Final Report

How defined entities can achieve gender equality for Culturally Diverse Women in the Victorian Public Sector

**Project funded by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector**

**Report prepared by MindTribes Research Team in partnership with the Victorian Multicultural Commission, February 2020**

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which this research report was completed, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We value the spirit of reconciliation and recognise that any work to improve intersectional gender equality must acknowledge the inequalities that continue to be experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Working towards equity for all must begin with ensuring an equal voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As we strive for a more inclusive Australia, we acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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# Report overview

This report provides a detailed description of findings from research funded by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Victorian Public Sector (VPS): **How defined entities can achieve gender equality for Culturally Diverse Women in the VPS**

The document is divided into two parts. Part one provides an overview of the research project. It includes the research problem, research objectives, research aims and research questions, an extensive review of literature and interviews and research methodology. Part two provides an overview of the research findings. It includes a detailed description of the newly created framework encompassing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) assessment tool and practical model. The final section is the references and appendices.

## Definitions of terms and concepts

To ensure clarity and common understanding, the research team has specified key concepts and definitions. Key terms used in the research project such as 'CALD', 'workforce mutuality', 'intersectional gender equality and 'intersectionality', were defined through a thorough examination of literature and currently accepted approaches in policy and practice. While the research team acknowledges that other experts may have different interpretations, the following definitions were used throughout the project design and implementation.

#### ****CALD women / Culturally Diverse Women****

The term "Culturally and Linguistically Diverse" (CALD), commonly used in the research, practice, and policy discourse, refers to all of Australia's non-Indigenous ethnic groups other than the English-speaking Anglo-Saxon majority. The term CALD may include non-Indigenous people who also identify as People of Colour, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people of mixed heritage and people who may only speak English but identify with a non-Anglo culture. The term CALD Women is often used interchangeably with Culturally Diverse Women and, while different, overlaps considerably with the term Women of Colour (which typically, refers to women who do not identify as “white”).

The research team acknowledges that these terms are contentious and fraught with ambiguity, however in the absence of a single, broadly accepted descriptor to reference women who experience gender inequality, compounded by their cultural identity and/or ethnicity, the report defaults to the term “CALD women” unless specifically referencing research pertaining to a particular cohort such as Women of Colour. For this project, the research team asked participants to self-identify, when necessary.

#### ****Intersectionality****

Intersectionality describes the concept that people may experience overlapping forms of discrimination based on their specific attributes (such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender, cultural identity, sexual orientation, and religion), which may compound the disadvantage or discrimination experienced.

**Intersectional gender inequality**

For this report, Intersectionality refers to the intersectional gender inequality and compounded disadvantage and discrimination CALD women experience due to their racial and gender attributes. Their experience of gender inequality may be compounded by how gender-based discrimination intersects with other forms of diversity such as disability, cultural diversity, age, sexual orientation and religion.

#### ****Diversity Equity & Inclusion****

Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) refers to three concepts and practices that are crucial to an organisation’s success[[1]](#footnote-2). Diversity refers to the distribution of individuals from a range of backgrounds and with various attributes such as gender, race, cultural identity, disability, age, and social class, that make up an organisation.

While diversity refers to the statistical representation of people of diverse backgrounds, inclusion refers to the organisational culture and how valued, respected, and safe people feel. Therefore, inclusion in the context of this report refers to the organisation’s effort to implement practices that allow individuals of diverse backgrounds to feel culturally and socially accepted within the organisation. An inclusive organisational culture is one that ensures cultural and psychological safety.

Equity refers to how an organisation can reach equality in terms of status, rights, and opportunities and requires the embedding of impartiality and fairness into initiatives to provide equal opportunities for every individual. Equity is a process that understands the relationship between power and fairness and seeks to rebalance power dynamics to deliver fairness. As a concept, it acknowledges that not everyone starts from the same place as some individuals start with advantages while others with barriers. Equity is an integral aspect of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiatives as it creates the conditions for inclusion and bridges the gap between diversity and inclusion. This report acknowledges the importance of considering equity in any D&I initiative to best achieve equality for diverse individuals and as such, uses the term DEI rather than D&I.

#### ****Victorian Public Sector (VPS)****

For the purposes of this report, the acronym VPS refers to Victoria's Public Sector, which is comprised of public service bodies and public entities. As part of the Public Sector, the Victorian Public Service, which includes government departments, administrative offices, special bodies and the State Service Authority, will be referred to in full throughout this report, e.g., Victorian Public Service Women of Colour Network.

#### ****Gender Equity Act 2020 (the Act)**[[2]](#footnote-3)**

The Act promotes gender equality in the Victorian Public Sector, universities and local councils. The Act commenced on 31 March 2021. As described by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (CGEPS) that oversees the implementation of the Gender Equality Act 2020, “The Act promotes gender equality by:

* Requiring the Victorian Public Sector, local councils and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality.
* Requiring these organisations to consider and promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services.
* Establishing the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner to provide education, support implementation and enforce compliance.”

**Defined Entities**[[3]](#footnote-4)

As per the CGEPS website:

“The Act applies to certain organisations that have 50 or more employees, including:

* public service bodies
* public entities
* special bodies
* local councils
* universities
* Court Services Victoria
* Office of Public Prosecutions

Defined entities have [obligations](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/what-you-need-to-do-to-comply) to promote workplace gender equality and consider gender equality in their policies, programs and services.”

#### ****Workforce Mutuality**** [[4]](#footnote-5)

Workforce Mutuality, developed by the "HealthWest Partnership", whose members are Defined Entities, refers to the concept that the diversity of an organisation’s workforce should reflect the actual diversity of the community it services. The organisation’s diversity is assessed across all levels from the senior executive to individual contributors. [See Appendix 3 for a more detailed explanation].

# Executive Summary

## Problem

While the Victorian Public Sector (VPS) workforce consists of 67% women, it is yet to achieve intersectional gender equality, particularly for women who represent culturally diverse minority groups in the workplace. Minority groups, particularly culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women face significant barriers to entering and progressing in the Australian workforce.

CALD women experience additional intersecting barriers at work related to participation, economic security, and underemployment. CALD women have also faced more significant levels of psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic through increased instances of racism and harassment, and poorer results across the seven measures of gender equality used by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (gender pay equity; gender composition at all levels of the workforce; gender composition of governing bodies; workplace sexual harassment; recruitment and promotion; gendered work segregation; leave and flexibility).

From research and interviews, the leading causes of barriers CALD women experience can be summarised as:

* barriers related to existing societal structures and mechanisms (racism, sexism, tokenism, stereotypes and biases) [[5]](#footnote-6).
* barriers related to organisational practices (devaluation of skills and experiences, pigeonholing, lack of support networks)
* personal barriers (lack of confidence and language barriers), which intensify and (re)produce inequalities

## Purpose of the research

This report proposes an innovative and practical framework for VPS entities to break down the barriers that CALD women experience in the workplace. The report also considers how the proposed framework can work alongside and support the current Gender Equality Act (2020) to enable VPS entities to achieve genuine intersectional gender equality – while considering the practical realities of the individual entities to enact the framework.

## Methods

The study utilised a qualitative research design, comprised of two tranches. The first tranche involved gathering secondary data through an extensive literature review, while the second tranche comprised a collection of primary data using targeted interviewing with national and international researchers, practitioners, and representative VPS entities of different sizes, locations and sectors. Together, the project’s two tranches provided a review of nationally and internationally published best practice models and practical frameworks addressing workplace gender inequality; an understanding of the experiences of successful and unsuccessful practices, implemented by national and international researchers and practitioners; and an enquiry of existing programs and frameworks implemented within selected VPS entities.

## Findings from the literature and interviews

The literature review and interviews identified three main gaps in current research and practice related to addressing barriers for marginalised communities in the workplace, including CALD women:

* the need to fix systemic barriers that cause inequality and to view Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives through an intersectional lens
* the need to align DEI goals to organisational strategies and implement change at the organisational level
* the need to create initiatives targeting top-down change that create a trickle-down effect.

The review indicates that VPS entities must look beyond implementing reactive interventions and address root causes by focusing on organisational procedures and practices. This approach reflects the importance of an intersectional approach and aligns with the Act and the obligations for organisations to complete a Gender Audit that is then leveraged in the Gender Equality Action Plan.

Based on the gaps identified, this report articulates the need to create truly inclusive workplaces by applying a holistic approach that includes systemic, organisational and individual change to address the barriers CALD women face in the workplace.

## Recommended Approach and Framework

The research suggests that the VPS can break down barriers for CALD women by adopting a holistic framework (the Framework) as developed in this project. The Framework includes an assessment tool (the Assessment Tool) and high-level guidance (the Model) and promotes the conditions to change mindsets, relationships, processes, and structures in the VPS, enabling entities to achieve genuine intersectional gender equality and sustained inclusion for CALD women.

The Framework consists of the following processes that are repeated at the end of each stage (levels) of the practical model:

* Assessment *(utilising the Assessment Tool)*
* Establishing the Action Plan *(based on the Model)*
* Progression *(within the Model)*
* Review

It looks beyond stand-alone solutions and leverages Kotter’s organisational change model, Senge’s systems approach to change, the concept of the learning organisation, the idea of inclusive leadership, strategic diversity management and capability development.

#### Assessment (utilising on the Assessment Tool)

The Framework begins with an assessment, which is repeated after each level, to assess whether the organisation should move to the next level of activities in the Model. Based on the assessment results, individual entities can determine their current position and follow the recommended actions to move forward. Organisations move from an entry level position (Level 0) through the remaining levels to achieve an inclusive, diverse organisation (Level 5). In this way, each organisation’s situation and progress is assessed, ensuring that they build a stable platform, maintain their momentum, and importantly, only move forward when ready to do so.

#### Establish the Action Plan (based on the Model)A graphical depiction of the model, showing actions under each level from Level 0 as preparatory phase through to Level 5 as continuous improvement. The graphic shows different levels range progress from short term, to medium term to long term and are underpinned by executive buy-in, commitment and sponsorship, sharing best practice, and strong change management and communications. This is covered in detail in a later section.

Based on the first assessment, and in consideration of data and information obtained from their Gender Audit, an organisation must develop a DEI plan. In developing the plan, organisations need to determine:

1. Actions to be completed to meet its targets, or to progress to the next level in the Model
2. A realistic timeframe to complete the actions and the sequence in which activities should be undertaken
3. Communications for initiatives and actions
4. A budget and resource plan
5. A governance framework
6. The learning and development requirements of employees tasked with implementing, assessing, reporting on and sustaining the program of work

#### **Progression**

Progression in the Model reflects three levers VPS organisations must focus on to build genuine and sustainable intersectional gender equality – structural, leadership, and individual. The model and assessment tool apply these levers to support organisations correctly assessing their progress and readiness to move forward in their DEI roadmap.

**Structural**: Transforming policies, processes, systems, and organisational cultural alignment and capability development.

**Leadership**: Leadership and advocacy at the executive level to gradually transform the status quo.

**Individual**: Individual awareness and insight to increase personal agency, responsibility, and capacity to be responsive and adaptive.

#### **Review**

This process is discrete from the assessment. While the Assessment tool reflects an organisation’s readiness and progress to embark on planned initiatives, the Review process considers the organisation’s entire approach and issues that may not have been identified during the assessment.

The organisation should reflect on its performance against goals and targets to identify specific issues or trouble spots (e.g., underrepresented departments), to improve the effectiveness of future initiatives, determining the root cause of any issues, and removing barriers to future success. As part of the review, CALD women’s voices should be heard, and stakeholders consulted to uncover any difficulties in the implementation of the DEI plan.

Post the Review, organisations need to re-establish their targets, remove roadblocks to progress and escalate issues to senior executives should decisions be warranted.

Part one

# Project Background

## Research problem

The VPS is a diverse workforce with people from English-speaking backgrounds; non-English speaking background; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds; people with disabilities; culturally diverse people; people from different age groups; and people from the LGBTIQ+ communities. Roles in the VPS ( in leadership, administration or service delivery) support and provide services such as police and emergency services; and in sectors such as public health, education, creative industries, finance, transport, water, and land management.

The VPS workforce consists of 67% women and is making progress towards achieving equitable outcomes across all measures for women (People Matter Survey 2020). However, VPS entities have yet to achieve intersectional gender equality, particularly for women who represent culturally diverse minority groups in the workplace. As a report commissioned by the VPS Women of Colour Network indicates, minority groups, including CALD women, face significant barriers to entering and progressing in their workplace[[6]](#footnote-7).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly worsened the situation for CALD women. A study by the Office for Women on the impacts of COVID-19 found that CALD women have experienced additional, intersecting barriers at work, relating to participation, economic security, and underemployment. CALD women also faced more significant psychological distress during COVID through increased rates of racism and harassment.

The barriers CALD women experience are three-fold: barriers related to existing structures and mechanisms (racism, sexism, tokenism, stereotypes, and biases); barriers related to organisational practices (devaluation of skills and experiences, pigeonholing, lack of support networks); and personal barriers (lack of confidence and language barriers), which intensify and (re)produce inequalities[[7]](#footnote-8).

Further complicating efforts to reduce these barriers is the lack of uniformly accepted metrics to measure and understand the experiences of CALD women in the VPS. As a result, VPS entities do not collect relevant data or have comparable indices to benchmark against their peers, nor do they track progress longitudinally to achieve equitable gender outcomes for CALD women.

While there is limited published research on practical actions that organisations (particularly in the public sector) have taken and can take to achieve equitable outcomes for CALD women, the VPS Women of Colour report on the systemic barriers CALD women face in the workplace indicates existing structures and mechanisms in the VPS that (re)produce inequalities. Equally relevant is research that indicates that strategies implemented in isolation are likely to be less effective than those that address structural issues through comprehensive and holistic approaches[[8]](#footnote-9).

## Research Aims

This research explores the practical actions, initiatives and approaches that the VPS can implement to achieve genuine gender equality for CALD women. Specifically, it focuses on how within the framework of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act), defined entities can implement practical actions, initiatives and approaches to break down systemic barriers in the workplace.

## Research Objectives

* To identify the approaches defined entities are currently taking to address requirements under the Act.
* To provide case studies on how entities can identify actions for inclusion in organisational Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs), current and ongoing.
* To identify the current gaps preventing the VPS from achieving equitable outcomes for CALD women and to propose practical approaches or initiatives for implementation.
* To review international best practice examples that aim to improve workforce diversity.

## Research Questions

## What actions, approaches or initiatives have worked (and not worked) internationally and nationally to support and break down systemic barriers in the workplace for CALD women?

1. How can defined entities achieve gender equality for CALD women in the VPS workforce?

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study utilises a qualitative research design and is comprised of two tranches. The first involved gathering secondary data through an extensive literature review, while the second comprised a collection of primary data using targeted interviewing with national and international researchers, practitioners and representative VPS entities. Together, the project’s two tranches provide:

* An extensive review of published literature comprising nationally and internationally published best practice models and practical frameworks addressing workplace gender inequality.
* A deep understanding of the experiences of successful and unsuccessful practices, frameworks and models trialled or implemented by national and international researchers and practitioners.
* A thorough enquiry of existing programs and frameworks implemented within selected VPS entities to achieve gender equality for minority groups, including CALD women.

The research outcome was a practical framework to address systemic barriers faced by CALD women in the VPS.

### Data Collection

The research uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data was mainly gathered through interviews, while secondary data was collected through an extensive literature review.

#### Secondary data collection

In the first tranche of the research, an extensive collection of secondary data was conducted to prepare a literature review. While particular attention was paid to breaking down barriers for CALD women, this review considered Australian and internationally published academic papers, case studies, and organisations’ reports on practical approaches that have been implemented within organisations to improve intersectional gender equality in some way. The review considered literature on the success factors and barriers to effective change management within organisations from a management and behavioural perspective.

A range of industries, geographical and cultural contexts across different fields of research was also considered, including change management, psychology, gender studies, and sociology. This broad review provided an understanding of the practical, effective and ineffective mechanisms, and the organisational change required to achieve intersectional gender equality in the workplace.

#### Primary data collection

The target group included VPS entities and local and international researchers and practitioners who had relevant insights into the effective mechanisms for promoting diversity, inclusion, and intersectional gender equality. Research participants were engaged through direct email invitations and through MindTribes and CDW (Culturally Diverse Women) contacts. VPS representatives were engaged with support from the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

The collection of primary data from interviews provided a detailed and in-depth understanding of the current practices, frameworks and models applied worldwide. Specifically, the interviews were used to achieve a deeper understanding of:

* Effective and ineffective practices, used in different contexts
* The effectiveness of past or existing initiatives that promote intersectional gender equality within the VPS
* Barriers and success factors to the implementation of gender equality or diversity initiatives
* How VPS entities have undertaken their new obligations under the Gender Equality Act and whether these actions have promoted gender equality for CALD women

#### Data Analysis

The literature review data and transcribed interview data were analysed using qualitative or narrative data analysis methods. The constructionist grounded theory method was used rigorously to guide the analysis and interpretation of the interview data. Data analysis was conducted following three elements: sensitive theoretical coding, theoretical sampling, and comparison. Theoretical sensitive coding was used to generate concepts from the data to explain the techniques, activities and frameworks that have worked and not worked to achieve gender equality.

The interview data analysis commenced with the first interview and continued throughout the data collection period. The transcripts were read and coded with provisional themes that emerged from each interview. The constant comparison method was used to compare these stories across the course of an interview and between respondents to develop concepts. This process was conducted manually, and results are interpreted as text in the reports.

### Ethical considerations

The project applied a high level of ethical practice during and after the project life cycle. It involved secondary analysis of existing non-identifiable data and recruitment of human participants. There were no risks involved in this study as no sensitive or private information was collected, including when conducting interviews with selected VPS defined entities.

To ensure clarity of communication and understanding, the research team contacted selected national and international researchers and practitioners and representatives of VPS entities before the interviews and explained the interview’s purpose and nature. This allowed the research team to address any concerns and mitigate accordingly. Moreover, this allowed the participants to ask questions related to the interview process, the design and purpose of the study, and other concerns about participation.

Interviews were conducted online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The interview process was scheduled for 60 minutes in duration. Interviews were audio-recorded only with participants express permission and only for the purpose of fully transcribing the information accurately. All audio files were subsequently deleted. Where permission to audio recording was not granted, detailed notes of the interview were collected. At all times, verbal consent from participants was obtained before collecting information. To protect data and ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants, transcripts and notes were de-identified and assigned a unique code of analysis.

### Limitations

The study faced some challenges and limitations, which did not interfere with the overall outcomes. The main limitation experienced was due to COVID-19 restrictions as no face-to-face interviews were possible. The mitigation strategy consisted of extensive online meetings and remote consultations.

A second limitation was the responsiveness of international researchers and practitioners due to time differences and competing priorities. Despite this limitation, the findings and recommendations collected were sufficient to determine patterns and draw conclusions.

