

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

diversity  
and  
inclusion

Strategy 2019-21



Government of  
South Australia



## PURPOSE

As the State's largest employer, a diverse and inclusive workforce is essential to ensure the South Australian Public Sector *reflects the diverse community* it serves.

**Diversity** is one of the Four Foundations of Public Service as outlined in the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector and is reflected in the South Australian Public Sector Values. The Values communicate a vision for the public sector culture and daily working practices.

The South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy 2019-21 outlines three key priorities. The strategy also includes a set of principles that are people focused and aligned with our Public Sector Values, the Code of Ethics and the *Public Sector Act 2009*:

- **Reflect the diverse community that the public sector serves**
- **Build diversity and inclusion knowledge and capability**
- **Be accountable for diversity and inclusion.**

This strategy also identifies and outlines focus diversity streams.



## VISION

A diverse, inclusive and safe public sector where *everyone belongs*.



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## BACKGROUND

This strategy has been developed in consultation with South Australian Public Sector agencies, bringing together the **significant work** undertaken by many agencies, and broadening the sector's diversity and inclusion focus.

The *Gender Equality in Leadership Strategy* was launched in 2016 focusing on three levers of Leadership Accountability, Empowered Workplaces and Talent Pipeline. Through its actions and the significant work undertaken across the public sector, there has been positive progress towards achieving gender equality in executive positions.

In September 2018, the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE) invited all public sector employees to have a say about their workplace in the inaugural I WORK FOR SA – Your Voice Survey. The survey provided valuable insight to help ensure the public sector is an employer of choice that positively serves the community. The sector-wide results identified D&I as a priority area to be addressed.

In December 2018, OCPSE commenced developing the D&I Strategy in consultation with South Australian Public Sector agencies. This included a D&I Strategy Workshop for 140 public sector and not-for-profit sector contributors, with a workshop report published on OCPSE's website in March 2019. This strategy has been developed in consultation with South Australian Public Sector agencies, bringing together the significant work undertaken by many agencies, and broadening the sector's diversity and inclusion focus. The strategy recognises agency contexts and circumstances vary and therefore, it provides the strategic umbrella which enables agencies to prioritise activities and approaches according to their needs. This strategy was endorsed by Senior Management Council.

## WHAT DOES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MEAN?

Diversity relates to the mix of background, characteristics, experiences, professional skills and perspectives.

Some characteristics include disability, age, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, in addition to cultural, linguistic and religious background. In this strategy we refer to those characteristics as diversity streams – in the public sector we will be focusing particularly on gender, LGBTIQ+, disability, age, Aboriginal people and culturally and linguistically diverse diversity streams.

Inclusion is the extent to which the diverse mix of people are valued, respected, connected, progressing and contributing to success.

Inclusion impacts us all and is fostered when individuals:

- **Feel valued and respected for who they are**
- **Feel connected to and accepted by their co-workers**
- **Have equal opportunities to develop their career and progress**
- **Can contribute their full talents to the public sector**
- **Feel safe to freely talk about physical and mental health challenges.**



## WHY IS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPORTANT?

The South Australian Public Sector is committed to reflecting the **diverse community** it serves, while creating an inclusive workplace for all of its people.

The public sector workforce comprises people from diverse backgrounds, working at different levels and, in a broad range of roles. Individuals' identities, life experiences, backgrounds and skill types all influence what people know and how they think. Information on the current structure and composition of the public sector workforce is available at [www.publicsector.sa.gov.au](http://www.publicsector.sa.gov.au).

Valuing diversity and building a more inclusive workforce delivers a range of positive organisational, team, and individual outcomes.

Research consistently shows that workplace diversity improves organisational performance and effectiveness through enhanced decision-making, access to greater talent pools, greater employee satisfaction and productivity, improved workforce wellbeing and reduced employee turnover.<sup>2</sup> By valuing all our employees' skills and perspectives we will also increase creativity and innovation across the public sector.

D&I underpins our ability to create a contemporary and innovative public sector, which can continue to improve our services to meet the needs of the community and the overall impact of our programs.

Diverse organisations can only deliver dividends if people feel included and are able to work with difference in ways that result in positive outcomes. Individuals deserve to feel valued and have the opportunity to actively participate, to prosper in the public sector and feel safe to be themselves.

Fostering, valuing and embedding D&I in the South Australian Public Sector is the collective responsibility of all employees at all levels.

## PRINCIPLES

## PUBLIC SECTOR PRINCIPLES FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

...a **culture of support**, belonging, meaningful engagement and wellbeing for all employees.

These principles for diversity and inclusion directly align with the Public Sector Values and the principles of Employer of Choice, Ethical Behaviour and Professional Integrity as set out in the *Public Sector Act 2009*.

These are:

- Foster a culture of support, belonging, meaningful engagement and wellbeing for all employees
- Value difference, and respect and value every individual for the diversity of skills and experiences that they bring to the public sector
- Aim to be an employer of choice with the best people attracted, recruited, developed and retained in the public sector
- Treat each other respectfully, fairly, justly, reasonably and equitably without discrimination
- Hold each other accountable for enabling inclusive practices and cultures.



