



Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission

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**2014**

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**Diversity  
Strategy**

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**PROMOTING DIVERSITY AT THE COMMISSION**

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## **1 Statement of Commitment from the President**

As the body with a statutory responsibility to ensure the observance of human rights in Australia, it is important that respect and acceptance of diversity is an integral part of our own workplace. Diversity in our staff is one of our greatest assets and assists us to meet our organisational objectives.

A diverse workforce with a range of different backgrounds and perspectives provides us with a broader range of ideas and insights to draw on in decision-making and policy development. Diversity makes good business sense. A workplace that reflects the Australian community will understand its clients better, which will lead to improved service and a more inclusive community for all.

Diversity principles are promoted across the Commission and awareness of diversity issues raised through staff training and through the celebration of significant events such as NAIDOC week, International Day of People with a Disability and International Women's Day. Our integrated workforce strategies reinforce our commitment to diversity and we encourage flexible working conditions to enable our employees to balance their work and other responsibilities. We make a clear statement about diversity, flexibility and accessibility in the careers information on our website to ensure that from the first encounter with our organisation, potential candidates know that we see workplace diversity as a positive and important part of how we work together.

We have also given high priority to the inclusion of people with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our internship program to improve employment prospects for these particularly disadvantaged groups.

We work proactively with others to ensure recognition for Australia's first peoples.

We ensure that our advertised employment opportunities are open and accessible to all and are committed to providing reasonable adjustment to enable candidates to participate in our selection processes and where successful, to support them to work with us.

We monitor our workforce diversity and benchmark ourselves against the Australian Public Service State of the Service Report each year and consistently outperform the broader APS in this area. We seek new and innovative ways to improve our diversity performance and turn our commitment into practical outcomes.

We demonstrate respectful workplace behaviours and ensure that all staff have the opportunity to develop cultural competence as they gain experience and exposure to the myriad of community groups through their work and engagement activities.

This diversity strategy, for the first time incorporates all of our commitments and activities across 4 separate reporting areas and includes our Reconciliation Action Plan, our Disability Action Plan, our Agency Multicultural Plan as well as Workplace Diversity Program and has streamlined our processes and intensified our efforts.

**Professor Gillian Triggs, President**

## **2 Introduction**

### **2.1 What is Workplace Diversity?**

The term diversity refers to what makes us different. It covers gender, age, language, disability, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation and religious belief. Diversity also refers to our many other differences in education, work experience, occupation, socio-economic background, marital status and whether or not we have family and carer responsibilities.

Workplace diversity encompasses, but goes beyond, the traditional concept of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). The object is to ensure that we are representative of the community we serve and that we value and make the fullest possible use of the diverse backgrounds, skills, talents and perspectives of *all* our people. We seek to ensure full participation of staff, community members and service recipients.

EEO policies address continued disadvantage experienced by particular groups of people in the workplace, including women, Indigenous Australians, people with disabilities and those who suffer disadvantage on the basis of race or ethnicity. These policies remain an important foundation for our diversity strategy.

Workplace diversity programs are built on the principle that a diverse workforce is creative, innovative, and improves public service responsiveness and performance.

### **2.2 Legal Framework**

The *Public Service Act 1999* and Public Service Commissioner's Directions require all agencies to establish workplace diversity programs to assist in giving effect to the APS Values.

The APS Values are central to management in the APS. The following APS Values are especially relevant to diversity policies:

- merit-based employment (section 10(b) of the PS Act);
- non-discrimination and diversity (section 10(c));
- fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace (section 10(j)); and
- equity in employment (section 10(l)).

Section 10(g), which requires sensitivity to the diversity of the Australian public when delivering services, is relevant to the management of an agency.

APS employees also have responsibilities which relate to diversity under the APS Code of Conduct:

- an APS employee, when acting in connection with APS employment, must treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment (section 13(3) of the PS Act); and

- an APS employee must at all times behave in a way that upholds the APS Values and Employment Principles, and the integrity and good reputation of the Commission and the APS (section 13(11)).

The Enterprise Agreement of the Australian Human Rights Commission includes a commitment to Workplace Diversity.

### **3 Priorities of the Diversity Strategy**

In this Diversity Strategy, we have brought together our commitments under 4 separate reporting areas which all have a diversity focus. Our commitments under the Reconciliation Action Plan, the Disability Action Plan, the Agency Multicultural Plan and our Workplace Diversity Program intersected and overlapped and streamlining was designed to reduce our reporting time, duplication of activity and ultimately reduce red tape in keeping with current government policy.

#### **3.1 Agency Multicultural Plan**

The Commission advocates a human rights-based approach to multiculturalism, access and equity and reconciliation and provides an action framework that facilitates the practical application of a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to multicultural access and equity issues. We want to model and address our access and equity practice in our programs, services and operations with and for CALD communities and stakeholders.

