

This Employer Context Statement accompanies information submitted by Federation University Australia to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) for the 2024–25 reporting period.

A message from the Vice-Chancellor and President

Federation University Australia is regional Victoria's largest education institution, operating as a dual-sector university and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) provider. We play a critical role in building the workforce capability and economic resilience of the regions we serve.

Over the coming decade, regional Victoria will require an estimated 280,000 additional workers, including nurses, teachers, engineers, technicians and other professionals. At the same time, rapid technological change, the growth of artificial intelligence, and shifts in productivity, health and climate are transforming how work is done. These challenges demand a workforce that is adaptable, skilled and supported to thrive.

Traditional education pathways alone cannot meet this demand. Federation University is responding by delivering the skilled workforce, applied research and innovation our regions need. As part of this ambition, we are progressing toward becoming Australia's first co-operative university, embedding real-world experience throughout the learning journey.

Our people are central to delivering this vision. Attracting and retaining talent requires more than competitive remuneration – it requires a workplace that is inclusive, flexible and equitable, and where diverse perspectives are valued and supported to succeed.

Meeting our obligations under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* is a core part of this commitment. We are committed to transparency in reporting our gender pay gap and to taking sustained, meaningful action to address it. We recognise that pay equity is shaped by the full employee lifecycle, including recruitment, progression, flexibility, leadership pathways and access to opportunity.

While progress has been made, we know there is more to do. Reducing our gender pay gap is therefore embedded across workforce strategy, policy and culture, rather than treated as a standalone issue.

What the gender pay gap is – and what it is not

The gender pay gap (GPG) reflects the difference between the average earnings of women and men across an organisation. It is influenced by a range of social and economic factors that affect women's lifetime earnings and is widely recognised as a proxy for gender inequality in access to opportunity.

The GPG is not the same as equal pay. Equal pay refers to women and men receiving the same remuneration for the same or comparable work, which is a legal requirement.

Addressing the gender pay gap is complex and requires sustained, multi-faceted action. It is shaped by interconnected factors including representation, recruitment, promotion, career development, turnover, caring responsibilities, parental leave and access to flexible work – particularly in senior and higher-paid roles.

Understanding Federation University's gender pay gap

Federation University's gender pay gaps are all below national private-sector benchmarks. Over the past two reporting periods, we have achieved reductions in our average and median base salary¹ gaps and in median total remuneration, with a marginal increase in average total remuneration reflecting workforce composition changes.

¹ In 2024-25, total remuneration data was inadvertently duplicated as base salary resulting in WGEA-published base salary and total remuneration GPGs being the same. This was a one-off anomaly with prior years reflecting accurate figures. Data cited in this document reflects recalculated, accurate base salary GPGs.

While comparison data provides useful context, our industry comparison group includes universities that are not dual-sector institutions and therefore do not face the same unique gender equality challenges. Compared to this group, Federation's average base salary, average total remuneration and median base salary gender pay gaps are higher, while our median total remuneration gap is lower.

Comparison gender pay gaps	Federation		Comparison group	National GPG
	2023–2024	2024–2025 ²		
Average base salary	13.6%	13.2%	10.3%	15.7%
Average total remuneration	13.5%	13.8%	11.0%	21.1%
Median base salary	12.0%	8.3%	7.1%	11.9%
Median total remuneration	11.5%	8.3%	8.5%	16.4%

Federation has achieved gender balance in the two highest-paid quartiles. However, women remain under-represented in the highest-paid quartile, while men are under-represented in the two lowest-paid quartiles.

Gender composition by pay quartile

Women | Men

	Women	Men	Average total remuneration
Total workforce	64%	36%	\$120,000
Upper quartile	52%	48%	\$178,000
Upper middle quartile	59%	41%	\$124,000
Lower middle quartile	70%	30%	\$103,000
Lower quartile	76%	24%	\$76,000

Causes of Federation University's gender pay gap

Federation is committed to addressing the structural drivers of its gender pay gap across both university and TAFE environments. To strengthen our understanding and ensure our actions are targeted, we engaged an external gender equality expert to undertake a detailed analysis of our workforce data.

As is common across the higher education sector, Federation's gender pay gap reflects long-standing structural patterns. Women are more likely to be employed in lower-paid professional, teaching-focused, fixed-term or casual roles, while men are more highly represented in senior academic and leadership positions.

As a dual-sector institution, our results are also influenced by the highly gender-segregated nature of vocational education, where men are more likely to teach in higher-paid technical and trade-based disciplines.

² Recalculated with correct base salary data.

Over the past two reporting periods, women's representation increased across the workforce, including:

- women managers increasing from 52% to 54%
- women non-managers increasing from 65% to 67%
- overall representation of women increasing from 64% to 65%

Despite this progress, deeper analysis shows that women remain under-represented in several of the highest-paid roles captured in the upper pay quartile, while men are significantly under-represented in non-manager roles. Together, these structural imbalances continue to contribute to our gender pay gap.

It is worth noting that as a small regional university, we have undertaken stringent cost-cutting measures over the past five years since COVID. This has limited our hiring ability, including in senior roles where we have lost several senior appointments which we have not been able to replace. This has impacted our ability to improve gender balance in STEM academic areas and senior leadership.

Federation University's gender equality priorities

Federation University will develop its next gender equality strategy and action plan in the first quarter of the 2026 calendar year. Delivery will be overseen by a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion Senior Consultant to ensure accountability and sustained progress.

1. Bias-free recruitment and promotion

We will strengthen equity across recruitment, promotion and performance processes by:

- Implementing an updated recruitment procedure informed by a gender impact assessment.
- Embedding equity considerations into workforce systems and decision-making processes.
- Strengthening evidence-based training for selection and promotion panels to reduce bias and improve outcomes.

2. Addressing gendered barriers to career progression

We recognise that pay equity is closely linked to flexibility, caring responsibilities and access to leadership opportunities.

Flexible work

- Investigating barriers to part-time and flexible senior leadership roles.
- Designing and normalising flexible work arrangements in senior positions, including role-modelling at executive level.
- Strengthening accountability through consistent documentation and measurement of flexible work outcomes.

Parental leave

- Supporting research career continuity for women taking academic leave for parental or carer's leave, by proactively engaging with them and co-developing research continuity plans and activities that enable them to remain part of their team's research output.
- Actively promoting primary carer parental leave for men, including senior leaders, to support shared care and reduce career impacts associated with caring responsibilities.

3. Addressing gender segregation

- Continuing to strengthen our women's academic mentoring program, supporting participation in promotion processes. In 2025, applications for academic promotion from women increased by 112% compared to 2024.

- Supporting participation in the Wattle Leadership Program, with 36% of participants promoted since attendance and a further 50% currently in leadership roles.
- Through Federation's Skills and Jobs Centre, promoting women's participation in trades and technical pathways, supporting longer-term change in gender representation within higher-paid vocational teaching roles.

In 2026, Federation will deliver a Certificate II in Electrotechnology as a VETDSS schools program to an all-female cohort, developed in partnership with local schools.

4. Workplace safety

- Strengthening prevention and response frameworks for sexual harassment and gender-based violence, informed by consultation with staff, students and community partners.
- Continuing partnerships with regional organisations including Women's Health Grampians and Our Watch to support community-wide approaches to gender equality and safety.

Conclusion

Federation University recognises that achieving gender pay equity requires sustained leadership commitment and systemic change. Through targeted action, transparent reporting and continuous review, we are focused on embedding gender-equitable practices across our workforce and delivering meaningful, long-term progress for our people and the communities we serve.

Professor Duncan Bentley

Vice-Chancellor and President