Further limitations relate to the scope of the research study and the capacity of the researchers. Due to these constraints, the research team could not re-examine the validity of the barriers CALD women face or the unique stressors of systemic discrimination and exclusion. However, it is noted that the experiences of CALD woman in the workplace are well researched (including in two previous related studies by this project team’s researchers[[9]](#footnote-10)). This was further mitigated by the research team conducting an extensive review of the existing literature to document the barriers and challenges previously identified (included in Appendix 1: Breaking down barriers for CALD women in the VPS).

It is important to note that the research did not focus on the “case for change” within organisations and was underpinned by the view that change towards inclusive organisations is imperative. Similarly, the research did not address the economic and social effects of systemic discrimination and their reinforcement of negative workplace structures as this was outside the scope of the study.

# Research Review (Literature, Case Reviews and Interviews)

## Overview

The research focused on exploring and understanding current DEI initiatives implemented worldwide and adopted a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding how organisations can evolve and embed inclusive practices. Over one hundred internally and nationally published articles were reviewed, and 30 interviews were conducted with VPS entities, national and international researchers and practitioners to produce this review.

The literature was examined across diverse disciplines in consideration of the first research question:

 *‘What actions, approaches or initiatives have worked (and not worked) internationally and nationally to support and break down systemic barriers in the workplace for CALD women?’*

The fields of sociology, organisational psychology, behavioural science, systems management, and change management were explored. This inquiry was supported by in-depth interviews with numerous researchers, practitioners and specialists from the gender, diversity and inclusion sector, and the examination of several case studies.

The review covers three main sections:

Firstly, it undertakes an examination of the barriers CALD women experience in the workplace. Examining locally published research papers and industry reports, the review provides a broader understanding of the types of barriers CALD women experience in the Australian workplace; systemic, organisational, and personal, and the obstacles to tackling these barriers at the organisational level. This is provided in Appendix 1: “Breaking down barriers for CALD women in the VPS.”

Secondly, the review focuses on the key programs, frameworks and approaches implemented worldwide to tackle the barriers all women experience in the workplace. The interview data and case literature – Australian and internationally published academic papers and organisational reports – focused on practical approaches to improve intersectional gender equality. This review considered all DEI initiatives and programs to gain a broad perspective, which helped to identify existing, innovative, and new ideas in practice worldwide.

Thirdly, this review explored the second research question of the study: *‘How can defined entities achieve gender equality for CALD Women in the VPS workforce?’*

Drawing on the interview and literature data, this section suggests that for the VPS to make authentic and sustainable change to support inclusion, it must engage in several processes: organisational change, system change, creating learning organisations, empowering inclusive leadership, strategic diversity management, and capability development. The following section provides an extensive explanation of these concepts.

## Introduction

#### Cracking the barriers: individual or organisational responsibility?

CALD women face unique stressors of systemic discrimination and exclusion in the workplace[[10]](#footnote-11). The barriers that women experience are systemic, organisational and personal, and they can be present at any phase of the employee life cycle (attraction, selection, recruitment, progression, retention and departure)[[11]](#footnote-12) research shows that racism, sexism, implicit biases and cultural stereotypes, micro-aggressions, bullying, and pigeonholing are the leading systemic barriers CALD women face in the workplace[[12]](#footnote-13). The main organisational barriers identified are devaluation of qualifications and work experience, lack of professional and social networks, and lack of role models and advocates. A lack of understanding of Australian labour market standards and recruitment mechanisms, along with reduced self-esteem and confidence, cultural mismatch, lack of trust, low credibility and safety, and voluntary exclusion are the most common personal barriers women experience in the workplace.

These barriers are complex and function at various levels[[13]](#footnote-14). However, there has been much effort invested in addressing them, both by researchers and practitioners. While some tackled issues by understanding organisational level warning signs and then acting, others attributed the responsibility to act to individuals, both those who experienced the barriers and those who were in positions of power[[14]](#footnote-15).

Many current initiatives focus primarily on personal or individual change, or individual assimilation into existing systems or structures rather than challenging the status quo[[15]](#footnote-16). Short-term training programs for leaders and employees such as intercultural understanding, anti-bias training, language skills and confidence training are prevalent. However, while these approaches are useful, there is a lack of focus on systemic barriers and the organisation’srole in causing and perpetuating inequality and discrimination.

## Case literature and interview findings

**“What actions, approaches or initiatives have worked (and not worked) internationally and nationally to support and break down systemic barriers in the workplace for CALD women?”**

This section of the review evaluates the frameworks, concepts, and practical actions that national and international organisations have used to promote intersectional gender equality in the workplace. It describes the most common actions, processes, and initiatives that different researchers and practitioners have implemented (successfully and unsuccessfully) to tackle workplace discrimination.

### Why do many DEI initiatives fail?

The following section reviews some of the primary reasons that DEI initiatives have been unsuccessful[[16]](#footnote-17) and provides a starting point for exploring approaches that have been more successful in practice.

#### The negative impact of biases

According to the interview data and reviewed literature, biases constitute one of the main obstacles to implementing successful DEI initiatives. Implicit biases are the perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes that operate before conscious intention and underpin damaging gendered, racial and cultural stereotypes[[17]](#footnote-18). Stereotypes are fixed, over-generalised beliefs about a particular group of people, such as people of colour or women[[18]](#footnote-19). Society infers that those individuals have a set of characteristics and abilities common among the group by stereotyping an individual or a group of individuals. These stereotypes inform implicit biases that damage specific groups like CALD women, people with disability, the LGBTQI community, migrants and refugees, who often experience these biases as barriers to job promotion, recruitment, retention, and equal opportunity[[19]](#footnote-20).

CALD women experience discrimination due to their gender and culture, which leads them to being implicitly or explicitly viewed as “outsiders.” Stereotypes and prejudice against CALD women cause women to be unfairly treated based on their names, visible appearance, skin colour, or how they speak. Implicit biases and stereotypes can manifest through covert forms of racism which are subtle in nature and difficult to identify and can also manifest in informal social interactions that occur in the work environment[[20]](#footnote-21). Managers have a direct role in influencing the social dynamics within the workplace, by either addressing or reinforcing forms of subtle discrimination. Typically, CALD women report that subtle racism is unaddressed and unpunished, which normalises the experience. Sometimes perpetrators are unaware that their behaviour constitutes discrimination or racism, due to the subtlety of the implicit biases that underpin their ways of thinking and behaving. The subtle nature of such behaviour makes it difficult for CALD women to report such instances, and often leads to an invalidation of their experience by those above them who may fail to recognise discriminatory behaviour. In turn, this can make CALD women less likely to report such instances, and lead to a distrust in reporting and increased feelings of being psychologically and culturally unsafe at work.

Along with implicit bias, affinity bias is another obstacle that hinders the success of many DEI initiatives. Affinity bias is the tendency to favour one’s own social group (ingroup) more than groups of which one is not a member (outgroups). Affinity bias encourages people to extend greater trust, positive regard, cooperation, and empathy to in-group members while discouraging intergroup contact, perpetuating negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination[[21]](#footnote-22). Dobbin & Kalev‘s research[[22]](#footnote-23) shows that group membership is an important source of one’s self-esteem. The study shows that self-esteem can be boosted by associating with high-status groups, distancing from low-status groups, and elevating the in-group’s relative status compared with outgroups. The research indicates that the formation of intergroup friendships can help dismantle social categorisations and decrease bias.

Implicit bias and affinity bias do not only directly impact the marginalised community but can also help perpetuate dominant organisational cultures[[23]](#footnote-24). For instance, when a dominant cultural group is already present within an organisation that is not diverse, affinity bias and implicit bias can be exacerbated and create organisational level barriers for marginalised groups. These provide comfort and familiarity and are a way to preserve the organisation’s cultural status quo. As a result, many organisations hire for “culture fit”.

Culture fit describes the likelihood that a person will conform and adapt to the core values and collective behaviours that make up a team and the broader organisation[[24]](#footnote-25). Hiring and promoting based on culture fit encourages bias, homophily (the likelihood that individuals associate mainly with others who are similar), and groupthink culture, leading to mono-cultural organisations that hire “their own” – often leading to a predominantly white male demographic, particularly in higher positions[[25]](#footnote-26). In this way, existing organisational culture is reinforced. Hiring for culture fit reflects affinity bias and leads to a reinforcement of the dominant cultural group within the organisation. The research highlights that without formal policies, active processes, and measures to promote diversity, biases serve as a direct barrier to minority groups.

One UK study demonstrates how hiring for culture fit impacts marginalised communities, particularly Women of Colour[[26]](#footnote-27). According to the study, Women of Colour often felt socially excluded and isolated as they do not fit into the UK pub culture. Women of Colour found it difficult to fit in with a drinking culture due to their social and cultural norms and values. However, rather than acknowledging the cultural differences, these women were excluded from workplace social functions and misinterpreted as antisocial, which then impacted their promotion and job retention.

The reviewed literature suggests that there is a need for organisations, and particularly managers, to play an active role in ensuring psychological and cultural safety in the social dynamics of the workplace. The impact of implicit biases manifests itself not only through hiring and promoting practices (such as hiring for culture fit), but in the informal daily interactions at the workplace between staff. While subtle in nature, implicit biases can lead CALD women to feel marginalised and socially excluded, with significant impacts on their professional performance and their mental health and wellbeing. It is imperative for DEI initiatives to address the impact of such implicit biases through holding managers and leaders accountable.

#### Under-representation of members of marginalised communities

An accurate understanding of the diversity of the workforce composition is best achieved using an intersectional approach. Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that demonstrates how individuals often experience compounding disadvantage due to intersecting and overlapping aspects of their identity, such as age, race, class, gender, ethnicity, aboriginality, disability, and sexual orientation[[27]](#footnote-28). It contemplates how people’s overlapping identities and experiences invariably create discrimination and disadvantages in their day-to-day economic, social, and cultural relations. The intersectionality framework recognises that the sources of oppression do not exist independently but overlap with each other, often resulting in a complex convergence of oppression. An intersectional lens allows organisations to manage the structural barriers minority groups face within the workforce.

Unfortunately, when organisations collect data on their workforce, they tend not to use an intersectional approach – instead, only reporting data by gender[[28]](#footnote-29). As a result, organisations are unable to measure how diverse individuals are represented, promoted, and hired, or in what occupational rank they fall. For a DEI initiative to address the barriers that marginalised communities face, there needs to be an accurate understanding of the diversity of the workforce composition through data collection and analysis, identifying where marginalised communities are under-represented and what barriers they face.

An interviewee from the VPS described the issue: *“We don’t collect intersectional data well as we don’t have those diversity indicators. There is a lack of intersectional data.”* An intercultural researcher and academic articulated a similar view: *“Some people think [gender equity] is fine, so they don’t see a need to push further diversity in terms of culture.”*

There is little reporting of diversity measures relating to CALD women in the workforce, which contributes to under-representation[[29]](#footnote-30). The 2013 FECCA (Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia) report[[30]](#footnote-31) highlights that many gender equality policies do not include CALD women because the data that informs these policies is not distilled based on ethnicity or cultural identity. Consequently, CALD women are left out of most gender equality policies. Furthermore, data collection often restricts cultural identity to only one ethnic group or utilises ‘country of birth’ alone, which is invariably the default category when examining CALD talent within organisations[[31]](#footnote-32),and only provides a partial view.

According to an interviewee: *“DEI treats minority groups in a silo way (women, disabled etc.) but not in an intersectional way.”*

Literature also suggests that gendered data tends not to be reported by occupational rank or work type, which does not allow occupational segregation to be captured, e.g., the number of women employed in part-time versus full-time work. CALD women in Australia face increased job insecurity compared to non-CALD women. Gender equality cannot be looked at in isolation from other diverse intersectional attributes such as ethnicity or cultural identity and organisations must collect and analyse data that has been disaggregated by attributes in addition to gender.

Work to prevent gender-based inequality cannot be done in isolation from work to address racism and other forms of discrimination[[32]](#footnote-33). When data is only collected based on gender, those with intersectional attributes such as CALD women become invisible and increases and decreases in their representation remains undetectable. The use of an intersectional lens ensures that CALD women are accurately represented in data collection and analysis, which consequently will help to address the issues they face in the workplace.

#### Short-term educational interventions

The implementation of DEI initiatives through short-term educational interventions such as anti-bias training has increased in the last 20 years[[33]](#footnote-34). These training programs are typically targeted at reducing the implicit biases that create prejudice. Organisations have relied on diversity training to reduce bias on the job and in recruitment, promotion, and grievance systems . However, research demonstrates that in general, these short-term educational interventions do not lead to behavioural or attitudinal change. Longitudinal research analyses show that short-term educational interventions, whilst used by most organisations, are ineffective at changing people’s attitudes and behaviour and can even backfire by prompting further bias and even hostility towards minority groups[[34]](#footnote-35). They also found that while diversity training can increase knowledge for compliance purposes, it has not been shown to effectively reduce implicit biases in the long term and that the positive effects rarely last[[35]](#footnote-36).

Supporting these findings, two interviewees provided perspectives on short term educational interventions:

*“Australia tends to just do one-day training once a year, which doesn’t create a big impact on changing negative behaviour such as implicit bias and anti-racism.”*

*“One-off anti-bias training does not work and at times it even creates backlash and can backfire by reducing diversity.”*

The main reason for the failure of short-term educational interventions is resistance. According to Self-Determination Theory, framing motivation as originating externally causes rebellion and resistance because people resist extrinsic control on their thoughts and behaviour[[36]](#footnote-37). Research indicates that feelings of blame and resistance may be reduced by using those who are not personally the targets of prejudice as trainers[[37]](#footnote-38). Resistance is also reduced when diversity initiatives focus on the inclusion of multiple groups to avoid certain groups feeling excluded and therefore, resistant. Employee feedback on training programs is important to identify employee dissatisfaction and resistance before it develops. Some research indicates that training that focuses on highlighting stereotypes can reinforce these stereotypes in people’s minds[[38]](#footnote-39).

Furthermore, diversity training may make majority groups feel excluded and guilty, reducing their support for diversity[[39]](#footnote-40), or responding with resistance. Integrating DEI training into broader professional development such as cultural intelligence training, can mitigate resistance, by removing the explicit label of diversity training.

An interviewee referenced the potential use of the CQ Model, a framework that builds cultural intelligence capability: *“It’s a tool for changing the mindset of leaders to make them ready for accepting cultural diversity changes and embedding that in the VPS system.”*

The CQ framework consists of building an understanding of culture and cultural differences[[40]](#footnote-41). This is an important consideration considering that research shows white men feel “tired of being made to feel guilty in every discussion of diversity…of being cast as oppressors”[[41]](#footnote-42).

#### Siloed Interventions: Centralised vs Decentralised approaches

Another reason why diversity training fails to create change is that it takes a siloed approach to DEI. Training is not integrated into the organisation’s culture, broader professional development, or the overarching business strategy and as a result, it becomes a tokenistic box-ticking exercise[[42]](#footnote-43). To benefit from educational interventions, organisations need to move beyond distinction made between passively valuing diversity (by recognising an individual’s worth), and actively managing diversity[[43]](#footnote-44). Actively managing diversity involves successfully organising the involvement of individuals with diverse backgrounds to ensure the organisation’s strategic goals are being fully and effectively met.

According to research by Dobbin & Kalev[[44]](#footnote-45), educational training should confirm with three basic principles:

1. Engage managers and senior leaders in promoting diversity
2. Increase inter-group contact between diverse groups to minimise implicit biases i.e., through self-managed teams and cross-training.
3. Encourage social accountability for change i.e., through diversity taskforces.

Short-term interventions that tend to occur as one-off events fail to instil any long-term behavioural or systemic changes. Rather than focusing on tokenistic short-term educational interventions, it is necessary for organisations to consider implementing structural and behavioural change initiatives.

To identify the effective elements of anti-bias training practices, one study evaluated a newly designed, interactive anti-bias initiative “(Workshop Activity for Gender Equity Simulation) WAGES-Business” against Google’s traditional anti-bias training.[[45]](#footnote-46)

Google’s traditional training format, like many widely used in business, consisted of a PowerPoint lecture presenting the scientific findings on unconscious bias followed by a Q&A session. WAGES-Business incorporated theory-grounded experiential learning methods where participants learn by ‘doing’. WAGES-Business presented scenarios of unconscious gender bias in business in a game setting. Players progressed along a game board to reach the highest level of professional attainment before concluding the exercise with a facilitator-led discussion. The study suggested that WAGES-Business and Google training participants were both comparable and participants in both groups were more likely to acknowledge unconscious bias than a control condition that did not undergo any training. However, the WAGES-Business participants were more knowledgeable of gender equity issues and more willing to discuss and confront bias. Participants were surveyed to establish the training’s effectiveness on their acknowledgement of bias, knowledge of gender equity issues, willingness to discuss bias, willingness to confront bias, concern about bias, resistance to perceived threats to freedom of behaviour and self-efficacy. The study showed that the WAGES-Business initiative was more effective than Google’s training, both immediately after the training and after one to two weeks, highlighting the increased effectiveness of interactive learning as opposed to traditional rote-learning that is commonly employed in short-term educational interventions.

The research thus suggests that DEI initiatives are better implemented through integration into a broader planned change approach to systemically manage diversity. While many organisations have implemented a corporate diversity strategy, most have not used a “strategic planned change approach” to manage diversity systemically[[46]](#footnote-47).

The notion of integration draws heavily on Senge’s Systems Thinking model[[47]](#footnote-48) in which all systems and processes within an organisation must be integrated for systems change to occur. According to Senge, individual stand-alone interventions do not produce systems change. Successful change requires a holistic approach that integrates individual-level changes with systems changes. This kind of systems thinking requires the ability to see the “big picture” and to be able to see the interrelationships between what may seem to be completely unrelated issues. In the context of diversity and inclusion, changing recruitment processes alone will not produce a maintainable, diverse workforce, but will need to consider the entire employee lifecycle (including sourcing and selection, talent identification, advancement, incentives and retention) to produce lasting change and increased diversity.

In the Finnish Defence Forces, a systems-change approach was used to challenge the structures and organisational practices across both horizontal and vertical hierarchies of the organisation. Researchers adopted an integrated approach to understanding pre-existing beliefs about gender equality initiatives[[48]](#footnote-49). Instead of applying specific gender equality practices, open dialogue encouraged the identification of the attitudes and beliefs that would serve as barriers to gender equality, thereby allowing researchers to better understand the context in which to apply change. Occupational group and rank were shown to affect participants’ views on gender equality. This application of systems thinking demonstrates how policies and practices can be better applied when understood within the context of the organisation.

