

THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

APRIL 2025



We Acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the Land, Waterways and Skies. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We Acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of our Greater Geelong community today.

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The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy informs the organisational actions we take through plans including the:

- Rainbow Action Plan
- Disability Access & Inclusion Plan
- Gender Equality Action Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan

Photo: Barwon River, Moonah Park Barwon Heads

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I am proud to launch the City’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy, reinforcing our commitment to an inclusive, diverse, healthy, and connected workplace.

This is central to our focus on Great People and reflected in our Organisational Strategy 2024-2029, which ensures every employee has equal access to opportunities and a supportive environment to do their best work.

This strategy is shaped by our employee’s voices, through our Employee Experience Surveys, the People Matter Survey for gender equality reporting, and our Employee Networks, Pride and Enabler. Employee feedback is invaluable in helping us create a fair and inclusive workplace.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Roadmap (Appendix One) outlines our journey from where we are now (Horizon One) to where we want to be (Horizon Four). This roadmap, supported by our inclusion action plans, lays out the key steps and outcomes that will guide us forward.

We know that an inclusive organisation makes good business sense, diverse and inclusive workplaces drive better performance, innovation, creativity, engagement, and wellbeing.

Building a safe and inclusive workplace is a shared responsibility, and I look forward to working together to make this a reality.



Ali Wastie

Ali Wastie
CEO,
City of Greater Geelong

INTRODUCTION



Photo: I AM public artwork – Mark Cuthbertson, 2021. The work recognises the empowerment of diversity in our society.

Our aspiration for an inclusive, diverse, healthy, and connected community is reflected in the City’s strategic commitment to Great People.

As demonstrated in our Organisational Strategy 2024-2029 we are committed to creating an inclusive organisation that supports and encourages its employees to do their best work, have equal access to opportunities and a fair working environment.

We make this commitment with our customers and community in mind knowing that our customers will be better understood and our services more innovative when we are a mature, inclusive and diverse organisation.

As our City grows and we welcome more people with their own unique experiences, it changes our work and workforce. Our workplace reflects the community we live in, and we celebrate the unique experiences, knowledge, and contributions every employee at the City makes. Creating an inclusive environment for our employees to thrive is foundational for representing our community and working with them.

We want our employees to be their authentic selves at work and to improve their everyday experience. It is important all our employees feel included, engaged and safe to contribute fully to a productive, healthy and inclusive City.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy sets the framework for a strategically aligned, organisation-wide approach to inclusion and diversity. This framework demonstrates the pathway we will take to achieve our goal of a diverse workplace and safe and inclusive organisation.

This strategy sets the framework for our internal actions within our action plans. Regular action plans hold us accountable for achieving identified outcomes and commit the organisation to effect positive, sustainable change for our employees. We seek to build awareness and capability, monitor, and track our progress, shape an inclusive environment and embed inclusion across all stages of the employee experience.

OUR VISION FOR INCLUSION

The City is a place where our diverse workforce can thrive, feel like they belong and work effectively together. Our employees reflect and harness the power of our diverse community.

OUR INCLUSION PRINCIPLES

Diversity: Our workforce reflects the diversity of the community we serve.

We embrace all people's unique identities and ways of thinking to ensure the City reflects the diversity of our community and all employees feel like they belong.

Voice: We harness diversity to improve outcomes.

We listen to new ideas and perspectives to deliver innovative and inclusive services across the City and for our people.

Access: Our policies and structures enable all our workforce to work in a way that is most effective for them.

We are committed to supporting our workforce to work flexibly and empower them to shape their work so they can be effective and maximise their performance.

Participation: We support all employees to participate equitably at the City.

We support all employees to have autonomy and build their capability and capacity to deliver their roles to the best of their abilities.

Responsibility: Everyone is responsible to drive inclusion

Leaders play a critical role in enabling safe, inclusive workplaces, however, we expect our people at all levels and in all areas to champion inclusive workplaces.

OUR STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy is aligned to the City's Organisational Strategy 2024-2029. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap (Appendix one) horizon one outcomes align to delivering the Organisational Strategy's Strategic Priority 1: We will be an extraordinary employer with a proud, diverse and talented workforce and notably outcome 1.2 we are an inclusive workplace that embraces diversity and creates equal opportunities for all.

This Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy is also aligned to the City's strategic policies and Victorian and Commonwealth legislation. Each creates the foundation of our work and provides essential parameters for developing our action plans. Over the life of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy, we will continually review our approach to providing a safe, inclusive and accessible workplace in response to national and Victorian initiatives as they occur.

Relevant legislation

Equal Opportunity Act 2010: The Equal Opportunity Act recognises that access to opportunities is not equitably distributed through society and that discrimination can cause social disadvantage. Under the Equal Opportunity Act, employers have a positive duty to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation as far as possible for protected characteristics.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006: The Charter requires all public authorities to 'properly consider' and 'act compatibly' with 20 protected human rights in decision making. The Charter includes a right protecting individuals from discrimination (s.8 Recognition and equality before the law), protecting people's cultural rights (s.19), and their safety (i.e. a right for all people, including in a work context, to feel safe and be safe, (s.20 protection of liberty and security of person).

Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic): The Gender Equality Act was passed in February 2020 and commenced in March 2021. It requires the Victorian Public Sector, including local councils, to report on, plan for and progress gender equality for all genders.

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Clth): The Sex Discrimination Act, together with state and territory anti-discrimination laws, provides the primary framework for understanding and addressing sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination, and recognises the right to work in an environment free from sexual harassment.

Fair Work Act 2009 (Clth): The Fair Work Act governs the employment relationship between employers and employees in Australia, and provides protections of employees including minimum entitlements to minimum wage, leave, and flexible work to ensure a fairer workplace.

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

Inclusion occurs when people feel a true sense of belonging and value regardless of their personal characteristics, circumstances or background.

Diversity is about what makes each person unique and includes our backgrounds, personality, life experiences and beliefs. It is a combination of the visible and invisible differences that shape our view of the world, our perspective and our approach. Diversity may typically be seen as manifesting through attributes such as gender identity, sex characteristics and sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, faith, ability, age, mental health, socioeconomic status, housing status or geographic location. It is the embodiment of all forms of diversity that enables and drives inclusiveness.

EQUITY

Equity is a concept based on the principle of human rights and fairness in the distribution of services, resources, benefits and responsibilities, on the basis of people's current opportunities and barriers. It recognises that people have different needs, life experiences, levels of influence and access to decision making and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies imbalances, to provide equitable outcomes for all.

EQUALITY

Equality affirms that all human beings are born free and equal, having the same rights and are entitled to the same level of respect, treatment or prosperity regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, age, ability or religion.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion acknowledges that every person has strengths, resources and skills and when these are contributed to a community, they add value, enhance resilience, contribute to solutions and exponentially benefit everyone. It presupposes that a society is less than it could be when parts of the community are excluded.

It is a philosophy, that creates products, services, places, environments and experiences that are usable for everyone, and accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of a person's age, level of ability, cultural background, or any other factors that contribute to the diversity of our communities.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. Aspects of a person's identity can include social characteristics such as:

Aboriginality, gender, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, ethnicity, colour, language, faith, class, socio-economic status, ability and age.

Attitudes, systems and structures in society and organisations can intersect and create inequality and result in exclusion. These include:

Sexism, racism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, intersex discrimination, ableism, ageism and stigma.

THE CITY'S APPROACH

An inclusive organisation values staff of all demographic backgrounds and utilises their different ideas, experience, and perspectives to build a better organisation. An inclusive organisation seeks to actively dismantle all forms of discrimination and remove barriers caused by marginalisation.

The City of Greater Geelong recognises that every employee brings a unique experience and is part of multiple groups and identities. We consider our employees' experiences through an intersectional lens and see employee inclusion as the avenue to address the systemic causes that may prevent any of our employees from participating fully and contributing to the organisation and community.

Our employee Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and Social Equity Framework are underpinned by the idea that individuals can and do belong to many social groups, and that systems and structures interact or overlap on multiple levels to create disadvantage, based on personal characteristics. We recognise the unique barriers that the groups and identities as outlined in Figure 1 have experienced and recognise there are many others that also intersect with these.

Organisational inclusion is needed for the City to support its employees to perform at their best and continually deliver tailored, meaningful services to our community. We embed employee inclusion as a core part of everything we do because it is crucial to our success.

