Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women Projects

**Local Government Gender Analysis Toolkit**

**Latrobe City Council**

**Project Process:**

A project team consisting of a community development officer (CDO) from Latrobe City Council and a health promotion worker (HPW) from Gippsland Women’s Health was formed to deliver the project. Both members worked 0.4 EFT on the project with the CDO providing expertise on council processes, the local government setting and facilitating consultation with council staff while the HPW provided expertise on gender analysis.

The project commenced with a review of existing gender analysis tools and scoping the content of a draft generic tool. Council areas/teams were identified for potential tool development.

Initial meetings were held with individuals in relevant teams identified as being engaged in the concept. These meetings workshopped the concept of gender analysis within the context of the relevant team and attempted to identify workflow processes where a gender analysis could be integrated. The project team then drafted tools for the identified teams and distributed them for feedback.

The project team made a presentation to the Executive Team to provide an update on the project and build buy in. The draft tools were presented to the MAV PVAW Network for feedback and were circulated to PVAW contacts at the other five Gippsland Councils.

The feedback received from all sources was incorporated into the final version of the toolkit which was then provided to the Marketing team for the final design work.

**Project achievements and successes:**

The overarching achievement of the project has been the development of the toolkit. The project has also progressed existing internal conversations around gender equality in service planning and delivery in specific teams and at the Executive level.

Feedback received from people already engaged in this work in other councils is that the tools will assist them in their work. Access and utilisation of the tools by these councils is eagerly awaited.

The project was a successful partnership between Latrobe City Council and Gippsland Women’s Health. It demonstrated the value of local government engaging external subject matter experts to assist in developing internal programs and processes. At a worker level the project team brought different but complementary skills and experience to the project and this enhanced the outcomes.

**Project challenges and issues:**

The key challenge of this project was the short timeframe, which did not allow for in-depth consultation in the development and trialling of the tools. As such, the tool will benefit from further piloting, evaluation and development.

During the scoping of the project it was discovered that although several resources exist for organisational gender equity audits there are limited resources for gender analysis. There was also a lack of clarity regarding the differences between an audit and an analysis. The project team also found it challenging to focus on future planning (analysis) without referring to what is currently being undertaken (auditing). It became apparent that the recommended and logical process is for a gender equity audit to be conducted initially, followed by a more in-depth gender analysis of specific programs, services and processes. Conducting an initial gender equity audit provides a baseline from which to compare future practice and outcomes.

This project sought to develop an assessment and accountability process to highlight and assist to address gender equality in council programs and services. The process relies on the understanding and support of management to ensure the implementation and integration of gender analysis as fundamental business within the organisation. It was not within the scope of this project to work with managers to develop this understanding; therefore, councils who utilise the tools may first need to build the capacity of management to value gender analysis.

The aim of the project was to build the capacity of council staff to undertake gender analysis through the development of a standalone toolkit. In engaging staff the project team initially discovered that they had been overly optimistic about the readiness of council staff to understand the implications of gender on their work. The project team were also questioned about the benefit of considering gender when staff feel under pressure to consider other legislated groups, such as people with a disability.

The project was developed utilising a collaborative approach between the project team and work areas/teams to develop the tools. While this approach worked for individuals and teams receptive to the concept there was inadequate time to overcome either initial resistance or a lack of understanding of the concept from some staff members. A longer timeframe for implementation would have allowed greater engagement with teams to overcome initial barriers.

**Advice for other councils:**

When developing a process that requires accountability it is imperative to build the capacity of those responsible for holding people accountable to understand the issues and have project buy in.

Systemic change takes time and is a labour intensive process. Creating an additional burden on already under-resourced staff can create further resistance. This process needs to be well managed and given enough time to work through initial barriers and resistance.

It is important to develop a ‘pitch’ to quickly sell the project to the target audience. ‘Real life’ examples related to the person’s work area or area of interest would be helpful. Showing how the project solves a problem that a person knows they face helps to build buy in.