Siloed and decentralised interventions are one of the reasons why stand-alone diversity training fails[[49]](#footnote-50) to create any long-term change and why it typically becomes a “box-ticking” exercise. Diversity practices become a compliance exercise when not included in strategy and integrated as a core competency across the organisation. In support of this point, a DEI practitioner explained how narrowly focused and decentralised interventions create less sustainable change outcomes: *“There is a misguided perception that DEI is a check-the-box exercise which comes about from companies believing that DEI is important without knowing what it is.”*

The shortcomings of decentralised interventions highlight the need for DEI to be driven by an approach to integrates it into the culture and across all levels of the organisation. Interviewees shared that: *“DEI is often silo-ed and seen as an HR* [Human Resources] *function living only in HR”* and *“We have silo approaches to the DEI action plan (i.e., disability, gender equality, multicultural) but we want to integrate these approaches with the GEAP (Gender Equality Action Plan) which takes an intersectional approach ….[GEAP’s] need to be seen as integrated, not as an add-on – this will help get over the barrier of lack of resourcing.”*

The literature and interview data support the view that DEI strategies must be integrated into and within “organisational DNA”. DEI must be integrated into broader business strategy and culture across all levels of the organisation[[50]](#footnote-51).

IBM’s success with DEI implementation is a good example of alignment of DEI with the organisation’s strategic goals. IBM took a non-siloed approach and sought to integrate DEI as a core competency across all levels of the organisation. DEI became an integral part of the organisation’s culture. IBM aligned their Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with their wider business strategy, embedding accountability for managers and senior leaders to ensure progress towards goals. IBM utilised a “5-minute drill” which took place during a discussion of management talent at the corporate and business unit levels. During senior-level meetings, executives were expected to discuss high-potential managers who were women or belonged to a minority group. This ensured that executives were held accountable for identifying and grooming high potential minority managers. Managing diversity was also included as a core competency for managers and included in training and orientation of new managers.

Change initiatives fail when leaders neglect to firmly anchor changes in the organisation’s culture[[51]](#footnote-52). An interviewee highlighted that effective implementation of policy, practice and behavioural changes require DEI to be seen as a core competency as opposed to a mere “add on”: *“People inside and outside the company don’t want DEI to be an add-on – it needs to be integrated deeply into the core of the business which changes how we collect data, how we talk about DEI, how we act on strategy and this all depends on the organisation’s ethos and culture.”*

According to PwC’s 2016 DEI report[[52]](#footnote-53), a standalone approach to DEI is not enough to create sustainable change or visible progress. Sustainable progress is only achieved if DEI is driven in an integrated way that targets all levels of the organisation – including those at the senior level through a top-down approach. According to the report, DEI must be embedded within the DNA of an organisation, identified as fundamental to success, and woven into the fabric of its business, customer and workforce strategies. The overarching aim should be to engage and influence stakeholders across the organisation towards the goal of a business environment where DEI is an implicit aspect of every discussion, activity, and customer interaction. Successful change requires a holistic approach that integrates individual-level changes with systems changes.

### A top-down approach that embeds accountability

According to the research, support and commitment of senior leaders and managers is critical for change, mainly when designing and executing policies, processes and actions that make CALD women feel valued and respected in the workplace. While some initiatives have worked, others have failed for several reasons such as poor accountability, lack of inclusive leadership, poor change management and resistance to challenge the status quo[[53]](#footnote-54). Moreover, belief that executives are acting in good faith with integrity is critical to establishing trust and gaining employee commitment.

Many organisations worldwide have implemented DEI initiatives to increase women’s representation, equal pay, and flexible working[[54]](#footnote-55). However, most have failed to create an equitable and inclusive workplace environment for Women of Colour[[55]](#footnote-56). According to McKinsey’s Women in the Workplace 2021 report, representation of Women of Colour is significantly lower compared to white men, white women, and men of colour at every step in the career pipeline, leaving them severely underrepresented at every level of employment.

As research indicates, the disconnect between organisational commitments to DEI and their ability to create a diverse and inclusive environment is the main reason behind the failure of most diversity and inclusion projects, which usually focus on targeting individuals to change their behaviour (bottom-up approach) rather than systemic and organisational level barriers[[56]](#footnote-57).

A study by Laver et al. highlights the downsides of bottom-up approaches to promote gender equality in the workplace[[57]](#footnote-58). They found that targeting individual-level changes such as introducing mentoring programs and hosting networking events increases individual skill and knowledge but does not produce sustainable systemic change. The study demonstrates that a bottom-up approach is ineffective in creating cultural shift or removing the structural barriers required for systemic change.

The interview findings of this study also reveal the inefficiency of the bottom-up approach. One interviewee who works as a DEI consultant expressed the view that bottom-up approaches fail to achieve genuinely inclusive workplaces: *“Leadership delegates DEI onto an employee group (i.e., a taskforce) which is ineffective as employees have burnout and they don’t have expertise in change management. Tasking someone passionate because of lived experience to do that work undermines the work from a capacity perspective and a knowledge perspective, and this results in failure – this is why bottom-up grassroots programs fail, and there needs to be a top-down approach.”*

When responsibility for change initiatives is assigned to lower organisational levels, employees have less power, capacity and capability to drive and sustain change. Supporting this point, Dobbin & Kalev’s research[[58]](#footnote-59) indicates the significance of senior leadership taking accountability to embed change into everyday practice. When leaders lack the incentive to pursue new organisational goals over old routines, they tend to resist change as too costly and uncomfortable. Consequently, a lack of accountability for achieving goals results in little incentive for change to occur. Confirming Dobbin & Kalev’s findings, one participant of this study also commented on the effects of accountability, particularly the ramifications of the absence of top-level accountability. Referring to the introduction of mandatory training at Starbucks to address racism, the interviewee stated that: *“People are saying on social media that mandatory training is not effective and organisations are now having to meet a demand for genuine accountability.”*

Creating accountability ensures that people assume ownership of their actions and lead by example rather than waiting for change to happen. For sustainable change to occur, individuals must be held accountable for enacting change as well as making sure it is being reinforced. The research identifies that creating accountability, where an individual or department experiences consequences for their performance or actions, is essential for organisational change. Many organisations have effectively focused on using a top-down approach to implement change initiatives, such as setting up diverse taskforces and committees, with support from executive leadership to create accountability structures. The Victorian Public Sector Enablers Network is a good example of such an initiative.

#### Establishing Accountability with Key Performance Indicators

Research and interview data also highlights the significance of creating strategic goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for creating accountability and executing successful change[[59]](#footnote-60). KPIs are clear and quantifiable measures that assess the progress of implemented actions towards achieving goals. IBM is an example of an organisation that has made use of clear, quantifiable KPIs within specific timeframes to hold leaders accountable for progress by committing to procure 15% of its 1st tier diverse suppliers from Black-owned suppliers by 2025[[60]](#footnote-61). Similarly, PwC committed to establishing KPIs for 20% of its partners being from a diverse cultural background in 2016, increasing to 30% by 2020[[61]](#footnote-62).

Organisations can also utilise the Objectives & Key Results framework (OKR) to embed accountability. The OKR framework enables organisations to create alignment and engagement around measurable goals that are typically set every quarter. This holistic framework comprises of qualitative objectives aligned with quantitative targets, by which organisations may measure progress. The literature indicates that DEI initiatives tend to lack performance mechanisms such as the use of KPIs or OKRs, leaving senior leaders with no metric to assess their accountability to achieve goals. The OKR framework or the use of KPIs provides a way to manage goals and assess performance across all levels of the organisation.

Establishing executive sponsored initiatives and creating quantifiable targets and metrics are a way to embed accountability and measure progress towards DEI goals.

VicRoads is a pioneer in Indigenous engagement and workforce participation with an Indigenous Employment Program that commenced in 2006[[62]](#footnote-63). A broader Indigenous Action Plan for 2011–2015 was developed with a 1% employment target which set a standard across the VPS. Leveraging the momentum and progress made towards this target, VicRoads now have a target of 2% Indigenous workforce participation by 2022 and have developed a series of initiatives to support the achievement of this target.

Two not-for-profit organisations in Australia successfully increased diversity and inclusion by embedding diversity-related goals into their broader organisational KPIs[[63]](#footnote-64). By creating clear and quantifiable targets that were integrated into broader KPIs, the organisations were able to drive change and prevent DEI targets from being decoupled from everyday practice. Embedding DEI targets into the broader organisational KPIs ensured that these were critical to the organisation’s success.

US tech company Hustle utilised an OKR framework to both define and measure diversity by conducting their first company survey in 2018[[64]](#footnote-65). Hustle’s survey utilised quantitative measures of their workforce representation by measuring the extent of diversity relating to gender, culture, ethnicity and sexual orientation. This data, disaggregated by intersectional attributes, was then compared to data averages of other Silicon Valley companies and the US average. Part of Hustle’s OKRs included a commitment to two equity/inclusion training programs per quarter: bias in the workplace and inclusive hiring best practices.

#### Creating transparency

While accountability is crucial to execute change initiatives, studies indicate that building transparency is also a critical element to achieve success. According to the literature and interview data of this study, building transparency holds organisations accountable for progress and reflects a commitment to fair and equitable practices. A lack of transparency via selective corporate reporting is one way that organisations avoid accountability for diversity-related performance[[65]](#footnote-66). Research also indicates that creating transparency around performance ratings, promotions, and pay increases by race and gender embeds organisational accountability[[66]](#footnote-67).

One interview participant expressed her view on the significance of transparency to increase accountability: *“Companies must be genuine and have a willingness to grow. The metric of trust is not being considered and there is low transparency with the metrics … People inside and outside the company don’t want DEI to be an add-on – it needs to be integrated deeply into the core of the business which changes how we collect data, how we talk about DEI, how we act on strategy etc. This all depends on the organisation’s ethos and culture.”*

Non-disclosure of poor performance and avoidance of accountability affects the progress of achieving the desired outcome of DEI initiatives. While most organisations report externally on gender equality in response to external stakeholders and potential employees, others are reluctant to report when it may attract unwelcome pressure for further action[[67]](#footnote-68). According to Grosser & Moon, external pressure such as public and government demand for detailed reporting produces transparency in reporting. Grosser & Moon identify the following requirements for transparency related to gender equality:

* Active government drivers to encourage reporting
* Standard and mandatory reporting practices to ensure transparency and comparisons across organisations
* Standardisation of practice for unbiased and comprehensive reporting
* Disaggregated gender data, by intersectional attributes and occupational rank

IBM is a good example of creating a transparent reporting mechanism. Executives are held accountable for progress towards DEI goals, which have been tied directly to bonuses and compensation to increase incentives. IBM harnesses data transparency to enable accountability, action and outcomes for increased diversity representation and inclusion at every level. To further promote transparency, the organisation has committed to publicly share their EEO-1 data (detailed workforce data by race and gender which must be reported annually to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)in 2022[[68]](#footnote-69).

The review undertaken for this study has found a general lack of public reporting of data on both workplace composition and progress made towards DEI goals. Recent studies highlight the importance of an intersectional approach to data collection, particularly to make minority groups such as CALD women visible in workforce data composition. Currently, most organisations collect data in a siloed manner and when workforce data is not disaggregated by intersectional attributes such as cultural identity, gender, and ethnicity, the obstacles to true representation of minority groups remains hidden.

Monash Council is a good example of an organisation using an intersectional approach to data collection. Intersectionality was adopted as a guiding principle within the *Monash Loneliness Framework 2020–2025[[69]](#footnote-70).*

#### Engaging senior and middle managers

Support and commitment from senior and middle management is another way to minimise the ineffectiveness of bottom-up approaches[[70]](#footnote-71). Leaders build the advocacy for DEI to implement changes in everyday practice and can prevent a disconnect between official rhetoric and action. However, getting leaders to commit and support DEI can be difficult and mainly relies on intrinsic motivation. As one interviewee described: *“The willingness of senior leadership is important; they often shut down when there is a challenge to their authority and control.”*

Research by Dobbin & Kalev[[71]](#footnote-72) demonstrates the significance of holding leaders and senior management accountable, which effectively pushes change top-down. Active engagement and championing encourages all members of the organisation to take an active role in DEI efforts. This leads to a normative commitment to change within the organisation through a ‘role model’ effect, that trickles down from senior leadership positions to middle leadership and lower. An interviewee in this study also highlighted this point when asked about the importance of senior management in DEI work: *“We need champions at the top level, and only then will everyone feel like they have to be involved.”*

When senior leaders undertake accountability and create transparency, employees at the lower level of the employment ladder develop trust. This process is referred to as the ‘cascading’ effect[[72]](#footnote-73). As Ariel Wendling, CEO of #NotMe, an enterprise solution for reporting and resolving work-related misconduct, describes it: *“Without [good faith], diversity initiatives cannot work. Without good faith, employee productivity cannot excel. Without it there is no psychological safety. Good faith is foundational. What is good faith? The Oxford dictionary defines ‘good faith’ as honesty or sincerity of intention.”*

The inclusion of multiple layers of sponsorship creates a network of sponsors that sustains change progress. Cascading sponsorship that starts from senior level management and executives creates a model of distributed leadership that allows the change to move through multiple organisational locations, divisions, and departments. The engagement of senior leaders also helps build normative commitment within the organisation and generate buy-in from lower levels of the organisation and middle managers[[73]](#footnote-74).

Cinépolis, the second largest luxury cinema company in the world by number of customers, utilises cascading sponsorship as part of their leadership strategy[[74]](#footnote-75). Cinépolis cites their success as coming from engaging all learners. Learning content is customized for each level of the organisation and shared between groups to ensure common reference points are consistent among leaders. Top performers (at every level of the organisation – not just executives) are given the opportunity to share content to the next levels down, which provides a highly visible and influential way to share expertise, shape future leaders, and keep employees engaged. Top performers at different levels of the organisation are also used as facilitators. The use of cascading sponsorship results in engaged leaders at all levels of the organisation who are empowered to share content to lower levels and prevent any ‘watering down’ of learning as it cascades from level to level.

While top-down approaches emphasise accountability for those in senior positions, it is important to highlight the role of middle managers who are mainly responsible for shaping the workplace’s social dynamics, which either reduce or reproduce inequalities[[75]](#footnote-76). Racism, discrimination, and workplace bullying commonly manifest covertly through informal, everyday social interactions, and middle managers strongly influence these interactions. Thus, instances of racism and discrimination are facilitated and reinforced by middle managers who fail to take an active role in identifying and addressing them. As a result, inaction breeds a culture where racism and discrimination become normalised. Researchshows how middle managers’ active involvement is critical to creating an inclusive workplace culture and aiding DEI initiatives. From a psychological perspective, Dobbin & Kalev[[76]](#footnote-77) argue that when individuals act in a way that supports a particular view, their opinions will likely shift toward that view to avoid cognitive dissonance. Thus, when managers are actively involved in diversity efforts, they will think of themselves as diversity champions. Diversity efforts should be integrated into an overarching initiative that communicates commitment from upper levels and supports middle management to help shift attitudes.

In summary, the reviewed literature shows that the use of a bottom-up approach alone is ineffective in creating systemic and structural changes within organisations. While approaches that target individual-level changes are important, grassroots approaches alone do not create significant systemic change. Engaging middle managers (particularly male managers) in addition to senior leaders and executives is necessary to ensure that change ‘cascades’ from the top to lower levels of the organisation.

#### Inclusive Leadership that Promotes Culture Add over Culture Fit

Organisations often hire and promote based on “culture fit” - favouring individuals who are similar to those in the dominant cultural group - as a way to either consciously or subconsciously preserve comfort and familiarity[[77]](#footnote-78). This encourages a culture of groupthink which leads to monocultural organisations with low levels of gender, ethnic, or cultural diversity in most senior positions. Without intervention to ensure this type of affinity bias is minimised, homogeneity is facilitated. This becomes a direct barrier for employees of marginalised communities to be hired or promoted and can lead to those within an organisation feeling excluded and socially isolated.

Conversely, “culture add” looks for people who share the organisation’s core values but focuses more on gaining valuable elements that existing organisational culture lacks. Studies indicate that developing inclusive leadership capabilities is vital to drive change from top-to-bottom and to also function effectively in different cultural settings. An exploration of current initiatives worldwide indicates that leaders who promote ‘culture add’ over ‘culture fit’ foster diversity and minimise the tendency for organisations and their hiring practices to steer towards homogeneity.

A 2018 study[[78]](#footnote-79) found that not-for-profit aged care homes that had a diverse employee base had a culture that placed significant value on culture add, cross-cultural understanding, and language skills – leading to an inclusive and culturally safe work environment. A strong focus on cultural diversity was reflected in the expectations imposed on residents and staff, creating a positive work environment that enables CALD staff to adapt to cross-cultural care practice.

Studies indicate that developing inclusive leadership capabilities is vital to function effectively in different cultural settings. Inclusive leadership is one way of building more diverse and inclusive workplaces. According to the research, inclusive leadership that promotes cultural sensitivity and values cultural differences drives a culture of hiring and promoting individuals that add valuable cultural elements and ways of thinking that can enhance organisational culture.

IBM is an example of an organisation that focuses on inclusive leadership. IBM holds executives and senior leaders accountable for making an explicit effort to talk about high potential minority group employees (alongside white males) in all discussions of senior talent. This a way to minimise the tendency for homogeneity, or ‘white male cloning’, to occur at senior levels of employment.

Deloitte’s 2016 report Inclusive Leadership[[79]](#footnote-80) states that inclusive leaders must be highly sensitised to personal biases such as homophily, stereotypes, and groupthink and must possess the ability to function effectively in different cultural settings. Capability training can build leaders’ recognition of how their own culture impacts their personal worldview, as well as how cultural stereotypes influence their view of others. The basis of cultural sensitivity and understanding should lead to valuing cultural differences and defying ethnocentric tendencies that cause people to judge other cultures as inferior to their own. To be inclusive, senior management must actively make the effort to learn about the presence of biases, to self-regulate, and to develop corrective strategies.

According to Deloitte’s report, without an effort to intervene on biases, leaders tend towards their natural state of self-cloning and self-interest. The report cites BHP Billiton’s CEO as an example of an inclusive leader who emphasises placing checks and balances on hiring processes to mitigate implicit biases. However, awareness-raising of implicit bias, e.g., through anti-bias training, is not in itself sufficient to address systemic challenges[[80]](#footnote-81). While beliefs and biases themselves may be hard to eliminate in individuals, both structural and cultural change can minimise the effects of these biases, particularly in relation to recruitment. The intent of “culture add” must underpin practices such as hiring and promoting to promote diversity[[81]](#footnote-82).

### The need for behavioural change to make change happen

#### The Importance of Generating Buy-In for Change Initiatives

For change initiatives to be effective, there needs to be sufficient “buy-in” across the whole organisation. Buy-in refers to the initial support of impacted staff to the identified changes. Buy-in requires organisational members to have an adequate level of “readiness for change”, which can be defined as shared change commitment and the shared belief in their collective capability to do so. Buy-in and readiness for change considers the behavioural aspect of change management, where motivation, cooperation and willingness to change is created to implement change successfully[[82]](#footnote-83). Therefore, an important part of successful change implementation, before any change is enacted, is the preparation of the organisation to be open to the proposed changes.

