

Summary Report

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



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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Definitions of terms and concepts

CALD women / Culturally Diverse Women

The term "Culturally and Linguistically Diverse" (CALD) 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 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"). While these terms are contentious and fraught with ambiguity, in the absence of a single, broadly accepted descriptor to reference women who experience gender inequality compounded by their cultural identity and/or ethnicity, this report defaults to the term "CALD women" unless specified.

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.

Diversity Equity & Inclusion

Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) refers to three concepts and practices that are crucial to an organisation's success¹. Diversity refers to the distribution of individuals from a range of backgrounds 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. As such, it uses the term DEI rather than D&I.

¹ Shinnars, J. (2021). *Diversity, equity, and inclusion: A call to action. The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 52(2), 57-60.*

Definitions of terms and concepts

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.

Gender Equality Act 2020 (the Act)²

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 Commission to provide education, support implementation and enforce compliance."

Defined Entities³

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 to promote workplace gender equality and consider gender equality in their policies, programs and services."

Workforce Mutuality⁴

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..

² Victorian Government, Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, *About the Gender Equality Act 2020 (2021)*, <https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/defined-entities-under-gender-equality-act>.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Plowman, M. (2020). *Workforce Mutuality*. Healthwest.org.au. Retrieved 22 February 2022, from <https://healthwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Workforce-Mutuality-Standards-2020.pdf>.

Introduction

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. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women experience intersecting barriers at work related to participation, economic security, and underemployment.

Research demonstrates that the leading types of barriers CALD women experience in the workplace are:

- barriers related to existing societal structures and mechanisms (racism, sexism, tokenism, stereotypes and biases)⁵
- barriers related to organisational practices (devaluation of skills and experiences, pigeonholing, lack of support networks)⁶
- personal barriers (lack of confidence and language barriers), which intensify and (re)produce inequalities⁷

This document summarises the outputs of a research project designed to better understand the barriers experienced by CALD women in the VPS and develop an evidence-based approach to change.

The research project was made up of two methodologies:

- 01** An extensive literature review, and
- 02** Targeted interviewing with national and international researchers, practitioners, and representative VPS entities.

These methodologies explored nationally and internationally published best practice models and practical frameworks addressing workplace gender inequality; successful and unsuccessful practices implemented nationally and internationally, and existing programs and frameworks implemented within selected VPS entities.

Three main gaps in addressing barriers for marginalised communities in the workplace were identified:

- 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.

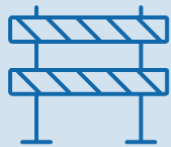
This report proposes a practical framework to assist VPS entities to address the root causes of exclusion. The suggested framework reflects an intersectional approach and aligns with the Act's obligations for entities to complete a Gender Audit that informs a Gender Equality Action Plan.⁸

⁵ Fearfull, A., & Kamenou, N. (2006). *How do you account for it?: A critical exploration of career opportunities for and experiences of ethnic minority women. Critical Perspectives on Accounting, 17(7), 883-901.*

⁶ Carangio, V., Farquharson, K., Bertone, S. & Rajendran, D. (2021) *Racism and White privilege: highly skilled immigrant women workers in Australia, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 44:1, 77-96.*

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Victorian Government, *Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, About the Gender Equality Act 2020 (2021), <https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/defined-entities-under-gender-equality-act>.*



Barriers CALD women experience in the workplace are related to:

Existing societal structures

Organisational Practices

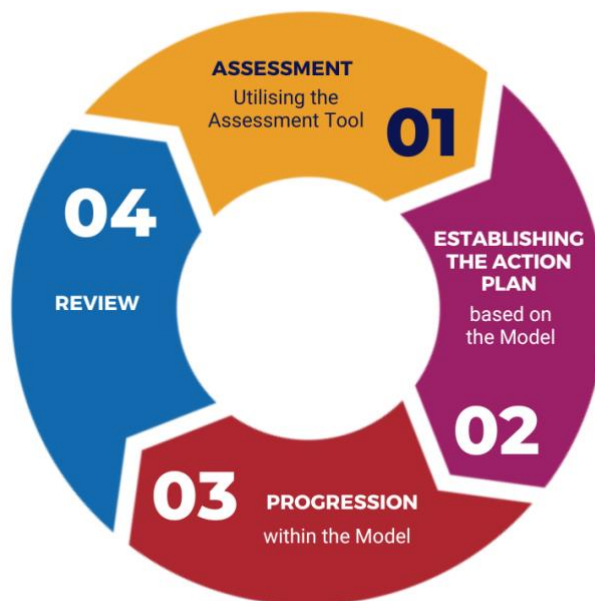
Personal Barriers

Recommended Approach and Framework

Research suggests that the VPS can break down barriers for CALD women by adopting the holistic framework (the Framework) developed in this project. The Framework includes an assessment tool (the Assessment Tool), 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.

