



Australian Government



Services
Australia

Workplace belonging strategy

2025 to 2029





Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Services Australia aspires to be a workplace where all people are valued and respected, are supported to reach their full potential, and feel they belong.

Our Workplace belonging strategy 2025 to 2029 is our commitment to being an inclusive workplace where diversity is celebrated, and everyone feels a sense of belonging.

As one of the largest employers in the Australian Public Service (APS), we believe diversity is our greatest strength. The more diverse our workforce is, the more reflective we are of the communities we serve, and the better placed we are to understand their unique needs.

This strategy builds on the goals of our people strategy and aligns with our 2030 Vision and corporate plan.

Our agency places great importance in building a workplace culture where our staff can be their true selves at work, no matter where they work or what they do. We've made progress by working together and embracing differences, but we can go further.

For this strategy to work, we've got to stay focused on building places where everyone feels safe, respected and valued no matter their job or location.

It's about making sure our values show up every day, and creating a culture where belonging is something everyone gets to feel.

Working together, embracing our differences and supporting each other is what makes us great. It's an important part of making government services simple so people can get on with their lives.

Part 1 of this strategy outlines our vision of belonging and our 4 priority areas:

- 1 Building connections
- 2 Growing together
- 3 Inclusive environments
- 4 Learning and leading.

Part 1 also focuses on our goals and values. It outlines our dedication to diversity and identifies what we need to do to continue our journey from diversity and inclusion towards belonging for everyone.

Part 2 identifies our key priorities over the life of this strategy and our approach to getting things done. Each area is outcome-focused, clearly setting out why they are important, how they relate to our priorities and what success looks like.

Part 3 outlines how we will monitor, evaluate, and report on our progress over the next 4 years.

We all play an important role in embedding inclusion in our workplaces. I encourage you to engage with this strategy and to play your part in helping make our agency a great place where everyone belongs.

David Hazlehurst (he/him)
Chief Executive Officer
Services Australia



Acknowledgement of Country

Services Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live on. We pay our respects to all Elders, past and present, of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations.

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Our acknowledgement and commitments

Our commitment to closing the gap

We're committed to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and we continue to build on the foundations already established across the agency. We'll embrace a cultural strengths-based approach and build genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This strategy will build on the Closing the Gap outcomes through implementing our workforce initiatives. These initiatives will strengthen and support individual career goals and create culturally safe spaces.

Our commitment to workforce inclusion and diversity

We acknowledge the importance of embracing diversity and will take proactive and meaningful action to prevent all forms of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying.

We celebrate, value and welcome people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, religions, ages, bodies and abilities.

We strive to reflect and make real the values of inclusion and diversity in all that we do.

We commit to making our programs, services and workplaces truly safe spaces where all people can think, act and express themselves freely.

Acknowledging intersectionality

We acknowledge the importance of placing an intersectional lens over the experiences of our staff. We'll work to better understand and address any barriers or areas of disadvantage which may impact one or more of their identities.

Acknowledgement of lived and living experience

We acknowledge the lived and living experience of our diverse workforce including people with disability and their family members, carers and supporters.

We honour your strength and resilience in challenging generations of discrimination, violence, abuse, neglect and exclusion.

We recognise the leadership, insight and contribution that your lived experience brings to shaping inclusive workplaces and delivering exceptional service. Your voice helps guide the way we create belonging for everyone.

Our commitment to our partnerships

Our diversity partnerships are important to us. We maintain corporate diversity memberships with relevant not-for-profit employer organisations including the Australian Disability Network, Pride in Diversity and Diversity Council Australia.

We would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support of other organisations for collaborating with us on a range of workplace inclusion and diversity projects. This includes the Australian HR Institute (AHRI), the Australian Human Rights Commission, Employ for Ability and Koomarri Jobmatch.

These partnerships help shape our inclusion and belonging policies and strategies. They also help us deliver culturally appropriate and inclusive programs and services to support the diverse needs of our workforce and the Australian community.



Our journey

We've taken meaningful steps to build a workplace where everyone feels safe, respected and valued.

We continue to evolve to meet your expectations and the changing needs of the communities we serve. We don't want to maintain the status quo, we want to be ambitious and known as a leader in inclusion and diversity – in our workforce and our service delivery.

