

A photograph of two women in industrial workwear at a manufacturing site. They are wearing orange high-visibility shirts with reflective stripes, white hard hats with 'VIVA' logos, and safety glasses. One woman is holding a tool. The background shows industrial structures under a clear blue sky. A large dark blue diagonal shape is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text.

# Making it equal

Victoria's women in  
manufacturing strategy

**To receive this document in another format,  
email: [women.victoria@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:women.victoria@dffh.vic.gov.au).**

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The photographs in this document show women working and learning in Victorian manufacturing workplaces and learning environments.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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# Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live, work and learn, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We recognise that self-determination is the vital guiding principle for all Victorian Government actions to address past injustices and to create a shared future based on Aboriginal sovereignty.

## Treaty and Truth-telling in Victoria

This strategy has been developed in 'good faith' and incorporates sufficient flexibility and adaptability so that it neither pre-empts nor impedes any agreement making under the Victorian Treaty process. The strategy is open to future revision as part of Treaty-making.

## Language statement

Language is important and can change over time. Words can have different meanings for different people.

We acknowledge that our approach to gender equality must always include trans and gender diverse people. We celebrate the critical role of trans and gender diverse people in the fight for gender equality. A person's gender is their own concept of who they are and how they interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being a man or woman. Some people understand their gender as a combination of these or neither. A person's gender may or may not exclusively correspond with their assigned sex at birth.

When we say women, that word always includes trans women and sistersgirls.

Some data and research in this document is limited to the gender binary of men and women, in particular cisgendered and heterosexual men and women. For example, the 2021 Census did not have a question on gender, and presented its data on sex as male and female only.

Available data does not always account for the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) people. We acknowledge that there is more work to do to improve intersectional data collection and use across the Victorian Government.

Please note that some names in this strategy have been changed.

## Thank you

The Victorian Government thanks everyone in the community who shared their time, expertise and experiences with us to develop this strategy. We held more than 150 meetings with a range of different stakeholders who generously contributed their knowledge and insights, including:

- industry associations
- unions
- employers
- women's organisations
- gender equality experts.

Special thanks to the women working in manufacturing who generously shared their experiences as part of the case study series, provided quotes, and suggested ways that gender equality could be improved in their workplaces. Your input will support the next generation of women to thrive in manufacturing. Our work is deeply strengthened by your contributions.



## Message from the Minister

**Building on our nation-leading progress on gender equality, I am proud to present *Making it equal: Victoria's women in manufacturing strategy*.**

For far too long, outdated norms and stereotypes have steered girls and boys down limited career pathways. This has resulted in many roles and sectors overwhelmingly dominated by either men or women. This means women are often locked out of secure, high-paid jobs or may not pursue roles that align with their skills and interests.

But we are proud to be creating a state where women can thrive in any job or industry we choose. On the shop floor and around the decision-making table.

This strategy is the next big step to open up meaningful opportunities for women in historically male-dominated industries. In particular, we want to support women in leadership, STEM, technical and trades roles in the manufacturing sector where women continue to be severely underrepresented.

*Making it equal* was developed in response to the *Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women* and supports our work under *Our equal state: Victoria's gender equality strategy and action plan 2023-27*. It outlines the action needed from all parts of the manufacturing industry to break down the barriers to women's participation.

For women to enter, stay and lead in the manufacturing sector in larger numbers, we must make sure pathways are appealing and accessible, workplaces are safe and equitable, and people of all genders have fair and flexible opportunities to participate and thrive.

Taking these opportunities to build a more diverse workforce will give Victorian manufacturing the edge it needs to be innovative, internationally competitive, and resilient to skills shortages.

In preparing this strategy, I have been inspired by the wide range of stakeholders who have come forward to support this work. This includes industry, unions, education and training, and gender equality sectors. Your leadership and expertise have been invaluable, and your ongoing collaboration will be critical to the success of the strategy. Thank you for contributions so far.

I am excited to work in partnership to build a future-fit and gender equitable manufacturing sector in Victoria.



**The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP**  
Minister for Women  
Minister for Jobs and Industry  
Minister for Treaty and First Peoples



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# Victoria's women in manufacturing strategy – at a glance

## Our vision

A thriving Victorian manufacturing sector that upholds human rights, where people of all genders are safe, respected and have equitable access to opportunities.



## What is needed



### Clear and appealing career pathways

More awareness of the varied and secure career opportunities in manufacturing

Manufacturing subjects presented in an accessible and appealing way

Communities and role models work together to identify and dispel gender stereotypes about manufacturing jobs

Safe spaces for girls and women to try non-traditional subjects

Inclusive and open-minded recruitment processes



### Access to education and training

Incentives for women to access education and training opportunities, particularly for mature-aged women

Training environments that support the needs of a diverse range of women

Opportunities for women to reskill, upskill, and transition into the industry



### Support for economic equity and leadership opportunities

More flexible work options for people with caring responsibilities

Appropriate facilities and equipment for women

Wraparound supports for women's career progression

Re-thinking what – and who – makes a good leader

Additional and targeted support for women to remove systemic barriers to participation and advancement



### Accountability for workplace safety, culture, diversity and wellbeing

Safe workplaces that meet legal obligations

Employers striving for greater inclusivity through workplace policies and practices

Male leaders stepping up to drive positive workplace culture

Boards and governing bodies that understand the value of boosting women's participation at all levels

Progress towards equal representation in leadership



## Signs of success

There are appealing, diverse and accessible career pathways for women in manufacturing

More women enter and thrive in leadership, STEM, technical and trade manufacturing roles

Gender pay gaps in manufacturing are reduced or closed

The manufacturing workforce is less gender segregated

Manufacturing workplaces are safer, more accessible and flexible for all genders



## About this strategy

***Making it equal: Victoria's women in manufacturing strategy* is about increasing the participation and equity of women and gender diverse people in this important industry. In particular, it focuses on leadership, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), technical and trades jobs.**

This strategy outlines:

- what gender equity looks like in practice
- how to address barriers to women's participation
- how to attract, recruit, retain and support women to thrive in Victoria's manufacturing workforce.

### **This strategy builds on Victoria's leadership in advancing gender equality**

Victoria is a leader in gender equality.

In 2016, the Victorian Government released *Safe and Strong 2016–2021*, the state's first gender equality strategy. Victoria then introduced the *Gender Equality Act 2020* – the first of its kind in Australia. This was followed by an updated gender equality strategy and action plan in 2023, *Our equal state: Victoria's gender equality strategy and action plan 2023–2027*. *Our equal state* is a roadmap for Victoria's investment in gender equality and includes 110 actions across government.

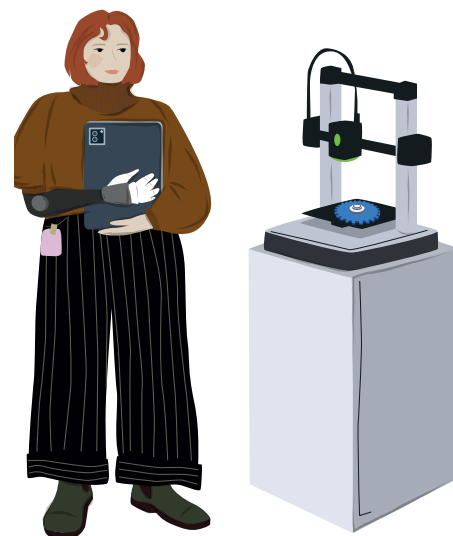
In 2019, the Victorian Government released *Building Gender Equality: Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy 2019–2022*. This was followed by the *Women in Transport Strategy 2021–24* in 2021.

In 2021, the Victorian Government set up the *Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women* (the Inquiry).<sup>1</sup> A key focus of the Inquiry was **workforce gender segregation**. In other words, the proportion of women and men is not equal in some industries and job types. For example, women hold most of the jobs in the care economy, many of which are low-paid and insecure. On the other hand, women are underrepresented in industries

like manufacturing, especially in the higher-paid leadership, technical and trades jobs.

Gender segregation is a key reason why women earn less than men on average and are less financially secure. Gender segregation in industries and jobs accounts for around 24% of the gender pay gap.<sup>2</sup>

**Some progress has been made in recent years to increase the number of women in manufacturing and other majority-men sectors. However, there is still more work to do. This strategy is a response to the Inquiry and shows the Victorian Government's strong commitment to ensuring women can take part freely and fairly in any job or industry they choose.**





## Demystifying the vocabulary: Equality, equity, intersectionality, diversity and inclusion

Gender **equality** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men and gender diverse people. It relates to the need to reform the way our society works to improve outcomes for people of all genders. Equality does not mean that women, men, trans and gender diverse people become the same. It means that rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on gender.

Gender **equity** means there is fairness and justice in distributing benefits and responsibilities regardless of gender. The concept recognises that:

- people may have different needs and power related to their gender
- these differences should be identified and addressed to fix gender-related imbalance.

For this strategy, the term 'gender equity' includes gender equality.

By taking an **intersectional approach**, we acknowledge that people's experiences, identities and backgrounds may affect participation. For example, barriers to work may be made worse for women facing other forms of disadvantage or discrimination. This may be based on:

- age
- race
- ethnicity
- disability
- sexual orientation
- income
- if they live in regional or rural areas
- if they are single parents.

To be intersectional, we must give such factors targeted consideration.

Gender equity is one aspect of diversity and inclusion.

**Diversity** is recognising, respecting and valuing differences based on:

- ethnicity
- gender
- age
- sexual orientation.
- race
- religion
- disability

**Inclusion** is when people:

- feel – and are – valued and respected
- have opportunities and resources to fulfil their potential
- have a sense of belonging.



## Causes of gender imbalance in the labour force

One of the primary drivers of gender segregation in the workforce is **stereotypes**. These are false or oversimplified beliefs and ideas about certain groups of people.

Outdated stereotypes about what jobs women and men should do can influence people's career decisions and perceptions from a young age.<sup>3</sup> These stereotypes can also apply to the types of tasks men and women do at home. People may unconsciously favour certain skills and career pathways because of these stereotypes. They may also avoid certain jobs or education options without trying or even considering them.

**Structural barriers** are elements of institutions and systems that limit participation or equity for certain people. These barriers can make it difficult for women in majority-men industries to stay employed. Barriers that can force women to leave include:

- inflexible working arrangements
- a lack of appropriate facilities
- no paid parental leave
- gender discrimination, sexism and sexual harassment due to outdated attitudes
- poor culture or work environment.

## How this strategy can help manufacturers address skills shortages

Many Victorian manufacturers are currently struggling to find enough people with the right skills. This includes engineers, welders, fabricators and fitters.<sup>4</sup> These are the skills that are needed to help Victorian manufacturers advance and compete on a world stage.

