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30 November 2022

Employment Taskforce
Treasury
Langton Cres
Parkes ACT 2600

By email: employmentwhitepaper@treasury.gov.au.

Employment White Paper Submission

Dear Employment Taskforce,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Employment White Paper.

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the independent not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace. We have over 1,100 member organisations, reaching more than 20% of the Australian labour market.

DCA's response to the Employment White Paper draws on our research into diversity and inclusion (D&I) to respond to a number of specific terms of reference. We outline what our research says about the experiences of Australian workers from a diversity of backgrounds and offer evidence-based solutions to create inclusive workplaces.

We argue that a focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I) can help us to understand and address these issues, and in doing so it can also help us create a more equitable job market for all Australians.

Please feel free to contact myself or Cathy Brown, Director of Communications and Advocacy, on 0424 578 698 or advocacy@dca.org.au, you require any further information about this matter.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Annese
Chief Executive Officer

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ABOUT DIVERSITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

Who we are

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the independent not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace. We provide unique research, inspiring events and programs, curated resources and expert advice across all diversity dimensions to a community of member organisations.

DCA's Membership represents over 20% of the Australian workforce

DCA's prestigious group of over 1,100 members is drawn from business and workplace diversity leaders and includes some of Australia's biggest employers. Our membership reaches over **20%** of the Australian labour market.

About our members

Over 1,100 member organisations, including almost 40 ASX100 Listed companies.

Our members are drawn from across the corporate, government and not-for-profit sectors and vary from small to large workforces in size.

Our founding members include ANZ, AMP, BHP, Boral, Coles, IBM Australia, Myer, Orica, Rio Tinto and Westpac.

DCA's Members are listed on our website here: <https://www.dca.org.au/membership/current-dca-members>.

Our belief, vision and mission

- Our belief is that diversity and inclusion is good for people and business.
- Our vision is to create a more diverse and inclusive Australia.
- Our mission is to encourage and enable Australian organisations to create diverse and inclusive workplaces.

What we do

DCA, formerly known as the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Ltd, was established in 1985 as a joint initiative of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia to demonstrate the business community's commitment to equal opportunity for women.

Our focus since then has expanded to cover all aspects of diversity in employment, reflecting changes in practice to embrace all areas of the diversity of human resources.

DCA is not government funded - its income is generated from membership fees, sponsorships and services to business/employers.

Our Research

DCA works in partnership with members to generate ground-breaking evidence-based diversity and inclusion resources that enables Australian organisations to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.

DCA research is grounded in the contributions of people with lived experience. DCA projects use expert panels, focus groups, think tanks and surveys to make people with lived experience central to the project findings.

DCA resources are ahead of the curve. They establish leading diversity thinking and practice, enabling Australian organisations to re-imagine and reconfigure the way they manage talent in today's dynamic operating environments.

DCA resources drive business improvement. They are high impact, driving business improvement through providing evidence-based guidance on how to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.

DCA resources are practice focused. They respond to the information needs of industry leaders and the people they employ.

DCA resources speak to the Australian context. DCA projects generate leading diversity thinking and practice that speaks to Australia's unique and distinctive institutional, cultural and legal frameworks.

DCA resources considers all diversity dimensions. The full spectrum of diversity dimensions are investigated including age, caring responsibilities, cultural background and identity, disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, social class and work organisation.

POSITIONING

The importance of taking an intersectional approach

Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

It is critical that legislators, policymakers, and those implementing such policies understand intersectionality and take an intersectional approach implementing such policies.

A note on binary language used in this submission

While neither sex nor gender exist in binary categories, these categories still have very real effects.

However, DCA recognises that there are people whose experiences and identities cannot be captured by the use of binary language, and these limitations should be acknowledged whenever binary language is used.

1. SUMMARY

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Employment White Paper.

Now is a time of significance for Australia. After more than two years of constant disruption and change, Australia is learning to live with the impacts of a major global pandemic.

The past two years have had a profound impact on the way Australians live and work:

- It has caused great disruptions to the labour market – and shifted vast numbers of Australian workers into flexible work, including for many, work from home. Early on, it was assumed that this shift to working from home would lead to more equitable sharing of unpaid work in the home, but this did not come to pass.
- What's more, in 2022, Australia is experiencing the lowest unemployment rate in almost 50 years. This, along with record-high employment, means that many Australian organisations are struggling to meet their workforce needs. At the same time, there are more than 3 million people in Australia who are looking for work, or who want more work.
- Over this time, DCA saw a huge increase in our membership and engagement – something that we believe reflects Australian's desire for a more diverse and inclusive labour market.

DCA's response to the Employment White Paper draws on our research into diversity and inclusion (D&I) to respond to a number of specific terms of reference. We outline what our research says about the experiences of Australian workers from a diversity of backgrounds, and offer evidence-based solutions to create inclusive workplaces.

We argue that a focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I) can help us to understand and address these issues, and in doing so it can also help us create a more equitable job market for all Australians.

DCA is really pleased to see the number of initiatives and legislative changes already underway to address issues identified in the White Paper. Our recommendations are therefore in relation to actions that can support the work already underway, or in relation to additional areas that we believe will help build a more productive workforce and create more opportunities for more Australians.

The transformation associated with digitalisation and emerging technologies.

We are experiencing a fundamental shift in the way organisations recruit and work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, changing demographics, an increasingly globalised operating environment, and technological advancements.

As Australia's peak body leading diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the workplace, DCA believes that it is critical that D&I is considered in relation to the development and implementation of digitalisation and emerging technologies, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence (AI).

Recommendations to support digitalisation and emerging technologies (including AI)

1. DCA supports the work currently being undertaken by the CSIRO regarding D&I in artificial intelligence and strongly urges the government to make D&I a priority consideration in relation to all emerging technologies.

As a community, we need to ensure that there are a diversity of people involved in designing automation and AI tools, so that different experiences and perspectives of diverse groups are understood and incorporated.

2. The government should develop a survey tool to understand and measure the diversity of the technology skillsforce, and measures to attract and retain under-represented groups as part of this critical section of the labour market.

We need to ensure that we monitor and understand the impact that new and emerging technologies have on different groups.

3. Research should be undertaken to measure how digitalisation and emerging technologies (including AI) impact different groups. This research must include access to technologies, how new technologies impact industries and occupations, and accessibility.
4. There is a need for guidance and education for people using AI tools and emerging technologies, so they know what the tool does, how it works, and how it can be used in a way that eliminates bias.
5. There is a need for Australia's technology skillsforce to have D&I skills so that they can apply these skills when developing new technologies and AI tools.

Pay equity, including the gender pay gap, equal opportunities for women and the benefits of a more inclusive workforce.

Pay Equity

DCA has been pleased to see:

- The government taking action to address the gender pay gap through the introduction of legislation to establish new expert panels at the Fair Work Commission to determine equal remuneration cases where members will have specific expertise in gender pay equity, anti-discrimination, and the Care and Community Sector.
- that the full implementation of the Respect@Work report is underway.

DCA was also delighted that the government is taking action on a number of strategies to address the impact of unpaid care work, including through the changes to the government's paid parental leave scheme making it more flexible and encouraging shared-care, changes to flexible working arrangements (currently before the Parliament), and extending subsidies for childcare.

Recommendations to complement work under way for pay equity

6. The government should continue to fund the Time Use Survey to measure and quantify unpaid work.

DCA looks forward to the establishment of the new expert panels at the Fair Work Commission to address the issues in the Care economy in particular.