Our journey is guided by our former workplace inclusion and diversity strategy, which gives us a strong foundation to go forward with. This strategy helped us turn intent into action. From supporting gender affirmation and breastfeeding at work, to improvements in diversity representation and workplace adjustments that meet staff where they are. We filled 4 senior executive positions through the SES100, a recruitment strategy to increase representation of First Nations staff at senior leadership levels across the APS. We continue our 27-year relationship with Koomarri Jobmatch, a service provider that supports staff with disability to get and keep a job and actively participate in the community.

We've also celebrated culture and identity through NAIDOC Week, Harmony Week, and events that honour the lived experiences of our staff. These moments remind us that diversity is not just something we acknowledge, it's something we embrace.

Our workforce is becoming more reflective of the diverse communities we serve, which has happened because of the many diversity policies, programs and initiatives we have. We know the impact they are making through the stories of our staff and the recognition we've received.

Inclusion, diversity and belonging create a powerful foundation for equity, collaboration and mutual respect. They ensure no one is left behind and everyone has a voice and place.
– Alexis

The Workplace belonging strategy 2025 to 2029 builds on this momentum. It aligns with our agency's vision to make government services simple so people can get on with their lives. It recognises that to serve the community well, we must reflect its diversity and create a workplace where everyone feels they truly belong.

Our achievements

We have thriving employee diversity networks that share information and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, staff with disability, staff over 50, staff with CALD backgrounds and LGBTQIA+ staff.

We're one of the largest employers of people with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the APS.

We've established the Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.

We've now delivered the Multiculturalism: Our Stories program, to over 25,000 staff.

We've achieved Platinum tier status in the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Survey, a national benchmark on LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion.

We've recruited over 140 neurodivergent people with a 98% retention rate in 2024–25 financial year.

We received multiple awards in the Australian Human Resource Institute (AHRI) and Techdiversity Awards in recognition of our inclusion initiatives.

We were reaccredited as a breastfeeding workplace with the Australian Breastfeeding Association and awarded breastfeeding friendly workplace best practice standard.

We've held annual Indigenous Apprenticeship Program graduation events.

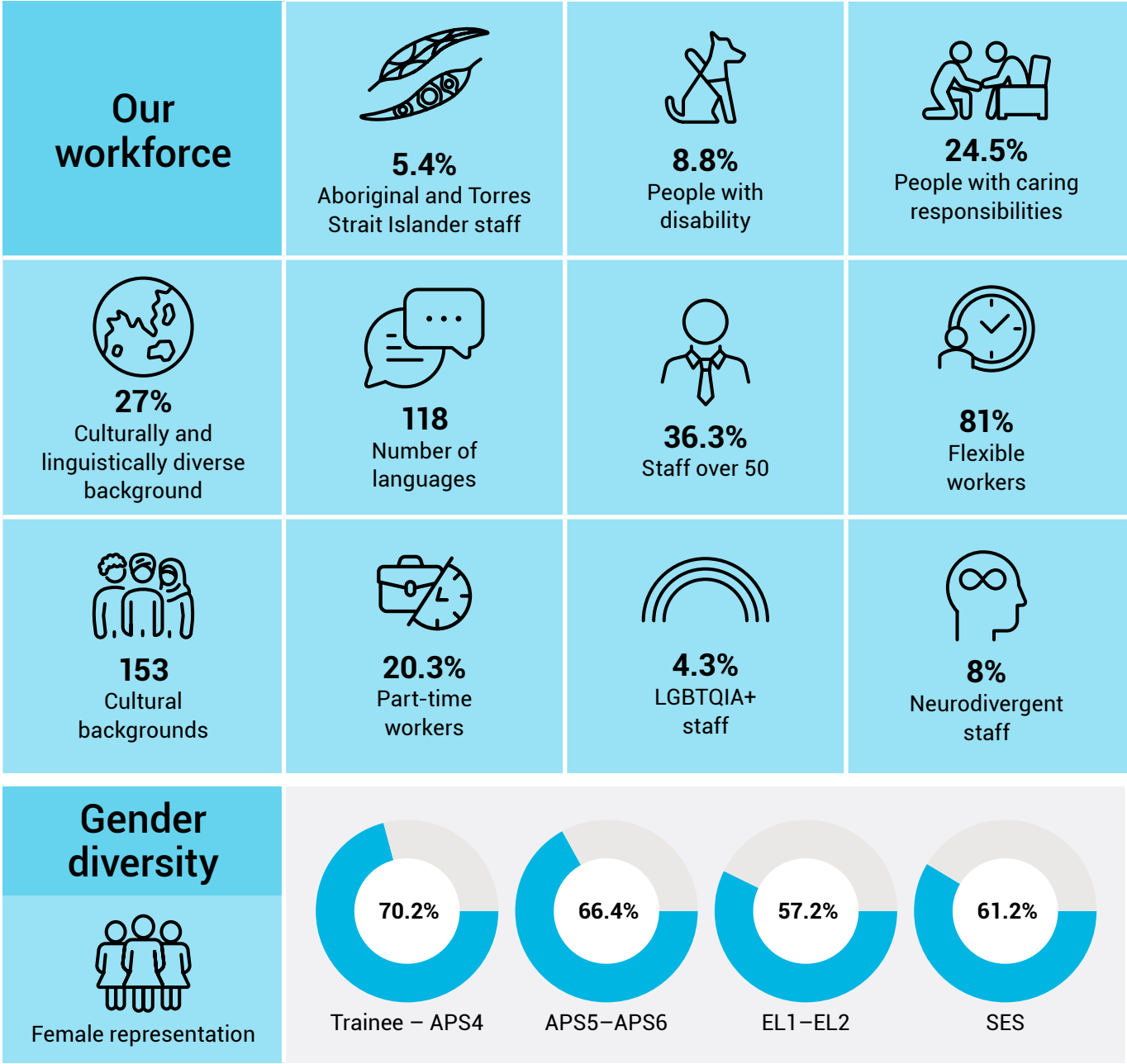
We've participated in and complied with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency Public Sector Reporting Program.

