GENDER EQUITY COALITION GREATER BENDIGO

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Newsletter
November - December 2026

Welcome to the November-December edition of the Gender Equity Coalition Newsletter, featuring news, opportunities and events for the months ahead. Together we share achievements, celebrate progress, and showcase the collective efforts of individuals and organisations working to advance gender equity across our community.

The GEC brings together individuals, local government, business, education, community and health organisations and community groups who share a simple but powerful goal: to create a Greater Bendigo where everyone feels safe, respected and valued. Together, we're building momentum for real change, through collaboration, shared learning, and collective advocacy.

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Gender Equity Coalition Updates

2026 - 2028 Leadership Governance Group

In September the GEC welcomed a new Leadership Governance Group for the 2026 - 2028 term. We are lucky to retain eight existing members; Mandy Hutchinson - CEO Bendigo Community Health Services; Eileen Brownless - Community Representative; Kate Wright - CEO Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria; Margaret Augerinos - CEO Centre for Non Violence; Ember Chittenden - Zonta Bendigo; Belinda Buck - Director Strategy, Programs & Partnerships Women's Health Loddon Mallee; Kate Mannix - CEO AFS & Associates; and Jess Howard - Director, Healthy Communities & Communities City of Greater Bendigo.

Alongside these existing members, we welcomed four new members; Caitlin Rogers, Damian Stock, Simone Holden, and Mary Hayes.



Caitlin Rogers

Senior Stakeholder and Engagement Advisor
La Trobe University

La Trobe University is committed to advancing gender equity, inclusion and equal opportunity across its campuses and regional communities. We contribute to positive change through education, research and community partnerships, while working to create safe, respectful and inclusive environments. In my role, I am passionate about supporting this commitment and contributing to a fairer, and more inclusive Greater Bendigo.



Damian Stock

CEO - Arc Justice

ARC Justice provides community legal and housing justice services across central and northern Victoria, working to address inequality and strengthen communities. Through our work with people affected by family violence, housing insecurity and legal disadvantage, we see the impact of gendered violence and systemic exclusion. I'm joining the Coalition's leadership group to support practical action that challenges harmful norms and helps build a more inclusive and equitable community.



Mary Hayes

Manager Employee Experience
Coliban Water

I lead work across organisational culture, employee experience, inclusion, wellbeing and gender equality. I bring more than 20 years' experience across people and culture, organisational change, transformation and operational leadership in both the public and private sectors. I am passionate about creating inclusive workplaces where people feel valued and respected, with a particular interest in turning gender equality commitments into practical and sustainable change.

Simone Holden



Respectful Relationships Liaison
Department of Education & Training

We are committed to promoting gender equity through Respectful Relationships, which helps children and young people build healthy relationships, resilience and respect. Supporting the Gender Equity Coalition enables us to contribute to broader community change, creating safer, more equitable and inclusive environments for everyone. I am passionate, both personally and professionally, about addressing the drivers of gender-based violence and working collaboratively to create lasting change.

GEC Working Groups

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to refining the long list of potential projects for GEC Working Groups to progress over the next two years. Alongside online and face-to-face meetings over the past six months, the Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equity Working Group recently participated in a workshop facilitated by Azzy and Hayley from WHLM. Focusing on *Healthy Masculinities: Unpacking Driver 4*, the session brought together 20 participants from a range of GEC member organisations, including Zonta, Agnico Eagle, Thorne Harbour Country and the Bendigo Football Netball League.

Together, participants explored how workplaces and communities can promote positive masculinities and challenge harmful gender stereotypes. The session concluded with a productive discussion about which projects the group is best placed to deliver, considering both impact and capacity. These proposed projects will now be considered further as part of the Leadership Governance Group's upcoming strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning Session

The Leadership Governance Group has a Strategic Planning session in mid-November, which will focus on aligning the GEC's 2026-2028 goals with its purpose. They will also be reviewing projects/initiatives developed by the three GEC Working Groups - Celebrating and Creating inclusive Leadership; Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equity and GEC Communications. This will allow the generation of a clear plan for the GEC for the next two years.

What's On - Events & Training

Greater Bendigo events - 16 Days of Activism Against Gendered Violence

The Walk and Run Against Family Violence is a free community event that brings people



together to raise awareness of gender-based violence, show support for those affected, and promote a safer, more respectful community. Participants can walk, jog or run at their own pace in a welcoming, family-friendly environment.

Register for FREE: Walk and Run Against Family Violence | City of Greater Bendigo



A Call for Peace and Equality

Tarang Chawla brings his powerful call against violence to Bendigo, at a time when it's never been more important to hear. Tarang is the co-founder of *Not One More Niki*, a campaign to end violence against women and children, named in honour of his younger sister, who was murdered in 2015. He is an inspiring speaker on a mission to affect change within communities, relationships and families. His story is unforgettable, as is his message for peace and equality.

Friday 11th December 5.30 - 6.30 - Supported by the City of Greater Bendigo.
Click here for FREE tickets.