DCA also notes that the Office for Women, through the Women's Leadership and Development Program (WLDP), is funding initiatives to address occupational segregation, such as a program that DCA is leading (with partners Settlement Services International and Chief Executive Women) to address the under-representation of culturally and racially marginalised women in leadership.

Equal opportunities for women

Any government strategies to address inequalities for women, must recognise that women are not a monolith and that they have different experiences based on other aspects of their identities.

Recommendations for creating equal opportunities for women

7. Government strategies to address women's equality must ensure that the intersectional experiences of different women are addressed and understood.

Improvements to data collection and reporting

Australia needs to collect national data that would enable us to examine the pay gap through an intersectional lens.

There is strong support from our member organisations for expanding the data currently collected by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) and DCA supports the work currently underway to broaden data collection (including recognising non-binary genders) for WGEA.

With nationally consistent national data sets for benchmarking, the addition of intersectional data to the WGEA data will mean much more comprehensive applicability.

Recommendations for better data collection

8. The government should ensure that questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status are also included in the Census.
9. The ABS should consider the framework outlined in DCA's Counting Culture: Towards A Standardised Approach to Measuring and Reporting on Workforce Cultural Diversity in Australia.
10. The government should collect data on culturally and racially marginalised people. *

**DCA will soon be updating our Counting Culture framework to include a methodology for collecting data on race.*

The benefits of more inclusive workplaces

DCA's research shows that inclusive workplaces significantly decrease the risk of experiencing discrimination and/or harassment while at work; and inclusive workplaces are more productive and have better outcomes for all employees.

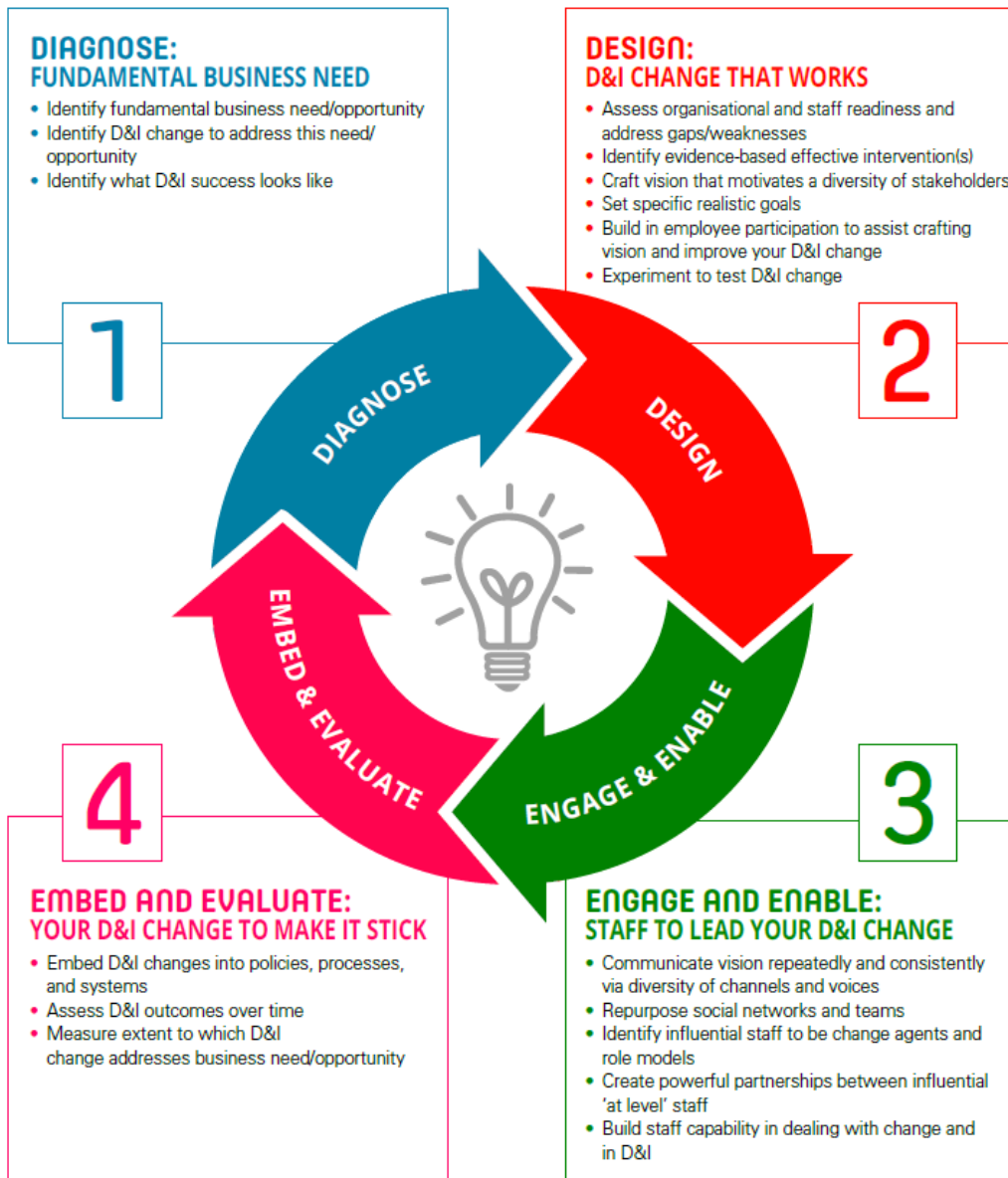
Recommendations for creating more inclusive workplaces

11. The government makes D&I a priority for tackling some of the systemic issues that are impacting our economy.
12. That employers must follow evidence-based interventions that are tailored to their specific business contexts and organisational readiness.

Inclusion at work doesn't just 'happen'. For workplaces and organisations to be inclusive, it requires employer commitment – as well as an understanding of not just the systemic issues driving inequalities, but also an understanding of specific issues in a given context.

In advising our members, we recommend evidence-based interventions that are tailored to their specific business contexts and organisational readiness are the most effective way to create more inclusive workplaces. Our [Change at Work](#) model is an evidence-based model for designing and implementing D&I organisational change. We recommend that employers use this model in order to make effective and lasting D&I change.

DCA's Model for D&I Organisational Change

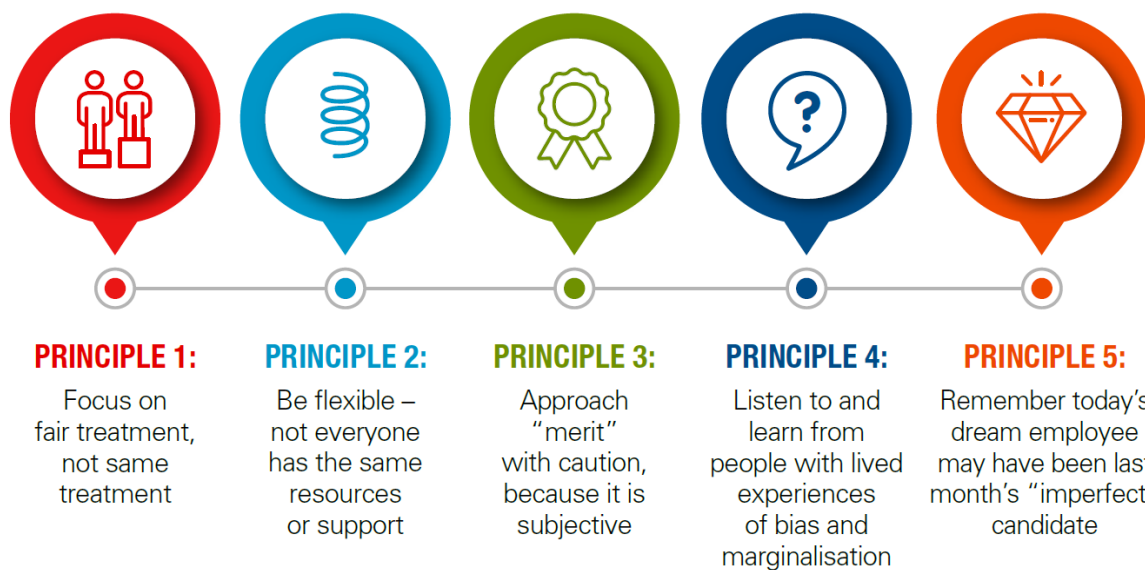


Reducing barriers and disincentives to work, including the role of childcare, social security settings and employment services.