Our diverse workforce

Diversity shows up in many ways. It can be about our culture, age, gender, or how we express ourselves.

It might come from our life experiences, who we love, the languages we speak, our education, or whether we live with a disability. It also includes the skills and knowledge we bring, both personal and professional.

Diversity can also be shaped by where we live, our responsibilities outside of work like caring for others, and the things that matter most to us. All these differences make us who we are, and they all matter.



We collect diversity data in many ways, depending on which dataset is most complete and accurate at the time of collection.

- Including:
- workforce representation rates as of 30 June 2025 as reported in the agency's HR system
 - data collected from the annual Workplace Inclusion Survey in 2024.

Our diversity champions

Diversity champions are senior leaders chosen by the CEO to help drive inclusion and support a diverse, respectful and welcoming workplace.

Champions play a key role in promoting our diversity initiatives, providing leadership and visibility and helping shape a positive and psychosocial safe workplace culture.

Diversity champions bring valuable insights and feedback on how we're tracking against the initiatives in our inclusion action plans.

Our inclusion pledge principles

Our diversity champions have committed to making inclusion a priority. Their inclusion pledges bring focus to the importance of workplace belonging in everything we do.

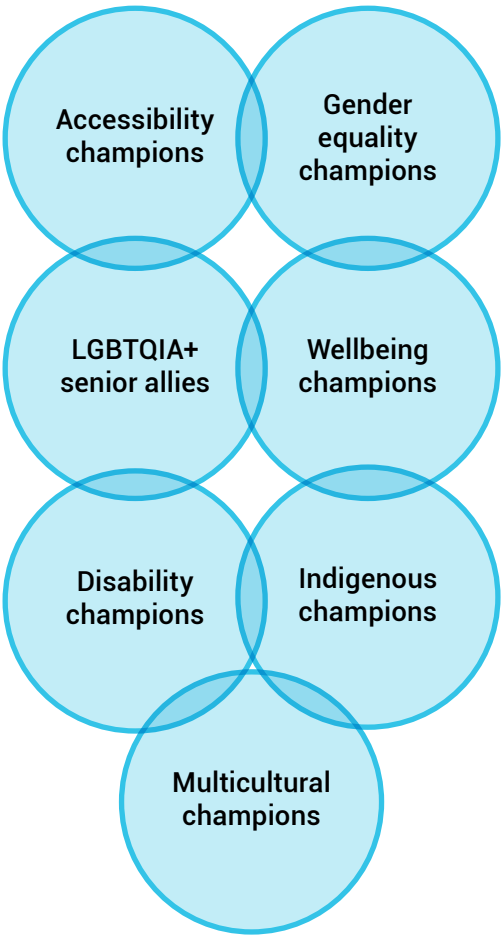
Diversity champion pledge principles:

- ✓ We'll make our commitment to diversity known.
- ✓ We'll champion inclusion across the agency and the Australian Public Service.
- ✓ We'll actively seek out and listen to our diverse voices.
- ✓ We'll raise the issue of exclusion when the opportunity arises.
- ✓ We'll challenge inequity and help remove barriers which hold our staff back.
- ✓ We'll encourage and influence inclusion, diversity and belonging in everything we do.
- ✓ We hold ourselves accountable for creating a culturally safe and inclusive environment for everyone.