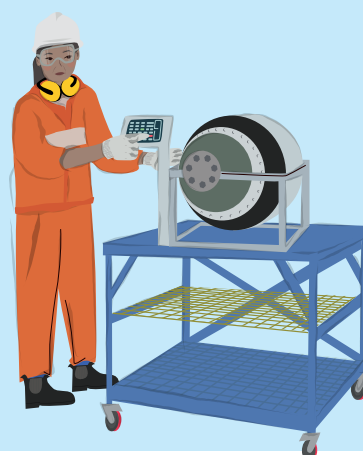
The Victorian Skills Authority estimates that 24,800 new workers will enter the Victorian manufacturing sector between 2023 and 2026.<sup>5</sup>

Women continue to be an untapped resource for this sector. Leveraging their skill and talent will make a significant contribution to the growth and advancement of manufacturing in Victoria. It will also help build resilience against future skills shortages.

Skills gaps are more common in gender-segregated industries like manufacturing.<sup>6</sup> This is why targeted initiatives such as this strategy are so important.

There is a significant opportunity for government and industry to work together in partnership to address barriers that prevent women from entering, staying and leading in manufacturing workplaces.

This strategy aims to support women to thrive in a range of roles where women have been historically underrepresented in the manufacturing industry.



## Why manufacturing?

The manufacturing industry is critical to Victoria's economy. It is a major employer, export earner and driver of new technology and innovation.

Yet the economic benefits of this thriving sector are not evenly shared across genders.

Women are currently around one-third of the Victorian manufacturing workforce.<sup>7</sup> However, roles in the industry are highly gender segregated. Across Australia, women make up:


- 69% of administration and clerical roles in manufacturing
- 26% of managerial positions
- 11% of technical and trades jobs.<sup>8</sup>

As an increasingly advanced sector, Victorian manufacturing offers the possibility of exciting, varied and secure careers for everybody. There is significant potential for women to share in the benefits as advanced manufacturing in Victoria goes from strength to strength.

**Addressing the barriers that prevent women being part of manufacturing will not only help close the gender pay gap and improve outcomes for Victorian women. It will also help manufacturers respond to skills shortages and boost productivity.**

Helping more women to join and thrive in the sector will also bring other benefits for businesses and the economy. One study found that companies with greater gender diversity in their boards were 28% more likely to outperform their peers.<sup>9</sup>

Everyone has a role to play to advance gender equality in manufacturing. This includes government, employers, unions, education and training providers, women's organisations and gender equity leaders.



**This strategy aims to bring this work together as a tool for everyone to use. It is the first step towards an ambitious long-term goal of at least 40% women in both the industry and in leadership positions.**





**'At the moment, [many women] can either choose part time or fulltime. If they want to do kids drop off and pick up, they have to do part time. Part time isn't enough money but they just have to do it.'**

**Vinii, Organiser**



# Victoria's manufacturing industry

## Overview

### What is manufacturing?

The manufacturing industry includes all businesses (except agriculture and construction) that physically or chemically transform materials, substances or components into new products.<sup>10</sup>

Historically, manufacturing involved conventional, process-intensive assembly and production.

Today, manufacturers are increasingly digital, agile and connected internationally. This is mainly due to technological advances, growing global trade, more complex supply chains and changing consumer preferences.

### Manufacturing is an important part of Victoria's economy

Manufacturing is vital to the Victorian economy. It creates \$33.5 billion in gross value added each year.<sup>11</sup> Manufacturing employs over 260,000 people<sup>12</sup> across nearly 24,000 businesses.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of manufacturers in Victoria are small- to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These SMEs supply into both local and global value chains.

### The Victorian Government's commitment to manufacturing

The Victorian Government is focused on strengthening the state's manufacturing sector by supporting advanced manufacturing skills, processes and business models. This is set out in the *Made in Victoria 2030: Manufacturing Statement*, which outlines five priority areas:<sup>14</sup>

- zero- and low-emission technologies
- health technologies
- food manufacturing
- defence, aerospace and space
- digital and advanced technologies.



## Industry data



Sector size<sup>15</sup>

**\$33.5 billion**

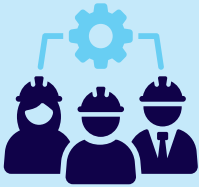
(gross value added, financial year (FY) 2022-2023)



Research and development expenditure<sup>19</sup>

**\$1.79 billion**

(FY 2021-2022)



Number of employees<sup>16</sup>

**> 260,000**

(12-month average to Feb 2024)



Wages and salaries<sup>20</sup>

**\$18.48 billion**

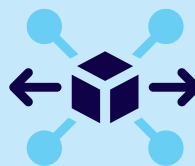
(FY 2021-2022)



Number of businesses<sup>17</sup>

**23,600**

(June 2023)



Exports<sup>21</sup>

**\$23.9 billion**

(2022-2023)



Contribution to gross state product<sup>18</sup>

**6.26%**

(FY 2022-2023)



Capital expenditure<sup>22</sup>

**\$4.4 billion**

(12 months to December 2023)



### Demographic profile of Victoria's manufacturing workforce <sup>23</sup>

**42**

is the average age of female workers in 2021, compared to 43 for male workers<sup>24</sup>

**43%**

of female workers in Victoria were born overseas

**36%**

of female workers use a language other than English at home, compared to 32% of male workers

**0.6%**

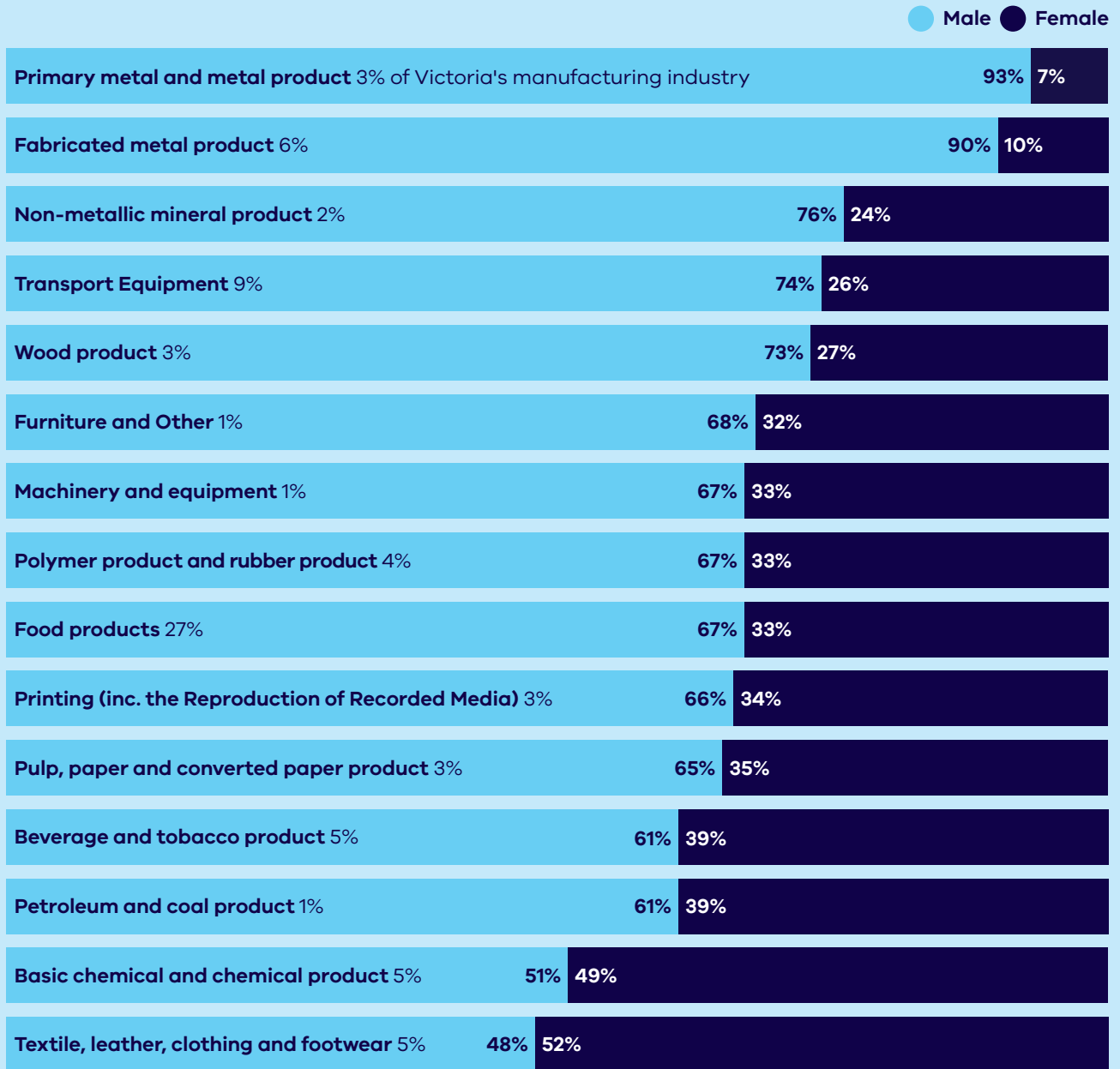
of Victoria's workers identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

**0.14%**

is the percentage of female Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers in the manufacturing workforce




### Gender breakdown by manufacturing subsector in Victoria<sup>25</sup>



This graph shows the distribution of women workers across the different subsectors of Victoria's manufacturing industry. The subsector's contribution to Victoria's total manufacturing workforce is shown in brackets. For example, the textile, leather, clothing and footwear manufacturing subsector has the most gender equal workforce. However, it makes up 5% of Victoria's manufacturing workforce overall.

Please note that sex-based language including male and female is used in this figure to be consistent with the data source.



**'There can be a bit of citycentric focus, but I've loved moving regionally, there's such a sense of community... support with accommodation when I first moved up was an absolute lifesaver.'**

**Courtney,  
formulations specialist**



## How manufacturing is performing on gender equality

### Workforce composition in Victoria<sup>26</sup>

In the Victorian manufacturing workforce, women make up:

**32.8%** Women make up only 32.8% of all workers (94,400)

**65.8%** Women are 68.5% of all part-time workers in Victorian manufacturing – despite being about one-third of the workforce

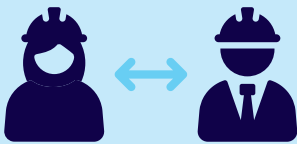
### Gender composition of governing bodies in Australia<sup>27</sup>

**10%** of manufacturing board chairs are women

**22%** of board members are women

**24%** of employers have a formal policy or strategy in place for gender equality in their governing bodies

### Gender pay gap In Australia<sup>28</sup>



**10.6%**

base salary full-time gender pay gap in the manufacturing sector

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA)<sup>29</sup> median total remuneration gender pay gap in manufacturing employers with at least 100 employees: 18.1% in FY 2022-2023. This includes casual and part-time employees, overtime and bonuses.

