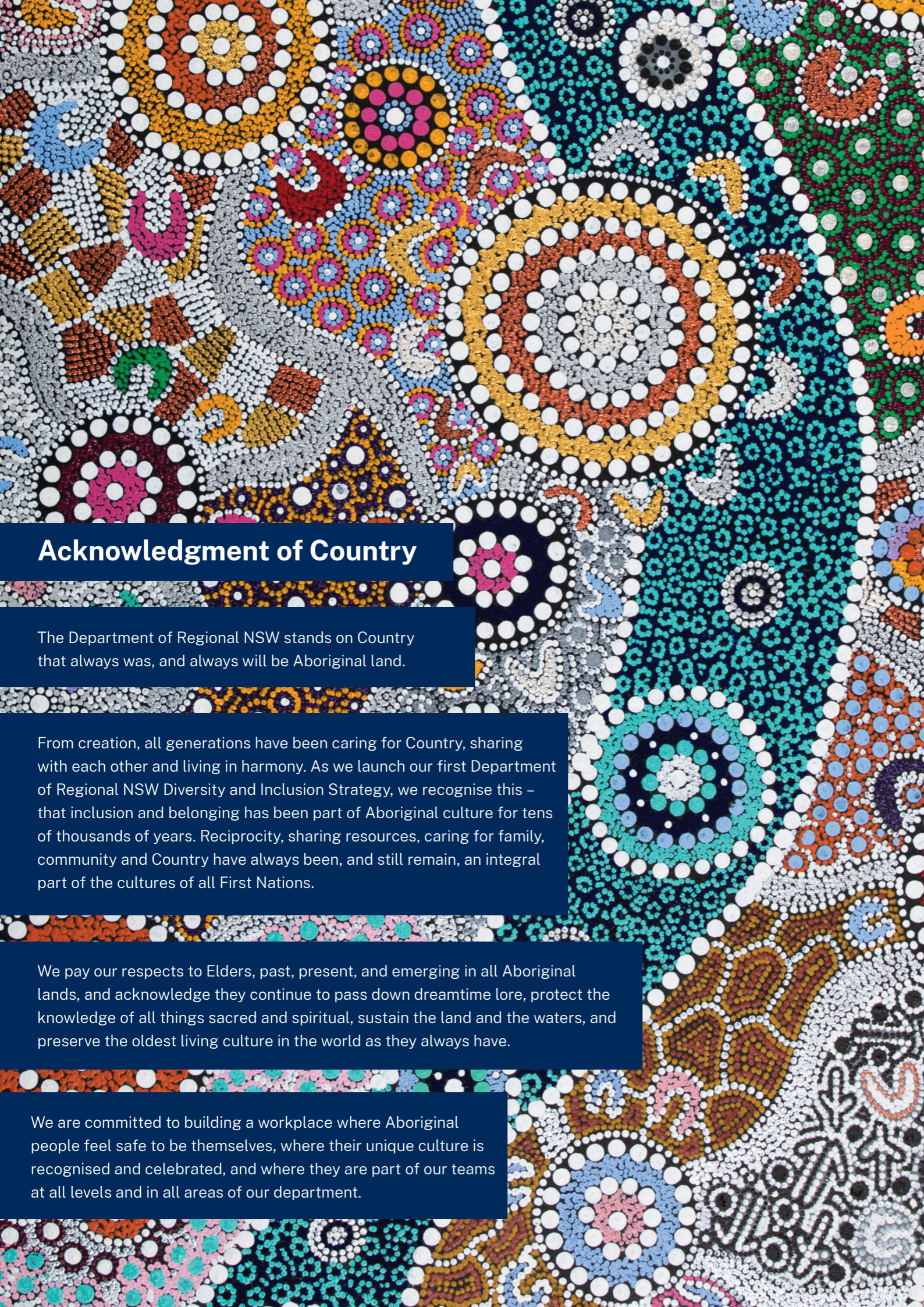


Diversity & Inclusion Strategy





Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Regional NSW stands on Country that always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

From creation, all generations have been caring for Country, sharing with each other and living in harmony. As we launch our first Department of Regional NSW Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, we recognise this – that inclusion and belonging has been part of Aboriginal culture for tens of thousands of years. Reciprocity, sharing resources, caring for family, community and Country have always been, and still remain, an integral part of the cultures of all First Nations.

