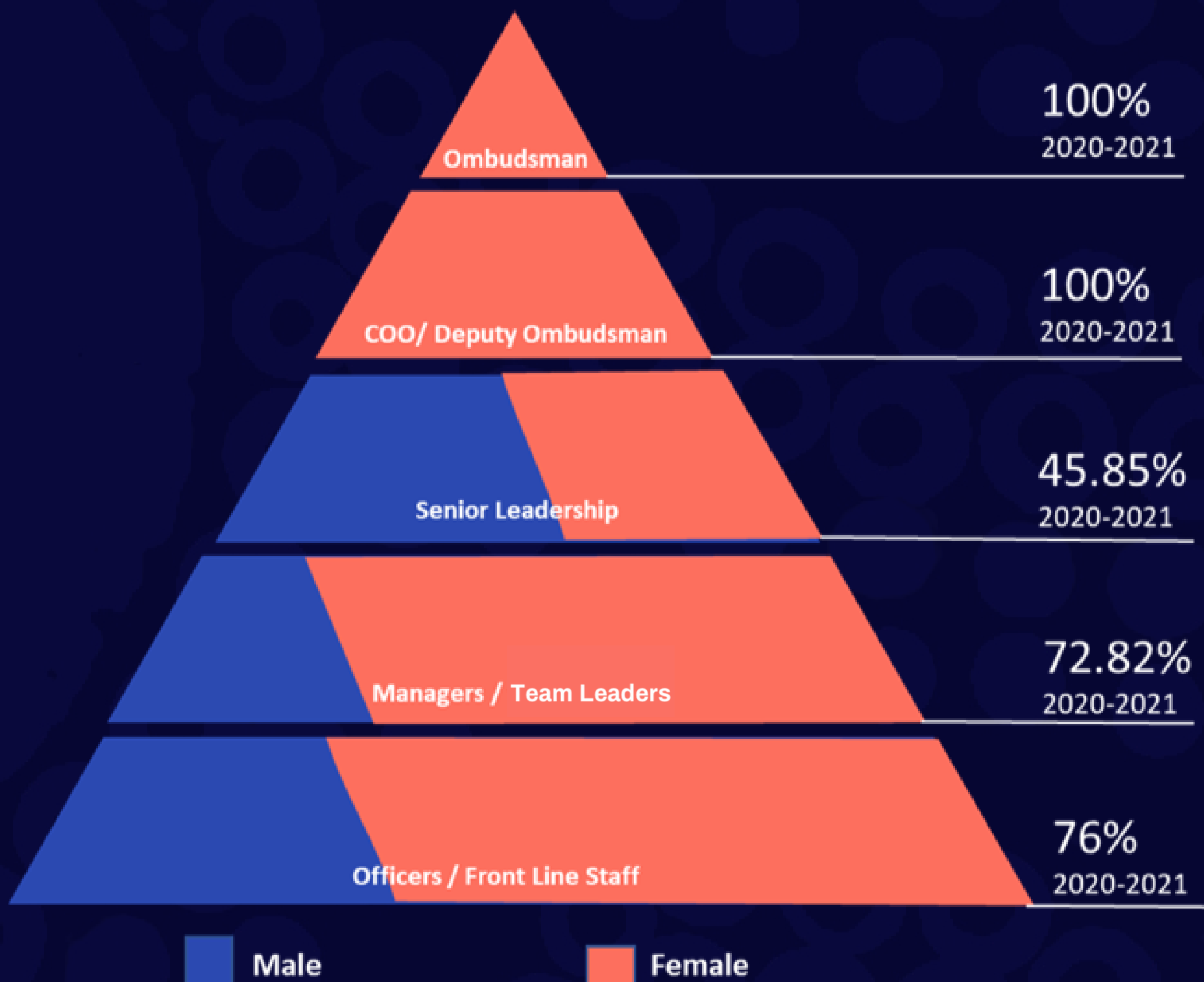
This insight has led to actions being undertaken to ensure that we promote pay parity across all genders at the Victorian Ombudsman.



