



# **DVA Gender Equity Action Plan:**

**Consolidating the Achievements,  
Moving Forward 2022–2026**



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**



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## Consolidating the Achievements, Moving Forward 2022–2026

### The APS Gender Equality Strategy

The *APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026: Realising the Benefits for all* (APS Strategy) presents a shared vision for gender equality towards which everyone in the APS can contribute.

The three APS Strategy objectives aim to embed inclusive and respectful workplace practices to enable all genders equality of opportunity and full participation so that the APS can deliver at its best.

**Objective 1:** To see leaders at all levels hold themselves and others to account for demonstrating gender equitable and inclusive behaviour.

**Objective 2:** To shift gender norms, and normalise respectful workplaces and access to flexibility for all.

**Objective 3:** To embed gender equality and inclusion in all that we do.

To achieve these objectives, the APS Strategy outlines six actions areas that contain minimum standards that all APS departments are expected to implement:

- Leadership and accountability *that progresses gender equality through individual and collective action.*
- Respectful workplaces and empowered people *that prioritises our people's safety and wellbeing.*
- Shifting gender stereotypes *to support the career and life choices of our people.*
- Flexible ways of working *to give our people more choice and enhance their contributions at work.*
- Gender data *that ensures our efforts are informed by the evidence base and progress is visible.*
- Leveraging our external influence *to champion gender equality in our everyday work.*

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) understands the imperative of supporting the six action areas in a way that brings the APS Strategy to life within DVA's unique context.

## **DVA's Commitment: Consolidating the Achievements, Moving Forward**

In the APS context, equality ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to make the most of their experiences, careers and talent. Equity is about recognising differences and providing tools and support so that everyone has an opportunity to succeed. Equality is our end goal, and equity can help us get there. DVA's *Gender Equity Action Plan 2022–26* outlines the department's commitment to further embedding gender equality and equity into all that we do through short, medium and long-term actions. DVA will continue to focus on maintaining an effective gender balance at all levels. This Action Plan calls on the SES to lead from the front and seeks to further embed and strengthen existing flexibility arrangements. It also seeks to uplift staff capability through professional development programs already underway in DVA.

DVA acknowledges that people are our greatest asset and is committed to establishing a respectful and safe work environment, improved employee engagement and wellbeing and increased innovation and productivity.

### **Action Areas**

The action areas within this Action Plan align directly with the six APS Strategy action areas. They focus on driving policy, communication, information, performance, capability, systems, facilities, data innovation and operational uplift and best practice. Moving DVA forward to be a benchmark of gender equality and equity in the APS.

## **How will the Action Plan be implemented?**

Leadership commitment at every level of DVA and dedicated roles such as Assistant Secretary People Services Branch (PSB) and the SES Gender Equality Champion will provide accountability for driving progress through successful implementation of the Action Areas.

### **Governance**

The SES Gender Equality Champion, Assistant Secretary PSB and Executive Management Board (EMB) will receive reports on progress that is integrated into reporting timelines of other diversity and inclusion initiatives to ensure holistic and seamless reporting across all diversity and inclusion projects.

### **Ensuring progress: evaluation and reporting**

This Action Plan is a live document. A mid-term review will be conducted in 2024 to inform the approach for the remainder of this Action Plan, whether continuing as planned or piloting new initiatives.

The People Services Branch will coordinate:

- bi-annual strategy progress reports to the EMB, Strategy Reference Group and Assistant Secretary People Services Branch,
- mandated reports will be sent to relevant external entities and
- a final evaluation of the Action Plan.

### **Timeframes**

Timeframe to implement definitions:

- Short term: 0–12 months (December 2022 – November 2023).
- Medium term: 12–24 months (December 2023 – November 2024).
- Long term: 24–48 months (December 2024 – November 2026).

# 2022–2026 Implementation Plan

## Action Area 1: Leadership and accountability

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Information is accessible to external parties in a strategic and planned manner to provide an accurate picture of DVA's gender equality position.</b>	DVA publish on the internet targeted plans for gender equality—informed by data and aligned to department priorities.	This Action Plan will be published on the DVA internet and intranet sites.	Short term
	Develop an external facing communications and engagement plan to raise awareness in the APS and broader community of DVA's successes and plans in the area of gender equality, diversity and inclusion.	An engagement plan will be developed that will outline what will be communicated to external stakeholders via which channels and when.	Medium term
	DVA publish on the internet prominent gender equality data within broader Diversity and Inclusion information to provide an accurate public facing picture of DVA's gender equality position and culture.	DVA gender equality data will be published on the internet alongside other Diversity and Inclusion information.	Medium term