We pay our respects to Elders, past, present, and emerging in all Aboriginal lands, and acknowledge they continue to pass down dreamtime lore, protect the knowledge of all things sacred and spiritual, sustain the land and the waters, and preserve the oldest living culture in the world as they always have.

We are committed to building a workplace where Aboriginal people feel safe to be themselves, where their unique culture is recognised and celebrated, and where they are part of our teams at all levels and in all areas of our department.



OWEN LYONS

I was born in Narrandera NSW, on Wiradjuri Country, into a family of 10 children at a place known affectionately as “Down the Lane”. I have a deep connection with the land of Wiradjuri Country and I am passionate about this area. My art reflects my ties to the townships and communities within, to the vast landscape that spans from the mountains in the east, to the wide plains of the west of this beautiful Wiradjuri Country.

I have dabbled in art for over 30 years, completing works with my brother. I started creating my own artworks in 2016 as an outlet to help me deal with my son’s mental illness. My artistic expression of my lived experiences and the land on which I call home are what I portray in the works I create, using traditional dot painting and concepts to create works that also have a contemporary feel.

owenlyonsart.com



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Department of Regional NSW thank our staff, Destination NSW, Australian Network on Disability, Carers NSW, Diversity Council of Australia, Future Women, Family Friendly Workplaces and Pride In Diversity for the use of images they have provided throughout.

Front Cover clockwise from left: Staff and guests at the launch of the DRNSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan; Graham Kelly and Steve Orr at Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Training on Kamilaroi Country; Rohan Leach tracing his cultural heritage during Harmony Week celebrations; Mim Knolly and Justin Stanger conducting research Aquatic Ecosystems; Elka Blackman in the research lab at Narrandera Fisheries Centre; Steven Vallance and Jillian Fryer (centre) with staff from the Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation.

Back Cover clockwise from left: Wiradjuri Artist Lewis Burns teaching DRNSW staff about the Terramungamine Grinding Grooves on the banks of the Macquarie River; Karen Montgomery at the Londonderry Drillcore Library explaining mineral exploration to the public; Rebecca Fox, Gary Barnes and Chris Hanger with a performer at the Mardi Gras Fair Day; DRNSW staff attending cultural competency training at Wonga Wetlands, Albury; Hani Alhuseen and Willie Li at the Coffs Harbour launch of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

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Senior Regional Coordination Officer, Nyssa Murray with Colin Moore, his father Uncle Tom Moore and Uncle Gerry Moore at Illaroo Farm.

Message from the Secretary



Here at the Department of Regional NSW we pride ourselves on taking an active and positive stance towards diversity and inclusivity. We embody the spirit of our regional communities and truly believe everyone deserves a fair go. We take this approach in the way we work and do business, to our staff and stakeholders, and most importantly for the people of regional NSW.

The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022–2025 will help us achieve even better outcomes as we move ahead into the future. It provides clear priorities and expectations on how we will build a safe and welcoming environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. It outlines our top 10 priorities and how we will achieve them, from guiding behaviours to implementing tailored action plans and workplace diversity targets. There are roles and responsibilities for everyone at our organisation, especially our leaders who must set an example by championing diversity and inclusion across the department.

We still have much to do and this is only the beginning of an exciting and important journey. We will be working hard to implement the goals outlined in the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022–2025 and it will inform and guide

future plans and initiatives, including our Gender Equity Action Plan and refreshed Aboriginal Outcomes Plan. Our goal is to see diversity and inclusion embedded in our everyday work, from our business operations to our relationships with colleagues.

Everyone benefits from a healthy workplace culture. We all want to come to work and be treated fairly, respectfully, and that is the right of every person in our team. At the Department of Regional NSW, we strive to ensure everyone is able to contribute and participate to their full potential and that their unique experiences are valued. We are proud to have a team of people with different backgrounds, skills and life experiences, because that reflects the richness and complexity of the regional NSW communities we serve.

We will continue to champion diversity and inclusion as one of our core principles. It is at the heart of our organisation and our goal is for every member of the Department of Regional NSW to see that reflected in their own experiences.