### Gendered work segregation in Australia<sup>30</sup>

In the Australian manufacturing workforce, **women** make up:



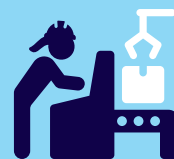
**69%**

Clerical and administrative workers



**26%**

Managers



**15%**

Machinery operators and drivers

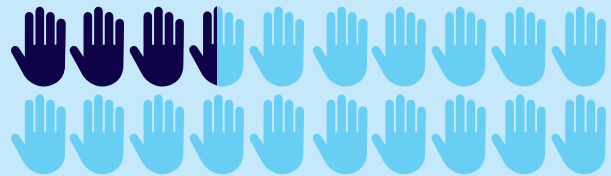


**11%**

Technicians and trades workers

### Workplace sexual harassment in Australia<sup>31</sup>

**17%**  
of all manufacturing employees experienced sexual harassment



Between 2016 and 2022 (women: 18%, men: 16%). While this is lower than the rate for all industries (women: 41%, men 26%) it is still unacceptably high.

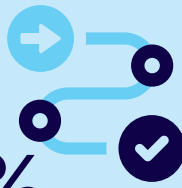
**Note:** Workplace sexual harassment is severely under-reported as the burden is on victims to complain or make a formal report.<sup>32</sup>

### Leave and flexibility in Australia<sup>33</sup>

**47%**  
of manufacturing employers offer paid parental leave



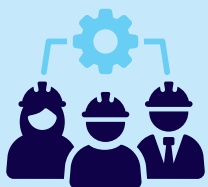
**80%**  
have a flexible work policy



**80%**  
have a formal policy to support staff experiencing family or domestic violence



### Recruitment and promotion in Australia<sup>34</sup>



**23%** of manufacturing employers had trained people managers in addressing gender bias (including unconscious bias)

**42%** analysed performance ratings to ensure no gender bias

**8%** conducted a gender-based job evaluation process

### Data gaps

Developing this strategy has revealed data gaps in our understanding of women's participation and equity in Victorian manufacturing.

A lack of data is a barrier to equity. Without information on women's participation and experiences, it is difficult to:

- identify and understand the issues
- take necessary action to address issues.

### Identified data gaps

Data gap	Description
<p><b>Regular data on Victoria's manufacturing sector broken down by a range of factors</b></p>	<p>Composition of Victorian manufacturing workforce, including gender, how age impacts participation and experiences, job group and demographics, including First Peoples' participation rates.</p> <p>Regular data on the above will help to better understand compounding or intersectional barriers. It will also help with tracking progress. The Census provides some of this information but is only released every five years.</p>
<p><b>Victorian data on leave and workplace flexibility</b></p>	<p>Leave and other workplace flexibility indicators for Victorian manufacturing sector. This is currently only available for Australia as a whole.</p>
<p><b>Recruitment and promotion</b></p>	<p>Information on recruitment and promotion processes in the Victorian manufacturing sector.</p> <p>For example, the proportion of employers giving unconscious bias training to managers and recruitment personnel.</p>
<p><b>Gender equality initiatives</b></p>	<p>Proportion of manufacturing companies that have other gender equality initiatives in place, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gender equality action plans</li> <li>• workplace sexual harassment training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workplace culture</b></p>	<p>Measures of workplace culture and staff wellbeing in the industry, broken down by gender and demographic background. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning and development opportunities</li> <li>• access to flexible work arrangements and reasonable workplace adjustments</li> <li>• work-related stress and burnout levels</li> <li>• job satisfaction</li> <li>• intention to stay</li> <li>• experience of bullying, discrimination, aggression and violence in the workplace</li> <li>• satisfaction with complaint processes and feeling safe to speak up</li> <li>• colleague, manager and leadership support.</li> </ul>



## Priority 1: Clear and appealing career pathways

This action area is about addressing deep gender biases and assumptions around skills and jobs. It involves challenging gendered and outdated perceptions of modern manufacturing work, especially among younger women and girls.



# Priority 1: Clear and appealing career pathways

**85%**

of people over 65 believe manufacturing is important to the economy, compared to 48% of people aged between 18 and 24.<sup>35</sup>



**Assumptions about careers for girls or boys means that many women are:**

- not actively encouraged to consider the wide range of careers available
- unsure about the benefits of a career in manufacturing
- unsure whether manufacturing is a good match for their interests and skills.



**Social norms around gender, culture and available role models influence the decisions women make about their education and careers. These could be preventing many from entering manufacturing.<sup>36</sup>**

## What is needed

### More awareness of the varied and secure career opportunities in manufacturing

The Victorian Government has identified manufacturing as a priority industry. It is a high-tech sector where businesses rely on skilled workers (especially from STEM and trades backgrounds). Manufacturing uses sophisticated technology and business models to gain a competitive edge.

The industry offers a range of well-paid and secure career pathways, including in:

- mechanical engineering
- robotics
- additive manufacturing
- software engineering
- design and packaging
- metal fabrication.

Manufacturing is the second most popular industry of employment for people with vocational education and training (VET) STEM qualifications, after construction.<sup>37</sup>

Many trades roles are also increasingly linked to STEM skills as new technology changes the way these jobs are carried out.

We want women and girls to be aware of the exciting and varied careers and share in the benefits of future industry growth. Tailored and values-based messaging is essential to engaging a diverse range of women. This may include showing the value in working together to create something to solve real world problems, such as making life-saving vaccines or developing technologies to help transition to net zero emissions.

Improving the visibility of women already in manufacturing, in all their diversity, is one way to encourage girls to consider pathways into manufacturing.



### Manufacturing subjects presented in an accessible and appealing way

There are opportunities to rethink how manufacturing subjects are presented in schools to make them more appealing.

The sector could be better explained to children, youth and young adults and promoted as one that offers safe and interesting opportunities where women can thrive. This might involve creating gender neutral STEM learning environments. The messaging could also better reflect technological change, emerging industries and the changing nature of work.

Connecting young women and girls with role models, mentors, networks or industry experiences could also boost awareness of manufacturing and other careers in STEM.

### Communities and role models work together to identify and dispel gender stereotypes about manufacturing jobs

Workforce gender segregation, including in leadership positions, can be traced back to early childhood experiences.<sup>38</sup> Without even realising it, influences on career choices start in early childhood.

Career goals often fall along gendered lines. They can be shaped by the social norms and expectations of their surroundings, including at home and in places like libraries and playgrounds.<sup>39</sup> These gendered expectations can be more firmly held in regional and rural areas.

In addition to this, many women experience family and cultural expectations around caregiving, family responsibilities and job choices. These may discourage them from jobs that have irregular hours or are physically demanding.

All community members play an important role in identifying the factors that may be shaping gendered decisions about career choices and helping young people to consider a wider range of job options.



**There are outdated perceptions of manufacturing jobs being dirty, low-skilled and dangerous rather than skilled, smart and safe.**

**Career advice remains gendered, especially in regional and rural areas.<sup>40</sup>**

This includes influential adults like primary carers, cultural leaders, parents and teachers. It also includes schools, employers, youth organisations and young people themselves.

Parents and primary carers have a special role to play in looking at what may be affecting their own views on certain jobs, being a role model of equality and helping their children explore different career pathways. Parents and teachers should also build understanding and openness to new and evolving career opportunities in advancing sectors like manufacturing. One way to build awareness could be working with employers and community groups to arrange parent days at manufacturing sites.



## Gendered influences on career choices throughout a woman's life



### Childhood (formative years)

- Family opinions and expectations
- Cultural expectations
- Gendered assumptions about paid and unpaid work
- Limiting forms of play in childhood affecting self-confidence and self-esteem later in life
- Stereotypes about girl's and boy's interests and work
- Lack of visibility of women in trade, technical, STEM and leadership jobs
- Lack of awareness of career opportunities and pathways
- Outdated perceptions of the manufacturing industry

### Youth and young adulthood (education and training)

- Negative perception in society that trades are 'not academic'
- Influence of parents and peers on career choices, which may reinforce own biases
- Gendered and inadequate careers advice
- Behaviours, experiences or influences that affect young people's perceptions of themselves, what they're capable of or 'allowed' to do
- Not enough awareness of training pathways
- Lack of information, industry exposure and role models
- Financial barriers to pursuing education or undertaking training
- Sexism from trainers and peers
- Training and education systems that entrench bias and discrimination based on gender, race, disability or other factors
- Work and training cultures that tolerate



### Adulthood (career experiences and advancement)



- Psychologically and physically unsafe workplaces
- Family violence affecting workforce participation
- Work and training cultures that disrespect, harass or exclude women
- Lack of flexibility for people with caring responsibilities
- Informal and biased recruitment and promotion practices stop women from being considered for roles and discourage them from applying
- Experiences of working in isolation or of being one of only a few women on the shop floor, leading to lack of connection and belonging
- Limited access to career progression and leadership opportunities
- Inadequate amenities and personal protective equipment (PPE) for women

### Older adulthood (transitioning to retirement)

- Psychologically and physically unsafe workplaces
- Gendered impacts of ageism
- Lack of flexibility for people with caring responsibilities
- Equipment and facilities that are unsuitable for people of all ages
- Need for increased recognition of older women's potential as mentors and leaders



### **Safe spaces for girls and women to try non-traditional subjects**

Because of deeply held gender stereotypes, girls and young women often do not get the same casual exposure to trades and hands-on skills as boys when growing up.

Girls may limit their career goals to familiar fields if they do not get opportunities to learn about and try different skills, jobs and subjects.

Girls and women should have the opportunity to explore a wide range of career pathways and try new skills in safe spaces. Training providers and employers need to provide safe and respectful environments for women to learn and work in.

**'I went from school to university, studying contemporary Fine Arts, because I've always enjoyed making things. I never really thought about the possibility of working in manufacturing. I thought manufacturing was a completely automated workforce and there wasn't any real hands-on work being done.'**

**Amelia, apprentice boilermaker**





**'One of my favourite parts of manufacturing is that I'm never bored, there's always something to learn and something to do.'**

**Courtney, formulations specialist**



### Inclusive and open-minded recruitment processes

Employers should review position descriptions to make sure they are written for the needs of the role, rather than having an 'ideal' candidate in mind. This helps to avoid assumptions about gender, disability or age.<sup>41</sup> Focusing on the skills needed, rather than specific education or years of directly relevant industry experience, broadens the candidate pool.

