



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

N|H|M|R|C

NHMRC Workforce Diversity Program 2017-2019

March 2017

Revision History

Date	Changes
20/09/2016	Creation of Program Document
21/12/2016	Restructure of Plan and inclusion of actions
16/01/2017	Edits following Working group meeting
9/02/2017	Edits following Working group meeting
20/3/2017	Edits following HR consultation

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Message from the Chief Executive Officer

It is with great pleasure that I present NHMRC's Diversity Program and Action Plan 2017-2019.



There is more and more evidence that diversity in the workplace is good for business. It not only brings together a larger pool of ideas and viewpoints leading to more innovation, but it can inspire employees to perform to their highest ability through inclusion and feeling valued.

The world has moved fast since the drafting of our previous plan. There have been several recent relevant legislative changes and reports which affect the promotion and understanding of diversity in our workforce and in the Australian Public Service (APS) in general:

- the *Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex status) Bill Act 2013* now makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status
- reports such as the *Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australian and*

Australians with Disability have given us food for thought on changing demographics and how we might maximise this untapped talent potential

- APS strategies such as *Balancing the future* (gender equality strategy 2016-2019) and the *As one* disability employment strategy (2016-2019) have highlighted the need for rethinking our ideas of flexibility at work and the best person for the job
- new Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions (2016) which set out changes to simplify recruitment processes and expand affirmative measures for employing Indigenous Australians and people with disability.

I look forward to your support of the principles of workplace diversity and the commitments made in this program.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Kelso." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Anne Kelso, AO

Chief Executive Officer

National Health and Medical Research Council

Date

Message from the Diversity Champion



As the Disability and Diversity Champion for NHMRC, I am pleased to introduce this strategy and action plan to all NHMRC staff.

In September 2016, a number of staff from across our business areas came together as a Diversity Working Group to update our plan and promote awareness of diversity issues within our agency.

The importance of recognising diversity is not simply about our obligations to report figures in an annual survey. Diversity and inclusion make for a more productive organisation, better staff retention and better outcomes all round.

I am pleased to say that the results we have seen in the 2016 State of the Service Employee Census show that staff perceive our leaders, managers, and teams as being supportive of diversity, with positive response rates generally above the APS overall.

However, harnessing diversity presents challenges as well as opportunities. We can always do more, especially in terms of inclusion. As a small agency we are in an ideal position to get to know and work closely with our colleagues and help them to feel valued and respected at work. Each of us needs to look closely and honestly at our own limiting beliefs about others and strive to temper our biases.

Finally, I urge all staff to complete and update their diversity details in our HR system so that we can plan more appropriate services and programs and deliver these to the right people.

Tony Kingdon

General Manager

National Health and Medical Research Council

What is diversity?

Diversity in the workplace is about recognising the ways in which people are different and seeing these differences as a positive factor in creating the best workplace for all employees, for NHMRC and for the APS.

It is also about having a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian community and our stakeholders.

It goes beyond accepting difference to ensuring that all staff feel valued and included in their work environment.

"In the APS, workplace diversity and inclusion mean valuing and respecting employees with different backgrounds, skills and experiences. APS agencies are required to ensure that all employees have equal access to employment opportunities, are treated with fairness and respect, and are not subject to discrimination or harassment in their workplace." APS State of the Service Report 2012

Benefits of diversity and inclusion

There are many benefits of investing in a diverse workforce including:

- **Capacity** Diversity and inclusion increase our agency's capacity to deliver high quality health and medical research outcomes that meet the needs of Australia's diverse population
- **Innovation** Increased creativity and problem solving by capitalising on differences and avoiding groupthink
- **Reputation** Having an inclusive, flexible workplace that values diversity, positively enhances our reputation both as an agency of choice for prospective staff and with our stakeholders
- **Engagement** Employees in agencies which are non-discriminatory, harassment-free, flexible, and facilitate work-life balance are more engaged and productive¹
- **Retention** Diversity and inclusion initiatives improve the quality of our agency's workforce and are the catalyst for better outcomes from our investment in our people.

Our aim

At NHMRC, we aim to create a workplace which supports all staff, regardless of their gender, age, cultural/religious background, sexual orientation or personal attributes. We want NHMRC to be a flexible and fair work environment, in which staff can flourish and where differences between employees are respected and viewed as an organisational asset.

If we are to improve our employment and retention of people from diversity groups to meet or exceed the APS average, we must not only ensure that there are no barriers to attracting and retaining high quality staff, but that we are able to accurately identify relevant groups in order to better target services and programs.

