



Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2021

20 August 2018

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2021

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5.0	31 July 2020	Office’s Diversity Profile updated – as at 30 June 2020

Message from the Ombudsman



I am pleased to present the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

The Strategy builds on the previous Workplace Diversity Program 2015–2018 and details our ongoing commitment to building a workplace that is fair, accessible, flexible and inclusive.

The Strategy provides a framework for diversity and inclusion across the Office and will support a workforce that better reflects the diversity of our stakeholders, partners and the community we serve.

The Strategy is underpinned by a number of targeted diversity and inclusion action plans including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan; Gender Equality Action Plan; Disability Action Plan; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Action Plan and the Office's Multicultural Access and Equity Action Plan.

The Strategy will assist the Office in ensuring that the principles of workplace diversity and inclusion are understood by employees and are embedded in Office culture, practices and procedures.

I encourage you to be part of creating our positive and inclusive culture by taking part in events and making a personal commitment to diversity and inclusion.

I commend this strategy to you.

Michael Manthorpe PSM
Commonwealth Ombudsman

20 August 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW.....		5
-	Introduction.....	5
-	What is Diversity and Inclusion?.....	5
-	Why Diversity and Inclusion are important.....	5
-	Our Objectives.....	6
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLANS.....		7
-	Introduction.....	7
-	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan – Overview.....	7
-	Disability Action Plan – Overview.....	8
-	Gender Equality Action Plan – Overview.....	8
-	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Action Plan – Overview...	9
-	Multicultural Access and Equity Action Plan 2016–2018.....	9
THE OFFICE’S DIVERSITY PROFILE.....		10
-	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Disability, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse data.....	10
-	Gender Equality.....	11
ATTACHMENT A - ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ACTION PLAN.....		12
ATTACHMENT B – DISABILITY ACTION PLAN.....		14
ATTACHMENT C – GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN.....		16
ATTACHMENT D – LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX.....		17

OVERVIEW

Introduction

The Office’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2021 (the Strategy) sets out our commitment to workplace diversity and inclusion in the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office). It details the actions we will implement and have in place to ensure that we value and respect the diversity of our employees, stakeholders and partners. It outlines what we will do to create a workplace that is fair, accessible, flexible, inclusive and in which unlawful discrimination, bullying and harassment are not tolerated.

The Strategy also complements the Office’s Strategic Workforce Plan 2015–2019 (2020-25 Workforce Plan is under development).

What is Diversity and Inclusion?

Diversity refers to all the characteristics that make individuals different from each other. It includes characteristics such as age, caring responsibilities, cultural diversity, disability, gender, Indigeneity, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion. Diversity is about our commitment to equality and treating all individuals – our employees, complainants and the communities in which we operate - with fairness and respect.

Inclusion refers to the act of creating workplace environments in which any individual or group feels welcomed, respected and valued to fully participate and contribute. Inclusive workplace environments incorporate new and different ways of thinking, interacting and working into the way business is done so that all individuals, whether members of majority or minority groups, have access to opportunities and resources and are able to contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their organisation.

Why Diversity and Inclusion are important

The *Public Service Act 1999* (the Act), through the APS Values and Employment Principles, requires us to foster diversity in the workplace and section 18 of the Act mandates that agencies must establish a workplace diversity program. This Strategy, however, takes us beyond compliance, recognising diversity and inclusion as a key business enabler that is central to supporting the Office in delivering against its purpose and strategic objectives.

Our Office practices diversity and inclusion as it contributes to our success in fostering a culture which:

- improves our ability to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce
- leads to higher levels of employee engagement and improved performance
- promotes greater innovation
- results in improved employee wellbeing and lower levels of inappropriate behaviour, and
- supports a workforce that better reflects the diversity of our stakeholders, partners and the community we serve.

