

1.5 Women in Local Government

PART A - Policy

Objective

The objective of this Policy is to set out how the Shire of Dandaragan (Shire) aims to advance the representation of women in decision making roles as Councillors, managers and emerging leaders within the organisation

Policy Statement

The Council and Shire are committed to working towards increasing the participation of women in its local government, both as elected members and as senior managers and professionals.

The Council and Shire:

- acknowledges that in Local Government women are underrepresented both as elected members and as senior members of administrations and that their increased participation in both of these arenas should be encouraged;
- acknowledges that increasing the representation of women in leadership positions will help challenge and shift workplace cultures and provide women with a greater capacity to participate in the development and implementation of legislation, policies and services that affect their lives;
- ensures that no discrimination or impediment exists, and will take action to ensure that barriers to women's full participation in Local Government are removed; and
- agrees to create and support an environment in Local Government which is harassment-free and that encourages the expression of and respect for a wide range of views.

The Shire will:

- work towards a local government and community where women feel able to fully participate and share their skills, knowledge and experience;
- work towards a harassment-free, participative local government where opinions and differences are respected;
- develop a climate of understanding among Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and senior staff of the need for greater participation of women in leadership roles and to enlist their support;
- provide support for women who choose to develop their leadership capacity through specific training and networking activities for women;
- provide flexible working arrangements that enable staff to balance their work and family responsibilities so that they may grow to their full potential without unfair barriers to advancement; and
- identify career growth plans for high performing and competent women employees to develop their leadership capacity.

PART B - Management Procedures

Definitions

Nil.

Detail

Strategies to Increase Participation of Women in Local Government

Women bring different skills to decision-making and leadership, particularly when dealing with complex and subtle issues.

The following strategies are in many cases already occurring however, it is essential they be included as part of a policy to ensure these practices continue into the future:

1. The Shire of Dandaragan to be an employer of choice.
2. Devising a family friendly organisation that offers mutually beneficial practices.
3. Continued positive access to learning and development.

1. The Shire of Dandaragan to be an Employer of Choice

Need to make people comfortable from the beginning - Interview panels to consistently have at least one woman on them, thereby ensuring balanced representation and no bias in the job selection processes.

Workplace culture - Endorse the Codes of Conduct for Council and Employees and revisit this annually to ensure all are aware of the guidelines and their ethical responsibility. This will promote an inclusive organisational culture, equal opportunity and good governance.

Open communication - Continued positive and open relationship and communication between President, CEO, Councillors and staff, ensuring effective working environment.

Consideration be given in specific circumstances to allow family friendly practices to occur. At all times finding ways to be mutually beneficial.

Promotion of women in leadership positions - When booking speakers for public events, to ensure appropriate women speakers are considered in order to give a powerful message

2. Devising a Family Friendly Organisation that Offers Mutually Beneficial Practices

There are a range of work practices and administrative measures that can be implemented that will facilitate the attraction and retention of women as employees and elected members.

The Council, Shire and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) embrace these initiatives and will apply them where possible

Opportunity for flexibility of working hours - Some flexibility be considered if it can be arranged to be mutually beneficial and the role is not compromised.

Job sharing - Being able to work part-time or role share may encourage more women to enter local government. This may also be appropriate upon return from maternity leave.

Working from home - If circumstances require it then consideration be given to setting up a mutually beneficial arrangement to allow a percentage of work time to be from home. This would only be applied in specific circumstances with real needs. Negotiation may need to consider network access from home in this situation.

Council workshops and meeting times - To review meeting and workshop times to ensure they occur at times that are family friendly times.

3. Continued Positive Access to Learning and Development

Access to learning - At all times within the Shire and Council, access to professional development and appropriate courses, be encouraged and well supported to continue to enhance knowledge and skills.

Increasing networking opportunities for women - To encourage increased participation of women in both elected member and officer positions it is important to provide a wide range of networking opportunities.

Joining professional organisations - Women officers and Councillors be encouraged to join professional organisations that promote women in Local Government.

Opportunity to raise specific issues - As part of performance appraisal by the CEO, consideration be given to individual circumstances pertaining to women officers and meeting their development needs.

Career opportunities - Ensure there are opportunities for promotion and career advancement generally.

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