Inclusion means I have access and my contribution is valued. Belonging is a sensation I experience when I have shared values and beliefs with those around me.
– Toni

Our diversity champions:

- ✓ support a positive and inclusive experience for all staff
- ✓ speak up for the needs of staff in diversity groups
- ✓ promote good practices in how we hire and support staff
- ✓ lead conversations that build understanding and drive cultural change
- ✓ encourage sharing and collaboration across the APS
- ✓ help raise awareness of diversity and inclusion across our agency and the APS.



How we'll use this strategy

As we continue building a more inclusive and diverse workplace, it's essential that we commit to continuous growth and learning.

Embracing diversity is not just about acknowledging differences but actively seeking to understand and value them.

This commitment starts with each of us. It means taking a moment to think about how we act, questioning our assumptions, and doing our bit to create a workplace where everyone feels respected and valued. When we do that, we build a culture where staff feel safe to speak up and share their needs and unique ideas.

When we follow through on these actions, we can make real change happen — together. It means creating a workplace where everyone feels included, respected, and like they truly belong every day. When our workforce reflects the diversity of the community we serve, we're better placed to deliver services that meet the needs of our customers, especially those who are vulnerable or underrepresented.

These are the specific actions and inclusive practices we'll take at all levels within our agency to support this commitment:

		
As a staff member	As a leader	As an executive
✓ I consider how I think, act and behave. ✓ I'm aware of how my actions make others feel. ✓ I'm inclusive in everything I do. ✓ I embrace diversity, while respecting and valuing the contributions of others. ✓ I contribute to inclusive relationships through the work I do. ✓ I recognise and challenge assumptions and bias.	✓ I support and encourage my team to bring their true selves to work. ✓ I take action to bring my team along with me on our journey. ✓ I make sure I consider the voices of my team and am transparent in my decision making. ✓ I recognise and challenge personal bias. ✓ I create safe spaces for my team to share their experiences and perspectives. ✓ I call out inappropriate or exclusive behaviour or incivility that would prevent my team from feeling a sense of belonging.	✓ I consider and plan for a diverse workforce of the future. ✓ I champion this strategy to drive inclusion across the agency. ✓ I positively influence diversity, inclusion and belonging across the agency. ✓ I allocate time and space to drive workforce diversity initiatives and positive experiences and outcomes. ✓ I help shape ways that recognise and celebrate the unique contributions of individuals from all backgrounds.

Strategic alignment

Our Workplace belonging strategy 2025 to 2029 is shaped by broader APS diversity frameworks and strategies, key legislation and our agency's diversity and inclusion strategies to guide its actions and priorities.

Commonwealth strategies	APS strategies and plans	Agency strategies and plans
National strategies • National Agreement on Closing the Gap • Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2030 • National Autism Strategy 2025–2031 • National Carer Strategy 2024 – 2034 Legislative obligations • <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> • <i>Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012</i> • <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i> • <i>Age Discrimination Act 2004</i> • <i>Carer Recognition Act 2010</i> • <i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975</i> • <i>Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012</i>	• APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021–26 • APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25 • APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Employment Strategy and Action Plan • Workforce Strategy 2025 • Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy	• 2030 Vision • 2030 Strategy • Corporate plan 2025–2026 • People strategy: Our vision for 2025 • Strategic workforce plan 2025 to 2027 • Positive Duty Prevention and Response Plan

Diversity means recognising people from all walks of life. Belonging means being part of a safe and happy space.
– Denise

