Diversity and inclusion framework 2022–2027

Embedding inclusion in our workplace

Victoria State Government

Families, Fairness and Housing

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Secretary's foreword

I am proud to introduce the first diversity and inclusion framework for the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. This framework represents a commitment to everyone who works in the department. Together, we will continue to build a diverse and inclusive organisation.

Fairness and equity are at the heart of our work as a department. The framework complements our vision of empowering communities to build a fairer, safer and more inclusive Victoria.

This work must start with us. Our culture and practice must lead the way – it influences everything else that we do and deliver.

Making diversity and inclusion a priority benefits everyone. It promotes a positive and safe workplace culture, builds our reputation as an employer of choice, and helps us to attract and retain talented staff. It supports innovation by harnessing the rich and varied perspectives of our people. It also helps us to understand and better meet the diverse needs of the Victorian community. There is enormous strength in our diversity.

Our implementation plan under the framework will progress initiatives that truly value the diversity of our staff and embed authentic inclusion, which is the key to unlocking the potential of our diversity.

A focus for us under this framework will be demonstrating greater commitment, consistency and accountability across diversity and inclusion – from being visible allies, to ensuring the consistent application of policies, to preventing and responding to inappropriate workplace behaviours, and to being ambitious in our efforts to reflect the communities that we serve.

The actions set out in this framework will require us to embrace the strength of our differences, have challenging and at times uncomfortable conversations, and to hold each other and the department to account for removing structural barriers and addressing discrimination.

This framework was developed in consultation with our staff. I want to thank everyone involved. Our people shared not only their time but their experience. I know that this is not always an easy thing to do. Your honesty throughout the consultation process and your commitment to continuous improvement for the department has allowed us to develop a framework that will help make our department a place where we can all feel safe and be safe.

I want our workplaces to be ones of belonging, care and support for each other. This framework gives us a focus and meaningful actions to keep building an organisation where our diverse talents, experiences, and skills can meaningfully contribute.

We have a deep responsibility towards each other in this work. Creating an inclusive workplace relies on the decisions and behaviours demonstrated by each of us, every day. This framework requires effort from everyone in the department to give it life. In undertaking this work, I encourage you to embrace opportunities to show empathy for others, curiosity about different perspectives, and flexibility in your approach. Our department and the work that we deliver together will be the better for it.

Brigid Sunderland
Secretary
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays respect to and recognises the contribution from their Elders past and present. We proudly acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Nation peoples as the world's oldest living culture and the contribution of generations of Aboriginal leaders who have fought tirelessly for the rights of their people and communities.

We recognise the intergenerational consequences of colonisation, dispossession, child removal and other discriminatory government policies and acknowledge that the impacts and structures of colonisation still exist today.

Our department is committed to addressing these impacts by embedding cultural safety and self-determination in all that we do and as part of the Yoorrook Justice Commission so that Aboriginal Victorians have decision-making power and control to determine what is best for them.

Aboriginal self-determination is a human right as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are committed to developing strong and enduring self-determined partnerships with Aboriginal communities that will contribute to growing a prosperous, healthy and strong Victorian Aboriginal community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recognition Statement

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing pays respect to and recognises the contribution of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living and working in Victoria.

Throughout this document the term 'Aboriginal' is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recognition and language

Recognition of diverse employees and staff networks

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) acknowledges and thanks all our diverse employees and staff networks. We benefit from the significant contribution you all make to creating a fairer, safer and more inclusive Victoria – both within our department and for the communities we serve.

We thank all employees and Victorian Public Sector (VPS) staff who contributed to the development of the framework, including engaging in consultation and completing our diversity workforce survey.

We extend a special thanks to staff and representatives of the following groups and networks:

- DFFH Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group
- Aboriginal Staff Network
- VPS African-Australian Network
- VPS Autism Success Network
- DFFH Enablers Network
- Pride Network
- VPS Women of Colour Network.

Language

The words 'our' and 'we' in this document refer to DFFH.

Our workforce comprises people with intersecting identities. 'Intersecting identities' refers to when there are multiple aspects of a person's identity that can individually expose them to discrimination or exclusion.

Throughout this document the term 'diverse employees' recognises employees who experience additional barriers to access and inclusion in the workplace and are most affected by systemic barriers. These include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- people with disability
- people from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds
- people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ+)
- people of different ages
- people with caring responsibilities.

'Diverse women' is used to describe women (including trans women) whose experience of gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination based on a range of attributes including Aboriginality, disability, cultural diversity, diverse sexualities and ages.

Inclusive language is evolving

We recognise the power of language in changing community attitudes and the rights of all people to use language that is meaningful to them. We acknowledge that language is socially constructed and constantly evolving. We understand that one term or description may not capture the full breadth of individual identity or be the language that individuals or groups identify with. Our intent is to be inclusive and respectful of everyone and we commit to evolve our language as it changes to create an inclusive workplace.

Identity

Aspects of a person's identity can include attributes protected from discrimination under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* such as:

- Aboriginality
- gender identity
- disability
- marital status
- parental status or status as a carer
- physical features
- pregnancy
- race (including colour, descent or ancestry, nationality or national origin, ethnicity or ethnic origin)
- religious belief or activity
- sex
- sexual orientation
- personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes.[1]

A person's identity may include attributes such as:

- refugee or asylum seeker background
- migration pathway, visa status or mode of arrival in Australia
- veteran status
- language
- health status
- mental health status
- medical record
- socioeconomic status
- housing status
- geographical location
- criminal record
- appearance, mannerisms and voice.

Identities within an individual may come, go or converge depending on time or place (for example life stages).

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1   Refer to *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* for details of protected attributes.

Intersectionality

Attitudes, systems and structures in society and organisations can interact to create inequality. Intersectionality refers to the ways in which multiple aspects of someone's identity can expose them to compounding, additional and unique forms of discrimination and exclusion.

In the workplace, we recognise that people with intersecting identities experience additional discrimination or exclusion. We take intersectional approaches to address barriers to inclusion, progress equitable approaches and achieve equal outcomes. We recognise each person's individual identity and their right to choose their preferred language to describe different aspects of their identity.

Person-first and identity-first language

We use both person-first and identity-first language in this framework:

- person-first language puts the person before the description of them
- identity-first language puts a person's identity before the person.

We support the right of people to use language that is meaningful to them.

LGBTIQ+ people

The term 'LGBTIQ+ people' refers to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex or queer. The '+' recognises that LGBTIQ does not include all the terms that people identify with.

We support the right of people to use their preferred language to describe their sexual orientation, sex, intersex variation and gender. We acknowledge that LGBTIQ+ people and communities are diverse and the measures used to support and empower LGBTIQ+ employees will also be diverse.

People with disability

We support the right of people with disability to choose the language they use to refer to themselves.

This includes people who may not identify as having a disability or may not recognise disability as part of their culture, but who are defined and protected as such under anti-discrimination legislation.

People from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds

The term 'multicultural and multifaith' encompasses cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity within a community. This recognises the different lived experiences of:

- migrants from new and emerging communities who have recently arrived in Victoria
- people from refugee backgrounds and people seeking asylum
- people who speak languages other than English or who speak English with an accent
- people who follow a broad range of religious and spiritual practices.

We recognise the limitations of terminology to adequately describe the experiences of people with multicultural and multifaith backgrounds and identities. We recognise, respect and support the right of all diverse employees to identify using the language they choose.

People from non-main English-speaking countries

In this document, we use the term people from 'non-main English-speaking countries' (NMESC). This means people from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds who self-identified that their cultural background was from outside the following main English-speaking countries: the UK, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, USA and South Africa. This language is used to enable mechanisms needed to act, set targets and address barriers that disproportionately affect some employees.

People of colour

In this document, the term 'people of colour' is used for the purposes of taking affirmative action to improve inclusion for under-represented ethnic groups who may face discrimination and disadvantage. In this context, it recognises that some people experience greater levels of systemic racism and inequity than others.

About the department

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) oversees the following portfolios:

- housing
- child protection
- disability
- ageing and carers
- prevention of family violence
- women
- veterans
- youth
- multicultural affairs
- LGBTIQ+ equality.

The departmental structure also supports Family Safety Victoria, Homes Victoria and Respect Victoria.

Through these portfolios, we work every day to achieve a fairer, safer and more inclusive Victoria. We support people to feel empowered, safe and secure.

We do this every day by supporting people and communities to:

- have equitable access to opportunities
- overcome struggles and hardships
- recover from adversity.

We approach our work knowing that collaboration and connection are essential to our success. We recognise that collaboration starts with our diverse workforce to ensure we connect respectfully and collaborate in ways that are inclusive and empowering of the communities we serve.

We are a complex department, with a wide reach across urban and regional areas. Our complexity is one of our strengths. It allows us to serve the unique needs of our communities and enables us to build our supports for people wherever they are.

As a new department we are in a unique position to drive real change that is inclusive of our diverse workforce and communities. Our commitment to ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace complements the important work of Fairer Victoria, Family Safety Victoria and Office for Disability. These important portfolios work to embed inclusion, access, and social and economic participation for all Victorians in government policies, programs and services.

Introduction

Victoria is home to one of the most diverse societies in the world. We are committed to empowering communities to build a fairer, safer and more inclusive Victoria.

It is critical that our workforce reflects the diversity of our community and that our workplaces are inclusive and safe for all.

Our values of responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership and human rights underpin our practice with colleagues, with clients and in the community. They define what is important to our organisation and how things will be done.

They flow through our governance arrangements to ensure our decision making is based on sound judgements.

We value the unique experiences, identities and diversity of our workforce. We are committed to building the diversity of our workforce and being an employer of choice. This includes but is not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people with disability
- people who may not identify as a person with disability, such as people who are part of the Deaf community, autistic people, neurodiverse people or people from cultures that do not recognise the concept of disability
- people experiencing health or mental health issues
- multicultural, multilingual and multifaith people
- people from refugee backgrounds and people seeking asylum
- LGBTIQ+ people
- women and people of diverse genders
- people of different ages and stages of life
- people with caring responsibilities
- veterans
- people with lived experience of socio-economic disadvantage
- people with lived experience of family violence
- people with lived experience of child protection services and out-of-home care
- people who experience discrimination or disadvantage because of where they live.

We know that inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience based on:

- Aboriginality
- age
- disability
- ethnicity
- gender identity
- race
- migration pathway, visa status or mode of arrival in Australia
- religion
- sexual orientation
- other attributes.