Similarly, employers should avoid hiring people based on perceived 'cultural fit'. This can reduce the effect of unconscious biases against women and other underrepresented people during the hiring process.

During interviews, hiring staff should make candidates feel comfortable. They should ask candidates if they need any adjustments to fully participate. Any physical tests should be carried out in a way that is culturally respectful.

Consistent criteria and language should be used when evaluating the performance of men and women, and to remove any bias that favours candidates who fit the stereotype of a manufacturing worker.<sup>42</sup>

Employers should work with recruitment companies to make sure they follow similar practices.

**Research shows that older women are more likely than older men to be unfairly thought of as:**

- having outdated skills
- being too slow to learn new things, or
- as being someone who would do a poor job<sup>43</sup>

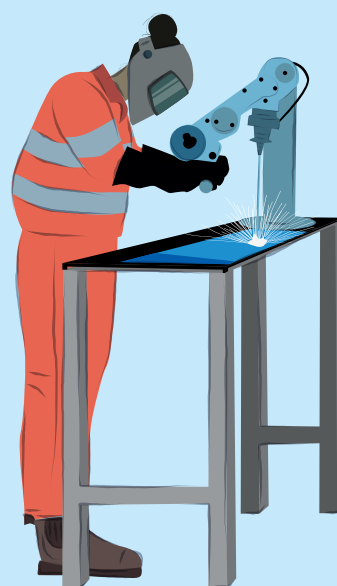
### Case study: Giving women the opportunity to try a trade through the Women Onsite project

The Women Onsite project has been giving women the chance to experience what it is like to work in trades through a series of 'try a trade' workshops. These events:

- introduce people to different trades jobs, from carpentry to welding
- give people hands-on experience with tools
- let people hear from tradeswomen already working in manufacturing.

Participants can also build networks with other women and get help to start their trades careers.

The project was run by the Victorian Trades Hall Council and supported by the Victorian Government.



## Victorian Government actions

### Addressing gender bias in careers education and pathways options

Develop and implement an approach to address gender bias in careers education and pathways options in the implementation of the Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms. This will include more explicitly addressing gender bias through:

- career initiatives that support student decision-making and school career planning
- addressing barriers to girls' participation in STEM education, and barriers to boys' participation in the care industries.

Note: this supports Action 3 in *Our equal state*.

### Tech Schools

Victoria's 10 Tech Schools are high-tech STEM centres of excellence. They run free, hands-on and immersive STEM learning programs for local secondary school students.

Students stay enrolled in their local school and go to Tech Schools for one-day or multi-day programs.

Tech Schools work with schools and industry to introduce students to education and career pathways in STEM. They focus on key industry growth areas, including advanced manufacturing.

Tech Schools give girls a safe space to explore STEM subjects and learn about manufacturing.

Note: This also supports Priority 2 of this strategy.

### Help students get work experience in in-demand industries

The Victorian Government is supporting 10,000 more work experience placements in clean energy and other priority industries. This gives female students the chance to try careers in male-dominated areas like manufacturing through short-term supported placements.

Placements will give students the chance to:

- build self-confidence and meaningful relationships
- explore possible career paths and set goals to strengthen their career ambitions
- gain insights into industry and workplaces.

### Skills and Jobs Centres

Skills and Jobs Centres offer free career, employment and training support services across Victoria. They are open to all members of the community.

Each Skills and Jobs Centre also offers a range of localised workshops specially designed to meet the needs of their local community and local industries.

Note: This also supports the Priority 2 of this strategy.



### Women in Trades project

The Women in Trades project is run by the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union.

The project helps attract and recruit women to manufacturing roles through activities including:

- trade demonstration events
- employer site visits
- career expos.

Trade demonstration events give girls and women some hands-on experience with tools. The events also let them try different trades, such as automotive and engineering.

The project also involves:

- helping place women in manufacturing jobs, supporting their economic equity
- working with employers to make sure workplaces are safe and respectful.

Delivered in 2024. Note: This also supports Priority 4 of this strategy.

### The Trade and Tech Fit career expo

The Trade and Tech Fit career expo shows young women and gender diverse people the exciting world of trade and tech industries, including manufacturing.

The expo also highlights the rewarding and well-paid careers available in these industries.





## Leading practice: Introducing preschool girls to manufacturing concepts with a world first co-teaching model

Two renowned leaders – and Victorian Honour Roll of Women inductees – worked together to introduce Victorian kindergarteners to manufacturing and engineering.

Laureate Professor Marilyn Fler is a leading expert on early childhood education and development at Monash University. Aishwarya Kansakar is an award-winning engineer in the field of automation and robotics.

Fler and Kansakar recognised that many girls do not get to experience STEM content at a young age – and decided to do something about it.

With support from the Australian Research Council, they created a program to introduce preschoolers to STEM in an accessible and engaging way.

The project uses Fler's Conceptual PlayWorld, a research-based model for teaching STEM through play. Engineers and early childhood educators work together in a co-teaching model. Teachers bring concepts and practices of intentional teaching and play-based learning. Engineers bring deep knowledge of engineering concepts.

Using the fairytale of the Shoemaker and the Elves, the children help chief engineer



Aishwarya when she announces that her shoe factory was burnt down. The children then try to build a shoe factory in their centre. The kids explore engineering concepts in practice through designing and manufacturing shoes for the elves so that Christmas orders can be filled.

The project successfully introduced children aged between 2 and 5 years to complex manufacturing topics like 'design for manufacturing' and 'lean manufacturing'. It also simulated running a shoe manufacturing factory. This resulted in highly effective learning outcomes.

**'Girls are pushed into jobs that, even if they love STEM, it's seen as more of a boy's field – we need to start young.'**

**Courtney, formulations specialist**



## How we can work together to create change

Like other industry strategies, the strength of this strategy relies on a partnership approach between different industry actors.

We are stronger together and everyone benefits from gender equality.

All industry actors can use their levers of influence to achieve gender equity in the manufacturing sector. We must specifically consider how our actions will help diverse women facing intersecting barriers to participation and progression.

### Levers of influence to improve career pathways

Industry actor	Lever of influence
<p><b>Industry associations and peaks</b></p>	<p><b>Partnerships:</b> Develop and strengthen partnerships, including with primary and secondary schools, to promote manufacturing pathways for women and girls.</p> <p><b>Increase visibility of women:</b> Highlight the contributions, stories and achievements of women members currently in manufacturing.</p>
<p><b>Unions</b></p>	<p><b>Increase visibility of women:</b> Highlight the contributions, stories and achievements of women members currently in manufacturing.</p> <p><b>Showcase opportunities:</b> Use trade demonstrations, industry introduction events and opportunities for hands on experience.</p>
<p><b>Gender equality organisations</b></p>	<p><b>Subject matter expertise:</b> Organisations with expertise in gender equity can give manufacturing businesses advice and tools on improving gender equity in the workplace. This is especially for women facing compounding barriers to participation. Relevant organisations include WGEA, Victorian Women’s Health Services and Our Watch.</p>
<p><b>Employers (SMEs and larger employers)</b></p>	<p><b>Inclusive and open-minded recruitment practices:</b> Carefully consider where and how jobs are advertised to maximise reach. Work to remove biases in hiring and promotion processes. Make sure recruitment testing requirements are culturally appropriate.</p>





## Priority 2: Access to education and training

This action area is about understanding what skills the manufacturing sector needs and making sure women have fair access to training and education. This is increasingly important as manufacturing becomes more advanced and needs more specialised skills.





## Priority 2: Access to education and training

The Victorian manufacturing sector is currently facing skills shortages in many areas, including:

- computer-aided manufacturing and design
- welding
- problem solving
- digital capability
- STEM skills
- leadership and management.<sup>44</sup>
- robotics

# 25%

As of June 2023, women were 25% of apprentices and trainees in-training in Victoria. Of these, 69% were in non-trades jobs, like early childhood education and care, hospitality and retail.<sup>45</sup>



There is high turnover in STEM-related industries. One report found that over one-third of women surveyed aged under 36 years intended to leave their STEM profession within five years.<sup>46</sup> The main reasons for leaving (for women both with and without children) were:

- work conditions and pay
- lack of career advancement
- workplace culture.

### What is needed

#### Incentives for women to access education and training opportunities, particularly for mature-aged apprentices

Consultations for this strategy revealed that money is a major barrier for women looking to complete apprenticeships and traineeships, particularly for mature-aged apprentices (21 years and over). Financial barriers include low wages for apprentices and the up-front costs of purchasing tools. Although these barriers exist for all apprentices, they are particularly felt by women. Women are more likely to start an apprenticeship later – around 27 years old compared to 23 for men.<sup>47</sup>

Lower apprentice wages can be challenging for mature-aged students who may:

- be re-entering the workplace after career breaks to have children
- be managing family responsibilities
- have increased financial obligations.

Also, even when mature-aged students complete apprenticeships, they are often overlooked by employers. This can be particularly true for women retraining to different jobs later in life. Many companies prefer to hire apprentices and trainees aged under 21 years as their wages are lower.

**‘I started by doing a Certificate II with a training provider, so I was being paid a bit of a wage which allowed me to do it. If it was unpaid, I wouldn’t have been able to do that.’**

**Amelia, apprentice boilermaker**

### Training environments that support the needs of a diverse range of women

Training providers need to challenge assumptions that an apprentice is an 18- to 20-year-old young white man who lives at home with parents to support him.

Instead, educators and employers should consider how they can tailor training to diverse students and apprentices. They need to look for ways to proactively help them join in training and on-the-job learning.

Training opportunities and apprenticeships should be designed with people with caring responsibilities in mind. This will encourage more women to take part and complete these opportunities.

Relying on people to speak up about their needs can create barriers to participation. Especially when a woman is part of a majority-men training group or the most junior person on-site. There may not be a culture or precedent for speaking up safely.

**15%**

**In 2023, women held just 15% of STEM-qualified jobs nation-wide, despite making up 37% of enrolments in university STEM courses.<sup>48</sup>**

**STEM-qualified jobs include engineers, software developers, biologists and chemists.**



**In 2016, 56% of women in the Australian labour force with university STEM qualifications were born overseas.<sup>49</sup>**

### Leading practice: Helping women facing financial hardship to enter trades jobs through Remade for Trades

Tradeswomen Australia's Remade for Trades program is an initiative that aims to address financial barriers to women taking part in trades. Through a free and flexible short course, it helps women experiencing hardship to enter trades roles.