Our Objectives

Our objectives under the Strategy are to:

- be an employer of choice and improve our ability to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce
- make diversity and inclusion a central part of how our organisation and employees work
- support and empower our employees to be able to do their best and to bring their whole selves to the workplace, and
- ensure that all employees have equal access to opportunities available at work and are equitably rewarded and recognised for their contributions.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLANS

Introduction

The Strategy provides the framework for, and articulates our commitment to, diversity and inclusion across the Office.

The Strategy is underpinned by the following targeted diversity and inclusion action plans:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan – **Attachment A**
- Disability Action Plan – **Attachment B**
- Gender Equality Action Plan - **Attachment C**
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Action Plan - **Attachment D**
- [Multicultural Access and Equity Action Plan 2019–2020](#)

The Action Plans put this Strategy into practice by:

- committing the Office to the initiatives in each Action Plan
- actively engaging staff in developing and implementing diversity and inclusion strategies, and
- providing a means of monitoring and reporting on each Action Plan’s support of the Strategy.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan – Overview

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan is aligned to the:

- [Office’s Reconciliation Action Plan 2019](#) (the RAP) – which is a vital part of our continued commitment to develop an office that is culturally safe, aware, respectful, collaborative, inclusive and trusted. The Office’s vision for Reconciliation under the RAP is to:
 - acknowledge, value, respect and affirm the history and cultural richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all that we do, both in our daily interactions and in our work to influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration.
- [Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy](#) - which aims to build Indigenous employment within the Commonwealth public sector. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy supports the Government's target of 3 per cent Indigenous employment in the sector by 2018. The Offices target figure under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy is 2.5 per cent Indigenous employment. The four key action areas under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy are to:
 - expand the range of Indigenous employment opportunities
 - invest in developing the capability of Indigenous employees
 - increase the representation of Indigenous employees in senior roles, and
 - improve the awareness of Indigenous culture in the workplace.

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2021

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan has also been informed, where appropriate, by the findings and recommendations from the Indigenous Accessibility Review conducted by Gilimbaa which aims to support a more culturally capable and engaged Office.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan at **Attachment A** outlines the initiatives the Office will implement to address and support the achievement of deliverables/outcomes against the four key action areas under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy and the relevant areas of the RAP and Gilimbaa report to review.

Disability Action Plan – Overview

The Office promotes an accessible and inclusive workplace for people with disability and looks to expand on the range of employment opportunities for people with disability.

The Disability Action Plan is aligned to the:

- [As One: Australian Public Service \(APS\) Disability Employment Strategy 2016–19](#) (Disability Strategy) – which builds on the initiatives and momentum of 2012 APS Disability Strategy to improve the employment experience of people with disability in the APS. The goal is to increase the representation of employees with disability across the APS. The four key action areas under the Disability Strategy are:
 - expand the range of employment opportunities for people with disability
 - invest in developing the capability of employees with disability
 - increase the representation of employees with disability in senior roles, and
 - foster inclusive cultures in the workplace.

The Disability Action Plan also contains actions in relation to recommendations from the Disability Access Review undertaken by Westwood Spice.

The Disability Action Plan at **Attachment B** sets out actions and initiatives to position the Office as an employer of choice for people with Disability.

Gender Equality Action Plan – Overview

Workplace gender equality is achieved when people are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of gender.

In the Office, 67 per cent of employees are female and 33 per cent male. There are a greater number of females employed across all classification levels within the Office.

Gender equality is not just about the numbers but also about creating an inclusive workplace, where barriers are removed to ensure equitable outcomes, regardless of gender, and discrimination on the basis of gender is eliminated, including in relation to family and caring responsibilities.

The Gender Equality Action Plan (refer **Attachment C**) is aligned to the:

- [Balancing the future: The Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2016–19](#) – which sets out actions for driving high performance and boosting productivity in the Australian Public Service (APS). This is a strategy to address gender imbalance across the APS—at all levels and in all agencies.

The full breakdown of metrics is provided in the topic titled *The Office's Diversity Profile*.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) Action Plan – Overview

Equality and freedom from discrimination are fundamental human rights that belong to all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or because they are intersex.