The Framework

Leveraging recognised change models ⁹¹⁰¹¹, the Framework consists of the following cyclical processes:



Assessment (utilising the Assessment Tool)

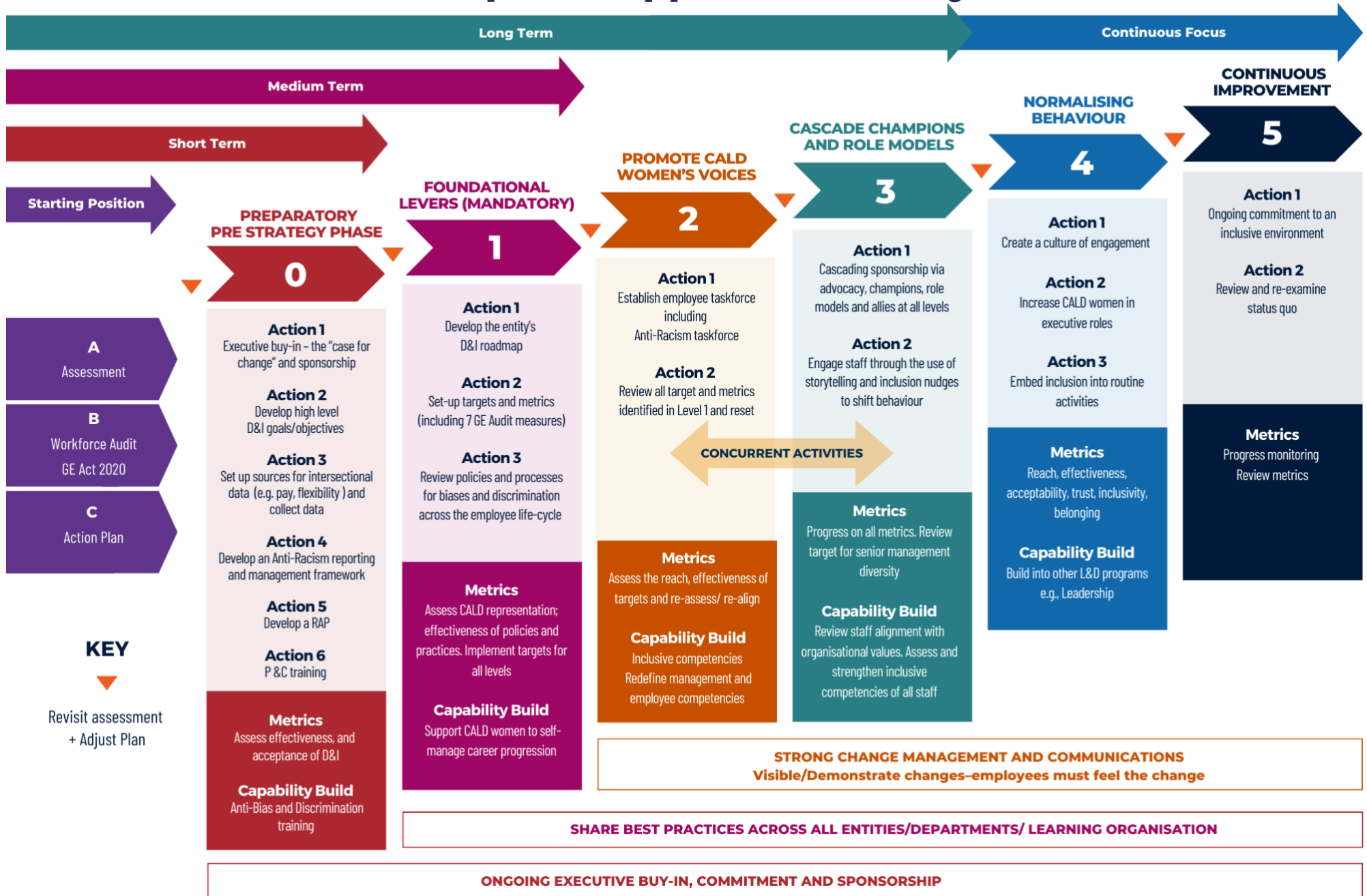
The Framework begins with an assessment, which is repeated after each level to determine **readiness** for progression to the next level in the Model. Individual entities move from an entry level (zero) through five levels to achieve and maintain an inclusive, diverse organisation (Level 5). Continued assessment ensures that each entity builds a stable base, maintains momentum, and only progresses when ready to do so.