Source: SAP

	VO '21	NATIONAL AVG.	PUBLIC SECTOR	VPS
Gender Pay Gap comparison	7.5%	14.2%	9%	2%

Workforce Composition by Classification Level



Source: Gender Audit Analysis

WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Victorian Ombudsman strongly supports the implementation of recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission Respect@Work report, and the subsequent government roadmap for preventing and addressing sexual harassment.

The Victorian Ombudsman supports meaningful cultural change in Australian workplaces.

<https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/publications/roadmap-for-respect>

	VO '21	COMPARATOR AVG.
Percentage of survey respondents in the organisation who experienced sexual harassment	2%	3%

Source: Gender Audit Analysis

There were 0 formal sexual harassment complaints made as of June 30 2021

	VO '21	COMPARATOR AVG.
My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours	96%	84%
My organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment and discrimination	76%	67%
I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work	80%	67%
My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours	96%	84%

Source: Gender Audit Analysis

Creating a trusted environment may assist in calling out and reporting harassment and bullying. This supports the Victorian Ombudsman's zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination in the workplace.

The Victorian Ombudsman is cognisant that during most of the reporting period the workforce had been working remotely due to the onset of COVID-19. It will be part of our ongoing continuous improvement initiatives to ensure that, as we start to reintroduce the workforce back the office, those policies and standards are continually communicated to staff.