It has a particular focus on women from First Nations, refugee, asylum-seeking and/or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

This program gives women:

- information on the types of careers available
- hands-on experience with power tools
- direct connection to employers
- networking opportunities
- recruitment support.

After completing the course, participants can join an online peer support network and receive free mentoring.

Tradeswomen Australia also provides financial support for participants to get to the course and provides free childcare.



**'At my current workplace, the head boilermaker has been a really great support, the main way that he's supportive is taking the time to teach new skills.'**

**Amelia, apprentice boilermaker**

### Opportunities for women to reskill, upskill and transition into the industry

We want employers and leaders to help women with transferrable skills from different industries to enter manufacturing. This can be achieved by:

- removing financial barriers to VET to encourage women to upskill and move into emerging sectors
- recognising transferrable skills (such as digital and computer skills) to open up opportunities for women coming from other industries
- improving career development and progression for women through more opportunities for upskilling and greater access to on the job learning and training. For example, by offering on-the-job opportunities to gain a forklift license or white card.

Migrant and refugee women often face unique challenges when looking for work that matches their skills and experience.

Many migrants work in jobs beneath their skill level and are paid less than Australian-born workers.<sup>50</sup> Migrant women with a postgraduate degree have the worst wage outcomes. They earn 31% less than Australian-born women with similar education levels.<sup>51</sup>

One reason for this is that common temporary and bridging visas offered by Australia can restrict the amount and types of work visa holders can do and their access to free and subsidised training. Some people on bridging visas do not have work rights at all.

Matching migrant women's skills to the most suitable jobs will make better use of their talent, help address labour shortages and support productivity growth.



### Leading practice: Supporting mature-aged apprentices through the Women and their trade program

NECA Education and Careers and their trade program is an example of an effective program that supports mature-aged women apprentices.

NECA Education and Careers were able to do this by giving employers a wage subsidy that matches the difference between hourly rates of junior and adult apprentices.

More than 35 women were given meaningful employment through the program's apprenticeship model. This showed the valuable contribution mature-aged women apprentices can make to the workforce.

Participants liked that the model recognised the skills they already had when they started a role.

The program was previously funded through the Apprenticeships Victoria Innovation Fund. This funding has enabled NECA Education and Careers to set up a system to help more women into the industry. Women now represent over 18% of their electrical apprenticeship workforce.



## Leading practice: Catering to diverse needs at the Australian Institute of Engineering

The Australian Institute of Engineering (AIE) is a leading training provider for a range of engineering courses. This includes pre-apprenticeships like Certificate II in Engineering to postgraduate qualifications like the Graduate Diploma in Engineering.

Many of AIE's specialised streams relate to advanced manufacturing, including its courses in robotics and mechatronics.

AIE is known for its innovative approach to education, including by offering flexible training options.

AIE recognises that a rigid education system has long been stopped women from completing apprenticeships and other qualifications. AIE offers flexibility in how courses are delivered, including by offering modules on weekends, after hours, part-time or online.

This has seen the number of women taking part in its courses grow over time.

AIE is constantly looking for new ways to help more women into engineering. This includes by designing courses that are more accessible for those with digital and other transferrable skills.



1.4%

Indigenous women accounted for 1.4% of all women who completed an apprenticeship or traineeship in Victoria in June 2023.<sup>52</sup>



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are under-represented in STEM in Australia, particularly at the university level. Just 0.5% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population had a STEM qualification, compared to 5% of the non-Indigenous population.<sup>53</sup>



For migrant women, lack of recognition of overseas qualifications, skills and work experience is a major barrier. This makes them more likely to work in low-paid, low-skilled and insecure jobs.<sup>54</sup>





## Victorian Government actions

<b>Head Start</b>	<p>Head Start is a program that helps students in years 10 to 12 take part in a school-based apprenticeship and traineeship (SBAT). It helps students build confidence and develop skills and capabilities that employers in growth industries need.</p> <p>SBAT students get paid, on-the-job training that contributes to their VCE, VCE Vocational Major or VPC and leads to a qualification.</p> <p>Head Start teams are in 12 school-based hubs across Victoria. They give wraparound support to SBAT students.</p>
<b>Free TAFE program</b>	<p>Under the Free Technical and Further Education (TAFE) program, the Australian and Victorian governments cover the cost of student tuition fees for high priority TAFE qualifications and short courses aligned to industry needs.</p>
<b>Women in Apprenticeships</b>	<p>Apprenticeships Victoria will continue to prioritise rolling out trades opportunities for Victorian women.</p> <p>They will focus on career pathways for woman apprentices in male-dominated trades, including in the manufacturing and energy sectors.</p> <p>Note: This supports Action 55 of <i>Our equal state</i>.</p>
<b>Skilling the Bay</b>	<p>This initiative is a place-based and school-based education program in the Barwon area. Skilling the Bay gives students hands-on exposure to vocational careers. It is led by The Gordon Institute of TAFE, in partnership with Deakin University.</p> <p>The initiative includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• industry immersion programs in clean energy</li><li>• Girls Leading Advanced Manufacturing, which encourages young women into male-dominated fields.</li></ul>
<b>Improve access to the VET Delivered to Schools Students (VDSS) Core Offering</b>	<p>The Core Offering includes 41 VET certificates grouped into 12 pathways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clean Energy and Engineering</li><li>• Digital Media and Technologies</li><li>• Automotive.</li></ul> <p>The Core Offering provides a unique opportunity to change perceptions of VDSS as being largely focused on trades in traditionally male-dominated industries. Instead, it can be seen as a gender neutral pathway, where students choose certificates based on interest and ability, not outdated stereotypes. This is underpinned by a communications campaign to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• promote the VDSS core offering pathway as clearly anti-bias</li><li>• show successful pathways for women in trades and technology.</li></ul>

**Women Onsite project**

The Women Onsite project is led by the Victorian Trades Hall Council. To support women into the manufacturing sector, the project includes job readiness training and 'Introduction to the industry' sessions.

The project also involves:

- working with women to identify barriers to entering the industry
- helping women identify jobs of interest and enroll in the required training
- providing financial support for training, tools and PPE
- providing safe and respectful workplace training for employers
- providing WorkSafe approved training on work-related gendered violence for health and safety representatives.

Delivered in 2024. Note: This also supports Priorities 1, 3 and 4 of this strategy.

**Redefining Women's Work in Hume and Whittlesea program**

This program helps women facing compounding barriers to workforce participation, including multicultural women.

Run by Whittlesea Community Connections, the program helps women develop manufacturing careers through:

- skill building opportunities
- peer networking
- tailored career support.

**Advocating to lift apprentice pay and provide workplace conditions that support women's full economic participation**

In March 2024, the Victorian Government made a submission to the Fair Work Commission on the Annual Wage Review 2023-24. It recommended that the Fair Work Commission should consider increases to apprentice pay rates to align them more closely with the current cost of living.

The Victorian Government will continue to advocate to lift apprentice wages through submissions to relevant inquiries, including the Fair Work Commission Annual Wage Review. This supports the goal of improving the growth and sustainability of the skilled workforce and careers in trades.

In its submission, the Victorian Government also focused on barriers to workplace entry. It highlighted growing concern about gender wage gaps in the private sector, and its impact over a women's life into older age. The Victorian Government argued that skills and labour shortages make providing workplace conditions that support women's full economic participation ever more important.

## How we can work together to create change

### Levers of influence for improving access to education and training

Industry actor	Lever of influence
<p><b>Training providers</b></p>	<p><b>Incentives:</b> Consider scholarships or financial incentives to help women into pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships and traineeships, particularly for women from marginalised backgrounds.</p> <p><b>Roll out and promote gender equality initiatives:</b> Promote existing TAFE initiatives like the Our Watch guide, <i>Respect and equality in TAFE: building a TAFE environment that promotes gender equality and respect</i>.</p> <p><b>Support women’s learning needs:</b> Identify approaches to education and training that support women’s learning. For example, women-only pre-apprenticeships.</p> <p><b>Policies, procedures and staff training:</b> Cover topics about gender equity in policies and training. This may include preventing and responding to sexual harassment, active bystanders and cultural safety.</p> <p><b>Employ more women and gender diverse educators:</b> More diverse teaching staff give students more opportunities to connect with educators to build their career potential.</p>
<p><b>Employers (SMEs and larger employers)</b></p>	<p><b>Take on more women apprentices:</b> More women in workplaces helps increase women’s participation and retention. It improves workplace culture, diversity and decision making. It may also build the pipeline of future leaders.</p> <p><b>Transferrable skills:</b> Look for innovative solutions to better harness the transferrable skills of women from other sectors.</p>
<p><b>Industry associations and peaks</b></p>	<p><b>Promote training opportunities:</b> Give information about job and training opportunities using web, social and other channels.</p> <p><b>Give information and support:</b> Offer support services to women considering a career in manufacturing. Create resources for employers interested in getting more women to join their organisations.</p> <p><b>Run programs:</b> Encourage women to explore non-traditional skills and roles through programs and events.</p>
<p><b>Gender equality organisations</b></p>	<p><b>Partnerships with training providers:</b> Through partnerships, gender equality organisations can help build organisational capacity to drive gender equity outcomes.</p>





## Priority 3: Support for economic equity and leadership opportunities

Economic equity means that women have the same economic opportunities as men. It means levelling the playing field so that women, especially those with diverse backgrounds and identities, can achieve the same outcomes as their male peers.



## Priority 3: Support for economic equity and leadership opportunities

To achieve economic equity in manufacturing, we need to identify biases, address barriers to women's retention and advancement, and support women to reach their career goals and thrive.

There is currently a lack of women in management and leadership roles in manufacturing. This is due to structural discrimination, for example:

- inflexible work arrangements, which affects people who take time out of work for caring responsibilities
- women being overlooked for promotions when compared to men
- misperceptions about women and gender diverse people's ability to lead a team that is majority-men.

**53%**

of manufacturers who report to WGEA, do not offer any paid parental leave.<sup>55</sup>



**LGBTIQA+**

women may experience a 'double glass ceiling', making it more difficult for them to thrive and develop in their working environment.<sup>56</sup> This is due to the combined impact of being perceived as a woman and LGBTIQA+.

### What is needed

#### More flexible work options for people with caring responsibilities

A lack of access to affordable, available and flexible childcare prevents many women from being in the workforce. Accessing childcare can be particularly hard for families in some rural and regional areas. Women also tend to take on the bulk of other types of unpaid care work, including for ageing parents, partners, grandchildren and other family members, or people with disabilities.

Employers can support women's economic equity by offering all staff flexible work options. This would:

- help more women join and stay in the workforce
- encourage more men to take on caring work
- help challenge outdated gender stereotypes around child and caring responsibilities.