Gary Barnes
Secretary,
Department of Regional NSW

Introduction from the Chief People Officer



I am so pleased to present our first Diversity and Inclusion Strategy at the Department of Regional NSW, an overarching set of principles and priorities that explain our commitment to building a culture inclusive of everyone at Regional NSW.

In the past 2 years the department has grown from strength to strength and as a team we have not only seen what we can deliver, but we have demonstrated phenomenal resilience and achieved incredible results in the most challenging of circumstances.

This was only able to happen because of the way we worked together and looked after one another, the very core of what inclusion and belonging are about. And while there is a lot of work to do, I truly believe we have a strong foundation already in the team and leadership to support our next chapter.

The upcoming year is an exciting time for us. As we see restrictions ease, our focus will be on embracing the silver linings of the last year and a half. Working to leverage the flexibility that was a necessity to deliver new ways of working, both in and out of the office. This enables us to give greater agency to our employees to manage their work in ways that don't create undue burdens in their life outside of work – whether that's managing

caring arrangements more sustainably, removing barriers for them as a person with disability, spending more time taking care of themselves, attending to family commitments or just making life more of a balance than a juggle.

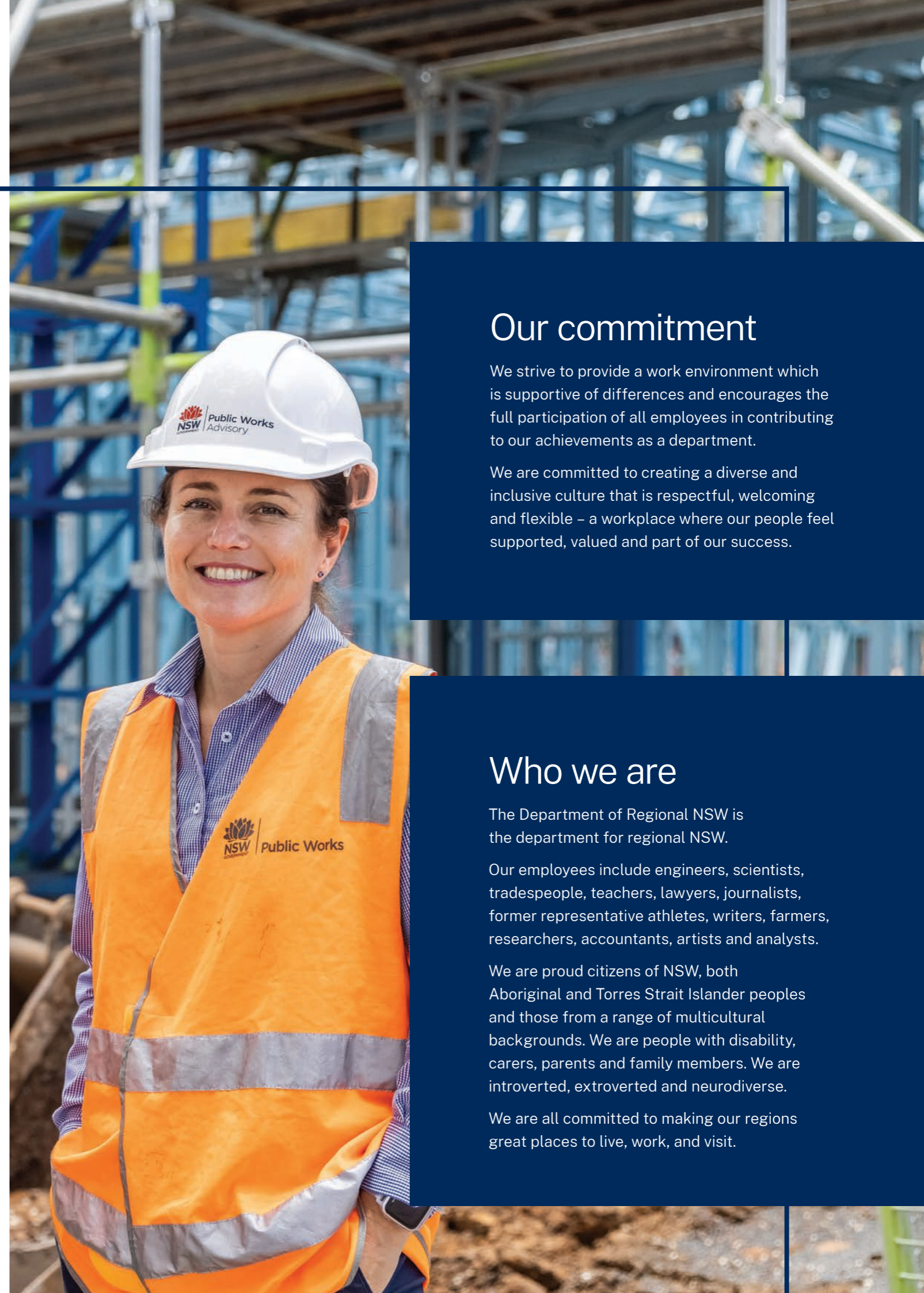
We also recognise as still quite a young cluster, now is the time to hit the ground running and invest in building our culture to be more inclusive in practical ways.