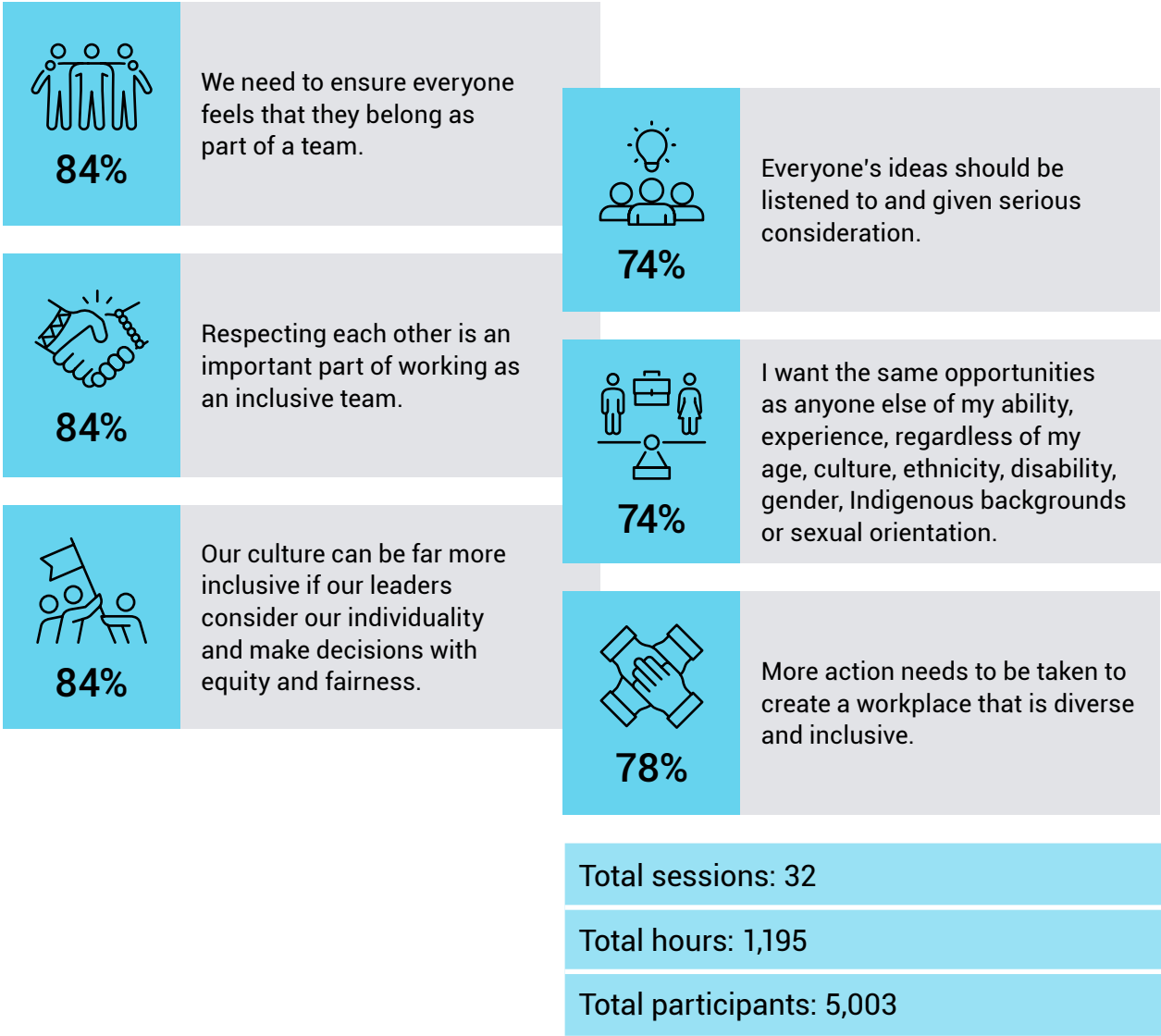


Listening to our staff

Through the APS Census, workplace inclusion surveys, focus groups, workshops and staff consultations, we heard a wide range of voices, especially those with lived experience.

These insights, along with the expertise shared throughout the process, have directly shaped this strategy and the action plans that support it.

What staff told us was important to them.