Employers should also consider how flexible work practices and supports could help women balance other factors that affect participation. These factors include:

- unpaid labour
- cultural and caring responsibilities
- family violence
- expectations that they have to advocate for themselves.

**'I would love to see better paternity leave so that the expectation is not just on mothers.'**

**Amelia, apprentice boilermaker**

### Appropriate facilities and equipment for women

Many work sites in male-dominated industries do not have suitable facilities and equipment for women.<sup>57</sup>

Consultation for this strategy highlighted that some manufacturing workplaces do not have:

- women's and gender-neutral bathrooms and sanitary bins
- personal protective equipment (PPE) for women's bodies, including maternity PPE
- culturally-appropriate uniform and PPE options for migrant and multicultural women.

Another issue is that the machinery and tools are often designed for men. This increases the risk of injury for women and prevents them from being as productive. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, employers must provide and maintain a work environment that is safe and without risk to the health of their employees, as far as is reasonably practicable.

Proper facilities and equipment are essential for women's inclusion and safety in a workplace.

### Wraparound supports for women's career progression

As highlighted by the Inquiry, programs to increase women's leadership should focus on addressing structural and cultural barriers to women's leadership, particularly for women from diverse backgrounds. This is more effective than only building women's capabilities or confidence.

Wraparound supports include:

- mentoring
- leadership programs to support career aspirations
- networking opportunities
- peer-to-peer support
- leave for health conditions, including menstruation, menopause and endometriosis
- cultural leave

- family violence leave (which Australian workers are entitled to)
- sponsors actively looking for ways to support women's advancement.

### Re-thinking what – and who – makes a good leader

We need to shift ideas about what an effective leader looks like. There may be an assumption that decision makers in manufacturing need technical abilities. This assumption has historically disadvantaged women who have not had the same opportunities to gain these skills.

Effective leadership fosters a collaborative, empathetic and inclusive approach. Value is placed on core skills like communication, problem solving and curiosity.<sup>58</sup>

Taking a holistic view of what a leader needs to do may broaden the possible talent pool. It may give more women the opportunity to be promoted to leadership roles in manufacturing workplaces.



**Women currently make up around a quarter of the management positions in the Australian manufacturing workforce.<sup>59</sup>**

**The gender pay gap for women of colour across the economy is around 33 to 36% – double the national average.<sup>60</sup>**



## What do we mean by 'cultural safety'?

A **culturally safe** environment is one where people feel safe, their needs can be met and there are no assaults, challenges or denial to their identity. Cultural safety is a fundamental human right.

Different people might have different cultural safety needs. Respecting the right to **self-determination** is an important part of creating cultural safety. This means acknowledging that everyone has the right to have control over their own lives and participate in decisions that will affect them.

There are practical steps organisations can take to create a culturally safe work environment. These could include:

- Gathering data on the needs and perspectives of workers from First Nations, migrant and multicultural communities, asking how the organisation can meet their cultural safety needs and taking action in response.
- Providing training to all staff to increase knowledge of and respect for different cultures. This includes understanding First Peoples' cultural connections to family, community and Country, as well as traditional and contemporary forms of cultural expression like language, ceremonies and storytelling.
- Introducing workplace policies that formally promote First Nations and multicultural workers' right to culture and their right to

participate in cultural activities. This may include offering cultural leave for certain activities and events.

- Committing to continuous review and improvement of organisational policies and practices, including by seeking employee feedback.
- Making cultural safety an explicit priority year-round, not just during days or weeks of significance.
- Ensuring policies and actions to support cultural safety are well informed by First Nations, multicultural and migrant communities, and that community members are remunerated for their expertise. As part of this, employers should be vigilant to times when workers might be taking on unpaid labour to have cultural safety needs understood and respected. For example, expecting First Nations staff will contribute to an organisational Reconciliation Action Plan on top of their job.


It is important to note that cultural safety is ongoing learning journey. This includes the need to address racism and unlearn unconscious bias.

As outlined in Victoria's *Yuma Yirramboi Strategy (Invest in tomorrow)*, setting an expectation of cultural safety and actively eliminating racism will help improve employment outcomes for First Peoples (see Initiative 5.4).

**"I used to work at another place that would allow for me to pray only on my break time. Here, they gave me a room and said I can pray any time I need to."**

**Duaa, packing**





## Additional and targeted support to overcome systemic barriers to participation and advancement

People facing intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage are more likely to have significant pay gaps and be underrepresented in leadership positions.

It is important to recognise these extra barriers. Organisations should gather data to understand the needs and perspectives of staff from diverse backgrounds. They can use this data to help ensure cultural safety, prevent sexual harassment and create opportunities for career progression.

Examples of targeted supports may include:

- workplace facilities that are age-friendly and accessible and appropriate for women with disabilities. For example, ensuring worksites have adequate lighting, seating access and universally accessible amenities.
- leave for perimenopause, menopause and other health conditions
- support to understand and exercise your rights at work, especially for women with disabilities and young, migrant, multicultural and First Nations women.
- PPE and workplace facilities that meet the needs of women from different cultures, for example a safe and private space to pray.

**‘When I was looking for an apprenticeship, there were a lot of places that were not an option for me to work at because they start at 6am and there aren’t any childcare centres that are open before that.’**

**Amelia, apprentice boilermaker**



**'I'd like to see more women in management, doing hard skills ... I'd like to see more women machine operators, welders, forklift drivers or whatever it is that's higher pay and higher skill.'**

**Vinii, organiser**

## Leading practice: Jayco's flexible approach to shift work leading the way

Victorian caravan and motorhome manufacturer, Jayco, is leading the way using flexible work practices to support women's economic equity.

After lockdowns were lifted in late 2021, there was a surge in demand for recreational vehicles. To address labour shortages, Jayco introduced school-friendly shifts for production workers. These shifts start at 10am and end at 2pm. This let local mothers with childcare responsibilities take up part-time work at the company's factory in Dandenong. They filled roles in cabinetry, pre assembly and machine operating.

This approach has been expanded to help other part-time workers with different needs and preferences, like students working evening shifts.

Jayco's approach has improved women's economic equity in the Dandenong area. Flexible work has also allowed retirees to pick up work.

It has also brought Jayco other benefits. Workplace culture and quality assurance have improved.

Jayco's flexible approach to work is an example for other companies to follow.

## Case study: Using NAWO's mentoring program to help women thrive in manufacturing operations

The National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO) is helping women advance their careers in Victoria's manufacturing sector.

With funding from the Victorian Government, NAWO offers women a tailored mentoring program. The program supports women working in operational fields, from inventory control to quality assurance.

The program links Victorian women with experienced mentors in the sector to help them navigate their careers and develop leadership capabilities.

NAWO offers both one-on-one and group mentoring. The matching process considers each mentee's goals and each volunteer mentor's skills and experience.

Successful mentoring can lead to leadership opportunities, promotions and career achievements. It can also be highly rewarding for mentors.

Organisations benefit through improved staff engagement, retention and knowledge sharing.



## Victorian Government actions

### Reducing barriers to women's workforce participation through *Best Start, Best Life*

The \$14 billion *Best Start, Best Life* reforms aim to lower the cost of early childhood education and care. This will help address one of the biggest barriers to women joining the workforce.

*Best Start, Best Life* includes:

- Free Kinder for all Victorian 3- and 4-year-old children at participating services. Available for both standalone (sessional) services and long day care (childcare).
- Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is becoming Pre-Prep. This will be a universal 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning for every 4-year-old child in Victoria.
- Set up 50 affordable and government-owned early learning centres in areas that most need them. This will make it easier for families to access education and care.

Note: This supports Action 72 of *Our equal state*.

### Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame Awards

Now in its 22nd year, the annual Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame Awards recognise outstanding achievements in Victoria's manufacturing industry.

The new Leader in Gender Equality and Inclusion award:

- encourages companies to support women's economic equity in manufacturing
- showcases leading practice in the industry.

The Woman Manufacturer of the Year:

- recognises leaders in the manufacturing sector
- boosts the visibility of women in manufacturing, supporting clear and appealing pathways.

### NAWO's mentoring program for Victorian women in operations

This mentoring program supports Victorian women's success in manufacturing and energy operations roles. The program offers both group mentoring ('mentoring circles') and one-on-one mentoring.

Volunteer mentors help mentees to:

- achieve their goals
- overcome challenges
- increase future career opportunities.

Delivered in 2024 by the National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO).



**Nice Work If You Can Get It project**

Run by Women’s Health in the South East (WHISE), this project aims to increase the number of women completing apprenticeships.

WHISE is partnering with Chisholm TAFE to:

- complete a gender impact assessment of their manufacturing apprenticeship programs
- build the capacity of TAFE leaders and employees.

**Apprentice to Leader program**

Run by the Ai Group, this program aims to help women advance in manufacturing across Victoria. The program will address economic equality and leadership opportunities in the energy and manufacturing sectors.

The program will give apprentices and mid-career workers:

- peer to peer mentoring
- networking events
- leadership workshops.



## How we can work together to create change

### Levers of influence to support economic equity and leadership

Industry actor	Lever of influence
<b>Unions</b>	<p><b>Advocate for flexibility:</b> Look at options to give all workers access to flexible arrangements so that caring responsibilities can be shared. Ensure increased flexibility is not at the expense of job security, particularly for women at extra risk of exploitation at work, such as migrant women and women with disabilities.</p> <p><b>Safe workplaces and suitable PPE:</b> Make sure unionised workforces give women suitable PPE and facilities.</p> <p><b>Health and safety representative and workplace delegate roles:</b> Find ways to help more women take on these roles. This may help career progress and leadership goals.</p> <p><b>Enterprise bargaining:</b> Negotiate for clauses in enterprise bargaining agreements around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• flexibility</li><li>• parental leave</li><li>• pay equity</li><li>• dedicated leave for menopause, menstrual and reproductive care</li><li>• other mechanisms that advance gender equity.</li></ul>
<b>Industry associations and peaks</b>	<p><b>Help develop networks:</b> Give women in the industry formal and informal networking opportunities. This includes support for accelerated leadership programs to help women’s career development.</p> <p><b>Website images:</b> Review website and other communication materials to see if it includes a diverse representation of staff. Look for ways to make women more visible.</p>

Industry actor	Lever of influence
<p><b>Employers (SMEs and larger employers)</b></p>	<p><b>Suitable PPE and accessible facilities:</b> Make sure work sites and PPE meet the needs of diverse women, including women with disabilities. Amenities include women’s and gender-neutral bathrooms and lactation rooms, prayer rooms, PPE and uniforms that fit. Offer culturally appropriate options when needed.</p> <p><b>Recruitment:</b> Review recruitment and promotion practices to make sure processes are fair. Consider where jobs are advertised and how interviews are conducted.</p> <p><b>Actions to prevent sexual harassment:</b> Employers have a positive duty to prevent sexual harassment and gendered violence. It is not enough to only respond to it when it arises.</p> <p><b>Workplace policies:</b> Put in place policies that support safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces. Policies should cover themes like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flexible working arrangements and family-friendly shifts</li> <li>paid primary and secondary caregiver or parental leave</li> <li>job sharing</li> <li>menopause, menstrual, gender-affirmation and reproductive leave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Childcare supports:</b> Employers can support working parents by assisting with childcare. This may include providing childcare at work, holiday programs for schoolchildren or access to caregivers, such as babysitters. This also helps attract and retain staff.</p>
<p><b>Gender equality organisations</b></p>	<p><b>Subject matter expertise:</b> Use expertise in intersectionality to help businesses in the manufacturing sector build their capacity to support women’s economic equity and leadership.</p>



**'Taking a discrimination case up is a massive and costly task that a lot of people don't actually have access to. People who are more likely to be discriminated against in a workplace are the least likely to have the resources to do that.'**

**Amelia, Apprentice Boilermaker**





## Priority 4: Accountability for workplace safety, culture, diversity and wellbeing

Poor culture in majority-men workforces has a major effect on women joining, staying and progressing in the workforce. To succeed in majority-men sectors, workplace culture – and their systems and structures – need to be supportive and safe for women.