Our recruitment and retention efforts will focus on acquiring the best and brightest talent, by reaching out to all communities where such talent exists.

An objective of our workplace diversity program is to encourage all new starters and existing employees to complete their diversity information to enable us to better understand our workforce.

¹ APS Values and Code of Conduct in practice: Working with APS colleagues

Our current workforce

Currently (Jan 2017), NHMRC has a total of 211 staff (ongoing and non-ongoing) with nearly 15 percent working part-time.²

Our staff profile is different from the Australian Public Service overall³ in that we employ more women (70%), a higher percentage of university educated staff (65% with Bachelor degree or higher) and more staff under 40 years (53%).

One third of our staff have caring responsibilities and 15 percent are from culturally and linguistically diverse groups⁴.

Employees who identify as having disability represent six percent of our workforce, compared to eight percent in the APS. One percent identify as Indigenous Australians compared to 2.9 percent in the APS.⁵

In summary, we have a younger, more highly educated workforce with a higher proportion of women and fewer staff with disabilities than the broader APS. Our staff profile provides an opportunity for flexible work practices to accommodate caring responsibilities and strategies to lift rates of Indigenous employment and representation of women in more senior management positions.

Links

The Workforce Diversity Program 2017-2019 is the guiding statement of NHMRC's diversity aims and links the following Strategies and Action Plans:

- [Strategic Workforce Plan 2016-2019](#)
- [Reconciliation Action Plan](#)
- [Indigenous Employment Strategy](#)

It incorporates actions we will take to support and include people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Our goal

In 2017 NHMRC will implement a diversity program tailored to the unique features of our workforce to remove identified barriers and improve inclusion. Our primary goal is to promote and embrace a culture of diversity and ensure our workforce is informed of, and committed to, diversity principles. We will achieve this by working to:

- encourage a diverse and inclusive workforce by identifying and removing barriers to employment opportunities
- foster diversity practice through our business activities
- maintain a flexible and responsive working environment and ensure the wellbeing of our people.

² Source: Aurion payroll system

³ Source: State of the Service Employee Census 2016. Comparison figures for the APS overall are (59%), (53%), (39%)

⁴ Source: State of the Service Employee Census 2016

⁵ As above.

Reporting

NHMRC will:

- report against the Workplace Diversity Program in our annual report
- provide information on workplace diversity to the Public Service Commissioner for inclusion in the State of the Service Report, and
- review the Workplace Diversity Program every year to ensure that it continues to give effect to APS Values and achieve its desired outcomes.

Measures of success

The following metrics will be used annually to assess our success in removing barriers and improving inclusion, and to devise a new Workplace Diversity Program for 2019:

- Results from the State of the Service Employee Census
- Diversity Pulse surveys undertaken at regular intervals

Remove barriers

- Implement Flexible Workplace Policy by end April 2017
- Develop, implement and promote workplace adjustment policy and procedures by Mid 2017

Improve inclusion

- Promote awareness of significant cultural events in HR News - ongoing
- Improve awareness of the availability of the carer's room by end April 2017 (Canberra office) and by end June 2017 (Melbourne Office)
- Host regular social events including Wear it Purple Day August 2017 - ongoing
- Update signage for the agency toilets to be gender inclusive, and educate staff in the use of these facilities.

Workplace Diversity – Action Plan – 2017-2019

Strategy	Actions	Time Frame	Responsibility
Educate and inform staff about diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update NHMRC's Diversity intranet pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apr 2017, ongoing 	HR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source appropriate resources (for disability, carers, women, LGBTI, CALD, Indigenous groups) and make these available through Learnhub/intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2017, ongoing 	HR/DWG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish articles about recent research/developments around diversity in staff newsletters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mar, Aug 2017 	HR/Comms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate relevant information arising from Disability Champions Network and Diversity Working Group meetings through HR news email/intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly 	Disability/Diversity Champion/HR/Comms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source and offer relevant training (e.g. unconscious bias, cultural awareness, diversity awareness) to all staff either online or in-house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2017, ongoing 	HR
Provide forums for discussion of diversity issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain our diversity working groups (e.g. DWG and RAP) and schedule regular meetings for open discussion and event planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	HR/RAPWG/DWG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and promote a gender equity network of interested staff for informal discussion, collaboration and information sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jun 2017 	HR/Business areas/Comms