9 Kotter, P. and Schlesinger, L. (2008) *Choosing Strategies for Change*, Harvard Business Review.

10 Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N., & Sanchez, D. (2018). *Inclusive workplaces: A review and model*. *Human Resource Management Review*, 28, 176-89.

11 Todnem, R. (2005). *Organisational change management: A critical review*, *Journal of Change Management*, 5:4, 369-380.

Model: Proposed Approach and Key Actions





A practical implementation guide (The Model)

The Model details the actions to be taken to progress towards an equitable and inclusive environment for CALD women. This ensures that all entities, irrespective of starting point, have a clear roadmap.



Level 0

Preparatory Stage

Actions

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

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.

Action 3 – Establish mechanisms to collect **intersectional** gender data.

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

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

Action 6 – People and Culture/Human Resources training in DEI and to manage issues of bias and discrimination.

Outcome - Expected transformation at Level Zero

Successful completion of this level requires:

- 100% executive sponsorship.
- Verbal and written commitment of executives and management leading the change initiatives.
- Collection of disaggregated data on the intersectional workforce, including the seven workplace gender equality indicators, to get a better understanding of their impacts and experiences.
- Established and enforced anti-racism framework and RAP.
- Established confidential and anonymous reporting mechanisms to identify racism and discrimination in the workplace.
- Training for HR/ People and Culture to be champions of DEI and manage an intersectional workforce.

Proposed Metrics

- Number of Executives explicitly support and champion DEI policies and plans related to CALD women’s progression.
- Percentage of employees embracing the DEI vision, through surveys or focus groups.
- Percentage completion in establishing systems and processes to collect intersectional data for all seven gender equality measures.
- Percentage 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.
- Percentage completion of training for HR/ People and Culture.

Capability Building

At Level Zero, CALD employees should receive appropriate training and coaching to encourage and support them to self-manage their career progression.

Level One

Foundational levers

At Level One, organisations commence development of initiatives and strategies to help achieve intersectional gender equality in the workplace. This level identifies the baseline for the entity and establishes future targets. Entities 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.

Action 2 – Set-up Metrics and Targets.

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

Outcome - expected transformation at Level One

Successful completion of this level requires:

- Clear, realistic and measurable targets, policies and processes to include CALD women at all levels of employment are established.
- Evidence-based decisions incorporating gender audit data, People Matter survey data and intersectional data are collected (qualitative and quantitative) when defining targets, policies, and processes.
- 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

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

Via employee survey:

- Reach and understanding of change initiatives across all levels.
- Percentage communication and buy-in of targets, policies and practices for employees across all levels.

Capability Building

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 their career progression.
- Leadership training and coaching for CAL women and recruiters, interview panels and selection committees receive
- De-biasing training

Level 2

Promote CALD Womens Voices

The objective 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 to influence both internal and external stakeholders. Organisations will benefit from establishing an in-house staff-led network and an anti-racism taskforce to promote accountability and drive inclusion.

Actions

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

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

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

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

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

Action 6 – Review all targets and metrics identified at Level One and the actions taken to close the gaps.

Outcome – expected transformation at Level Two

Successful completion of this level requires:

- A staff-led network 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.
- Training, learning and development opportunities are available to members.
- Creation of an anti-racism taskforce with clear roles and responsibilities of members to ensure action and accountability.
- Review baseline 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

- Performance of the taskforce through engagement surveys to assess the cultural safety of CALD women in the workplace.
- Frequency and severity of the incidents of bias and discrimination resulting from racism.

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

- CALD women's engagement with the network.
- Achievement against their own objectives.

Capability Building

At Level Two, all employees, including executives, receive appropriate training and coaching to build inclusive competencies. First prioritise line managers and staff-led networks, then executives, senior managers and all staff.