In 2021 we delivered our first Disability Inclusion Action Plan, which involved thorough consultation and really highlighted opportunities for us to make improvements for people with disability and carers of people with disability. We also kicked off our involvement in a three-month process to gain Family Friendly Workplace accreditation this year, providing us with a roadmap to improve our processes and policies to better support all working families.

In 2022 we will continue this work with further consultation on our next two plans – our Gender Equity Action Plan and a review and refresh of our Aboriginal Outcomes Plan. I'm looking forward to sharing our progress with you throughout the lifespan of this strategy and into the next one.

Kyleah Hayes
Chief People Officer

Right: Emily Pitt, Regional Projects Coordinator at Camden Haven Health delivering for Health NSW.



Our commitment

We strive to provide a work environment which is supportive of differences and encourages the full participation of all employees in contributing to our achievements as a department.

We are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive culture that is respectful, welcoming and flexible – a workplace where our people feel supported, valued and part of our success.

Who we are

The Department of Regional NSW is the department for regional NSW.

Our employees include engineers, scientists, tradespeople, teachers, lawyers, journalists, former representative athletes, writers, farmers, researchers, accountants, artists and analysts.

We are proud citizens of NSW, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those from a range of multicultural backgrounds. We are people with disability, carers, parents and family members. We are introverted, extroverted and neurodiverse.

We are all committed to making our regions great places to live, work, and visit.

What is **diversity** and **inclusion**?

To thrive as an organisation and deliver world class public service to the people of regional NSW, we must have diversity in our workforce, and an inclusive culture that embraces the unique perspectives of our team and community.



Daniel Rumbold and Marlo Perry at the launch of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, December 2021

What is **diversity**?

Diversity refers to all the traits and characteristics that make people unique.

This can mean differences in cultural background, education, age, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability status or any other number of attributes.

These aspects come together for each individual and shape their experiences and perceptions of the world, including their social settings, work environment, school and home.

Diversity in the workplace means an organisation employs a diverse team of people with a range of differences, experiences and perspectives, who reflect the society in which the organisation operates.

Benefits

Diversity within an organisation has a range of recognised benefits.

These include:

- attracting candidates from the broadest possible pool of talent
- improved suitability of applicants
- increased creativity, problem solving and innovation
- improved understanding of customers and the community

What is **inclusion**?

Inclusion is the practice of ensuring people feel a sense of belonging and support regardless of these differences.

Inclusion in the workplace means creating a work environment where all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, their perspectives are valued and they have equal access to opportunities and resources, so they can contribute fully to the achievements of the organisation.

Benefits

Employees who are valued in the workplace and able to contribute are more satisfied with their jobs and more productive.

The DCA-Suncorp Inclusion@Work Index¹ findings indicate employees working in an inclusive team environment are nine times more likely to innovate, 10 times more likely to be highly effective, and 19 times more likely to be very satisfied with their job, compared to employees in teams not as inclusive.

What is **intersectional diversity**?

People can belong to more than one traditionally underrepresented group. For example, an employee can be both a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and have a disability, someone can be both an Aboriginal person and a woman. This is “intersectional diversity” or “intersectionality”.