RECRUITMENT BY GENDER

Recruitment by Gender



65% Female

35% Male

Exits by Gender



83% Female

17% Male

Higher Duties by Gender



70% Female

30% Male

Flexible Work Arrangements



15% Female

3% Male

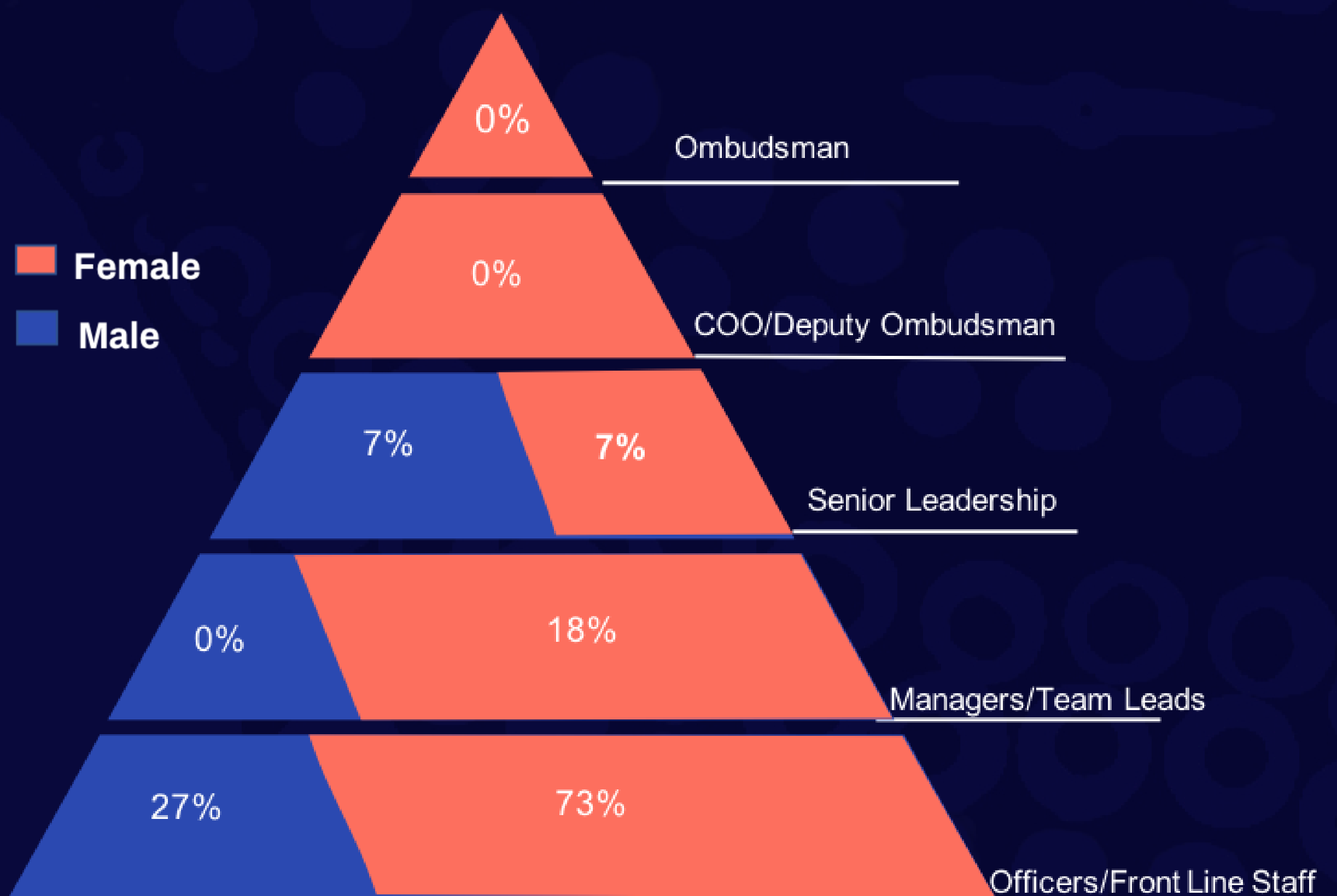
LEAVE & FLEXIBILITY

Flexible working is about rethinking the where, when, and how work can be done; in a way that maintains or improves business outcomes.

It can improve employee engagement and commitment in the workforce, increase productivity, help attract and retain talent across diverse workforce demographics, foster a sense of teamwork among employees (which can improve customer service), and can enable new business models with broader benefits to customers and society more generally.

With the onset of COVID-19, the office has moved to a hybrid model of three days in the office and two days remote working. This applies to all staff and is in addition to those with pre existing flexible work arrangements. This model is to continue as we commence 'return to work' processes

Proportion of the workforce using formal flexible working arrangements, by gender and level.



Source: SAP

GENDER SEGREGATION

Based on the ANZSCO code hierarchy, most employees (inclusive of gender) fall within the sub major group of clerical and administrative, with manager and support professionals rounding out the top three.

The type of work conducted at the Victorian Ombudsman does not translate directly to the STEM capabilities. It is important to note that in the areas of both technology and mathematics, specifically finance and data analytics, the gender balance is in favour of females.

GENDER COMPOSITION OF KEY GROUPS AT MORE DETAILED LEVELS OF THE ANZSCO CODE HIERARCHY



Source: Gender Audit

MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The People Matter Survey was completed, made available and consulted with staff in November 2021. 84 responses were received.

In December 2021, several focus workshops were provided to all staff to attend and discuss opportunities for improvement, based on People Matter Survey data. The Workforce Gender Audit was undertaken and submitted to the Commission on December 1, 2021

The Victorian Ombudsman conducted a deep dive analysis across the Gender Audit, the People Matter Survey and the Intersectionality Report data, and compiled a full analysis across all seven indicators (as set out by the Commission).

Once analysis was reviewed by the Executive, a process of broader consultation with Victorian Ombudsman staff at all levels commenced, with stakeholder engagement activities such as staff newsletters, surveys, and a dedicated landing page on the intranet providing information about our results and proposed actions.