At the City, social equity and inclusion is the foundation for promoting a diverse and thriving community, and our workforce should reflect the community we serve.

Inclusion creates a greater voice for all employees and emphasises a greater responsibility for individuals to shape the organisation and how services are provided.



Photo: Celebration of Diwali at Wurriki Nyal

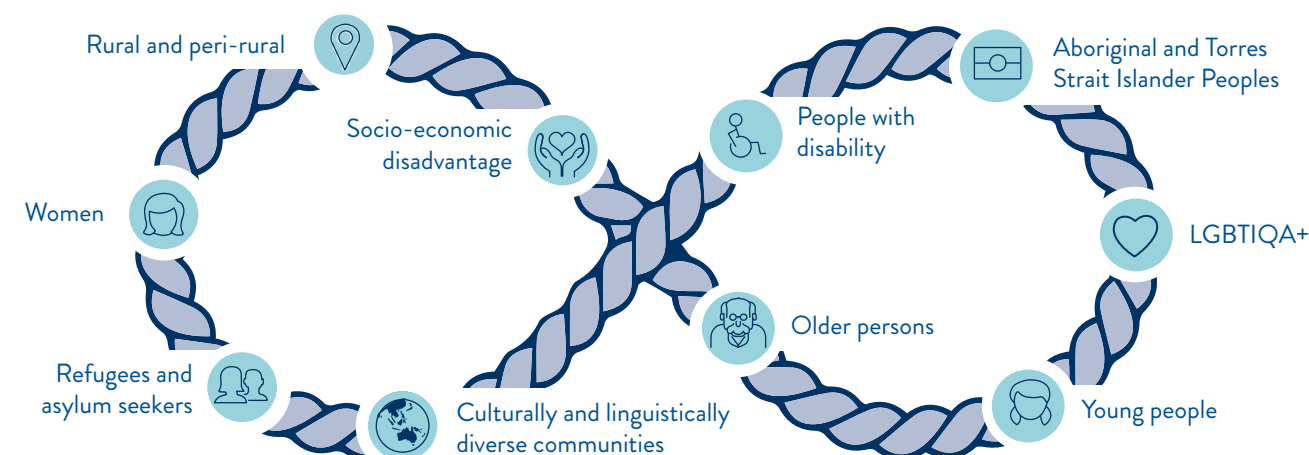


Figure 1: Intersectionality and indicative social groups (Social Equity Framework)

HOW INCLUSION ENRICHES US ALL

An inclusive organisation is more than an organisation with employees from a wide range of backgrounds. It values diversity and champions all types of people, it gives them a voice to contribute to decisions that affect them, it encourages them and skills them to participate meaningfully, it provides access and opportunities for all people, and it creates a shared responsibility of creating an inclusive workplace.

An inclusive organisation makes good business sense and delivers a range of positive organisational, team and individual outcomes. Research consistently links diverse and inclusive workplaces with improved profit and performance, innovation, creativity, talent management, engagement and wellbeing.

The outcomes of this strategy will deliver a well-supported workforce, better organisational performance, and ultimately more effective delivery of the City's Organisational Strategy and Community Plan. Outcomes operate across three levels:

Employees: Greater trust, respect, engagement and job satisfaction.

Organisation: More effective decision-making, fewer meetings and efficient management of council funds.

Customers: Better represented and understood, receiving innovative solutions faster.

Employees have a better experience at diverse and inclusive organisations.

- Numerous studies have shown inclusion is associated with greater engagement, commitment and satisfaction
- Employees who perceive their organisation is committed to diversity and feel included are 80% more likely to believe they work in a high-performing organisation
- Gender-balanced teams create greater level of 'psychological safety' for all employees, increasing feelings of self-confidence and appetite for moderate risk-taking and experimentation

The entire organisation benefits as a result.

- Inclusive teams make better decisions 87% of the time - and take half the time and meetings to do so
- Companies low in gender and ethnic diversity are 29% more likely to under perform in profit
- Ethnically diverse teams are 58% more likely to avoid errors

This helps them deliver better services to the customer.

