COMMISSION FOR
GENDER EQUALITY
IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (CGEPS) Progress Reporting and Audit Processes Review

Diagnosis report

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Document date: 11 December 2024

Overview and content

Introduction

This document serves as a diagnosis report for the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (CGEPS) Progress Reporting Review project, supported by Right Lane Consulting.

The aim of this document is to provide a synthesis of enablers and areas for improvement with the progress reporting and progress audit processes. These insights are informed by extensive stakeholder consultation, including:

- Focus group discussions with representatives from 24 defined entities

- Survey on progress reporting and audit experience conducted by CGEPS

- Interview with the Commissioner, Dr Niki Vincent

- Consultation and document review with the CGEPS project team and managers.

It also includes a list of strategic and tactical opportunities along with the high-level action plans for CGEPS and defined entities, which would serve as the foundation to improve the Progress reporting and progress audit processes.

If you have any questions about this document, please contact Radhika Chelliah at radhika.chelliah@rightlane.com.au or Afsaneh Rashidi at afsaneh.Rashidi@rightlane.com.au.

Contents

Context

Gender equality remains a global challenge, with Australia making significant strides through Victoria's Gender Equality Act 2020

Globally, gender equality remains one of the most pressing and complex challenges of our time. While significant progress has been made, many countries continue to grapple with structural inequalities that disproportionately affect women and marginalised groups. Across the world, efforts to bridge these gaps have gained momentum, with legislative reforms, social movements, and public policy playing key roles in advancing the agenda for equality. Yet, even with this progress, many of the systems and structures that sustain gender inequality persist, particularly in the workplace.

Australia, however, stands out as one of the few countries that has committed to tackling these issues through robust legislative frameworks. In recent years, Australia has seen an increased focus on gender equality, driven by both public and political demand. A series of reforms, campaigns, and inquiries, such as the #MeToo movement and the Respect at Work inquiry, have underscored the urgent need to address inequalities in the workplace and beyond. However, despite decades of advocacy by unions and women's movements, achieving widespread gender equality continues to be a significant challenge, especially in sectors characterised by gender segregation and undervaluation of work.

Amid this backdrop, Victoria has taken a leadership role with the introduction of the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic). This groundbreaking legislation positions Victoria as a leader in workplace gender equality, both in Australia and internationally. The Act mandates public sector organisations, local councils, hospitals and universities, collectively referred to as 'defined entities,' to embed gender equality in their policies, programs, and services. These entities, with 50 or more employees, are required to conduct workplace audits, develop Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs), undertake Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) and report on their progresses every two years to ensure they promote gender equality. There are ~300 defined entities in Victoria with obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020.

The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (CGEPS), led by Dr Niki Vincent, the Gender Equality Commissioner, oversees the implementation of the Gender Equality Act, providing guidance and support to defined entities as they work towards compliance with their legislative responsibilities. CGEPS is comprised of 16.5 FTE and with limited funding, it has supported and monitored the progress of defined entities, receiving and analysing close to 300 progress reports and audits from defined entities that are diverse in size, function, and capacity.

A key responsibility for CGEPS is monitoring the progress of defined entities under the Gender Equality Act, with 282 entities participating in the 2023 reporting cycle

In the 2023 reporting cycle - the first-time organisations were required to report on progress - 282 defined entities submitted progress reports and audits. Around one-third of organisations demonstrated compliance in the GIA and GEAP sections of their progress reports, as well as in explaining their progress against all 7 workplace gender equality indicators, while over 80% were fully compliant in progress audits. Notably, 95% of defined entities demonstrated compliance in the GEAP section of their reports. Key areas for improvement include conducting and reporting on GIAs and demonstrating progress against all workplace gender equality indicators. The indicators with the lowest compliance levels were sexual harassment and gendered workforce segregation, whereas governing body composition and gender composition at all levels of the workforce showed the highest compliance. The Commission is focusing on supporting rural and regional organisations, as well as the public healthcare sector, to better integrate GIAs and track progress ahead of the next reporting cycle.

Victoria's leadership in gender equality is further distinguished by its comprehensive and intersectional approach. The Gender Equality Act requires employers not only to address the gender pay gap but also to make 'reasonable and material progress' across a broad set of gender equality indicators, including gender pay equity, gender composition at all levels of the workforce, gender composition of governing bodies, workplace sexual harassment, recruitment and promotion, gendered work segregation and leave and flexibility. The Act has an emphasis on intersectionality, considering the way in which gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage and discrimination. This progressive approach has positioned Victoria as a model for other jurisdictions, both within Australia and globally, to follow.

However, as this report outlines, there are areas for improvement across the progress reporting and progress audit processes. This report reflects insights from survey, focus groups with defined entities and consultation with CGEPS. **These consultations were completed before the release of progress report and audit feedback by CGEPS.** It includes what has been working well, what didn't work well, and opportunities for improvement.

In a global landscape where gender equality remains a challenge, Victoria's commitment exemplifies the potential for meaningful progress. This report acknowledges the significant achievements made by CGEPS and the defined entities it supports and offers a pathway for future progress, emphasising the importance of collaboration, continued vigilance, and strategic focus in the ongoing journey toward gender equality.

This project has engaged substantially with defined entities to review the effectiveness of the progress reporting and progress audit processes

The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (CGEPS) is in the process of gathering feedback and exploring ways to improve the process for progress reporting and progress audits.

CGEPS engaged Right Lane Consulting to review the efficiency and effectiveness of the progress reporting and audit processes through engagement with defined entities.

The objective of this report is to identify enablers, challenges and possible opportunities for improvement in progress reporting and progress audit processes.

To review the effectiveness of the progress reporting and progress audit processes, several key activities were conducted in August and September 2024:

1 **Focus Groups:** Right Lane Consulting engaged representatives from 24 defined entities (representing 8% of total defined entities) across various sectors.

Eight 90-minute focus groups were conducted, four focused on progress reporting and four on the progress audit. These focus groups involved selected defined entities from various sectors (including government organisations, councils, hospitals, universities, and TAFEs), different locations (metro, rural and regional Victoria) and organisations with different size (number of employees). A total of 31 participants from 24 defined entities took part.

2 **Consultations:** Right Lane Consulting facilitated discussions with the Commissioner and the CGEPS team.

3 **Surveys:** CGEPS issued progress reporting and progress audit surveys to all 300 defined entities. Progress reporting surveys received a ~26% response rate, whilst the progress audit survey received a ~20% response rate. Please be advised that only the high-level insights from these surveys are included in this report.
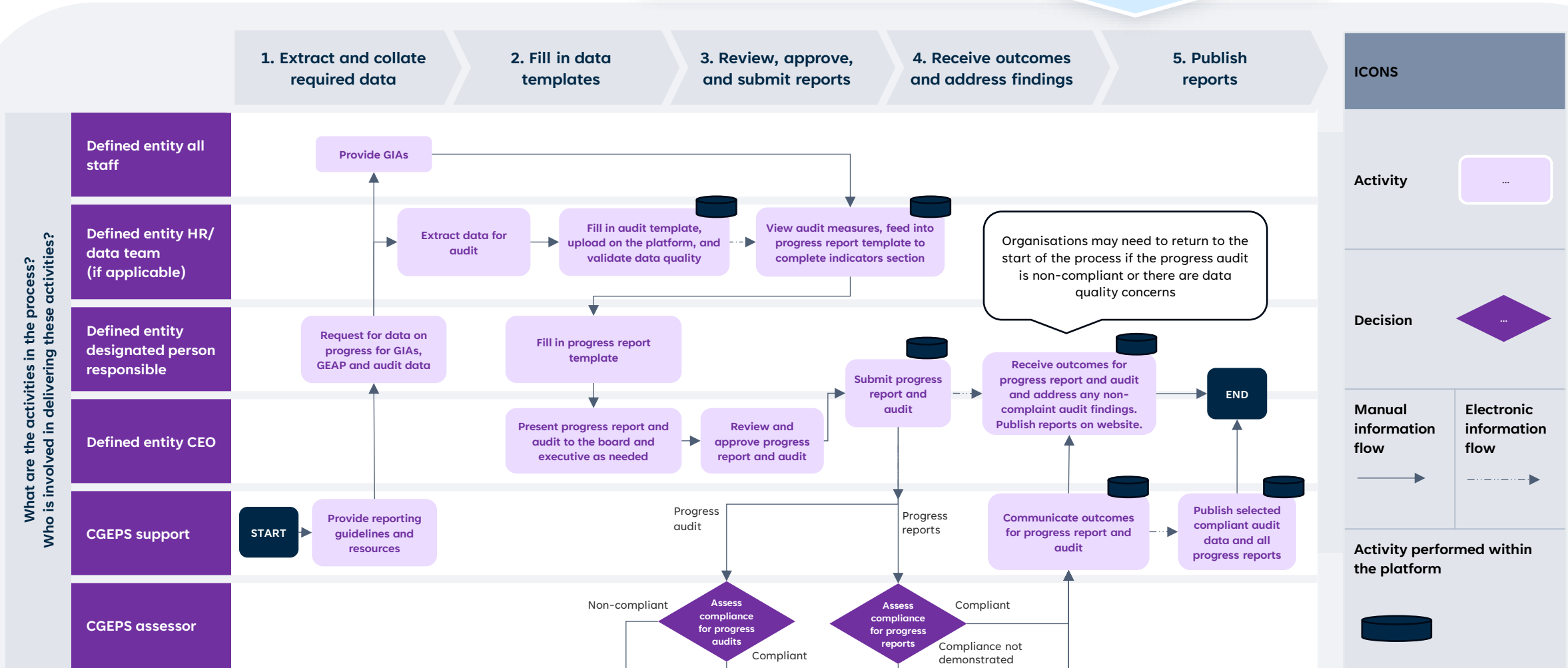
- Refer to pages 12 and 22 for the high-level summary of the themes on what did/didn't work well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes.
- Refer to pages 46 and 47 for the priority list of actions for CGEPS and defined entities.