While these are simple examples, it's important to recognise intersectionality is often a very complex overlap of multiple barriers for an individual. Intersectionality also demonstrates members of particular diversity groups are not all the same. While they may face similar barriers and share experiences, every person's challenges are unique, and they cannot and should not be reduced to a label.

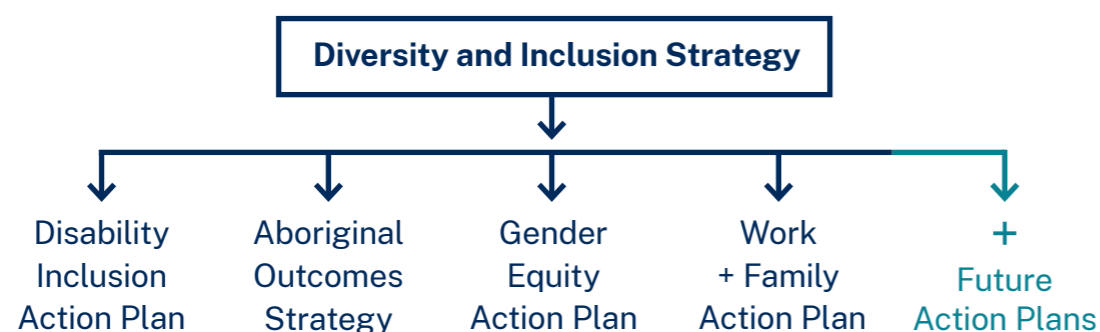
¹ <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/inclusion-index>

The strategy

The Department of Regional NSW Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is an overarching set of principles and priorities pointing to our commitment to a culture inclusive of everyone at Regional NSW. The strategy ties together specific individual action plans which work to achieve that goal.

This strategy will:

- Outline our commitment to diversity and inclusion and the behaviours that apply to all Department of Regional NSW employees and contractors.
- Provide a framework of objectives and priorities to inform the strategic plans of all groups and agencies, allowing flexibility to develop their own plans and initiatives while ensuring all activities are aligned to the department's strategic priorities.
- Support *Premier's Priority 14 - World Class Public Service*, specifically to increase women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in senior leadership roles, and increase the number of roles held by people with disability.
- Create strong foundations for individual action plans, tailored to address specific barriers faced by underrepresented groups, with the first three plans (Disability Inclusion Action Plan, Gender Equity Action Plan and Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy) directly relating to *Premier's Priority 14 World Class Public Service*. Further plans will be developed in consultation with our employees and released over time.
- Bring together diversity and inclusion initiatives and action plans across the department to ensure they do not operate in silos, and address intersectionality across groups.



10 strategic priorities

We are building an inclusive, diverse and equitable culture and a psychologically safe workplace for everyone.

This will enable our ten strategic priorities:

- 1 all employees to feel safe to be themselves at work and freely contribute to the best of their ability
- 2 greater recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, communities and their culture and achievements
- 3 improvements to gender balance across all levels of the organisation
- 4 increased awareness of disability, improved accessibility and ongoing support for employees with disability and in carer roles
- 5 LGBTQIA+ people to feel supported and safe to be themselves in our workplace
- 6 support for working families and their caring arrangements
- 7 people of all ages and life stages to contribute fully
- 8 access to flexible working arrangements for all employees to be business as usual
- 9 development of specific action plans to address the unique barriers faced by under-represented groups within our department and community
- 10 understanding of the value that people of diverse cultures, backgrounds and perspectives bring to our department

Objectives

Promote broad awareness of our diversity and the benefits of having an inclusive culture

Actions and behaviours

- Communication plan for the strategy, plans and initiatives.
- Share success stories and acknowledge achievement.
- Provide training on a broad range of diversity and inclusion topics for all employees.
- Organise events open to all staff acknowledging culturally significant dates.
- Promote our Diversity and Inclusion Council and include updates and achievements in our communications.

Build an inclusive workplace culture

- Leaders to champion and model inclusive behaviours.
- Senior Executive Performance Development Plans (PDPs) have clear diversity accountabilities.
- Provide training on unconscious bias and inclusive leadership for all people leaders.
- Ongoing communication and engagement with staff, including those on long term leave.
- Employee-led diversity networks.
- Participate in NSW Public Sector initiatives and collaborate on relevant programs across the sector.