- Teams representative of their community are 158% more likely to understand that demographic, increasing their likelihood of innovating effectively
- A match between organisation and community racial diversity is positively related to sales
- Organisational demographics representative of the community is associated with greater civility

THE CITY’S JOURNEY TOWARDS INCLUSION



Photo: Accessible entrance at Wurriki Nyal

INTRODUCING THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ROADMAP

The City’s journey to an inclusive organisation is demonstrated in Appendix 1: The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap provides a visual representation of how the City will work towards a truly diverse workplace and a safe and inclusive organisation. The roadmap will provide the strategic framework to map future progress through targeted outcomes and aligned action plans.

The roadmap sets out how we will progress along the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion horizons, a visual model, updated in 2024 to identify four stages on a development continuum.

Each action plan will align its organisational actions to the *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap* (Appendix 1). However, each demographic action plan, including Disability Access & Inclusion, Rainbow, Gender Equality and Reconciliation will likely begin to display different stages along the *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap’s* horizons. The City has developed individualised action plans for each demographic portfolio in recognition that each will need unique support to ensure maturity along the *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap’s* journey.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION HORIZONS

HORIZON 1	HORIZON 2	HORIZON 3	HORIZON 4
Transforming the future - Inclusive leadership capability developed across senior levels of the organisation. - Increased awareness of the diversity of our people and community through diversity data. - People and processes responding to workplace harm have an increased understanding of inclusion. - Workplace policies, procedures and practices have increased application of the inclusion principles. - The City of Greater Geelong’s governance structures have increased responsibility for inclusion.	Strengthen inclusion and welcome diversity - Increased leadership accountability to enable inclusive workplaces. - All employees recognise and promote the value of inclusion. - Increased confidence to report workplace harm. - Our workforce and community-facing policies, procedures and practices are more inclusive.	Integrating diversity into our DNA - Leaders proactively create and sustain inclusive workplaces. - Diverse voices contribute to decision-making at the City of Greater Geelong. - Increased feelings of cultural safety in the workplace. - Increased diversity at all levels of our organisation.	Adaptive inclusion We are a champion of inclusivity and prioritise safety.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The City has demonstrated its commitment to great people and an inclusive workplace in our *Organisational Strategy 2024-2029*.
By 2029, our *Organisational Strategy 2024-2029* has committed to being an inclusive workplace that embraces diversity and creates equal opportunity for all. This is demonstrated by:

- being an employer of choice for diverse genders, sexes, sexualities, abilities, experiences and backgrounds, that understands and adapts to the diverse needs of our workforce,
- valuing and attracting people of diverse backgrounds and identities who can bring their authentic selves to work,
- incredible outcomes that are enhanced by diverse perspectives.

The *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy* is strengthening this journey through our focus on solidifying the Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Roadmap horizon one.

HORIZON ONE – TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE.

Horizon one is defined by the following outcomes:

- Leaders have increased understanding of the importance of inclusion and diversity

To support strong foundations, we need to empower our leaders to understand, embed and champion safe and inclusive workplaces. We will do this through focusing our training resources to support leaders to understand, implement and embed the inclusion principles.

- The City’s governance structures have increased responsibility for inclusion

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and action plans will be supported by the development of internal processes for governance and reporting. Through establishing a robust inclusion & diversity governance and reporting structure, there will be clear expectations, transparency and accountability for developing and implementing the inclusion and diversity program and action plans.

- People and processes responding to workplace harm have increased understanding of inclusion

A foundation of safety in the workplace includes accessible and inclusive workplace harm reporting processes. Workplace harm reporting should be considerate of the diverse needs of our workforce and ensure that safety and inclusion are at the heart of workplace harm reporting and disclosures.

- Workplace policies, procedures and practices have increased application of the inclusion principles

To enable strong foundations we need to ensure our policies, processes and procedures are built to enhance an equitable and inclusive workplace. This includes connecting with our workforce to ensure that all new policies and procedures are considered with an inclusion lens.

- Increased awareness of the diversity of our employees through demographic data

To best serve the diverse needs of our workforce, we need to understand who our workforce is. It is critical we enhance our ability to capture our employee diversity data to better understand and improve the needs of our employees.

