

2023-2025



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy

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Our Commitment

At Coliban Water we are committed to fostering a workplace and community that values and embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion.

By embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion, Coliban Water aims to not only reflect the rich tapestry of the world around us but also to contribute positively to it. Together, we can create an environment where all individuals can flourish, our organisation thrives, and our communities are strengthened.

A recent external review demonstrates a level of maturity, where we have become motivated to move beyond compliance to ambition.

The 2023 People Matter Survey results also indicated that staff are demonstrating their commitment through their many contributions, however there is still a lot to be done.

Our DEI strategy aims to:

Foster Inclusivity



Create a workplace culture and environment where every employee feels valued, respected, included, regardless of their background or identity.

Achieve Diversity



Build a diverse workforce that reflects the broader community, with representation across various dimensions of diversity, such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and more.

Promote Equity



Ensure that all employees have equal access to opportunities, resources, and career advancement, addressing systemic barriers and bias



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Definitions



Diversity

The quality of being different or unique at the individual or group level.

Includes culture, religion, ethnicity, language, age, gender spectrum, sexual orientation, family and carer status, disability, socio-economic status and other characteristics.

Increases innovation, creativity and collaboration bringing a variety of life experiences, skillsets and viewpoints to the table.

Leads to more effective decision making, problem solving and teamwork as well as increased workplace engagement and retention rates.

Inclusion

The act of bring together and harnessing differences in a way that is beneficial.

Creates an environment in which everyone feels valued, respected and listened to, has access to the same opportunities and is supported to reach their full potential.

Equity

The pledge of fair treatment, opportunity and advancement while striking to identify and eliminate barriers.

- **EQUALITY** treats everyone the same regardless of their needs or circumstances.
- **EQUITY** treats people differently according to their needs in order to provide the same opportunities.

Background

Workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are important for several reasons, and they can have a significant positive impact on organisations, individuals, and society as a whole. A diverse workforce brings together people with different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. This diversity of thought can lead to more innovative solutions and creative problem-solving. When employees feel included and valued, they are more likely to share their unique ideas.

Current Trends

Gartner have found that organisations that are able to enact sustainable D&I strategies can achieve meaningful results, including a 20% increase in organisational inclusion, which translates into a 6.2% increase in on-the-job effort, a 5% increase in employees' intent to stay with the organisation and a nearly 3% increase in individual employee performance.

To build sustainable D&I, Gartner recommends that organisations do three things – 1. take an employee centric approach, 2. prioritise a metric that tracks overall progress over time and 3. Embed D&I into existing talent and business processes.

Industry Target

Whilst each Water Corporation will have their own targets to reflect their local community, VicWater have set the following targets as part of their 2023-2028 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy:

- 80% of people leasers across the water sector attend at least one ED&I professional development activity each year
- Reduce the pay gap year-on-year
- Maturity shift in ED&I maturity across the sector
- Zero non-conformance with GEA audits across the sector
- Gender balance (40:40:20) in senior leadership positions
- Gender balance (40:40:20) across the organisation
- 10% of our workforce identify as a person with a disability
- 20% of our workforce identify as having a multicultural background
- 2.5% of our workforce identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 35% of our workforce identify as carers, with caring responsibilities
- 7% of our workforce identify as belonging to the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) communities

Additional Internal Targets

- Flexible work arrangements are available to all employees unless there is a specific operational constraint
- 35% of employees work flexibly (through informal and formal flexible working arrangements)

Community & Workforce Profile

Snapshot of community profiles	Loddon	Campaspe	Gannawarra	Mt Alexander	Macedon Ranges	Greater Bendigo
Total population	7729	38506	10528	20292	52132	122551
% Female	48.42	50.49	50.08	49.86	50.58	51.29
% Male	50.76	49.51	49.91	50.13	49.42	48.71
% Total ASTI persons	2.1	3.0	2.5	1.3	0.9	2.3
% ATSI participating in workforce	75.9	78.6	87.0	87.0	87.8	83.8
% Born overseas	8.6	7.6	5.6	12.4	13.1	9.6
% Speak LOTE at home	3.1	3.9	2.4	3.3	4.5	6.5
Main Religions	None and Christian					
% Persons who need assistance with core activities	7.5	7.4	7.4	5.3	5.1	7.1
% Persons with a disability	22.1	22.3	23.8	29.3	16	21.4
% Primary care givers aged 15+	6.6	5.9	5.7	6.2	4.7	5.5

Our Targets

By 2025 we aim for our Workforce to be:



Gender balance (50:50) in senior leadership positions



10% of our workforce identify as a person with a disability



10% of our workforce speak a language other than English



2.5% of our workforce identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



7% of our workforce identify as belonging to the LGBTIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Asexual) communities



Maintain flexible work arrangements to all employees unless there is a specific operational constraint

Our Strategic Direction

Our Vision

Create an inclusive culture where all employees feel valued, empowered, and supported to achieve their full potential.

