



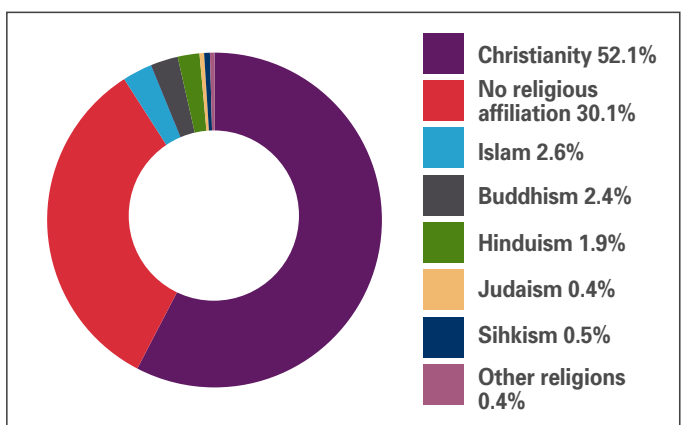
# CREATING INCLUSIVE MULTI-FAITH WORKPLACES



Australia has had a rich diversity of spiritual and cultural practices for thousands of years, beginning with the diversity of beliefs and practices among Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

From colonisation, Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Jews and Muslims began arriving in Australia. Since then, a diversity in migration has led to a rich environment of religious and spiritual beliefs in Australia.

**DCA developed this resource to help Australian organisations move from *accommodating* the religious beliefs and expressions of their staff, to building *inclusive workplaces* which respect and respond to diversity in faith affiliation and experience.**



Source: ABS, *Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia – Stories From the Census, 2016 (2017.0)*

## WHAT?

We want to elevate the conversations that we have each day so they respect and include all. INCLUSION is a higher aspiration than simply meeting the legal requirements to accommodate people of faith (or no faith) at work.

**INCLUSION refers to getting the mix of people in an organisation to work together to improve performance and wellbeing.**

Inclusion in a workplace is achieved when a diversity of people (e.g., ages, cultural backgrounds, genders, perspectives) feel that they are:

- RESPECTED for who they are and able to be themselves;
- CONNECTED to their colleagues and feel they belong;
- CONTRIBUTING their perspectives and talents to the workplace; and
- PROGRESSING in their career at work (i.e., have equal access to opportunities and resources).





## WHY?

# THE CASE FOR MULTI-FAITH DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

### JOB SATISFACTION AND MORALE



Employees are **happier at work** when their organisation is **supportive of their religious and spiritual expression**.

### PERFORMANCE



On the other hand, employees **perform worse** when **they feel they must hide and/or fake their faith identity** to fit in with their organisation's requirements.

### RETENTION



Employees who feel they do not have to fake their faith identity to fit in with their organisation are **less likely to leave their organisation**.

### WELLBEING AND STRESS



Employees who are able to disclose their faith at work have **higher perceived wellbeing and less stress** compared to those who feel they have to hide it.

### MARKET SHARE



**The global religious industry is estimated to be worth trillions of dollars**, presenting opportunity for proactive organisations to capitalise on. For example, the global Halal market has been estimated to be worth up to US\$1.6 trillion per annum, while the religious tourism industry is valued at approximately US\$18 billion a year.

### BRAND



Cultivating a diversity-differentiated organisational reputation can translate into **positive media attention**, as well as recruitment and business outcomes.

### TALENT COSTS



**Religious discrimination, harassment, and vilification complaints** are lodged each year, with 2018 seeing an increase in some States and Territories. The majority of these complaints **occur in the workplace**. **Preventing discrimination and harassment** minimises organisational legal exposure and risk and reduces costs associated with absenteeism, turnover and loss of staff morale and productivity.

Research references are available in DCA's Full *Creating Inclusive Multi-Faith Workplaces* Guidelines.



## HOW?

- 1. Start with understanding the law:** Inclusion is about more than just meeting your legal obligations, but it helps to understand Australia’s laws covering protection from religious discrimination at work.
- 2. Get counting:** Use DCA’s principles for inclusive data collection to help you understand the faith diversity of your workforce and subsequent need for faith-based inclusion within your organisation.
- 3. Build inclusion into ALL of your policies:**
  - Update your **D&I policy** to include faith, and no faith, as part of a person’s identity.
  - Consider how to make your **dress codes** inclusive; so that they provide flexibility to accommodate employees’ religious or cultural obligations, while meeting health and safety requirements.
  - Check if your **leave policies** allow for employees to meet cultural and religious obligations.
  - Include staff from a variety of backgrounds when **planning events** to ensure these are inclusive.
  - Where feasible, **Multi-faith Quiet Rooms** are an excellent way to be inclusive of employee needs for prayer, meditation, and quiet reflection for employees of all faith and of no-faith.
- 4. Educate to avoid stereotypes and bias:** Faith-based stereotyping is extremely common and in the workplace can lead to inaccurate ideas that people from particular faiths are not capable of taking on certain roles.



### BALANCING RELIGION WITH OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS AT WORK

A common question we receive at DCA is how to handle situations where someone’s religious beliefs, challenge another person’s belief or identity, especially if this has an impact on the needs of the business.

There are no easy answers, but the principle of inclusion – ensuring that all employees are respected, connected, and able to contribute and progress – can help navigate some of these situations.

In practice, aspiring for inclusion means:

- 1. STARTING WITH MUTUAL RESPECT**

Inclusive organisations are ones where a diversity of employees are respected. When you encounter a situation where it appears that two ideas may be in conflict with each other, a good point to start from is by ensuring that all employees are treated with respect. In most cases, starting with respect enables there to be a sensible compromise.
- 2. WELCOMING RELIGIOUS BELIEFS BUT RECOGNISING THAT WORK IS NOT THE PLACE FOR PROSELYTISING – UNLESS YOU ARE EMPLOYED TO DO THIS**

Inclusive workplaces welcome and encourage religious beliefs and expression, but religious expression shouldn’t involve proselytising at work (unless that is the actual job).
- 3. SEPARATING RELIGIOUS BELIEFS FROM RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION**

Many people in Australia have deeply held religious beliefs, but expressing those beliefs in a way that is harmful to other people could breach anti-discrimination laws, and may also not be respectful in a workplace context.
- 4. RECOGNISING THAT COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS ARE CONSTANTLY SHIFTING OVER TIME**

At various times in history, religious beliefs were used to justify a range of practices including slavery, prohibitions on interracial marriage, and the criminalisation of homosexuality. But in 2019, thankfully, the views and expectations of the community have since shifted.