We recognise that discrimination in our organisational structures and systems results in systemic bias and exclusion for some employees. We acknowledge it is our obligation to ensure inclusion and meaningful roles and careers for all employees. The diversity and inclusion framework (DI framework) commits DFFH to empower the voices of employees and remove structural, systemic, attitudinal and behavioural barriers to address:

- ableism
- ageism
- transphobia
- homophobia
- biphobia
- intersex discrimination
- racism
- sexism
- bullying
- sexual harassment
- stigma
- other forms of discrimination, exclusion and inequality.

Successfully embedding an inclusive workplace culture is linked to improvements in organisational performance, effectiveness, and service delivery. Valuing everyone's contribution:

- improves employee engagement, job satisfaction, innovation and retention
- harnesses the true value in diversity of thought.[2]

As a leader in diversity and inclusion in Victoria, we will:

- be proactive and model best practice diversity and inclusion in the workplace
- be bold and change the narrative to embrace challenging and courageous conversations
- eradicate discrimination in behaviours, organisational systems and structures.

2   Diversity Council Australia, Inclusion@Work Index 2019–2020. Accessed at <https://www.dca.org.au/inclusion-at-work-index>

Our diversity and inclusion principles

Six principles underpin our DI framework:

- designing for diversity
- inclusion and belonging
- equality and equity
- business and service improvement
- collective responsibility
- inclusive leadership.
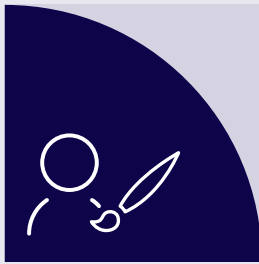
Designing for diversity

Inclusion and belonging
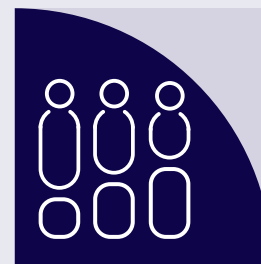
Equality and equity
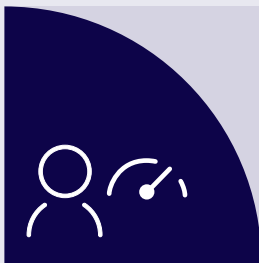
Business and service improvement

Collective responsibility
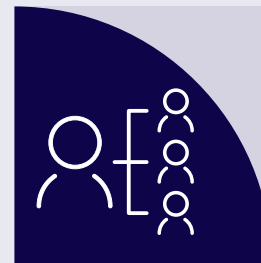
Inclusive leadership

Designing for diversity

Diversity is the mix of unique identities, backgrounds, life experiences and beliefs that shape who we are, our perspectives, our approach and how we view the world.

Workforce diversity includes ensuring that our teams, people leaders and executive reflect the diversity of the communities we serve, at all classifications and levels, and in all occupational groups. Designing for diversity is particularly important in our:

- workforce planning
- organisational culture
- leadership development
- role and workplace design
- policies and systems
- attraction and recruitment
- graduate, trainee and intern programs
- promotion, career development and retention activities.

As an organisation we must understand, enable and celebrate the diversity of our workforce, as well as individual differences. Everyone must be included and empowered to contribute freely within the workplace, ensuring diversity of thought drives solutions for our organisation and communities.

Designing for diversity means we will:

- proactively design our workplace to embed diversity of thought and psychological safety
- continue learning about diversity in DFFH so we can better support people to express their identity in ways that are meaningful to them
- recognise the additional value we gain from employees with lived experience of the compounding barriers faced by people with intersecting identities
- understand that our people also experience barriers outside of the department that require us to be creative, use external influence and engage in productive partnership with others.

Inclusion and belonging

'Inclusion' includes processes we have to ensure all people in the workplace feel safe, respected, valued, engaged and heard.

Inclusive actions build a sense of belonging and an ongoing ability for staff to feel safe to:

- bring more of themselves to their job
- make choices that reflect what they value
- connect and collaborate meaningfully with others
- contribute their unique experiences and capabilities to the workplace, policies, programs and services to improve the lives of Victorians.

To create inclusion and belonging, we all must:

- actively live our values
- model behaviours that are respectful
- understand and recognise strength in our differences
- interact with kindness
- reflect on why we belong and how we contribute to helping others belong
- avoid making assumptions about someone's identity, background, experience or capability, and acknowledge that diverse attributes may not be visible or immediately apparent
- recognise that intersecting identities may result in compounding barriers to opportunity.

An inclusive workplace culture is one where people feel safe to raise concerns and ideas on decisions that affect them and others. It is also where people have access to the power, resources and opportunities (including professional, career and leadership development opportunities) they need to reach their full potential. It requires us to have challenging conversations and to take action to address structural, systemic, cultural and other barriers to inequality, discrimination and disadvantage.

Equality and equity

Equality is when all people have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities regardless of their diverse attributes or circumstances.[3]

We recognise that access to opportunities is not equitably distributed throughout society and that applying a policy or measure equally to different people can have unequal results or outcomes. Achieving substantive equality means making equitable adjustments and accommodations, and taking special measures.[4]

Equity is when resources are distributed according to each person's circumstances and individual needs. Equity recognises that a person's individual needs, which may be affected by their diverse attributes and circumstances, should be identified and met proactively in a way that addresses imbalances and inequalities.[4] This includes:

- preventing and removing barriers in physical, technological and cultural environments
- ensuring accessibility
- allocating budget and resources towards achieving equal outcomes for all.

Equity also recognises that people who face additional barriers, such as those with intersecting identities, may need additional resources or support to achieve equality.

Equal opportunity is an integral part of all aspects of employment. Equal opportunity in this context means that every person can participate freely and equally in the workplace without disadvantage or less favourable treatment due to attributes protected from discrimination. Equal opportunity is an integral part of all aspects of employment.

Under equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, everyone in the workplace has rights and responsibilities to prevent discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimisation.[5]

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3   Adapted from *Safe and strong: A Victorian gender equality strategy*, State of Victoria, 2016

4   Adapted from *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

5   Department of Premier and Cabinet, *Diversity and inclusion strategy 2019-2021*. Accessed at <https://www.vic.gov.au/dpc-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2019-2021>

Business and service improvement

I think sometimes we put lots of focus on our outward work, on our products to community, without the same eye to our own internal behaviours and the promise to ourselves. – *Consultation participant*

Our department cannot just be good at diversity and inclusion; we must be excellent. To be excellent, we must be proactive and improve our internal processes.

We have an obligation to our staff, our clients and communities to ensure that inclusion within DFFH is part of our core business. We must embrace the strength of our differences and hold each other and our organisation to account for a diverse and inclusive workplace.

We must also recognise that discrimination is not only a result of individual behaviours, actions and attitudes but a consequence of policies, systems, processes and attitudes that benefit or disadvantage groups disproportionally.

This means that, as a minimum, we:

- make workplace adjustments for our employees, including people with disability, people with medical conditions and people with mental health needs
- ensure we build inclusivity and multiple perspectives into the design and delivery of policies, programs and services
- are innovative in our business practices
- build diversity and inclusion into our workplace culture, capabilities, workspaces and our communications and engagement
- have the capability and mindsets to connect effectively with diverse clients and communities to understand and respond to their needs
- improve data collection, and use data and evidence to inform and improve our work and measure progress
- ensure that all business and service improvements take an intersectional approach and do not result in disadvantage in other areas.

Collective responsibility

All our staff have an individual and collective responsibility to embed diversity and inclusive behaviours. This means we all have a responsibility to encourage self-determination and listen to diverse employees when they tell us what supports and changes are needed. A 'one size fits all' approach does not support an inclusive workplace. We all play a role in adapting to individual needs to create an equitable and inclusive workplace.

Behaviours that support diversity and inclusion include:

- actively ensure team and workforce composition is as diverse as the communities we serve
- model and enable workplace flexibility
- raise awareness of and build capability to work with and manage diversity, inclusion, equity, equality and intersectionality
- protect, promote and act in line with human rights including human dignity, equality and freedom
- encourage others to learn and build inclusive practices
- hold ourselves and others accountable for building a diverse and inclusive culture.

Inclusive leadership

We have all these commitments but what is not working is the leadership. There is no mention of inclusive leadership practices within the VPS. It's about how you interact with people. – Consultation participant

People managers, leaders and executives need to model inclusive leadership behaviours. Inclusive leaders understand that practising diversity and inclusion means recognising and respecting that each person is unique and faces different and compounding barriers to workplace inclusion. They know how to equitably allocate the resources and opportunities each person needs to reach their full potential.

To strengthen diversity and inclusion in DFFH, leaders and managers must meet the expectations of our people.

The expected behaviours and outcomes should be:

- clearly articulated and supported in processes such as selection processes and performance and development planning (PDP)
- included in our leadership and management development activities.

Diversity Council Australia has identified the following five mindsets of an inclusive leader.[6]

- **Identity aware:** Believes diversity can significantly improve organisational performance and so learns about their own and others' identities.
- **Relational:** Creates teams and networks where a diversity of people feel they belong and are valued and respected.
- **Open and curious:** Is curious about and open to new and different perspectives from a diversity of people.
- **Flexible and agile:** Is flexible about and responsive to a diversity of people and perspectives.
- **Growth-focused:** Challenges accepted practices and incorporates different perspectives into how business is done.

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6   Diversity Council Australia, Building inclusion: an evidence-based model of inclusive leadership. Accessed at <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/building-inclusion-evidence-based-model-inclusive-leadership>

Our vision and strategic objectives

Vision statement

We will be a proactive leader in diversity and inclusion.

We will empower people to express their identity and belong.

We will remove structural and systemic barriers so that everyone can reach their full potential in a safe, equitable and respectful workplace.

We will create a department that embodies inclusive leadership, celebrates diversity of thought and reflects the diversity of the communities we serve so we can better support them.

Strategic objectives

- DFFH's leadership profile, governance structures and workforce reflect the community's diversity and all employees are accountable for creating an inclusive workplace.
- We empower the voices of our diverse workforce, value diversity of thought and create a workplace where all employees are supported to develop and progress their careers.
- Diverse people's lived experience is core to policy, programs and services, to improve business practices and outcomes for the diverse communities we serve.
- Culturally-safe actions are embedded into systems and practices as the norm and work environments are accessible and safe, with prevention, early intervention and suitable response to discrimination and inappropriate behaviours.
- DFFH has transparency, accountability and measurable targets to achieve outcomes.

Our framework for change

To achieve our vision and strategic objectives we will have four priority focus areas:

- **strategy and business alignment**
- **leadership and accountability**
- **employment and careers**
- **culture and safety**.

