Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector PhD program

Guidelines

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# Message from the Commissioner

The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector’s PhD Program was established in 2025. As Victoria’s first Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner, I am proud to support research that grows the evidence we need to drive intersectional gender equality. This program also helps grow the community of researchers in this important field.

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* is nation-leading legislation. Targeted research is crucial to understand how we can best advance intersectional gender equality in public sector workplaces, communities, policymaking and beyond.

This PhD program will help achieve the goals of the Act and the ambition of Victoria to continue to lead the nation in gender equality. By better understanding how to achieve intersectional gender equality, we can inspire other jurisdictions and sectors to follow Victoria’s lead.

Successful applicants will undertake research that directly supports the objects of the Act, while gaining exposure to the Victorian public sector and government policymaking.

I look forward to welcoming successful students to the CGEPS PhD Program. I also look forward to the insights their research will bring to help create a gender-equal future for everyone.

**Dr Niki Vincent**Public Sector Gender EqualityCommissioner

# About the Commission

The [Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/) (the Commission / CGEPS) was established after the [*Gender Equality Act 2020*](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/about-gender-equality-act-2020) (the Act) was passed in February 2020.

The Commission supports the [Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner](http://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/the-public-sector-gender-equality-commissioner) (the Commissioner) in:

* overseeing the Act,
* promoting gender equality in the public sector workforce and beyond.

The Act is a ground-breaking piece of legislation. It requires certain public sector organisations in Victoria to take action to improve gender equality.

These organisations must:

* report on gender equality measures
* set out plans to improve gender equality in their organisation
* consider the gendered impacts of all policies, programs and services that impact the public, and
* make measurable progress towards gender equality.

## Objects of the Gender Equality Act 2020

The Act has broad-ranging goals. Its key strength is that it not only focuses on driving gender equality and improving women’s status, but also recognises how multiple forms of disadvantage and discrimination can shape the experience of gender equality.

The Act aims to:

* promote and support gender equality and improve the status of women
* identify and remove systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs and services in workplaces and communities
* recognise that gender inequality is made worse by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination. A person may experience this based on Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other attributes
* reduce disadvantage, stigma, stereotyping, prejudice, and violence, and make structural changes to include people of all genders
* improve economic and social participation by people of all genders
* promote the right to equality set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The Act focuses on systemic inequalities, intersecting forms of disadvantage, and the promotion of human rights. It applies to the public sector as well as policymaking and service delivery across Victoria.

## The Commissioner’s research function

The Act gives the Commissioner power to research anything related to its operation and objectives. This makes research a core function of the Commissioner.

To make the Act work in practice, we need:

* rigorous and relevant research, and
* clear translation of research into policy and practice.

There is a growing body of research on organisational gender equality and its relationship to gender equality in the wider community. However, there is little on what works in the Victorian context. We need more research that supports the Act’s effective implementation and strengthens Victoria’s role as a leading jurisdiction. We also need more research translation to share this knowledge with relevant stakeholders and across the Victorian community.

Research is vital to ensure that:

* the goals of the Act are fulfilled
* the Commissioner is supported to perform their role effectively
* duty holders' actions to promote intersectional gender equality are backed by the latest knowledge
* the Commission can share this knowledge with duty holders and the wider Victorian community;
* gender equality continues to progress throughout Victoria, and
* Victoria’s leadership can guide other jurisdictions.

# The Commission’s PhD program

The Commission launched its PhD Program in 2025 to build strong, practical knowledge that supports the goals of the Gender Equality Act 2020. Students start the program at the same time they begin their PhD candidature, in either Semester 1 or Semester 2. Each year, one or two students are expected to join.

The program helps grow a community of researchers focused on the Act and its aims. It provides a clear way to produce high-quality, evidence-based research that can be used to advance intersectional gender equality.

Successful applicants will:

* work closely with the Commission,
* connect with state, national, and international organisations already engaged in gender equality and violence against women research, and
* contribute to a stronger base of evidence that guides action in Victoria and beyond.

