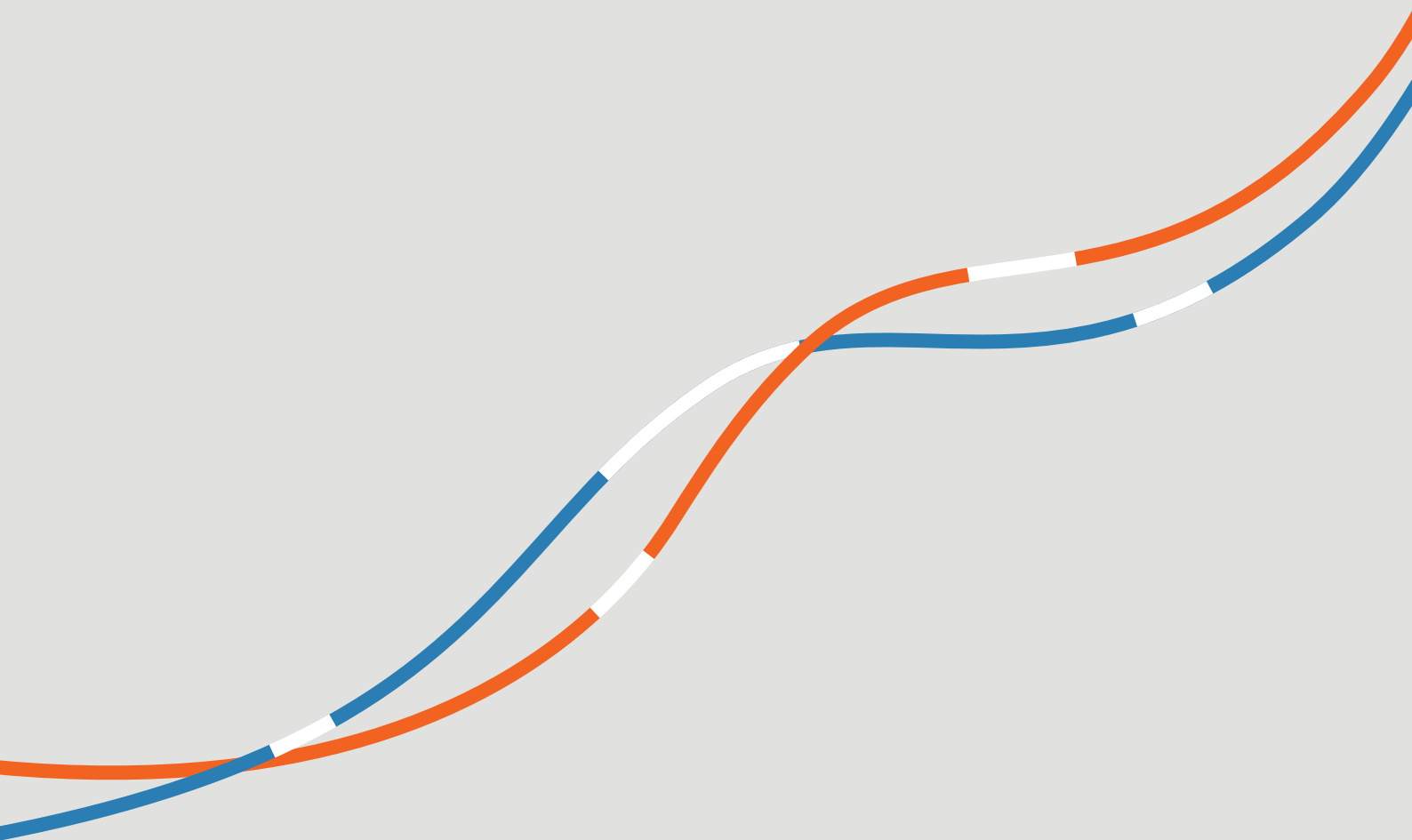




Australian Government
Department of Education,
Skills and Employment



2022–2024 INCLUSION & DIVERSITY STRATEGY



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, present and emerging.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges diversity and respectfully uses both the terms 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' interchangeably throughout this document.