Our Principles

1. **Respect for All:** Show respect and value for individuals regardless of their background, identity, or perspective.
2. **Leadership at all Levels:** Promote leadership that actively supports and advocates for DEI efforts at all levels.
3. **Representation:** Strive for diverse representation at all levels of an organisation, including leadership positions, to reflect the broader community.
4. **Accountability:** Teams and Individuals are accountable for progress toward DEI goals, with clear metrics and consequences for failing to meet them.
5. **Fair Policies and Practices:** Policies, practices, and procedures are free from systemic biases.

Our Goals

1. **Strengthen Leadership, Commitment & Accountability:** Active and visible support, endorsement, and dedication of an organisation's leaders, including senior executives, managers, and board members, to the principles of DEI.
2. **Open Communication:** Effective communication plans to ensure the exchange of information, ideas, and messages that promote diversity, address issues related to equity, and foster an inclusive culture.
3. **Embed DEI into Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Practices:** Implementation of proactive policies and procedures to attract and retain diverse employees.
4. **Effective Education and Training:** Implementation of education and training programs to fostering awareness, understanding, and meaningful change in DEI.
5. **Comprehensive Data Insights and Evaluation:** DEI data and insights developed to provide comprehensive insights.
6. **Engage Customers, Community and Stakeholders:** Effective understanding and engagement with customers, community and stakeholders.

Our Plan

Target outcomes have been defined for each goal



Strengthen Leadership, Commitment & Accountability

- Senior leadership is fully committed to and actively involved in promoting DEI initiatives
- Clear responsibilities and metrics are established for leaders to track progress



Open Communication

- DEI strategy is shared and understood internally and externally
- Channels are created for employees to provide feedback and share concerns



Embed DEI into Recruitment, Retention and Workplace Practices

- Strategies are implemented to attract and hire a diverse workforce
- Workplaces are designed considering DEI requirements



Effective Education and Training

- Training and resources are provided to help employees understand the value of diversity and develop cultural competency
- Unconscious biases addressed in areas that may impact decision-making and interactions



Comprehensive Data Insights and Evaluation

- Demographic data is collected and analysed to assess diversity and track progress against the targets
- Key performance indicators (KPIs) are established to measure DEI initiatives' effectiveness and reported regularly



Engage Customers, Community and Stakeholders

- The local community is engaged with to support initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion
- DEI principles are integrated into corporate social responsibility efforts

Goal 1: Strengthen Leadership, Commitment & Accountability

Target Outcome	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior leadership is fully committed to and actively involved in promoting DEI initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To undertake an independent maturity assessment to determine our current position and actions to progress inclusive employment practices. To create a Tailored Roadmap that identifies the actions and timings around these recommendations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear responsibilities and metrics are established for leaders to track progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop KPIs for Leaders in Performance Development Plan re DEI.
<h2>Rationale</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To set a baseline of where we are today so we can track progress This identifies a clear pathway to an improved position on the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion maturity curve, outlining timing and responsibility. 	
<h2>Considerations</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring actions are realistic and pragmatic while providing drive and focus. 	

Goal 2: Open Communication

Target Outcome	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEI strategy is shared and understood internally and externally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and share new DEI strategy communications plan • Establish internal communications plan related to new/updated DEI policies • Create and roll out external comms plan related to DEI • Raise awareness of DEI practices to Coliban Water's suppliers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channels are created for employees to provide feedback and share concerns related to DEI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create continuous feedback loop
Rationale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the rolling out of the new DEI strategy, communications team to create an external communications plan to keep key stakeholders informed about the organisation's DEI goals, strategy implementation, and achievements in this space. • This will enable Coliban Water to be seen as a champion in inclusive employment practices by the local community, the water sector, DEECA and other relevant external stakeholders. 	
Considerations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcase best practice happening within Coliban Water, to inspire other organisations to follow suit. In case studies and success stories, focus on impact on individuals, in a respectful manner. • Consider using key dates (International Women's Day, International Day of People with Disability, NAIDOC Week...) to share case studies related to the priority cohort. • Monitor effectiveness of messaging across multiple metrics: delivery method (newsletters, LinkedIn, etc.), language used (is it inclusive?), quality of stories (are they resonating with key external stakeholders?) • Ensure messaging also resonates with all staff across the organisation – all staff to understand their role and be proud of their inclusive behaviours. 	