Develop inclusive policies, practices and procedures with a focus on diversity

- Develop specific Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans for different underrepresented employee groups.
- Commit to meaningful consultation when developing plans and policies.
- Ensure all people-related policies and practices are developed with diversity and inclusion in mind from inception.
- Implement strengthened inclusive recruitment practices.
- Use inclusive language in all policies and practices.
- Implementation of tailored workforce representation targets for leaders of groups and agencies.
- A goal to have Senior Executive at least 45% women, 45% men and 10% any gender.
- Partner with relevant organisations such as the Australian Network on Disability, Pride in Diversity, Parents at Work and Diversity Council of Australia.

- Undertake Family Friendly Workplace accreditation.
- Implement detailed Diversity and Inclusion reporting to ELC bi-annually and Public Service Commission annually.
- Participate in the annual NSW Government People Matters Employee Survey (PMES).

Build a safe and healthy workplace free from bullying, harassment and discrimination

- Ensure support from the People team is accessible for all employees.
- Provide Employee Assistance Program and resources.
- Provide relevant training for all employees and leaders.
- Communicate Code of Conduct.

Actively support flexibility in our workplace

- Embed 'If not, why not' approach to flexible working.
- Executive leaders modelling flexible approaches to working.
- Provide manager and staff guidance on the intranet.
- Regularly review systems and policies.
- Share success stories and case studies of flexible working arrangements across the department.

Outcomes

Our team feel valued and respected, all employees have access to equal opportunities

A supportive and cohesive team and workplace

Progress towards our Premier's Priority 14 Targets

An environment that encourages different perspectives and approaches to problem solving

Increased workforce capability and innovation

Increased staff retention

We are viewed as an employer of choice

Diversity and inclusion influences broader strategic plans across all groups and agencies

Positive impact on the community – our employees understand and engage with diversity initiatives in their communities across NSW, and model inclusive behaviour

Action plans

We recognise achieving the objectives of our strategy will require meaningful consultation, planning and real action. To support the strategy, we are committed to developing measurable action plans with executive level sponsorship. Regional NSW currently have the following plans either in place or in development, with more to come.

- Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021–2024
- Work + Family Action Plan 2022-2024
- Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy - TBC 2022
- Gender Equity Action Plan – TBC 2022

It's important to note our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is not static and will grow as we meet the actions outlined in the above plans. Future plans will also be developed during the life of the strategy in consultation with our employee networks and key advisory bodies.

Roles and responsibilities

Everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work, in an environment that recognises and accepts diversity. We can all contribute by treating everyone with respect, participating in workplace diversity and inclusion activities, learning more about the barriers faced by different communities and groups and making a safe space for our colleagues to be themselves.

Some groups also have additional roles to play in supporting employees in building our culture:

Executive Leadership Committee (ELC)

Led by the Secretary, it comprises the leaders of DRNSW groups and agencies, who are responsible for making key decisions for the department. ELC members are responsible for driving action in their own groups and agencies and focusing on areas for improvement specific to their group. ELC members are also responsible for setting an example and championing diversity and inclusion initiatives across the department.

Diversity and Inclusion Council

Made up of representatives from across all DRNSW groups and agencies and employee-led networks. Representatives update the council on initiatives, activities and achievements in their areas, and also report what is happening across the department back to the groups they represent. This enables all employees to find out more about diversity and inclusion and opportunities to get involved. The council also organise several highlight events for significant dates throughout the year.

Action Plan Steering Committees and Working Groups

Each Action Plan is developed and driven by a committee or working group. During development, members are responsible for consultation and drafting key actions in their functional area. Once a plan is published, members drive actions within their own groups and agencies, and coordinate activities in collaboration with other employees, resource groups and the Diversity and Inclusion Council, as well as providing progress updates to their committee.

Employee Resource Groups and Networks

Our groups and networks such as the Regional Rainbows and Aboriginal Support Network provide employees with peer support and the opportunity to connect. These groups also work on events for significant dates in collaboration with the Diversity and Inclusion Council and are an integral part of consultation with employee groups for new policies and plans.

People Team

Encompasses HR, Learning and Development, Recruitment, Health and Wellbeing, Safety, Industrial Relations and Diversity and Inclusion. These central functions are vital to implementing key initiatives that make a practical difference to the attraction, retention and wellbeing of employees across all groups.