Addressing barriers through inclusive recruitment

A focus on inclusive recruitment practices can reduce barriers to work for those from groups who are overlooked and underleveraged in the Australian labour market.

DCA developed 5 *Guiding principles for inclusive recruitment* which we believe can be applied to the development of initiatives and strategies to address barriers to labour market participation for people from marginalised groups.



Childcare

DCA has advocated for many years that the government should ensure affordable, available, flexible and accessible universal childcare. Universal access ensures that all families can access quality childcare, in a form that meets the needs of children, parents and community, and at a cost that does not present a barrier to participation.

Improving labour market outcomes for those who face challenges in employment, including First Nations people, those who live in rural and remote areas, younger and older Australians, people with disability, and those who may experience discrimination.

Harassment and discrimination

DCA’s *Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022* is a nationally representative sample of 3000 Australian workers.

This research found that in 2021, as in previous years, some employees experience notably higher levels of exclusion than their colleagues – namely, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers, workers with a non-Christian religious affiliation, workers with disability, and LGBTIQ+ workers. Our research has also found that people from lower social classes are more likely to experience workplace exclusion than higher class workers.¹

Unemployment and underemployment

DCA’s *Inclusive Recruitment at Work* report found that approximately 3.3 million Australians of working age – 16% of our working-age population – are potential job seekers who want to work or contribute more to the economy but are currently overlooked and underleveraged by employers.

- Close to 1 million (808,100) are looking for work (i.e. short-term and long-term unemployed).
- Well over 2 million (2,328,000) are open to work but not actively searching because they are employed elsewhere (underemployed), are discouraged from finding employment or have other obligations (such as childcare or study).

All are much more likely to belong to marginalised diversity groups. They are disproportionately likely to be:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Culturally or racially marginalised people (affected by cultural backgrounds, language difficulties or visa restrictions)
- Carers (particularly sole parents and carers of young children)
- People with disability
- People from lower socio-economic backgrounds and with lower formal education levels
- Transgender people
- People over 55
- People under 25

Recommendations for improving labour market outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples

13. The experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people at work should be a key focus of the White Paper, and these discussions must be led and informed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

The [*Gari Yala \(Speak the Truth\)*](#) report set out 10 truths to centre Indigenous Australians' voices to create workplace inclusion:

- 1) Commit to unearthing and acting on workplace truths – however uncomfortable this may be
- 2) Ensure any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-related work is Indigenous led and informed
- 3) Develop organisational principles to make it clear how Indigenous community engagement and employment should work in practice
- 4) Focus on workplace readiness (cultural safety) rather than worker readiness
- 5) Recognise identity strain and educate non-Indigenous staff about how to interact with their Indigenous colleagues in ways that reduce this
- 6) Recognise and remunerate cultural load as part of an employee's workload
- 7) Consult with Indigenous staff on how to minimise cultural load while maintaining organisational activity
- 8) Focus on sustainable careers and career development, rather than just short-term appointments
- 9) Take action to address workplace racism
- 10) Look to high-impact initiatives – those that research shows are linked to better wellbeing and retention for Indigenous staff

Recommendations for improving labour market outcomes for people with disability

The labour force participation rate for working-age people with disability has not improved in 3 decades. It was 54.9% in 1993 and 53.4% in 2019. For working-age people without disability, the rate increased from 76.9% in 1993 to 84.1% in 2019.

14. DCA's *Inclusive Recruitment at Work* report details a range of strategies to address the barriers to employment for people with disability.

Recommendations for improving labour market outcomes for culturally and racially marginalised people

DCA's *Racism At Work* revealed that workplace racism is having a significant impact on Australian employees' wellbeing, and impacting Australian organisations.

Australia must address racism, and DCA supports the work being undertaken by the Australian Human Rights Commission on a National Anti-Racism Strategy.

15. DCA recommends that the White Paper address racism in workplaces, and that this work should be led by racially marginalised people.

2. INTRODUCTION

Now is a time of significance for Australia. After more than two years of constant disruption and change, Australia is learning to live with the impacts of a major global pandemic.

The past two years have had a profound impact on the way Australians live and work:

- It has caused great disruptions to the labour market – and shifted vast numbers of Australian workers into flexible work, including for many, work from home. Early on, it was assumed that this shift to working from home would lead to more equitable sharing of unpaid work in the home, but this did not come to pass.
- What's more, in 2022, Australia is experiencing the lowest unemployment rate in almost 50 years. This, along with record-high employment, means that many Australian organisations are struggling to meet their workforce needs. At the same time, there are more than 3 million people in Australia who are looking for work, or who want more work.
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DCA's response to the Employment White Paper draws on our research into diversity and inclusion (D&I) to respond to a number of specific terms of reference. We outline what our research says about the experiences of Australian workers from a diversity of backgrounds, and offer evidence-based solutions to create inclusive workplaces.

We argue that a focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I) can help us to understand and address these issues, and in doing so it can also help us create a more equitable job market for all Australians.

3. RESPONSE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.2 The transformation associated with digitalisation and emerging technologies.

We are experiencing a fundamental shift in the way organisations recruit and work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, changing demographics, an increasingly globalised operating environment, and technological advancements.

But as the Institute of Development Studies notes:

*governments, businesses and global institutions are not prepared for the impact of automation and digitisation. Labour market policies and training systems in most countries are not prepared for large-scale, rapid changes, and policymakers are not putting in place anticipatory and adaptive measures to cope with the impact of digital shocks and stresses.*²

DCA believes that it is critical that D&I is considered in relation to the development and implementation of digitalisation and emerging technologies, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence (AI).

To this end, we strongly support the work currently being undertaken by the CSIRO regarding D&I in artificial intelligence and strongly urge the government to make D&I a priority consideration in relation to all emerging technologies.

DCA has made a number of previous submissions to government inquiries highlighting the importance of ensuring that there is a diversity of groups involved in designing automation and AI tools. As highlighted by the European Commission.

... the AI field is also a male-dominated one. According to [Reuters \(2017\)](#), the percentage of female employees in technical roles in major Machine Learning companies is only around 20%. And the main problem is that, when those male developers create their systems, they incorporate, often in an unconscious way, their own biases in the different stages of its creation such as data sampling, annotation, algorithm selection, evaluation metrics and the human-algorithm user interface (Tolan, 2018). As a result, AI systems seem to be biased to male developer's tastes.³

We need to ensure that there is a diversity of people involved in designing automation and AI tools, so that different experiences and perspectives of diverse groups are understood and incorporated.