## Action Area 1: Leadership and accountability continued

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Recruitment and induction materials are updated as required.</b>	Recruitment materials include references to DVA's commitments to gender equality and inclusion.	All DVA recruitment materials will include written acknowledgement of DVA's commitment to gender equality.	Short term
	Induction materials include references to DVA's commitments to gender equality, diversity and inclusion.	DVA's corporate induction program will include information about DVA's commitment to gender equality including information about leave provisions, breast feeding policy and rooms, bullying and harassment and so on.	Short term
<b>Implementing a listen, learn and take action approach to gender equality in DVA.</b>	Diversity and Inclusion staff led network become accountable for supporting gender equality initiatives.	Processes will be established so that staff feedback on gender equality issues can be provided to the Diversity and Inclusion staff led network.	Short term
	The Diversity and Inclusion staff led network establish opportunities for staff to provide their perspectives and experiences on gender equality issues in DVA on an ongoing basis and provide these findings to the Gender Equality Champion and SES.	Processes will be established to raise gender equality issues with the Gender Equality Champion and EMB as required.	Short term

## Action Area 2: Respectful workplaces and empowered people

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Strengthening approaches to managing risks in relation to sexual harassment, harassment, bullying and discrimination in the workplace.</b>	Integration of Respect@Work findings into DVA policies and processes as endorsed and required by Government.	An improvement in APS Employee Census results over the life of this Action Plan for questions relating to discrimination, harassment and bullying.	Short term or as required by Government
	Code of Complaints (harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying) statistics and case studies published internally on the intranet for transparency across the department pursuant to advice from Risk and Legals.	An increase in satisfaction levels reported in relation to how experienced or witnessed instances of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or bullying were dealt with over the life of this Action Plan.	Long term
	Clearer guidance and communication provided on reporting processes and who to report to in relation to incidents of sexual harassment, harassment, bullying and discrimination in the workplace.	In the medium term a potential increase in the rates of reported incidents of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or bullying initially as staff have growing confidence in reporting these incidents.	Short term
	Campaigns be organised to raise awareness of the Code of Conduct, APS Values, and recognising forms of sexual harassment, harassment, bullying and discrimination in the workplace.	In the longer term a reduction in the rates of reported incidents of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or bullying.	Medium term
	Include gender equity topics on the agenda at team meetings, instigate discussions in the lunch room and be part of developing an inclusive culture. Establish momentum and initiate a program of activities together. This will be more successful than a stand-alone event.		Short term and ongoing into medium term and long term

## Action Area 2: Respectful workplaces and empowered people continued

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>An appropriate training schedule is in place to support a safe workplace.</b>	All staff be required to undertake appropriate training on a rolling schedule as required in relation to sexual harassment, harassment, bullying and discrimination. For example, the Family and Domestic Violence Support at Work training program once every two years.	Same success measures as for the previous section above.	Short term
<b>Ensuring DVA staff have access to superannuation information and resources through all stages of their careers.</b>	A comprehensive superannuation communication and information provision toolkit be developed that provides superannuation resources and information to managers and staff at all levels on an as needs, just in time and proactive basis from induction through to retirement, including as part of the PFA review cycle.	Superannuation resources and information products are included in Induction, PFA, Intranet and other information sources and publicised to DVA staff on a regular basis.	Long term
<b>Reviewing policy and process gaps to ensure staff have clear guidelines on various workplace accommodations and standards.</b>	DVA to draft menstruation, fertility treatment and menopause policies that include workplace accommodations and approaches.	Policies will provide for menstruation, fertility treatment and menopause through greater workplace flexibility for women and their partners, office accommodations and leave provisions within existing policy parameters.	Medium term
	Comprehensive review of DVA signature blocks to seek standardisation across the department including guidance on optional use of personal pronouns and work days and hours.	Signature blocks will be standardized across DVA within agreed parameters.	Short term



Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Undertaking a review of building facilities and IT to ensure equitable access for all genders.</b>	Review breastfeeding facilities across all DVA offices to maintain and enhance Australian Breastfeeding Association accreditation.	Australian Breastfeeding Association accreditation is maintained and if possible enhanced to best practice status.	Short term
	Review of toilet facilities across DVA offices to ensure the presence of inclusive facilities for transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary gender identities.	Designated toilet facilities are inclusive at each DVA office location.	Short term
	Update relevant systems to ensure staff can identify themselves according to their identified gender if they so choose.	Systems are updated to enable staff to accurately identify themselves according to their gender.	Long term
<b>Undertaking a review of the internet and intranet to ensure inclusive use of images.</b>	An agreed percentage of images on the DVA internet and intranet feature people who are transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary gender identities.	Inclusive images are present on the internet and intranet.	Short term

