

Diversity & Inclusion Framework

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1. Diversity, inclusion and belonging

Diversity is all of the differences in people's backgrounds and how they identify in relation to their social identity such as cultural background, heritage, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability status, religious affiliation, socio-economic background, and language. Inclusion ensures all people are treated fairly and equally without barriers due to our differences.

Whilst diversity has both benefits and barriers to collaboration, inclusion maximises everyone's ability to contribute. The NSW Ombudsman's Office (the Office) seeks to actively implement inclusive practices to harness diversity in perspectives and improve collaboration, through listening and collaborating with staff from different backgrounds. These initiatives and efforts encourage deflection from general assumptions and stereotypes. Inclusive and diverse teams lead to truly unique and innovative ideas, better employee engagement and retention, and improved decision-making.

The goal of diversity and inclusion is not only to assist minority groups. Rather, the Office values the differences present within our diverse community and aims to provide a sense of belonging to all individuals in a workforce that is collective and harmonious. With the focus being one of long-term inclusion and going beyond best practices, organisations not only benefit in terms of productivity, innovation and a strong workplace culture but also work towards enabling equality of opportunity for the less represented.

1.1 Why is inclusion and belonging important

Having a diverse workplace and an inclusive culture ensures that we better understand our communities and their unique needs. This will enable us to better deliver on our vision and purpose, and ensure everyone receives the right services and fair treatment from those we oversight. A diverse and inclusive culture means that our people – a workforce built on diverse people that represent diverse communities – drives creativity and innovation that will support the Office in delivering on our strategic outcomes. Diverse staff representation, especially in leadership, ensures a deeper understanding of the communities we serve and allows us to deliver better outcomes for the public.

Diversity and Inclusion encourages full participation and productivity at work and is directly linked to increased staff morale, engagement, retention, health and wellbeing, and performance.

An inclusive workplace where staff feel their ideas, presence and contributions are valued and where they will be treated fairly, regardless of background, leads to a more productive, creative, and adaptable organisational model that thrives in managing change and has overall better performance.

Having an inclusive culture will also support the Office in becoming an employer of choice and attracting diverse talent.

2. The Framework

2.1 Purpose

This Framework outlines the Office's commitment to driving inclusive work practices to foster a culture that celebrates diversity and creates a greater sense of belonging for people to be their most authentic selves in the workplace. The Framework was developed with thorough research and a clear focus on elevating diversity and inclusion within the Office by:

- promoting awareness of the importance of diversity
- building and maintaining an inclusive culture that values diversity
- facilitating the development and implementation of key initiatives that support equitable and inclusive practices, including policy, development, and behaviours
- establishing channels to engage and consult with employees to improve diversity and inclusion
- ensuring programs and practices are fit-for-purpose and effective in creating a diverse workforce and inclusive working environment, and
- providing a basis for monitoring, reporting and continuous improvement.

2.2 Commitment and leadership

The Office's foundation is built upon the understanding that an inclusive workforce is crucial in serving a diverse community. We are committed to taking proactive steps towards parity which in turn will lead to improved outcomes for the communities we serve.

To ensure success of inclusion programs, it is critical our leaders:

- take an active role in shaping and driving an inclusive culture and cultivating positive behaviours in their teams
- actively champion inclusion for all
- develop their individual and team competencies
- demonstrate the importance of inclusion through role modelling behaviours and supporting the implementation of initiatives.

This Framework is underpinned by the Office's strategic plan, which sets out objectives linked to having a diverse and inclusive workforce and striving towards meeting and exceeding internal and external targets related to diversity and inclusion.

The development, implementation, and improvement of this Framework will continue to form part of the People and Culture unit's program of work and resources have been allocated to ensure the Framework's success.

2.3 Consultation and collaboration

Everyone in the Office is encouraged to provide honest feedback and participate in the development of inclusion initiatives. There are a range of communication channels used to engage with staff, including:

- the annual Public Sector People Matter Employee Survey (PMES)
- Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum representatives and contribution in team meetings and planning events
- creating awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion, through the promotion of diversity related events
- providing staff a platform to learn, discuss and participate in activities that celebrate diversity.

2.4 Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum

One of the primary systems for consulting and collaborating with staff is our Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum.

The forum represents employees and leaders from diverse groups across the Office and provides governance to share ideas and drive Office-wide initiatives.

The Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum meets quarterly and focuses on the following objectives:

- Provide a forum for staff from across the office to share ideas and contribute to inclusion initiatives.
- Encourage all staff to value diversity and to appreciate the benefits it brings to the office.
- Develop strategies to assist the office to meet its targets and deliver outcomes.
- Promote and encourage a diverse workforce through the workforce strategy initiatives and ensuring supports are available.
- Embed a sustainable culture of inclusion across the Office.