CONSULTATION PROCESS



February/March 2022	All VO Staff	Provided overview of analysis & conducted anonymous survey, requesting key responses to pre-defined questions relating to proposed GEAP
March	All VO Staff	Reviewed survey findings and provided overview of data and feedback to all staff
March	Executive	Executive reviewed and approved process
March	CPSU	Provided overview of findings and approved GEAP to CPSU
31 March 2022	Commission	Submit GEAP to Commission via portal

The Victorian Ombudsman has been proactively involved in attending Diversity and Inclusion workgroups dedicated to looking at Gender Equality across the Victorian Public Sector.

CASE FOR CHANGE

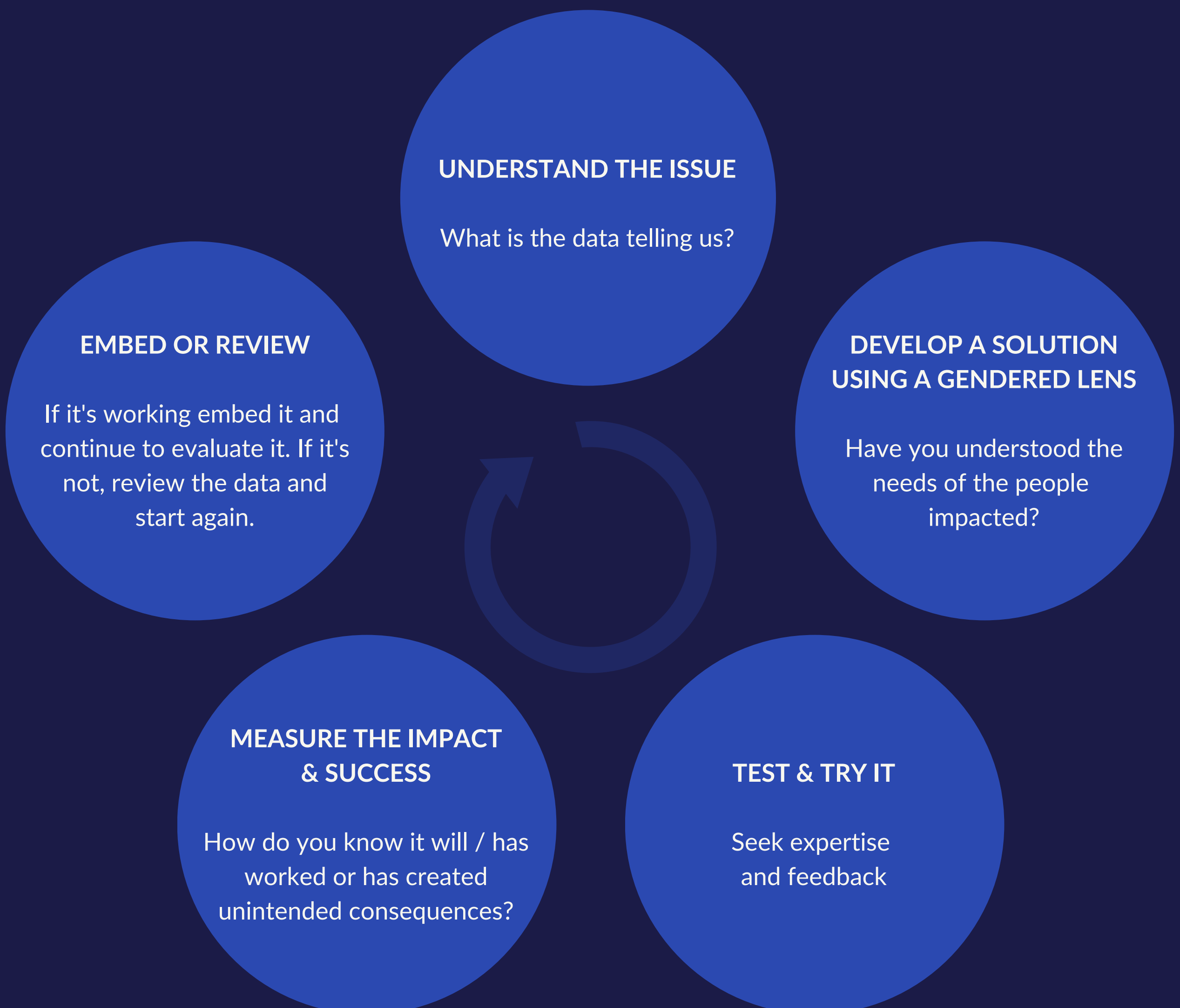
This Gender Equality Action Plan encourages all minimum standards and action areas to be implemented; acknowledging that the Victorian Ombudsman will decide what actions are most relevant for the organisation to focus on implementing, maintaining, and continuously improving.