Strategy	Actions	Time Frame	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with existing APS agency networks where applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jun 2017 	HR/DWG
Celebrate and promote significant days on the diversity calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise and promote events/speakers/ for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ International Women’s Day (Mar 8) ○ Harmony Day (Mar 21) ○ Indigenous days of significance (see NHMRC’s RAP for details) ○ Wear It Purple day (last Fri in Aug) ○ International Day of People with Disabilities (Dec 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually 	HR/DWG/Diversity Champion/Exec/Comms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint a member of the Executive as the Diversity Champion who will take a prominent role at events and champion diversity issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biannually 	CEO/Exec/HR
Provide a flexible employment framework to support work/life balance and assist employees to perform their duties to the best of their abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise and promote NHMRC’s Flexible Working Arrangements Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ promote awareness of flexible employment provisions including leave, part-time work, home based work etc. via the Intranet, HR News and information sessions facilitated by HR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apr 2017, Apr 2019 	HR/Exec/Comms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise and promote NHMRC Workplace Adjustment Policy and Guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2017, May 2019 	HR/Exec/Comms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure employees with a disability have the necessary equipment and ergonomic items to actively participate in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	HR

Strategy	Actions	Time Frame	Responsibility
Use diversity data collection to inform staff and stakeholder services and improve reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and encourage regular updating of staff diversity data in Employee Self Service, Aurion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually 	HR/Diversity Champion/Comms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage grant applicants to complete their personal profiles in the RGMS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twice Yearly 	Grant Systems
Ensure the working environment caters to employees with a range of needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate access to a carer's room for Melbourne staff and promote the availability of the carer's room in Canberra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jun 2017 	HR/Property
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change signage on disabled toilet doors to be gender neutral/inclusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nov 2017 	HR/Business Services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an accessibility review of NHMRC's premises to ensure that any risks or barriers for people with disability are eliminated or reduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nov 2018 	HR/Property/WHS Committee
Promote a safe, respectful working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all new employees access relevant online Bullying and Harassment and APS Values training through Learnhub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	HR/Business areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Mental Health First Aid training for FAOs and HSRs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mar 2017 	HR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all WHCOs have current training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	HR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide mental health information sessions/mental health first aid training to all staff as part of Health Week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oct 2017 	HR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure content authors and Web Services review all content (WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements), prior to publication, for unintentional discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	Comms/Web Team/HR

Strategy	Actions	Time Frame	Responsibility
Maintain links with key organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain membership of the Australian Network on Disability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ facilitate networking opportunities for mutual learning and information sharing – roundtable events and webinars ○ help increase our disability confidence, engagement and action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually 	HR
Ensure advertising, recruitment, selection processes and panel training incorporate diversity principles for flexible, fair and equitable outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance to recruiters regarding our diversity policy and selection panels through our information on the intranet etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb 2018 	HR/Business areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise information in the eRecruit system to ensure that potential recruits are aware of our Workplace Adjustment policy and our diversity strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2017 	HR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the use of niche and/or informal career networks to promote vacancies at NHMRC to attract people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives into our workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb 2018 	HR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate purchasing a reporting module in eRecruit to better understand the diversity of our potential recruits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jul 2018 	HR
Ensure our policies, programs and services are accessible and relevant to our stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness of and adherence to relevant Australian Government standards and guidelines relating to multicultural access and equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	HR/Business areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure our website continues to meet government content accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.0) at the appropriate level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	Web Team/Comms

CEO=Chief Executive Officer, Comms=Communications, DWG=Diversity Working Group, Exec=Executive, HR=Human Resources, RAPWG=Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, WHS=Work, Health and Safety.

Further information

[The Workplace Diversity](#) page on the intranet has useful information and links.

Legislative framework and whole of government requirements

Age Discrimination Act 2004

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986

Carer Recognition Act 2010

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987

Fair Work Act 2009

Public Service Act 1999 (particularly the APS Values and the APS Code of Conduct)

Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2016

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

Other resources

APS Statistical Bulletin 2015-16. Section 5 Diversity

<http://www.apsc.gov.au/about-the-apsc/parliamentary/aps-statistical-bulletin/statisticalbulletin1516/section5>

Australian Network on Disability

<http://www.and.org.au/>

Diversity Council Australia

<http://www.dca.org.au/>

Secretaries Equality and Diversity Council

<https://www.dpmc.gov.au/secretaries-equality-and-diversity-council>

State of the Service Report 2015-2016: representation

<http://www.apsc.gov.au/about-the-apsc/parliamentary/state-of-the-service/stateoftheservice2015-16/glance>