



Australian Government
Department of Human Services

Every story counts

Workplace Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2019–23



working
as one

humanservices.gov.au



Acknowledgement of Country and Traditional Owners

The Department of Human Services 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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Message from the Secretary

I am pleased to present the Department of Human Services' *Workplace Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2019–23*.

This strategy demonstrates our commitment to providing a positive work environment where our diversity is celebrated, and inclusion is a focus for everyone.

Our department provides services to nearly every Australian, whatever their age, cultural background or personal circumstances. The diversity of our workforce is crucial if we are to do this effectively. It's what allows us to connect with our customers and our colleagues at work. It helps us see different perspectives and helps create new and innovative ways of providing excellent customer service to the Australian community.

Nothing is achieved alone—to reach our best we must support each other and maintain an inclusive culture where everybody is valued for their contribution. All of us should feel safe, trusted and productive at work. We all have a role to play in creating an environment that truly values the diversity each of us brings to work.

We are not just about doing the minimum that needs to be done—as a large employer, we want to set the example and be a leader in modelling inclusion and diversity.

I am delighted to see this strategy sets a road map to achieving this ambition by building diversity in our workforce and promoting respect and inclusion in all corners of our department. I encourage you to help build a culture where 'every story counts'.

Not only will this promote the health and wellbeing of our staff, it will ultimately help us deliver excellent services to our customers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renée Leon". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Renée Leon PSM
Secretary
Department of Human Services

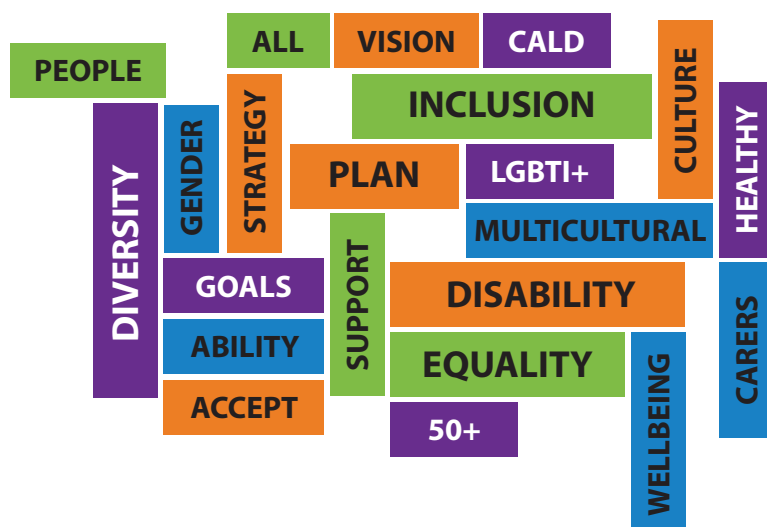


Our inclusion journey

We are proud of what we have achieved so far. We have delivered innovative programs, services and initiatives that have allowed us to work better together. These programs have increased awareness within the department of the value of inclusion and diversity and provide positive employment experiences for staff. We have also shared our programs with other APS agencies so they can advance their own inclusion journeys.

Our vision—every story counts

This strategy reflects our vision to foster a workplace culture where our people feel respected, included, supported, valued and empowered. We will be a place that recognises that every story counts.