DCA recommends that the government develop a survey tool to understand and measure the diversity of the technology skillsforce, and measures to attract and retain under-represented groups as part of this critical section of the labour market.

DCA's previous submissions have also highlighted how the impacts of automation and artificial intelligence in the workforce will not affect all groups equally.

For example, it is predicted that men and women will not equally experience job losses due to artificial intelligence and automation. While some estimates suggest that women will be more adversely affected than men by technological changes⁴ other research suggests that the jobs most susceptible to automation are dominated by men.⁵ Furthermore, as the OECD⁶ points out, history shows that workers have adapted to large technological changes by changing the tasks they perform.

We need to ensure that we monitor and understand the impact that new and emerging technologies have on different groups in the Australian labour market.

DCA recommends that research is undertaken to measure the impact of digitalisation and emerging technologies (including AI) on different groups. This research should include access to technologies, how new technologies impact industries and occupations, and accessibility.

DCA's current research: artificial intelligence and recruitment

In response to the unprecedented level of activity and investment in AI occurring within Australia and globally, DCA along with Monash University and sponsor, Hudson RPO, are working on a 3-phase industry research project *Inclusive Artificial Intelligence (AI) at Work in Recruitment*.

Increasingly, businesses are using AI technologies that automate some, or all, of the recruitment process. On the one hand, recruitment software developers argue that their recruitment software and algorithms create a more efficient recruitment process and a better match between the job description and a job candidate's skills, qualifications and work experience. On the other hand, scholars, recruiters and job search websites are concerned about whether these new recruitment algorithms are subject to unconscious bias.

Although focussed on the role of AI tools in recruitment, one of the key findings in early stages of the research can be summarised as:

- there needs to be more support for [people using AI tools] on understanding the tools and how they work; and
- there needs to be more support for AI developers in understanding D&I and applying a D&I lens to the development of AI tools.

These findings are relevant to all AI and emerging technologies.

There is a need for guidance and education for people using AI tools and emerging technologies, so they know what the tool does, how it works, and how it can be used in a way that eliminates bias.

There is a need for Australia's technology skillsforce to have D&I skills so that they can apply these skills when developing new technologies and AI tools.

Read the research:

Stage 1: [AI: Neither Friend nor Foe for D&I](#)

Stage 2: [Inclusive Artificial Intelligence at Work in Recruitment: From Cautious to Converted](#)

4. Pay equity, including the gender pay gap, equal opportunities for women and the benefits of a more inclusive workforce.

DCA has been pleased to see the government taking action to address the gender pay gap through the introduction of legislation to establish new expert panels at the Fair Work Commission to determine equal remuneration cases where members will have specific expertise in gender pay equity, anti-discrimination, and the Care and Community Sector.

DCA was also pleased to see that the full implementation of the Respect@Work report is underway.

The gender pay gap

Australian women are among the most educated in the world. Yet despite many years of higher educational attainment than men, and women working more than ever, the gap between women's and men's earnings hasn't significantly changed.

This is a significant waste of talent and human capital. To address this issue, DCA, along with KPMG and WGEA, recently released the fourth iteration of [She's Price\(d\)less](#), which uses econometric modelling to unpack the drivers of the gender pay gap, and help provide an evidence base for interventions to close the gap.

This research revealed that three factors have a significant impact on the gender pay gap: gender discrimination; care, family and workforce participation; and type of job (industrial and occupational segregation). The report also recommended actions to effect change in relation to each of the drivers.

Key drivers of the pay gap in 2020

Our analysis shows that systemic drivers of the pay gap remain the largest contributors to the pay gap in 2020.



Gender discrimination

Gender discrimination is the part of the gender pay gap that is not able to be explained by factors associated with people's employment, labour force participation, household characteristics and unpaid care and work responsibilities. There is a considerable body of evidence about the impact of gender discrimination on wage gaps in Australia and other high-income economies.

Gender discrimination shows up in various ways, including the systematic undervaluation of women's economic contribution, the allocation of less meaningful tasks to women or fewer

opportunities for promotion. In the workforce, gender discrimination has been linked to practices such as workplace culture, hiring, promotion and access to training, which can impact human capital.

Addressing gender discrimination will require:

- action to eliminate workplace sexual harassment, every-day sexism and gendered violence
- addressing discrimination in work practices such as hiring, promotion and access to training
- increased pay transparency and reporting on gender pay gaps
- undertaking gender pay gap audits and actioning findings.

Care, family and workforce participation

Unpaid care and work are inherently gendered issues. They contribute to labour market inequalities, are associated with employment quality and increase the likelihood of part-time or insecure casual and contract work. What's more, for women, time out of the workforce to care for young children or other family members is a key aspect and has a significant impact on pay.

DCA was also delighted that the government is taking action on a number of strategies to address the impact of unpaid care work, including through the changes to the government's paid parental leave scheme making it more flexible and encouraging shared-care, changes to flexible working arrangements (currently before the Parliament), and extending subsidies for childcare.

We would also encourage the government to continue to fund the *Time Use Survey* to measure and quantify unpaid work.

Occupational and industrial segregation

Type of job (also referred to as occupational segregation and industrial segregation) refers to the unequal distribution of women and men in certain jobs or industries. For example, industrial segregation can be seen in the high number of women in education and primary care relative to the low number of women in mining. Occupational segregation can be seen in the underrepresentation of women in high paying roles, such as management and chief executives, and overrepresentation in low paying roles, such as care work.

DCA looks forward to the establishment of the new expert panels at the Fair Work Commission to address the issues in the Care economy in particular.

DCA also notes that the Office for Women, through the Women's Leadership and Development Program (WLDP), is funding initiatives to address occupational segregation, such as a program that DCA is leading (with partners Settlement Services International and Chief Executive Women) to address the under-representation of culturally and racially marginalised women in leadership.

Equal opportunities for women

Any government strategies to address inequalities for women must recognise that women are not a monolith and that they have different experiences based on other aspects of their identities.

The following are examples from DCA research that illustrate how for women with intersectional identities barriers can be amplified:

- **Racially marginalised women:** Racially marginalised women experience barriers arising from their racial group as well as barriers from their gender.⁷
- **Indigenous women with caring responsibilities:** Indigenous women who are also carers experience a 'triple jeopardy'. That is, the combination of these three aspects of their identity overlap to amplify their experiences of discrimination and exclusion at work.⁸
- **Lower-class women:** Self-identified lower-class women are the most likely of any social class group to experience discrimination and/or harassment at work. 45% of lower-class women reported having experienced discrimination and/or harassment of some type in the past year, compared to 39% of lower-class men, 24% (female) to 21% (male) of middle class workers, and 25% (female) to 27% (male) of higher class workers (note that the differences between middle class and higher class workers are not statistically significant).⁹
- **Lesbian and bisexual women:** Lesbian and bisexual women often hide their identity in the workplace as they fear it will be a barrier to progression in the workplace, and due to experiencing higher rates of sexual harassment (compared with heterosexual women).¹⁰
- **'Culturally Diverse' women:** In 2015, only 2.5% of all 7,491 ASX directors were culturally diverse women, compared to 5.7% who were non-culturally diverse women, 27.8% who were culturally diverse men and 64.0% who were non-culturally diverse men.¹¹
- **Older women:** Older women continue to be significantly underutilised in the workforce. With significant implications for women in retirement, as well as the Australian economy as a whole. In fact, Productivity Commission modelling indicated that if we were to increase the participation rates for women over 55 to match men's workforce participation rate could increase per capita GDP growth to 2044-45 by a further 1.5%.¹²
- **Older women with disability:** Older women's reports of age discrimination, gender-based discrimination and discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities were all higher for those who had a disability. While 17% of older women overall reported having experienced age discrimination at work, this figure was notably higher for older women who had a disability (32%). The same trend was apparent in relation to discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities (5% older women overall versus 15% older women with a disability) and of gender (8% older women overall versus 17% older women with a disability).¹³

Government strategies to address women's equality must ensure that the intersectional experiences of different women are addressed and understood.