## Priority 4: Accountability for workplace safety, culture, diversity and wellbeing

SMEs may need tailored support and resources to improve workplace gender equity. This is especially important in regional areas where the labour supply is more limited.

Cultural change needs commitment from all levels – from executives to middle-managers to employees. However, accountability rests with senior leaders. It is not the responsibility of women – in particular diverse and marginalised women – to create culture change. Making women do this alone can add to the significant mental load they already carry.



**Working in an organisation where women are in the minority is a risk factor for sexual harassment.**

**This may include men being over-represented in senior leadership and male-dominated workplace cultures.<sup>61</sup>**

**From 2018 to 2022, some people experienced workplace sexual harassment at rates much higher than the national average of 33%. This includes:**

- 47% of people aged 18-29.
- 56% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 48% of people with a disability.
- 70% of people with an intersex variation.<sup>62</sup>

### What is needed

#### Safe workplaces that meet legal obligations

Under occupational health and safety laws, employers must protect the health, safety and welfare of workers and other people on their work sites.

Under Victoria's *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, employers must provide workplaces that are free from discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. This means that it is not enough to only react to complaints of discrimination or sexual harassment. Organisations must be proactive and take steps to stop it from occurring in the first place.

#### Employers strive for greater inclusivity through workplace policies and practices

Beyond the legal obligations for worker safety, we want leaders to commit to diverse, respectful and inclusive workplace cultures. This means every worker is valued, treated fairly and differences are celebrated. This brings many benefits, including for staff wellbeing and morale, business performance and innovation.

Practical steps may include:

- introducing or expanding flexible work options
- raising staff awareness of what the workplace is doing to prevent and respond to sexual harassment
- reviewing job descriptions to see if any language may discourage women from applying<sup>63</sup>
- running unconscious bias training to reduce bias in hiring and promotion.<sup>64</sup>

**'[During Ramadan] I asked my manager to start earlier in the morning so I could finish early, and he said OK.'**

**Duaa, packing**

### Male leaders step up to create positive workplace culture

Male leaders are critical allies in creating safe, respectful and inclusive work cultures.

To support this, they can:

- build confidence on gender equality issues
- understand the barriers in their organisations
- take part in professional development or executive coaching
- sponsor women at work – particularly those women facing compounding barriers.

Sponsoring women helps them advance and creates ‘space at the table’ for them. A **sponsor** is someone in an organisation with power to give advice, arrange meetings and introductions, and use their connections and credibility to advance a woman's career.

### Boards and governing bodies that understand the value of boosting women’s participation at all levels

Boards exist to create value for organisations. Gender equity gives businesses:

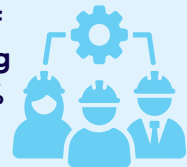
- access to diverse thinking
- a deeper talent pool
- resilience to skills shortages.

When boards understand this value, they are more likely to endorse related actions. This includes ensuring there is enough funding for gender equity initiatives. Board endorsement can also make it is easier to get unwilling people to take part.

Gender equity measures should be included in key performance indicators for leaders. This can help make sure the people with the most influence on work practices and culture are accountable for progress.

# 32.8%

Women are just 32.8% of Victoria’s manufacturing workforce, yet are 68.5% of all part-time workers in the sector.<sup>65</sup>



Of the Australian manufacturers reporting to WGEA, only 25% have a pay equity strategy or action plan.<sup>66</sup>

### Progress towards equal representation in leadership

To improve gender equity, businesses should set meaningful gender targets and have a plan to meet them.<sup>67</sup>

This approach focuses on continuous improvement, accountability and measuring performance.

As part of setting targets, employers should make sure that leadership roles are meaningfully designed to allow more women to take part. For example, this could involve job sharing and part-time senior leadership roles.





**'All of the forklift drivers were male in the workplace, she's the only female and they were all harassing her saying 'You can't do this, women can't do that'... when other men bumped into something, they would never report it, they'd say to her, 'Why are you making a big fuss?' Then when she did it, they made a big fuss about it.'**

**Vinii, organiser**





## Case study: Success in Victoria's construction industry

Like manufacturing, Victoria's construction sector has long been male-dominated.

In 2019, the Victorian Government released *Building gender equality: Victoria's women in construction strategy 2019–2022* to create training and employment opportunities for women across the industry.

It included a requirement for the Victorian Government to consider how it could use its purchasing power to create training and employment opportunities for women. This resulted in the **Building Equality Policy**. This contains three actions for construction companies delivering government projects:

- Action 1 requires minimum onsite targets for women for each trade, non-trade, management and specialist labour positions.
- Action 2 requires opportunities for women apprentices and trainees.
- Action 3 requires organisation-wide Gender Equality Action Plans.

An independent evaluation of the Building Equality Policy by RMIT University found that there has been an increase in activity to attract, recruit and retain women to meet the targets in Actions 1 and 2. It was also noted that the Gender Equality Action Plan requirements under Action 3 have resulted in improved workplace policies and processes, creating more opportunities for women workers.

Industry stakeholders were committed to and saw the need for the policy:

**'I do think that it is generally accepted now, the Building Equality Policy and what it is trying to achieve, so getting people on board to engage with it does not seem to be as much of an issue anymore.'**



## Victorian Government actions

### Pay Equality Toolkit

The Pay Equality Toolkit is a set of resources for SMEs in Victoria to help them achieve equal pay.

The toolkit includes:

- information on equal pay concepts
- a progress self-assessment tool, the Pay Equality Compass
- templates and guidance for creating things like audits and action plans.

The Compass helps SMEs assess strengths and opportunities in their business practices. It also identifies which tools they should use to meet their goals around equal pay. Tools include:

- a sample equal pay policy
- a model for handling complaints
- advice on how to conduct a gender pay audit
- a capability matrix to help businesses understand the skills each role needs
- other workbooks and templates for SMEs to tailor and use.

### WorkSafe Victoria's WorkWell Toolkit

This is a practical toolkit designed to help employers prevent and manage the causes of poor mental health. This includes work-related gendered violence and other hazards that are known to co-occur.

The WorkWell Toolkit was expanded as part of the Victorian Government's response to the Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment in 2022.

### Job Ready and Ready for Advancement project

Run by the Victorian branch of the Australian Workers Union, this program helps:

- develop workplace gender equity training for manufacturing and energy employers
- run pilot culture change initiatives in partner workplaces
- women members get trade-based roles.

### See What You Can Be and Act On Site project

Run by Women's Health Grampians, this project helps manufacturing businesses in the Wimmera region with workplace culture change.

The project focuses on improving recruitment policies, workplace policies and wraparound supports for women.

**Big Ideas: Boosting Implementation of Gender Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access project**

Run by the Geelong Manufacturing Council, the Big Ideas project helps manufacturing employers in Geelong address structural workplace barriers.

The project will:

- give employers education
- develop gender-equitable workplace policy templates.

**Women in Manufacturing project**

This project helps the women stay and progress in the manufacturing sector.

It partners with manufacturing employers to:

- pilot family-friendly work hours
- progress women from low-paying jobs to leadership positions
- run educational forums on improving workplace culture
- create a women's peer network.

The project is run by the Victorian branch of the AMWU.



## Case study: Recruiting and keeping more women in trades in the Grampians region with the Act On Site program

Women's Health Grampians is supporting women in the region to enter and excel in trades jobs through its Act On Site program.

The program aims to create safe, healthy and equitable workplaces for all.

Act On Site works with trade companies to become an employer of choice for a more gender diverse workforce. It enables businesses to address skills shortages by encouraging a wider pool of candidates to join.

Act On Site includes different action areas to help companies make change, including:

- hiring and promotion practices
- healthy workplace culture
- mentoring and support
- workplace policies and procedures.

A core element of the program is the development and implementation of company specific action plans. The actions are tracked over 9 to 12 months to assess the progress made.



## Leading practice: Acting on the gender pay gap at Alstom

Alstom is a leading transport manufacturer, with sites in Ballarat and Dandenong. Alstom builds the trains and trams used across Victoria.

The company's global headquarters in France has a strong commitment to gender equity, including through its *Diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) charter*.

In Australia, Alstom is taking concrete steps to achieve equal pay. This includes:

- taking a 'total reward approach' to salary review
- educating people managers
- a dedicated gender equity budget to correct historical pay gaps.

The company also aims to make sure salaries for new hires are consistent using a gender neutral process.

As part of its *Mind the Glass* action plan, Alstom educates people managers to address biases and ensure gender equity in progression and recruitment. It also conducts demographic research to better understand its workforce. Alstom benchmarks its activities against external assessments, including WGEA and WORK180.

Alstom is active in the community, giving women opportunities to learn about careers in manufacturing. Alstom ran events to introduce women and non-binary people to rail manufacturing at its Ballarat facility. It teamed up with Apprenticeship Support Australia (part of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and Empowered Women in Trades on these events.

In 2023, Alstom was awarded the Global Top Employer certification in Australia for the third year in the Asia Pacific region. The award recognised the company's commitment to being one of the best places to work.