Women's Health Loddon Mallee - 16 Days Toolkit

We can change the story Loddon Mallee. Choose Respect. The Loddon Mallee 16 Days Toolkit provides practical resources, tools and guidance to help individuals and organisations get involved in the campaign. Whether you're participating in local events, leading your own activities, or sharing campaign messages, the toolkit will support you to make a meaningful contribution in your community. **Check it out Here.**

Welcome to Many Culture, One Voice!

A FREE day celebrating diversity, respect, and community.



Connect with local services, share your voice, learn about support available in our community, and stand united for a safer, more respectful future for everyone.
Everyone welcome! Let's celebrate our diverse cultures and show that every voice matters and every person deserves to feel safe, respected, and supported.

Rotary Club - Kangaroo Flat
Friday 27th Nov, 10 - 3pm.
Register here



Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre is hosting Courage and Codes, a free workshop for father/father figure and sons aged 10-15 years old. We will explore ways of helping your son to respect himself, choose healthy mates, value women and community, recognise and manage his emotions. Facilitated by Matt Lees-Nunan, a passionate counsellor, teaching young men how to build self-worth and emotional awareness.

Wed 2 Dec, 5:30 - 7pm
Register Here



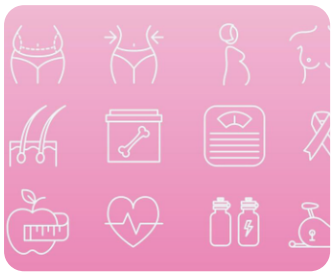
- Friday Nov 27, 10.30am-12pm. Bendigo Health Concert Hall. **Unanswered Calls Documentary Screening**
- Saturday Nov 28 and Dec 5. 12.30pm. California Gully Recreation Reserve. **Violence Prevention Cricket Matches.**
- Saturday Nov 28. 9.30am-11.30am. **Many Hands Create Change community art workshop**
- Monday Nov 30. 10.30am, Bendigo Library. **Anglicare Story time.**
- Monday Dec 7 4pm-6pm **Red Energy Arena Pop Up stall with Bendigo Spirit**

'Doing' Gender Equity

Respect Victoria have expanded the previous **16 Days of Activism toolkit and 'Respect Is...'** assets into a year-round 'It Starts With Respect' toolkit. You can use and adapt these at



any time, including during the **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.**



The Australian Government has announced a new **Senate Select Committee on women's health,** chaired by Senator Marielle Smith, to hear directly from women across Australia about their healthcare experiences and identify opportunities for improvement. The committee will focus on issues such as fertility, postpartum care, women's pain, and perinatal mental health, helping to inform future policy and reform.



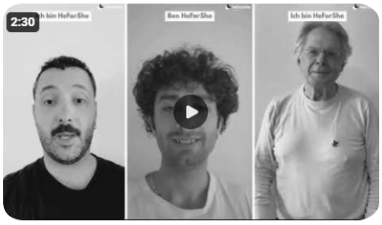
Sweethearts is a public artwork by Philippa Lysaght and Omi McCurdie that highlights the excuses often used to minimise domestic violence against women. The installation features 56 concrete hearts representing women killed by a current or former partner this year, each displaying common victim-blaming phrases. The artwork encourages people to challenge attitudes that excuse abuse and to recognise everyone's role in preventing violence against women.



A new bill from Allegra Spender aims to stop religious schools from being able to expel students or sack staff because they are gay, transgender, pregnant, divorced, or unmarried. Supporters say all students and staff should be protected from discrimination, no matter what school they attend. Advocates are now calling on the government to support the bill and strengthen protections for students and teachers. **Read more here**.



Suicide is the leading cause of death of Australian males aged 15-44 and the third leading cause of death of males aged 45-64. Knowing that men are typically less likely than women to reach out for support, Murray PHN has launched the **His Story. End Silence. End Suicide.** campaign in a bid to reduce the rate of men's suicide.



The **HeForShe 2026 IMPACT Report** captures a year of collective action for gender equality, bringing together the work of HeForShe Champions, National Chapters and partners across sectors and regions.In 2026, the HeForShe community reached 16+ million people, mobilised 6,300+ institutions and directly supported 2.61 million+ people through initiatives

advancing women's leadership, education, economic empowerment, healthcare, violence prevention and more.

Research & Resources

Teach Us Consent is an Australian education initiative that provides practical, evidence-based resources on consent, respectful relationships and gender equality. Through podcasts, videos, articles and downloadable resources, it helps people better understand consent, challenge harmful norms and build healthier relationships. **Check it out: Here.**



Our Watch have partnered with *Pop Culture Parenting* for a new podcast episode exploring masculinity through the film *The Lost Boys*. Drawing on research, the episode looks at how rigid ideas about masculinity can shape boys' relationships, wellbeing and behaviour – and what parents, carers and educators can do to support the boys in their lives.
Listen Here.