## Benefits of the program

As a participant, you will play an important role in developing evidence-based and innovative approaches to progressing gender equality across workplaces, the Victorian community, and further afield. Your research will help the Commission:

* identify what works and in what context,
* highlight areas that need adjustment, and
* show where evidence gaps remain.

This program also prepares you for a career in research, the public sector, policymaking, or industry. Specifically, successful applicants will be provided with:

* the chance to develop research that translates into real-world outcomes for a gender-equal Victoria,
* regular meetings with the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner
* PhD supervision from a CGEPS staff member (the Commission will provide up to 20% external supervision on your panel)
* a desk at the Commission’s Melbourne CBD office
* opportunities to build skills and knowledge about public sector regulation and policymaking
* access to Commission data and support in connecting with key stakeholders
* direct exposure to Victorian public sector and government policymaking.

## Eligibility

To participate in the CGEPS PhD Program, applicants must:

* be enrolled (or enrolling) in a PhD program at an Australia-based university. It is preferred that you apply to the CGEPS PhD Program before commencing your candidature
* be able to self-fund your research. Recipients of an [Australian Government Research Training Program scholarship](https://www.education.gov.au/research-block-grants/research-training-program) will be viewed favourably.

You may be able to *apply* for the program while applying for a PhD place. However, you cannot *commence* engagement with the Commission until your candidature has started.

Applicants are expected to:

* complete their PhD full-time, within a maximum of 3.5 years (excluding any leave of absence)
* use a desk space at the Commission’s Melbourne CBD office regularly throughout their candidature

The Commission welcomes applications from a wide range of disciplines, including:

* social sciences
* psychology
* law
* business
* human resources
* industrial relations.

We strongly encourage applications from:

* Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
* people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
* people with disability
* people from LGBTIQA+ communities.

Applicants are invited to propose their own PhD project that aligns with the goals of the Gender Equality Act 2020 and/or the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector. Projects should show a clear link to the Victorian context. Students whose projects analyse the workplace gender audit data collected under the Act will be viewed favourably.

Specific priorities for the Commission include research that:

* draws on or investigates the workplace gender audit data, progress reports, gender impact assessments and/or Gender Equality Action Plans reported under the Act
* supports the monitoring and evaluation of the Act
* builds the evidence base for effective interventions to promote intersectional gender equality.

## Assessment criteria and process

Assessment will be based solely on the information supplied in your application.

A panel of gender equality experts, including the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner, will assess applications. Shortlisted applicants may be invited to interview.

Assessment criteria

1. Project quality, viability and alignment with the goals and values of the Act and the Commission:
   * Your application must demonstrate your ability in academic writing and provide a cohesive project design that demonstrates your understanding of the research question to be explored.
   * Your application must demonstrate the alignment between your project, the core principles of the Gender Equality Act 2020, and the role of the Commission and Commissioner. Your project must clearly align with the publicly stated goals and values of the above and demonstrate clear links to the Victorian context.
   * Your proposed project must apply a structural gender lens in its approach and address relevant questions of intersectionality.
2. Track record and capability:
   * You must demonstrate the relevant expertise to execute your proposed project successfully. You will be assessed based upon your prior academic performance, and, if relevant, your professional qualifications and experience.
   * You must demonstrate gender equality expertise and ideally a sound understanding of workplace gender equality. Evidence of your understanding of intersectional gender equality will be viewed favourably.
3. Motivation and capacity to complete candidature in a timely manner.
   * If not already secured, your application must demonstrate your competitiveness for enrolment in a PhD course at an Australian-based university.
   * Your application must demonstrate your ability to self-fund your research and/or your competitiveness for an [Australian Government Research Training Program scholarship](https://www.education.gov.au/research-block-grants/research-training-program).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criterion | Weighting |
| Project quality, viability and alignment with the goals and values of the Act and the Commission | 50% |
| Track record and capability | 30% |
| Motivation and capacity to complete candidature in a timely manner | 20% |

## Onboarding

Before commencing their engagement with the Commission, the successful applicant must:

* complete DFFH induction paperwork
* provide documentation, including a valid police check certificate.