Progress reporting and progress audit process review

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Phases:
1. Extract and collate required data
2. Fill in data templates
3. Review, approve, and submit reports
4. Receive outcomes and address findings
5. Publish reports

What are the activities in the process? Who is involved in delivering these activities?

Swimlanes:
- Defined entity all staff
- Defined entity HR/ data team (if applicable)
- Defined entity designated person responsible
- Defined entity CEO
- CGEPS support
- CGEPS assessor

Activities / flow:
- Provide GIAs
- Extract data for audit
- Fill in audit template, upload on the platform, and validate data quality
- View audit measures, feed into progress report template to complete indicators section
- Request for data on progress for GIAs, GEAP and audit data
- Fill in progress report template
- Submit progress report and audit
- Present progress report and audit to the board and executive as needed
- Review and approve progress report and audit
- Receive outcomes for progress report and audit and address any non-complaint audit findings. Publish reports on website.
- START
- Provide reporting guidelines and resources
- Communicate outcomes for progress report and audit
- Publish selected compliant audit data and all progress reports
- END
- Assess compliance for progress audits (Non-compliant / Compliant)
- Assess compliance for progress reports (Compliant / Compliance not demonstrated)
- Progress audit
- Progress reports

Organisations may need to return to the start of the process if the progress audit is non-compliant or there are data quality concerns

ICONS
- Activity
- Decision
- Manual information flow
- Electronic information flow
- Activity performed within the platform

Source: Right Lane Consulting (2024) in consultation with CGEPS.

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Consultation themes

Overview

The following pages outline the high-level insights captured during consultation with defined entities. These insights have been categorised into what worked and what didn't work well with progress reporting and progress audit processes**:**

- Insights from what did and didn't work well are grouped according to the dimensions of the success factors framework developed by Right Lane Consulting. These dimensions include *Capability, Organisation, Culture and ways of working,* and *Enabling infrastructure*. (Refer to the next page for more details on the success factors framework.)

- Insights within each dimension of the Success factors framework are further grouped into the different stages of the progress reporting and audit process. These stages are: *1. Extract and collate required data, 2. Fill in data templates, 3. Review, approve, and submit reports, 4. Receive outcomes and address findings and 5. Publish reports.* (Refer to page 7 for more details on the progress reporting and progress audit process map and the relative stages.)

Additionally, the analysis identifies whether these insights relate to the progress reporting process, progress audit process, or both. The insights are presented in no particular order, and conflicting views between what did or didn't work well may appear, reflecting the diverse perspectives within defined entities.

These insights provide an understanding of the experience of defined entities about what worked or didn't work well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes. They form the foundation for the potential strategic and tactical opportunities for CGEPS to prioritise, subject to its resource availability and staffing capacity .

While this section provides an accurate representation of the challenges identified by participants, there may be inconsistencies and differences in views and experiences across the feedback that was provided. Nonetheless, it's important to understand where defined entities are unable to find what they need or where our communications have not sunk in, in order to improve these going forward.

Right Lane Consulting has developed a success factors framework that will inform the structure of our analysis

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Right Lane Consulting's success factors framework for gender equality

	Capability	Organisation	Culture and ways of working	Enabling infrastructure
Definition	• Distinctive **knowledge, skills, and subject-matter proficiency and capabilities**	• **Governance structure, capacity, and resource allocation**	• **Collective attitudes, beliefs, norms, and behaviours**	• **Tools, systems, processes and data**
Examples	• Knowledge of the Commission's latest requirements • Skills to identify and conduct gender equality practices • Research proficiency	• Governance framework (e.g., Responsible, Accountable, Supporting, Consulted, Informed – RASCI) for gender equality delivery across the organisation • Stakeholder engagement at the appropriate levels • Resources budgeted for gender equality delivery across the organisation	• Defined and aligned attitudes, beliefs, norms, and behaviours on gender equality • Defined and aligned organisational focus on gender equality	• Project management processes • Information system that supports data collection

Source: Right Lane Consulting. (2023).

What worked well with progress reporting and progress audit processes?

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Through consultation, 20 themes were identified, presenting the areas that worked well with the progress reporting and audit processes, enabled by defined entities or CGEPS

A. Capability

#	
1	In-house data collection, reporting, and analysis expertise
2	Leveraging Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and leadership to inform progress
3	Expertise in gender and intersectionality in sector-specific context
4	Capability to influence and drive change within the organisation

B. Organisation

#	
1	Enhancing internal capacity through outsourcing
2	Formal working groups within the organisation (e.g., Gender Equality working group, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion working group)
3	Clear governance and approval processes
4	Senior leadership buy-in and participation
5	Community of practice (CoP) and peak bodies within the sector e.g., Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)

C. Culture and ways of working

#	
1	Organisational strategy and commitment to promote gender equality (or diversity, equity and inclusion more broadly)
2	Organisational statements or frameworks on gender equality (or diversity, equity and inclusion more broadly)
3	Motivation levels of senior leadership for promoting gender equality
4	Visits from the Public Sector Gender Equality team and Commissioner
5	Enhancement in the support for gender equality initiatives from the senior team due to legislative imperatives

D. Enabling infrastructure

#	
1	Systems and data architecture to enable insightful reporting
2	Tailored template and resources developed by the defined entities for Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs)
3	GIA workflow and approval tool developed by the defined entities
4	Guiding resources, technical support and templates from CGEPS
5	Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) embedded into business-as-usual processes
6	Timeliness of providing the templates to defined entities

Further insights and observations related to what worked well can be found on the following pages.

Key | What worked well attributed to CGEPS | What worked well attributed to defined entities

Key | Progress report | Progress audit | Both progress report and audit

Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what worked well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
1	In-house data collection, reporting, and analysis expertise	Having staff skilled in data collection, reporting, and analysis enhances the progress audit and reporting of workplace gender equality indicators.	• 'Engaged a data analyst to collate data from various sources to have a meaningful analysis.' • 'Experienced systems analyst supports processes.' • 'Working in a team with that expertise to support and upskill the person completing the audit worked well.' • 'We managed to assign certain tasks across the process to the teams with expertise in that specific area (e.g., data & reporting team completing audit template and Inclusion & Diversity team completing report side of the process).' • 'P&C data analytics & reporting officer and D&I coordinator (enabled our performance in completing progress audit).'	✔				
2	Leveraging Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and leadership to inform progress	Having SMEs who are knowledgeable about strategies and measures, combined with clear project leadership, enhances the ability to track and inform the progress of gender equality initiatives effectively.	• 'We had SMEs who could inform the progress on strategies and measures, with clear project leads.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	

Progress reporting and audit processes stages	1. Extract and collate required data	2. Fill in data templates	3. Review, approve, and submit reports	4. Receive outcomes and address findings	5. Publish reports	Key	Progress report	Progress audit	Both progress report and audit

Note: The quotations on this page are not all verbatim; every effort was made to capture the content accurately and capture the essence of the conversation.
Source: CGEPS Progress Reporting and Progress Audit Processes Review – Defined entities focus groups (N=24 defined entities and 31 participants). (2024, Aug-Sept).

Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what worked well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme	Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
			1	2	3	4	5
3 Expertise in gender and intersectionality in sector-specific context	Having staff with specialised knowledge in gender and intersectionality, and the ability to apply this expertise within sector-specific contexts, enhances the delivery of gender equality obligations.	• *'Understanding of intersectional data has improved.'* • *'The allocation of a dedicated GE Officer in addition to a grant-funded Free From Violence Project Officer brings specialist expertise in gender equality to implementing the Act.'* • *'(We had) Robust experience from WGEA and other reporting requirements - we had no need to engage external providers.'* • *'One dedicated resource to all of GEAP/GIAs - became the subject matter expert based on information provided by the Commission.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	
4 Capability to influence and drive change within the organisation	The capability to influence behavioural change within the organisation is a pivotal factor in the adoption of gender equality initiatives across the organisation.	• *'Organisational change, key roles/sponsor changes impact continuity since GEAP implementation.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what worked well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
1	Enhancing internal capacity through outsourcing	Allocating the survey administration and template to a third-party company significantly enhances internal capacity and free up resources to focus on the other components of reporting.	• 'Allocating the survey administration and template to a third-party company (worked well).'	✔	✔			
2	Formal working groups within the organisation (e.g., Gender Equality working group, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion working group)	Working groups within the organisation serve as an important platform for discussing and advancing the gender equality agenda with a diverse group of stakeholders.	• 'Working groups seeking representation across the organisation (to progress gender equality).' • 'A senior working group of operational and medical leaders meets bi-monthly. They oversee the audit process.'			✔	✔	
3	Clear governance and approval processes	The well-defined governance structure and collaborative approval process involving managers, executives, and the Inclusion & Diversity team ensure that progress audit process is completed efficiently and accurately.	• 'Our governance structure was clear, and it was easy to identify the right approval process. I worked on the audit data and then it was further approved by my own manager and executives in consultation with our Inclusion & Diversity team.' • 'Clear processes for communication up and down between workers and leaders.' • 'Small team worked together to complete (the progress audit), executive reviewed, CEO approved.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

Progress reporting and audit processes stages	1. Extract and collate required data	2. Fill in data templates	3. Review, approve, and submit reports	4. Receive outcomes and address findings	5. Publish reports	Key	Progress report	Progress audit	Both progress report and audit

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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what worked well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
4	**Senior leadership buy-in and participation**	The active engagement and visible participation of boards, executives, and senior leaders are crucial in securing support from the broader organisation to advance gender equality initiatives.	• *'In principle, the governance structure supports and enables monitoring, driving and prioritising. Structure is established and the Board are generally interested/bought into the (progress) reporting and driving better outcomes.'* • *'At the beginning, we had strong support from our Exec and board and that continues to be the case, however, the degree of that support varies.'* • *'Board and Executive Leadership (buy-in was an enabler).'* • *'We report regularly on progress against gender equality to the Vice-Chancellor's Group (the University's most senior committee), as well as to our governing body and the University-wide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. This includes our University annual report.'* • *'Executive Leadership Team onboard with the purpose and buy-in was easily sought.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
5	**Community of practice (CoP) and peak bodies within the sector e.g., Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)**	Communities of practice provide a forum for sharing best practices and discussing common challenges. This has been recognised as a valuable support system for gender equality and DE&I professionals, who often work without dedicated teams within their organisations.	• *'I don't think remoteness is such a big deal. We can overcome that with communities of practice, with regional outreach.'* • *'Used the collective knowledge from other councils on how to interpret or explain results. Tapped into team members for energy and encouragement.'* • *'The recent PD session organised by MAV on how to apply a GIA to Municipal Community Health and Wellbeing Plans, was very well received, and offered a chance for councils to share learnings, and streamline common questions/challenges.'*		✔			

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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what worked well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme	Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
			1	2	3	4	5
1 Organisational strategy and commitment to promote gender equality (or diversity, equity and inclusion more broadly)	An organisational strategy and commitment that promotes gender equality, whether directly or indirectly, significantly enhances stakeholder engagement and support. Gender equality initiatives are perceived as crucial to achieving strategic goals.	• 'We have an E&I interim strategy, and this guides our actions for priority populations.' • 'The commitment to equity as a Council Plan value means that many of the senior leadership team exhibit these values, have skills and experience related to this area and are genuine supporters of the legislation and consequent legislative obligations.' • 'Organisation is very supportive of gender equality, and we have a number of projects and initiatives aimed at improving gender equality as well as reducing the gender pay gap.' • 'Some consultation with First Nations employees and LGBTIQA+ Network on some aspects.' • 'The University's commitment to gender equality is well-articulated in our strategic documents, and gender equality goals are included in our Environmental, Social and Governance Statement.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
2 Organisational statements or frameworks on gender equality (or diversity, equity and inclusion more broadly)	Formal organisational commitments to gender equality demonstrate active leadership sponsorship and significantly enhance stakeholder engagement and support.	• 'Developing/implementing GIA framework at present - opportunity to ensure that we have an all of organisation approach to gender equality and reporting responsibilities.' • '(Our council) has a strong commitment to inclusion across our Towards Equality Framework, the Aboriginal Protocols and the GEAP. It also has recently completed both the Welcoming Cities and the Rainbow Tick Accreditation process.' • 'Developing universal design principles which will drive an intersectional approach to planning and service design - this will replace impact statements for us.' • 'In 2020, (our TAFE) established a Social Justice Charter with the purpose of embedding the universal principals of equity, fairness, and respect into all aspects of TAFE's operations, systems, and infrastructure.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
3 Motivation levels of senior leadership for promoting gender equality	Individual motivation and commitment to the gender equality agenda are crucial for securing buy-in from the leadership team.	• 'Our organisation understands the need for gender equality and is supportive – (we mostly have) female executives.' • 'Strong prioritisation by (our university) to complete the CGEPS reporting, understanding the importance of this work.' • 'Working with (internal) partners who have an understanding and desire to contribute to real change. Curiosity of peers, willingness to explore data and reasons.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what worked well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
4	**Visits from the Public Sector Gender Equality team and Commissioner**	Visits from the Commissioner and CGEPS team invigorate the leadership team and staff, often introducing new perspectives and renewing motivation to advance gender equality initiatives.	• *'Having the Commissioner visit (was very helpful).'* • *'Having site visit from the Commissioner was very impactful.'* • *'CGEPS team were available to meet with TAFEs to update us & answer queries which was very helpful.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
5	**Enhancement in the support for gender equality initiatives from the senior team due to legislative imperatives**	Legislative requirements to complete gender equality reporting and the enforcement by CGEPS has increased senior leaders' support to gender equality within the organisations.	• *'Legislative imperatives helped with the 'business case' for Executive leaders and Executives in support of GEAP agenda.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

Progress reporting and audit processes stages	1. Extract and collate required data	2. Fill in data templates	3. Review, approve, and submit reports	4. Receive outcomes and address findings	5. Publish reports	Key	Progress report	Progress audit	Both progress report and audit

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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what worked well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme	Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
			1	2	3	4	5
1 Systems and data architecture to enable insightful reporting	Having a Human Resource Information System (HRIS) or similar system that is able to capture the data fields required for reporting is a significant enabler to completing progress reports and audits.	• 'HR system change (e.g., Workday) will provide improved data.' • 'Payroll system is the primary data source. Data extract is generally manual with several different reports required to complete the audit. A more sophisticated HRIS system would be beneficial.' • 'With our department having recently moved from 3 payroll systems into 1, this made data collection much more streamlined.'	✔				
2 Tailored template and resources developed by the defined entities for Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs)	Tailoring the 4-step template by the defined entities to be more prescriptive and relevant has increased clarity for staff completing GIAs.	• 'Gender impact assessments tool (at our university we call this the Sustainability and Equity Evaluation Tool which supports completion of GIAs)'.		✔			
3 GIA workflow and approval tool developed by the defined entities	Implementing a tool with integrated GIA workflow and approval processes has minimised manual follow-ups via email, enabling the completion of GIAs.	• 'We have integrated the GIA template into DocAssembler which is the primary reporting platform for Council meetings and EMT meetings.' • 'I think I created a power BI report myself, sort of a dashboard for the inclusion diversity team to look at the data in a more consolidated way.'			✔		