## PRIORITIES

## KEY PRIORITY AREAS AND GOALS

The *D&I Strategy* provides three key priority areas and associated goals:

### 1 Reflect the diverse communities that the public sector serves

#### Goals

- Ensure recruitment practices are equitable, inclusive and bias free
- Increase the employment of people with diverse backgrounds or experiences to ensure that diversity streams are represented in the public sector workforce
- Ensure public sector workplaces are inclusive, safe, supportive and that the contribution and perspectives of all employees are valued
- Continue momentum in gender equality initiatives to support equality in the public sector workforce
- Improve retention and development outcomes of employees from diverse backgrounds.

### 2 Build diversity and inclusion knowledge and capability

#### Goals

- Support the development of agency-based D&I initiatives that incorporate industry, workforce and client variables
- Increase awareness of the importance and value of diversity across the public sector
- Increase collaboration and sharing of D&I initiatives and programs across the public sector
- Increase awareness and understanding of how to create inclusive workplaces
- Increase awareness and uptake of flexible working arrangements.

### 3 Be accountable for diversity and inclusion

#### Goals

- Maximise capabilities to monitor and measure progress and the impact of D&I across the sector
- Ensure leaders across all workplaces are accountable to embed and foster a culture of D&I and are role models for their employees.

## FOCUS DIVERSITY STREAMS

It is recognised that diversity is a complex area and as individuals *we are all different.*

In delivery of this strategy we define diversity as relating to the mix of background, characteristics, experiences, professional skills and perspectives. We refer to those characteristics as diversity streams and in this strategy we focus on gender, LGBTIQ+, disability, Aboriginal people, culturally and linguistically diverse and age diversity streams.

### Gender

All employees should have equal access to relevant and appropriate policy and employment matters such as remuneration, professional development, promotional opportunities and workplace flexibility irrespective of gender.

Workplace gender equality is achieved when people are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of gender, or gender identity.<sup>3</sup> The aim of gender equality in the workplace is to achieve broadly equal opportunities and outcomes for women and men.

Achieving gender equality is important for workplaces not only because it is 'fair' and 'the right thing to do,' but because it is also linked to increased organisational performance and the ability to attract and retain employees.<sup>4</sup>

### LGBTIQ+

The South Australian Public Sector is committed to creating an environment where people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) are welcome and where their ability to participate fully in all aspects of social and economic life, free from discrimination and prejudice, is maximised.

LGBTIQ+ refers to the diverse sex, sexual orientation and gender identities represented in the community. LGBTIQ+ is used in an effort to be as inclusive as possible, though it is recognised there are many more terms that people identify with.



## Disability

Disability, in relation to a person, includes long-term physical, psycho-social, intellectual, cognitive, neurological or sensory impairment, or a combination of any of these impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.<sup>5</sup>

Supporting the access and inclusion of people living with disability is a key focus for the public sector. Employees living with disability should feel valued and be treated equally, and with respect. The experience and knowledge of employees living with a disability plays an important role in the design and delivery of public sector services.

## Aboriginal People

The public sector delivers a large number of services which seek to improve the lives of Aboriginal people<sup>6</sup> in South Australia. It is extremely important that the contribution and cultural diversity that Aboriginal people bring to the public sector workforce is valued.

The public sector continually strives to be a culturally responsive workplace that is committed to supporting Aboriginal employees. It is an ideal place for Aboriginal people to start or continue their career, as it offers a range of occupations and professional development opportunities. It is also vitally important that Aboriginal employees play a key part in the design and delivery of the public sector's services providing their cultural knowledge.

## Cultural and Linguistically Diverse

South Australia is home to people from more than 200 culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> Each person has their own unique cultural identity. The South Australian Government is committed to supporting its diverse and vibrant South Australian multicultural community. The South Australian Public Sector aims to create work environments where every employee's cultural identity is recognised, valued and respected.

## Age

In the public sector, there is the potential for up to five generations to be working together at any one time.<sup>8</sup> The workforce should reflect the fact that Australia continues to have one of the longest life expectancies, with workers remaining active in the workplace for longer.

A mix of generations in the workplace provides benefits in terms of the unique backgrounds and perspectives that each generation brings. There is considerable evidence to support the business case for age diverse workplaces, and for the inclusion of older people in particular.

## NEXT STEPS

The Commissioner for Public Sector Employment will lead the **implementation of this strategy** in partnership with public sector agencies.

