

9.10 VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S CHARTER

File Number: FOL/19/98
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Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the history and progress of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter ('the Charter');
2. Continues to progress actions in support of the Charter's three principles: gender equity, diversity and active citizenship;
3. Appoint the following people as Charter Champions
 - (a) Councillor: Colleen Condliffe
 - (b) Council Officer: Janine Jackson
4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to promote Council's Charter signatory status and display the Charter in council premises and communications (including Council's website)
5. Sends a copy of this report to the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), notifying the VLGA of Council's reaffirmation of the Charter
6. Supports the VLGA campaign to increase women's participation in local government as citizens, candidates and councillors
7. Requests that an annual report be provided to Council on progress against the Charter principles.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

At the Council meeting on 26 February 2019, Council resolved to adopt the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter (the Charter) and appoint Councillor Colleen Condliffe as the Charter Champion.

BACKGROUND

The Charter was established in 1998 by the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC) to recognise the need for increased women's participation in the key decision-making forums in the community and in democratic governance.

The WPILGC was a coalition of organisations, including peak bodies in local government, the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition, Victorian Women's Trust, Women's Electoral Lobby Victoria, Women's Planning Network and YWCA Victoria.

Following council amalgamations in 1996, the number of women councillors was at a record low (134 out of more than 600).

In 2013, the WPILGC dissolved itself and handed responsibility for this work to the MAV and the VLGA. At present, the VLGA manages the administration of the Charter signatories and network,

working alongside the MAV on promoting the charter and achieving gender equity in local government.

In 2020, 73 of 79 Victorian councils are signatories to the Charter.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

With the Local Government Bill 2019 and Gender Equality Act 2020 highlighting the importance of community engagement and equality, all 79 Victorian councils have a legislative imperative to prioritise the active and equal participation of women in council decision-making.

The VLGA has generated a list of suggested actions. Council's performance against these suggested actions is listed below:

CHARTER STATUS & CHARTER CHAMPIONS	STATUS
Become a Charter signatory.	Complete
Reaffirm your commitment to the Charter.	Pending adoption of the recommendation in this report.
Reappoint your Charter Champions.	Pending adoption of the recommendation in this report.
Appoint a councillor and an officer.	Complete
Try to rotate the Charter Champion position among councillors throughout the council term.	To be considered after the 2020 Council election.
Make the Charter a standing item on Council's agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requiring an annual report on actions related to gender equity, diversity and active citizenship. • appoint Charter Champions at the same time as other delegations. 	To be considered after the 2020 Council election.
Send a copy of the minutes to the VLGA (deborah@vlga.org.au) for publication on their website.	Complete
Display a framed copy of your council's Charter certificate (or multiple copies in different council buildings, including community centres, libraries etc).	Complete
Empower Charter Champions and council staff to use the Charter in their work. Provide them with the time or delegation to implement action items and attend network meetings or development sessions related to the Charter.	Complete
POLICY & ADVISORY GROUPS	
Undertake a simple audit of Council's activities, processes and community projects to identify what you have already achieved and can build on.	Council has developed a gender equity strategy which identifies priority actions.
Create a committee or working group of council that has oversight/responsibility for women's civic participation (i.e. Gender Equality Working Group, Women's Charter Advisory Committee).	
Empower the committee to operate in a meaningful advisory capacity on all relevant policies facing council – not just 'women's' or 'family' policies.	
Conduct a gender equality audit of all committees.	
Encourage committees to consider diversity when recruiting new members.	
Provide regular opportunities for women on all committees to develop their skills in leadership, policy, negotiation and decision-making.	

<p>Conduct an audit of committee meeting times and locations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they held in venues and at times that suit working women and women with childcaring responsibilities? • Consider using a survey to investigate barriers to women’s attendance at/participation in committees. • Work to address these barriers and evaluate the success of these measures. 	<p>Council has developed a gender equity strategy which identifies priority actions.</p>
<p>Compile a list of community groups (and their contact details) that may have women who are interested in running (or interested in supporting another woman to run) for local government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite these groups to pre-candidate training and ask that they distribute details to their networks. • Invite these groups to participate in community engagement or consultation that council undertakes. 	
<p>Make sure that you are actively seeking input from the Indigenous community, people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse groups. Dedicate resources to provide cultural, language, accessibility support where appropriate.</p>	
<p>Ensure that the Charter is referenced in any council policy that relates to Charter principles.</p>	
<p>Include the Charter in relevant council documents and strategies, including the Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.</p>	
<p>Distribute the Charter document to officers and ensure that they are aware of Council’s signatory status. Encourage officers to consider the Charter as an authorising document in their reports and daily work.</p>	
<p>AWARENESS RAISING</p>	
<p>Increase information and resources available to the community about the business of local government, on topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How councillors are elected • How councils make decisions • What services councils provide 	<p>Council has developed a gender equity strategy which identifies priority actions.</p>
<p>Make sure that these resources are accessible to all community members, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse groups.</p>	
<p>Spotlight the experiences and achievements of women leaders in your community, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse groups and current and former women councillors.</p>	
<p>Profile current and former women councillors on their backgrounds, their motivations for running for office and their achievements during their time as a councillor.</p>	
<p>Facilitate community conversations about the importance of diverse representation. Seek local examples and anecdotes of the impact that diverse representation has on decision making and community outcomes.</p>	
<p>Hold an event for International Women’s Day (8 March). Consider holding an awards ceremony celebrating the achievements of local women.</p>	

Encourage the community to nominate women for civic awards (see Honour A Woman).	Council has developed a gender equity strategy which identifies priority actions.
Nominate a local active citizen for inclusion on the Victorian Women's Honour Roll.	
Celebrate the centenary of Mary Rogers' election – the first woman elected to local government in Victoria and only the second in Australia (1920).	
ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO RUN	
Host a Victorian Local Government Women's Charter Afternoon Tea with women councillors, community groups and women interested in running in the October 2020 elections (or supporting another woman to run). This is a great opportunity for women to network and share information.	Election timetable includes events promoting women's civic participation.
Host one of the VLGA's Local Women Leading Change workshops for women ahead of the October 2020 elections. These workshops are held across Victoria, free of charge for councils and communities.	
Encourage all community members to attend the VLGA's Candidate Information workshops.	
NEW COUNCILLOR INDUCTION	
Provide information on the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter as an authorising document for council during induction for new councillors.	Charter will be included in induction materials.
Encourage councillors to consider the Charter when developing the Council Plan. As a task that must be completed within the first 6 months of the council term, it is important that councillors begin the next four years considering gender equity, diversity and active citizenship as core business for local government.	Charter will be included as a key reference document in development of Council Plan.
Provide opportunities for all councillors to learn about the importance of diversity and gender equity in local government, and the importance of a diversity of views in decision making processes.	Training to be provided.
Provide gender equality and/or unconscious bias training as part of new councillor induction.	Training to be provided.
Connect women councillors with opportunities for mentorship and support, including the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA).	Networking opportunities included in councillor development budget
Consider working with the VLGA and other councils in your area to initiate a mentorship/peer support program for new women councillors.	VLGA opportunities will be monitored.

COST/BENEFITS

Costs associated with the recommendations in this report will be contained within operational budgets. The benefit of adopting the recommendations is reaffirmation of Council's commitment to achieving gender equality and improving outcomes for women and men.

RISK ANALYSIS

There is a risk that Council will not be able to progress actions in support of the Charter due to competing priorities and limited resources.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Various staff have been consulted during the preparation of this report.