## Action Area 3: Shifting stereotypes

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Ensure recruitment pipelines into gender dominated roles are gender balanced where appropriate.</b>	Undertake an analysis of specific job roles within DVA and set specific targets to achieve more of a gender balance in gender dominated roles.	Minimum 50 percent women in SES leadership is maintained and gender dominated roles such as Executive Assistant target a 40/40/20 gender balance. That is 40% women, 40% men, 20% any gender.	Short term
<b>Seeking innovation, cultural change and challenging stereotypes through new ways of providing information to DVA employees in relation to flexible working policies, gender equality and leave.</b>	Implementation of visible intranet and other high profile campaigns through TED (with input from interested staff) to influence gender equality and broader culture to highlight leave and flexible work options for staff across the gender and time of life spectrum, including for parental reasons (both as a parent and caring for a parent), caring for partners, siblings or grandchildren, menstrual issues, menopausal issues, mental health of self and others, service animal care, pet care and so on.	Improved results in DVA All Staff Survey for flexible work across the life of this Strategy.  Improved results in DVA Gender Equality Survey for senior leaders who engage in flexible work.  The percentage of males choosing to work part-time in DVA increases above 15% of the part-time workforce.	Short term and ongoing
	PSB to implement new, innovative and engaging ways of delivering policy to make it clearer and easier to understand through intranet campaigns, real-life scenario based applications of flexible working and leave, videos and so on that sit alongside policy documentation in relation to leave and flexible work options.	Staff wellbeing results in the APS Employee Census stay stable or improve over the life of this Action Plan.	Medium term and ongoing into long term
	Highlighting of senior men who access flexible work due to parenting or other caring responsibilities to highlight non-typical usage of flex-work examples.		Long term

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**Review the Performance Feedback Scheme to ensure it is effectively supporting career development of all staff.**

Strengthen career planning aspects of the Performance Feedback Scheme (PFS) to support staff who both want to move forward in their career and those who are happy to learn new skills but stay where they are.

Career planning aspects of the PFS will be considered as part of the PMF Review being carried out under the Organisational Capability Strategy.

Short term

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## Action Area 4: Flexible ways of working

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>SES take the lead in embedding a flexible working culture into DVA at all levels.</b>	SES to consider ways that they can model flexible ways of working to ensure that the talent of all genders are encouraged to continue career progression if they so choose and that flexibility need not be completely lost or be invisible as one moves up the career ladder.	Improved results in DVA All Staff Survey for flexible work across the life of this Strategy.  Improved results in DVA Gender Equality Survey for senior leaders who engage in flexible work.  Minimum 50 percent women in SES leadership is maintained.	Short term
	SES and managers to take the lead in making clear to staff the variety of flexible work available beyond remote work and inclusive of compressed work weeks, part-time, broken-up times during the day.	SES send out communications on key dates publicising flexible work options available to staff.	Medium term
<b>Reviewing and drafting policies and other documentation to ensure flexible working is fully supported by a comprehensive, best practice guides and governance framework.</b>	Drafting of best practice policy documents/user guides and other manager support resources in relation to managing and building cohesive teams and managing underperformance in the hybrid work environment and continually adding to and updating these as new findings uncover better approaches.	Improved results in DVA All Staff Survey for flexible work across the life of this Strategy.  The percentage of staff who have no access to flexible working arrangements will reduce to <5% by December 2026 on APS Employee Census and DVA All Staff Survey.	Short term and ongoing throughout life of the action plan
	The Performance Feedback Scheme and related policies be reviewed to ensure managers are being encouraged to manage for outcomes and results based performance rather than 'presenteeism' in the hybrid environment within attendance requirements.	Incremental year by year increase in use of TOIL by EL cohort from December 2024.	Medium term

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Barriers to flexible working in DVA be actively identified and mitigated.</b>	An audit of flexible work practices be included in bi-annual reporting to EMB highlighting areas of usage of flexible working across DVA.	Improved results in DVA All Staff Survey for flexible work across the life of this Strategy.	Medium term and ongoing
	<p>Strategies be developed to raise awareness of, and prevent proximity bias when assigning projects and tasks to ensure team member are assigned rewarding work no matter where they work and what their gender.</p> <p>A comprehensive review of part-time work arrangements in DVA and review of the part-time work policy to ensure consistent application and support for part-time arrangements for all genders across DVA, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part-time staff are not placed in full-time roles and expected to just manage workloads.</li> <li>Job design be actively engaged in to ensure part-time workers are not constantly expected to undertake more work than their hours allow.</li> <li>Encouragement of part-time acting opportunities where applicable to encourage career progression.</li> <li>Targeted policy/training advice for managers and senior leaders on how to manage staff in job share/part-time arrangements.</li> <li>Job sharing arrangements are well understood and implemented as required.</li> </ul>	<p>By December 2026 DVA Gender Equality Survey results will improve for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The advancement of part-time employees is actively supported in DVA (&gt;25%)</li> <li>It is difficult to work part-time and have a career in DVA (&gt;15%)</li> <li>It is feasible to be a part-time manager in DVA (&gt;30%)</li> </ul> <p>The percentage of males choosing to work part-time in DVA increases above 15% of the part-time workforce.</p> <p>More than 40% of DVA SES positions are, in principle able to be located outside of the ACT by 2026.</p>	<p>Medium term</p> <hr/> <p>Review Planning = Short term, Review = Medium term, Embedding best practice = Long term</p>