Goal 3: Embed DEI into Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Practices

Target Outcome	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies are implemented to attract and hire a diverse workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current DEI policies and practices Update job descriptions Add new tools to recruitment framework to ensure a fairer and more inclusive process, in alignment with DEI strategy's objectives. Create a workplace adjustments policy Top add more diversity to recruitment panels, beyond gender.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace design considers DEI requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a neurodiverse room

Rationale

- Best practice organisations would have a written policy covering all scenarios to ensure all employees have equal access to workplace adjustments.

Following the launch of the new DEI strategy, review current set of DEI policies and practices to ensure they align with the strategy, are current, and do not create any unintended barriers to inclusion.

Considerations

- Leading organisations benchmark their policy and practices against world's best practice,
- Policies to be reviewed every second year to evaluate its impact, effectiveness, and relevance. This review consider capturing latest trends in DEI and update policies accordingly.

Goal 4: Effective Education and Training

Target Outcome	Deliverable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and resources are provided to help employees understand the value of diversity and develop cultural competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all DEI related education and training materials. • Assess accessibility of such resources by all employees.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconscious bias addressed in areas that may impact decision-making and interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all DEI related education and training materials

Rationale

- This analysis will allow Coliban Water to better understand the relevance of existing training material, its alignment to the new DEI strategy and its objectives, the effectiveness of training and identify any double-ups or gaps.
- Update materials for them to relevant with latest trends.

Considerations

- What is the purpose of the existing DEI training?
- Are the materials covering all aspects of DEI?
- How accessible are the materials?
- Are they aligned to Coliban Water's DEI goals?
- Do they need to be mandatory? Recurrent? Only completed at induction?
- Best practice suggests training is linked to the organisation's vision, mission, and values, and frequently reviewed and updated to ensure it is current and relative.

Goal 5: Comprehensive Data Insights & Evaluation

Target Outcome	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic data is collected and analysed to assess diversity and track progress. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are established to measure DEI initiatives' effectiveness and reporting regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop process to collect demographic data from New and existing employees

Rationale

These action will allow Coliban Water to :

- Effectively map out the diversity mix of the workforce, to better understand who they are, to identify gaps and set reasonable targets around DEI. This will also allow you to monitor success of the DEI strategy.
- Sharing the responsibility and accountability among all department / teams to ensure the achievement of organisational DEI objectives set out in the DEI strategy.
- Identify any sufficient and unjustified difference in pay, and action to mitigate this.

Considerations

- Consider using an independent party to access data, so individual personal data is not shared with the organisation as an employer, only as aggregate data.
- This process must collect the same demographic data from existing employees that the new system will be collecting from new employees.
- Consider which data is mandatory for employees to disclosure, and which data is optional.
- Develop a communications plan to explain to existing employees:
 - What data will be collected
 - Why this activity is being undertaken
 - How this information will be used

Goal 6: Engage Customers, Community & Stakeholders

Target Outcome	Deliverable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local community is engaged with to support initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion. • DEI principles are integrated into corporate social responsibility efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness to Coliban Water’s customers and suppliers about the organisation’s DEI commitments in alignment to the new DEI strategy.
<h3>Rationale</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep key stakeholders informed about the organisation’s DEI goals, strategy implementation, and achievements in this space. • This will enable Coliban Water to be seen as a champion in inclusive employment practices by the local community, the water sector, DEECA and other relevant external stakeholders. • By publicly raising awareness of its DEI commitments, we can position ourselves as a leader in this space, invite suppliers to join the organisation on this journey. • Having public DEI targets signals Coliban Water’s intent to commit to the DEI strategy and influence supply chain accordingly. 	
<h3>Considerations</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how Coliban Water’s customers and suppliers can support achieve DEI goals. • Consider assessing suppliers for their own inclusive employment practices. • To focus internally first to get our own DEI right before passing on requirements to our suppliers. 	

Implementing Our Plan

Coliban Water's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Implementation Plan will be a key deliverable under The Coliban Ways of Working (CWoW) workstream.

A cross functional group across DEI, CSR, and Sustainability will be formed to deliver the required actions.

Considerations

- Determine tangible scope for working group – goals, impact in the community.
- Determine frequency of meetings, members, roles, and responsibilities.
- Best practice suggests a mix of staff levels be amongst the representatives including an executive leader and at a minimum the meeting frequency should be quarterly.
- Suggested scope – tracking of progress towards the DEI strategy's targets and status of actions raised to deliver to these targets.