To ensure meaningful actions and outcomes for gender equality, the Victorian Ombudsman will continue to evolve and improve existing processes and standards as part of its core action plan for 2021-2025.

To ensure this Gender Equality Action Plan and its proposed initiatives are truly inclusive, the Victorian Ombudsman will consider gender identity and other identity dimensions including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, age, cultural and linguistic background, disability, and sexuality, in order to reduce the impact of compounding disadvantage.

The model below is a useful approach to assist the Victorian Ombudsman with implementation. Underlying this is communicating gender with engagement and empathy.

It's complex and not binary.



STRATEGIES AND MEASURES / MEASURING PROGRESS

GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN VISION & OBJECTIVES

The Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025 (GEAP) and objectives builds upon the Victorian Ombudsman Strategic Framework 2024, with its vision to “provide fairness for all Victorians”.

INDICATORS

- 1 Gender composition of all levels of the workforce
- 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 Sexual harassment in the workplace
- 5 Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace
- 6 Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities
- 7 Gendered segregation within the workplace



VISION

STRATEGIC

Fairness for Victorians in public administration | Improved public administration

GEAP

Our workplace provides a fair and inclusive work environment for all genders and cultures to participate

RELEVANCE

IMPACT

QUALITY

INNOVATION

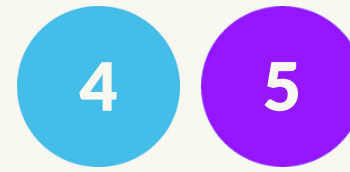
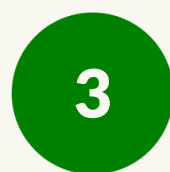
GEAP STRATEGY AREAS

LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

SHIFTING GENDER STEREOTYPES

EMPOWERED PEOPLE

DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING



Monitor and enhance the current gender diversity levels at the VO

Promote pay parity within the VO across all genders

Maintain a zero tolerance towards sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination in the workplace

Support gender retention and intersectionality

Increase gender and intersectionality awareness and support

ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION

The GEAP will form part of our annual strategic planning and will deliver annual updates of progress, which will form part of our Annual Report which is tabled in Parliament each year

PROGRESS REPORTING

To promote the importance of gender equality, the Victorian Ombudsman will track and measure progress, reporting to:

- The organisation annually, as part of the People Matter Survey review and engagement sessions
- To our employees via a dedicated landing page on our staff intranet
- Our Annual Report publication, communicating key findings and initiatives currently in place or underway
- The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, every two years