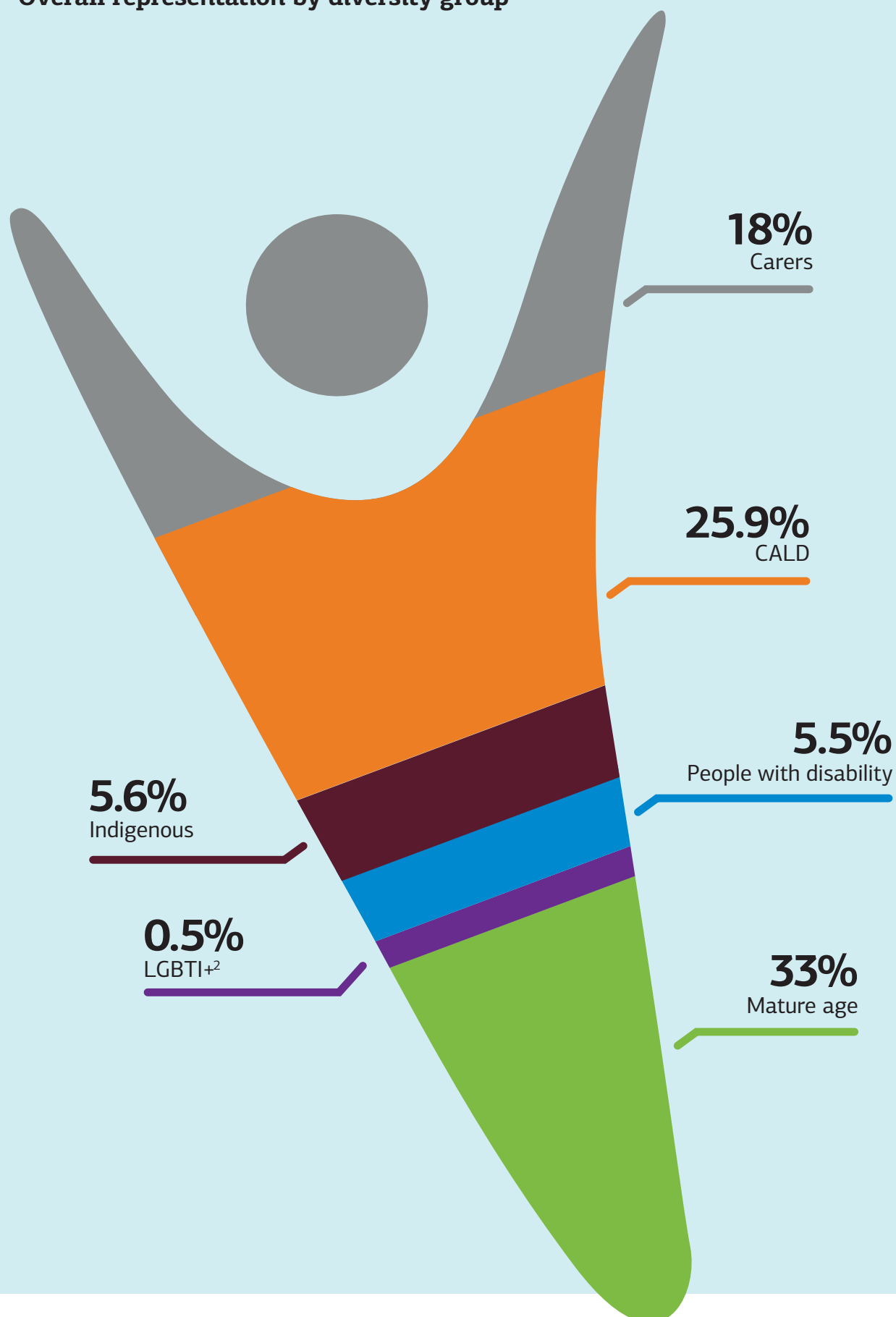
Our achievements

We have a lot to celebrate, such as:

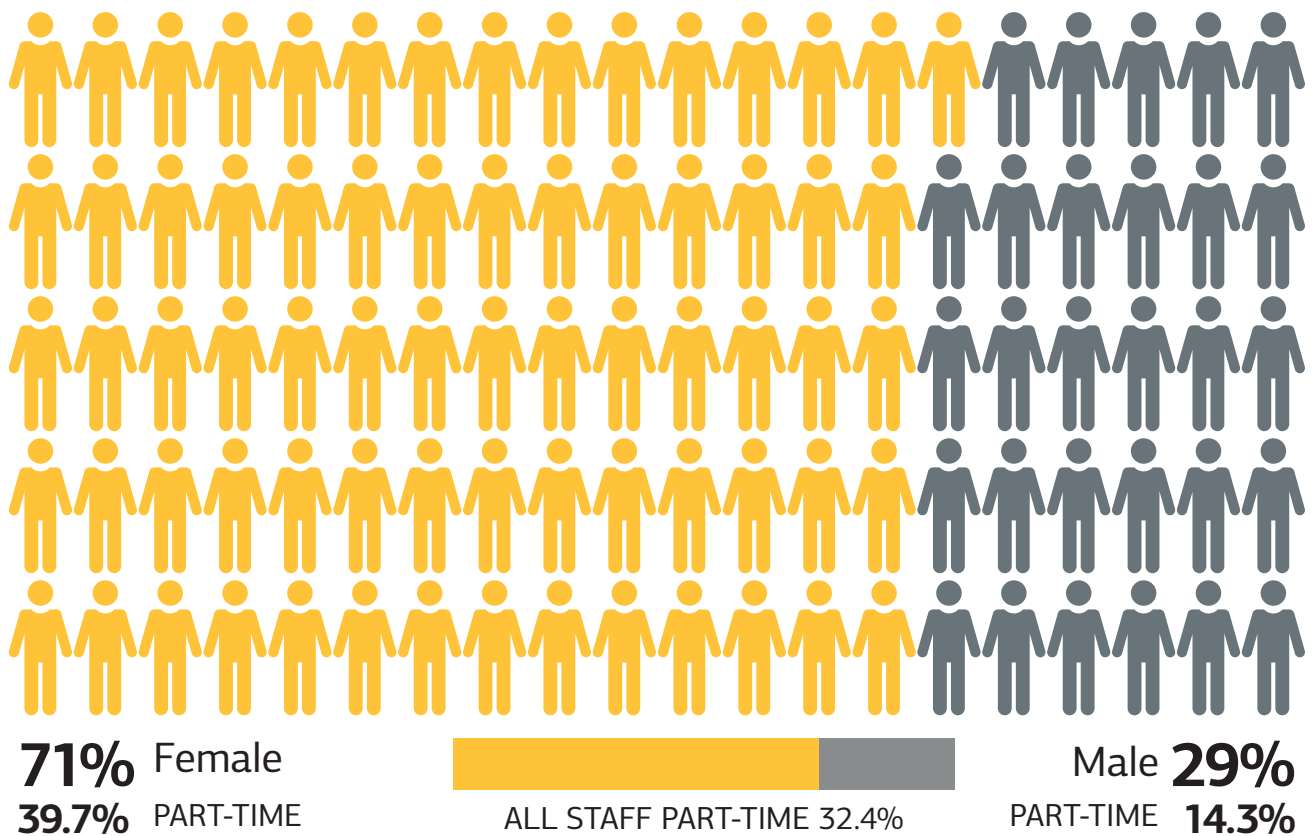
- achieving the Gender Equality target of 50% female SES representation
- achieving accreditation from the Australian Breastfeeding Association as a recognised Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace
- achieving Indigenous representation in our workforce of 5%
- achieving positive census results, in particular:
 - we accept people from diverse backgrounds (88%)
 - we are committed to creating a diverse workforce (80%)
 - we support and actively promote an inclusive workplace culture (79%)
 - our supervisors actively support people from diverse backgrounds (86%)
- achieving Bronze employer status in the Australian Workplace Equality Index for excellence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) workplace inclusion
- being the 2018 Agency winner of the APS Diversity and Gender Equality Awards
- being the 2017–18 leading organisation for the Australian Network on Disability's Access and Inclusion Index
- being a 2018 Comcare—Recovery At and Return to Work Award (Access and Inclusion Unit)
- developing the 'Supporting working parents' resource
- introducing an intranet resource hub for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and LGBTI+ staff
- providing our staff with the ability to request workplace adjustments online and share accessibility information with others
- establishing a Senior Executive Diversity Champion Network to promote workplace inclusion and influence cultural change.