Improvements to data collection and reporting

Any approach to addressing the systemic drivers of the gender pay gap cannot be one size fits all. We know from overseas evidence that a woman's race or disability status can exacerbate the pay gap.

Australia does not currently collect national data that would enable us to examine the pay gap through an intersectional lens.

There is strong support from our member organisations for expanding the data currently collected by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and DCA supports the work currently underway to broaden data collection (including recognising non-binary genders) for WGEA.

Better data collection for understanding Australia's LGBTIQ+ populations

Without nationally consistent national data sets for benchmarking, the addition of intersectional data to the WGEA data set will have limited applicability.

DCA therefore recommends that the government ensures that questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status are also included in the Census.

Better data collection for understanding Australia's racial and cultural diversity

What's more, there are limitations in the current measures used in the Australian census for understanding measuring, and reporting on Australia's racial and cultural diversity.

DCA encourages the ABS to consider the framework out lined in DCA's *Counting Culture: Towards A Standardised Approach to Measuring and Reporting on Workforce Cultural Diversity in Australia*.

DCA recommends that the government should collect data on culturally and racially marginalised people. DCA will soon be updating our *Counting Culture* framework to include a methodology for collecting data on race.

The benefits of more inclusive workplaces

DCA's research shows that inclusive workplaces significantly decrease the risk of experiencing discrimination and/or harassment while at work; and inclusive workplaces are more productive and have better outcomes for all employees.

DCA's *Inclusion@Work Index* is a nationally representative survey of 3,000 Australian workers repeated biennially to map and track inclusion in the Australian workforce over time.

Since 2017, DCA has conducted three *Inclusion@Work* indexes and each time the findings demonstrate inclusion is much more than a 'feel good' exercise. It creates a better work environment that is good for businesses and people.

The 2021 research found that workers in inclusive teams are:

- 4 times less likely to leave their job in the next 12 months
- 10 times more likely to be very satisfied
- 4 times less likely to feel work has a negative or very negative impact on their mental health.
- 5 times less likely to experience discrimination and/or harassment
- 11 times more likely to be highly effective than those in non-inclusive teams
- 10 times more likely to be innovative
- 6 times more likely to provide excellent customer service
- 4 times more likely to work extra hard

However, there is a lot at stake where workplaces are not inclusive.

Non-inclusion significantly increases risk of discrimination and harassment, reduces team performance, and impacts employee wellbeing.

Non-Inclusion increases harassment and discrimination

Our research shows that working in non-inclusive teams, with non-inclusive managers, and in non-inclusive organisations significantly increases your risk of experiencing discrimination and/or harassment while at work.

For employees, this can harm wellbeing and mental health. For organisations, this can risk costly lawsuits and loss of organisational reputation. Specifically, our results show:

- workers in non-inclusive teams are 5 times more likely to report experiencing discrimination and/or harassment at work compared to those in inclusive teams (56% in non-inclusive teams compared to 10% in inclusive teams)
- workers with non-inclusive managers are 4 times more likely to report experiencing discrimination and/or harassment at work compared to those with inclusive managers (47% with non-inclusive managers compared to 12% with inclusive managers)
- workers in non-inclusive organisations are 4 times more likely to report experiencing discrimination and/or harassment at work compared to those in inclusive organisations (45% in non-inclusive organisations compared to 11% in inclusive organisations).

Diversity and inclusion have significant benefits for wellbeing and productivity. Employers who do the work to actively create and maintain diverse workforces with actively inclusive practices are more productive, more innovative, and more profitable.

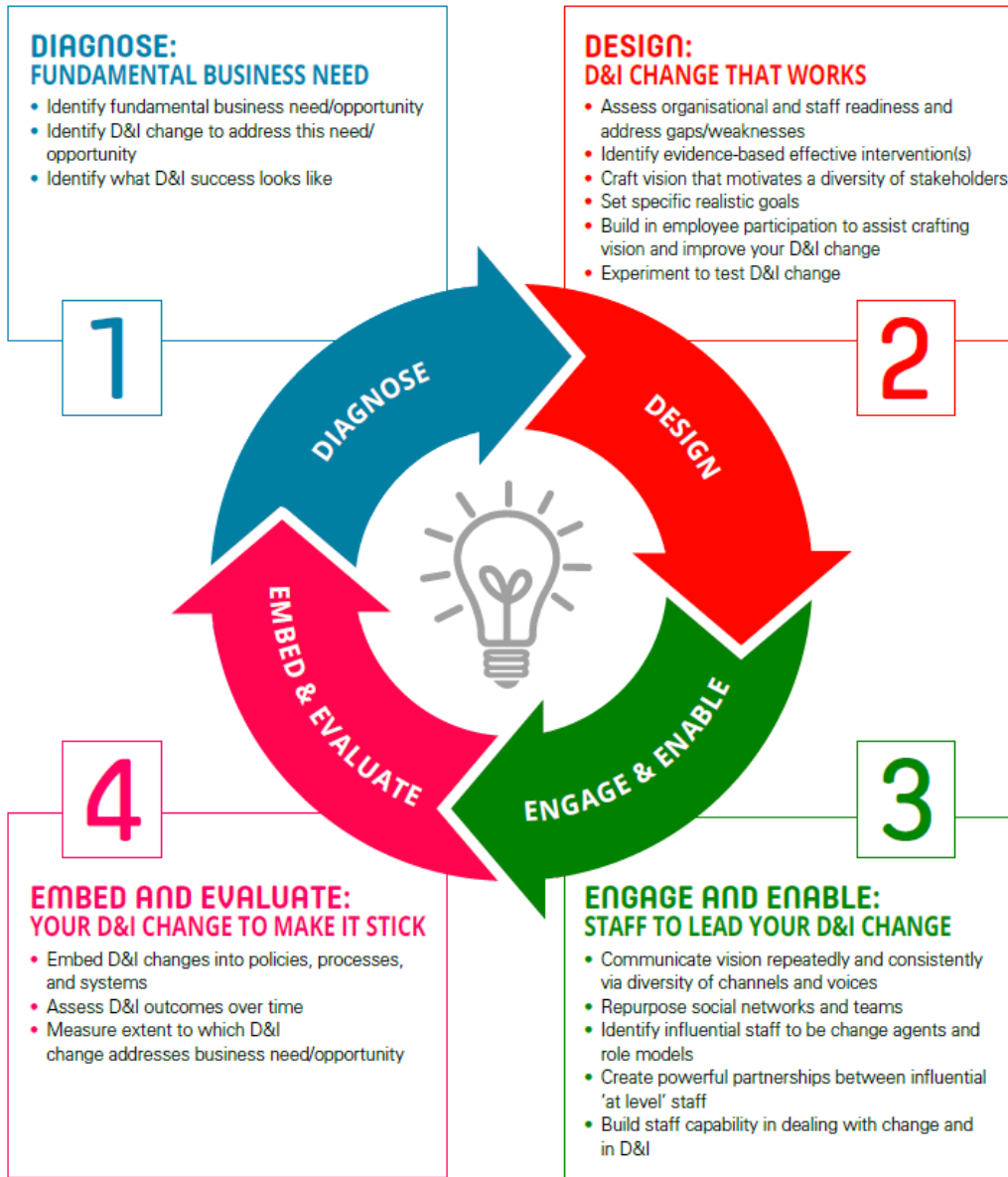
Employers who embed inclusive practice have happier, more effective, more innovative workers who are four times less likely to be looking to leave in the next year.