Whose pipeline have you entered? Fitness and "looks optimising" content online can easily drift into overtly misogynistic material tied to incel ideology. This article from Respect Victoria encourages us to learn to think critically about the content you're fed can give you an opportunity to disrupt the algorithim and come up for air. **Read about it Here.**

Addressing misogyny is critical to both gender equality and preventing extremism. Research from the University of Melbourne found that misogyny is a key predictor of support for extremist beliefs among young Australians. A survey of more than 3,400 Australians found hostile attitudes towards women were linked to multiple forms of extremism. Researchers identified manfluencer content, online dating platforms and pornography as significant influences. Teachers reported growing concerns about anti-feminist and manosphere influences in schools. **Read more Here.**

The **Gender Snapshot 2026** reports that progress towards gender equality across the Sustainable Development Goals remains too slow, with major gaps in leadership and decision-making. It highlights declining support for gender equality institutions, reduced funding, and increasing challenges to



women's participation and rights. The report also shows that when women are represented in leadership, outcomes improve across areas such as education, poverty reduction, and environmental action. **Read more here**



The State of Man: Award-winning journalist Marc Fennell plunges into the heart of masculinity in Australia, exploring the online world of the manosphere, the machinery cashing in on the search for what it means to be a man, and what's shaping the next generation. **Watch in on abc iview**



The Pregnancy Penalty - how being pregnant or a mother can still cost women their jobs. Avani Dias spoke to women who say they've been fired, demoted, discriminated against or offered sham redundancies when they were pregnant or returning to work. **Watch on abc iview**

Gender and Disaster Australia

With summer approaching, **Gender and Disaster Australia** have released a **project report** and **8 factsheets** which focus on how Emergency Evacuation Centres can be designed and operated to uphold safety, dignity and accessibility for everyone. Factsheets focus on recommendations for Women, Children and Family, Domestic and Family Violence, LGBTIQASB+ people, First Nations, Multicultural, Disability, Older People and Youth. Alongside this they have developed a **reference sheet** on family violence for emergency evacuation workers.

Member spotlights



Fosterville Gold Mine

GEC Member: Fosterville Gold Mine

An underground gold mining operation, with close to 800 employees across mining, maintenance, processing, technical and support functions.

GE action we're working on right now?

We continue to focus on strengthening gender equity and workplace inclusion through workforce consultation, targeted development opportunities and initiatives that support attraction, retention and career progression. We also partner with DJAARA through our Bakaru Wayaparrangu Agreement, creating opportunities to strengthen cultural engagement, employment pathways and greater participation from underrepresented groups.

A gender equity action we're proud of?

We are particularly proud of our **International Day of Women in Mining (IDWIM)** event, which was co-designed with employees to ensure it was meaningful and impactful. The event brings together women at different career stages to share experiences, learn from one another and celebrate the contributions of women in mining. We are also proud to deliver the **Dr Leanne Baker Leadership Program**, an annual initiative focused on building confidence, resilience and leadership capability. The program equips women with practical skills and support to further their professional growth and pursue leadership opportunities within the industry.

What others could learn from your work?

One of our key learnings has been the value of consultation. Engaging employees in the design of initiatives helps ensure programs are relevant, meaningful and aligned to the needs of the workforce, which in turn drives stronger participation and impact.



North Central Catchment Management Authority

GEC Member: North Central CMA

North Central Catchment Management Authority works with communities, Traditional Owners, landholders and partners to protect and enhance land, water and biodiversity across north central Victoria, supporting healthy environments, resilient communities and sustainable landscapes.

What's happening in GE at NCCMA?

NCCMA values listening to the communities it works with. Recently, Rachel Murphy attended the Thriving Women Conference in Bendigo, gaining insights into the experiences, challenges and contributions of women in agriculture. These learnings help ensure women's voices inform CMA planning and decision-making, supporting a strong and sustainable agricultural sector.

A gender equity action we're proud of?

With several staff becoming parents in recent years, we're strengthening support for employees returning from parental leave and promoting shared caregiving responsibilities. This includes re-induction, coaching, manager support, flexible work arrangements, carers leave and peer connections to help balance work and family life.

What others could learn from your work?

One of our biggest lessons has been that better outcomes are achieved when diverse voices are heard and valued. By actively seeking different perspectives, we make better decisions and create initiatives that better reflect community needs. Gender equity is an ongoing commitment to ensuring everyone has opportunities to participate, contribute and be heard.

Joining the GEC

Separate Pathways exist for organisations and individuals to join the Coalition. A dedicated organisational pathway ensures the relationship is held by the organisation itself—supporting continuity beyond changes in staff or leadership. **Organisations EOI to Join HERE**.

A separate option for individuals allows people to join without needing a workplace or club affiliation, offering a quicker and more streamlined process with fewer barriers to participation. **Individuals Join HERE.**

Member Spotlight

You are invited to share your stories, projects, or actions, big or small, that are helping to create more inclusive, respectful spaces.

Your experiences can inspire others and highlight the collective progress we're making together. Let's highlight the amazing gender equity efforts happening across our region!

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