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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what worked well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
4	**Guiding resources, technical support and templates from CGEPS**	The detailed step-by-step guidance by CGEPS, which includes best practice examples, training recordings, templates, and toolkits, has been invaluable in preparing progress report and audits. Additionally, the provision of detailed technical instructions and helpful video resources for data collection and uploads has significantly improved defined entities' ability to comply with reporting requirements.	• 'Guidance document provided by CGEPS - comprehensive and easy to follow.' • 'Progress audit guidelines PDF and webinar provided clear instructions on data requirements.' • 'CGEPS' willingness to answer questions clearly and with good level of detail. Approachable and anticipated our needs.' • 'CGEPS provided detailed technical instructions and guidance, including useful video resources related to data & data uploads.' • 'The guidelines to complete the audit & report were clear.'	✔	✔			
5	**Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) embedded into business-as-usual processes**	Incorporating the GIA process into business-as-usual workflows increases the completion rate of GIAs.	• 'The EIA/GIA process is deeply embedded in the function of (the) council.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
6	**Timeliness of providing the templates to defined entities**	Early access to reporting templates is crucial for effective preparation and understanding of reporting requirements. This allows defined entities to familiarise themselves with the processes before actual data collection begins.	• 'I relied heavily on those procedures and getting the template early enough that I could start playing with it and figure it out before we actually had the data.' • 'Knowing what's required ahead of time (is key) so that you're able to prepare, given the context of limited resources and the constraints within the organisation.'	✔	✔			

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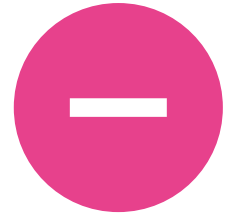
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What didn't work well with progress reporting and progress audit processes?

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Consultation with defined entities and CGEPS has revealed 27 areas that require more focus both by defined entities and CGEPS

A. Capability

1	Staff at defined entities lack knowledge, skills, and subject matter expertise to meet gender equality obligations
2	Insufficient resources provided by CGEPS to support capability uplift across the entire defined entities to conduct GIAs
3	Resources and reporting requirements lack consideration for the context of particular sectors or types of defined entity
4	Inconsistency of messaging from different CGEPS staff members, peak bodies, other defined entities and leadership within the organisation on reporting requirements
5	Perceived delay in the provision of additional resources for new reporting requirements

B. Organisation

1	Resource constraints in defined entities
2	Resource constraints in CGEPS
3	Lack of clarity on the extent of senior leadership approvals required
4	Significant changes within the defined entities, including high staff turnover with poor handover
5	Lengthy progress reporting and audit processes hinder defined entities from providing meaningful and timely reports

C. Culture and ways of working

| 1 | Perception that other Diversity, Equity & Inclusion initiatives are deprioritised in lieu of gender equality initiatives |
| 2 | Perception that gender equality obligations are a regulatory burden rather than a valuable mechanism for advancing gender equality |

D. Enabling infrastructure

1	Inconsistent requirements with other gender equality obligations*
2	Long turnaround time for feedback from CGEPS
3	Poor quality of data and reporting systems
4	Outdated, irrelevant resources available on the CGEPS website confusing users of defined entities
5	CGEPS' website not being intuitive to navigate
6	Opportunity to improve quality and usefulness of feedback provided to defined entities**
7	CGEPS not consistently including the reporting process owners as recipients of its communications to defined entities
8	The need for a more comprehensive planning of the progress reporting and progress audit submission deadline

D1. CGEPS' platform/templates

1	Excel template not being user-centric
2	Excel template not being accessible
3	Inconsistency of templates
4	Lack of clarity on why certain data fields are required
5	More clarity on the level of detail required to achieve compliance
6	Confusion on the level of detail required to publish the progress reports on defined entities' websites
7	Insufficiency of platform functionality

Further insights and observations related to what didn't work well can be found on the following pages.

Key | Challenges attributed to CGEPS | Challenges attributed to defined entities | **Key** | Progress report | Progress audit | Both progress report and audit

Note: *This insight is mostly highlighted by universities, which make up 9 of the 300 defined entities. Notably, much of CGEPS's data has been designed to align with relevant reporting frameworks, such as WGEA and VPSC, where feasible. Additionally, a long-term data alignment project is currently underway. **Note that consultations were conducted before feedback was released by CGEPS to defined entities.
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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what didn't work well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

COMMISSION FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR | right lane

Theme	Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
			1	2	3	4	5
1 **Staff at defined entities lack knowledge, skills, and subject matter expertise to meet gender equality obligations**	Defined entities identified a significant internal capability gap in meeting gender equality obligations. There is little or no formal upskilling provided to defined entities in preparation for the rollout of the Gender Equality Act.	• 'Managers (still) lack knowledge on how to complete GIAs.' • 'It's all very well to allocate a staff member to do the work, but if that staff member does not have the skills and experience, then they're not going to be able to do a good job.' • 'Lack of consistency in understanding of (gender equality and) DE&I work - steps being taken to build capability & using the expertise of those passionate about it.' • 'Many have done GIA on internal programs, policies and services that don't have a direct and significant impact on the public, so they don't qualify under meeting the obligation.' • '(From CGEPS) They've confused two things; intersectionality with diversity.' • 'I am not a data analyst. There was a necessity to engage with a data analyst in order to review the data sets, make accurate & meaningful assessments & complete the Progress Report. This requirement needs to be advised to defined entities so appropriate resourcing can be identified early in the process & funded.' • 'This sometimes fell outside of our skill level and further support was needed in order to ensure accurate reporting. This added to the workload and time that it was completed.' • 'I had no capability this year to make sense of what I was looking at. I needed to use my data analyst, and he did not have the time to do that.' • 'Where there's gendered segregation and that's another one that organisations really aren't understanding, a lot of organisations don't understand what gendered segregation within the workforce is, and they haven't included that data.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
2 **Insufficient resources provided by CGEPS to support capability uplift across the entire defined entities to conduct GIAs**	Defined entities reported inadequate support for upskilling their teams, resulting in the burden of upskilling falling on individual employees or on a central gender equality coordinator.	• 'No ongoing training provided by the Commission for new employees involved in this process - initial workshops were helpful but you were left to learn on your own.' • 'There were a few gender equality experts in Victoria...they were in high demand at the onset of the Gender Equality Act. Many defined entities did not have in-house capability to meet the requirements. Those who could afford consultants or hire specialist staff were able to get additional support.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

Progress reporting and audit processes stages	1. Extract and collate required data	2. Fill in data templates	3. Review, approve, and submit reports	4. Receive outcomes and address findings	5. Publish reports	Key	Progress report	Progress audit	Both progress report and audit

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3	Resources and reporting requirements lack consideration for the context of particular sectors or types of defined entity	There is a perception that the content and the process are tailored more towards certain sectors, leaving others inadequately addressed . This suggests a need for more cohort-specific considerations (tailored to the size, location, sector, etc. of the defined entities)	• 'Lack of tailored content for specific defined entities in the public service.' • 'For a large organisation, I'd want to see measurable progress every two years. you're going in that direction and a lot of work being done to actually make that change. For us, for a tiny organisation you have completely different expectations.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
4	Inconsistency of messaging from different CGEPS staff members, peak bodies, other defined entities and leadership within the organisation on reporting requirements	Defined entities expect consistent communication from CGEPS staff members, peak bodies, other defined entities and internal leadership on the reporting requirements. However, it is important to emphasise that CGEPS guidance should be regarded as the sole source of truth.	• 'I feel like some of the messaging, both from the Commission and from other sources, is a bit confusing and muddies the water. It's really hard to help people build their capabilities when there are mixed messages around this.'	✔	✔	✔	✔	
5	Perceived delay in the provision of additional resources for new reporting requirements	Defined entities experience a delay in receiving additional resources on the CGEPS website for new requirements. Note: CGEPS highlighted that most resources for the 2023 progress reporting and audit cycle were provided 9 months before the submission deadline. Additionally, CGEPS is committed to releasing guidance 12 months ahead of the submission deadline for the next reporting cycle.	• 'The Commission's tools and guidance were retrospective. Need to know in advance of the progress reporting period what the requirements are, mandatory versus optional etc.' • 'Information from CGEPS was drip fed e.g., templates, what's required, what's mandatory, what's recommended.' • 'When a new requirement is introduced, it takes some time before we receive resources or guidance from CGEPS on how to be compliant...we need to rush at the last minute.'	✔	✔			