We urge the government to make D&I a priority for tackling some of the systemic issues that are impacting our economy.

Inclusion at work doesn't just 'happen'. For workplaces and organisations to be inclusive, it requires employer commitment – as well as an understanding of not just the systemic issues driving inequalities, but also an understanding of specific issues in a given context.

In advising our members, we recommend evidence-based interventions that are tailored to their specific business contexts and organisational readiness are the most effective way to create more inclusive workplaces. Our [Change at Work](#) model is an evidence-based model for designing and implementing D&I organisational change. We recommend that employers use this model in order to make effective and lasting D&I change.

DCA's Model for D&I Organisational Change



5.1 Reducing barriers and disincentives to work, including the role of childcare, social security settings and employment services.

Barriers and disincentives to work

In 2021, 3.3 million working-age Australians were overlooked and underleveraged by employers, many of those open to work experience specific barriers:

Open to work (74%)		
Underemployed	Marginally attached	Discouraged
37% (1,170,600)	33% (1,044,400)	4% (113,000)
Employed but wish to work more hours or at their skill level	Open to paid work, but not employed or actively looking for work due to other obligations (e.g. childcare or education)	Open to paid work, but not employed or actively looking for work Have given up looking for labour market-related reasons (e.g. they expect discrimination due to their disability or age)

Addressing barriers through inclusive recruitment

Australian organisations need to diversify who and how they hire if they are to meet their workforce needs – tapping into pools of talent typically left off their recruitment radars.

A focus on inclusive recruitment practices can reduce barriers to work for those from groups who are overlooked and underleveraged in the Australian labour market.

What is inclusive recruitment?

DCA defines inclusive recruitment as when hiring practices:

- value diversity,
- are bias free, and
- enable a diversity of talent to be sourced, assessed, selected, and appointed.

DCA developed 5 Guiding principles for inclusive recruitment which we believe can be applied to the development of initiatives and strategies to address barriers to labour market participation for people from marginalised groups.

Principle 1: Focus on fair treatment, not same treatment

We often assume that the best way to be equitable and inclusive is to treat everyone the same. In fact, the best way is to treat people fairly – and sometimes that requires recognising people have different needs.

Principle 2: Be flexible – not everyone has the same resources or support

To ensure your hiring processes are fair to all job seekers, check for accessibility at each recruitment stage. If a process is not accessible, be flexible and consider adapting it for different needs. Remember that not everyone has the same resources and support.

Principle 3: Approach “merit” with caution, because it is subjective

We often rely on the ideal of merit to guarantee fairness, equity and inclusion in recruitment (e.g. “we only hire on merit”). In theory, merit should yield less biased results as it relies on meeting

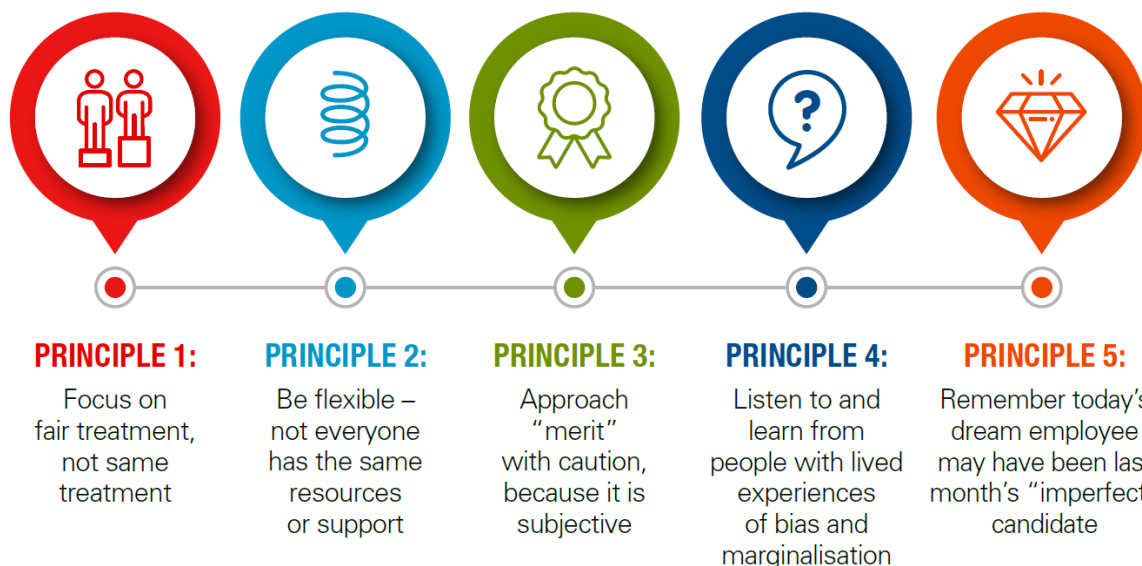
objective standards around skill and experience. Yet, in practice, fixating on merit can amplify bias and inequality. This is because our idea of the most meritorious (best) applicant is often subjective and prone to bias. This does not mean we should discard the idea of merit. But we do need to challenge how we define and assess merit for bias, to make sure it is not locking out a diversity of talent.

Principle 4: Listen to and learn from people with lived experiences of bias and marginalisation

Employees from overlooked and underleveraged talent pools have first-hand experience of biased recruitment. So, they are well placed to identify and advise on how to make recruitment more inclusive and not lock marginalised talent out.

Principle 5: Remember this month's "imperfect" candidate may be next month's dream employee

Just because a candidate is different from what you anticipated, does not mean that they are deficient. They may simply come in a different shape or work in a different way from what you are used to.



Childcare

DCA has advocated for many years that the government should ensure affordable, available, flexible and accessible universal childcare. Universal access ensures that all families can access quality childcare, in a form that meets the needs of children, parents and community, and at a cost that does not present a barrier to participation.

5.2 Improving labour market outcomes for those who face challenges in employment, including First Nations people, those who live in rural and remote areas, younger and older Australians, people with disability, and those who may experience discrimination.

Which Australian workers face challenges in employment?