The student’s university will also need to sign a Student Placement Agreement with DFFH. This process will begin once the student is notified of acceptance.

## Key Dates

Applications are welcome at any time, and applicant assessment will occur on a rolling basis.

However, it is preferred that candidates align their application to the CGEPS PhD Program with their candidature commencement date.

Preferred timelines:

* Candidates starting in Semester 1 should apply by 31 October of the year before.
* Candidates starting in Semester 2 should apply by 30 April of the same year.

Acceptance outside these times is at the discretion of the Commissioner.

## How to apply

We prefer that applicants discuss their application with the Commission team before applying. Please contact Dr Kate Farhall and Dr Jessica Megarry via this email: [enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au)

Submit as a **single PDF:**

* the CGEPS PhD Program Application Form, [available here](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/cgeps-phd-program)
* a full academic transcript
* a CV (maximum 2 pages)
* a short writing sample (maximum 5000 words) with a short note on context (e.g. from Honours or Masters thesis, or recent paper/essay).

Applicants should complete all parts of the CGEPS PhD Program Application Form, adhering to word limits where given, as well as all other directions stated on the form. All information on the application form must be correct at the time of submission.

Applications will be assessed solely on the information in the application. Links to external documents (URLs) will not be assessed.

Please combine your application form, your academic transcript, your CV and your writing sample as a single PDF.

Email your completed application to: [enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au)

# Collection Notice

## Use of your information:

Any personal information provided will be handled in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and any other applicable laws. Enquiries about access to, or correction of, personal information held by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) should be directed to the Privacy team at DFFH by emailing privacy@dffh.vic.gov.au. Information provided to DFFH on this application form will be used to determine your eligibility, to assess your application and to contact you about your application. The information provided by you will be stored in a secure folder managed by the Commission and will be accessible only by Departmental staff. If you do not provide DFFH with the information on this application form, your PhD program application may be affected, and it may impact the likelihood of a successful outcome. If your PhD program application is successful, your name, project, and university will be published on the Commission’s website, other Victorian Government websites or publications.

## Sharing of your information:

Information provided to DFFH may be shared with other government departments, ministerial offices, and members of Parliament (including key organisation contacts) for the purpose of sending notices or updates on topics of interest such as other funding opportunities, information on community consultations, policy, programs, legislative announcements, and multicultural information. If you do not wish for your details to be shared with other Victorian government departments, ministerial offices and members of Parliament please email enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au

## Privacy

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) is committed to protecting your privacy. We collect and handle any personal, sensitive or health information that you have provided in your application, in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic), the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic), the *Public Records Act 1973* (Vic) and any other applicable laws.

The information we ask of you is needed for the purpose of administering your application and informing the public of successful applications. If you do not provide us with all the information asked of you, we may be unable to progress with your PhD program application.

For us to administer your PhD program application effectively and efficiently, we may need to disclose some of the personal information you have disclosed with others for the purpose of assessment, consultation, and reporting. Information we may need to disclose includes you name and contact information. The people we may need to disclose the information to includes departmental staff, Members of Parliament and their staff, external experts, such as members of assessment panels, or other government departments.

If you intend to include personal, sensitive or health information about third parties in your application, please ensure that they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement, and consent to you doing so.

You have a right to request access to, and correction of, your information held by the department, at any time. If you would like a copy of your information, or to have it corrected, please contact [enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au). You can also make a Freedom of Information Request via the department’s website here: <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-freedom-information-request>.

Should you have any privacy queries or a complaint about the way your privacy has been handled, please contact the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (CGEPS) here: [enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au) or email [privacy@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:privacy@dffh.vic.gov.au).

This privacy statement is to be read in conjunction with the department’s privacy policy which can be accessed here: <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/privacy-policy> and the collection notice which you will see when you submit your PhD program application.

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