Reflecting this point, several interviewees discussed the importance of behaviour change:

*“Buy-in and commitment from senior-level management are key for early successes. Cultural change needs to be the target, - looking at behavioural changes – resistance arises when DEI is not seen as a priority.”*

*“We know we need to change behaviours, especially in the diversity and discrimination space. Changing minds is generational, but you can change behaviours. But you have to work out in detail where those behaviours cause problems.”*

*“People don’t realise their behaviour [can be] ethnocentric”.*

 To leverage buy-in, DEI must be seen as a priority and as a core competency of the organisation. Research suggests that having strong role models and a learning culture facilitates organisational buy-in[[83]](#footnote-84). A learning culture may be defined as a culture that embraces innovation, risk-taking, and learning and consists of a growth mindset amongst employees and a commitment to acquiring knowledge and new skills[[84]](#footnote-85). A learning culture promotes knowledge sharing and an openness for new ideas which in turn facilitates collective buy-in for change and reduces resistance[[85]](#footnote-86).

Research also suggests that pre-existing organisational culture significantly influences the extent to which an organisation is likely to accept and adopt proposed change. Organisational culture can be defined as the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values and ways of interacting that contribute to the unique social environment of an organisation[[86]](#footnote-87). These facilitate or inhibit readiness for change and resistance to change. In organisations where competition, bottom-line performance, and academic excellence are prioritised (such as high-performance corporate cultures), diversity initiatives can be seen as a threat to either meritocracy or company performance[[87]](#footnote-88). In such cultures, a behavioural approach to facilitating readiness for DEI change may require refraining from explicitly branding DEI efforts as such, and instead, framing DEI as part of a broader business strategy.

Changing attitudes and behaviour does not always require overt strategies and enablers. Recent studies indicate that organisations have successfully drawn upon nudge theory; an evidence-based approach that utilises subtle, subconscious ‘nudges’ that steers the mind in a non-intrusive way to change behaviour without taking away the freedom to choose something else[[88]](#footnote-89). Behavioural nudges are mental pushes used to influence people to act in a desired way without convincing them via rational arguments, incentives, threats, or punitive measures. As outlined in Deloitte’s research[[89]](#footnote-90), nudges may be used to target motivation through an emotional connection so that people ‘feel the need’ to make a change:

“Two groups of assessors were given fictional candidate resumes to assess for a particular role with the only difference being the candidate’s gender and name. Assessors were asked to rate them on the likelihood that they would hire the candidate. Results showed that there were diverse responses between the groups where the male group scored the individual significantly higher than the female group. The results were shared with the whole group, allowing the assessors to spot the patterns in how the two groups rated the candidate differently due to gender and race. This helped bring awareness to assessors to ‘feel’ the impact their implicit associations and stereotypes can have on hiring and evaluating candidates.”

Nudging has been used by health organizations to educate citizens about COVID-19 testing and vaccination[[90]](#footnote-91). In Switzerland, people have been nudged to automatically enrol in clean-energy programs by ensuring that the “dirtier” program is more expensive[[91]](#footnote-92). The best way for organizations to develop a capability in nudging is to utilise people with skills in this area. The next best option, however, is to train people in-house on the basics of behavioural science or behavioural economics. The following example of nudge theory was provided by an interviewee skilled in behavioural insights research:

*“The tax office nudges better than almost anyone. They are very clear that if you want someone to use something, you can nudge them towards it. For example, we are nudged about how to claim on work uniforms in the easiest way possible. When they want you to pay your taxes, nudges are effective. When they need you to do something, mandates are used.”*

Another approach to behavioural change addresses “affinity bias”. Studies indicate that the formation of intergroup friendships can help to dismantle social categorisations and decrease bias. Workplace activities and events that encourage knowledge share promotes “individuation” of outgroup members so that they are considered as individuals rather than as a member of a broader social category. Studies have shown that inducing a positive mood enhances cognitive flexibility and leads to broader and more inclusive categorisations. As such, organisations should offer individuals from different social groups opportunities to develop friendships to promote inclusivity and decrease implicit biases.

A body of evidence highlights the importance of preparing for change prior to implementing DEI initiatives. Organisations often fail to take the time to leverage buy-in and reduce potential resistance to change. Successful implementation to change requires adequate buy-in from all staff and facilitates the likelihood of sustainability.

### The need for policies and processes that enable change at a structural level

Reducing the barriers that marginalised communities face in the workplace requires changes at the structural level. In recognition of this, most research has focused on developing policy and strategy to minimise the impact of barriers on employees from diverse backgrounds.

#### Trusted Reporting Procedures

The Safer Workplaces for Women of Colour report (2021)[[92]](#footnote-93) found that racism and discrimination were major contributors to “poor workplace culture” and posed a significant barrier for Women of Colour in the Victorian Public Service. While 32% per cent of survey respondents indicated that they had personally experienced workplace racism, and 58% of respondents had personally experienced bullying or harassment, 60% per cent chose not to report the incidents due to distrust and lack of confidence in reporting processes and fears of negative consequences to their employment. The majority of respondents who did report their experiences stated that reporting failed to produce a satisfactory resolution.

While an organisation may have documented policies and practices to deal with discrimination, a culturally unsafe organisation with systems and processes that are not perceived as confidential and impartial are barriers to an individual’s willingness to report. Standardised and trusted workplace reporting systems that are confidential and anonymous build trust and encourage reporting.

Culture Amp is an organisation that fosters a ‘speak up culture’ that encourages members to come forward with both major and minor incidents. Leaders are responsible for cultivating this environment and making people feel comfortable enough to raise even the smallest pieces of information – even if anonymously: “*It’s about an individual feeling comfortable about raising a confidential concern if something doesn’t seem quite right. These ‘tip offs’ are useful indicators of an issue – the tip of an iceberg*”[[93]](#footnote-94).

While there may be incident reporting channels available, CALD women are not always willing to come forward. The absence of anonymous and confidential reporting systems, low levels of psychological and cultural safety, and organisational culture that discourages individuals from speaking out constitutes a structural barrier to incident reporting. As such, incidents of discrimination, bullying, racism and sexual harassment are under-reported. Under-reporting is particularly aggravated in the presence of power imbalances (e.g., when the perpetrator is in a more senior position than the complainant) and if individuals fear negative consequences of reporting. This is particularly true for migrant employees who depend on ongoing contracts to maintain their visas.

#### Affirmative Action

In addition to creating safe and trusted reporting systems to respond to incidents, organisations can target a lack of diversity and inclusivity more directly through the implementation of affirmative action which is shown to produce positive effects and significantly increases the representation of women in certain sectors. Affirmative action refers to policies and practices aimed at increasing workplace opportunities for specific minority groups who are underrepresented. It focuses on improving historically low representation to offset discrimination and disadvantage in access and opportunities. Formal legislation or mandated quotas facilitate organisational cultural change at institutional levels[[94]](#footnote-95) and holds organisations accountable for increasing levels of workforce diversity. The success of gender equality initiatives in Denmark, Sweden and Norway[[95]](#footnote-96) highlights the effectiveness of this type of affirmative action.

Legislative action increased the proportion of South African women in parliament, with South Africa now being one of the top 20 countries in the world in terms of closing the gender gap (approximately 75%)[[96]](#footnote-97). While access to income-earning employment was improved in South Africa, a wide disparity still exists between types of employment; more women are employed in part-time work than men. A similar significant upward trend was observed in Italy with the implementation of gender quotas in the banking sector[[97]](#footnote-98). However, the progress made by women was mainly to non-executive positions, indicating that occupational segregation persists despite an overall increase in the representation of women. The banking and finance sector is still dominated by cultural constraints and stereotypes which dramatically hinder the rebalancing of roles between genders in Italy.

Affirmative action can also increase incidental contact between diverse groups, which inadvertently helps break down harmful implicit biases and stereotypes[[98]](#footnote-99). While affirmative action does not directly address behavioural changes, the increased representation of diverse individuals reduces the reinforcement of dominant culture groups and shifts the organisational culture toward one that is more inclusive. Affirmative action is especially effective in tandem with organisational KPIs for minority group representation.

While affirmative action can help improve diversity, pre-existing attitudes and cultural beliefs (such as the idea that men are inherently better leaders) can become barriers to intersectional gender equality. While the proportion of women may increase through quotas, existing biases and prejudices within the organisation will continue to operate as barriers to an inclusive workplace. Therefore, policies and practices that are aimed at increasing the representation of minority groups must simultaneously address organisational culture.

Research finds that the majority of affirmative action policies lack an intersectional lens and have focused on increasing the representation of women without considering attributes other than gender. While affirmative action is typically aimed at increasing the representation of women, it must adopt an intersectional approach that considers cultural identity and ethnicity to make a meaningful difference for CALD women[[99]](#footnote-100).

#### Addressing Flexible Working

One of the most common reasons for women not progressing into senior roles is the negative impact being a parent or primary caregiver has on career progression[[100]](#footnote-101). Women who have children are less likely to be employed in more senior positions because of harmful stereotypes such as a perceived lower commitment to the organisation. While flexible working conditions mitigate some disadvantages, they may not directly address discriminatory cultural attitudes such as the belief that the “ideal worker” is essentially masculine. Having flexible working conditions, such as the option to work part-time or work reduced hours with the same output, is an effective means of supporting the careers of women with children[[101]](#footnote-102).

However, data collected from the Victorian Public Service Women of Colour Network survey (2021)[[102]](#footnote-103) showed that almost 50% of Women of Colour were unaware of flexible working policies. Migrant women are particularly impacted due to their lack of networks and support to help care for their children[[103]](#footnote-104). Migrant women may also face personal barriers such as a cultural expectation to look after children and manage domestic duties. Complicating their situation, CALD women typically lack both employment security and industrial advice. This contributes to a reluctance to challenge the view that flexible working is a ‘perk’ and not a right. The research also showed that Women of Colour are often hesitant to request anything “extra” for fear that it will negatively impact their prospects of advancement or job security.

According to the report on Gender Diversity in Action at AON (2009)[[104]](#footnote-105), flexible work policies are dependent on supportive individual managers and workplace culture. For example, small organisations may not be able to afford paid maternity leave, or some managers may be less inclined to allow employees to work flexibly than others. Given that flexible working opportunities may be dependent on the manager or the specific culture of the immediate workplace, standard policies applied equitably across the organisation are crucial. These must be accompanied by a commitment to normalise flexible working as part of organisational culture. The option to work flexibly must be viewed as an aspect of the modern workplace and organisations must develop a culture that values performance over physical presence.

The importance of addressing organisational attitudes towards flexible working was supported by an interviewee who stated that: *flexible working arrangements are said to be hard to implement, but this comes down to the attitudes and stigma towards it.*

In summary, the research reinforces the need to support flexible working to ensure that the needs of women in minority groups are being addressed. Given employers’ universal support for flexible working during the CoVid pandemic and backed by evidence that “the switch to remote working had not materially impacted on employee’s productivity” [[105]](#footnote-106), in a post-CoVid world it is important to retain the benefits for CALD women. Employers can also reinforce that successful flexible work arrangements are compatible with management and leadership roles. When policies are applied fairly and equitably, they can serve to increase workforce participation and minimise the ethnic pay gap that exists within most organisations[[106]](#footnote-107).

### The need for Continuous Incremental Change

For most organisations, the managerial capacity to implement change management programs has been underdeveloped with research showing a failure rate of 60-70% for organisational change projects[[107]](#footnote-108). Due consideration must be given to generating sufficient support prior to implementation for the rate of change and to reinforce the changes after they are implemented[[108]](#footnote-109). Change management models and frameworks are effective to organise, and guide planned organisational change in a structured way – which many organisations fail to do[[109]](#footnote-110).

While many organisations have implemented diversity initiatives in the past few decades, few have made use of a planned change approach to systemically manage DEI programs. As such, many diversity initiatives fail to become systemic to an organisation’s culture, resulting in a decoupling of diversity rhetoric from actual practice. This review indicates that the use of a planned change approach will help create a progression from merely valuing diversity to systematically managing it, and that change should be considered as a continuous process of incremental shifts as opposed to once-off radical change that is not sustained.

While certain practices may be effective in driving change, the way in which these practices are enforced and the rate that change is enacted, significantly influences how successful implementation is[[110]](#footnote-111). According to Kettinger & Grover, change should be considered as a continuous process and implemented in incremental steps; radical change may have negative effects on an organisation’s performance and lead to a large degree of resistance from employees[[111]](#footnote-112). Incremental change can be described as a process that modifies the status quo via simple, minor adjustments. Change is typically met with some degree of resistance, however research shows that a series of small wins to consolidate gains, while facilitating continuing change efforts, is highly effective at keeping people encouraged and focussed on the next small win[[112]](#footnote-113). A strategy of small wins can be defined as one in which people “identify a series of controllable opportunities of modest size that produce visible results”[[113]](#footnote-114).

The use of a ‘small wins’ strategy concurrently marks progress and shifts attention and energies to the next areas of action within organisations[[114]](#footnote-115). Small wins represent movements from one stepping-stone to the next, and their accumulation results in more noticeable achievements that represent symbolic markers of progress. When change is incremental, the degree of resistance is likely to be reduced. Furthermore, incremental change is typically more effective and sustainable[[115]](#footnote-116). The exact strategy for managing change will depend on the maturity of the organisation, its readiness to embrace a DEI change program, the stage of organisational development, and the type of change needed[[116]](#footnote-117).

An interviewee for this study stated the importance of considering howto implement DEI change initiatives:

*“Change management must be considered as a large part of DEI.”*

*“What we are lacking is a perception that DEI rests on dense literature on how to create change – we aren’t giving it the resources, investments, and energy needed.”*

Having small and quantifiable short-term goals in the form of KPIs is an effective starting point to create sustainable momentum. Furthermore, starting with the most engaged and willing departments and teams can help build momentum that motivates sustained effort while also sparking additional efforts for organisational change[[117]](#footnote-118).

The concept of small wins was also considered important by another interviewee, who stated that: *“We need to celebrate some of the small wins to show people we are making progress, otherwise people won’t know”.*

Involving key organizational participants, particularly managers and senior leaders, will increase the likelihood that work will be effective and sustainable over time. Any disconnect between the corporate culture and the change program can diminish the potency of the change initiative and impede the change from becoming entrenched in existing organisational culture[[118]](#footnote-119). Any conflict or resistance encountered should be addressed during the evaluation of the organisational context and climate prior to implementation to ensure there is adequate readiness for change. Disconnect and resistance can be minimised through clearly integrating DEI initiatives to the organisation’s broader strategic direction, core competencies, and corporate culture. The likelihood of success occurs when the changes are viewed as long-term, continuous investment, with short-term wins to motivate employees during the change effort as opposed to a quick fix.

## Summary of Literature Review

The literature and interview data identified that the need to tackle workplace gender inequality for marginalised communities is well accepted by researchers and practitioners. However, while many organisations have expressed the intent to create genuinely inclusive workplaces, efforts to address inequality and identify its underlying causes have been disparate and ineffective.

An important gap identified with current approaches highlighted by this review is the mismatch between organisational goals and DEI goals. Most initiatives that focus on addressing DEI issues take siloed approaches that lack a broader understanding of systems and structures and are not reflected in organisational goals. A lack of commitment and accountability creates a trust and credibility deficit and results in less buy-in from employees, thereby creating resistance to change the status quo.

The review identifies the limitations of bottom-up only approaches that focus primarily on personal change and individual assimilation into existing systems or structures. Three main gaps were identified in current practice:

* the need to look at DEI initiatives with an intersectional lens
* a systems approach to align DEI goals to organisational goals and strategies
* initiatives that focus on top-down change to create a trickle-down effect.

## Theoretical approach

**“How can defined entities achieve gender equality for Culturally Diverse Women in the VPS workforce?”**

It was noted by the researchers and interviewees that despite a large body of work existing on what is required to create more inclusive organisations for all marginalised communities, significant organisation-wide change to shift systemic discrimination in the workplace has not occurred. The review shows that existing research to understand and find solutions to curb discrimination, mainly focuses on the subjects (victims) or agents (perpetrators) of discrimination and is less focused on the underlying systems and structures that perpetuate discrimination in the workplace. Consequently, organisations develop piecemeal programming with a siloed and narrow focus, resulting in unsustainable and unsuccessful change.

The review and interview data indicate that the underlying structures of modern workforces are still dominated by existing benefits and privilege coupled with self interest in maintaining the current status quo. The absence of measures or metrics in most organisations to measure the experiences of CALD women demonstrates a lack of knowledge of lived experience and overlapping and intersecting disadvantages.

The change required for an organisation to shift from homogenous, inequitable, and exclusive to genuinely diverse, equitable and inclusive requires:

* specifically targeted holistic initiatives based on qualitative and quantitative data that considers organisational change, and systematic change, while
* fostering a learning culture, and
* developing inclusive leadership to address inequities and empower marginalised employees.

Policies and practices must uphold a commitment to valuing all voices at work to ensure employees feel psychologically safe in the workplace. Organisations must create a culture where employees have the voice, knowledge, skills, competence, and support to be comfortable to “bring their authentic selves” to work.

This report proposes an approach to breaking down barriers for CALD women in the workplace by adopting conceptual and theoretical approaches to create truly inclusive workplaces. The following section discusses several concepts and theoretical approaches: *Organisational Change, Systemic Change, Learning Organisations, Inclusive Leadership* *and Strategic Diversity Management*.

### Organisational Change

Creating diverse and inclusive workplaces involves intentional and incremental shifts in organisational processes and activities[[119]](#footnote-120). Organisational change management provides a range of intervention strategies, making the change a part of the organisational culture[[120]](#footnote-121) [[121]](#footnote-122). Change management also helps organisations align the change initiative to their overall mission and to organisational strategy by properly planning and creating a vision that includes people in the change[[122]](#footnote-123). In this research project, organisational change management has been identified as one of the core concepts to address the research objectives.

Based on the literature and interviews reflecting on DEI application, this research project has developed a practical step by step roadmap that aligns with a well-designed and managed organisational change process to tackle the barriers CALD women face in the workplace. It recommends that change initiatives be integrated into an overarching change management model, providing a structured and planned approach to reinforce and sustain it.

All change management models reviewed for the purpose of this research recognised the importance of:

* establishing readiness for change
* creating desired change through practices and policies
* reinforcing the change to prevent the organisation from reverting to its previous status quo.

A brief description of the organisational change management models considered for this study is included as an appendix under Appendix 2 in this report.

#### Kotter’s organisational change model: a way to systemically implement change in organisations

As this research aims to create and apply both organisational and individual level organisational change, John Kotter’s change management model[[123]](#footnote-124) was selected as the appropriate model to implement DEI initiatives to drive inclusive, intersectional gender equality in the workplace.

The model provides a step-by-step guide to achieving successful organisational change from top to bottom, supporting the breaking down of systemic barriers for CALD women in the workplace. By following Kotter’s prescribed steps, organisations can successfully implement large-scale change and prepare and commit to embracing the change.