## Action Area 4: Flexible ways of working continued

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Professional development leverages existing programs and opportunities wherever possible to ensure short to medium term capability uplift of managers leading teams in a hybrid working environment.</b>	Consideration be given to mandating that all managers complete the Manager Development Program (MDP) by a set date as agreed to by EMB.	75% of the manager cohort in DVA have completed the MDP by 31 December 2026.	Short term
	All new starters in DVA at the APS5 level and above be required to complete the MDP within their first 24 months of joining the department.		Medium term
<b>Identifying and implementing best practice professional development and staff support approaches in a flexible working environment.</b>	Identification of best practice in building cohesive teams for the hybrid model of working and these approaches provided to managers as part of the Manager Development Program.	Employee Engagement score in APS Employee Census remains at 75% or higher over the life of this Action Plan.	Medium term
	Managers engage staff on long-term leave through phone calls and emails including staying in touch by extending invitations to work place events and functions.	Productivity change results in DVA All Staff Survey will continue to be above 70% for the duration of this Action Plan.	Short term
	Policy and systems review be undertaken to assess the viability of allowing staff on long term leave to maintain remote access to work email if they so choose, to enable them to remain engaged in workplace events to the extent they wish to be using their own device.	By December 2025 DVA APS Employee Census positive results will increase for Leadership – Immediate Supervisor >5%.	Medium term

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Review the Performance Feedback Scheme to ensure it is effectively supporting career development of all staff.</b>	A review of Individual Performance Agreements of part-time workers to identify any discrepancies between ratings for full-time and part-time workers. If discrepancies exist, take steps to understand why and address if necessary.	Part-time workers are treated equitably on IPAs.	Medium term



## Action Area 5: Gender data

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>Providing data internally to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>challenge stereotypes in leave and work arrangements</b></li> <li>• <b>enable better targeted gender equality initiatives</b></li> <li>• <b>highlight the application of flexible work policies across DVA</b></li> <li>• <b>reveal specific job roles that could be open to gender targeted recruitment</b></li> <li>• <b>highlight training shortfalls across divisions, branches and teams</b></li> </ul>	<p>Collect, analyse and publish internally on the intranet gender disaggregated data across relevant people metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender composition of DVA at a high level and by division and branch</li> <li>• uptake of flexible work across DVA (including IFAs, part-time work, job sharing, WFH)</li> <li>• carers leave, parental leave, other</li> <li>• rates of promotion, internal mobility, higher duties</li> <li>• recruitment (including graduate, apprentices, veteran intakes)</li> <li>• redundancies, separations</li> <li>• geographic location</li> <li>• key job roles and gender composition</li> <li>• training uptake by work area and gender</li> </ul>	<p>Data is collected, accessible and transparent across all people-metrics, including uptake of flexible work, carers leave, and parental leave, rates of promotion, internal mobility, higher duties, remuneration, recruitment, redundancies, and separations.</p>	<p>Short term and ongoing across medium and long term</p>
	<p>Create an accompanying communication strategy to ensure DVA staff are aware of the publication of the gender disaggregated data to increase engagement and support changes in gendered behaviour and decision making.</p>	<p>Staff indicate that they are able to make informed decisions using the published data.</p>	<p>Short term</p>
<b>Increase transparency with external statutory bodies.</b>	<p>Participate in Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) surveys.</p>	<p>DVA data is published in WGEA survey results.</p>	<p>Short term</p>



## Action Area 6: Leveraging external influence

Our goals	Our actions	Measuring our success	Timeframe to implement
<b>SES seek to publicise DVA's achievements as appropriate at external forums.</b>	SES to seek opportunities as appropriate to speak about gender equality and DVA's successes and plans at public engagements.	SES Gender Equality Champion attends at least one external forum per year to speak on DVA's successes.	Medium term
	DVA collate instances where SES publicise DVA's gender equality achievements such as the Female Veteran's and Veteran's Families Forum.	A list of public facing engagements is maintained and published on the internet and intranet.	Short term
<b>Linking DVA in with broader APS wide gender equality initiatives and perspectives.</b>	Identifying and appointing dedicated gender advocates from the Diversity and Inclusion staff led network to represent DVA at the Cross-Agency Gender Equality Network (CAGEN) to ensure formalised attendance and cross-agency cooperation and perspectives.	Identified DVA staff attend CAGEN events in a formalised capacity.	Short term