Part 1: Our vision of belonging

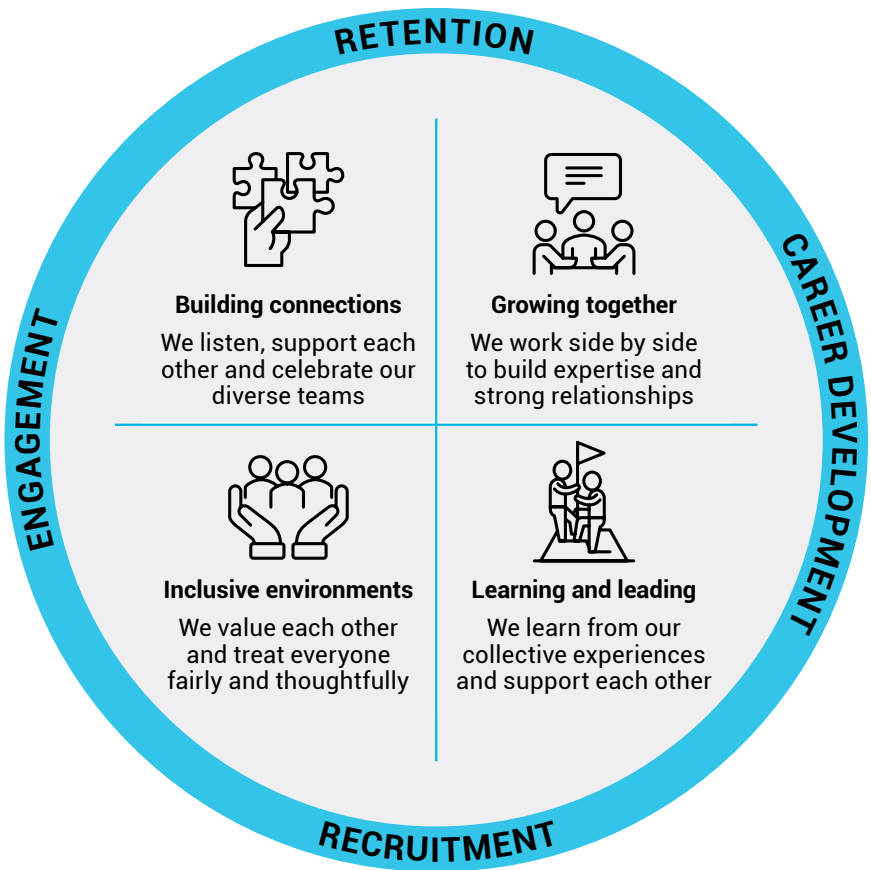
Our vision is to build a workplace as diverse as the communities we serve, where we work together to make government services simple and putting people at the heart of everything we do. Creating a workplace where everyone feels a sense of belonging is key to making this vision a reality.

Belonging moves us beyond inclusion and promotes a workplace culture where everyone feels confident and accountable and able to be themselves and bring these qualities out in others.

To achieve our vision, we need to work together. This includes actively seeking out differences and sharing knowledge and expertise to remove obstacles that lead to inequality. It also means focusing on ways to drive action and build trust and create culturally safe places to work in the agency and across the APS.

- ✓ We'll relentlessly champion fairness and empower everyone to be a bold advocate for inclusion.
- ✓ We'll also create initiatives that not only recognise but respect, value and celebrate the unique abilities and contributions of everyone.
- ✓ We'll recognise intersectionality, where individuals who identify with more than one under-represented diversity group face overlapping barriers to representation.

Our 4 priorities to achieve our vision



True inclusion is an environment where people feel safe, valued and empowered to contribute authentically, knowing that their uniqueness is an asset not a barrier.
– Nikki

Our values matter. They guide how we create an inclusive culture — one where respect, connection and representation are part of everyday practice.

When we create space for belonging, we allow our staff to be themselves. We unlock creativity, fresh thinking, and stronger teamwork. Our differences help us learn, grow, and find better ways to serve the people who rely on us.

Doing this helps us attract great people, build a supportive culture and make a positive difference.

It also allows us to challenge unfairness or exclusion wherever we see it. We're stronger when we include different perspectives and make sure no one is left out.

Our values are fundamental to achieving our goal of being a truly diverse workforce. This includes the importance of inclusive and respectful behaviour. These support the legislative and policy environments we work within. Together, these values ultimately shape the ways we operate, serve our customers and work together.

Belonging starts with diversity and putting lived experience at the centre of everything we do.

We recognise our staff are the key to unlocking our potential.

As we work towards achieving our vision, we'll continue to recognise, listen and learn from the unique knowledge, skills and expertise our staff bring to work through their identity and lived experience.

This includes a continued focus on improving representation, retention and career outcomes of our staff who belong to one or more identity groups.

Why is this important?

- We're representative of the communities we serve.
- We work better together and deliver culturally appropriate services when we have staff with different skills, experience and abilities.
- Bringing multiple viewpoints to the table drives innovation. fuels creativity and problem-solving.
- We want to continue taking steps to attract and retain the best talent pool.
- By embracing diversity, we bring our values to life and move closer to a culture where belonging is experienced by everyone.