Kotter’s 8-step change model consists of the following 8-steps:

* Create a sense of urgency
* Build a guiding coalition
* Form a strategic vision and initiatives
* Communicate the vision
* Enable action by removing barriers
* Generate short-term wins
* Sustain acceleration
* Institute change

##### Create a sense of urgency

This first step sparks the initial motivation to change the status quo. As Kotter notes, the change should start with establishing a sense of urgency amongst everyone involved in the change process – executives, middle managers and employees. Everyone involved should feel that change is critical to organisational growth, and that their contribution is inevitable to build the momentum of the change initiative and achieve lasting transformation. If there is no adequate motivation and readiness for change, proposed practices and policies may fail to be implemented into the organisation and its culture[[124]](#footnote-125) . At least 75% of a company’s management must “buy into” the proposed change for the change to be successful. To prepare leaders and employees for the upcoming change, Kotter suggests identifying existing threats and opportunities affecting the organisation and then openly communicating about the change to demonstrate why it is essential.

##### Build a guiding coalition

The second step in Kotter’s model is to bring together a competent team with the right skills, qualifications, reputation, connections and power to provide leadership to the change effort and influence internal and external stakeholders[[125]](#footnote-126). An effective team should include:

* The sponsor – usually a senior executive responsible for the change initiative
* Senior guiding team – members selected by the sponsor with sufficient authority to make decisions
* Field guiding team – highly credible and respected members who represent the communities in the organisation with a stake in the change
* Change teams – groups of managers and supervisors responsible for designing and deploying the change.

Once the team is established, organisations must focus on setting goals and creating an environment of trust and commitment. VPS entities can develop “a guiding coalition” to create a transparent process for measuring success, decision-making, tracking issues, resolving conflicts and communicating mission and purpose.

##### Form a strategic vision and initiatives

Step three of the model is to create a clear vision and strategy for change by determining the core values central for realising the proposed change. It helps create a picture of the organisation’s future once the change is implemented. The main aim is to create a realistic vision to direct the initiative and develop effective strategies to help the team achieve it.

Organisations can achieve change successfully by inspiring and guiding team actions and decisions with the right vision. VPS entities should set a clear and appealing vision to help align values central to the organisation with the change initiative. At this stage, organisations need to also define clear and realistic targets and metrics to measure success aligned with their vision.

##### Communicate the vision

Organisations must communicate that vision to leverage acceptance and support from the rest of the organisation. The goal here is to capture the hearts and minds of employees and to instil the belief that the benefits of change are in the best interests of the organisation and themselves. Developing a solid communication strategy and communicating the vision and strategy frequently is critical to ensure that employees incorporate it in daily decision-making and problem-solving. Staff engagement is key to obtaining unanimous support and to minimise pushbacks and resistance. It can also lay the groundwork for a safe and inclusive environment with proper feedback mechanisms established to address employees’ concerns openly, transparently and honestly.

##### Enable action by removing barriers

Obstacles are common and frequently occur during change. These are caused by insufficient processes, resistance to change, existing organisational policies and structure, etc[[126]](#footnote-127). Employees may be confronted with positions that are at odds with their initial perspective and often experience conflict with new and unknown practices. Kotter recommends that the guiding coalition and the senior management focus on removing obstacles that block the organisation’s path to achieving the change vision[[127]](#footnote-128).

#####

##### Generate short-term wins

Achieving the intended result and the actual transformation of any change initiative takes time. Continuing to drive change with no visible victories may discourage employees and disrupt the momentum. It is important to set short term targets and goals and celebrate small wins to keep the momentum going. The change process needs to be designed to make incremental shifts with continuous evaluations and review processes. This incremental process is based on the Japanese concept of “kaizen”, defined as continuous, incremental improvement[[128]](#footnote-129). Incremental changes compound over time to produce substantial long-term change without requiring radical innovation.

##### Sustain acceleration

After every win, organisations must evaluate and identify what actions and initiatives worked and what did not, to build on the momentum of change. This step helps to identify and remove unnecessary processes and inter-dependencies, facilitating successful transformation to deliver benefits to the targeted population and the whole organisation.

##### Institute change

Lastly, Kotter recommends that the change is anchored in organisational culture. The change should no longer be a separate activity but embedded in organisational structure and systems, e.g., embedding new norms and values in recruitment and promotion processes. Entities can increase the likelihood of “making change stick” by eliminating organisational processes that do not align with the new culture and removing individuals who actively hinder progress.

While this research suggests applying Kotter’s change management model, in practice, organisations can use their preferred change management model to undertake DEI implementation.

##### Using a “change model” to achieve systemic change

Implementing organisational-wide systemic change in the VPS is neither quick nor easy due to its size, diverse work environment, and ongoing workforce dynamics. From extensive consultation, it is noted that strong planning and preparation, together with long-term commitment, is required to effect change within the VPS.

While a change roadmap can provide prescriptive guidance in a sequential, step-by-step approach, it is evident from discussions with change practitioners that the organisational context or “change readiness” (the extent that existing processes, systems, people and culture are willing to adapt) can strongly influence the success of any change implementation. Organisational culture and context must be considered when deciding where to begin and what specific actions will make up the change roadmap. The appropriate practices and policies to be integrated into any change roadmap must be selected with due consideration of the effect of cultural change across the organisation.

Accordingly, Johnson and Scholes’s Cultural Web, Peter Senge’s System Approach and Learning Organisation, and the concepts of Inclusive Leadership and Strategic Diversity Management can be used to bolster the change management model.

#### Culture Web: an approach to change organisational culture

Johnson and Scholes’s Cultural Web is a framework for studying organisational culture[[129]](#footnote-130). Culture is shaped and perpetuated throughout the organisational environment; thus, when planning change, organisations must reflect on six key elements to make the change happen and keep the momentum going. The ‘culture web’ identifies vital elements that effect cultural change across an organisation during a change process. These are interrelated, but often viewed as separate factors:

* Stories that underscore organisational values - what the organisation chooses to emphasise in day-to-day communications.
* Rituals and routines – how people behave and act and signal what is considered essential.
* Symbols – how the organisation represents itself formally and informally, including logos, brand colours, office environment and dress code.
* Formal organisational structure – who is valued and whose behaviour is role modelled. It also reflects who represents the organisation.
* Control systems – including financial systems, risk management, quality systems, and reward and recognition, which highlight what is critical to the organisation.
* Power structures (both formal and informal) – the people to whom staff listen and respond to, the people who influence others, irrespective of what organisational level they occupy.

Organisational culture is typically created unconsciously over time based on the values of senior management. A strong culture (in which beliefs and values are widely shared and firmly held) can offer many advantages, such as cooperation, control, communication or commitment during the change process.

### Systems approach to change

While organisational change models often define change as a linear process, Senge states that organisational change does not happen discretely; it involves systems, people, structures and processes within an organisation. A system typically consists of inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes with ongoing interaction and feedback among differing parts[[130]](#footnote-131). An essential aspect of preparing for system thinking is setting the environment and allowing employees to reflect, analyse, and design strategic plans to achieve the desired outcome.

The role of leadership in addressing an organisation’s underlying structures is critical during a change[[131]](#footnote-132). Senge argues that a leader’s sponsorship and commitment at the beginning of the change management process will have significant impacts. With exemplary leadership, organisations can expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models.

The notion of integration is another crucial aspect of system thinking that helps frame the second research question of this study: “How can defined entities achieve gender equality for Culturally Diverse Women in the VPS workforce?” Senge states that all systems and processes within an organisation must be integrated for systems change to happen and individual or siloed interventions do not produce systems change. Successful change requires a holistic approach that integrates individual-level changes with systems changes.

Systems thinking requires the ability to see the “big picture” and interrelationships. For example, changing recruitment processes in the VPS alone will not produce an overall change in diversity and inclusion. Instead, changes to increase Diversity, Equity and Inclusion must be made across all processes and systems within the VPS. As one employee noted, regarding the Jobs and Skills Exchange (JSE)[[132]](#footnote-133) and recruitment: *the current whole of government requirement to advertise roles first on the JSE, to only Victorian government employees, further limits the ability to recruit new staff with multicultural backgrounds.* The VPS workforce cannot expand its diversity if it is first recruiting from within an existing workforce that is not diverse.

Based on this holistic perspective, the Systems Approach of Change Management is a helpful approach to apply alongside Kotter’s change model.

### Learning organisation

While successful organisational change relies on choosing a suitable change management model and adopting a systems perspective, having a flexible, adaptive, and productive organisational structure and workforce also contributes to successful change[[133]](#footnote-134). Organisations need to identify ways to utilise people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels[[134]](#footnote-135). One method for achieving this is creating a learning culture to utilise people’s commitment and capacity to learn. This may often require a fundamental shift of organisational structure and culture to become more conducive to learning, reflection and engagement[[135]](#footnote-136). In most instances, while people have the capacity to learn, the organisational structures in which they function often do not support reflection and engagement. In some cases, while there is organisational readiness, people may lack the knowledge to make sense of the change they face. Organisations, therefore, need the structural ability and employee capability to execute successful change[[136]](#footnote-137).

Research by Dublin City University Business School[[137]](#footnote-138), identified seven key factors to successfully develop and implement strong learning and development (L&D) programs. The following table relates the seven factors to its application to DEI.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Seven key factors | Examples of application to DEI |
| An over-arching objective that guides the decisions on learning  |  Identifying DEI needs and developing an L&D framework |
| A skills baseline  | Reviewing the understanding, skills and capability of the workforce in relation to DEI. |
| Alignment of learning efforts with strategic priorities | Developing a L&D road map aligned with DEI and organisational priorities  |
| The right skills and resources for the learning and development team | The L&D team have the skills and capabilities to develop a DEI framework |
| Learning designed to accommodate evolving conditions  | Considering the evolving needs of all staff to ensure the changing workforce is engaged, can fully contribute and succeed |
| Individualised learning pathways | Recognising that each employee will need different support and capability development to fully contribute and support others to contribute |
| Being agile and adapting over time | Being able to adapt to changing organisational and societal expectations  |

Senge’s concept of a ‘learning organisation’ is helpful for creating an environment where people practice continuous learning at work. Learning organisations are skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and modifying behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights. Learning organisations are comprised of five disciplines or ‘component technologies’[[138]](#footnote-139). These are:

* Systems thinking
* Personal mastery
* Mental models
* Building shared vision
* Team learning

Understanding how employees internalise new insights and alter their behaviour is essential. Firstly, employees must be exposed to new ideas, expand their knowledge, and train themselves to create a learning organisation. Secondly, organisations must focus on how learning has influenced employee behaviour. Finally, organisations must look for performance improvement, with changes in behaviour leading to measurable results.

Another important characteristic of learning organisations is the ability to review their successes and failures and learn from others[[139]](#footnote-140). Learning comes from reflection, self-analysis and from looking outside one’s immediate environment. Organisations that assess their progress systematically and share the lessons learned in a format that employees find open and accessible can create a culture of learning and boost new ways of thinking.

Measuring success on the way to the change is another critical aspect of a learning organisation[[140]](#footnote-141). Measuring how employees expand their knowledge and skills and adapt to change is one parameter to measure the success of change initiatives. By measuring adaptability and reach, organisations understand where improvements are needed and can focus their capability build[[141]](#footnote-142).

Another important parameter is measuring behavioural change or how employees internalise new insights and alter behaviour. This helps organisations understand levels of acceptance and identify roadblocks and resistance to change processes[[142]](#footnote-143).

Finally, measuring performance improvement helps organisations to trace learning and sustain the positive learning culture. As such, this report argues that the concept of the learning organisation is a useful tool for change management and creating a culture open to learning and innovation[[143]](#footnote-144).

### Inclusive leadership: leading the learning organisation

As discussed, choosing a suitable change management model, incorporating system thinking into planning, designing and implementing change and creating a continuous learning culture will help to create a genuinely inclusive workplace. However, organisations also need the right leadership to guide the change process towards a strong and inclusive workplace[[144]](#footnote-145).

Traditionally, leadership has been viewed as a high-level and decision-making role responsible for making critical organisational decisions. More recently, leadership has also been defined as a more subtle and engagement focused role responsible for helping and guiding employees to continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models[[145]](#footnote-146).

Studies have shown that creating a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion must start from the top. Inclusive leadership is, therefore, the key to creating fair, respectful and inclusive workplaces where individual uniqueness is valued and embraced. To achieve this, leaders must align organisational goals and objectives with these values and must believe in the case for change. According to a recent Deloitte report ‘Six signature traits of inclusive leadership’[[146]](#footnote-147), leaders who authentically embrace inclusive workplace culture and commit to DEI demonstrate curiosity, cultural intelligence, and collaboration. They are genuine sponsors of the change process and help create an eco-system of engagement that helps better connect with diverse outcomes enabling individuals in the workplace to reach their full potential. Inclusive leaders translate their written commitment to DEI into actions and ensure that employees at all levels feel connected to the organisation.

Another important aspect of inclusive leadership is speaking up, challenging the status quo, and realising the strengths and weaknesses of current organisational structure and culture. By acknowledging these limitations, leadership can challenge structural barriers that impede DEI. Inclusive leaders allow team members to make decisions, be involved in the entire change process, and create a safe environment where employees feel comfortable speaking up. Highly inclusive leaders also promote, empower and leverage group thinking and create work environments where people are treated fairly, have a sense of belonging and a voice in decision-making, and feel included.

Organisations need to identify individual and organisational level development gaps to inclusive leadership by assessing and measuring inclusive leadership capabilities across executive and senior leadership and to create leadership development plans accordingly. Inclusive leadership is crucial for achieving intersectional gender equality. VPS leadership needs to take personal responsibility and accountability for diverse and inclusive outcomes and allocate the resources to build capability where needed.

### Managing Diversity and Inclusive processes and practices

The concepts, models and methods mentioned above lay the foundation to create a genuinely inclusive workplace, however, the challenge organisations face in contemporary diverse and multicultural societies is to manage both Diversity, Equity and Inclusion systemically and systematically[[147]](#footnote-148).

To understand and actively manage their diversity, organisations must determine the diversity of staff across the organisation, relative to the diversity represented in the community they serve. Collecting data and evidence is integral to designing and implementing initiatives to create diverse and inclusive workplaces,[[148]](#footnote-149) allowing organisations to design and implement strategies to recognise, value, and manage diversity and inclusion. Workplace diversity data should be disaggregated by gender and other relevant intersectional attributes such as ethnicity, cultural identity, age, disability, etc., to consider the intersectional nature of individuals and better understand the interconnected and overlapping disadvantages people experience.

Organisations need to shift their focus from a reactive approach, e.g., through recruitment which while necessary, can be self-limiting, to proactively managing their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts[[149]](#footnote-150). Using a planned change management approach will shape how an organisation deals with diversity and inclusion and establishes a clear path forward to navigate the changes required by the organisation in its policies and processes; by executives and managers to lead and inspire and by individuals in terms of practices, attitudes, and behaviour.

Offerman and Basford[[150]](#footnote-151) suggest that best practices to enhance inclusion include:

* Focusing on recruitment and retention of diverse talent
* Confronting discrimination and micro-aggressions
* Leveraging the diversity in employee resource groups (ERGs), that provide increased socialisation and networking opportunities for diverse members, to support greater understanding and connections across the organisation
* Developing accountability systems for integration into performance management systems
* Providing learning and development to employees and managers to develop the capabilities needed for such efforts
* Using peer-to-peer support for sharing issues and ideas

The authors also note the importance of a diverse HR team, exemplifying the positive, inclusive culture it is seeking to develop. As HR is tasked with developing an inclusive organisation, it will have little credibility if it is not seen to practice the same values. Furthermore, HR as a change agent must be involved in decision-making processes, leading the approach to inclusive management processes and practices.

Managing diversity alone will not result in an inclusive organisation. A leadership that is committed to fostering inclusion, open communication between employees and leadership, transparent recruitment, promotion, and development processes and practices and the opportunity and scope for employees to influence decisions were identified as key factors to developing an inclusive environment[[151]](#footnote-152).

While organisations implement DEI initiatives to break down barriers for marginalised individuals in the workplace, most have not used a planned change approach to strategically align change initiatives with long-term organisational objectives and strategic positioning. A planned change management DEI strategy is therefore needed to implement diversity and inclusion initiatives – positioning those initiatives within the organisation’s strategic goals and making DEI an integral part of organisational culture with unequivocal leadership and support of the executive to drive change.

### A Framework for Authentic and Sustainable Change

In summary, this study recommends that the VPS adopt the concepts of the change model, cultural web, systems perspective, the learning organisation, inclusive leadership and processes and practices, as illustrated in the diagram below, as the basis to develop a framework to achieve intersectional gender equality for CALD women.

**Tackling barriers for CALD women in the workplace**

Part Two

Practical Framework

The two tranches of this research project uncovered key insights into the practical approaches that have been implemented within organisations to improve intersectional gender equality. The research team developed a nuanced understanding of the issues experienced by people employed in the VPS and were able to identify gaps in existing structures and processes and determine a range of practical approaches for success.

### Overview

While there are rich datasets and extensive research aimed at identifying and tackling inequality and systemic barriers for people experiencing intersectional disadvantages, the research team could not find a framework, approach, or actions that could be directly replicated into the VPS or that were specifically targeted at CALD women in the public sector. Therefore, considering the context in which VPS entities operate, a practical framework (**the Framework**) for addressing workplace barriers experienced by CALD women was developed.

The Framework was created with due consideration of both the WGEA gender strategy toolkit[[152]](#footnote-153) and Gender Equality Action Plan[[153]](#footnote-154) guidance, to develop a toolkit that is familiar, easy to use and integrates seamlessly with other toolkits in operation across the VPS. The Framework includes a suggested assessment tool **(the Assessment Tool) –** an indicative example is provided, and practical step by step implementation guidance (**the Model**). It also considers the need to change the mindsets, relationships, processes, and structures in the VPS, enabling entities to achieve genuine intersectional gender equality and sustained inclusion for CALD women.

As transforming organisational culture involves many incremental changes to both human behaviours and attitudes and organisational systems and processes over time, the change process needs to include constant learning and progress feedback mechanisms. The Framework takes into consideration the differences and complexity of multiple VPS entities, of different sizes, cultures and maturity, and provides a roadmap to effectively plan and implement authentic and sustainable inclusion initiatives for women from CALD backgrounds. It also sets out how the proposed recommendations align with the Victorian Government’s Gender Equality Act 2020 and its obligations.

### the Framework

The Framework looks beyond stand-alone solutions and focuses more on transforming organisational procedures and practices that contribute to the complex factors resulting in current employment outcomes. It leverages Kotter’s organisational change model, Senge’s systems approach to change, and the concepts of the learning organisation, inclusive leadership, Inclusive management, processes and practices and capability development.