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
1	**Resource constraints in defined entities**	Many defined entities face challenges in allocating sufficient resources to meet gender equality obligations. This often results in the responsibility falling disproportionately on individuals in operational roles, such as People & Culture Managers or Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Coordinators.	• *'Limited staffing to complete actions aligned with the generation of the GEAP, and the progress reporting.'* • *'Expertise is deep in the pocket, and those resources are stretched, doing multiple roles.'* • *'Budget constraints across the organisation and government more broadly.'* • *'No resources allocated, was absorbed as part of the role and the team was already stretched with workload.'* • *'I was the only data analysis team member involved in the audit process due to our overall team workload. This made the process more drawn out and reduced the time that our L&D team had to complete the report.'* • *'Without appropriate resourcing, there was no one to review or test the audit data. Leaves room for error. Working in isolation - no one to refer queries to or ask support from.'* • *'Sometimes gender-related reporting can sit at a lower priority due to urgent payroll-related tasks that potentially sit at a higher priority. This at times could make it challenging to set aside time to complete the audit report and may have contributed to the process being drawn out further.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
2	**Resource constraints in CGEPS**	Defined entities reported experiencing slower response times to queries and extended turnaround times for feedback, attributed to perceived resource constraints within CGEPS.	• *'(From CGEPS) We don't have enough staff. We don't have enough stakeholder engagement.'* • *'(From CGEPS) I would love us to be able to move towards a pre-populated template model but it will be expensive. We would need to get more money to do that on our platform. It's not a small piece of work.'* • *'We understand the CGEPS team is small...responses were slow...turnaround time to receive feedback is too long.'* • *'We wait so long for a response (from CGEPS)...during a critical period when we are rushing to meet the deadline.'* • *'It can take weeks to hear back from them (CGEPS).'* • *Delay in responses when seeking support from the CGEPS team, acknowledging that CGEPS is a very small team who are at stretched capacity. Opportunities for mitigating this include consolidating key learnings, guidance, training resources etc., grouping by type of defined entity.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
3	Lack of clarity on the extent of senior leadership approvals required	Defined entities that are unclear on who needs to approve the progress report or audit before it is submitted, experience long approval wait times.	• 'Reporting to leaders for approval is time intensive - audit is not as simple as submitting a sheet to the Commission - leaders want to understand everything before they approve. Timelines leading into submitting papers to senior leaders are lengthy and will not change any time soon.'			✓		
4	Significant changes within the defined entities, including high staff turnover with poor handover	Defined entities experiencing high staff turnover, face significant knowledge gaps due to inadequate handover processes. This disruption hinders progress in fulfilling gender equality obligations.	• '(There are) changes in teams to take the activities forward.' • 'The main challenge was the inconsistency of information sharing due to staff turnover.' • 'Significant organisation changes impacting the ownership of GEAP reporting.' • 'Instability in leadership - executives and board - having to explain continually.'	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	Lengthy progress reporting and audit processes hinder defined entities from providing meaningful and timely reports	Lack of a streamlined progress reporting and audit processes, adds to the complexity of the work that needs to be done by defined entities in meeting the gender equality requirements.	• 'Limited resources and reporting requirements are increasing disproportionately to resources/budget/experience.' • 'GEAP is too aspirational considering the organisation context, change and current resources.' • 'No subject matter expert, time consuming process as is in addition to BAU, process feels overwhelming.' • '(The process is) time-consuming and feels like we submit and then need to submit again.' • 'My manager told me that during the initial consultation phase for the workplace audit & Progress Report there was a clear indication from the Commission that reporting would not be an onerous task. My experience was that it took me at least 4 months full time to compile the information, obtain the workplace audit data from multiple HR systems, upload the data, analyse the data and write the report. Then another 2 months to go through the internal review and approval process.'	✓	✓	✓	✓	

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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what didn't work well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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	Theme	Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
1	**Perception that other Diversity, Equity & Inclusion initiatives are deprioritised in lieu of gender equality initiatives**	The central gender equality coordinator frequently oversees broader Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives. However, due to resource constraints and the amount of work required to complete progress reporting and audit processes, other DE&I initiatives often experience minimal or no progress during peak periods dedicated to gender equality obligations.	• *'Why can't a Gender Impact Assessment be an Equity Impact Assessment...we can look at all forms of DE&I?'* • *'During the peak periods of progress reporting and progress audit, (other DE&I initiatives) the Disability initiatives, LGBTQIA+ initiatives etc. did not progress...it's the same team and same budget for all DE&I initiatives.'* • *'We met the obligation at the expense of progressing other DE&I initiatives...leads to push back from staff.'* • *'Our council is in the learning stages of D&I initiatives such as gender equality. We experience pushback from parts of Council on this process - no understanding of the "why".'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2	**Perception that gender equality obligations are a regulatory burden rather than a valuable mechanism for advancing gender equality**	The progress reporting and progress audit processes are perceived as primarily focused on data collection, analysis, and reporting, rather than advancing gender equality outcomes. Some organisations feel that, in a resource-constrained environment, meaningful gender equality initiatives are paused to meet reporting requirements.	• *'The focus (is) on reporting rather than cultural change or implementing the GEAP effectively.'* • *'I think with our rural health organisation, probably what I could say is there's a lot of regulation that they have to deal with. They feel like they're over regulated.'* • *'An increasing demand on resources to report, versus driving meaningful change and outcomes (advocacy versus reporting).'* • *'The GEAP actions assigned to P&C were largely unable to be meaningfully implemented due to conflicting priorities and capacity.'* • *'Progress reporting is very time-consuming and reporting every second year is onerous. It does not allow time for results arising from actions undertaken to show actual progress.'* • *'The reporting requirements under the Gender Equality Act are seen as a regulatory burden on universities that are not new to gender equality action plans.'* • *'We had to pause our proactive work in gender equity, diversity and inclusion in order to prioritise the development of the Progress report. The disruption was described by equity practitioners as if their roles became reporting officers.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

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				1	2	3	4	5
1	**Inconsistent requirements with other gender equality obligations***	Defined entities with multiple gender equality reporting obligations, both external and internal, often face inconsistencies in requirements and approaches.	• 'Competing elements of respect & Equality @ TAFE and other D&I initiatives.' • 'Similar data reported to WGEA, TCSI, Athena Swan - which could have been used. However, CGEPS consistently had different definitions to existing reporting.' • 'The data we had to report and analyse was not useful to us internally because our own work in identifying and addressing structural, systemic and cultural barriers rely on the analysis of our university-specific data (employee data as well as survey data). This meant that we had to then "re-analyse" CGEPS data to demonstrate what the findings were in terms of our own organisational structure (as opposed to ANZSCO codes or levels to CEO).' • 'The workload to develop the progress report was significant, almost 10x more than the requirements by WGEA.'	✔	✔	✔		
2	**Long turnaround time for feedback from CGEPS**	Defined entities are uncertain about their compliance status and lack confidence in their actions due to the long wait for feedback from CGEPS.	• 'Delays in Commission advice/reporting assessment have not helped build confidence in what we are doing. It would be great to have feedback on what we have done to inform this review. I'm not confident stating what has worked well or what hasn't as I'm not sure if what we provided has hit the mark.' • 'Not receiving results on our progress report as yet after submitting in February means we are not sure if we are on track or need to do more/reconsider resource allocation.' • 'Still haven't got results from our reporting in Feb '24 - Frustrating to keep reporting to board and CEO that we still have no results of our progress.'				✔	

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3	Poor quality of data and reporting systems	Defined entities with poor-quality data or inadequate reporting systems face a significant increase in manual workload to meet their reporting obligations.	• 'The quality of our data was problematic and is spread across various systems. Easy to source the reports, more difficult to clean them up for the purpose of the template.' • 'We do not have an HRIS system...we manually pull together the report...it takes a lot of effort.'	✔	✔			
4	Outdated, irrelevant resources available on the CGEPS website confusing users of defined entities	CGEPS' website has outdated guidance that confuses users.	• 'There are outdated resources on the website...it confuses us unnecessarily.' • 'Why is there old information on the website? It should be the single source of truth.'		✔		✔	
5	CGEPS' website not being intuitive to navigate	Staff from defined entities find it challenging to navigate the website to locate relevant resources. The site is not user-friendly, which exacerbates the experience of time-constrained users from defined entities.	• 'CGEPS' website is difficult to navigate and find important documentation.' • 'Quality of information on CGEPS' website is good, however, website is difficult to navigate.' 'The website had great support information, but it was difficult to navigate to find the right information for the task. By clicking on links, you went down a rabbit hole & I often couldn't get back there when I needed to as I couldn't remember how I got there. I ended up saving all the links in another document.'				✔	
6	Opportunity to improve quality and usefulness of feedback provided to defined entities*	Defined entities would benefit from greater clarity on the feedback process and the usefulness of feedback.	• 'There were no clear guidelines in my opinion that would give us the reassurance that we have satisfied all compliance requirements because of the qualitative nature and the possibility for the Commission to interpret what we provided in any way that's outside of our direct control.'				✔	