**'The biggest difficulty I've had working in manufacturing was actually during my pregnancy. I was sacked by my employer and there was no real avenue for repercussions for that.'**

**Amelia, apprentice boilermaker**





## Case study: Working with employers for cultural change and psychological safety in the workplace

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) has an initiative to improve the culture of manufacturing workplaces in Victoria.

The first step involves consulting with managers, as well as men, women and people of all genders in the workplace on the best way to create safer and more inclusive work environments. Following this, action plans are developed. Lastly, businesses get training on how to prevent work-related gender violence.

The initiative is supported by funding from the Victorian Government.

Viva Energy is a Victorian manufacturer of fuel and other energy products for various sectors across Australia. It is an industry leader that

has won numerous awards for its progressive approach to diversity and inclusion, in particular gender diversity.

Viva Energy's success includes the proactive steps it has taken over many years to fulfil its positive duty obligations. It has done this through policy, education, visible inclusive leadership and providing team members with avenues to seek support and report incidents.

The AMWU approached Viva Energy to form a partnership based on the 'gold standard' the company has achieved. It sets an example to other organisations in the manufacturing sector and provides a proven framework that others can follow.



## How we can work together to create change

### Levers of influence on accountability for workplace culture and safety

Industry actor	Lever of influence
<p><b>Unions</b></p>	<p><b>Advocacy:</b> Explore options for all workers for better prevention and responses to workplace sexual harassment and gendered violence.</p> <p><b>Member data:</b> Build the evidence base on women’s experiences in the manufacturing sector by surveying members about gender equity.</p> <p><b>Support gender parity as business as usual:</b> Commit to having gender balance on event panels, committees and boards.</p> <p><b>Enterprise bargaining:</b> Negotiate and advocate for clauses in enterprise bargaining agreements that support and protect workers who report bullying, discrimination or harassment..</p>
<p><b>SMEs</b></p>	<p><b>Agility to make change:</b> Smaller companies can often make changes faster than larger ones, including introducing cultural safety and gender equity actions. With smaller workforces and fewer layers of management, the effects of such changes are often felt more quickly in SMEs.</p> <p><b>Start small:</b> Identify one area for improvement and take meaningful steps towards it. For example, do a pay equity audit or look for ways to give staff flexible work options. Build on progress from there.</p> <p><b>Staff training:</b> Run active bystander training for all staff to build skills to call out sexism, disrespect and harassment. Employers should also offer training on preventing sexual harassment and creating culturally safe workplaces for First Nations, migrant and multicultural women.</p> <p><b>Develop inclusive leadership capability of leaders:</b> Inclusive leadership means being able to lead a diverse group of people while respecting and valuing their perspectives and experiences. Inclusive leaders have the mindset, knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to make sure diverse employee perspectives shape and improve business strategy, work, systems, values and norms for success.<sup>68</sup></p> <p><b>Track progress in achieving equal pay:</b> For example, using the Pay Equality Toolkit and its self-assessment tool. For more information, see <a href="#">Pay Equality Toolkit</a>.</p>

Industry actor	Lever of influence
Large employers	<p><b>Develop inclusive leadership capability of leaders:</b> Larger manufacturing employers have an opportunity to set an example in embedding inclusive leadership practices and setting a new standard in the industry.</p> <p><b>Clear processes for reporting and responding to sexual harassment, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour:</b> Make sure reporting takes a victim-centred approach. Give staff regular information on how to make a report.</p> <p><b>Workplace audits:</b> Conduct workplace gender equality audits to understand the organisation's barriers and opportunities for improvement.</p> <p><b>Action plans:</b> Develop a workplace gender equality action plan.</p> <p><b>Support systems:</b> Create internal support systems for women. For example, peer networking groups, professional development opportunities and mentoring. Make sure there are pathways for reporting workplace sexual harassment. Create both formal and informal supports to address sexual harassment.</p> <p><b>Staff training:</b> Run active bystander training for all staff to build skills to call out sexism, disrespect and harassment. Employers should also offer training on preventing sexual harassment and creating culturally safe workplaces for First Nations, migrant and multicultural women.</p> <p><b>Targets:</b> Set time-bound targets to improve the representation of women at all levels and in leadership. Include transparent monitoring and reporting.</p> <p><b>Lead by example:</b> Share leading practice on gender equality, including with smaller companies in your supply chains. Consider including policies on gender equality in procurement contracts.</p>

Industry actor	Lever of influence
<p><b>Industry associations and peaks</b></p>	<p><b>Support employer capacity building:</b> Help SMEs put in place fair practices around gender. Help build the capacity of organisations of all sizes in the sector.</p> <p><b>Build the evidence base:</b> Collect and analyse data on experiences of women and people from other under-represented groups in manufacturing. Track progress against key indicators over time.</p> <p><b>Partnerships:</b> Develop and strengthen partnerships to improve outcomes for women in manufacturing. This includes with gender equality organisations and training providers.</p> <p><b>Transport:</b> Explore ride-sharing options to transport employees to and from work. Many manufacturing sites may be near each other but far from public transport. Ride sharing may especially help migrant women, who are less likely to have a driver’s license or private vehicle. It could also increase safety for women working nightshifts. Industry associations can connect local employers to help them share costs.</p> <p><b>Support gender parity as business as usual:</b> Commit to having gender balance on event panels, committees and boards.</p> <p><b>Showcase leading practice:</b> Highlight examples of leading practice on gender equality with networks. Include initiatives that help women facing compounding barriers.</p>
<p><b>Gender equality organisations</b></p>	<p><b>Partner with employers:</b> Partner with businesses to help build their capacity to achieve gender equity outcomes.</p>





**'I'd like to stay in my current job because everyone there is friendly and nice from the boss down.'**

**Duaa, Packing**



# Action Plan

## Victorian Government actions for each priority area



### Clear and appealing career pathways

**1. Address gender bias in careers education** and pathways options through reforms to senior secondary education

**2. Introduce students to education and career pathways in STEM**, including advanced manufacturing, through Tech Schools

**3. Deliver the Trade and Tech Fit career expo to showcase trade and technical career opportunities**, including in manufacturing

**4. Help students get work experience in in-demand industries**, including manufacturing

**5. Provide free career, employment and training support services** across Victoria through Skills and Jobs Centres

**6. Deliver trade demonstration events to give women and girls hands-on experience with tools** through the *Women in Trades* project



### Access to education and training

**7. Through the Head Start program, help year 10 to 12 students take part in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships** to build skills and capabilities relevant to high growth industries like manufacturing

**8. Free TAFE courses** aligned to industry needs under the Free TAFE program

**9. Roll out trades opportunities for Victorian women** through career pathways for women apprentices

**10. Continue Skilling the Bay** to encourage women students into male-dominated fields

**11. Improve access to the VDSS core offering** and shift perceptions that VDSS is largely focused on trades in traditionally male-dominated industries

**12. Deliver 'Introduction to the Industry' sessions and 'Job Readiness' training** through the *Women Onsite* project

**13. Support career pathways, and access to education and training in manufacturing for women with diverse backgrounds and experiences living in Hume and Whittlesea**, through the *Re-defining Women's Work in Hume and Whittlesea* project

**14. Continue to advocate for higher apprentice wages** through submissions to relevant inquiries, including the Fair Work Commission Annual Wage Review.



### Support for economic equity and leadership opportunities

**15. Reduce the cost of access to early childhood education and care** and barriers to women's workforce participation through *Best Start, Best Life*

**16. Encourage companies to support women's economic equity** through the Leadership in Gender Equality and Inclusion award and recognise leadership in the sector through the Women Manufacturer of the Year award at the annual Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame Awards

**17. Deliver a mentoring program** to help Victorian women thrive in manufacturing operations roles, with a particular focus on women employed in rural and regional small businesses

**18. Improve women's retention and employment outcomes in manufacturing apprenticeships** through the *Nice Work If You Can Get It* project.

**19. Help women, gender diverse apprentices and mid-career workers become leaders after their apprenticeship** through the *Apprentice to Leader* program



### Accountability for workplace safety, culture, diversity and wellbeing

**20. Through the Pay Equality Toolkit, give SMEs advice and templates** for creating an equal pay policy, gender pay audits and handling complaints

**21. Help employers prevent and manage work-related gendered violence** with the *WorkSafe Victoria WorkWell Toolkit*

**22. Through the Women in Manufacturing project, partner with manufacturing companies to pilot flexible working hours**, boost the advancement of women from low-paying roles into leadership positions and support SMEs to implement culture change initiatives

**23. Through the See What You Can Be/Act On Site project, deliver a whole-of-workplace culture change program for manufacturing workplaces** in the Wimmera region focusing on policies, procedures, and wraparound supports

**24. Address barriers to women taking part in the manufacturing industry, including SMEs**, through the *Big Ideas* project

**25. Help manufacturing employers carry out workplace gender equality training and culture change initiatives to help retain and advance women** through the *Job Ready and Ready for Advancement* project



# Governance

## Oversight and monitoring

Progress under this strategy will be considered as part of reporting under Action 57 of *Our equal state*.

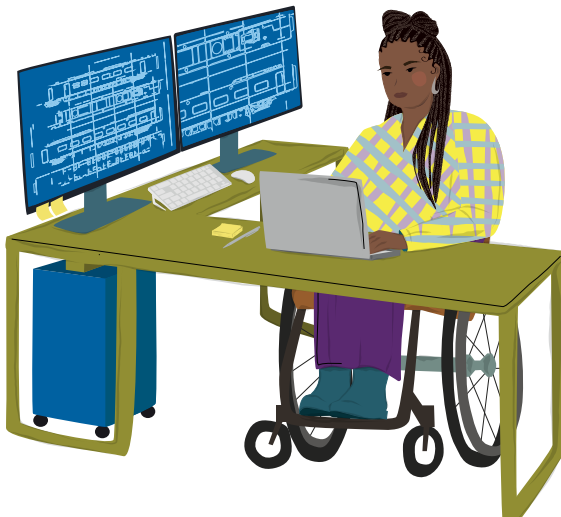
An update will be given to the *Our equal state* Reference Group. This group has been set up to give advice on the implementation of *Our equal state* (Action 99).

Updates may also be given to the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council.

This strategy is designed to build the Victorian manufacturing sector's awareness of and capacity to improve gender equity.

This is a long-term goal. It needs all industry actors to make meaningful progress against workplace gender equality indicators and achieve the strategy's desired outcomes:

- There are appealing, diverse and accessible career pathways for women in the manufacturing sector.
- More women enter and thrive in manufacturing in leadership, management, trades and technical manufacturing roles.
- Gender pay gaps in manufacturing are reduced or closed.
- The manufacturing workforce is less gender segregated.
- Manufacturing workplaces are safer, more accessible and flexible for all genders.





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