Focus area	
Strategy and business alignment	We will ensure that we prioritise diversity and inclusion in all the work we do. We will embed diversity and inclusion in our policies, practice, programs, strategies, operations and change processes.
Leadership and accountability	We will continue to build a workforce that reflects the diversity and intersecting identities of our community, including diversity at all levels of leadership and organisational governance. We will ensure that our leaders and managers prioritise diversity and inclusion and are accountable for: • inclusion and diversity within their teams • preventing discriminatory behaviours • being role models of inclusive leadership. We will ensure that our senior leaders are proactive and held to account for the progress of this framework.
Employment and careers	We will invest in and support the careers and aspirations of our diverse workforce, including our diverse staff network chairs and members. We will tackle structural barriers to entry, career progression, satisfaction and pay equity. This includes barriers for diverse staff affecting recruitment, selection, promotion, learning, capability building and career development. This also includes addressing unique barriers for staff with intersecting identities.
Culture and safety	We will ensure our organisational culture is respectful, inclusive and free from discrimination. We will support the wellbeing of our diverse staff by promoting equitable access to flexible work arrangements and supports for people with diverse caring, parental and kinship responsibilities. We will empower diverse employees to observe significant dates and events important to them. We will create safer, more respectful workplaces by acting to prevent discriminatory and harmful behaviours. We will establish trusted, transparent reporting and response frameworks to support employees who have experienced discriminatory and harmful behaviours.

Legislative and policy context

The Victorian Government is committed to achieving its long-term vision for inclusion by significantly investing in approaches that create a more inclusive and equitable society.

DFFH has a lead role in working to achieve a fairer, safer and more inclusive Victoria.

We will model the commitments in whole-of-government policy priorities, strategies, plans and initiatives. We will meet the standards of relevant legislation, the VPS values and the VPS Code of Conduct.

Our work in diversity and inclusion improves everyone's quality of life, economic development and prosperity, and strengthens the communities we are part of and that bind us together as a society.

Key legislation

Victorian

- *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018*
- *Carers Recognition Act 2012*
- *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Disability Act 2006*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*

Commonwealth

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*

Individual and organisational legislative accountability

DFFH requires all employees to model the department's values and to ensure workplaces are safe and inclusive, including:

- adhering to all legislation
- taking timely and appropriate action when issues and gaps are identified.

It is unlawful to discriminate against a person because of a protected attribute (such as the person's age, disability, race, gender, gender identity or sexuality). All public sector organisations and employees are accountable for ensuring workplaces and service delivery are free from discrimination, sexual harassment, vilification and victimisation.

Whole-of-government strategic commitments

- *Getting to work: Victorian public sector disability employment action plan 2018–2025* (Getting to work)
- *Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022–2026* (Inclusive Victoria)
- *Victorian autism plan 2019–2024*
- *Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022–2032* (Pride in our future)
- *Safe and strong: A Victorian gender equality strategy*
- *Barring Djinang: Victorian public sector Aboriginal employment strategy 2017–2022*
- *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2019–2023*
- *Recognising and supporting Victoria's carers: Victorian carer strategy 2018–2022*
- Victorian *Public sector veteran employment strategy*
- *Ending family violence: Victoria's plan for change* and *Everybody matters: inclusion and equity statement*
- *A future ready Victoria: Victorian Government digital strategy 2021–2026*
- Whole-of-Victorian Government anti-racism strategy – currently under development
- Whole-of-Victorian Government youth strategy – currently under development.

Alignment with DFFH strategies and plans

Aboriginal workforce strategy and cultural safety framework

Aboriginal peoples are sometimes included when referring to diverse groups. DFFH has developed dedicated strategies to elevate and recognise Aboriginal peoples as original custodians of Victoria.

We recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal peoples as the world's oldest living culture and the original custodians of our lands. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Aboriginal peoples may also have intersecting identities with other diversity attributes. The DI framework's intersectional approach aims to complement and support the fundamental principles of self-determination and cultural safety that are included in our:

- *Aboriginal workforce strategy 2021–2026*[7]
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework*.[8]

These strategies incorporate the Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs commitments and policy to ensure we listen, learn and enable true self-determination for Aboriginal peoples as a fundamental requirement of how DFFH empowers Victorian Aboriginal communities.

The Aboriginal workforce strategy includes a target of more than three per cent Aboriginal employees in the DFFH workforce by 2026, with a stretch target of four per cent, and at least four per cent of Aboriginal employment in manager and executive level positions by 2026.

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7   DFFH, Aboriginal workforce strategy. Accessed at <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/aboriginal-workforce-strategy-2021-2026>
8   DFFH, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework. Accessed at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-cultural-safety-framework>

Strategic alignment

The DI framework aligns with the Aboriginal workforce strategy and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework. Actions in the Aboriginal workforce strategy implementation plan complement diversity and inclusion actions and vice versa.

Reporting against the Aboriginal workforce strategy and cultural safety framework is through an Aboriginal workforce committee, reporting to the DFFH Board through the Aboriginal Subcommittee of the Board.

Gender equality action plan

DFFH's *Gender equality action plan 2022–2025*[9] (GEAP) was launched on 8 March 2022. It recognises that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience based on Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.

Our vision for gender equality is that DFFH:

- leads the way in workplace gender equality and workplace diversity and inclusion
- is a safe, respectful and equitable place to work where all employees have equal access to power, resources and opportunities to reach their full potential
- takes sustained and enduring action to address gender inequality and other forms of inequality and disadvantage.

The GEAP is aligned with key Victorian legislation, including the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Vic). The Act aims to improve workplace gender equality in the VPS, universities and local councils. Under the Gender Equality Act, we must:

- prepare and implement a gender equality action plan, which includes results of a workplace gender audit, and strategies and measures for promoting gender equality in the workplace
- publicly report on progress on workplace gender equality
- complete gender impact assessments on all new or revised policies, programs or services which have a direct and significant impact on the public.

Strategic alignment

The GEAP uses the same four focus areas as the DI framework. Short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes have also been aligned between the two implementation action plans, as outlined in **Appendix 1.** This will allow:

- all implementation actions to be viewed through both a diversity and inclusion and a gender (including intersectional) lens, reducing duplication of effort
- divisions to prepare and manage a single divisional plan that incorporates diversity, inclusion and gender equality actions, simplifying implementation and reporting
- aligned reporting to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the DFFH Board, with the intersectional components of the GEAP contributing to the DI framework.

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9   DFFH, Gender equality action plan. Accessed at <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/gender-equality-action-plan-2022-2025>

Disability action plan

The *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) requires public authorities, state government departments and local governments to prepare disability action plans and report on implementation in their annual reports. These plans need to describe how the agency will address access and inclusion barriers for people with disability, as both service users and employees, by:

- reducing barriers to accessing goods, services and facilities
- reducing barriers to getting and maintaining employment
- promoting inclusion and participation in the community
- achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against people with disability.

Disability action plans should align with the outcomes framework of Inclusive Victoria, the state disability plan. The four pillars of Inclusive Victoria are:

- inclusive communities
- health, housing and wellbeing
- fairness and safety
- opportunity and pride.

Strategic alignment

The DI framework outcomes at **Appendix 1** incorporate outcomes from Inclusive Victoria that are relevant to the DFFH internal workforce.

This will allow:

- DI framework outcomes to contribute to outcomes reporting under Inclusive Victoria
- targeted diversity and inclusion capability building actions that support our workforce to meet the outcomes of Inclusive Victoria.

Inclusion for Equity in Services and Community project

Inclusion for Equity in Services and Community is an initiative aiming to strengthen the way the department undertakes its core functions and responsibilities to achieve equity of outcomes for all Victorians who use DFFH-funded programs, services and initiatives.

The project, currently in development, will build on the former DHHS' Designing for Diversity resources.

In addition to refreshing and expanding existing resources, the project will include a whole-of-department framework and practical tools and resources to help DFFH staff design and implement policies, programs and services that are inclusive and accessible for all Victorians.

The initiative will embed an intersectional approach that acknowledges that overlapping forms of structural discrimination and disadvantage are experienced by people with diverse and intersecting identities and must be addressed holistically.

How we developed the framework

Nothing about you, without you

This framework aims to empower the voices of our diverse employees and staff networks including:

- Aboriginal Staff Network
- VPS African-Australian Network
- VPS Autism Success Network
- DFFH Enablers Network
- Pride Network
- VPS Women of Colour Network
- staff who voluntarily gave feedback through our consultation process.

This is a reflection of our commitment to ensure we do 'nothing about you, without you.'

Consultation and engagement

We developed this framework in collaboration with divisions, stakeholders, diverse employees, and diverse staff networks.

Staff and stakeholder consultation

We consulted with staff and stakeholders to ensure we captured and elevated the issues most important to them. Consultation mechanisms included:

- inviting all staff to attend virtual consultation workshops with an independent facilitator and staff network representatives throughout December 2021 and January 2022
- meeting with employee groups and representatives from DFFH and the VPS
- reviewing independent reports and documents from diverse staff networks, including whole of government networks
- inviting people to provide anonymous written feedback.

Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group

The Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group was established in November 2021 to oversee, guide and co-design the framework and implementation plan.

The group comprised:

- senior executives
- representatives from DFFH's People and Culture inclusion teams
- internal communications
- accommodation support services
- most importantly, diverse employees from different levels within DFFH and staff networks.

The group guided the development of the framework by empowering representatives and amplifying diverse voices, sharing lived experiences, and enabling input and authoritative advice.

The group created an environment where I felt my voice mattered and it was safe to express it – *Advisory group member*

I felt privileged to be part of the advisory group. I had a voice. I was heard. I feel confident that this will be a framework for change and was not just created because we need to have one. – *Advisory group member*

We recognise that our consultation processes may not have captured the views and opinions of all staff. The framework's implementation plan includes regular reviews to ensure the framework reflects the voices of our staff and stakeholders.

Data sources

This framework and its implementation plan are informed by various data sources to ensure we can measure our progress over time and remain accountable and transparent to our staff.

Diversity workforce survey

The diversity workforce survey was developed in partnership with the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group to address DFFH's diversity data gaps in a safe way. The survey was a way for staff across the department to provide anonymous feedback on structural, attitudinal and behavioural barriers to inclusion.

The data collected in the survey allowed us to establish a baseline dataset to better understand our workforce profile and track progress over time.

The data represents 31 per cent (2,171) of DFFH staff:

- 54 per cent (1,158) from central divisions
- 21 per cent (1,013) from operational divisions.

The diversity workforce survey will be conducted and published annually. The framework's implementation plan includes strategies to increase participation in the diversity workforce survey in future years.

People Matter Survey and employee system data

Additional data sources were also used, including the People Matter Survey and employee system data.

There are significant data gaps in employee systems (such as SAP) around diverse people. A key strategy in the implementation plan involves data quality improvement, including encouraging staff to share information and building confidence in how personal and sensitive data is stored and used.

People Matter Survey and employee system data will support us to benchmark DFFH results with other VPS agencies and report against whole-of-Victorian Government strategies and plans.