Diversity and Inclusion Team

Sitting within the People team, it manages the coordination of key diversity and inclusion strategies and plans, including monitoring progress against the targets in Premier's Priority 14. They connect key subject matter experts and groups to support a department-wide approach to diversity and inclusion, and work to ensure diversity and inclusion is a key consideration in policy and program development within the Corporate group.

Senior Executives

Our Senior Executive set the tone and priorities of the teams and functions they lead. They are responsible for ensuring they model inclusive behaviour and hold their people leaders accountable for creating psychologically safe and inclusive work environments. This includes demonstrating a commitment to flexible work arrangements, completion of relevant training and involvement in Regional NSW initiatives. Senior Executives also seek opportunities to improve diversity and inclusion within their area and work with groups such as the People Team to implement action.

People leaders

Contribute by displaying a positive commitment to workplace diversity and inclusion, being role models, fostering an inclusive workplace culture, dealing quickly and effectively with inappropriate behaviour and encouraging team participation in diversity and inclusion training and activities.

Inclusion is everyone's responsibility

The success of the strategy depends on the support of everyone in the department.

We all have a part to play in building the inclusive culture we are committed to through our actions and behaviour.

Senior Executives

Take the lead on championing diversity and inclusion priorities

Walk the talk - model inclusive behaviours and get involved in initiatives

Take action and hold themselves and their people to account on diversity and inclusion targets

People leaders

Ask staff what support or flexibility could help them perform their role

Ensure meetings are accessible and take team needs into account

Take action and hold themselves and their people to account on diversity and inclusion targets

All employees

Listen and educate themselves – embed learned practices into everyday

Be respectful to everyone, create a safe space for colleagues to be themselves

Get involved – participate in cultural events and initiatives in the department and community

Evaluating performance

We will achieve success if we:

- Make progress against the Premier's Priority 14 target of 50% Women in Senior Leadership across the NSW Public Sector by 2025 – specifically meeting milestone targets set out in the Gender Equity Action Plan.
- Make progress against the Premier's Priority 14 target to increase Aboriginal representation in Senior Leadership across the Public Sector – specifically meeting milestone targets set out in the Aboriginal Outcomes Plan at the next review.
- Make progress against the Premier's Priority 14 target to increase representation of people with disability in roles across the NSW Public Sector to 5.6% by 2025 – specifically through actions set out in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.
- Consistently increase the percentage of employees who complete their Workforce Diversity Information over time.
- Show the employment experience of people in our diversity groups improves over time through People Matter Employee Survey (PMES) data.

Progress on Diversity and Inclusion at the department will be measured in several ways:

- Individual Action Plans will include communication actions, with regular progress updates to be provided to all employees on our intranet.
- As Action Plans are developed, their key deliverables and targets will be incorporated into reporting by the Corporate team. Reporting will be provided to the ELC and Diversity and Inclusion Council on a bi-annual basis. This will include progress against the Premier's Priority 14 Targets.
- The Annual People Matters Employee Survey (PMES) and Public Service Commission (PSC) Workforce Profile Reporting will also form part of our monitoring process.
- The effectiveness of the 2022-2025 strategy will be monitored through its lifespan, with an evaluation delivered as part of the development of the next strategy in 2025.



Consultation and acknowledgements

Key internal and external stakeholder consultations have informed our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022–2025, including staff across all DRNSW groups and agencies, peak organisational bodies, employee resource groups and roundtables.

We sincerely thank our team for their participation in the consultation process and their ongoing support to improving our culture across the department. Thank you to those who generously shared their experiences, insights and suggestions. There are too many people to thank individually but a special thanks to the Pride in NSW Trans, Gender Diverse, Intersex and Non-Binary (TGDINB) Policy Working Group; The Diversity and Inclusion Council; Graham Kelly, Chair of the Aboriginal Support Network; Guy Gibbs, Deputy Chair of the Aboriginal Support Network; The Disability Inclusion Action Plan Working Group and consultation group participants; The Future Women 2021 Pilot Cohort; The People Team; Regional Rainbows; and all of the passionate supporters and advocates who volunteered their time and experience.