SECRETARY'S FOREWORD

I am proud to release the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2022–2024 and companion Action Plan. The Strategy represents the department's continued commitment to strengthening our inclusive and diverse workplace. The Action Plan will direct and reinforce initiatives to improve our representation, improving and embedding our core values and inclusive workplace culture.

The Strategy outlines the core focus areas of **engagement** and **representation**, **capability** and **connection**, and **alignment** and **reporting**. The Action Plan highlights our priority initiatives that support these core areas and ensure we continue to be a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive place to work.

Every individual who works here has their own set of cultural and personal background influences and experiences that make them uniquely who they are. We are committed to ensuring the department is a place where everyone feels included, valued, and safe.

We contribute to Australia's economic prosperity and social wellbeing by creating opportunities and driving better outcomes for people, through education, skills and employment pathways. We mirror this ethos internally by providing access to develop capability, mobility and flexibility and a range of work opportunities for all employees.

Our core focus areas align with our purpose and ensure that the department continues to reflect the community we serve and recognises the value of diverse thinking. Our senior Diversity Champions, Employee Networks and the dedicated HR Strategy and Inclusion team look forward to supporting the implementation of meaningful and achievable deliverables in the Action Plan.

Dr Michele Bruniges AM
Secretary

OUR PURPOSE

DESE contributes to Australia's economic prosperity and social wellbeing by creating opportunities and driving better outcomes for people, through education, skills, and employment pathways. Our people and our culture are critical elements of our purpose. They are one of our most important assets.

DESE requires and seeks diversity. We must reflect the community we serve and recognise the value of diverse thinking. Diversity covers a broad spectrum of individual and group differences including our backgrounds, caring responsibilities, cultures, genders, neurodiversity, physical abilities, sexualities, work styles, generational perspectives and beliefs.

From research we know that inclusion fosters innovation and creativity and increases productivity. It increases employee satisfaction and retention and ensures our people are physically and psychologically safe. Inclusion promotes equity and supports our people to be their best.

We want every DESE employee to bring their unique skills, experiences and perspectives to the workplace. Our workplace provides opportunities for employees to develop their knowledge and skills that contribute to our inclusive culture.

Together, inclusion and diversity are fundamental to achieving our strategic priorities and our purpose.

OUR SHARED COMMITMENT

Our department is a place where we all feel included and valued in a respectful environment where our unique skills and qualities are embraced.

Each of us share a personal commitment to strengthening our diverse workplace by ensuring inclusion is at the heart of our core values and workplace culture. This means understanding the value of diverse thinking, demonstrating inclusive behaviours and reflecting on our individual choices that contribute to the culture of our workplace.

Inclusive leadership underpins this shared commitment. It is essential to creating a true sense of belonging for each of us, where we all feel empowered to bring our individual dispositions, skills and knowledge to work.

Our department's strategy is strengthened by our alignment with:







- Our legislative requirements to foster diversity under the *Public Service Act (1999)*
- APS Employment Principles
- APS Values and Code of Conduct
- APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25
- APS Workforce Strategy 2025
- APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2026
- Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24
- DESE – 2021–2023 People Strategy
- DESE – Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy 2021–23
- DESE – 2021–2024 Capability Strategy
- DESE – Enterprise Workforce Plan 2021–24

OUR JOURNEY

DESE has achieved significant progress in our inclusion and diversity journey since the department's establishment in 2020. Some of our key highlights include:

- Establishing five employee-led diversity networks including:
 - Ability and Carers Network
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network
 - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Network
 - Gender Equity Network
 - Pride Network
- Appointing 12 Senior Executive Diversity Co-Champions
- Creating a diversity Co-Chairs Council
- Delivering innovative training including a virtual reconciliation walk, and supporting trans and gender diverse employees workshop
- Celebrating days of significance including International Women's Day, Harmony Day, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, Wear it Purple Day and International Day of People with Disability
- Introduction of the Comcare award finalist COURAGE – CONNECT – CARE program, to guide support and connect our employees through COVID-19
- Refresh of the Employee Support Officer Network, ensuring representation from a diverse range of backgrounds
- Coordination of the Whole-of-Government Indigenous Australian Government Development Program, with 33 graduates completing the 18-month Program
- Development of the entry level Vocational Education Training Program to encourage young Australians to join the APS
- Achieving accreditation from the Australian Breastfeeding Association as a recognised Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace

OUR DIVERSE WORKFORCE

COHORT		APS REPRESENTATION	DESE REPRESENTATION
CALD (NESB1) [#]		5.3%	6.2%
Disability		4%	4.1%
LGBTQIA+		6% [*]	7% ^{**}
Carers		41% [*]	45% ^{**}
Women		60%	61.9%
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander		3.4%	2.8%

[#] refers to people born overseas who arrived in Australia after the age of five and whose first language was not English

^{*}overall APS Census 2020 responses

^{**}overall DESE Census 2020 responses

APS data derived from 31 December 2020 APS Employment data tables release.

DESE data derived from departmental human resource data reporting as at 30 June 2021.



OUR CORE FOCUS AREAS

Our core focus areas align with our purpose and ensure that the department continues to reflect the community we serve and recognise the value of diverse thinking. A focus on the areas of **engagement and representation; capability and connection and alignment and reporting** will ensure we are an inclusive place to work.

ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION

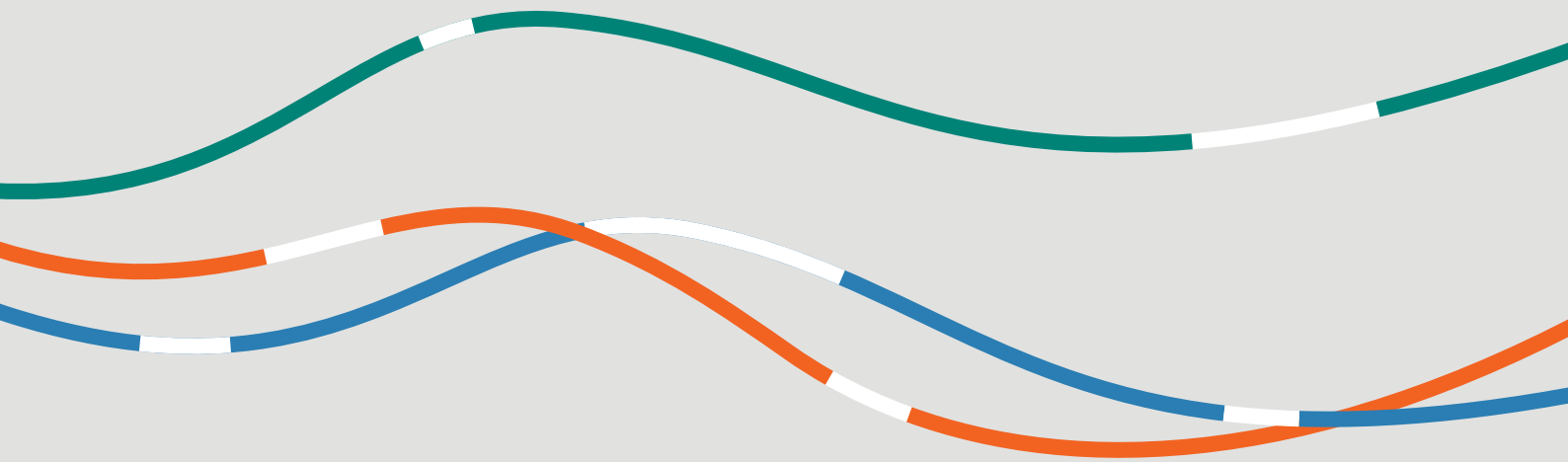
Outcome: We are a workplace that values the unique skills, experiences, and perspectives of every employee. We attract people from diverse backgrounds and ways of thinking through our broad engagement and welcoming culture that ensures our workforce is representative of the community we serve.