Our aim is to improve the access and equity of our services and programs by:

1. Modelling an agency HRBA to access and equity.
2. Systematising the coordination and reporting of our access and equity activities.
3. Providing a framework to oversight the access and equity processes across our Reconciliation, Disability and CALD access and equity initiatives.

#### **3.2 Disability Action Plan**

It is important to the Commission that every experience for a visitor, client, community member, employee or web explorer is a successful one, where information is available, accessible and helpful. We endeavour to deliver exceptional service by being proactive, considerate and responsive to the needs of our staff and visitors both on-site and online.

We have sought to identify and provide the best accessible premises and solutions with our recent relocation, but appreciate that this requires ongoing attention to ensure that continuing needs for both our staff and the public are met.

The focus for our current disability action plan has been on 4 key areas:

1. Developing and promoting a disability lens approach to our work
2. Technology and accessibility
3. Our workplace and employment
4. Community Connections

With these leading themes, we will endeavour to address any issues of service, technology, premises, education and employment.

### **3.3 Reconciliation Action Plan**

Reconciliation is important to the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission):

- it enables us to build the cultural diversity of our organisation so we are better placed to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to understand and exercise their human rights;
- it is appropriate for us to model the importance of understanding and respect for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Commission's activities to promote the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples include:

- Advocating for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution;
- Partnering with the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and Reconciliation Australia to promote improved relationships and
- reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community;
- Partnering with Australia's leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health and human rights organisations as part of the Close the Gap Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality;
- Supporting the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations at international fora with a specific focus on the rights of indigenous peoples through the Indigenous Peoples' Organisations Network.
- Advocating for the full implementation of both the spirit and intent of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in Australia.

### **3.4 Workplace Diversity Program**

The Commission has had a Workplace Diversity Program in place since 1999. Over time our programs have developed and responded to the changing workforce and its needs. We review our Diversity Strategy every four years to ensure currency and relevance to organisational best practice. Our Commission approves the Diversity Strategy.

The Diversity Strategy aims to provide practical and proven approaches to support staff as they try to achieve work-life balance. It provides for flexible employment

policies and practices and the recognition of diversity events to educate and celebrate.

We highlight the particular employment disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians and people with a disability and challenge ourselves to improve our performance in these areas.

We have concentrated our efforts in this single Diversity Strategy to ensure our limited resources are used wisely and to achieve the best outcomes for both the Commission and the community.

## **4 Accountability**

The President and Commissioners are ultimately responsible for our Diversity Strategy and how it is implemented in the Commission. In practice, on a day to day basis, the Executive Director has responsibility for ensuring the most effective diversity related outcomes are delivered.

The Commission has established a Diversity Committee to assist in developing, implementing and monitoring this and other diversity related activities across the Commission. This Committee has terms of reference which incorporate responsibilities for monitoring commitments under our Reconciliation Action Plan, Disability Action Plan and Agency Multicultural Plan. The Commission as part of the accountability framework for Workplace Diversity is required to report in its Annual Report to Parliament and to the Australian Public Service Commission's "*State of the Service Report*".

Our commitment to diversity is captured in goal 4 of our strategic plan:

- having a diverse and respectful workplace that reflects the diversity of the Australian community

to ensure its importance is never far from our vision.

## **5 The Diversity Committee**

The Diversity committee is responsible for ensuring that commitments within the Diversity Strategy are monitored, reported and achieved. The committee meets quarterly and works to agreed terms of reference. The membership of the committee is representative of the various business functions across the Commission and to emphasise the importance of diversity as an issue to the Commission, the committee is chaired by the Executive Director. All committee members are volunteers and contribute to our diversity activities and discussions in addition to their already busy workloads and schedules.

All staff can contribute to our diversity objectives directly through the Committee membership, through human resources, through supervisors or by email through a [diversity@humanrights](mailto:diversity@humanrights) email address.

## **6 The Diversity Strategy's Objectives**

The internal objectives of the Diversity Strategy have been distilled to employment related activities under the headings Planning, Sharing, Learning, Monitoring and Creating. The Commission's other external diversity activities relating to engagement and service delivery are well covered under our RAP, DAP and AMP commitments and cross referenced in Annexure A.

Our Diversity Strategy enables us to meet our commitments under Goal 4.4 of the Commission's Strategic goals for 2014-2018.

We will celebrate and recognise priority events over a biennial calendar to ensure equitable attention to each priority area.

## **7 Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is important that the Diversity Strategy is monitored and evaluated. This will assist in identifying successes and strengths as well identifying any barriers and problems. The Strategy will be reviewed annually to determine if the identified activities have been delivered and were effective and progress reported.