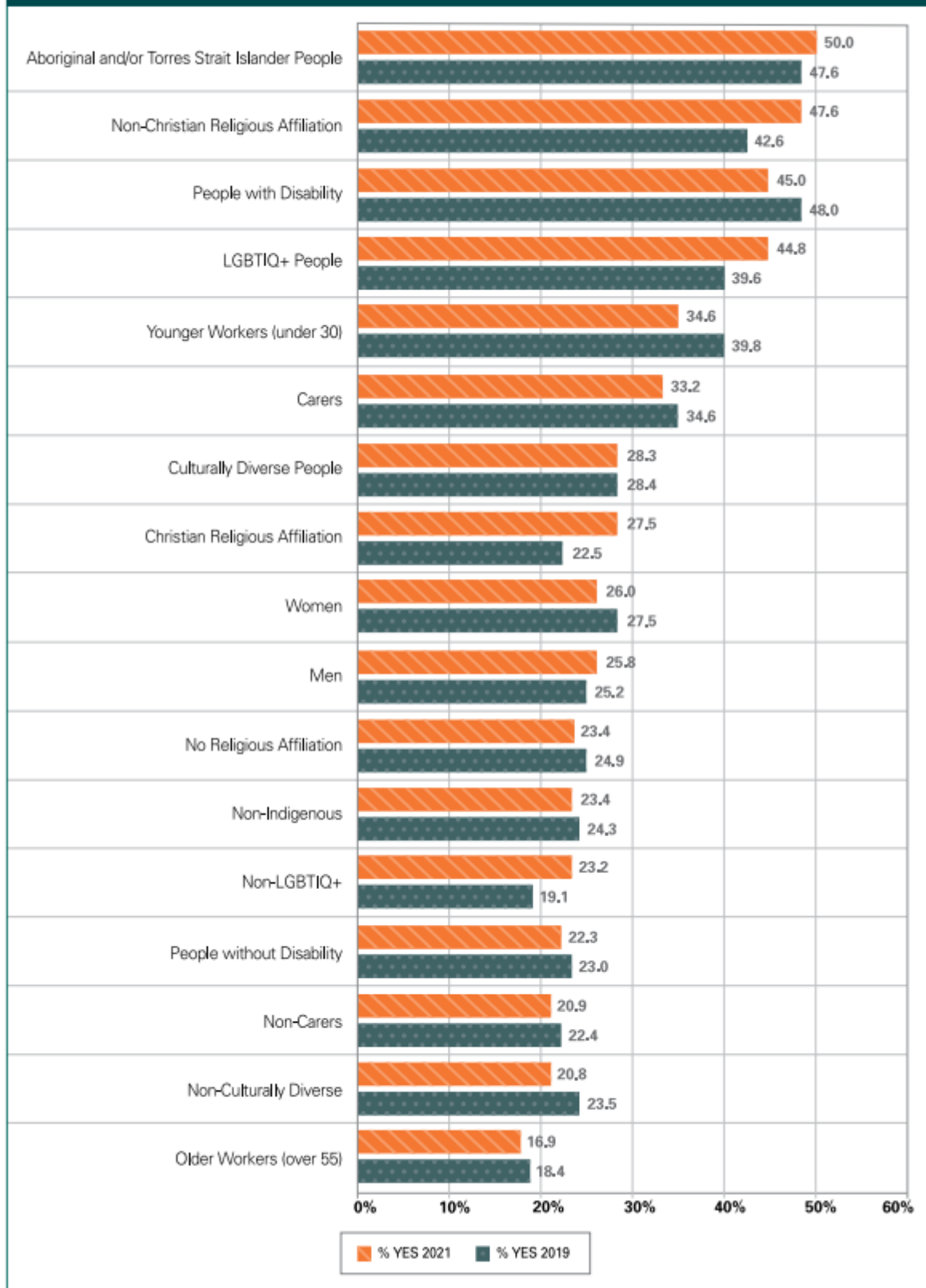
Harassment and discrimination

DCA's [Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022](#) is a nationally representative sample of 3000 Australian workers. The survey is repeated biennially to map and track inclusion in the Australian workforce over time.

This research found that in 2021, as in previous years, some employees experience notably higher levels of exclusion than their colleagues – namely, **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers, workers with a non-Christian religious affiliation, workers with disability, and LGBTIQ+ workers.**

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers report the highest levels of exclusion. With 1 in 2 reporting experience of discrimination and/or harassment, they are twice as likely than non-Indigenous workers to experience discrimination and/or harassment at work in the last 12 months (50% compared to 23%).
- Workers from a non-Christian religious background (48%), workers with disability and LGBTIQ+ workers (both 45%) again report significantly higher levels of experience with discrimination and/or harassment, compared to Christian workers (28%), workers with no religion (23%), workers without disability (22%), and non-LGBTIQ+ workers (23%).

Figure 21: Proportion Who have Experienced Discrimination and/or Harassment in Past Year



Unemployment and underemployment

DCA's [Inclusive Recruitment at Work¹⁴](#) report found that approximately 3.3 million Australians of working age – 16% of our working-age population – are potential job seekers who want to work or contribute more to the economy but are currently overlooked and underleveraged by employers.

Close to 1 million (808,100) are *looking for work* (i.e. short-term and long-term unemployed).

Well over 2 million (2,328,000) are *open to work* but not actively searching because they are employed elsewhere (underemployed), are discouraged from finding employment or have other obligations (such as childcare or study).

All are much more likely to belong to marginalised diversity groups. They are disproportionately likely to be:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Culturally or racially marginalised people (affected by cultural backgrounds, language difficulties or visa restrictions)
- Carers (particularly sole parents and carers of young children)
- People with disability
- People from lower socio-economic backgrounds and with lower formal education levels
- Transgender people
- People over 55
- People under 25

People who belong to multiple marginalised diversity groups are even more likely to be potential job seekers, particularly:

- Young people with culturally or racially marginalised backgrounds
- Women with caring responsibilities who are under 25
- Men with disability who are over 55.¹⁵

DCA's recommendations for improving labour market outcomes for specific groups

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples

In 2020, DCA collaborated with the Jumbunna Institute on [Gari Yala](#) – which means 'speak the truth' in Wiradjuri language – to gain a firsthand understanding of the diversity of Indigenous workers' experiences. The project was Indigenous led and overseen by an Expert Panel of distinguished Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academics and employment practitioners.

That report set out 10 truths to centre Indigenous Australians' voices to create workplace inclusion:

1. Commit to unearthing and acting on workplace truths – however uncomfortable this may be
2. Ensure any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-related work is Indigenous led and informed

3. Develop organisational principles to make it clear how Indigenous community engagement and employment should work in practice
4. Focus on workplace readiness (cultural safety) rather than worker readiness
5. Recognise identity strain and educate non-Indigenous staff about how to interact with their Indigenous colleagues in ways that reduce this
6. Recognise and remunerate cultural load as part of an employee's workload
7. Consult with Indigenous staff on how to minimise cultural load while maintaining organisational activity
8. Focus on sustainable careers and career development, rather than just short-term appointments
9. Take action to address workplace racism
10. Look to high-impact initiatives – those that research shows are linked to better wellbeing and retention for Indigenous staff

The experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people at work should be a key focus of the White Paper, and these discussions must be led and informed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

People with disability

The labour force participation rate for working-age people with disability has not improved in 3 decades. It was 54.9% in 1993 and 53.4% in 2019. For working-age people without disability, the rate increased from 76.9% in 1993 to 84.1% in 2019.¹⁶

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) ¹⁷, only 48% of working-age people with disability are employed (compared to 80% of those without disability) and they are twice as likely to be unemployed. From those who have found employment, 41% work part time (compared to 32% of those without disability), so 1 in 10 are underemployed.