The Framework consists of the following processes that are repeated at the end of each stage (levels) of the practical model:

* Assessment *(utilising the Assessment Tool)*
* Establishing the Action Plan *(based on the Model)*
* Progression *(within the model)*
* Review

####

#### Assessment (based on the Assessment Tool)

The first process is the assessment, which is repeated after each level, to support the determination of whether the organisation should move to the next level of activities in the Model. An organisation can begin, or prepare for, activities that are contained in the next level (while engaged in the current level), if they have determined that the whole organisation is ready and prepared for the change.

Each organisation must measure how mature they are in their DEI journey by assessing their readiness to change and their progress achieved in implementing diversity and inclusion practices for CALD women.

**Illustration of the Assessment tool process**



Based on assessment results, organisations are provided with a step-by-step process to move forward from their current position (with level zero being the lowest) to the highest position (level five) to create an inclusive, diverse organisation. It is expected that each organisation will be at different stages of their DEI maturity. The entities at level zero will have a steeper learning curve with a long road towards level five and will require support, the commitment of all staff (particularly senior executives), time and resources. This approach will ensure that entities commence the process with the correct activities to establish a stable platform to build momentum. Importantly, they will only move forward when ready to do so once confident organisational culture will support the change.

An example of an Assessment tool has been provided as a starting point for organisations. Organisations need to adapt the tool to suit, considering their specific structure, operations, service offering and operating environment.

***Establish the Action Plan*** (utilising the Model)

Based on their first assessment (based on the Assessment Tool) and in consideration of the data and information obtained from the Gender Audit, the organisation must develop their DEI plan. This plan should focus on the inclusion of CALD women and can be incorporated into the organisation’s Gender Equality Action Plan. The next assessment is required when actions for one level of the Model are completed. At this stage, the DEI plan must be refreshed to incorporate the activities for the next level.

The Action Plan should include:

1. Actions to be completed – Using the assessment as a guide, develop the actions that the organisation needs to take to meet its targets and progress to the next level of the Framework. Consider:
	1. what preparatory activities for the next level need to be included in the plan
	2. what appropriate metrics and targets will be used to measure progress
2. A realistic timeframe – Determine how long it will take to complete the actions and in what order they need to be undertaken.
	1. Develop the roadmap of the activities, including any dependencies
3. Communications needs – Consider what needs to be communicated (if necessary, develop a communication plan as part of the Action Plan).
	1. Identify who needs to be informed, engaged and consulted and how frequently
	2. Determine timeframes for communications activity to ensure maximum engagement and on completion of activities to celebrate success
4. A budget and resource plan
	1. Who is responsible for creating, managing and driving the plan?
	2. What supporting resources are needed (budget and staff)
5. A governance framework
	1. Who will be accountable?
	2. Who will be responsible for reporting and to whom will they report?
	3. What will be reported?
	4. The timing and format of the reporting
	5. Risk mitigation strategies

1. The learning and development requirements of employees tasked with implementing, reporting and assessing.

#### **Progression**

Progression in the Model reflects three levers VPS entities must focus on to build genuine and sustainable intersectional gender equality – structural, leadership, and individual. The model and assessment tool apply these levers to support organisations correctly assessing their progress and readiness to move forward in their DEI roadmap.

* **Structural**: Transforming policies, processes, systems, and organisational cultural alignment and capability development to enable greater inclusivity for CALD women. Entities are held accountable for achieving goals by introducing metrics and targets.
* **Leadership**: Building strong leadership and advocacy at the executive level to become enablers of intersectional gender equality. Leaders are held accountable for achieving these goals through creating a culture of communication and engagement.
* **Individual:** Building deeper awareness and insight at an individual level to increase personal agency, responsibility, and capacity to be responsive and adaptive to evolving organisational culture. Employees are held accountable for achieving these goals via active engagement with leaders and managers.

Organisations must focus on all three levers to achieve genuine and sustainable intersectional gender equality.

#### **Review**

This process is discrete from the assessment. While the Assessment tool reflects an organisation’s readiness and progress to embark on planned initiatives, the Review process considers the organisation’s entire approach and issues that may not have been identified during the assessment.

The review is an ongoing process to identify specific issues and improve the effectiveness of future initiatives. As the organisation completes activities for a particular level it needs to reflect on its performance against its goals and targets. The review needs to identify and understand the root cause if a goal/target was not achieved. Furthermore, the organisation needs to review the appropriateness of the target or goal, e.g., was the target reached because it was set too low, should the target be more aggressive to drive change? An ongoing review is necessary at each level of the Model to maintain a learning culture, even when the organisation has achieved its goals.

Post the Review, organisations may need to re-establish their targets, remove roadblocks to progress and escalate issues to senior executives should decisions be warranted.

#### Model: Proposed Approach and Key ActionsA graphical depiction of the model, showing actions under each level from Level 0 as preparatory phase through to Level 5 as continuous improvement. The graphic shows different levels range progress from short term, to medium term to long term and are underpinned by executive buy-in, commitment and sponsorship, sharing best practice, and strong change management and communications. The following section discusses these stages and actions in detail.

### A practical implementation guide (The Model)

The model details the actions to be taken to progress the organisation towards a more diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for CALD women. The Model guides that activity an organisation needs to undertake to progress across 5 levels. The purpose of creating the model is to ensure that Organisations irrespective of size, demographics, culture, experience or past progress in DEI, have a clear roadmap from which to begin and follow. Based on the Assessment an organisation can begin at the appropriate level that fits its circumstances.

#### Level Zero – Preparatory Stage

Barriers to implementing change exist in various levels and forms, such as rigid workplace cultures, lack of essential DEI policies and plans, lack of inclusive leadership and teamwork, and preconceived attitudes and behaviours which can interrupt the implementation of change. Therefore, establishing a sense of urgency among executives and employees iws the first step for organisations to prepare for change. Employees at every level must recognise the need for change and understand that change is critical for growth.

###### Actions

**Action 1** **–** Make the case for change (the concept of “workforce mutuality” is a good basis).

* Identify human objectives of the change (observable, behavioural impacts of the change)
* Gain Executive buy-in. Promote sustained sponsorship (express commitment and model the new behaviours that employees are expected to demonstrate)

**Action 2 –** Executive to articulate Organisational DEI vision/goals/objectives, e.g., “Organisation to be representative of the people they serve”). Align DEI with Organisational Strategy and communicate the message at all levels:

* Cascade sponsorship by identifying change agents at all levels
* Start “dialogues” to influence new behaviour. Communicate the significance of culturally diverse and inclusive workplaces, e.g., through briefings, workshops, email and poster campaigns. “Yarning Circles”[[154]](#footnote-155) are an effective tool to build mutual understanding (where appropriate and managed in a culturally sensitive manner, avoiding cultural appropriation by engaging with First Nation employees, or external providers, to facilitate it)
* Executives to publicly commit to a diverse, inclusive workforce
	+ Frame the status quo as abnormal, needing change

**Action 3 –** Set up mechanisms to collect **intersectional** gender data.

* Identify current data sources and ensure that the data collected via People Matters and other employee engagement surveys is intersectional
	+ Establish intersectionaldata collection mechanisms for the seven workplace gender equality indicators:
		- gender pay equity
		- gender composition at all levels of the workforce
		- gender composition of governing bodies
		- workplace sexual harassment
		- recruitment and promotion
		- gendered work segregation
		- leave and flexibility
* Set up anonymous, confidential reporting processes that are trusted and allow employees to report incidents of bias and discrimination

**Action 4 –** Identify incidents of bias and discrimination. Enforce anti-discriminatory policies and support anti-discrimination training.

* Develop an anti-racism strategy with significant punitive consequences for perpetrators (with career impacts for major transgressions)
* Set up anonymous, confidential reporting processes that are trusted and allow employees to report incidents of bias and discrimination.
	+ Monitor incidents of sexual harassment of CALD women
	+ Set metrics and targets to drive towards elimination
* Ensure that the process for managing incidents of bias and discrimination, and the consequence of transgressions, is understood, accepted and managed openly and transparently, while maintaining the anonymity of both victim and perpetrator. Note that the way in which the organisation manages the complaint is a signal to victims of its openness to receive and handle issues of discrimination.
* Implement training, mentoring and workshops to establish policies for combatting racism

**Action 5 –** Ensure that progress on the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is on track.

* Consult extensively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the organisation and externally on implementing and progressing the RAP
* Engage all employees on the RAP and its expected outcomes, e.g., “to create a workplace culture that understands, values and respects the histories, cultures and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples”[[155]](#footnote-156)

*It is the research team’s view that the RAP is a foundational step and that unless progress is made to support and advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace, progress on eliminating barriers for CALD Women will struggle to gain traction. Genuine cultural change cannot begin without acknowledging and addressing issues experienced by Aboriginal people*

*Lack of progress on a RAP is also indicative of organisational culture that is not inclusive or open to change, with employees who are likely to be unreceptive to other DEI change programs.*

**Action 6 –** People and Culture/Human Resources training.

* HR are often the first point of contact for CALD women to raise concerns such as cultural safety, biases, discrimination, bullying and harassment. Provide targeted training to:
	+ build the knowledge and capability to manage and support grievances
	+ be an ally and champion for CALD women through developing an understanding of the issues they face, e.g., via Cultural Diversity training and Allyship
	+ change the focus of DEI from being compliance focused to business strategy focused
	+ support the rollout of the Diversity Inclusion Plan (including the roadmap derived from this report)

These actions are defined as key baseline elements to achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion for all. Organisations will be unable to build a platform for inclusion without first addressing racism and reconciliation.

###### Outcome - expected transformation at level zero

For this level to succeed:

* Get 100% executive sponsorship
* Have verbal and written commitment of executives and management leading the change initiatives
* Collect disaggregated data on the intersectional workforce, including the seven workplace gender equality indicators, to get a better understanding of their impacts and experiences
* Establish and enforce anti-racism framework and a reconciliation action plan
* Establish confidential and anonymous reporting mechanisms to identify racism and discrimination in the workplace
* Train HR/ People and Culture to be champions of diversity and manage an intersectional workforce

###### **Proposed Metrics**

It is recommended that organisations measure the success of DEI actions using the metrics provided in this guidance for each progression level. At level zero, entities can measure the progress with the following metrics:

* % of Executive support to champion DEI policies and plans related to CALD women’s progression
	+ Effectiveness of executive sponsorship with employees embracing the DEI vision, through surveys or focus groups
* % completion in establishing systems and processes to collect intersectional data for all seven gender equality measures
* % progress to establish systems and processes to report experiences of racism, discrimination and harassment due to gender, race, ethnicity or aboriginality in the workplace
	+ Frequency, nature and severity of the incidents reported
* % completion of training for HR/ People and Culture

###### **Capability building**

At level zero, CALD employees should receive appropriate training and coaching to build capabilities:

* Provide training and coaching to encourage and support CALD women to self-manage career progression

Possible “small wins/ initiatives” to engage staff

At level zero, communication and engagement activities may include townhall style events to focus on the

* the rollout of the RAP
* the introduction of DEI purpose, goals and objectives (with Executive sponsorship)

#### **Level** One – Foundational levers

At level one, organisations commence developing the initiatives and strategies to help achieve intersectional gender equality in the workplace. This level identifies the baseline for an organisation’s current state and establishes targets for the future. Organisations must define clear, realistic and measurable targets, policies, and processes that aim to include CALD women at all levels of employment at the VPS.

###### Actions

**Action 1** – Develop the DEI roadmap for the organisation.

* While the Framework recommends the key actions, sequence of activities, supporting resources and infrastructure required for a DEI roadmap, the DEI roadmap must be designed and owned by the organisation and account for their unique circumstances and constraints
* The roadmap needs to be developed concurrently while completing the following two actions (Set-up Metrics and Targets and Review Policies and Processes), to ensure that the activities and outcomes of these actions are incorporated
* The roadmap must be a dynamic document that is constantly reviewed and refreshed in consideration of changing dynamics (personnel, resources, metrics, targets etc.)

**Action 2** – Set-up Metrics and Targets.

With the data collection and metrics for the ​seven-gender equality audit measures​ for CALD women established in level zero, targets and defined timeframes can be set.

Metrics

* Metrics can be used to benchmark the organisation’s current maturity level in DEI against the target maturity level and assess performance and progress towards the target. Entities monitoring the gender equality audit measures[[156]](#footnote-157)​, need to be able to disaggregate the data for CALD women to measure:
	+ Pay equity for CALD women
	+ CALD women representation at all levels of the workforce
	+ Diversity of senior management and governing bodies
	+ Recruitment and promotion of CALD women
	+ Segregation and pigeonholing of CALD women
	+ Availability and utilisation of policies by CALD women (family violence, flexible leave, etc.)
	+ Sexual harassment of CALD women (Note: this metric and target should be established in level zero as part of the reporting framework)
* Through employee surveys, measure:
* the effectiveness and acceptance of CALD initiatives
* the reach and progress of CALD initiatives to reassess the intended recipients
* CALD women’s trust, cultural safety, and sense of belonging

While some metrics may have been set up previously, organisations must constantly realign and reassess the metrics' appropriateness, completeness, and effectiveness for CALD women and consequently, reset the roadmap of initiatives targeting CALD women.

Targets

* Organisations need to consider the time necessary to reach their end goal and how they will track progress towards it. Targets need to be precise, measurable and set by leadership, establishing clear timeframes in which they are to be achieved. Targets need to be realistic considering an organisation’s current circumstances, broader social contexts (e.g., demographics of their community), and their progress to date. When developing targets, organisations should:
	+ set-up targets against the metrics (as above)
	+ include targets to develop capability at all levels of employment and skills and knowledge to build leadership, allyship and support the new cultural change
	+ cascade targets down to the lower levels, carefully considering each department's current circumstances and capability to achieve. Noting that some departments may need more aggressive targets to compensate for those that may not be capable of achieving theirs (due to legitimate constraints)
* employ targets to motivate the workforce by defining and communicating the incentives or punitive measures in place
* allow for the appropriate time needed to reach the end goal by setting incremental targets with clear milestones to mark progress towards the end goal within a defined timeframe

*Guidance Note*

Consider setting targets using Critical Success Factors (CSF) instead of traditional KPIs to shift the focus to leading rather than lagging indicators. CSFs should focus on the incremental steps necessary to achieve success for a particular goal, rather than measuring how the organisation has performed. Targets can also be used to develop the confidence of the workforce by setting smaller objectives followed by performance feedback. The CSFs or KPIs set must be specific and not generic.

**Action 3** – Review policies and processes for biases and discrimination (individual and structural).

Policies

* These are often developed with different priorities and cultures in mind. As such, they need to be reviewed regularly for biases to ensure that they allow for equitable opportunities. Typical policies requiring review in consideration of the barriers faced by CALD women are:
* Recruitment
* Performance appraisals
* Redeployment or redundancy
* Selection for promotion, secondments, projects etc.
* Remuneration and benefits
* Learning and development
* Flexible working arrangements
* Workplace bullying and sexual harassment
* Retirement
* Review policies regularly to consider:
* if the language used in the policy is inclusive
* if the policy imposes unnecessary constraints
* if the policy is flexible to account for the specific needs of CALD women
* if the policy contains prerequisites that are generic but may not be required (e.g., a requirement for job applicants to be fluent in spoken English, despite the job having limited verbal engagement)

Processes

* Recruitment:
* Communicate the importance of increasing representation and inclusion of CALD women at all employment levels in the VPS to recruiters and other stakeholders involved in the recruitment process
* Introduce blind recruitment for CVs/resumes
* Provide support for the application and interview process on the organisation's website by offering examples (video, audio and documents) of standard CVs, cover letters and advice on how to address selection criteria and interview tips
* Introduce panel-style interviews with diverse panel members who demonstrably support equity and inclusion
* Go beyond structured competency-based questions to assess a candidate's potential
	+ - Recognise and value the diverse thinking that a candidate from a different background could contribute
		- Avoid "cultural fit" assessments and recruit individuals who align with organisational values and DEI objectives
* Utilise targeted referrals to address inadequate candidate pools
* Consider adjacent recruitment, i.e., recruiting candidates who may not be an exact match but have transferable skills
* Proactively provide feedback after the interviews to support specific CALD women to address their gaps and encourage them to re-apply
* Promotion:
* Provide internal promotion opportunities via sponsoring
* Ensure that CALD women have access to mentoring opportunities
* Offer promotions based on potential instead of seniority and meritocracy - consider diverse employees who bring new thinking and new perspectives
* Identify and proactively encourage specific CALD women to apply for opportunities to further their careers. Provide guidance on how CALD women can seek opportunities and proactively provide feedback after interviews to support CALD women and encourage them to re-apply
* Review promotional practices within departments that consistently fail to meet targets to understand and address any biases and systemic issues that may limit CALD women’s advancement, e.g., consider if affinity biases are playing a role.
* Learning and development:
* Support managers and employees to develop the skills and knowledge required to be influential change agents
* Provide inclusive intelligence training, cross-cultural training activities, and cultural competency training to all employees at all levels of employment, focusing on managers and people leaders initially
* Provide development opportunities (formal and informal) for CALD women to self-manage their careers by improving their self-advocacy, internal brand, and career progression. This will support CALD women who are unfamiliar with executives’ expectations and assist in eliminating their own internalised biases (when a person believes that stereotypes and misinformation about themselves is true”)[[157]](#footnote-158)
* Provide professional development opportunities to CALD women that cover 'soft' or 'essential skills' targeted at improving advancement prospects, e.g., leadership training

###### Outcome - expected transformation at level one

For this level to succeed:

* Clear, realistic and measurable targets, policies and processes to include CALD women at all levels of employment are established
* Decisions are evidence-based by incorporating gender audit data, People Matter survey data and intersectional data collected (qualitative and quantitative) when defining *targets, policies, and processes*
* Clear communication strategies are established to deliver clear messaging that promotes DEI for CALD women
* Organisations understand employee demographics and the actions necessary to build a workforce representative of the people they serve

###### **Proposed Metrics**

At level one, entities can measure the progress of change by using the following metrics:

* Number of CALD women (representation) across the organisation compared with other demographic groups
* Number of incidents of racism and discrimination reported (frequency, severity and resolution)
* Completeness and accuracy of intersectional data collection

Via employee survey:

* Understanding and reach of change initiatives across all levels
* Buy-in of change and effectiveness of targets, policies and practices for employees across all levels

###### Capability **building**

This guide recommends that at level one CALD women receive appropriate training and coaching to build capabilities via the following activities:

* Career progression training to encourage CALD women to self-manage career progression
* Leadership training and coaching
* De-biasing training for recruiters, interview panels and selection committees

###### **Possible “small wins/ initiatives” to engage staff**

* Rollout of the DEI Roadmap

***For levels two and three, the Model focuses on communicating the vision, empowering others and creating quick wins (as per Kotter’s Change Management model).***

#### Level Two

The aim of Level Two is to assemble a competent team with the right intent, skills, reputation, networks and authority to provide leadership to the change effort and influence both internal and external stakeholders. Organisations will benefit greatly by establishing​ an in-house staff-led network and an anti-racism taskforce to promote accountability and drive inclusion. Organisations should work to identify an effective team to support change efforts to achieve intersectional gender equality for CALD women at every level of the organisation.