Interpreting workforce data

It is important to note that the diversity workforce survey and People Matter Survey are voluntary surveys. Assumptions must be made to generalise the results to the entire DFFH workforce.

People who identify as having one or more diversity attributes may be more likely to participate in the diversity workforce survey. This assumption is supported by the low 'prefer not to say' or no answer (PNTS) rate and the lower response rate (31 per cent) compared with the People Matter Survey (41 per cent). This is likely to result in higher proportions of diverse employees in the survey population compared with the total DFFH workforce.

People's participation in the People Matter Survey may be self-selected by their motivation to contribute to organisational improvement. Factors to consider in generalising People Matter Survey results to the total DFFH workforce include:

- the overall response rate (41 per cent)
- the high PNTS rate (likely related to this data being 'administrative by-product' data, as well as respondent concerns about confidentiality)
- consideration of whether, on balance, people with one or more diversity attributes may be likely to respond at higher rates than the total DFFH population (such as their higher motivations or more concerns to raise) or lower rates (for example, because of accessibility constraints or cultural factors).

Research and evidence-based practice

Our memberships with Diversity Council Australia, Pride in Diversity and Australian Network on Disability enabled us to:

- use research
- seek advice
- ensure our terminology is current
- implement evidence-based actions to address barriers faced by the workforce.

There is a long history of progressing equality, diversity and inclusion in Victorian government agencies. This is also true for agencies in other jurisdictions and non-government organisations. This DI framework has been informed by ideas and lessons drawn from many of these sources.

What the evidence told us

What our staff said

The following table is a summary of high-level themes for improvement consistently raised throughout all stages of consultation and provided by our employees.

The feedback has helped inform the implementation plan.

Table 1: Key themes of staff feedback

Focus area	Feedback on areas for improvement
Strategy and business alignment	• Diversity and inclusion are driven by a siloed approach and seen as an 'add on', not a core business function. • Effective workplace adjustments may not be timely, considered a priority or implemented. Decentralised processes reduce safety to request adjustments. • Organisational change processes do not support diverse employees. • There is a lack of transparency in data and implementation progress.
Leadership and accountability	• Leadership, management and governance structures within our organisation do not sufficiently reflect diversity or include lived experience or diverse role models. • Leaders do not demonstrate consistent practice of diversity and inclusion. • There is lack of courage to discuss and address all forms of discrimination in the workplace. • Executives and managers feel they must make a choice between being a good parent or carer, or being a good executive or manager. Some leaders have been told they cannot work part-time or job share.
Employment and careers	• Recruitment, development and career progression policies and practices are not sufficiently inclusive and do not promote diversity – particularly for people with caring responsibilities, people with disability, people of colour and older people. • Employees may feel stigmatised and excluded from career progression if they have medical or mental health conditions. • Part-time or flexible work may be discouraged or have unrealistic expectations, resulting in intentions to leave. The frontline practice workforce has unique considerations for flexible work due to their client-facing work. • Working from home has helped people manage disability and health conditions, with improvement in quality of life and career progression as a result.

Focus area	Feedback on areas for improvement
Culture and safety	• The workforce is exposed to discrimination (such as racism, ageism, ableism, homophobia), bullying, sexual harassment and microaggressions (like jokes, insensitive comments, patronising behaviour) which may be worse in some locations. • Our workforce includes people with caring responsibilities – they are not consistently given the flexibility to care for their families and people with disability, chronic health conditions, mental health conditions or those who are frail and elderly. • Employees may not feel comfortable or safe to share diverse identities as the lack of visible diversity in the workplace means people may be worried about negative consequences. • There is lack of trust and safety in DFFH grievance and reporting processes, and responses to negative behaviours. • Lack of recognition for employee wellbeing and failure to understand effects of chronic health, mental health, menopause or health conditions that disproportionally impact diverse people create stigma around health and wellbeing. • Multifaith employees do not feel supported to observe religious practice or significant religious dates.

Workforce demographic data

Whole of workforce profile

There is no single source of data that adequately describes the diversity of the entire DFFH workforce. The following table compares data from the diversity workforce survey, the People Matter Survey and representation of diverse groups in the community (noting that community representation will differ from labour force representation).

Data on DFFH's gender diversity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce are described in the GEAP and Aboriginal workforce strategy respectively.

See **Data sources** for more information on interpreting workforce data.

Note: There are significant data gaps in employee systems (such as SAP) around diverse groups, including gender-disaggregated data. The DI framework implementation plan aims to improve data collection and use disaggregated data to inform future actions and targets.

Table 2: Summary of data from different sources by group

Group	Diversity workforce survey 2022[10]	People Matter Survey 2021[11]	Community and VPS representation[12]
People with Disability	• Person with disability: 10.5% (228) • PNTS: 4.1% Of these respondents: • able to access workplace adjustments: 36.8% (84) • not able to access workplace adjustments: 20.2% (46) • did not need a workplace adjustment.: 37.3% (85) • PNTS: 5.7%	• Person with disability: 6.4% (161) • PNTS: 11%	• 17% of Victorians are people with disability[13] • 4.7% of the VPS identified as a person with disability[14]

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10   DFFH diversity baseline workforce survey, held in March 2022, had an overall response rate of 31 per cent.

11   Administrative data drawn from 2021 People Matter Survey self-reported demographic data by DFFH respondents. The survey had an overall DFFH response rate of 41 per cent.

12   Care should be taken with general population comparisons as these are not generally disaggregated or available for the working age population.

13   Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings, Australian Government, Canberra

14   People Matter Survey 2021

Group	Diversity workforce survey 2022[10]	People Matter Survey 2021[11]	Community and VPS representation[12]
People from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds	• Person from multicultural background aligned with NMESC[15]: 21.4% (464) • PNTS: 3.5% **Birthplace and time in Australia:** • Born outside Australia: 22.5% (488) • Born in NMESC: 12.2% • In Australia less than 5 years: 14.1% (69) • In Australia 5 to 10 years: 13.7% (67) • PNTS: 2.5% **Primary language:** • Primary languages spoken at home include one or more other than English: 13.1% (284) • PNTS: 0.5% **Person seeking asylum or from refugee background:** • Person seeking asylum or from refugee background: 1.9% (42) • PNTS: 1.4%	• Cultural identity aligned with NMESC: 16% • PNTS: 12% **Birthplace and time in Australia:** • Born outside Australia: 13% (330) • In Australia less than 5 years: 11% (34) • In Australia 5 to 10 years: 12% (39) • PNTS: 10% **Primary language:** • Speak a language other than English with family or community: 13% (335) • PNTS: 10% **Person seeking asylum or from refugee background:** • Not collected in 2021 survey	• 39.6% of Victorian population has an ancestry aligned with NMESC[16] • 17.3% of the VPS identified a cultural identity aligned with NMESC[17] **Birthplace and time in Australia:** • Of Victoria's total population, 28.4% were born overseas – 22% born in NMESC. • 49.1% of Victorians were born overseas or born in Australia with at least one parent born overseas.[18] **Primary language:** • Of Victoria's total population, 26% spoke a language other than English at home (ABS Census 2016) **Person seeking asylum or from refugee background:** • Around 4,000 refugees settle in Victoria each year through the Humanitarian Programme.[19] • An estimated 10,000 to 20,000 people are currently seeking asylum in the Victorian community.

15   Main English-speaking countries are UK, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, USA and South Africa
16   Based on ancestral responses in the 2016 census. Accessed at <https://www.vic.gov.au/discover-victorias-diverse-population>
17   People Matter Survey 2021
18   A snapshot of our diversity section on the Victorian Government's Discover Victoria's diverse population web page <https://www.vic.gov.au/discover-victorias-diverse-population#a-snapshot-of-our-diversity>
19   Health.vic's Refugee and asylum seeker health and wellbeing web page <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/populations/refugee-and-asylum-seeker-health-and-wellbeing>

Group	Diversity workforce survey 2022[10]	People Matter Survey 2021[11]	Community and VPS representation[12]
People from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds (continued)	Person identified a religion or faith: • Person identified a religion: 41.5% (902) • PNTS: 4.1% • Employees identified with 13 different faiths	Person identified a religion or faith: • Person identified a religion: 51% • PNTS: 18%	Person identified a religion or faith: • 59% of Victoria's population followed one of more than 130 different faiths (ABS Census 2016) • 52.6% of the VPS identified a religion[20]
LGBTIQ+ people	• Identified as LGBTIQ+ person: 15% (325) • PNTS: 4.1% • Identified as non-binary person or use a different term: 1.8% (39)	• LGBTIQ+ person: 9% (213) • PNTS: 20% • Transgender or intersex person: less than 1% • Non-binary person or use a different term: 1% (23)	• Around 5.7% of Victoria's population openly identify as LGBTIQ+ person • Lesbian or gay: 1.8% • Bisexual: 2.8% • Transgender, gender diverse, queer, pansexual, asexual or has an intersex variation[21]: 1.1%
People of different ages	• 18 to 24 years: 1.8% (39) of all respondents • 55 to 64 years: 19.6% (426) • 65 years and over: 3.5% (76) • PNTS: 2.8%	• 15 to 34 years: 18% (454) • 55 years and over: 22% • PNTS: 12%	**Victorian working age population 18 to 67 years** • 18 to 24 years: 13.4% • 55 to 64 years: 17.3% • 65 to 67 years: 4.5%[22] **Victorian Public Service workforce** • Under 25 years: 3.9% • 55 to 64 years: 16.2% • 65 years and over: 3.3%[23]

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20   People Matter Survey 2021

21   Victorian Agency for Health Information's population health web page <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/report/population-health/health-and-wellbeing-lgbtiq-population-victoria>

22   ABS, National, state and territory population, September 2021. Accessed at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/sep-2021>

23   Victorian Public Sector Commission's Employee work status, gender and age web page <https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/html-resources/2020-workforce-data-facts-and-visuals/employee-work-status-gender-and-age>

Group	Diversity workforce survey 2022[10]	People Matter Survey 2021[11]	Community and VPS representation[12]
Veterans	• Served in the ADF (permanent or reservist) and identified as a veteran: 1.2% (26) • PNTS: 0.8%	• Served in the ADF (permanent or reservist): 1% (34) • PNTS: 8%	• 0.5% of Victoria's total population is a veteran (0.7% of the population aged 15 years and over)[24]
People with caring responsibilities	• Care for child under 18 years: 35.4% (768) • Care for a person with disability or medical condition: 10.0% (217) • Care for a frail or aged person: 9.3% (202)	• Care for child up to secondary school age: 49% (1,221) • Care for a person with disability, medical condition or mental illness: 17% (433) • Care for a frail or aged person: 13% (326) • No caring responsibility: 36% (895) • PNTS: 14%	• 11% of Victorians are carers[25] • 13.9% of Victoria's population is aged under 18 years[26] • Of Australia's 7.3 million families, 45.5% were families with dependants. Of these, 81.1% were families with children under 15 years[27]

24   Department of Veterans' Affairs, Population projections (Executive Summary). Accessed at <https://www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/research/statistics-about-veteran-population#population-projections-executive-summary>

25   Carers Victoria, *Carers in Victoria: the facts*. Accessed at <https://www.carersvictoria.org.au/media/2965/2395-carers-in-victoria-the-facts-flyer_apr2021.pdf>

26   ABS, National, state and territory population, September 2021. Accessed at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/sep-2021>

27   ABS, Labour force status of families. Accessed at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-status-families/latest-release>

Executive leadership profile

The following data is from the DFFH diversity baseline workforce survey. This data is not available from the People Matter Survey.