The Diversity Committee will discuss progress against the strategy's objectives on a regular basis. The Committee will provide progress reports to the President and the Commissioners twice per year. Comparative analysis will be monitored through annual reporting statistics and benchmarked as is the case with the APS Commission's "*State of the Service Report*".

## 8 The Program

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Performance Indicators	Progress
<b>Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Plan incorporates diversity principles</li>   <li>• Workforce planning includes objectives and strategies for increasing the diversity of the workforce</li>   <li>• Priority status is considered for recruitment and/or work placement opportunities wherever possible</li> </ul>	<p>Executive Director</p> <p>HR Manager</p> <p>HR Manager</p>	<p>July 2014</p> <p>July 2014</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Strategic Plan implemented</p> <p>Diversity considered through change management processes and any proposed structural change</p> <p>Internship intake prioritises target groups and statistics reflect accessible process</p>	

<b>Connecting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership of and participation in the Australian Employers Network on Disability</li> <li>• Membership and participation in NEEOPA</li> <li>• Partnerships/exchanges considered between NHRI's and/or domestic organisations such as other agencies, NGO's, indigenous organisations or CLC's.</li> <li>• Recruitment advertising encourages applicants with diverse backgrounds</li>   <li>• Support attendance at cultural events eg GARMA</li> <li>• Encourage staff attendance at Rights Talks with diversity related themes</li> </ul>	<p>HR</p> <p>HR</p> <p>Policy, ICS, Legal</p> <p>All Managers</p> <p>ED</p> <p>All Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>As opportunities arise</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>As opportunities arise</p>	<p>Attendance at meetings</p> <p>Attendance at meetings</p> <p>Number of arrangements facilitated</p> <p>Diversity monitored where disclosed.</p> <p>Attendance monitored</p> <p>Attendance at events</p>	

<b>Sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible and current intranet</li> <li>• Encourage disclosure of EEO status</li> <li>• Encourage responses to State of the Service survey</li> <li>• Regular 'At Home with HR' sessions on workplace diversity and flexibility</li> <li>• Workplace Reasonable Adjustment Policy promulgated</li> </ul>	<p>Internal Communications Team</p> <p>HR</p> <p>HR</p> <p>HR</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>June 2014</p> <p>January 2015</p> <p>May 2014</p> <p>As issues arise</p> <p>September 2014</p>	<p>Intranet revised and evaluated by staff</p> <p>Percentage of staff completing EEO data forms</p> <p>Percentage of staff completing SoS</p> <p>Attendance levels and/or requests for topic information</p> <p>Policy implemented and At Home with HR session conducted</p>	

<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Competence training</li> <li>• Induction includes e-learning cultural awareness modules</li>   <li>• Induction training incorporates diversity</li>   <li>• Create awareness and understanding around intergenerational issues</li> </ul>	<p>External</p> <p>HR</p> <p>HR</p> <p>HR Manager</p>	<p>September 2014</p> <p>June 2014</p> <p>September 2014</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Training delivered</p> <p>Modules identified and staff completion within probation period</p> <p>Inductions delivered</p> <p>Statistics monitored in target groups</p>	
<b>Creating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active use of disability networks for temporary employment opportunities, work experience and mentoring</li>   <li>• Internal and external professional development opportunities supported</li> </ul>	<p>All Managers</p> <p>ED</p>	<p>March 2015</p> <p>Annually</p>	<p>Increased numbers of candidates sourced and placed</p> <p>Monitor number of staff supported</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enterprise Agreement showcases creativity around workplace flexibility, professional development and leave types to set benchmarks for other APS agencies</li> <li>• Support for carer's under the Carer Recognition act 2010</li> </ul>	Diversity Committee	June 2014	Enterprise Agreement approved and implemented	
		SES	June 2015	Number of staff supported leave monitored	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview priority for candidates with a disability where selection criteria is met</li> </ul>	HR Manager	Sept 2014	Increased numbers of candidates sourced and placed	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a respectful workplace policy</li> </ul>	HR Manager	June 2015	Policies developed and implemented	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a health and wellbeing</li> </ul>		September 2015		

	<p>strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate Graduate Rotation options through portfolio agencies</li> </ul>	HR Manager	Ongoing	Agreement between agencies	
<b>Monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity reports provided twice yearly to Commission meetings</li> <li>Data collection on employment of diversity trends including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible working arrangements</li> <li>- Employment of target groups</li> <li>- Workforce profile</li> <li>- Exit information</li> <li>- Monitor HCO contacts quarterly</li> </ul> </li> <li>Monitor implementation of RAP, DAP, AMP</li> </ul>	<p>ED</p> <p>HR Manager</p> <p>Diversity Committee</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Evaluated to determine success of new and existing strategies</p> <p>Data analysed and reported annually</p> <p>Ensure commitments are on target</p>	