Your work has made this strategy a practical foundation for us to build on over coming years and provided a framework for action plans that will make a real difference to the experience of our employees, customers and community.

Angie Kelly, Sheree Stewart and Erin-May Barker at the Aboriginal Support Network Meeting in Dubbo, December 2021

Partner organisations

We would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support of our partner organisations who are not only a key part of our strategy, but collaborate with us on a range of projects throughout the department.



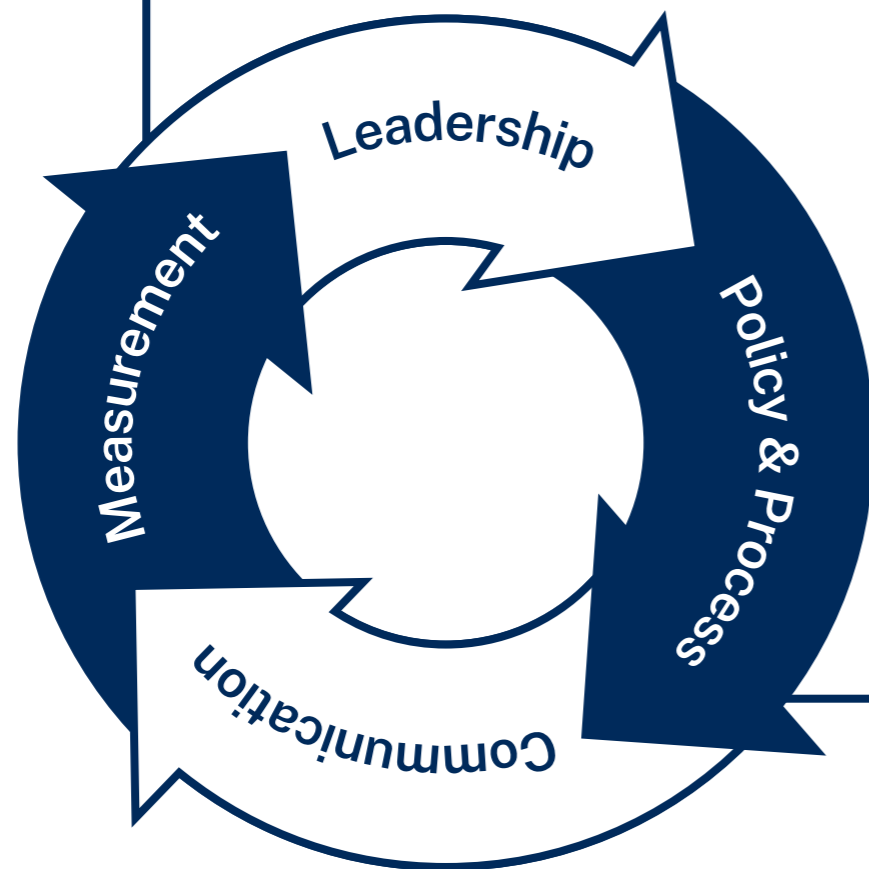
FutureWomen



Elements for success

There are certain factors critical to the success of this strategy, and the most important is leadership. We need to have the tools and resources to implement, communicate and monitor actions and initiatives that contribute to the strategy, but it is crucial the principles of diversity and inclusion are modelled and championed by our senior leaders.

Our elements for success are leadership, policy, communication, and measurement



Leadership

Our senior leaders must champion these actions and demonstrate embedding practices.

Leaders must take ownership of creating an inclusive workplace culture and supporting a diverse workplace.

Leaders must empower and encourage their teams to be involved in inclusion initiatives and working groups.



Policy and process

HR policies will be developed with a diversity and inclusion lens and with meaningful consultation.

Policies and processes will provide guidance in key areas such as recruitment and flexible work practices.



Communication

Communication across the department to promote initiatives and provide updates on progress.

Make sure all communication is clear, easy to understand and accessible.

Consult on diversity and inclusion through relevant working groups, surveys and employee-led networks.



Measurement

HR and diversity metrics will be refined and aligned to the strategy and action plans.

Measurement will include employee survey, recruitment, learning and development and workforce data.

Regular reporting will enable monitoring of progress, adjustment and targeted actions.