Table 3: Executive leadership data

19.8%
(11.7% people from NMESC)
People from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds

53%
People with caring responsibilities

8.1%
People with disability

16.2%
LGBTIQ+ people
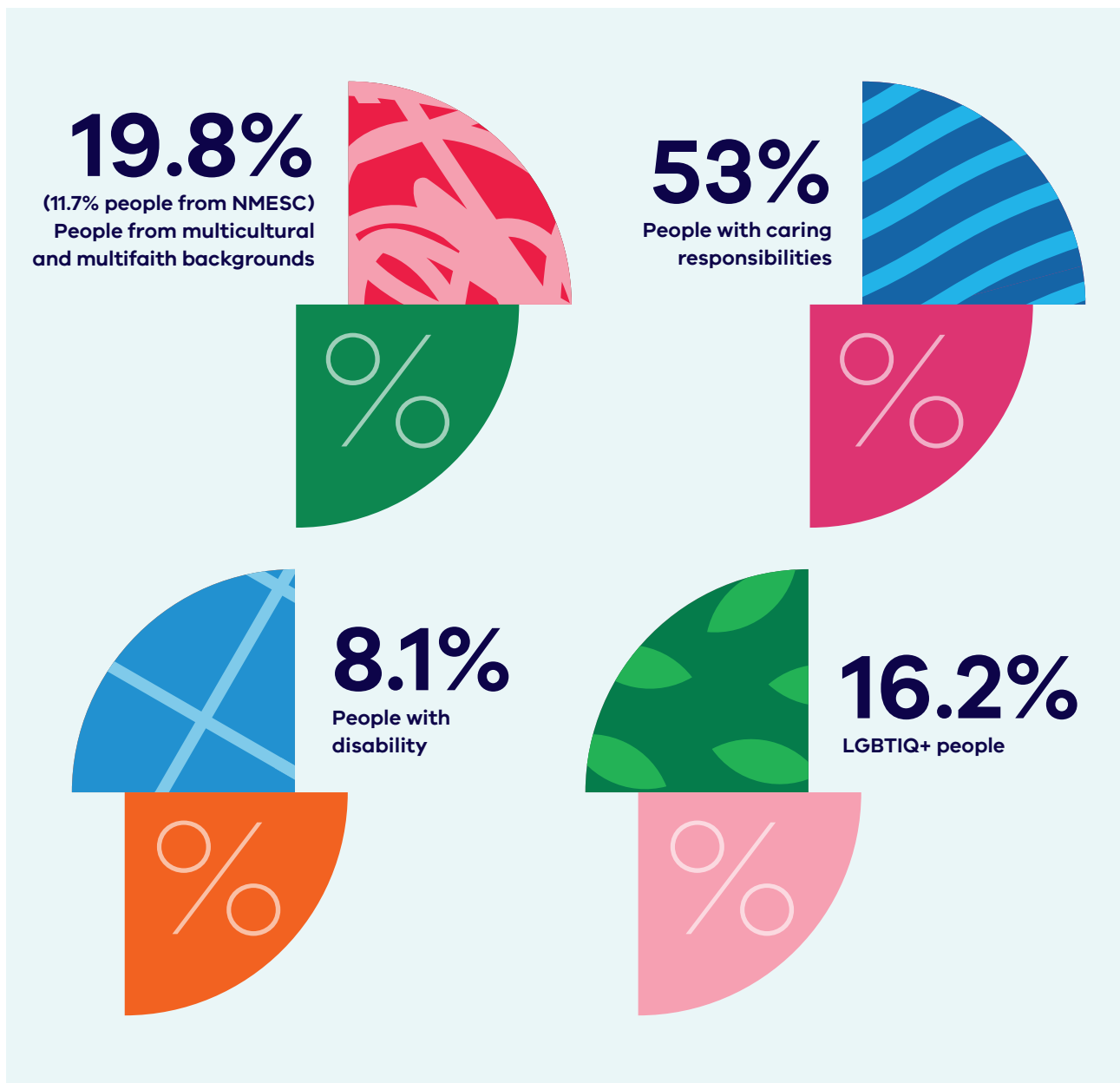
How we will achieve our vision and strategic objectives

Outcomes framework

We have established an outcomes framework to ensure we have sustained effort to meet the vision and our workforce targets **(Appendix 1).** This aligns with the GEAP outcomes framework to:

- enable us to apply a gender lens to the DI framework
- support shared implementation and reporting.

Short-term outcomes

We will measure progress of activities and deliverables against our short-term outcomes using indicators and targets detailed in the implementation plan.

Long-term outcomes

Long-term outcome indicators measure the broader impact of the framework strategies towards achieving our vision.

Implementation plan

The *Diversity and inclusion framework implementation plan* (implementation plan) outlines the critical actions DFFH will take to improve diversity and inclusion across the organisation.

The implementation plan is closely aligned with the GEAP implementation plan, which has a strong focus on intersectionality and includes a suite of diversity and inclusion actions.

Dedicated actions for priority diversity groups are included in the implementation plan to align with whole-of-Victorian Government requirements for departmental plans. This also ensures we can address specific barriers that some diversity groups face. This aligns with the principles of 'designing for diversity' and 'equality and equity', as outlined in **Our diversity and inclusion principles**.

The actions will be updated annually to ensure the implementation plan remains aligned to the voice of the workforce and the needs of the department.

Workforce targets

Targets are a mechanism to accelerate change and achieve the strategic objectives of this DI framework. They are one of multiple important ways we will implement this framework.

Targets were developed using baseline data from our 2022 diversity workforce survey, 2021 People Matter Survey data, Victorian community data and in consultation with the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group. See the **Workforce demographic data** section for comparison data.

In line with the DI framework implementation plan, we will refine these targets at divisional levels using available data, including recruitment and promotion data.

Gender diversity in the workforce targets will be managed through the GEAP. An underlying aim is to maintain or improve on existing gender diversity as detailed in the GEAP.

Some people will identify with more than one priority area. The impact of intersectional identities on our workforce targets will be considered as part of implementation actions.

Where existing representation of a diverse group in DFFH may already align with community or VPS representation, the target will be to maintain or improve on the 2022 baseline. However, within each target group there may be employees with particular attributes, including intersectional attributes, who experience greater discrimination and barriers to inclusion than others. Implementation actions will be targeted to such employees through a combination of prioritisation, program entry selection criteria and other mechanisms determined in consultation with staff with lived experience.

We will work to achieve the targets by aligning our implementation actions, such as:

- using special measures to address employment inequalities
- implementing evidence-based recruitment and entry program guidelines that recognise and support diversity
- targeting learning and development, including targeted leadership development programs
- embedding diversity and inclusion impact assessments into workforce planning processes
- conducting pay gap analysis across diverse employee cohorts
- inclusive leadership and diversity awareness training.

Note: There may be changes to DFFH's workforce profile during the period of this framework due to organisational change. The framework, including these targets and the implementation plan, will be reviewed annually to monitor progress and ensure the targets continue to align to our strategic objectives.

Targets by priority area

Table 4: People from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds from NMESC[28]

Type of target	Baseline at 2022[29]	Target by 2024	Target by 2027
DFFH workforce	21.4%	25%	29%
DFFH leadership roles	11.7%	50% increase	100% increase

Table 5: People with disability

Type of target	Baseline at 2022[29]	Target by 2024	Target by 2027
DFFH workforce	10.5%	14%	17%
DFFH leadership roles	8.1%	50% increase	100% increase

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28 The target for people from non-main English-speaking countries (NMESC, that is, outside UK, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, USA and South Africa) was derived from respondents self-identifying as culturally diverse and identifying their cultural background as NMESC.

29 'Baseline' refers to workforce composition as of March 2022 from the DFFH diversity workforce survey. The survey had an overall response rate of 31 per cent. It is noted that the People Matter Survey percentages were lower than the diversity workforce survey percentages, but the People Matter Survey also had a much greater non-response rate for diversity attributes. The baseline for leadership roles is derived from respondents who identified as an executive or equivalent; hence the leadership targets are framed as an increase rather than a hard target to reflect that disaggregated leadership data for positions at all levels will improve over time.

Table 6: LGBTIQ+ people

Type of target	Baseline at 2022[29]	Target by 2024	Target by 2027
DFFH workforce	15%	Maintain or improve baseline	Maintain or improve baseline
DFFH leadership roles	16.2%	Maintain or improve baseline	Maintain or improve baseline

Table 7: Age and life stage

Type of target	Baseline at 2022[29]	Target by 2024	Target by 2027
People under 25 years old in the DFFH workforce (Youth)	1.8%	3%	4%
People with caring responsibilities in the DFFH workforce	54.7%	Maintain or improve baseline	Maintain or improve baseline

We are naturally biased towards people that look like us, so targets are helpful to promote diversity to change this thinking. This should be across all employee life cycle stages. – *Consultation participant*

Continuous improvement

We recognise that as our implementation plan progresses, we will need to reflect on and refine what is working and what is not. We will evaluate the progress of the plan annually.

We will continue to use the diversity workforce survey, People Matter Survey, feedback from our diverse staff and reports from our diverse staff networks to inform our inclusion maturity and evidence-based practice and refine terminology and actions that improve outcomes for our workforce.

Governance and oversight

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (the committee) will be established, with a focus on organisational diversity and inclusion, including gender equality.

The committee will:

- have oversight of the DI framework and GEAP
- ensure we are taking coordinated action and holding ourselves to account
- oversee the DI framework implementation
- monitor progress and act if progress is not being made
- provide a report to the DFFH Board annually against relevant outcomes, strategies and measures
- authorise changes to the DI framework and implementation plan, in consultation with the diverse staff community of practice.