On 1 August 2013, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* was amended to make discrimination on the basis of a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status against the law.

Despite this important step forward, LGBTI people in Australia still experience discrimination, harassment and hostility in many parts of everyday life. This includes, and is not limited to, in public, at work and study, in accessing health and other services and in securing proper recognition of their sex or gender in official documents.

LGBTI inclusion means making sure that all our employees are valued and respected, and have access to the same freedoms and opportunities as everyone else—without exception. Being able to bring our whole true selves to work leads to increased job satisfaction and increased productivity.

The Office aims to create a workplace which is fair, safe and inclusive of all people regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status and foster a workplace environment and culture where all employees can feel free to be themselves without fear of bias, labels or negative behaviour.

The LGBTI Action Plan is at **Attachment D**.

Multicultural Access and Equity Action Plan 2019–2020

The Office’s vision for multicultural access and equity is to safeguard the community in its dealings with the Australian Government departments/agencies and prescribed private sector organisations that we oversight, including culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) members of the community.

We aim to provide services that are accessible to and inclusive of all members of the community, and incorporate cultural diversity principles into the way we work across our office.

The [Multicultural Access and Equity Action Plan 2019–2020](#) complements the Strategy and sets out the steps we will take to improve our responsiveness and ensure our programs and services meet the needs of all Australians, regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

Access—means that barriers of culture and language should not impede the delivery of Australian Government programs and services to those who are entitled to receive them.

Equity—means that Australian Government programs and services should deliver outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse Australians on par with those for other Australians.

THE OFFICE’S DIVERSITY PROFILE

Introduction

As at 30 June 2020 the Office employed:

- 231 employees (headcount)
- 218.07 employees (FTE)

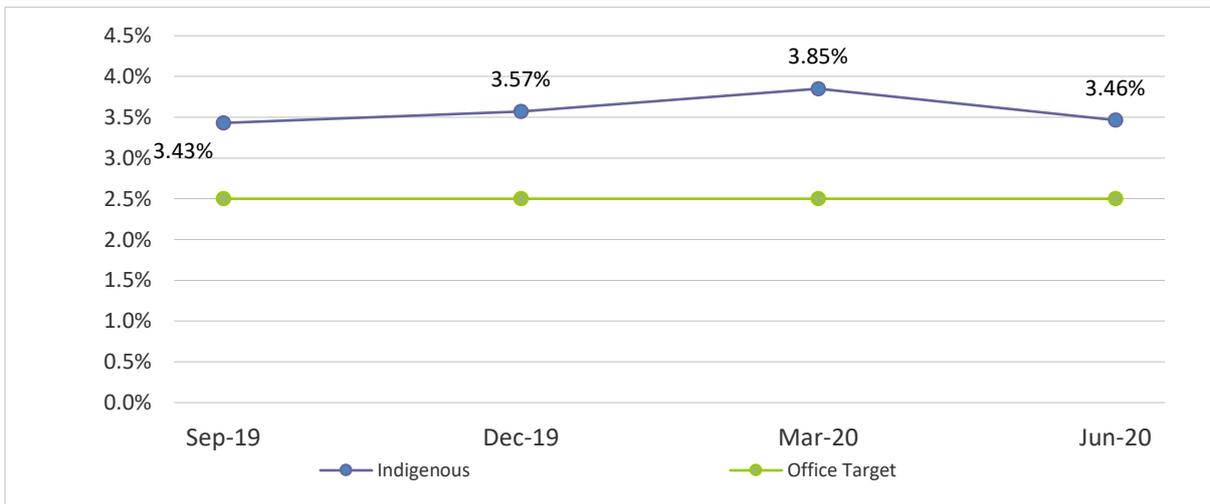
The following table and graphs provide information relating to the Office’s diversity and inclusion profile—ongoing and non-ongoing employees.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Disability, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

As at 30 June 2020:

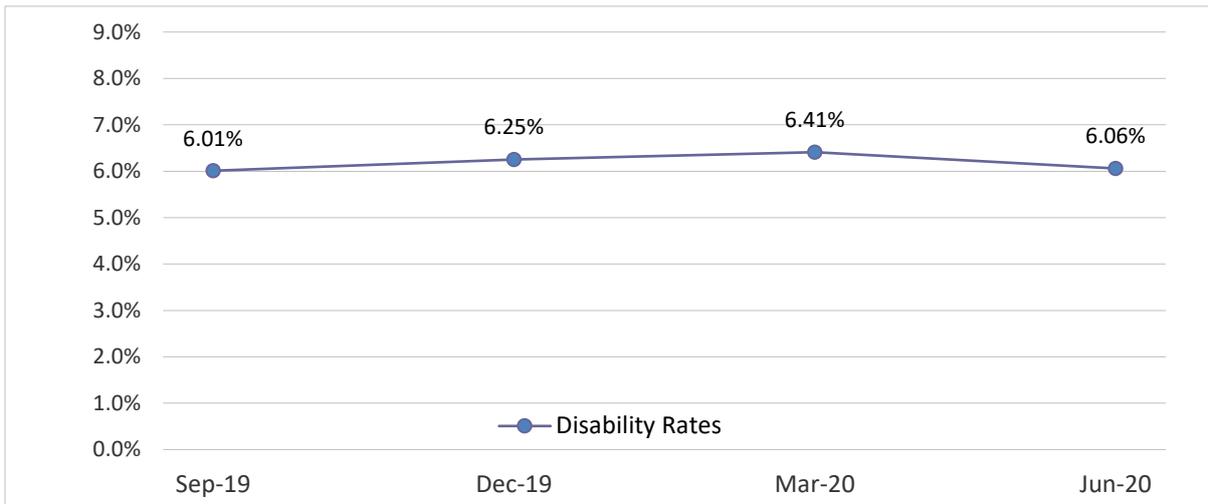
Category	Number of staff	% of all staff
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	8	3.46%
Disability	14	6.06%
CALD	27	11.69%

Indigenous profile against Office Target



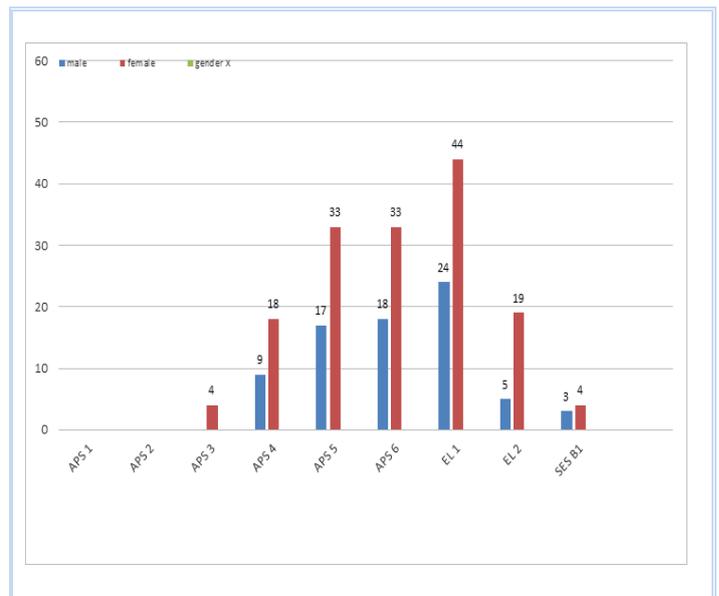
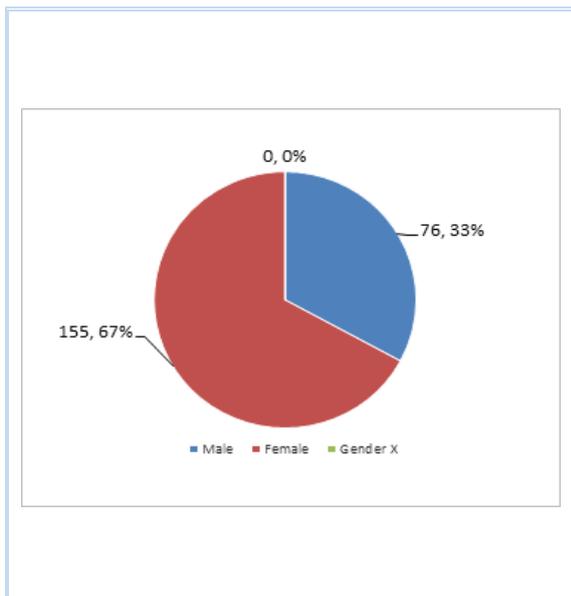
Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2021