###### Actions

**Action 1** - Promote CALD women’s voices, leveraging staff-led networks.

* Develop and engage a CALD staff-led network to provide guidance and the perspectives of CALD women to leadership, introduce support initiatives within the employee community and provide real-time feedback on implementation and process improvements
	+ CALD staff-led networks refer to the employee group(s) who represent CALD women (and/or men). The CALD employee network should include an executive sponsor, and if possible, be provided with a budget, administrative support and appropriate training in governance, advocacy and leadership to support the development of clear objectives and an action plan
	+ Staff-led networks will provide the opportunity for the organization to continuously learn, promoting intercultural understanding while supporting a safe space for CALD women to raise issues without fear of reproach
	+ Staff-led networks also assist in communicating management intent and help gain widespread support for CALD focused initiatives. They also play an invaluable role in communicating the causes of any lack of engagement by CALD women.

Indicative vision, objectives and outcome of the staff-led network

Vision

* Create a staff-led network that can champion and advocate for CALD women in the workplace

Objectives

* To establish a safe environment that facilitates inclusion and a sense of belonging for CALD women in the workplace
* To develop an engaged and proactive team culture that celebrates diversity and authenticity
* To provide effective, flexible, credible and trustworthy support

Outcome

* Culturally and emotionally safe workplace culture and environment for CALD women
* Dedicated, credible and representative
* Peer to peer support network
* Support DEI strategy, values and vision

**Action 2** - Promote accountability and develop an anti-racism taskforce.

* The responsibility of an anti-racism taskforce is to eliminate racism stemming from biases and discrimination, promote inclusion and foster a culturally safe environment, and drive change to make racism and discrimination unacceptable. The taskforce should have ownership of any anti-racism strategies, including incident reporting and oversight of processes to investigate and deal with the consequences of wrongdoing.

Select executive leader/champion

Employee representatives from staff led networks

Gather allies and advocates

Taskforce

* The taskforce should include the following members:
	+ The sponsor – a senior executive responsible for the change initiative. The sponsor needs to be committed and actively engaged
	+ Senior leader - (management-level leader/s) selected by the sponsor authorised to make decisions (including financial decisions) and to assign resources
	+ CALD women representatives drawn from the CALD staff-led network to provide insight into the lived experiences of CALD women
	+ Change team – employees at all organisational levels

**Action 3** – Engage potential advocates, champions and mentors for CALD women.

* Identify and engage potential advocates, champions and mentors[[158]](#footnote-159) committed to supporting CALD women. These should include employees who self-identify as allies and members of the staff-led network who will benefit from direct mentorship
* Develop a mentorship program
* Recruit and hire candidates who align with the organisation’s values and who will be natural allies in promoting the inclusion of CALD women

**Definitions**

Allies support CALD women by helping to promote a culture of equity and inclusion and demonstrate a commitment to learn how to be an agent for change

Champions acknowledge the equity gap and publicly promote CALD women initiatives and causes

Advocates use their power and influence to support CALD women and hold their colleagues to account

Mentors provide guidance, motivation and networks to support CALD women develop their careers

**Action 4 –** Actively provide opportunities and support for CALD women to advance.

* Identify talented CALD women to create a talent pool to source future leaders. Support and guide their career journeys with clearly defined job pathways to ensure readiness for senior leadership positions.
* Provide development opportunities for talented CALD women through secondments or special projects, providing guidance and mentoring where necessary
	+ Providing CALD women with access to opportunities that showcase their capabilities will mitigate some of the disadvantage they experience due to their lack of extensive networks both inside and outside their organisations
* Engage the community in support of CALD women and encourage CALD women to join the organisation. Constructive improvement based on community feedback will support the organisation to be viewed as a culturally safe place to work

**Action 5: –** Tailored training for employee groups and line managers.

* As described in Action 1, CALD women’s groups are both a support to the organisation and to other CALD women. These groups need tailored training to:
	+ triage complaints and to support CALD women through the complaints process (according to the organisation’s policies and process)
	+ safely and confidentially gather CALD women’s stories and perspectives and provide CALD women with a voice
	+ undertake governance activities for staff-led networks/CALD women’s groups
	+ advocacy with senior stakeholders
* Line managers need to be capable of managing issues related to cultural safety, bias, discrimination, bullying and harassment in their teams. Furthermore, line managers are often the first supporter or barrier for the advancement of CALD women. Specific, tailored training is required for line managers to:
	+ recognize their own biases
	+ be an ally and champion for CALD women through developing an understanding of the issues faced by CALD women, e.g., through cultural diversity training and allyship
	+ handle and resolve complaints according to organisational policies and processes

**Action 6** – Review all targets and metrics identified at level one and the actions taken to close the gaps.

* Analyze the data for each of the metrics used and consider all circumstances, missed opportunities, what worked, what did not and why
* Close the gaps in processes and policies by leveraging the knowledge of the lived experience of CALD women (refer to Action 1)
* Increase the challenge of targets in consideration of progress to date, changes in capacity and capability and employee engagement

###### Outcome – expected transformation at level two

For this level to succeed:

* A staff-led network is established, to address the needs of CALD employees with sustained sponsorship, guidance and commitment by the leadership
	+ Finances and resources are provided to support the staff-led network activities

Provide training, learning and development opportunities to the members

* Create an anti-racism taskforce with clear roles and responsibilities of members to ensure action and accountability
* Re-baseline the targets to account for progress and changes in capacity and capability of the organisation to deliver
* Clear progress in the attraction and retention of CALD women

###### Proposed metrics

At level two, organisations must reassess and realign the effectiveness of targets, policies and practices established at level one. Organisations can measure the progress of change by using the following metrics:

* Measure and evaluate the performance of the taskforce, through engagement surveys, assessing the cultural safety of CALD women in the workplace
* Monitor the incidents of bias and discrimination resulting from racism (frequency and severity).

The staff-led network can also assess their performance to understand:

* CALD women’s engagement with the network
* their performance against objectives.

###### Capability building

At level two, all employees, including executives, should receive appropriate training and coaching to build inclusive competencies. Priority should be given to line managers and staff-led networks followed by training for executives and senior managers.

For staff led networks:

* provide training in governance, advocacy and leadership

For line managers:

* provide training covering anti-bias, allyship, complaints handling (specifically on racism and discrimination)

For executives and senior managers:

* provide inclusive leadership training for executives and managers

For all staff:

* provide cultural intelligence training and anti-bias and discrimination training for all levels

###### **Possible “small wins / initiatives” to engage staff**

* Be guided by the staff-led network

#### Level Three

Important Note:

While distinct, levels two and three are interchangeable regarding priorities and timing. It is recommended that both levels be conducted simultaneously to ensure they are well established prior to embarking on level four activities.

At level three, the focus is to communicate in ways that encourage the whole organisation to support and champion the change. Organisations need to develop clear communication strategies and channels to foster commitment across all levels of the business. Communication tools can include persuasive storytelling and inclusion nudges to build support and gain buy-in, and cascade sponsorship via empowering advocates, champions, role models, and allies. ​

​

###### Actions

**Action 1 –** Sponsorship and Advocacy.

* Cascade the responsibility for change by encouraging and empowering advocates, champions, mentors, and allies for CALD women
	+ Set expectations from the top by role-modeling expected behaviours
	+ Build DEI into learning and development plans to engage employees and expand their thinking, e.g., types of biases (unconscious and conscious) and debiasing; anti-racism; intercultural competence; behavioral economics and bounded rationality (where individuals seek outcomes that are adequate rather optimal)
	+ Make managers accountable for change by cascading metrics and targets to lower levels
		- Recognise the unique challenges and advantages that each manager may face and set targets appropriately, e.g., some divisions may face structural difficulties in recruiting a diverse workforce
		- Build into the change roadmap at the manager level, the time and resources that will be needed to deliver on any initiatives

**Action 2 –** Engage staff and craft the message.

**Guidance Note**

Consider including in managers’ performance plans:

* key objectives (KPIs or KSFs) from the DEI plan applicable and relevant to the manager’s sphere of influence
* accountability for delivering on initiatives for CALD women on time
* Use tools such as persuasive storytelling and inclusion nudges to engage leadership, management, and employees to build the case for change and embrace cultural shifts continuously

**Action 3 -** Build engagement across the organisation.

* Build engagement that promotes CALD women’s voices and foster communication and understanding amongst all employees.
	+ Facilitate discussions led by a champion/lead of the taskforce or staff-led network that focus on solutions, not grievances. Employees at all levels engage in discussions and critically review the opportunities, challenges, roadblocks and possible solutions they face. Regular facilitated sessions will help embed practice in organisational culture
	+ This process can help create accountability and foster a safe space of trust and credibility between all employees and CALD women, promoting inclusivity

**Action 4 –** Review all targets and actions taken to close the gaps.

* Increase the challenge associated with targets in consideration of progress to date, changes in capacity, capability, and employee engagement

***An example of crafting the message***

###### Outcome – expected transformation at level three

Create engaging stories, showcasing CALD women to provoke an emotional response and build awareness of their value to the VPS

Tailor the story to the organisation’s situation, considering the diversity of roles, tenures, intersectional identities

Supplement the story with workforce data to provide context

Cater to different learning styles using a variety of media

Identify champions, advocates and allies to build support and create excitement and engagement

###### Proposed **Metrics** ​

For this level to succeed:

* Strong and clear communication strategies and channels are established to leverage

champions, advocates and allies in support of CALD women’s equity

* Championing of CALD issues occurs voluntarily, at all levels of employment
* DEI learning opportunities are included into learning and development plans
* Metrics and targets are cascaded to lower levels making managers accountable for change
* CALD women are given a voice
* Communication and engagement through facilitated discussions amongst all employees is actively encouraged

At level three, organisations must measure the progress and pace of change and assess risks, challenges and success factors associated with actions in levels zero, one, two and three. These additional metrics are suggested in addition to those used at earlier levels:

* % diversity of the executive, senior management and middle management levels against targets
* Reach and effectiveness of change initiatives (through feedback mechanisms such as engagement surveys or focus groups)

###### **Capability building**

When organisations reach level three, it is expected that all employees are trained and equipped with essential inclusive competencies. Organisations must focus on ensuring that all levels have lifted their capability and individual learning and development plans should be inclusive of DEI learning opportunities. Organisations need to consider how aligned every employee is to the values of the organisation and consider remedial action to address employees who actively refuse to change. Employees who are opposed to the organisation’s values and actively agitate against change can seed discontent that expands into other pockets of resistance.

###### **Possible “small wins / initiatives” to engage staff**

* Events guided by and/or hosted by the staff-led network
* Consider facilitated discussions, yarning circles, and subject matter experts, acknowledging how far the organisation has evolved and how open it is to feedback and truthful discussions

#### Level Four

At level four, the goal is to normalise the changes established and support new standards of behaviour, by embedding DEI into day-to-day practice. Inclusion of CALD women is a fundamental part of organisational culture and standard operating processes.

###### Actions

**Action 1 –** Promote CALD women into senior positions and ensure equitable representation at all levels.

* Actively promote or externally recruit senior CALD women to ensure representation at executive leadership and decision-making levels. Ideally at level 4, CALD women have been supported and promoted internally to senior positions
* Boards and committees should also include CALD women members

**Action 2 –** Embed diversity and inclusion into daily activities.

**Guidance Note**

Organisations need to guard against tokenism and avoid “parachuting in” CALD women candidates to fulfil key roles, while ignoring CALD representation at all levels and areas. “Pigeonholing”, where CALD women are over-represented in roles that they are perceived to excel in, constitutes a form of bias that can result in skewed representation and limits movement.

* Review all processes to embed DEI and integrate behavioural elements of the new culture into daily business activities.
	+ Learning and development for leadership seamlessly integrates cultural competencies and anti-bias training into existing programs
	+ Employee engagement and progress in DEI are considered in performance development, evaluation and promotion as part of the performance management process.
	+ Inclusion and cultural safety are key selection criteria to support active recruitment of advocates and allies

###### Outcome - expected transformation

For this level to succeed:

* Representation of CALD women occurs at all levels across all areas of the organisation, including executives and board
* The work related to cultural diversity and inclusion for CALD women is a fundamental and necessary part of the entity
* Leaders must demonstrate how they have turned input into action, so that over time employees feel and witness inclusivity, a sense of safe space, and trust.

Level four organisations are those that foster a culture where CALD women feel:

* included and represented,
* safe and supported
* a sense of belonging
* valued, and
* able to speak freely

**Organisations that nurture cultural diversity and inclusion**

**Leaders**

**Managers**​

**Employees**​

* Lead by example​ - commit to action and act accordingly
* Establish transparent and empathetic communication
* Ensure accountability, safety, trust and credibility
* Maintain clear, consistent expectations from employees
* Promote a sense of belonging to the organisation
* Prioritise sponsorship
* Recognize individual performance and promote sponsorship, role modeling, allyship and advocacy
* Empower employees to take ownership
* Feel their efforts are valued and heard by leadership
* Feel a sense of belonging to the organisation
* Understand their role
* Feel a sense of belonging
* Have opportunities to contribute ideas and feedback
* Feel their efforts are valued and heard by managers and leadership

###### **Proposed Metrics**

At level four, entities can measure the progress of change by using the following metrics:

* Diversity of senior leadership and number of CALD women identified as high potential talent
* through surveys or employee engagement
* Buy-in of DEI practices by all employees
* Cultural safety, inclusivity and sense of belonging CALD women feel towards their workplace

###### **Capability** building

At level four, entities must continue to provide capability building opportunities for every employee to develop DEI knowledge and skills. DEI must be seamlessly integrated into general learning and development programs across the employee life cycle (from induction to leadership) and not limited to specific DEI training programs.

###### **Possible “small wins / initiatives” to engage staff**

* Ongoing engagement of staff using external subject matter experts

*Level Five*

Level five focuses on sustaining change by ensuring that the actions implemented at each level are working consistently. As organisations evolve, their vision and purpose shifts and changes; the workforce turns over and new leadership takes control. Organisations need to continuously review, optimise, and adapt. Level five acknowledges that organisations are dynamic and consequently regular assessment is crucial to ensure that the vision of an inclusive, equitable workforce for CALD women is sustained, e.g., a Machinery of Government change could see departments merging or new departments forming, which results in a shift in focus and priorities.

###### Actions

**Action 1** – Ongoing Commitment.

* Leaders must reaffirm their commitment to fostering an inclusive environment and ensure this commitment is put into practice by all employees, particularly people leaders.
* As interactions between people leaders and employees need to be built on trust, reviews to measure employee engagement and cultural safety must be conducted regularly.

**Action 2** – Maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders.

* Maintaining regular channels of communication with the staff-led network, Anti-Racism Taskforce and external stakeholders will provide opportunities for organisations to gauge employee and community sentiment in real-time
* Regular community consultation (both internally and externally) will provide organisations with a sense of their obligations, expectations and shortcomings, particularly regarding workforce mutuality

**Action 3** – Review and re-examine the status quo.

* Organisations must avoid complacency and maintain momentum to achieve inclusivity and equity for CALD women. It is imperative for organisations to continuously re-examine the status quo and reflect on the sustainability of implemented changes. Reflecting on past successes, failures and short-lived wins will provide invaluable information and guidance to refresh DEI strategy and if necessary, forge a new path.

###### Outcome - expected transformation

###### **Proposed Metrics**

For this level to succeed:

* Processesis in place to
	+ continuously assess that the actions implemented at each level are working
	+ identify successes, failures and lessons learned
* DEI is built into reward and recognition programs
* High employee engagement for training, coaching, and mentoring that are continuously reviewed and refreshed

Ongoing review and re-examination of the status quo to account for organisational changes

At level five, entities must measure the sustainability of change by:

* Progress monitoring
* Ongoing reviews and evaluations

###### **Capability** building

Based on ongoing, vigilant monitoring of metrics, staff engagement and staff capability, it is expected that organisations continue to refresh training and skill development. Organisations should also revisit earlier levels of the Model and rebuild capabilities if culture has reverted to being less focused on inclusion due to internal or external influence.

#### Actions supporting the Model

While the Model provides prescriptive actions for each level to achieve the desired outcomes, some actions are crucial at all levels to support the effectiveness of the change process.

###### Ongoing executive buy-in, commitment and sponsorship

For any change to be successful, senior executives must first acknowledge the barriers that block change in their organisations and help transform the way people, processes, and systems work. Leadership must ensure that change initiatives align with organisational strategy. They must also gain financial and human resource support, overcome resistance, and provide ongoing direction and guidance across the change roadmap.

###### Reassessment and adjustment of the change roadmap

Reassessment is a critical component of the change process because it helps organisations learn, review, and adjust their strategies. Ongoing measurement and assessment helps organisations to identify if they are lagging or performing better than expected against targets and supports benchmarking with similar organisations.

###### Knowledge transfer and sharing of best practices

The Model recommends that VPS organisations share their progress, successes and failures openly. Transparency will help to fill knowledge gaps, improve efficiency, and encourage leadership within and beyond the VPS. Sharing best practices will enable organisations to learn how to avoid pitfalls and barriers and to identify how success is achieved. It will also facilitate constructive feedback and innovative approaches to managing DEI across multiple VPS organisations.

Organisations must nurture and foster a learning culture to create a close-knit and supportive community that celebrates successes, but also accepts stumbles and failures as necessary steps to learn and grow. Publicly sharing success via organisational websites, social media networks and newsletters will inspire and encourage other organisations at various stages in their DEI journeys.

###### Change management and communication plans

Developing a robust change management communication plan and strategy will support the implementation of DEI initiatives. By reviewing and amending the communication plan and strategies at the beginning of each process change, organisations can ensure that stakeholders understand the purpose of change, how it affects them and what is expected of them. Effective communications will minimise pushbacks and resistance and increase engagement and buy-in.

Acknowledging and celebrating specific activities that result in incremental improvements, along with visible examples of success, can support employee engagement. Staff events or similar initiatives must avoid being labelled as tokenistic or performative and must be contextualised as part of the larger strategy driving inclusion outcomes for CALD women.

# Summary

The Framework, including the assessment (Assessment Tool) and the practical guide (the Model) developed for this report provides organisations with a change roadmap to drive inclusion and progress for CALD women. It creates a system of engagement and accountability, establishes trust and credibility, and supports the development of a culturally safe space for CALD women.

The indicative assessment tool (Assessment Tool) provided identifies progress towards inclusion of CALD women and measures organisational readiness for change. Communication, leadership support and effective engagement is crucial to gaining widespread support for the change roadmap.

As highlighted in the Framework, organisations must first establish an anti-discrimination/anti-racism framework and a Reconciliation Action Plan. These vital initiatives are “hygiene factors”. Only by ensuring that this fundamental level of cultural safety is established will the organisation be able to create an inclusive environment.