The committee will comprise:

- executive members from each division accountable for progressing diversity, inclusion and gender equality within their division
- staff members from staff networks and other priority groups, including Aboriginal staff, staff with disability, LGBTIQ+ staff, staff from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds and older adult staff.

Diverse staff community of practice

The diverse staff community of practice will provide an ongoing voice for diverse employees. The community of practice will:

- identify representatives with lived experience from our diverse workforce to be on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- through nominated representatives, report to the committee on risks and issues around the progress of the DI framework implementation plan
- recommend changes to the DI framework and implementation plan to the committee
- ensure the expertise and lived experience of our diverse workforce is recognised through governance and implementation
- establish a safe space for the voices of our diverse staff to be heard
- include the experience of diverse staff who do not have, or do not engage with, a representative staff network.

Divisional accountability

Divisions will plan and manage implementation of DI framework strategies and actions at a local level, tailoring actions to their workforce profile, needs, priorities and circumstances. Divisions will be advised of high level priority actions reflecting departmental priorities and ensuring a consistent approach across the organisation.

Implementation actions at the divisional level will be managed and reported on through existing executive leadership teams, senior management teams and people committees.

People and Culture branch accountability

The People and Culture branch in Corporate and Delivery Services division is responsible and accountable for:

- providing secretariat services to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- managing the implementation plan, including updates as authorised by the committee
- coordinating monitoring and reporting under the DI framework
- supporting divisional implementation by facilitating forums (including communities of practice) to share practice and increase impact across the department
- providing data to divisions to support divisional planning and reporting.

Reporting

Reporting formats and timeframes will be closely aligned with GEAP reporting. This recognises the connection between the intersectional elements of the GEAP and diversity and inclusion actions in the DI framework.

Table 8: Reporting by level

Level	Reporting description
DFFH Board	• An annual paper to the Board on the progress of the DI framework implementation.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee	• Review and reporting on DI framework progress at quarterly committee meetings. • The committee may decide to evaluate programs or strategies – these will be reported in line with the relevant timetable.
Divisional executives	• Divisions will monitor their actions and outcomes and provide annual reports to the committee using a template common to the DI framework and the GEAP. • Divisional reports will contribute to Board reporting.
Staff and employee representatives	• After each report to the DFFH Board, a communiqué will be provided to all staff and employee representatives.

Priority diversity groups and networks

We bring people together to talk, but we leave the onus on those minorities to produce the solutions and fix it themselves. We need to make sure we have allies present who have the influence and power to enact change. – Consultation participant

This section provides an overview of our priority groups and focus areas under this framework.

Research, data and employee consultation highlight that certain groups in DFFH are more likely to experience discrimination and harmful behaviours. To ensure equality within our department, we are committed to equitable approaches to building capability and responding to the barriers faced by our diverse workforce. This includes dedicated priority groups and focus areas, to guide our commitments and actions within the framework.

Our staff networks play an essential role in:

- advocating for their members
- supporting executive champions and allies
- helping develop strategies and plans
- working in partnerships across the department and with external stakeholders.

Executive champions and allies stand alongside staff networks and create space to listen, understand, care and use their position and power to make positive change.

Executive champions

Executive champions take accountability and play a critical role with the staff networks by:

- providing mentoring and sharing successes and challenges
- promoting the importance of diversity and inclusion initiatives to their peers
- encouraging and supporting managers and employees to develop and implement inclusive practices
- sponsoring and participating in forums and events to celebrate, promote diversity and inclusion, raise awareness and remove barriers.

Executive champions are not necessarily members of a particular diversity cohort.

Allies

We encourage and facilitate all staff to be active and visible allies of priority groups. Allies:

- are upstanders for cultural safety and equal opportunities
- understand advantage and disadvantage and navigate uncomfortable conversations respectfully
- work to remove barriers and to empower and enable self-determination of priority groups.

Note on intersectionality

This section includes reference to distinct priority groups based on personal attributes. We recognise that our staff have intersecting identities and this framework and its implementation plan take an intersectional approach to addressing barriers to opportunity in the workplace.

People from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds

In Australia, quite often calling out racism is seen as more confrontational or hostile than being racist. This is a huge barrier that unfairly sits on the side of the person at the receiving end of the racism – *Consultation participant*

Victoria is one of the most multicultural societies in the world. The term 'multicultural' encompasses cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity within a community.

We recognise the social, cultural, creative, productivity, efficiency and economic benefits that a society or organisation can garner from a genuinely inclusive multicultural population or workforce.

Victoria has a long history of diverse multicultural and multifaith communities. Victorians:

- come from more than 200 countries
- speak 260 languages
- follow more than 130 faiths.

Some groups face more discrimination and exclusion than others due to factors like their:

- culture
- religion
- language or accent
- visa or residency status
- mode of arrival in Australia
- migration or settlement experience.

A successful multicultural society is underpinned by the principles of access and equity. These support a fair, inclusive and socially cohesive society, one that acknowledges that:

- all of its members are entitled to equal opportunity to access services and programs
- some members of our society face greater barriers, discrimination, exclusion and disadvantage in accessing and using services or participating in society
- it must address the barriers and disadvantage to help everyone meet their full potential.

A multicultural organisation proactively:

- seeks to include the views of those from all cultures and faiths
- breaks down barriers, including those which may be compounded by intersectionality
- enables everyone to have the opportunity to attain their full potential, directly and indirectly benefiting not only themselves but their families, communities and the whole society.

As a department delivering policy and services to support and empower multicultural communities, it is critical that we ensure our workforce represents this diversity at all levels of our organisation. We must ensure our workforce has the capability to work with multicultural communities and teams, and role model intercultural awareness. This includes creating workplaces where staff can bring their full selves to work and use their lived or direct experiences and community perspectives to inform their work.

This also means we must create an inclusive and supportive workplace for multicultural employees to undertake cultural and religious practice. This includes making prayer rooms available, supporting public holiday substitution and implementing leave policies that ensure employees can engage in what is important to them.

Despite the high proportion of multicultural diversity in Victoria, multicultural employees are under-represented in leadership and executive positions at DFFH. This is more pronounced for people of colour or racially diverse employees.

Bilingual and multilingual people

Over 50 languages are spoken by employees within DFFH, representing an important skill we will embrace to better support multicultural communities. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that a multicultural and multilingual workforce makes us better able to:

- respond to communities
- build trust
- collaborate
- understand and address the unique needs of all Victorians.

We commit to being inclusive and respectful to all employees who are bilingual and multilingual. Adequate workplace supports for bilingual and multilingual staff can also support Deaf and hard-of-hearing employees.

Race discrimination and anti-racism

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission protects the rights of multicultural Victorians to have equal opportunity, no matter where someone is from or the colour of their skin.

Under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, race discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly or bullied because of their:

- colour
- descent or ancestry
- nationality or national origin
- ethnicity or ethnic origin.

People and public sector agencies have a positive duty to make sure employees do not face discrimination in the workplace.

Victorians are also protected from vilification and race- and faith-based discrimination through the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*.

Diversity Council Australia's *Racism at work* report,[30] launched 21 March 2022, challenges organisations to eradicate racism through anti-racism and ways that help people better understand race and racism, including:

- developing racial literacy
- focusing on lived experience
- auditing for racial equity
- removing bias in recruitment, recognition and reward
- ensuring people can have open conversations about race, including calling out racism.

DFFH will ensure all employees and workplaces build an inclusive and safe environment for multicultural employees. We will develop a DFFH anti-racism strategy, aligned with the whole-of-Victorian Government anti-racism strategy, and ensure the lived experience of our diverse workforce is central to its development. This will include ensuring:

- people feel safe to report instances of racism
- appropriate measures are in place to respond to these reports.

Anti-racism strategy

The whole-of-Victorian Government anti-racism strategy is under development. It intends to set out a clear and targeted roadmap to reducing racism in Victoria, including within the VPS itself and in the delivery of government services.

The strategy's tentative vision is:

- an equitable and inclusive Victoria, where everyone has access to and can participate in political, economic, social, cultural and community life
- for all Victorians to play a role in building a society where racism and discrimination is not tolerated, and our diversity is celebrated as our greatest strength.

The DI framework reflects the goals of the anti-racism strategy. This framework is the first step towards ensuring DFFH and its leadership reflect Victoria's diversity and promote policies and services that are designed to be inclusive of all Victorians' needs.

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30   Diversity Council Australia, Racism at work. Accessed at <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/racismatwork>

VPS Women of Colour Network

The VPS Women of Colour Network is a peer-to-peer staff-led network. A dedicated group of volunteers elected to committee positions lead over 800 members and allies across the VPS.

The network aims to:

- contribute policy, community and lived experience to the development of policies and programs that better meet the needs of communities
- advocate for professional and personal development
- improve diversity and inclusion practices across the VPS, including through recruitment, retention and progression of diverse talents.

The network champions the inclusion of women of colour (WOC) and elevates and amplifies the voices of WOC within the VPS.

Membership is open to all self-identifying WOC and to allies who want to stand alongside WOC.

The network is supported by executive leaders and champions, with the Principal Champion Sponsor being Adam Fennessy PSM, Commissioner, Victorian Public Sector Commission.

For more information and to join the WOC Network, visit the Victorian Government's Women of Colour Network web page <https://www.vic.gov.au/vps-women-colour-network>.

VPS African-Australian Network

The VPS African-Australian Network is a staff-led initiative that supports personal and professional development of people of African descent in the VPS.

The network is committed to:

- providing a welcoming, safe and inclusive space for African-Australian employees across the VPS to connect and build a sense of belonging and community
- advocating for and contributing to the development of inclusive and equitable policies and practices that improve workforce participation and outcomes for employees of African descent
- contributing to Victorian Government and departmental initiatives to improve attraction, recruitment, retention and representation of African-Australians in VPS roles
- being a resource that government departments and agencies can use to strengthen engagement with African-Australian communities in Victoria
- supporting career and leadership development for African-Australian employees.

The main champion is Nicola Brown, Deputy Secretary, Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS). Several other executive leaders across government support the network.

For more information on the VPS African-Australian Network and how to get involved, see:

- Victorian Government's VPS African-Australian Network web page <https://www.vic.gov.au/vps-african-australian-network>
- VPS Innovation Network's VPS African-Australian Network web page (login needed) <https://innovationnetwork.vic.gov.au/my-network/groups/vps-african-australian-network>.

People with disability

DFFH is committed to creating a workplace that attracts, values, retains and supports people with disability to flourish. Research consistently shows that with the right support (including workplace adjustments), people with disability are high-performing employees.

Around 17 per cent of Victorians have disability and most people's disabilities are not visible or not immediately apparent. People with disability are diverse – what they have in common is shared experiences of encountering barriers to their participation and inclusion. 35.9 per cent of households include a person with disability and many of our employees care for someone with disability.