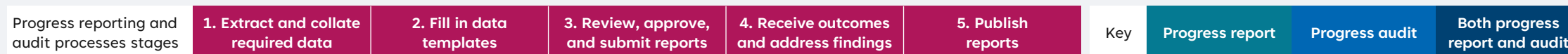| Progress reporting and audit processes stages	1. Extract and collate required data	2. Fill in data templates	3. Review, approve, and submit reports	4. Receive outcomes and address findings	5. Publish reports	Key	Progress report	Progress audit	Both progress report and audit

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7	**CGEPS not consistently including the reporting process owners as recipients of its communications to defined entities**	Reporting process owners are not consistently included in communications from CGEPS, leading to delays in taking necessary actions.	• *'Communications are sent to the CEO; sometimes, the reporting process owners are not kept in the loop...we receive it very late. CGEPS should make it clear who receives which communication.'* • *'There needs to be a more considered communications strategy where CEOs are only receiving the key information and are informed that other reporting contacts in the organisation are also receiving them.'* • *'Incompliance data is sent directly to the CEO, with no opportunity for process owners to make changes.'*	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
8	**The need for a more comprehensive planning of the progress reporting and progress audit submission deadline**	Some defined entities faced challenges in meeting submission deadline due to internal approval processes, magnitude of data required, and resource availability. This is understandable given the varying sizes and contexts for defined entities and the level of resource available to support the reporting process.	• *'Timing of audit – coincided with the holiday season/school holidays which created added pressure to complete.'* • *'Due to the magnitude of data required and consultation and approval requirements etc., we will never be able to submit by the timeframes currently included in the Gender Equality Act. Legislative timeframes for both GEAP submission and progress reports need to permanently change.'*	✔	✔	✔		

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1	Excel template not being user-centric	Template for progress audit changed from 2021 to 2023, leading to challenges in comparing data. Additionally, the template for progress report captures qualitative and quantitative input in a single cell, making it challenging for analysis.	• 'The presentation of data was different from the previous report and the structure and templates of the reports were difficult to use, making editing and detailed responses difficult to input.' • 'The excel template for the Progress Report update on GEAP strategies & actions, GIAs & gender equality indicators was not easy to insert bulk text. There was a limit on the number of rows that were displayed on the screen which made reviewing the text cumbersome. Formatting the text to make it easier to read was also limited by excel's formatting capabilities.' • 'I found the Commission's spreadsheet very difficult to use once I'd inputted the data, I was trying to make it do pivot tables and work out what was going on. The issue was the time to load it. It just took so long to load; it was unusable and then it wasn't giving me any analysis that I couldn't do myself.' • 'The Excel spreadsheet template for reporting is fiddly, and a difficult format within which to read/review a large amount of text and information, for example formatting the cells, checking for grammar etc.'		✔			
2	Excel template not being accessible	The Excel template does not comply with accessibility guidelines and must be reviewed.	• 'Excel is not accessible - struggling to put up something that would appeal to readability and brand standards - you want to put narrative around the process and progress.'		✔			
3	Inconsistency of templates	• GIA toolkit template does not have a field to report on progress, which is required for progress reporting. • There is a lack of alignment between the indicators and the related strategies and measures. • There is a lack of consistency in the questions asked in the 'People Matter' employee experience survey.	• 'The Commission's GIA Toolkit and Template did not prepare defined entities for the questions that would be asked in the progress report. The GIA Toolkit guided defined entities to the point of making a GIA recommendation but no further. Therefore, it was only by luck that we had embedded processes for reporting on GIA recommendation implementation that enabled us to have data to input under 'Confirm if actions taken' and 'Describe actions taken.' • 'The progress report did not actually prompt or ask anywhere what the GIA recommendation was for any of the GIAs conducted – which, to our understanding, was what the GIA Template was guiding staff to make.' • 'Lack of consistency in the questions asked in the 'People Matters' employee experience survey – the omission of some questions and changes to others made it difficult (and in some cases, not possible) to measure progress as we could not compare the results of the 2023 People Matter survey to the baseline data.' • 'Understanding what is being required of you and putting the right information out there is the biggest challenge and not having consistency to compare one year to the next when the definitions change.'		✔			

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4	**Lack of clarity on why certain data fields are required**	Certain data fields are difficult to complete and their relevance for reporting purposes is not immediately clear.	• *'Reporting requirements often met with questions as to why we need to capture/report on specific data sets (that we have not traditionally recorded).'* • *'A bit more clarity – intersectionality...what are we looking to report on?'* • *'Why do we need to report ANZSCO codes? What is the Commission looking to compare?'* • *'Some of the data fields are so challenging to fill...the quality of data may not provide meaningful insights.'*	✔	✔			
5	**More clarity on the level of detail required to achieve compliance**	Templates contain numerous open text fields that lack guidance on the required level of detail for compliance, resulting in under-resourcing.	• *'Lack of clarity around level of detail required in progress report. Very few examples provided about what this should look like, or how much information is required as a standard for a good progress report.'* • *'How much detail should we provide in the GEAP and GIA sections? How much effort is required?'* • *'We underestimated the effort required as we did not have clarity on the level of detail needed.'* • *(Perception of lack of direction on the information required in templates)...so it was left to us to decide on what we then had to provide the information on.'* • *'It is a challenge to kind of map the process when we're not exactly sure what we'll need, what templates will look like and what will kind of be in those recommended versus mandatory fields.'*	✔	✔			

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Insights from consultation with defined entities and CGEPS on what didn't work well with the progress reporting and progress audit processes

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Theme		Insights	Stakeholder observations	Relevant to stages of progress reporting and progress audit processes				
				1	2	3	4	5
6	**Confusion on the level of detail required to publish the progress reports on defined entities' websites**	Defined entities are unclear if they are meant to publish the detailed Excel spreadsheet on their website or if they can publish a summarised version of the progress report.	• *'Lack of clarity in understanding the level of detail required for the version of the progress report that we will need to be made publicly available on the website once assessed and deemed compliant. Will a detailed Excel spreadsheet be overwhelming/engaging for the broader council and community – is a carefully designed infographic summary the most effective way of promoting progress against the GEAP and distilling complex information into a more digestible format? What are the accessibility limitations around the Excel spreadsheet?'*					✔
7	**Insufficiency of platform functionality**	Platform users encountered several issues with the functionality which delayed their progress in meeting reporting obligations.	• *'We haven't designed a platform that works for us in determining progress.'* • *'Commission's website - audit reporting portal - does not compare 2021 and 2023 data in a quick and easy way which means we do our analysis on our own. We don't use the portal at all.'* • *'The platform doesn't give you enough to solve the problem yourself. And by the time we got to that stage, we'd allowed three or four days to work through in case there were any.'* • *'I'm not using the Commission's Portal much at all because I found it so clunky every time you clicked into something, it changed the year back to the other year. It's just like everything that could go wrong with it did.'* • *'With regards to the workforce audit data, small data sets are being shown as 'no data available' via the CGEPS portal. This is problematic, as we still need to be able to measure change where the representation of particular cohorts within the workforce is low (e.g., gender diverse employees).'* • *'The reporting tool was not easy to navigate & it was a time-consuming process to look at all the data sets individually. There was an enormous number of data sets available. Then comparing 2021 data with 2023 data & reaching meaningful conclusions if progress was made or not was challenging. Some data was small, and, in analytical terms, it wasn't prudent to rely on it as evidence. I tried exporting the data to excel however this didn't help me. You also couldn't print the data sets or graphs which meant I had to cut & paste the data into a Word document. I needed this information printed in order to go through the review & approval process. The approvers, CEO & Board, are not going to view the portal, so this was a necessary requirement.'*	✔	✔			

Progress reporting and audit processes stages	1. Extract and collate required data	2. Fill in data templates	3. Review, approve, and submit reports	4. Receive outcomes and address findings	5. Publish reports	Key	Progress report	Progress audit	Both progress report and audit

Note: The quotations on this page are not all verbatim; every effort was made to capture the content accurately and capture the essence of the conversation.
Source: CGEPS Progress Reporting and Progress Audit Processes Review – Defined entities focus groups (N=24 defined entities and 31 participants). (2024, Aug-Sept).

Survey outcome commentary

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CGEPS conducted a survey to evaluate the 2023 progress reporting and audit experiences of various defined entities, aiming to gather insights on challenges and identify opportunities for improvement.

The survey focused on the time required to complete reports, the usability of the template, resource pressures and the effectiveness of tools provided.