For line managers:

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

For staff led networks:

- training in governance, advocacy and leadership.

For executives and senior managers:

- inclusive leadership training.

For all staff:

- cultural intelligence training and anti-bias and discrimination training for all levels.

Level 3

Cascade champions & role models

At Level Three, the focus is to communicate in ways that encourage the whole organisation to support and champion the change. 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. Activities in Level 3 can be undertaken in parallel with Level 2 activities.

Actions

Action 1 – Sponsorship and Advocacy from senior stakeholders.

Action 2 – Craft the message and engage staff with regular communication updates.

Action 3 - Build engagement across the organisation via a planned staff engagement plan.

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

Outcome – expected transformation at Level Three

Successful completion of this level requires:

- Strong and clear communication strategies and channels established to leverage
- Champions, advocates and allies in support of CALD women's equity are in place across the organisation.
- Championing of CALD issues occurs voluntarily at all levels of employment.
- DEI learning opportunities are included in learning and development plans.
- Metrics and targets are cascaded to lower levels to ensure managers are accountable for change.
- CALD women are given a voice, that is considered at the highest levels, and has visible, tangible impacts on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Communication and engagement through facilitated discussions amongst all employees are actively encouraged.

Proposed Metrics

At Level Three, entities must measure the progress and pace of change and assess risks, challenges and success factors associated with actions at earlier levels. These additional metrics are suggested in addition to those used at earlier levels:

- Percentage of diverse representation at 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 entities reach Level Three, it is expected that all employees are trained and equipped with essential inclusive competencies and individual learning and development plans should be inclusive of DEI learning opportunities. Entities need to consider how aligned every employee is to the values of the organisation and consider remedial actions to manage resistance to change.

Level 4

Normalising Behaviour

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.

Proposed Metrics

- Diversity of senior leadership
- Number of CALD women identified as potential talent.
- 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.

Level 5

Continuous Improvement

Level Five focuses on sustaining change by ensuring that the actions previously implemented are working consistently. As entities evolve, their vision and purpose shifts and changes; the workforce turns over and new leadership takes control. Level Five acknowledges that organisations are dynamic. Regular assessment is crucial to ensure that the vision of an inclusive, equitable workforce for CALD women is sustained.

Actions

Action 1 – Ensure ongoing commitment.

Action 2 – Maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders.

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

Outcome- expected transformation

Continued success at this level requires:

- Processes in place to
 - continuously assess that 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 opportunities that are continuously reviewed and refreshed.
- Ongoing review and re-examination of the status quo to account for organisational changes.

Proposed Metrics

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. Entities should also revisit earlier levels of the Model and rebuild capabilities if culture has reverted.

Actions supporting the Model

While the Model prescribes level specific actions to achieve change, some universal actions are crucial throughout the process to support the effectiveness of the change.

Ongoing executive buy-in, commitment and sponsorship

For any change to be successful, senior executives must 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 measure performance against targets and supports benchmarking with similar organisations.

Knowledge transfer and sharing of best practices

The Model recommends that VPS entities share their progress, successes and failures openly. Transparency will help to fill knowledge gaps, improve efficiency, and encourage leadership within and beyond the VPS. A learning culture that celebrates successes and accepts failures as necessary to learn and grow is required. Publicly sharing success via organisational websites, social media networks and newsletters will inspire and encourage other entities 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, entities 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.



Developing a robust change management communication plan and strategy will support the implementation of DEI initiatives.

Summary

The Framework developed for this report provides VPS entities 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.

This report recognises the continuous diligence and action required to achieve and maintain equity and inclusion for CALD women in the VPS. Impactful and sustainable change will not be achieved without the following fundamentals:

- An anti-discrimination/anti-racism framework and RAP. Only by ensuring that this fundamental level of cultural safety is established will the entity be able to create an inclusive environment.
- Communication and effective engagement to gain widespread support for change.
- Leadership driven change and active advocacy.
- Ongoing review of organisational policies and processes to ensure absence of structural discrimination.
- New structures and mechanisms that amplify the voices of CALD women to increase participation and equity.
- Capability and capacity for all staff to drive the inclusion of CALD women. Cultural change will be realised through engagement of role models, champions, allies, and advocates.
- Metrics and targets to measure organisational and individual performance and progress and provide accountability.