Our diverse workforce¹

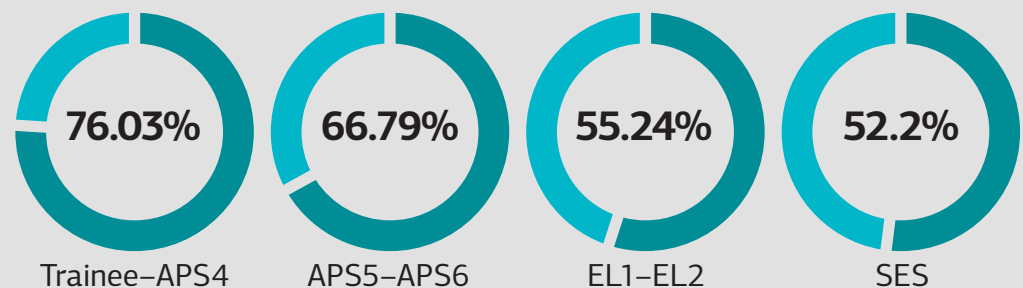
Overall representation by diversity group



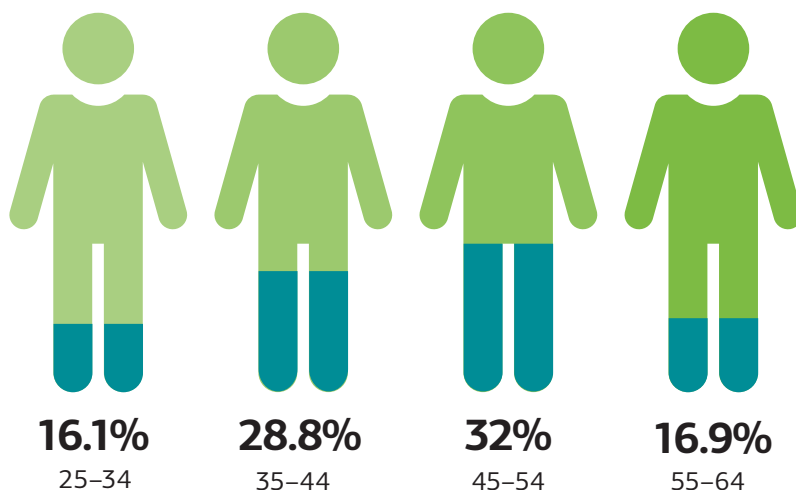
Gender equality



Female representation by APS classification



Age profile



- (1) Data current as at 30 June 2019.
 (2) LGBTI+ inclusion was introduced into our HR system on 17 June 2019. This represents provisional figures to date. LGBTI+ representation was previously evaluated from APS Census results. 4% of staff identified as LGBTI+ in the 2017 and 2018 census.

Valuing inclusion and diversity

Workplace diversity matters. It helps create workplaces that are more innovative, creative and adaptable to change. It helps identify new and improved ways of doing things, including harnessing the benefits of technology and improving the efficiency and quality of our services.

Workplace inclusion is the key to unlocking our potential. By being inclusive, staff feel safe to share their ideas, trusted to take considered risks without fear and ultimately, be who they are.

By valuing workplace inclusion and diversity, we see benefits such as:

- improved employee engagement and wellbeing
- better retention of talent
- improved performance
- increased innovation
- improved services to our customers
- minimised risk of unlawful behaviour such as workplace bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination
- being an employer of choice.

Understanding and respecting diversity impacts our working relationships and how we do our work. When we consider inclusion and diversity in all aspects of our work, we can influence our culture in a positive way.

We acknowledge the significant contribution that our staff and diversity networks made in developing this strategy and for their ongoing commitment to achieving inclusive employment outcomes.





“Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people are respected, connected, progressing and contributing to organisational success.”³



(3) Diversity Council Australia, Inclusion@Work Index 2017-2018, Synopsis, p6.

Our themes and goals

Our approach to inclusion and diversity is underpinned by our four key themes.

 1. Culture	 2. Capability	 3. Creativity	 4. Connection
Promote the value that diversity brings to the workplace	Build a diverse workforce for the future to drive greater productivity, expertise and agility	Harness diverse views from our workforce to cultivate and support innovation	Recognise individuality, authenticity and belonging






Our plan

The *Workplace Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2019–23* provides guidance to all staff and managers to achieve a positive, respectful and equitable workplace environment.

This strategy outlines the department's plan to foster inclusion and diversity in our workforce, helping us make positive contributions to social inclusion and workforce participation.