We will focus on:

- Recruiting at all levels from diverse backgrounds, generations, capabilities, and experiences
- Embedding inclusion and diversity awareness within each stage of recruitment
- Exploring engagement technologies and methodologies that foster accessibility for all candidates
- Leveraging pathways that broaden our representation

Our success is measured by:

- A workforce profile that reflects the community we serve
- Increased representation at all levels that reflects APS wide targets, including:
 - representation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprising:
 - five per cent of APS levels by 2022
 - five per cent of Executive Level 1 and Executive Level 2 by 2024
 - three per cent of Senior Executive Service levels by 2024
 - seven per cent representation for people with disability by 2025



CAPABILITY AND CONNECTION

Outcome: We are a workplace that provides opportunity to build the individual capability of our employees. We recognise that our inclusive culture fosters a workplace that allows our employees to work flexibly and perform to their full potential while feeling connected, valued, and supported.

We will focus on:

- Nurturing a high-performance workforce where cultivating the continued capability development of all employees is a priority
- Strengthening our inclusion capabilities and cultural integrity
- Encouraging accountability from each employee to act as advocates for inclusion and diversity by including initiatives in their individual performance agreements

Our success is measured by:

- Healthy, vibrant, and collaborative employee networks with increased membership
- Tenure for all employees is consistent, regardless of background
- Increased participation in learning programs
- APS census results, data from internal pulse surveys and alignment with APS wide targets

ALIGNMENT AND REPORTING

Outcome: We are a workplace that actively participates in the implementation of Commonwealth diversity strategies and programs to embed inclusive work practices. We ensure our reporting mechanisms reflect any commitments to report progress on priority actions.

We will focus on:

- Meaningful use of data to identify areas for improvement
- Tracking, monitoring, and reporting on progress of priority actions

Our success is measured by:

- Consistent and relevant monitoring, evaluating, reporting of our diversity profile to our governance committees
- Meeting outcomes under Commonwealth diversity strategies and programs

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As DESE employees, we are committed to making our department a great place to work, through shared values and a common purpose. Our Inclusion and Diversity Strategy is owned by all of us, with shared responsibility to ensure inclusion is an intrinsic element of our workplace culture.



INDIVIDUALS

Every employee takes responsibility for strengthening and committing to being part of our diverse workplace through valuing diverse thinking and backgrounds, seeking to understand others and demonstrating inclusive behaviours.

MANAGERS

Managers demonstrate inclusive behaviours including, listening to and respecting diverse perspectives, while supporting and empowering our employees to achieve their best.

SENIOR LEADERS

Senior Leaders are accountable for the creation of a culture that values diversity and inclusive behaviour, where we all feel connected and empowered to bring our authentic selves to work.

DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS

Diversity Champions play a key role in raising awareness, educating and promoting initiatives that support our employees to develop and adopt inclusive workplace behaviours. They help raise the profile of important issues that affect our employees, promote the activities of employee networks and support conversations about the policies we have in place to foster inclusiveness in our department.

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS

Employee Networks form an essential part of our inclusive and diverse workplace. They offer a way for employees to connect with, find support and thrive with others in the department. The networks help drive and promote diversity and inclusion initiatives, celebrate days of significance, improve employment outcomes and the day-to-day lived experience of our people.

PEOPLE, CULTURE AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The People, Culture and Engagement Committee supports, promotes, and monitors the development and delivery of diversity and inclusion related actions and initiatives.

PEOPLE, CULTURE AND CAPABILITY BRANCH

Support the embedding of a diverse workforce and inclusive culture through policies and practices, capability development and monitoring and evaluating progress against this Strategy.

CONTACT US

People hotline ext 65000 ● Website dese.gov.au