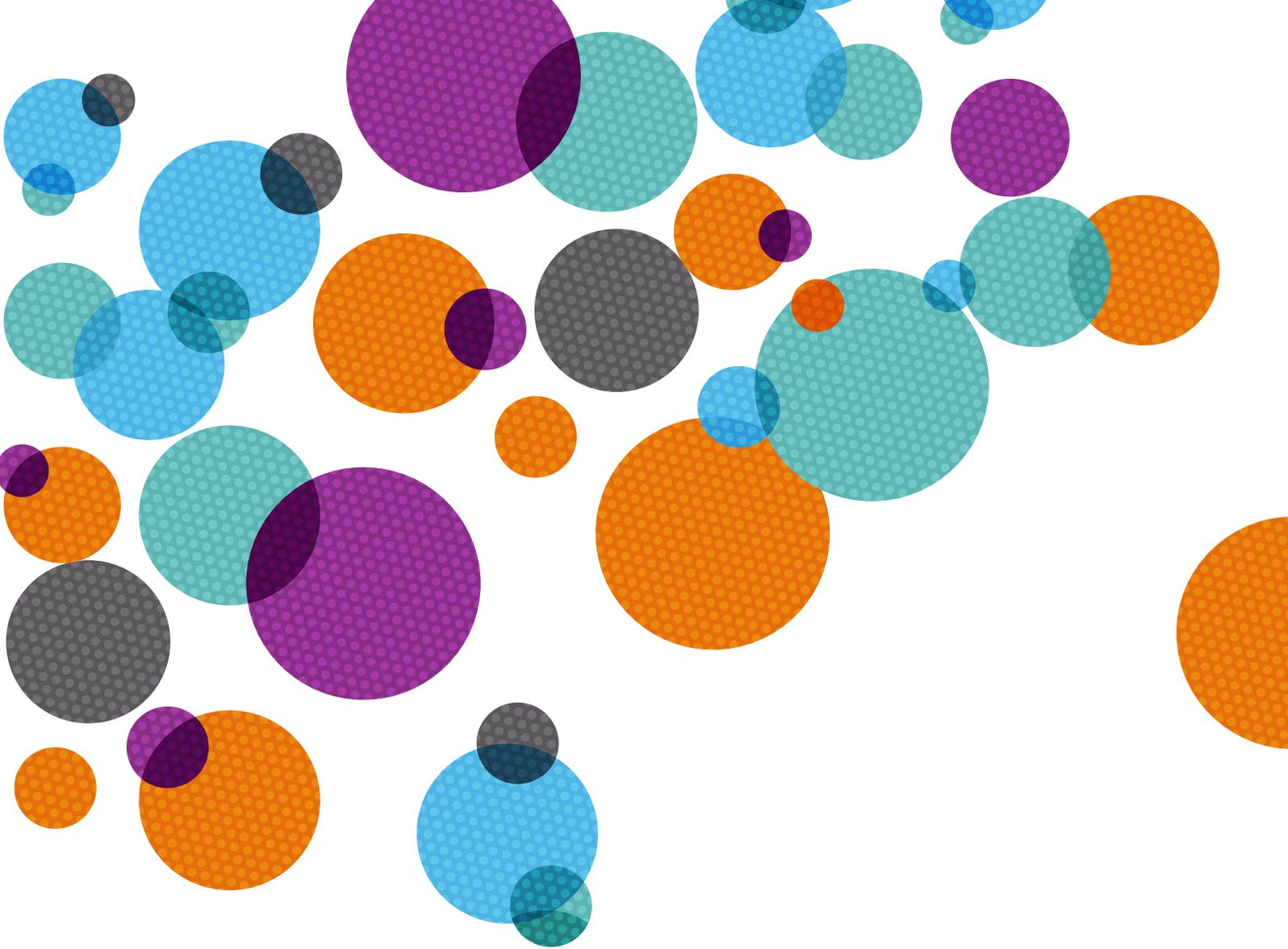
Information on actions to support delivery of this strategy can be found in the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Plan which will be reviewed annually. Copies of the Strategy and Plan are available at [www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/diversity](http://www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/diversity).

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment website [www.publicsector.sa.gov.au](http://www.publicsector.sa.gov.au) provides information on the following topics:

- Diversity and Inclusion Plan
- Diversity and Inclusion Workshop Report
- Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector
- South Australian Public Sector Values
- Gender Equality in Leadership Strategy
- I WORK FOR SA – Your Voice Survey
- Workforce Demographic Data

## References

- 1 'Public sector' means the administrative units of the Public Service and all other public sector agencies and public sector employees – *Public Sector Act 2009*.
- 2 Diversity Council Australia.
- 3 Gender identity means the gender related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth – Sex Discrimination Act 1984 [www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2014C00002](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2014C00002).
- 4 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, [www.wgea.gov.au/topics/about-workplace-gender-equality](http://www.wgea.gov.au/topics/about-workplace-gender-equality).
- 5 *Disability Inclusion Act 2018*: legislation. sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/DISABILITY%20INCLUSION%20ACT%202018/ CURRENT/2018.1.AUTH.PDF.
- 6 In this document, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within South Australia. This is not intended to exclude Torres Strait Islander people, or people that identify as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.
- 7 Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Population and Migration [dpc.sa.gov.au/responsibilities/multicultural-affairs/population-and-migration](http://dpc.sa.gov.au/responsibilities/multicultural-affairs/population-and-migration). Accessed 6 November 2019.
- 8 Commonwealth of Australia 2015, 2015 Intergenerational Report: Australian in 2055.
- 9 Diversity Council Australia, [www.dca.org.au/topics/age/business-case-age](http://www.dca.org.au/topics/age/business-case-age).



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