Job seekers with disability often face critical accessibility problems when applying for roles. For example, inaccessible recruitment portals with complex navigation, timeout restrictions, lack of video captioning or image alt-text, poor screen contrast, inaccessible form fields and mouse-only input options.¹⁸ Research has found that even recruitment websites aimed at recruiting employees with disability have errors that hinder accessibility.¹⁹

Applicants who disclose a disability receive a much lower call-back rate than those who do not. For disclosures of spinal cord injury or Asperger's syndrome, it was found to be 26% lower.²⁰ For accident-caused paraplegia, it was 50% lower,²¹ and for all wheelchair users, 48% lower.²²

What's more, some common requirements act as barriers to people with disability:

- Requiring uninterrupted, continuous employment: This adversely affects those job seekers who are more likely to have taken career breaks (e.g. women, primary carers, people with disability or refugees) and is not the best marker of merit.
- Requiring cultural or organisational fit: This (consciously or unconsciously) ends up being ambiguous code for "we're looking for someone just like us" (e.g. white, male and without disability or caring responsibilities).

DCA's *Inclusive Recruitment at Work* report details a range of strategies to address the barriers to employment for people with disability.

Culturally and racially marginalised people

DCA's [Racism At Work](#) revealed that workplace racism is having a significant impact on Australian employees' wellbeing, and is impacting Australian organisations.

Australia must address racism, and DCA supports the work being undertaken by the Australian Human Rights Commission on a National Anti-Racism Strategy.

DCA recommends that the White Paper should address racism in workplaces, and that this work should be led by racially marginalised people.

Furthermore, to address racism in Australia more broadly, more work needs to be done to increase racial literacy in the community.

People from lower socio-economic backgrounds

DCA's [Class at Work](#) research shows that social class is the attribute most strongly linked to workers' experience of inclusion at work and one of the most strongly linked to exclusion.

Lower Class Workers Are Less Likely to Experience Inclusion

- **Fair Treatment.** Only half of lower class workers indicated that they trusted their organisation to treat them fairly (53% strongly agree/agree), and this percentage was significantly lower than middle class workers (73% strongly agree/agree) and higher class workers (82% strongly agree/agree).
- **Opportunities.** Lower class workers were less likely to report they felt they had the same opportunities as anyone else with their abilities and experience (55% strongly agree/agree) compared with middle class (73% agree/strongly agree) and higher class (82% agree/strongly agree).

Lower class workers are more likely to experience exclusion

- **Discrimination/Harassment.** More than two-fifths of lower class workers (43%) reported having personally experienced discrimination and/or harassment in the workplace in the last 12 months, compared to 26% of higher class workers.
- **Non-Inclusive Teams.** 27% of lower class workers work in non-inclusive teams, compared to 10% of middle class workers, and 5% of higher class workers.
- **Being ignored.** Lower class workers were more likely to report being ignored (17% strongly agree/agree) compared to middle class workers (6%) and higher class workers (7%).
- **Missing out on opportunities and privileges.** Lower class workers were more likely to report missing out on opportunities and privileges (22% strongly agree/agree) compared to middle class workers (9%) and higher class workers (9%).
- **Left out of social gatherings.** Lower class workers were more likely to report being left out of social gatherings (20% strongly agree/agree) compared to middle class workers (6%) and higher class workers (7%).

That research made a number of suggestions for addressing class inclusion at work:

- Start talking about class as part of our diversity so we can develop and implement D&I strategies to ensure social class inclusion.

- Develop a consistent measure for class that can be adopted by Australian workplaces. Employers should adopt a consistent set of indicators that will help them understand the impact of class on attraction, recruitment and progression within Australian organisations.
- Recognise that the other aspects that make up our identity (e.g., cultural background, age etc.) will also be impacted by class in different ways. We cannot understand any aspect of diversity in isolation and we must always keep this in mind.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This submission addresses the terms of reference that relate to DCA's research and experience advising Australian businesses on diversity and inclusion.

DCA is really pleased to see the number of initiatives and legislative changes already underway to address issues identified in the White Paper.

Our recommendations are therefore in relation to actions that can support the work already underway, or in relation to additional areas that we believe will help build a more productive workforce and create more opportunities for more Australians.

Recommendations to support digitalisation and emerging technologies (including AI)

1. DCA supports the work currently being undertaken by the CSIRO regarding D&I in artificial intelligence and strongly urges the government to make D&I a priority consideration in relation to all emerging technologies.
2. The government should develop a survey tool to understand and measure the diversity of the technology skillsforce, and measures to attract and retain under-represented groups as part of this critical section of the labour market.
3. Research should be undertaken to measure how digitalisation and emerging technologies (including AI) impact different groups. This research must include access to technologies, how new technologies impact industries and occupations, and accessibility.
4. There is a need for guidance and education for people using AI tools and emerging technologies, so they know what the tool does, how it works, and how it can be used in a way that eliminates bias.
5. There is a need for Australia's technology skillsforce to have D&I skills so that they can apply these skills when developing new technologies and AI tools.

Recommendations to complement work under way for pay equity

6. The government should continue to fund the Time Use Survey to measure and quantify unpaid work.

Recommendations for creating equal opportunities for women

7. Government strategies to address women's equality must ensure that the intersectional experiences of different women are addressed and understood.

Recommendations for better data collection

8. The government should ensure that questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status are also included in the Census.
9. The ABS should consider the framework out lined in DCA's Counting Culture: Towards A Standardised Approach to Measuring and Reporting on Workforce Cultural Diversity in Australia.
10. The government should collect data on culturally and racially marginalised people. *

**DCA will soon be updating our Counting Culture framework to include a methodology for collecting data on race.*

Recommendations for creating more inclusive workplaces

11. The government makes D&I a priority for tackling some of the systemic issues that are impacting our economy.

12. That employers must follow evidence-based interventions that are tailored to their specific business contexts and organisational readiness.

Recommendations for improving labour market outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples

13. The experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people at work should be a key focus of the White Paper, and these discussions must be led and informed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendations for improving labour market outcomes for people with disability

14. DCA's *Inclusive Recruitment at Work* report details a range of strategies to address the barriers to employment for people with disability.

Recommendations for improving labour market outcomes for culturally and racially marginalised people

15. DCA recommends that the White Paper address racism in workplaces, and that this work should be led by racially marginalised people.

ENDNOTES

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- ⁴ Rapid Response BRIEFING: Automation, Women, and the Future of Work, Issue 1, July 2017, accessed at: https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/13126/II_RRBrief1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
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- ⁷ Diversity Council Australia (P. Anderson, V. Mapedzahama, A. Kaabel, and J. O'Leary) *Racism at Work: How organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism*, Diversity Council Australia, 2022, <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/racismatwork>.
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- ⁹ Diversity Council Australia (Brown, C., D'Almada-Remedios, R., Dunbar, K., O'Leary, J., Evans, O., and Rubin, M.) *Class at Work: Does Social Class Make a Difference in the Land of the 'Fair Go'?*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2020, <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/class-work>.
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- ¹¹ Diversity Council Australia (Shireenjit, J., O'Leary, J., Legg, A. and Brown, C.) *Capitalising on Culture and Gender in ASX Leadership*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2017. <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/capitalising-culture-and-gender-asx-leadership>
- ¹² Diversity Council Australia (Tilly, J., O'Leary, J. and Russell, G.) *Older Women Matter: Harnessing the Talents of Australia's Older Female Workforce*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2013. <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/older-women-matter>
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- ¹⁴ Diversity Council Australia (R. D'Almada-Remedios, A. Kaabel, and J. O'Leary), *Inclusive Recruitment: How to Tap into Australia's Overlooked and Underleveraged Talent*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022, <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/inclusive-recruitment-work>.
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¹⁸ The Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT), *eRecruiting & Accessibility: Is HR Technology Hurting Your Bottom Line?*, PEAT, 2015.

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