INDICATORS	STRATEGY	MEASURE / ACTION	CURRENT SUPPORTING INITIATIVES
<p>1 2</p> <p>4 5</p> <p>6</p>	<p>RELEVANCE</p> <p>✓</p> <p>LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY</p>	<p>Monitor and continuously improve gender composition at all levels of the Victorian Ombudsman. This will be achieved through reviewing processes and procedures that ensure alignment with human rights and equal employment opportunities legislation.</p> <p>Continued analysis of the gender ratio as part of the annual People Matter Survey and intersectional data to draw meaningful and fit for purpose improvements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining gender balance across all strategic committees, recruitment panels and additional voluntary roles across the office (i.e., peer support workers, HSR's, first aid volunteers etc.) • Continued targeted training and mentoring programs for all genders and intersectional groups at all levels across the organisation. • Maintaining partnerships for new career pathways through the Victorian Ombudsman intern program for all genders and intersectional groups • Continued communication and consideration for flexible work arrangements for all staff based on personal circumstances and role/team requirements • Maintain competitive merit-based recruitment processes for all opportunities (including short term and ongoing roles) • Continue to capture and review resignation reasons via exit interviews and look to improve areas highlighted by the analysis
<p>3</p>	<p>IMPACT</p> <p>✓</p> <p>SHIFTING GENDER STEREOTYPES</p>	<p>Maintain annual gender pay equity review as part of our GEAP and seek to identify where gaps exist, the reason for the gaps, and actions to address.</p> <p>Taking into consideration organisational size, budget and resources, this initiative will be an annual process across the lifecycle of the action plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to consider & offer salary increments within a VPS band based on candidate's skills/experience and salary/work of peers in similar roles across the organisation at the time of the employment offer (i.e., not defaulting to the VPS precedent of joining new starters at the base salary of a VPS classification) • Annual pay gap and classification review as part of gender and budget process, with guidance from P&C • Targeted pay parity review at level VPS 3 and VPS 4 level, where pay gap is most prominent • Continue to capture resignation reasoning via exit interviews and ensure questions use gender neutral language relating to pay to support necessary insights

INDICATORS	STRATEGY	MEASURE / ACTION	CURRENT SUPPORTING INITIATIVES
------------	----------	------------------	--------------------------------

- 4
- 5

QUALITY



EMPOWERED PEOPLE

Maintain and continuously improve policies and processes to ensure employees feel safe in the workplace and are confident to report unwanted or offensive behaviour without fear of reprisals.

Maintain and continuously improve exit interview processes to gain insights to support gender retention.

- Continued review of Victorian Ombudsman policies to ensure alignment to human rights and employee equal opportunity legislation
- Continued review and updates as required of recruitment and departure policies and processes, to leverage necessary insights
- Commence refresher workplace behaviour training via LMS for all staff as we transition back to the office
- Continue to up-skill our managers and leaders to manage and encourage greater formal reporting of any potential sexual harassment, bullying or discrimination issues via the IMS platform and respond to these matters accordingly
- Continue to capture resignation reasoning via exit interviews and add gender neutral questions to draw out whether career progression was a factor in a resignation

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

INNOVATION



DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Maintain and leverage existing and new data to best support gender diversity.

- Maintain and increase data capabilities to promote more diverse analysis that supports internal and external gender and demographic strategic planning
- Maintain dedicated gender equality landing page on the Victorian Ombudsman intranet with updates, posts and news articles on related training, commission updates and overall progress of the works undertaken by the Victorian Ombudsman

LEADERSHIP AND RESOURCING THE GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

The Victorian Ombudsman is committed to adopting the Gender Equality Action Plan.

As a relatively small integrity organisation, the Victorian Ombudsman will look to utilise existing resources to implement, monitor, evaluate and report on the plan.

Strategic annual plans will be developed by the leadership group, monitoring and reviewing gender equality specific initiatives ongoingly.

Ultimately, all staff will promote the Gender Equality Action Plan in everyday culture, values and practices. Appropriate processes are in place to collect and report on the level of data required to measure progress. This will ensure reliable reporting of statistics and commentary on workforce participation and experience, according to the principles of gender equality and intersectional characteristics, required under the Gender Equality Act 2020.

Training, development, and awareness activities are an effective way to engage our employees to develop skills, aptitude and capabilities in the areas of gender equality, diversity and inclusion whilst creating a culturally safe organisation. We encourage all employees to join in and get involved.

Our employee capability framework ensures that the culture, environment, career opportunities and employee benefits supports our goal to attract, develop and retain an inclusive, high-performing and engaged workforce.



VICTORIANombudsman