The forum's Terms of Reference detail the functions, membership, roles, and responsibilities for the group.

2.5 Focus areas, employee resource groups and networks

We have developed a number of diversity and inclusion initiatives to support the Office in achieving its strategic objective of becoming an employer of choice and a leader in inclusive workplace culture and practices.

The initiatives were developed around the following focus areas:

- organisational commitment and leadership
- employment opportunities
- collective workplace culture.

The Office has identified the need to increase participation and contribution of key groups of people and will focus initiatives to support these groups, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- women
- people with disability
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including refugees, and
- other diversity groups e.g., LGBTQIA+, carers, young people under the age of 25 and mature people.

2.6 Monitoring implementation and reporting

This Framework is supported by the Inclusion Action Plan which details how the objectives and targets of the framework will be delivered. Implementation will be monitored through regular reporting via the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum quarterly meetings, Chief Executive Board, and Quarterly Operations Report and Annual Report.

Reports will detail progress against programs and initiatives outlined under this framework and relevant employee data, supporting the groups to identify areas for improvement, prioritise initiatives, evaluate and set targets and measure the impact and success of programs.

2.7 Measuring success

It is important to have clear and robust measures to track outcomes and success of initiatives and programs. There are several metrics that will be used to assess the success of the framework and associated actions, initiatives, and programs, including:

- analyse reporting on diversity data including representation and retention
- track against set targets and results from the annual PMES
- evaluate procedures and policies, use other data sources such as exit surveys and grievances
- report on initiatives through the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum and Executive quarterly reporting.

These metrics will provide an evidence-based approach to reviewing, evaluating and if required adjusting the Framework to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Executive Team

The Executive Team is responsible for:

- actively promoting and championing inclusion and driving supportive behaviours to grow a more inclusive culture
- ensuring the Diversity and Inclusion Framework objectives and outcomes are aligned to the strategic plan
- monitoring the success of inclusion activities and the framework, and
- incorporating inclusion commitments into strategic and operational plans, including strategic workforce plans.

3.2 Managers and supervisors

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- actively promoting inclusion and role modelling inclusive and constructive behaviours
- ensuring awareness and understanding of diversity and inclusion by all team members
- developing their individual and team competencies
- supporting, and where appropriate, implementing inclusion initiatives and programs
- providing employees with equal opportunities in all aspects of work, ensuring selection processes are transparent, consistent, and fair, and
- identifying and resolving issues and challenges.

3.3 Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum members

The Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum members are responsible for:

- actively participating in the forum by sharing ideas, contributing to discussions, and planning and conducting approved events

- promoting diversity and inclusion and sharing relevant information within their teams and across the Office
- identifying systemic barriers and matters relating to employment inclusion and equality and possible ways to address them
- co-designing and supporting inclusion strategies and initiatives, and
- monitoring the success of inclusion activities and this Framework.

3.4 People and Culture Unit

People & Culture Unit is responsible for:

- driving employee-focused inclusion strategies and initiatives
- monitoring and reporting on diversity and inclusion activities, objectives, and outcomes
- facilitating communication and engagement around inclusion
- promoting inclusion through collaborating with other agencies, e.g., the Public Service Commission, and key non-government organisations
- providing advice, information, and support to staff from across the Office on inclusion, and
- supporting the integration of diversity and inclusion into policies and processes, including workforce planning.

3.5 All Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- fostering an inclusive workplace culture and behaviours
- complying with policies and procedures
- treating everyone respectfully, fairly, and equally
- supporting the implementation of inclusion initiatives and programs, where appropriate
- sharing ideas and actively participating in inclusion related activities including events, team meetings and planning, and
- working collaboratively regardless of differences.

4. Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

A Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan aligned to the focus areas and groups identified through this framework has been developed to outline a practical and achievable approach to improving inclusion throughout the Office.


The Action Plan initiatives aim to:

- address barriers to employment and progression for people from diverse backgrounds whilst providing both a supportive and inclusive workplace
- address discrimination based on gender and remove barriers to equal participation internally and externally
- meet the needs of employees with disability and increase accessibility in our workplace

- provide an inclusive and diverse workplace that embraces diverse culture, perspectives, and experiences to improve services, and
- provide a collaborative, supportive, and respectful environment to increase the participation and contribution of all staff from all diverse groups including (but not limited to) carers, LGBTQIA+ community, young people, and mature workers.

The Action Plan has been developed in consultation with the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Forum and will be continually monitored, evaluated and if required amended to ensure the actions are relevant and delivering on strategic outcomes.

5. Ombudsman approval

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Miller', written in a cursive style.

Paul Miller
NSW Ombudsman