 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff	 Staff who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)	 Staff over 50	 People with caring responsibilities
 Staff with disability	 Staff of all genders and gender identities	 Staff who are neurodivergent	 Staff who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and other diverse sexualities

Part 2: Our priorities and success

We'll focus on 4 priorities to achieve our vision of creating a diverse and inclusive workforce where everyone belongs.

Priority 1: Building connections – We listen, support each other and celebrate our diversity

Why it's important	How we'll approach it	What success looks like
Listening, supporting each other and celebrating our diversity helps us build strong connections. This makes everyone feel authentically welcome and supported, leading to better teamwork and culturally appropriate services for our customers. It makes sure our community feels safe and supported.	• We'll highlight the importance of diversity and take steps to make sure everything we do is universally accessible, inclusive, fair and empowering. • We'll provide more effective ways for you to engage with and be a part of diversity networks, initiatives and events. • We'll focus on our inclusion policies and programs to support inclusive relationships, and new initiatives which recognise our diverse workforce.	✓ We listen, support each other and celebrate workplace diversity. ✓ We see you taking steps to make sure everything you do is universally accessible, inclusive, equitable and empowering at every level. ✓ You see yourself represented in our work. ✓ We make the most of our diverse workforce.

Priority 2: Growing together – We work side by side to build expertise and strong relationships

Why it's important	How we'll approach it	What success looks like
Investing in you will unlock your full potential. It gives you the skills to be confident in the work you do, and it builds strong supportive relationships. It drives innovation, bringing multiple viewpoints to the table, fuelling creativity and problem-solving. It builds empathy and fosters a greater understanding and awareness of different cultures and viewpoints.	• We'll help our managers and senior leaders understand inclusive leadership practices to highlight the importance of ending exclusive behaviour and incivility. • We'll co-design with our staff and partner with professionals to maintain our focus on placing cultural capability, inclusion, safety, and lived experience at the centre of how we work and lead. • We'll expand our storytelling, peer networks, and allyship programs to embed inclusive leadership competencies and accountability mechanisms.	✓ Everyone helps each other, takes ongoing steps to engage in inclusive practices and increases understanding of the importance of workforce diversity. ✓ We role-model inclusivity through our everyday work practices and address exclusion or bias effectively. ✓ You're acknowledged for your skills, expertise and contributions.

Priority 3: Inclusive environments – We value and treat each other fairly and thoughtfully

Why it's important	How we'll approach it	What success looks like
Embracing individuality is the cornerstone to inclusivity. Valuing each other and treating each other fairly creates a respectful workplace where everyone feels safe and engaged. This builds trust and confidence, fostering strong relationships and empowering everyone to contribute to shared goals.	- We'll break down barriers and make sure everyone has a fair shot at getting a job and being successful. - We'll make sure everyone understands and has an opportunity to tell us about the state of inclusion. - We'll make sure our recruitment approaches meet the current and emerging needs of our multigenerational workforce and the APS.	- Everyone feels safe putting forward new ideas or suggesting better ways of working. - You feel treated fairly and respectfully and that your work matters. - You identify you feel valued in the work you do and safe to put your views forward openly and respectfully.

Priority 4: Learning and leading – We learn from our collective experiences and support each other

Why it's important	How we'll approach it	What success looks like
Engaging with each other to understand and practice our belonging values and empowering individuals to call out negative behaviours creates an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued. This fosters a sense of belonging and drives positive change, showcasing the values needed to grow and nurture belonging at work.	- We'll take steps to understand what you're saying and what may be holding you back. - We'll create innovative ways to raise awareness of the importance of anti-racism and anti-discrimination practices. - We'll identify inclusive practices to support you to deliver culturally appropriate and inclusive services.	- Everyone values each other and appreciates the importance of individuality. - You actively seek out ways to engage with diversity and practice inclusivity at work. - Our engagement practices and feedback mechanisms create a deeper understanding of workplace experiences and attitudes.

Inclusion is about removing barriers so everyone can fully participate in workplace activities and have equal access to opportunities.
– Kadir



Part 3: Measuring our progress

Measuring our progress will show us how we're creating a sense of belonging at work.