CGEPS gathered a total of **138 responses from defined entities: 79 for progress reporting and 59 for progress audit.** The defined entities that participated range across multiple industries (e.g., local government, universities, public healthcare, etc.) across rural, regional and metropolitan locations. These defined entities varied in size, with organisations ranging from 50 to 500 employees.

The survey responses were collected over 2 weeks in August 2024. All responses were collected anonymously.

The following pages provide high-level insights from the survey, organised according to the elements of the success factors framework. Each page focuses on aspects related to the progress reporting and progress audit processes.

High-level insights were identified from CGEPS' progress reporting survey with defined entities, focusing on what did/didn't work well

What worked well ⊕

Themes	Survey observations
Organisation	Some responding defined entities did provide adequate resources by allocating staff across teams, establishing committees, and appointing dedicated roles.
Enabling infrastructure	More than half of the responding defined entities had reached out to the Commission and were satisfied with the support received (e.g., follow up chats, sharing screens for further guidance, extensions that were granted quickly and Commission staff attendance at CoP).
CGEPS' platform/ templates	Majority of responding defined entities relied most heavily on the examples and notes in the progress reporting template and the guidance found on CGEPS' website.

What didn't work well ⊖

Themes	Survey observations
Capability	Majority of responding defined entities found the progress reporting process highly challenging, with the entire process being more difficult than individual sections or coordination tasks.
	Some responding defined entities suggested organising workshops by sector, providing more frequent workshops, and offering information sessions on the topic of data collection.
	Majority of responding defined entities expressed the need for clearer guidance, more examples and timely support from CGEPS, as existing guidance was at times not clear enough or timely.
Organisation	Majority of responding defined entities underestimated the time required to complete progress reports, and the lack of timing guidance contributed to this issue.
	Limited resources, high workloads and competing priorities were significant challenges, with majority of responding defined entities lacking dedicated gender equality resources.
	Some responding defined entities communicated that the Board was sometimes reluctant to provide gendered information due to privacy concerns.
Culture and ways of working	Some responding defined entities felt their strategy was also their measure of progress and it looked as if they had to enter the information twice, doubling the work.
Enabling infrastructure	Most responding defined entities lacked adequate internal systems for capturing required information ahead of time, impacting their ability to measure progress effectively.
	Internal records management systems of most responding defined entities often did not align with CGEPS' reporting requirements, leading to manual collation.
CGEPS' platform/ templates	The Excel template and data portal used for reporting was found to be hard to edit and not user-friendly, causing double handling of tasks among other issues experienced by majority of responding defined entities.

Source: Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector. (2024). Progress reporting experience survey (N=79), conducted by CGEPS.

High-level insights were identified from CGEPS' progress audit survey with defined entities, focusing on what did/didn't work well

What worked well ⊕

Themes	Survey observations
Capability	Around half of the responding defined entities indicated they had maintained process knowledge from 2021.
Organisation	In evaluating the usefulness of various reports for supporting progress audits, the Data Quality Review report emerged as the most popular, due to nearly two-thirds of responding defined entities revising their data multiple times during submission rounds.

What didn't work well ⊖

Themes	Survey observations
Capability	About half of responding defined entities said intersectional data preparation was the hardest; however, this is an optional section that can simply be skipped.
	Some responding defined entities called for more help (workshops, training and/or tools) with data analysis.
Organisation	Most responding defined entities underestimated the time required to complete progress audits and would appreciate guidance around suggested timeframes.
	Majority of responding defined entities had a different person completing the audit in 2023 than in 2021, highlighting the lack of dedicated roles/high staff turnover and the gap in maintained process knowledge.
	Almost half of responding defined entities did not obtain sign-off from their CEO or equivalent, which may indicate that CEO-level or Board-level stakeholders do not have visibility of or support the audit findings.
Enabling infrastructure	Majority of responding defined entities experienced challenges in preparing and obtaining reliable data and had difficulties accessing specific data due to internal privacy and restrictive processes. Some also called for a report that shows current and past data in the same view.
	Some responding defined entities advocated adding quick references, FAQs and examples. Some also called for improving remuneration guidance, best practice indicators, compliance standards and offering more human assistance options instead of fully relying on website materials.
CGEPS' platform/ templates	Some responding defined entities faced repeated issues with the reporting platform causing delays and incorrect results. Some found People Matters Survey (PMS) data difficult to inspect through CGEPS' reports.
	Majority of responding defined entities stated that the website needs to be improved as it currently has too much information and is hard to navigate.

Source: Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector. (2024). Progress audit experience survey (N=59), conducted by CGEPS.

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Opportunities to address challenges with progress reporting and progress audit processes

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The following pages present a list of opportunities, categorised into strategic and tactical, with the goal of enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of progress reporting and audit processes.

These opportunities are designed to address different dimensions of the success factors framework including Capability, Organisation, Culture and ways of working, and Enabling infrastructure.

CGEPS project team and managers have prioritised these opportunities based on CGEPS resource availability and staff capacity. The highest-ranked opportunities have been shortlisted to be the Commission's focus in the lead up to the next reporting cycle and over the longer term.

The level of impact and effort required to address these opportunities have also been assessed and determined in consultation with CGEPS' project team and managers:

- *Impact: How well does the opportunity improve progress reporting and progress audit processes and address pain points?*

- *Effort: How much effort is required to address the opportunity?*

Proposed list of strategic and tactical opportunities

The strategic opportunities identified strive for the progress reporting and progress audit processes to be more reflective of practical realities on the ground

A. List of strategic opportunities	Impact	Effort	Proposed implementation timeframe	Opportunities to address challenges for the following success factor elements				Comments from CGEPS
				Capability	Organisation	Culture and ways of working	Enabling infrastructure	
A1 Address cohort-specific challenges: • Hospitals: Operating in an increasingly resource-constrained environment • Local government • Others as necessary Note: Cohorts are a cross-section of defined entities across different sectors, organisation sizes, location etc. The specific cohorts need to be determined by CGEPS.	High	High	Long-term	✓				Defined entities should be encouraged to proactively consider collaboration as an important enabler (e.g., through participating in communities of practice or reaching out to peers).
A2 Consider implementing a maturity-based model for reporting requirements to foster progress among defined entities, taking into account their varying capabilities, organisational capacities, resources, and reporting infrastructures.	High	High	Long-term	✓	✓			This will need to align with legislative requirements, and CGEPS is collaborating with a regulatory expert to explore potential options.
A3 Identify opportunities to align reporting requirements with other gender equality obligations, such as those mandated by the WGEA.	Low	High	Long-term	✓			✓	Initiative underway.
A4 Develop a preferred resourcing approach for progress reporting and the progress audit, identifying tasks to be centralised at CGEPS or at a sector level versus what should be done locally in defined entities. This will enable a more targeted approach in a resource-constrained environment and prevent duplication of efforts amongst defined entities.	High	High	Long-term		✓			-
A5 Consider how approach to meeting legislative requirements can be structured to prioritise the allocation of resources at defined entities towards achieving substantive gender equality advancements, rather than merely fulfilling procedural reporting obligations.	Medium	Medium	Medium-term			✓		The refinement of obligations for the next reporting cycle has prioritised streamlining reporting processes wherever possible.
A6 Consider and communicate the unique role of CGEPS in leveraging progress reporting and audit outcomes to drive systemic change, particularly through sector-level advocacy, thereby enabling defined entities to advance gender equality.	High	Medium	Medium-term			✓		There is a need to raise awareness of what is available on the Insights portal, e.g., through a communication campaign. Separately, there is an opportunity to play a role in advocacy.
A7 Increase engagement with boards, executives, and senior leaders within defined entities, incorporating a sector-based change narrative that frames progress reporting and progress audits as meaningful drivers of progress in gender equality, instead of being perceived as mere reporting mechanisms.	High	High	Long-term			✓		This will be achieved through ongoing engagement with defined entities' leadership, including regular visits by the CGEPS Commissioner and the broader team.