To achieve the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap horizon one outcomes, all organisational actions within the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and action plans must align and bolster one another to contribute to foundational reform. This contributes to the delivery of the *Organisational Strategy 2024–29*.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

HORIZON FOUR– ADAPTIVE INCLUSION

Our end goal of a diverse workplace and safe and inclusive organisation is defined by the following outcome:

- The City is a champion of inclusivity and prioritises and protects safety

All employees will come to work and feel safe, included and respected. Our culture is one that values diversity within our workplace and community. Protected attributes are embedded in our policies, procedures, practices and decision making, placing employee well-being at the forefront of our organisation.

Leaders at all levels proactively champion safety and inclusion.

With a reputation as a safe and inclusive organisation, we ensure we align to evidence-based, best practice. We will continually learn, monitor and evaluate our practices to ensure we are safe, fair and inclusive for all employees.

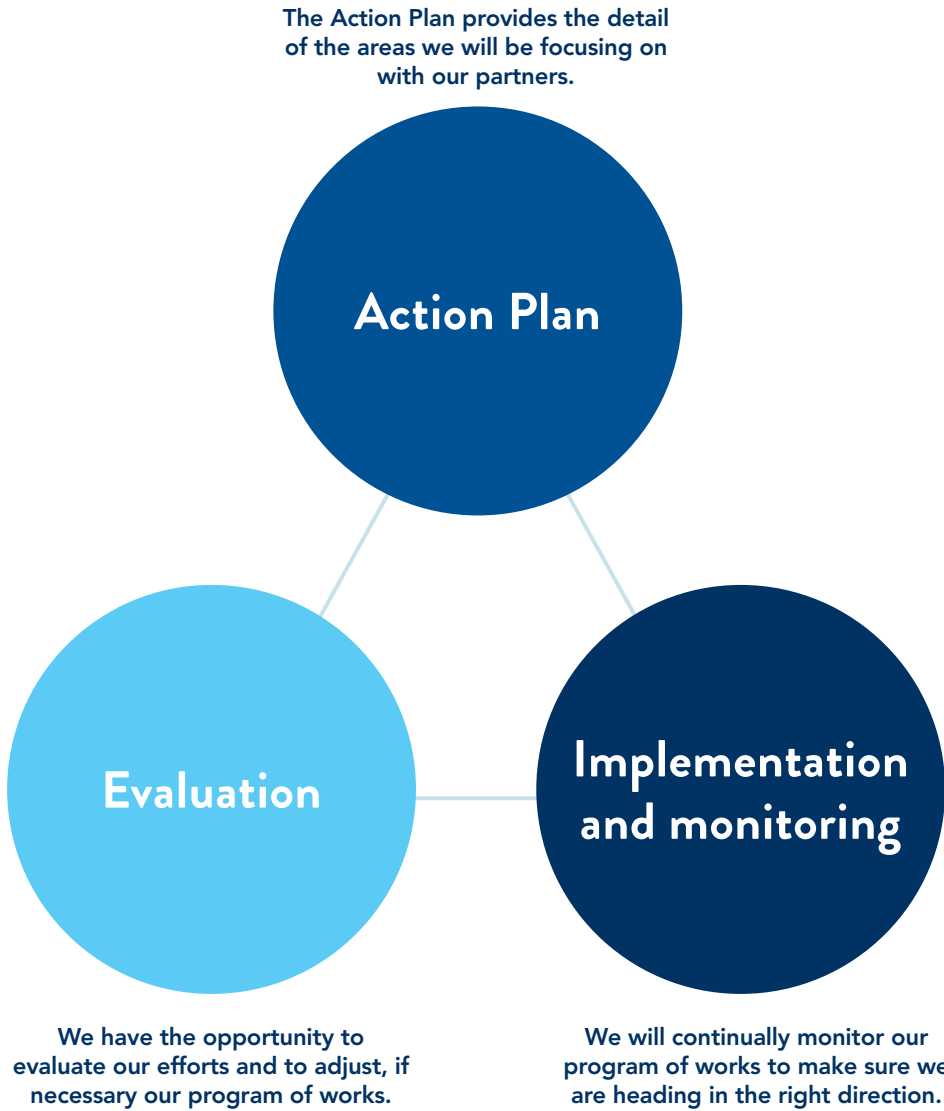
We will achieve this through the implementation of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap (Appendix 1) with our key partners and stakeholders. The roadmap will support the overall actions for all demographic action plans and ensure a strategic and clear direction through the horizons.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING OUR PROGRESS

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap (Appendix 1) are supported by a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap demonstrates the outcomes that are required to progress the City through the horizons, from Horizon One to Horizon Four. Each action plan will progress these outcomes through targeted and supported workforce actions.