Disability Profile



Gender Equality

Gender profile (headcount)—as at 30 June 2020



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
We have appointed an RAP Champion to be an active ambassador for promoting Indigenous issues and participate in the Indigenous Senior Management Champions network to promote and facilitate collaboration between agencies, and support the joint implementation of initiatives.	June 2019	SAO, Strategy Branch
We will raise internal awareness of the Office’s RAP.	June 2019	RAP Working Group RAP Champion
The RAP working group, which is chaired by the RAP Champion, will meet monthly.	June 2019	RAP Working Group
We will engage employees in cultural learning opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with recommendations adopted from the Gilimbaa Indigenous Accessibility Review to be implemented through the Office’s Learning and Development Strategy 2018–2020 which mandates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural awareness training for all employees—as a minimum - more extensive training for specific roles. 	Sept 2018	HR/ Indigenous Co-ordination Team
	Sept 2019	
We will investigate and participate in opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within our Office, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participating in the 2019 Indigenous Graduate program • participating in the 2018 Australian Government Indigenous Lateral Entry (AGILE) Pilot • participating in the 2018 Jawun program • partnering with Indigenous employment service providers to reach more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers and to promote awareness of the range of jobs available in the Office. • offering opportunities to Indigenous interns. 	Dec 2018	HR
	Oct 2018	
	Sept 2018	
	June 2019	
	Sept 2019	Indigenous Co-ordination Team/HR
We will participate in the ‘excELerate’ career development pilot program being conducted by the APSC – for high-performing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander APS employees at the APS 5–6 levels	June to Sept 2018	HR

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2021

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
We will use the Indigenous Employment affirmative measure available under the <i>Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2016</i> to fill specific vacancies.	June 2019	HR/ RAP Champion
We will recognise, celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week.	May/June annually	RAP Champion RAP Working Group
We will recognise, celebrate and provide opportunities for staff to participate in NAIDOC Week and other days and events of significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (e.g. National Sorry Day).	Annually	RAP Champion RAP Working Group
We will ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols, such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement to Country are used appropriately at significant meetings, events and education sessions.	June 2019	RAP Champion
We will engage in a Commonwealth public sector Indigenous employee reference group to collectively identify solutions to common issues.	June 2019	HR
We will improve the careers section of our website to reflect the Office's strong commitment to Indigenous employment.	Dec 2018	HR
We will continue to raise the visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture and history within the Office, by displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.	June 2019	RAP Champion Chief Operating Officer (COO)