It supports the objectives of our *Multicultural Servicing Strategy 2019–22* and Indigenous strategies including the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employees Strategy 2018–22*, the *Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–22*, and the *Indigenous Servicing Strategy 2018–22*.







The strategy also aligns to:

	our legislative requirements to foster diversity under the <i>Public Service Act (1999)</i>
	the APS Employment Principles
	the APS Values and Code of Conduct
	our desired culture and behaviours
	our Strategic Pillars.

Our focus

Our focus is to create a workplace where people feel included. We want the same opportunities to be available for staff of all backgrounds and life experiences. We want all of our staff to achieve, succeed and be at their best.

We will continue to focus on improving the representation and employment experiences of staff in our key diversity groups. This includes a continued focus on those:

	who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
	from a CALD background
	with disability
	who are over 50 (mature age)
	who are LGBTI+
	who have caring responsibilities.

Our priority areas

The mental health and wellbeing of our staff is a priority and we will focus on putting in place strategies that reduce workplace stress.

Gender balance is also important. We will create a workplace which provides equal opportunity and career advancement regardless of gender, and where workplace flexibility arrangements support both women and men to balance family and caring responsibilities and workplace participation.

Our people, our stories

Diversity is difference. It is our distinctiveness. It is everywhere. Our individual identities are made up of our unique blend of knowledge, skills and perspectives. We bring these to everything we do, including to the workplace. Our diversity incorporates our social identity and includes personal characteristics such as our cultural background and ethnicity, age, gender, gender expression, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, caring responsibilities, language and education. It can also include our professional identity with characteristics such as professional skills, working style, location and life experiences.

Inclusion is about making a place where everyone feels respected, included, supported, valued and empowered. In a workplace context, inclusion is about removing barriers so everyone can fully participate in workplace activities and have equal access to opportunities. It is enabling all staff to contribute their skills and perspectives to achieve success and personal growth.

We are all distinctly different, however, our fundamental needs and wants remain the same.

We want to be included, respected, valued and heard. We may think our differences set us apart from others but what if we aren't so different?

Our stories tell others how we became who we are, the experiences that shaped us, the lessons we have learnt along the way, our values, our differences and our similarities. We all bring a unique perspective to our work and the contributions we make to the community. These perspectives are central to driving innovation.

The best stories are far more memorable than facts and statistics. When you combine an idea with an emotion, this can become powerful and persuasive. A personal message can be moving and help to create a sense of connection. Real stories help us all to better understand and explore issues from perspectives different than our own.

“People from all walks of life have different skills and often those skills, especially in a government department like ours, help with servicing customers—because there’s customers who are just like us.”

Kathlene, Service Officer

“Inclusion means a level playing field for people, and a place which is culturally safe to work in.”

Heidi, Senior Diversity Officer

“I really believe the benefit of an inclusive workplace culture is the freedom to be you, and having the team support you—as you.”

Vivian, Senior Programme Officer

“Inclusion isn’t a fuzzy warm concept that’s left up to the Inclusion and Diversity team. It’s basic management, basic workplace efficiency. When you have a happy, included workforce, you are going to have strident gains in productivity.”

Arnjali, Lawyer



“The department really leads the way in a lot of areas of inclusion. I think it is a great place to work.”

Jad, Project Officer

“Being a person from a diverse background and having people from diverse backgrounds, you are always learning something different, getting different points of view and perspectives.”

Sean, Director

“... an inclusive workplace means people will come to work feeling valued, that they have a place to come to, happier and more productive.”

Joanne, Senior Project Officer

“... understanding diversity, including people from different cultural backgrounds, allows us to deliver more efficient services for our customers.”

Kadir, Service Officer

Our Champions' messages





Our commitments

Our commitments are integral to achieving increased workforce representation, inclusion, empowerment and personal growth. They align to the Strategic Pillars and will help realise an inclusive and diverse workforce.