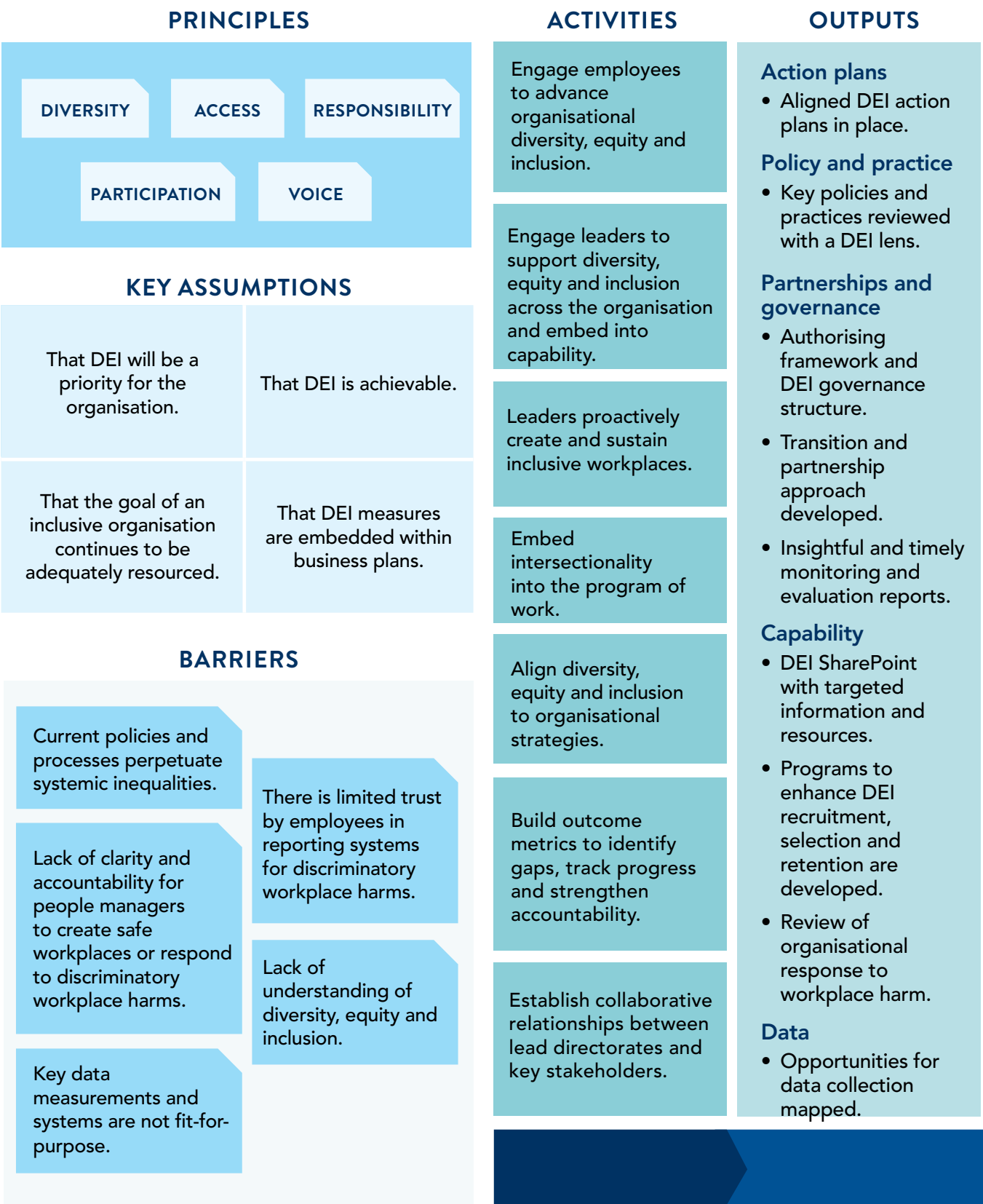
A dedicated MEL for each action plan will monitor the progress of the actions against their key milestones and performance indicators to inform the next iteration of action plans.

PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION CYCLE



APPENDIX 1: DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI) ROADMAP

Problem: A culture of systemic bias has amplified inequality and impeded diversity.



APPENDIX 2: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY – HORIZON 1 ACTIONS

These actions are designed to support the City to deeply embed inclusion through organisational culture, capability and people practices as well as our processes, policies and ways of delivering service to our community. Actions are prioritised in a sequence, via horizons, to successfully build momentum and buy-in and understand barriers. This will ensure we flexibly navigate the change journey towards successfully embedding inclusion at the City.

Photo: Attendees at the Geelong Rainbow Festival 2024



Action	Description	Horizon one outcome alignment	Action owner
Develop an Inclusion Statement that is promoted and supported throughout the City	The problem: there is currently no City statement promoting inclusion and our expectations and commitment for employees. How we will do it: by developing an inclusion statement that sets the standard of our commitment to inclusion and set expectations for employees at the City	Workplace policies, procedures and practices have increased application of the inclusion principles.	I&D team in partnership with Employee Communications
Inclusion & Diversity Program governance and reporting is embedded	The problem: Previous inclusion action plans have not had a governance structure to support transparent, accountable and measurable implementation of plans. How we will do it: The Inclusion & Diversity team have developed a program of work to strategically align internal actions to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Roadmap. Implementation will be supported by the I&D governance structure with clear action plan reporting requirements. This will include quarterly ELT reporting.	The City's governance structures have increased accountability for inclusion	I&D team
Review of organisational response to workplace harm to build recommendations for an inclusive response	The problem: Employee engagement has provided feedback on the need for the City's reporting processes to consider the experiences of diverse employees accessing support. How we will do it: Through the implementation of the Respect@Work framework we will review our organisational response to workplace harm. We will explore how to embed an intersectional approach to reports of workplace harm and provide recommendations for a safe and accessible service for diverse employee needs.	People and processes responding to workplace harm have an increased understanding of inclusion	I&D team in partnership with Respect@Work working group

Action	Description	Horizon one outcome alignment	Action owner
Develop leaders capability via training opportunities to improve awareness, service delivery and inclusive employee culture	The problem: Current leadership capability content has not focused on understanding and awareness for inclusion, equity and diversity, organisational expectations and how to promote an inclusive workplace. How we will do it: By developing our Inclusion & Diversity SharePoint site with information, resources and support for managers to engage and promote inclusion. We will explore inclusion training for people leaders and share communications around organisational expectations to promote inclusive workplaces.	Leaders have increased understanding of the importance of inclusion and diversity	I&D team in partnership with Learning and Organisational Development team



Photo: The City of Greater Geelong supports a diverse workforce.

Action	Description	Horizon one outcome alignment	Action owner
Explore opportunities to enhance capturing employee demographic data	The problem: There is limited capability to capture employee demographic data making understanding our workforce and its needs difficult. How we will do it: We will update systems to widen our capacity to capture employee demographic data. The I&D team will promote an employee communications plan to encourage safe and voluntary updating of their demographic data.	Increased awareness of the diversity of our employees through demographic data	People Shared Services with support from I&D Team
Explore opportunities to embed inclusion principles into people leaders PDRs	The problem: Current leadership expectations have not focused on developing and promoting safe and inclusive workplaces. How we will do it: We will explore organisational expectations of people leaders in creating and promoting safe and inclusive workplaces. We will embed expectations into people leader PDRs.	Leaders have increased understanding of the importance of inclusion and diversity	TBC
Identify and assign Champions at a senior level to promote and lead the work for each inclusion portfolio	The problem: The City does not currently have embedded practices of Senior Leadership championing inclusion How we will do it: A senior member of the City will become an inclusion champion for a dedicated demographic portfolio. They will be responsible for championing the implementation of action plans, engaging in days of significance and support dismantling barriers impeding inclusion.	Leaders have increased understanding of the importance of inclusion and diversity	I&D team

This document contains important information about the City of Greater Geelong. Please contact us if you have any questions or would like to request a hard copy of the report.

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