Disability Action Plan

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>We have appointed an SES Disability Champion to be an active ambassador for promoting disability issues and participate in the Disability Champions network to promote and facilitate collaboration between agencies, and support the joint implementation of initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through this role we will encourage and support our staff to develop and implement a culture of support for people with disability and champion their inclusion. 	June 2019	Deputy Ombudsman
We will apply the RecruitAbility scheme to our vacancies to maximise opportunities for people with disability.	June 2019	HR/Disability Champion
We will use the disability affirmative measures in the <i>Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2016</i> to fill specific vacancies where appropriate.	June 2019	HR/Disability Champion
We will ensure recruitment processes are accessible, inclusive and supportive of people with disability.	June 2019	HR
We will partner with disability employment service providers to reach more job seekers with disability and to promote awareness of the range of jobs available in the Office.	June 2019	HR
We will make workplace adjustments where required, including job design and flexible work arrangements and provision of assistive technology to maximise productivity.	June 2019	HR and ICT Team
We continue our annual membership with the Australian Network on Disability which is an organisation that supports organisations to advance the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of business.	Annually	HR
We will participate in disability networks to support implementation of inclusive cultures within agencies (e.g. Australian Network on Disability and APS Disability Champions Network meeting).	June 2019	HR/Disability Champion
We will ensure our workplaces are accessible to employees with disability.	June 2019	Property Team
<p>We engaged Westwood Spice to undertake a Disability Accessibility Review and will implement appropriate recommendations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve and embed disability confidence within the Office, and achieve inclusivity as an employer. 	July 2018 to June 2021	Disability Team to lead/co-ordinate

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2021

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>We will engage staff in disability related learning activities, in line with the adopted recommendations from the Disability Accessibility Review and learning requirements outlined in the Learning and Development Strategy 2018–2020, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mandated disability awareness training (eLearning module) for all employees—as a minimum • continuing with regular training in Mental Health First Aid, Trauma Informed practice and Vicarious Trauma • more extensive disability related training for specific roles, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inclusive communications for Operations and Communications staff, and - training on alternative communication methods, including the National Relay Service, enabling technology and speech to write software • ensuring recruitment and selection teams are disability aware and confident. 	Sept 2018	HR
	June 2019	
	June 2019	Disability Team/ICT/Comms
	June 2019	HR
We will provide support for managers and colleagues of people with disability (for example, increase manager uptake of Mental Health First Aid training and disability awareness training as appropriate).	Dec 2019	HR
We will recognise/celebrate events of significance such as International Day of People with Disability and R U OK Day.	Annually	Disability Champion HR/Disability Team
We will encourage people to share information about their disability and foster an environment where employees feel safe to share information about their status.	Annually	HR
We will improve the careers section of our website to promote the Office’s commitment to providing a disability confident culture and workplace.	Dec 2018	HR
We will develop a disability intranet page to provide our employees with information in relation to disability related issues and the support available.	Dec 2018	HR

Gender Equality Action Plan

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
We will promote the Office’s Domestic and Family Violence Policy and the support available and will provide generous and flexible access to existing leave provisions for victims of domestic violence.	June 2019	HR
We will commit to an appropriate gender balance on selection panels, with all panels asking ‘50/50—if not, why not’, as part of the shortlisting process.	Dec 2018	HR
Our leaders will take a positive approach in ensuring flexible work arrangements are not detrimental to an employee’s career progression.	June 2019	SLG
The flexible work provisions and guidelines will be promoted to all staff with a particular emphasis on increasing the take up by men.	Bi-annually	HR
We will encourage Senior Executives and Directors with flexible working arrangements to make their arrangements visible.	Bi-annually	SLG
We will continue to report to SLG on gender balance within the Office including by classification and take up of flexible working arrangements.	Quarterly	HR
We will use established mechanisms to monitor gender ratios for all branches to address areas of significant imbalance – where appropriate.	Quarterly	HR
We will encourage an appropriate gender balance for all internal Committees.	June 2019	SLG/ Governance Team

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Action Plan

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
We will join Pride in Diversity as an organisational member.	Annually	HR
We will develop a LGBTI Policy.	Dec 2018	HR
We will provide awareness raising sessions through speakers/training as appropriate	June 2019	HR
We will advise employees that the HRIS (Aurion) includes the option for employees to select M (male), F (female) or X (Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified) in relation to their sex and/or gender status in ESS.	Annually	HR
We will promote International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.	Annually (May)	SAO, Program Delivery
We will investigate whether membership of the AGD Pride Network is open to Office employees.	October 2018	SAO, Program Delivery