The DI framework commits to best practice and is aligned with the systemic reforms in Inclusive Victoria and Getting to work. It enables inclusion of staff with disability by removing and preventing attitudinal and environmental barriers to full participation in the workplace. We will continue to listen to the expertise of our staff with lived experience to find innovative and self-determined solutions to addressing these barriers.

In response to the voice of our employees with disability, the framework ensures our organisation and our employees:

- develop their disability awareness and ability to provide a trusting work environment
- understand that disability can be visible, not visible or not immediately apparent, includes neurodiversity, and that in most circumstances people do not need to share disability information
- recognise the expertise that lived experience of disability brings to the workplace by contributing to a richer, vibrant workplace culture that can better serve the people of Victoria
- support our leaders to treat everyone equitably and to understand the connection between equity and equality.
- listen to our employees with disability, include them in decision making that impacts them, and value the expertise their experiences bring to finding creative solutions
- support managers to ask all employees if they have what they need to flourish in their role, work safely and be included in all aspects of the workplace.

Autistic people

We are committed to ensuring secure, flexible employment and career progression for people who identify as being autistic or on the autism spectrum.

Around one in 100 Australians is autistic and 85 per cent of the community has a personal connection with an autistic person. Many autistic people live without a diagnosis so the actual rate may be higher.

The *Victorian autism plan*[31] requires VPS agencies to improve attraction, retention and career progression strategies to be inclusive of autistic people. Consultation and a parliamentary inquiry into autism identified barriers to inclusion such as:

- lack of community understanding of autism
- additional barriers for autistic people with intersecting identities
- exclusion from employment opportunities.

Every autistic person is different, which means that each person has unique strengths and challenges. When given the right environment and effective adjustments, employees with autism can make a positive contribution and add value to our workplace and the way we serve the Victorian community.

The former Department of Health and Human Services introduced the RISE program in 2017 to give autistic people employment opportunities. While we celebrate the success of RISE, we also recognise that DFFH must offer a variety of career pathways that are inclusive of individual career aspirations.

To achieve this, DFFH has collaborated with the VPS Autism Success Network to embed innovative and robust employment strategies into our DI framework and implementation plan. We will continue to work with network colleagues to refine and adjust our actions to ensure all people with autism are supported to reach their full potential.

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31 Department of Health and Human Services, State autism plan. Accessed at <https://www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au/victoria-autism-plan>

Social model of disability

We recognise that:

> disability is an evolving concept, and that disability arises from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. – *Preamble, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*[32]

Disability is defined in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic), the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth). It includes physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory conditions or functional limitations. It may be permanent, temporary, episodic in nature, evident or not. It can be caused by accident, trauma, genetics or disease. It can be total or partial, lifelong or acquired, visible or not visible.

We respect that some of our staff may not identify as a person with disability, may not view their disability as impairment or may not have shared they are a person with disability.

We understand these staff have the same rights to:

- have barriers removed
- have every opportunity to be safe and valued
- take part and make meaningful contributions in the workplace
- have fulfilling careers.

Workplace adjustments

> I want people to take the time to understand why I ask for something to be done in a certain way, not give a straight no. – *Consultation participant*

Workplace adjustments are changes to the work environment or work arrangements. Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) agencies are obligated to make workplace adjustments to accommodate someone's disability, unless that adjustment would result in unjustifiable hardship.

We recognise that each person has different circumstances. In line with our commitment to equity, we need to promptly allocate resources and opportunities to the people who need them to reach an equal outcome. Workplace adjustments ensure employees with disability have access to the same opportunities as their colleagues at all stages of recruitment and employment so they can flourish in their roles.

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32   *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Preamble, United Nations, 2006. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

The DI framework and implementation plan enable DFFH to lead and deliver a workplace adjustment passport and an autism passport, through a whole-of-Victorian Government working group. The passports are tools designed to discuss, identify, document and implement workplace adjustments. The passports will ensure people with disability have a consistent, positive and inclusive experience across the VPS.

Enablers Network

The Enablers Network is an employee-led association that represents the needs, interests and concerns of VPS employees with lived experience of disability and staff who care for people with disability. The network also welcomes allies in the VPS.

Through education, advocacy and dialogue, the network aims to create positive and empowering workplaces for people with disability. The DFFH Enablers Network has been established as a local sub-group to drive action to support staff with disability at the departmental level. It works with key stakeholders at all levels of the department.

The Graduate Disability Network is another subgroup of the Enablers Network focused on providing space and connecting current and alumni graduates and employment program participants with each other and VPS leaders. The Graduate Disability Network runs monthly meetings to collectively build disability confidence, share stories and support each other's lived experiences. The network welcomes people with lived experience of disability, carers and allies.

For more information on the Enablers Network and how to get involved, see DFFH's Enablers Network SharePoint page <https://dhhsvicgovau.sharepoint.com/sites/dffh/SitePages/Enablers-Network.aspx>.

Autism Success Network

The VPS Autism Success Network, a subgroup of the VPS Enablers Network, is an employee-led collective to advance equity, equality, accessibility and inclusion for people with autism in the VPS. It contributes to supporting the VPS to be a leading disability-confident employer.

The Secretary, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, is the VPS Autism Success Network Executive Champion.

- **For more information on the Autism Success Network and how to get involved**, see DFFH's VPS Autism Success Network SharePoint page <https://dhhsvicgovau.sharepoint.com/sites/dffh/SitePages/VPS-Autism-Success-Network.aspx>.

LGBTIQ+ people

Just over one in 20 adult Victorians (5.7 per cent) openly identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ+). LGBTIQ+ Victorians face higher levels of discrimination within the workplace, including stigma and exclusion.

Inclusive leadership and practice are about ensuring that our polices, programs and services are delivered in ways that are non-discriminatory, LGBTIQ+ inclusive and welcoming. Everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, can be an ally by supporting and advocating for LGBTIQ+ people. Being a good ally means:

- championing LGBTIQ+ people and communities
- being aware of unconscious bias and barriers
- calling out discrimination and harmful behaviours in the workplace
- creating safe and inclusive spaces.

Under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, a person cannot be discriminated against because of their:

- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- sex characteristics – protecting intersex Victorians against discrimination.

A priority area under Pride in our future is to strengthen existing legal protections for LGBTIQ+ Victorians and ensure we create laws with an equity lens.

For many LGBTIQ+ people, Victorian laws and legal institutions continue to be sources of trauma. This might be due to past wrongdoings, present inequalities or through a lack of recognition and inclusion. The Victorian Government has already started important legal reform work. This includes:

- removing legal barriers for trans, gender diverse and intersex Victorians for birth certificates to reflect their gender identity
- *(I) am Equal: Future directions for Victoria's Intersex community* paper, outlining a vision to uphold the human rights of people with intersex variations so they can achieve the best health and wellbeing outcomes.

The DI framework will support our LGBTIQ+ employees as it embeds a physically and psychologically safe working environment for all staff. It authorises robust processes and policies to support LGBTIQ+ inclusion and signals the importance of this to everyone. The framework makes diversity and inclusion everyone's business and raises the profile of this prominent issue at all levels across the organisation.

Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022–2032

Victoria's first whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ strategy, *Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022–2032*, provides the vision and plan to drive equality and inclusion for Victoria's diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer communities within all aspects of government work over the next decade.

The LGBTIQ+ strategy's vision is that:

- all Victorians feel safe, are healthy, have equal human rights and can live wholly and freely
- LGBTIQ+ Victorians experience the benefits of full participation in economic, educational, political, community and social areas at all stages of life
- Victoria leads the way in LGBTIQ+ equality, celebrating culture, community and taking sustained, enduring and measurable action.

The DI framework aligns with Pride in our future's vision and priority areas, including:

- visibility to inform decision making (priority area 3) – focuses on improving LGBTIQ+ data and LGBTIQ+ representation
- safe, strong and sustainable communities (priority area 4) – includes a focus on the VPS leading by example on LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

The Equality portfolio in DFFH leads implementation of Pride in our future, in collaboration with departments and agencies across government.

The Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) will lead work with all departments, including DFFH, to drive a centralised approach to support LGBTIQ+ VPS employees and review VPS workforce inclusion policies to identify improvements.

Pride Network

The DFFH Pride Network supports, promotes and advocates for LGBTIQ+ inclusion across the department. The network is Victoria-wide across all local area offices and is coordinated by a Pride Network Committee of department staff. Anyone in the department can join the Pride Network.

The DFFH Pride Network:

- increases LGBTIQ+ visibility and organisational understanding of diverse sexuality and gender identity in the department
- coordinates department-wide LGBTIQ+ networking events and recognition of significant dates
- advocates for LGBTIQ+ inclusive policies and processes to ensure staff safety and a workforce that reflects the values and composition of the Victorian communities we serve
- provides support to senior executives in creating inclusive team environments
- connects our network members to a range of support services when needed.

Recognising our roots in the former Department of Health and Human Services, the DFFH Pride Network continues to work closely with the Department of Health Pride Network on events and information sharing. The committee sits within the broader VPS Pride Network and advocates to the department on behalf of all LGBTIQ+ employees, the community and our allies.

For more on the Pride Network and how to get involved, see DFFH's Pride Network SharePoint page <https://dhhsvicgovau.sharepoint.com/sites/dffh/SitePages/Our-Pride-Network.aspx>.

People of different ages and stages of life

Age diversity

Age diversity is the acceptance and inclusion of all age groups in the workplace. Everyone should feel they are treated fairly in the workplace, regardless of age. Age discrimination can happen at any point in a person's life but is more likely to happen to older people and youth.

Under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, a person cannot be discriminated against because of their age.

Older workers

Our older workforce brings a wealth of organisational knowledge and experience, strengthening DFFH's productivity and capacity to solve complex problems.

Diversity Council Australia estimates that people aged 45 years and over will provide 85 per cent of workforce growth in the next decade to meet labour demand. At the same time, employment barriers are greater for people over 55 years.

We will ensure that our older workforce is valued and has equal opportunities for career development and progression. We recognise the importance of supporting our older workforce and ensuring everyone can transition to retirement or other life stages in a way that suits them. This may include enabling more older workers to work part-time or job share to continue sharing knowledge and expertise, including at executive and manager levels.

A lot of my experience was dismissed as irrelevant and not taken into consideration. A lot of it was not valuing workforce experience about how systems work or what I may bring to the role. *– Consultation participant*

Youth

Young people in Victoria are a highly educated and diverse group. They bring new perspectives and ways of working and offer lived experience that adds value to our work.