It is expected and necessary, that VPS leadership drives change and leads by example through active advocacy and sponsorship to advance CALD women. Leaders need to articulate and visibly act on their commitments.

This commitment must be supported by the review of all organisational policies and processes to ensure they are free of structural discrimination. Importantly, new structures and mechanisms that amplify the voices of CALD women need to be introduced to increase participation and equity.

Leaders, middle managers and employees must all be provided with the capabilities to drive the inclusion of CALD women. Cultural change will be realised through engagement of role models, champions, allies, and advocates.

Metrics and targets are vital to measure organisational and individual performance and progress. Performance as measured against set targets and cascaded down the organisation, will ensure accountability for results.

# Appendix 1:

## Breaking down barriers for CALD women in the VPS

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **DEI practices****across DPC "Diversity****and inclusion****Strategy 2019-2023"** | **Barriers**  | **Policy, process, or other actions to break down barriers** |
| ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT | Bias and cultural stereotypes in attraction, sourcing and recruitment | * Enforce anti-discriminatory policies in recruitment and promotion of CALD women
* Communicate the importance of increasing representation and inclusion of CALD women at all employment levels in the VPS to recruiters and other relevant stakeholders involved in the recruitment process
* Review advertising for roles to identify and remove unnecessary requirements that reinforce maintaining the status quo
* Avoid selection criteria that support “culture fit” e.g., team endorsements
* Include wider pools of candidates through direct community engagement
* Consider lateral and complementary skills and capabilities that are transferable into the role
* Introduce blind recruitment for CVs/ Resumes.
* Ensure that interview panels are diverse and inclusive of CALD employees
 |
| Bias and cultural stereotypes in promotion | * Provide internal promotion opportunities via sponsorship
* Cascade sponsorship through all organisational levels through the promotion of advocates, champions, and allies
* Review promotional practices within departments that consistently fail to meet targets to address any biases and systemic issues limiting the advancement of CALD women, e.g., consider if affinity biases are playing a role
 |
| SAFETY AND RESPECT | Lack of trust, credibility, and safety at the workplace  | * Normalise inclusive behaviour
* Establish accountability via anti-racism taskforces to provide culturally safe environments and intercultural understanding
* Establish anonymous, confidential reporting processes that are trusted and allow employees to report incidents of bias and discrimination
 |
| Pigeon-holing (not seeing migrant women as leaders)  | * Identify areas of disproportionate over-representation of CALD women. Understand and address biases and systemic contributary factors
* Offer development opportunities based on potential and transferable skills/experience
* Start "dialogues" to influence new behaviours
* Communicate the significance of culturally diverse and inclusive workplaces through briefings, workshops, email and poster campaigns.
* Provide inclusive intelligence training, cross-cultural training opportunities and cultural competency training to all levels of employment
 |
| Micro-aggression, bullying and discrimination | * Enforce anti-discriminatory policies and policies on workplace bullying and sexual harassment
* Establish a confidential and anonymous reporting process to identify incidents and measure frequency and severity
* Pinpoint specific areas that require attention
* Publish complaints data transparently
* Develop mechanisms to handle reported incidents with clear consequences. Be transparent with actions, while maintaining confidentiality of victims and perpetrators
 |
| EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE | Limited understanding of Australian workplace culture and cultural mismatch | * Provide 'soft' or 'essential skills' training opportunities to all levels of employment
 |
| Reduced self-esteem and confidence  | * Offer self-development, learning and engagement opportunities to CALD women to address status quo bias, social norms, bounded rationality
* Set up mentorship programs to coach and support CALD women
* Use allies and mentors to help CALD women increase their professional networks
 |
| Voluntary exclusion | * Introduce targeted referrals/ adjacency recruitment
* Proactively encourage women to reapply for positions by providing interview feedback
 |
| Devaluation of qualifications, work experience and skills by employers | * Introduce creative and novel ways of asking questions in interviews instead of structured competency-based questions to assess candidates' potentials and aspirations.
* Consider work sample tests to measure candidate competency and consider what capabilities can be developed on the job
* Consider non-traditional pathways that differ from existing practices
 |
| MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY | Lack of skills, desirable traits, and knowledge | * Provide ‘soft’ or ‘essential skills’ training opportunities to all levels of employment
* Integrate DEI into individual development initiatives and existing training for people leaders
 |
| Lack of understanding of the Australian labour market | * Display examples (video, audio and documents) of standard CVs, application letters and responses to address key selection criteria.
* Provide advice for interviews on organisational websites
* Provide candidates with opportunities to meet the team they are joining
 |
| COMMUNITY AND VISIBILITY | Lack of right social networks | * Introduce targeted referrals/ adjacency recruitment
* Proactively encourage CALD women to reapply by providing interview feedback
 |
| Lack of right social networks or networking opportunities | * Cascade sponsorship through all organisational levels through the promotion of advocates, champions, and allies
 |
| MEASUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY | Lack of flexible work and support for childcare and carer responsibilities | * Develop policies on flexible working arrangements
* Develop policies on ethnic pay equity
 |
| Lack of representation  | * Establish targets to increase the percentage of women from CALD backgrounds at all levels of employment in the VPS
* Campaign for role models and champions
* Identify current sources of data and ensure that the data collected via People Matters and other staff surveys is intersectional
 |
| Lack of sense of security and trust  | * Establish accountability via taskforces
* Integrate behavioural elements of the new culture into daily business activities
 |

# Appendix 2

#### Organisational change models

The principal models of change management stem from the work of Kurt Lewin in the 1940’s who developed a planned approach to change[[159]](#footnote-160). Lewin’s three-step change model explains the importance of systematic change that helps organisations to navigate successful change. His three-step model is grounded in social psychological approaches to change and suggests that all human systems struggle for equilibrium and for autonomy from their environment[[160]](#footnote-161). Therefore, a significant change in the field causes disequilibrium in the system. As human systems naturally seek balance, the system then attempts to change just enough to return to equilibrium. Thus, Lewin suggests that change should occur as a systematic process - unfreezing, moving, and refreezing.

In the unfreezing stage, organisations encounter volatility[[161]](#footnote-162); thus, they consider change and develop motivation. During the unfreezing stage, organisations actively work toward the desired change. The second stage is changing or moving. At this point, organisations develop and implement specific strategies and actions toward the change. This may involve relinquishing old values and learning and adopting new behaviour or practices. In the refreezing stage, organisations stabilise and integrate the change into culture. This phase requires continual reinforcement of new behaviours and norms to integrate it into the organisation thoroughly[[162]](#footnote-163).

Lewin’s three-step model provides a wealth of knowledge to make organisational change work. However, while Lewin’s model provides a concise roadmap, it also requires additional dimensions of sequence[[163]](#footnote-164). Consequently, by extending Lewin’s change model other scholars have developed new models of organisational change to cater to different situations, circumstances and contexts.

Schein’s change model is one example of extending Lewin’s three-step model[[164]](#footnote-165). Adding another layer to Lewin’s model, Schein describes the importance of considering the volatility that causes comfort/discomfort during change. Organisations must view a situation as a threat to its goals to motivate change[[165]](#footnote-166).

Similar to Schein, Senge et al. (1999) developed organisational models that seek to understand the influence of external driver(s) that cause volatility. According to Senge’s research, the prime motivation for change is external and organisations must realign and adapt themselves to accommodate the external reality. Employees require a sense of psychological safety to contemplate change seriously.

Senior executives must acknowledge the barriers that block lasting change in their organisations and then help transform the way people, processes, and systems work. Judson’s five-step model[[166]](#footnote-167) shows how to execute a successful change: analysing and planning the change, communicating the change, gaining acceptance of new behaviours, shifting behaviours from the status quo to the desired state, and institutionalising the change. He identifies a spectrum of possible behaviours towards change as acceptance, indifference, passive resistance, and active resistance. Resistance to change may be expressed through deviant behaviours to truncate the process or prevent implementation. Managing deviant behaviour and resistance to change is crucial to every organisation. Managing resistance and smoothly implementing change to meet environmental challenges is essential to organisational survival [[167]](#footnote-168) [[168]](#footnote-169).

Managing change and its associated uncertainties can be stressful and result in physical, emotional, and psychological tolls. Therefore, scholars argue that change should be implemented incrementally. Mintzberg[[169]](#footnote-170) defines incremental change as an approach in which organisations progressively alter a few elements or form new strategies. Mintzberg argues that sometimes the most economical and cost-effective change strategy is to adopt the semi-incremental approach with regular intervals punctuated occasionally by revolutionary periods of change to minimise pushbacks, resistance and other related tolls associated with the change process.

Learning from and extending these early change management models, scholars have developed more holistic models to make change more impactful and less complicated. The Prosci Change Triangle is one such model that describes four aspects of successful change: Success, Leadership/sponsorship, Project management, and Change management. Using the model, change practitioners can evaluate initiatives, identify risks, and improve outcomes.

Similarly, the ADKAR model[[170]](#footnote-171) also provides a framework for successful organisational change. The ADKAR model helps to understand change at an individual level and extend it to upper levels of the organisation. It has five elements: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement, and these act as building blocks to achieve successful organisational change.

Another change model popular in recent years is the McKinsey 7S Change Model[[171]](#footnote-172). It is based on seven key elements (Structure, Strategy, Staff, Style, Systems, Shared Values, and Skills), that are considered as interdependent to produce synergistic outcomes. It argues that organisational effectiveness involves more than simply putting in place the correct command and control structure to coordinate the delivery of an organisation’s strategy. The seven interacting factors align with systems thinking and are crucial to helping people function effectively to achieve a high-performance organisation.

One of the most recent and popular concepts applied in organisational change is the *nudge theory*, which is less a step-by-step model than the above change models[[172]](#footnote-173). Nudge theory focuses on human behaviours and driving a particular mindset to encourage change. It is based on finding a compelling way to nudge employees to want to change on their own rather than senior executives and leaders pushing employees to change. Nudging involves considering the employees’ points of view in the change process and showing employees how the change benefits them[[173]](#footnote-174). The change comes as a recommendation more than command, while listening to feedback throughout the process.

The above models emphasise that organisational change needs to have multiple considerations, including internal and external organisational dynamics, and plans and strategies for employees to move from the known to the unknown. While these models highlight what makes organisational change successful, they do not provide a clear roadmap to guide both organisational level change and individual level change as they mainly focus on driving change from the bottom (individual change).

John Kotter’s change management model[[174]](#footnote-175) provides an integrated model and step-by-step guide to achieving successful organisational change from top to bottom, supporting the breaking down of systemic barriers for CALD women in the workplace to create an inclusive workplace for all. As this research project aims to create both organisational and individual level changes, John Kotter’s model was selected as the most appropriate to implement systemic DEI changes.

# Appendix 3

#### Workforce Mutuality

Workforce Mutuality is a concept that refers to the extent to which an organisation’s diversity reflects the actual diversity of the community. The concept was developed by the “HealthWest Partnership” and refers to the concept that the diversity of staff across all levels within an organisation (from senior executives to individual contributors) needs to reflect the actual diversity of the community it serves[[175]](#footnote-176). Workforce mutuality is not the same as workforce diversity, because a workforce may be highly diverse without reflecting the diversity of the community it serves. For example, there may be a high representation of Asian workers, but little Indigenous representation within an organisation that specifically services a highly Indigenous community.

One of the driving factors of attaining Workforce Mutuality is that a workforce that reflects the community it serves tends to perform better. According to research[[176]](#footnote-177), diverse and inclusive workplaces are more efficient, creative, innovative, better equipped at problem-solving and decision-making, and better at attracting top talent. Diverse organisations are 35% more likely to perform better, have greater employee satisfaction and reduced absenteeism[[177]](#footnote-178). Currently, the diversity of senior leadership across the private and public sectors in Australia does not reflect that of the community. A 2013 study of board members and senior executives from 200 of Australia’s top publicly listed companies found that only 21% of CEOs and 19% per cent of senior executives identified as culturally diverse, while 32% of people in the Australian community identified as being culturally diverse[[178]](#footnote-179). With regards to gender, a 2018 survey found that women only represented 24% of directorships and 16% of CEOs[[179]](#footnote-180). An organisation that is more inclusive and reflective of the actual diversity of the community it serves is more in touch with community needs and is thus able to provide better services with a more highly skilled and innovative workforce.

Therefore, Workforce Mutuality requires a consideration of the wider context to which organisations strive to represent. To attain Workforce Mutuality, representative diversity needs to be seen as a priority by the organisation, particularly by executives and senior leaders.

Strong top-down support is necessary to drive Workforce Mutuality as it creates normative commitment and promotes internal advocacy towards diversity. Furthermore, senior leaders have the power to create authorising environments and allocate the necessary human and financial resources to implement Workforce Mutuality successfully. According to HealthWest, a leadership team that reflects the community in terms of gender, race and culture will provide organisations with strategic and operational advantage[[180]](#footnote-181). If diversity is restricted to a superficial representation of difference as opposed to being part of a long-term process of working towards representative diversity, it can easily become tokenistic[[181]](#footnote-182). Instead, diversity needs to be embedded into the core practices of an organisation and driven by a genuine commitment for real change to occur. According to HealthWest, the safe and confidential collection of staff and community data is essential for organisations to set Workforce Mutuality targets. This data should be disaggregated by intersectional attributes such as gender, cultural identity, and ethnicity, and collected in a safe and confidential way.

Organisations should consider their Workforce Mutuality as a starting point for their DEI strategy. Using data that is disaggregated by gender and other intersectional attributes such as cultural identity allows organisations to understand the extent of their workplace diversity and identify where there are gaps in representation of the wider context. Workforce Mutuality is a starting point that guides DEI strategy and more specifically, informs the specific targets and KPIs that sit within this strategy. Our Framework utilises the concept of Workforce Mutuality at the assessment stage and in the early stages of action.

# Appendix 4

#### Interview round 1: List of Stakeholders

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name  | Job title  | Department  |
| VPS stakeholders  |
|  | Manager, Workforce Diversity & Inclusion | Victoria Police |
|  | Senior Advisor DEI | Homes Victoria |
|  | A/Manager Inclusion and Diversity | Department of Transport |
|  | Senior Policy Officer  | Department of Justice and Court Services |
|  | Executive Director | Department of Treasury and Finance |
|  | Director, Community Engagement | Department of Families Fairness and Housing |
|  | Executive Director | Victorian Public Sector Commission |
|  | Project Officer | Department of Families Fairness and Housing |
|  | Aboriginal Dispute Resolution Officer | Dispute Resettlement Centre of Victoria  |
|  | Manager, Diversity & Inclusion | Court Services Victoria |
|  | Gender Equity Coordinator | Monash City Council  |
|  | Executive Director, Workforce and Engagement | Victorian Public Sector Commission |
| Research and Practitioners  |
|  | CEO | Scanlon Foundation Research Institute |
|  | Researcher | Diversein.com |
|  | Academic/Researcher | Intercultural Lab, Monash University |
|  | Academic and Researcher | Griffith University, Queensland |
|  | Director, Behaviour Works | Monash University |
|  | Researcher | Monash University |
|  | Researcher | Melbourne University  |
|  | Senior Recruitment Officer  | Monash Collage  |
|  | Consultant | Lilyzheng Consulting |
|  | Consultant  | Culture Plus Consulting |
|  | Researcher |  |
|  | Researcher | Diversity Council Australia |
|  | Behavioural expert and researcher | BI team |
|  | DEI Consultant | Nortonrose Fulbright |
|  | DEI Consultant  | Cultureamp |
|  | DEI Consultant  | Cultureamp |

#### Interview round 2: List of stakeholders

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| VPS stakeholders |   |
| Name  | Department/Unit | Email  |
|  | Victoria University  |  |
|  | Department of Families Fairness and Housing  |  |
|  | Department of Treasury and Finance  |  |
|  | Victorian Public Service Commission |  |
|  | Monash City Council  |  |
|  | Ambulance Victoria  |  |
|  | Department of Treasury and Finance  |  |
|  | Film Victoria  |  |

# Appendix 5

#### Interview questions for VPS defined entities

These questions are structured to reflect the underlying epistemology that informs this research practice. They stem from the relevant literature in Sociology, Management, Behavioural Science, Cognitive and Social Psychology and reflect the research questions of this study. Interview questions are designed to accommodate three different purposes based on where we are in the process and whom we are talking to:

1. Understanding of barriers to implementation and future initiatives – to allow us to revisit the literature and identify other case studies/examples to overcome those barriers
2. Understanding of existing initiatives
	1. How do they understand the problem?
	2. What have they done?
	3. What is the outcome? (What worked/what didn't)
3. Test and learn – How do they respond to our recommendations (last group)?

Notwithstanding the structured questions prepared, interviewees were provided an opportunity to speak freely. As such, interviews did not always follow a structured approach.

### General questions related to CALD women's representation in the defined entity/entities.

1. Do you think there is enough representation of CALD women in your unit/department/organisation?
	1. If yes, can you tell us about the reasons behind equal or higher CALD women's representation levels?
	2. If no, can you please tell us why it is the case?
2. Do you think CALD women experience barriers or challenges in applying for job opportunities or promotions in the unit/department/organisation?
	1. If yes, can you name a few salient barriers they face?

### Defined entity's initiatives, actions, and approaches to achieve gender equality and equitable outcomes for CALD women pre- Gender Equality Act 2020.

1. Were there any initiatives, actions or approaches introduced or implemented to increase the representation and equitable outcomes for CALD women in your unit/department/organisation?
	1. If the answer is yes to the above question:
		1. What were they?
		2. What initiatives, actions or approaches have worked to support and break down systemic barriers in the workplace for CALD women?
		3. What were the main facilitators for the success?
		4. What initiatives, actions or approaches have not worked to support and break down systemic barriers in the workplace for CALD women?
		5. What were the main challenges your unit/department/organisation faced when introducing and implementing the new actions, initiatives or approaches?

### Defined entity's initiatives, actions, and approaches to achieve gender equality and equitable outcomes for CALD women after the Gender Equality Act 2020

1. After introducing the Act, how much of a priority is the intersectional experience of CALD women in your programs/frameworks and actions plans?
2. What is the progress of the efforts made so far?
	1. If lots of efforts were made, what drove those efforts?
	2. If fewer efforts were made, can you please explain why progress has been slow to date?
3. What results have you received or are receiving on the newly initiated frameworks/ programs?
	1. How have these initiatives been received internally (was it a big change management project)?
4. What obstacles/resistance do you see within the organisation in implementing any changes?
	1. What do you think needs to be done to ensure take-up of any recommendations?

### Any new ideas/opportunities to make the VPS more inclusive and equitable for CALD women

1. Are there any new priorities areas you think that VPS entities should focus on when introducing and implementing actions, initiatives or approaches to achieve gender equality and equitable outcomes for CALD women in the future?
2. What is the best way to encourage CALD women to explore internal mobility opportunities?
3. How can we attract more CALD women into careers in the VPS?

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