1. Culture—our goal is to promote the value that diversity brings to the workplace.

Commitment	Measure	Target
We will role model inclusive behaviours and ensure unreasonable or unlawful behaviours such as workplace bullying, sexual harassment and direct and indirect discrimination are dealt with promptly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved awareness and confidence for staff and managers. Reduction in unreasonable and unlawful behaviour. Increase in staff wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incremental progress in APS Census results including wellbeing index, diversity commitment and inclusion culture. Ongoing decline of instances of discrimination, bullying and harassment in APS Census results. Decrease in case management escalations. Decrease in workplace adjustment interventions.
We will showcase the benefits of designing for diversity and to ensure our programs and services are accessible, inclusive, responsive and empowering.		



2. Capability—our goal is to build a diverse workforce for the future to drive greater productivity, expertise and agility.

Commitment	Measure	Target
We will provide resources to build the capability and confidence of our people to harness the power of an inclusive and diverse workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved workforce participation, representation and retention of people from diverse groups. Increased inclusion and diversity capability for staff and managers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased annual participation in the Diversity Capability Program. Incremental increase in female representation at SES level from previous year. Increased participation in SES, executive level and middle manager level cultural leadership programs from previous year. Increased Indigenous and disability representation in leadership positions from previous year. Improved uptake in males and SES accessing flexible working arrangements from previous year.
We will recognise the value of working flexibly, removing barriers to foster a high performing and dynamic workforce.		



3. Creativity—our goal is to harness diverse views from our workforce to cultivate and support innovation.

Commitment	Measure	Target
We will work collaboratively to capture the diverse views of our people, to bring forward ideas, build relationships, share knowledge and best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are more empowered to think innovatively and express new ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved APS Census results in the areas of innovation, wellbeing and collaboration from previous year.
We will recognise the contributions, skills and experience of our people to maximise talent and opportunity, and remove barriers to participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in staff feeling valued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uptake in the staff who use assistive technology software as workplace adjustment.
We will identify opportunities for innovation by implementing new and emerging accessible technologies. This will allow staff to be creative and contribute their best.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger range and number of assistive technology deployed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least four events of significance recognised and celebrated annually.



4. Connection—our goal is to recognise individuality, authenticity and belonging.

Commitment	Measure	Target
We will establish workplaces where people feel connected, valued, and able to bring their authentic selves to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy, vibrant diversity networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing increase in diversity network memberships.
We will create a sense of belonging by recognising individual skills and experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff feel more supported and connected to their workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved inclusion metrics from 2019 rates.
We will embed psychological safety practices to enhance mental health and wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers are more engaged in supporting their staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved engagement and interaction rates to internal and external inclusion and diversity communication tactics (news hub articles, staff profiles, stories). Incremental progress in APS Census results including wellbeing index.



Implementation

The success of this strategy depends on action both nationally and in local workplaces.

Our annual *Inclusion Action Plan* outlines the actions that will realise our goals.

Evaluating performance

We will work toward success by monitoring our performance against this strategy. We will have achieved success if we:

- increase the representation of people from key diversity groups
- show that the employment experience of people in our diversity groups improves over time
- improve uptake of, or participation in, our inclusion initiatives, programs or services.

We will monitor our progress against all our commitments to inclusion and diversity, including those specific to our key focus areas. This includes reporting on the diversity of our workforce, evaluating trends and identifying areas for improvement. We will use data to tell us what we need to improve on, and will regularly ask our staff how our actions are making a difference.

In addition to the APS Census, internal surveys and pulse polls, we will also participate in diagnostic and inclusion and diversity benchmarking processes, including the:

- Diversity Council of Australia Inclusion@Work Index
- Australian Network on Disability's Access and Inclusion Index
- Pride in Diversity Australian Workplace Equality Index.

Our corporate diversity partnerships

Our corporate diversity partnerships are important to us.

We maintain corporate memberships with relevant not-for-profit employer organisations including the Australian Network on Disability, Pride in Diversity and Diversity Council Australia.

These organisations provide us with access to specialist knowledge on matters relating to workplace inclusion and diversity. This helps shape our inclusion policies and strategies and ensures our programs and services support the diverse needs of our workforce.