Young Victorians aged 12 to 25 years make up 18 per cent of Victoria's population. Thirteen per cent of young people are unemployed compared to 7.1 per cent of the general population (ABS, 2020). Employed young people are more likely to be in casual or insecure employment. Youth unemployment disproportionately affects outer suburban and rural communities and is compounded by other diversity attributes.

There is more we can do to ensure DFFH recruits, supports and retains young Victorians in meaningful employment. We will expand the graduate, intern and YES traineeship programs and support participants to progress their careers through ongoing development. We will ensure program participants represent the diversity of Victoria's young people.

We will also explore new and innovative pathways into employment for youth within DFFH. We will establish a DFFH youth network to create connection and safe spaces for young people.

Stages of life

We recognise that the needs of each member of our workforce vary throughout different stages of life. The needs of employees constantly evolve as people get older and circumstances change.

Different stages of life bring with them both new opportunities and challenges:

- younger people starting their career
- managing families and care responsibilities
- further education
- career transitions
- managing health, wellbeing and medical conditions
- natural life changes such as menopause
- taking more time to spend with children and grandchildren, or exploring personal interests.

A positive workplace and a safe environment matter to our workforce. Such a workplace includes:

- purposeful work and life supports
- flexible working arrangements
- access to leave
- employee benefits
- job security
- career progression.

Seeking support and flexibility should not impede an employee's ability to maintain or progress their career.

The global pandemic has resulted in high competition for talent. Understanding and supporting the needs of our workforce is critical to ensuring we employ and retain the best diverse talent. This means we need to ensure all roles – including manager and executive positions – support flexible careers that enable people to manage the different stages of their lives. This includes job share opportunities and continuing to work in hybrid ways and from home where practical.

We value our workforce and recognise we must be progressive and inclusive to be an employer of choice. To ensure inclusion and retention of employees across life's milestones, flexibility is a must.

We have clear policies for leaders around flexible workplace arrangements… some of the way senior people respond and apply flexibility is subjective and dependent on the manager. There should be uniform standards. – *Consultation participant*

People with caring responsibilities

DFFH's diversity baseline workforce survey identified that more than half of respondents have some form of caring responsibility. This includes carers who assist with a variety of personal care, health care, transport, household and other activities in relation to young children, older children, elderly people, people with disability, people with medical conditions or people with mental health needs. For some employees, caring includes their pets.

People with caring responsibilities provide significant emotional and practical support to the people they care for – for a few hours a day or around the clock. This benefits not only those people but our whole community.

While caring roles are hugely rewarding, they can also be challenging. People with caring responsibilities can sometimes find it difficult to access employment opportunities, services and supports to look after themselves (including respite) and to be supported in their care role.

Balancing work and care responsibilities can be challenging. About one in five carers give up work to care for someone. Combining paid work and caring means carers are often working part-time or casually, or in a job below their skill level.[33]

Under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, a person cannot be discriminated against because of their parental status or status as a carer.

People with caring responsibilities are as diverse as the people they care for. The DI framework aims to support flexibility in people's work arrangements including continuing opportunities to work from home, so they can thrive in their care and career.

Carers Recognition Act

The *Carers Recognition Act 2021* (Vic) was enacted to:

- recognise, promote and value the role of people in care relationships
- enact care relationship principles to promote understanding of the significance of care relationships.

For the purpose of the Act, a carer is a person who provides personal care, support and help to another person who needs it because of:

- a disability
- a medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness)
- a mental illness
- they are frail and aged.

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33   DHHS, Victorian carer strategy 2018–2022. Accessed at <https://www.carersvictoria.org.au/our-impact/victorian-carer-strategy>

The definition of carer under the Act does not apply if the person is providing care:

- under a contract of service or a contract for the provision of services
- in the course of doing voluntary work for a charitable, welfare or community organisation
- as part of the requirements of an education or training course.

The care relationship principles include that a carer should:

- be respected and recognised as an individual with their own needs
- be recognised for their efforts and dedication as a carer and for the social and economic contribution to the whole community arising from their role as a carer
- have their social wellbeing and health recognised in matters relating to the care relationship
- have the effect of their role as a carer on their participation in employment and education recognised and considered in decision making.

In DFFH, carers of people with disability are represented by the Enablers Network and can request workplace adjustments through the same pathways as people with disability.

Veterans

Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel gain practical experience in skills which are needed in the VPS, including teamwork, leadership, adaptability, agility, problem solving and use of initiative.

Victoria established the *Public sector veteran employment strategy*[34] in 2017. The strategy provides online resources, mentoring, networking opportunities and workshops to help veterans find opportunities in the VPS and promote the skills of veterans to relevant employers. The public sector met the strategy's initial target of employing 750 veterans between 2017 and 2021.

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34   See the Victorian Government's About the Victorian Veterans portfolio web page <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-victorian-veterans-portfolio>

Appendix 1: Outcomes framework

Focus area 1: Strategy and business alignment

Strategic objective: Diverse people's lived experience is core to policy, programs and services, to improve business practices and outcomes for the diverse communities we serve.

Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
1.1 Workforce diversity data is safely and confidentially captured and analysed. 1.2 Staff voluntarily provide diversity data and have confidence in its confidentiality and use. 1.3 DFFH policies, programs and services reflect and promote diversity and inclusion, including system reform and sector workforce development processes. 1.4 DFFH documents and records are accessible, contain inclusive language and imagery and support diversity and inclusion. 1.5 Diversity and inclusion are promoted within the funded sector and industry through DFFH's budget processes, funding and purchasing relationships. 1.6 DFFH change processes consider diversity and inclusion principles and risks. 1.7 Diversity and inclusion are embedded at all levels of DFFH including in workplace design and practice. 1.8 People with lived experience are supported to have a voice in policies, programs and services to improve business practices and outcomes for diverse communities, including through staff networks and communities of practice.	Diversity and inclusion are embedded in all DFFH decisions and actions through: • increased focus on diversity and inclusion in DFFH procurement and budgeting • increased focus on diversity and inclusion in policy development, implementation and evaluation • diverse composition of all levels of the DFFH workforce • equity in distribution of budget and resources. The voices of diverse staff and community members are sought, respected and used to improve policies, programs and services. DFFH staff understand and respond to the complexity and spectrum of lived experience in diverse communities and work together effectively with diverse clients, communities and stakeholders. People and business practices are integrated and joined up to respond holistically to the diverse and intersecting needs of DFFH employees. We understand who in DFFH is benefitting from or missing out on opportunities, or experiencing discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying or victimisation, and why.

Focus area 2: Leadership and accountability

Strategic objectives: DFFH's leadership profile, governance structures and workforce reflect the diversity of the community and all employees are accountable for creating an inclusive workplace. DFFH has transparency, accountability and measurable targets to achieve outcomes.

Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
2.1 DFFH Board maintains and communicates a commitment to diversity and inclusion, including on the Board and internal committees. 2.2 Divisions identify, monitor and address local diversity and inclusion priorities. 2.3 A governance structure oversees DI framework implementation. 2.4 DFFH leadership and manager development programs focus on diversity and inclusion. 2.5 Managers and people leaders tailor people management to individual needs. 2.6 Targets are established for key diverse staff cohorts in leader and manager roles and strategies implemented to achieve them.	DFFH models best practice inclusive leadership and management within the department and across other departments, agencies and the broader sector. All DFFH staff are visible, have an equal voice and occupy decision making roles at work including increased: • representation of diverse staff across all levels of leadership and management • number of divisions that demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion • diverse composition of governing bodies. DFFH leaders, managers and staff are proactive, role model inclusive behaviours and show collective responsibility and accountability for diverse and inclusive workplaces. Targets are met for diverse staff in leader and manager roles.

Focus area 3: Employment and careers

Strategic objective: We empower the voices of our diverse workforce, value diversity of thought and create a workplace where all employees are supported to develop and progress their careers.

Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
3.1 DFFH has a representative and sustainable diverse workforce talent pipeline through effective entry programs, recruitment, promotion, development and retention.	DFFH models diversity and inclusion best practice in the workplace, shown through:
3.2 Pay gaps are addressed for diverse staff.	• diverse composition of all levels of the workforce
3.3 People with lived experience are supported to have a voice in workplace design and ways of working, including respect for diversity of thought and incorporation of different perspectives and views into workplace policies and processes.	• equitable and inclusive recruitment and promotion practice and career supports • reduced segregation of roles in DFFH for diverse staff • increased recognition of diverse staff strengths, preferences, decisions and knowledge, and respect for diversity of thought • increased pay equity for diverse DFFH staff.
3.4 Targets are established for key diverse staff cohorts in the DFFH workforce and strategies implemented to achieve them.	Participation in learning, education and the workplace is not limited by diversity attributes, shown through increased workforce participation by diverse staff.
	DFFH staff are rewarded equitably for their contribution in all aspects of the department.
	Diverse staff's access to DFFH programs, services, systems, resources and facilities is increased and barriers reduced or eliminated.
	Targets are met for diverse staff in the DFFH workforce.

Focus area 4: Culture and safety

Strategic objective: Culturally-safe actions are embedded into systems and practices as the norm and work environments are accessible and safe, with prevention, early intervention and suitable response to discrimination and inappropriate behaviours.

Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
4.1 Reports and responses to sexual harassment and other inappropriate behaviours relating to diverse staff are timely and appropriate. 4.2 Uptake of flexible working arrangements and parental leave by diverse staff is more equitable. 4.3 Access to job share and innovative flexible working arrangements by diverse staff is improved. 4.4 Family violence support, response and risk management for diverse staff are aligned with best practice. 4.5 Prevention interventions to address inequality are tailored to identified issues with specific behavioural outcomes. 4.6 Employee systems, processes and facilities are safe for trans and gender diverse staff.	All DFFH staff are safe in their workplaces, including when in the community, services and client homes. DFFH models diversity and inclusion best practice and shows sustained and enduring action through: • empowering people to express their identity, belong and reach their full potential • increased awareness and understanding of the extent and impact of inequality, bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation • increased culture of prevention, early intervention, challenge and response to inequalities, bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation across all settings and across all life stages • reduced sexual harassment and other inappropriate behaviours against diverse staff in the workplace • increased availability and uptake of flexible working arrangements by diverse staff and staff with family or caring responsibilities • increased availability and use of family violence leave • eliminating structural and systemic causes of bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation • increased promotion of diversity and inclusion in DFFH communications and engagement. DFFH staff and leaders do not tolerate attitudes and behaviours that support inequality. There are tangible changes to attitudes and practices that discriminate against or disempower diverse staff. Mutual learning and reflective practice are enduring features of DFFH organisational culture. DFFH staff protect, promote and act in line with human rights, including human dignity, equality and freedom. There are increased experiences by diverse staff of connection, inclusion, belonging, visibility, satisfaction and engagement.