

Date: 25 July 2025

To: Economic Reform Roundtable Secretariat, The Treasury, Canberra ACT

Email: ReformRoundtable@treasury.gov.au

Re: DCA Submission to the Economic Reform Roundtable Consultation

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Government's Economic Reform Roundtable and its consultations to improve productivity, build economic resilience and strengthen budget sustainability.

As the nation's leading independent peak body for diversity and inclusion, we are a member-based, not-for-profit, with a strong network of over 1,300 members, including many of Australia's largest employers. For 40 years DCA has worked to advance more equitable workplaces—supporting a stronger economy and fairer society. DCA's evidence-led approach is centred on lived experience, and our research consistently shows that inclusive organisations are more innovative, productive, and resilient in changing environments.

Founded as a joint initiative of the Business Council of Australia and what would become the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, DCA's original mission was to support equal opportunity for women through industry-led programs. Our founding members included ANZ, AMP, BHP, Coles, IBM, Myer, Rio Tinto, and Westpac. Today, we champion a spectrum of workforce diversity and inclusion dimensions and hold strong convening power, engaging directly with CEOs and senior leaders across a range of sectors from ASX-listed companies to not-for-profits.

Through research, practical tools, events, advocacy, education and training, we provide expert guidance to support employers, leaders and policymakers, and advance our charitable purpose to foster inclusive workplaces for the benefit of individuals, organisations and society.

An intersectional lens:

DCA takes an intersectional approach to workplace inclusion, recognising that individuals may experience overlapping and compounding forms of marginalisation based on their social identities. By applying an intersectional lens across our work, we help employers identify and address the structural barriers that affect participation and progression for people from marginalised groups.

The Business Case for Inclusion: the compelling evidence

DCA's biennial *Inclusion@Work Index* surveys 3,000 workers in Australia to track the state of workplace inclusion, consistently demonstrating that inclusive workplaces perform better, adapt faster, and are more resilient in changing environments. Our *last Index* showed employees in inclusive teams are:

- Ten times more likely to be innovative
- Four times more likely to provide excellent customer service
- More than twice as likely to have employees willing to work extra hard to help their team succeed
- Eight times more likely to work together effectively
- Five times less likely to experience discrimination and harassment.

Employees in inclusive teams are also eight times more likely to be very satisfied with their job, six times more likely to say their work positively impacts their mental health, and three times less likely to leave their organisation.

These outcomes benefit organisations and communities, and strengthen the broader economy. Workplace inclusion aligns with, and advances, the Government's five-pillar productivity agenda, in particular: 'Building a skilled, adaptable workforce' and 'Creating dynamic and resilient economies'.

Inclusion supports a more resilient, skilled and future-ready workforce

Inclusion enables organisations to tap into the full spectrum of talent and skills, including those often overlooked or underutilised due to bias or exclusion. As Australia prepares for major transitions, such as the net zero transformation and the rise of AI and digital technology, it is vital that we ensure these shifts are inclusive by design. For example, our research shows the use of AI in recruitment can entrench bias and discrimination if not carefully designed and monitored.

DCA as a strategic partner in reform

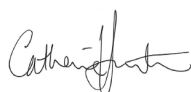
DCA offers practical, evidence-based guidance that supports employers to implement inclusive practices and policies. We carry out our advocacy work by: making formal submissions and recommendations to government and regulatory bodies; participating in consultations, roundtables, working groups and public inquiries; and engaging directly with key decision-makers across jurisdictions. In all our work, we focus on how policy and the legislative framework at both the employer and government level, can support inclusive and equitable workforce participation.

DCA therefore recommends these measures to government, to support productivity and workforce resilience, with potential for long-term budget-positive outcomes:

1. **Recognise workplace inclusion as a high-impact productivity lever** — not a ‘nice-to-have,’ but a critical tool for building future-ready, skilled, and resilient workforces.
 - Integrate workplace inclusion into national productivity, skills, and employment strategies (e.g. through the Employment White Paper implementation, skills migration reform, and Jobs and Skills Australia). Acknowledge inclusion as a key enabler of workforce participation, innovation, and economic resilience. Reinforce these messages with Australian business.
2. **Engage with DCA’s advocacy, research and expertise** when developing economic reform, skills policy, and workforce-related programs — to better include Australians still excluded from full workforce participation due to systemic barriers.
 - Invite DCA to participate in government-led consultation processes, roundtables, and taskforces. Reference our research in relevant policy documents and initiatives. Work with DCA to understand both the challenges and opportunities facing employers — from ASX-listed companies to not-for-profits — and to elevate the voices of people with lived experience of marginalisation to inform inclusive policy design.
3. **Support policies and funding that enable evidence-based inclusion strategies to thrive** — particularly those with a focus on individuals who have been historically disadvantaged or underrepresented in the labour market.
 - Support pilots and programs that apply proven inclusive workplace practices. Prioritise investment in evidence-informed initiatives targeting equity in recruitment, retention, and progression — particularly those that address intersectional barriers to inclusion.

Inclusion is not only fair, but also one of Australia’s greatest economic opportunities.

We would welcome the opportunity to share further insights with the Roundtable.



Catherine Hunter
CEO, Diversity Council Australia