We'll keep an eye on our progress by using internal measurements and checking how we perform against national benchmarks. This way, we can see how we're meeting expectations and where we might need to improve.

Internal measurements	External benchmarking
- Employment representation data - Training participation rates - Hiring and retention information - Workplace adjustment outcomes - Annual APS census results - Gender pay gap analysis - Staff experience data	- Access and Inclusion Index (Australian Network on Disability) - Australian Workplace Equality Index (Pride in Diversity) - Workplace Gender Equality Agency Public Sector Reporting Program - Inclusive Employers Index (Diversity Council Australia)

We'll know we're improving by making sure:

- we see more staff sharing their identity information with us
- we implement headline actions from APS-level diversity strategies
- there are consistent improvements in how included you feel at work
- there is more participation in diversity programs and services
- we're meeting gender equality and diversity group reporting responsibilities
- we're achieving Commonwealth and APS diversity measures (including phase targets)
- we have more staff engaging with diversity training
- we have fewer cases of unlawful and negative behaviour
- we see higher levels of workforce inclusion and wellbeing sentiment
- there is increased engagement with diversity networks.

We'll achieve our vision of belonging over 3 phases.

- 1 Phase 1: Foundations of connection (0 – 18 months)

Moving forward is laying the groundwork for a culturally safe and inclusive workforce.
- 2 Phase 2: Embedding inclusive practice (18 – 36 months)

Moving forward is cultivating inclusion and reinforcing cultural change.
- 3 Phase 3: Sustaining systemic belonging (36 – 54 months)

Moving forward means embedding belonging as a strategic and measurable capability.

Belonging is what I experience when I have shared values and beliefs with those around me. It motivates me and fosters engagement and productivity.
– Tom

Reporting our progress helps us celebrate what we've achieved and what we still need to do.

We'll report on our progress every 6 months, sharing our successes and being transparent about areas that need more attention.

Key terms and definitions

Key terms	Definitions
Diversity	This is about the characteristics which make each of us different, informing our unique identity and perspective on the world.
Inclusion	This is the act of genuine participation and contribution where everyone, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances is safe, valued and supported to thrive and contribute at work.
Belonging	This is about being a place where everyone, everywhere, experiences a sense of belonging and moves us beyond diversity and inclusion. It includes: • working with purpose and doing the things that matter to a high standard • encouraging and taking personal responsibility • taking the time and space to build genuine relationships • fostering growth by creating or promoting career, learning and development opportunities • demonstrating inclusivity through generosity, care and support • treating everyone in a fair and just way and being transparent in directions or decisions • nurturing safe environments knowing voices and ideas are valued.
Intersectionality	This is when people experience different kinds of disadvantages or unfair treatment at the same time, such as their race, gender, disability or sexual orientation. It helps us understand that these parts of someone's identity don't exist separately, they overlap and can affect how they are treated or the barriers they face.

Inclusion is about building environments that don't require individuals with differences to ask for accommodations or adjustments, because instead the workplace is designed to work for everyone in ways that acknowledge and support individuality.
– **Rhianna**

Definitions

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	People who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)	A widely used definition of CALD refers to people born overseas, in countries other than those classified by the ABS as 'mainly English-speaking countries.' The main English-speaking countries identified by the ABS are Australia, Canada, Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) and United States of America.
Multigenerational	A multigenerational workforce refers to a workplace that includes staff from different age groups. These age groups typically include Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z, each bringing their own distinct characteristics and experiences to the workplace. This also includes our workforce who are aged 50 or over.
Carers	Carers have responsibility for the care of a child of school age or younger or provide personal care, support and help to someone in need of support due to disability, medical condition, terminal illness, mental illness or due to being frail and aged.
Disability	Disability refers to any condition which restricts a person's mental, sensory or mobility function. It can be temporary or permanent, visible or invisible. It may have little or significant impact on a person's abilities. In the work environment, a disability may affect people in different ways. The APS definition of disability, for employment-related purposes (other than discrimination), is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (2015) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. This definition of disability can be found on the Australian Public Service Commission website. The definition of disability used for discrimination purposes can be found in the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>.
Gender equality	Gender equality refers to creating workplaces where everyone has equal opportunities and employment conditions irrespective of their gender.
Neurodivergent	Neurodivergent is an umbrella term that describes people with variation in their mental functions and can include conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other neurological or developmental conditions such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
LGBTQIA+	LGBTQIA+ refers to people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and other diverse sexualities and gender identities.