The tactical opportunities are considered to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of progress reporting and progress audit processes (1 of 2)

B. List of tactical opportunities		Impact	Effort	Proposed implementation timeframe	Opportunities to address challenges for the following success factor elements				Comments from CGEPS
					Capability	Organisation	Culture and ways of working	Enabling infrastructure	
B1	Provide more specific resources (e.g., video manuals, quick reference guides) that are simple and easy to use.	High	High	Long-term	✔				CGEPS will define the scope of resources that will be provided.
B2	Ensure the timely provision of requirements and templates (e.g., 12 months before the submission deadline), providing enough time for defined entities to plan, acknowledging their resource-constrained environments.	High	High	Long-term	✔				CGEPS will communicate to defined entities so they know when to expect materials, acknowledging the target will be easier to achieve as the process matures.
B3	Enhance communication materials to clarify the purpose of progress reports and audits, demonstrating how progressing gender equality is fundamental.	Medium	Medium	Medium-term			✔		This messaging already exists in guidance, feedback, newsletters, social media, Commissioner's engagements and media opportunities. CGEPS will consider additional forms and channels where appropriate.
B4	Provide prompt feedback to defined entities that will be useful in indicating priorities to work on in upcoming reporting cycles.	Medium	High	Long-term				✔	CGEPS will communicate timelines for feedback, manage expectation of defined entities and align internally on a deadline to provide feedback.
B5	Remove outdated sources and data from the CGEPS website to avoid potential confusion	Medium	Low	Short-term				✔	Initiative underway.
B6	Improve the user centricity of the CGEPS website for easier navigation.	Medium	Low	Short-term				✔	Initiative underway.
B7	Check the validity of the defined entities' mailing list. Ensure progress reporting owners are copied in relevant communications sent to their leaders.	Medium	Medium	Medium-term				✔	Initiative underway.

Source: CGEPS. (2024). Progress reporting and progress audit workshop (N = 12). Facilitated and synthesised by Right Lane Consulting. (2024, September)

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B. List of tactical opportunities	Impact	Effort	Proposed implementation timeframe	Opportunities to address challenges for the following success factor elements				Comments from CGEPS
				Capability	Organisation	Culture and ways of working	Enabling infrastructure	
B8 Adjust the submission deadline to ensure it does not fall right after the holiday periods in December and January. In addition, ensure there is a realistic submission timeline considering the lengthy approval process or resource constraint by some defined entities.	NA	NA	NA				✔	This opportunity has already been completed.
B9 Update the progress reporting template: • Consider other document formats as it is challenging to read and review a large amount of text on Excel. • Consider how much of the information provided is required for meaningful reporting. • Align the GIA template with the progress reporting GIA tab, with a data field for progress made on the GIA. • Provide guidance on the level of detail required for defined entities to be compliant, with some best practice examples. • Improve data entry hygiene by having separate data fields for qualitative data and quantitative data.	High	High	Long-term				✔	Initiative underway.
B10 Update the progress audit template: • Calibrate the number of data fields required on each tab, clearly indicating how it will contribute to further analysis. Specific data fields that were time consuming to populate include the ANZSCO code. • Clarify how total remuneration is calculated. • Align pay gap calculation with WGEA requirements. • Clarify how the non-mandatory data fields will be used in data analysis (e.g., intersectionality data).	High	High	Long-term				✔	CGEPS will improve the guidance and template to help organisations to correctly collect and prepare audit data.
B11 Clarify exactly what needs to be published on the defined entities' website. (e.g., the progress reporting Excel template or a summary).	Low	Low	Short-term				✔	CGEPS will highlight this in future communications.
B12 Update the CGEPS platform to: • Account for small data sets. • Address the system error of 'no data available' and what scenarios that might be. • Amend errors with system functionality.	Low	Low	Short-term				✔	CGEPS will unpack this further and address the knowledge gap via communications.

Priority list of actions

The Commission is addressing priority improvements, with some actions implemented immediately and others requiring longer-term planning and effort

The Commission has committed to prioritising the following areas for progress reporting and progress audit:

Summary:	1. Cohort-based approach:	2. Better resources for defined entities:	3. Refined assessment process and case management:
	Seeking to better understand and accommodate the diverse needs of defined entities across industries, locations, sizes and organisational maturity levels.	More user-friendly guidance and templates will be provided, supported by timely and clear communications.	Refining the assessment processes where possible to improve efficiency and using recent system upgrades to improve management of enquiries.
Aim:	To consider opportunities to align support where possible to the specific contexts and capabilities of different cohorts, in order to drive progress.	To simplify materials, increase accessibility, and enhance user centricity.	To streamline compliance-checking across the three obligations (GEAP, progress report and audit) where possible through: • Process redesign • Internal upskilling • Templates that reduce assessment times To set expectations on the provision of: • Responses to queries received • Feedback for progress report and progress audit submissions These expectations should reflect the resource availability and staff capacity at CGEPS.
Next steps:	By Q4 2025 we will: • refine the existing plan, • conduct a training needs analysis, • develop tailored resources and training materials, • and establish regulatory priorities.	**We are currently updating the reporting templates and the Commission website.** Updated guidance and templates will be developed by Q2 2025, along with planning for engagement and communications. Additional resources will be available by Q4 2025.	By Q4 2025, we will set expectations on the provision of feedback and communicate to defined entities. By Q2, 2026, we will have an updated compliance checking plan with a view to streamline where possible. We will continue to monitor enquiry response times, using our new case management systems.

These improvements are expected to help support defined entities to meet their obligations under the Gender Equality Act, enabling greater progress towards gender equality in Victoria

The Commission strongly encourages leaders from defined entities to take action on identified priorities for the next reporting cycle and beyond

Priorities for defined entities for progress reporting and progress audit:

Summary:	1. Collaboration with communities of practice and support networks:	2. Sponsorship from leaders, adequate resourcing and capability:	3. Reviewing existing content on the CGEPS website:
	Encourage reporting process owners and relevant staff to join communities of practice and support networks. This has been identified as a low effort, high impact enabler in building staff capability. Please refer to the CGEPS website for a list of communities of practice to consider. Kindly note that this list is non-exhaustive.	The CEO is accountable for meeting the legislative requirements under the Gender Equality Act. The CEO and executive team should display visible sponsorship by enabling their team to meet the obligations, including adequate resourcing and capability. Capabilities to build include, but are not limited to: • Data collection, reporting, and analysis • Gender equality and intersectionality • Undertaking and embedding Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) • Influencing and driving change within the organisation	Consultations highlighted clear knowledge gaps, some of which can be addressed through existing content on the CGEPS website. Prior to the next reporting cycle, please plan for sufficient time to review the material. Please note that the CGEPS website will be refreshed early 2025 for increased user-centricity and enhanced materials.

Other improvement opportunities to consider include:

- Improve documentation and handover processes to prevent loss of knowledge due to staff turnover in the organisation.
- Address perceptions on the importance of gender equality obligations within the organisation, linking it to the organisational strategy, reflecting values of a public sector entity.
- Identify ways to improve data quality, collection, and analysis.
- Establish clear internal governance processes for progress reporting and progress audit.
- Tailor CGEPS Gender Impact Assessment resources to meet the specific needs of the organisation.

Appendix

13 defined entities from various sectors and metro/regional locations of different sizes participated in four progress reporting focus groups

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	Organisation name	Purpose of engagement		Sector type				Size			Location	
		Progress report	Progress audit	Hospitals	Government	Councils	Universities and TAFEs	Small	Medium	Large	Metro	Regional
1	Alfred health	✓		✓						✓	✓	
2	Eastern Health	✓		✓						✓	✓	
3	South Gippsland Hospital	✓		✓				✓				✓
4	Kooweerup Regional Health Service	✓		✓					✓			✓
5	Department of Education	✓			✓					✓	✓	
6	Ambulance Victoria	✓			✓					✓	✓	
7	Greater Bendigo City Council	✓				✓				✓		✓
8	Darebin City Council	✓				✓				✓	✓	
9	Knox City Council	✓				✓				✓	✓	
10	Hume City Council	✓				✓				✓	✓	
11	RMIT University	✓					✓			✓	✓	
12	Federation University	✓					✓		✓			✓
13	William Angliss Institute of TAFE	✓					✓		✓		✓	

11 defined entities from various sectors and metro/regional locations of different sizes participated in four progress audit focus groups

	Organisation name	Purpose of engagement		Sector type				Size			Location	
		Progress report	Progress audit	Hospitals	Government	Councils	Universities and TAFEs	Small	Medium	Large	Metro	Regional
1	VHOGEN		✓	✓						✓	✓	
2	Albury Wodonga Hospital		✓	✓						✓		✓
3	Department of Transport		✓		✓					✓	✓	
4	Court Services Victoria		✓		✓					✓	✓	
5	Phillip Island Nature Parks		✓		✓				✓			✓
6	East Gippsland Shire Council		✓			✓				✓		✓
7	City of Melbourne		✓			✓				✓	✓	
8	Monash University		✓				✓			✓	✓	
9	University of Melbourne		✓				✓			✓	✓	
10	La Trobe University		✓				✓			✓	✓	
11	Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE		✓				✓	✓				✓

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Right Lane Consulting

🌐 rightlane.com.au

📍 Level 39, 2 Lonsdale Street
Naarm (Melbourne) VIC 3000