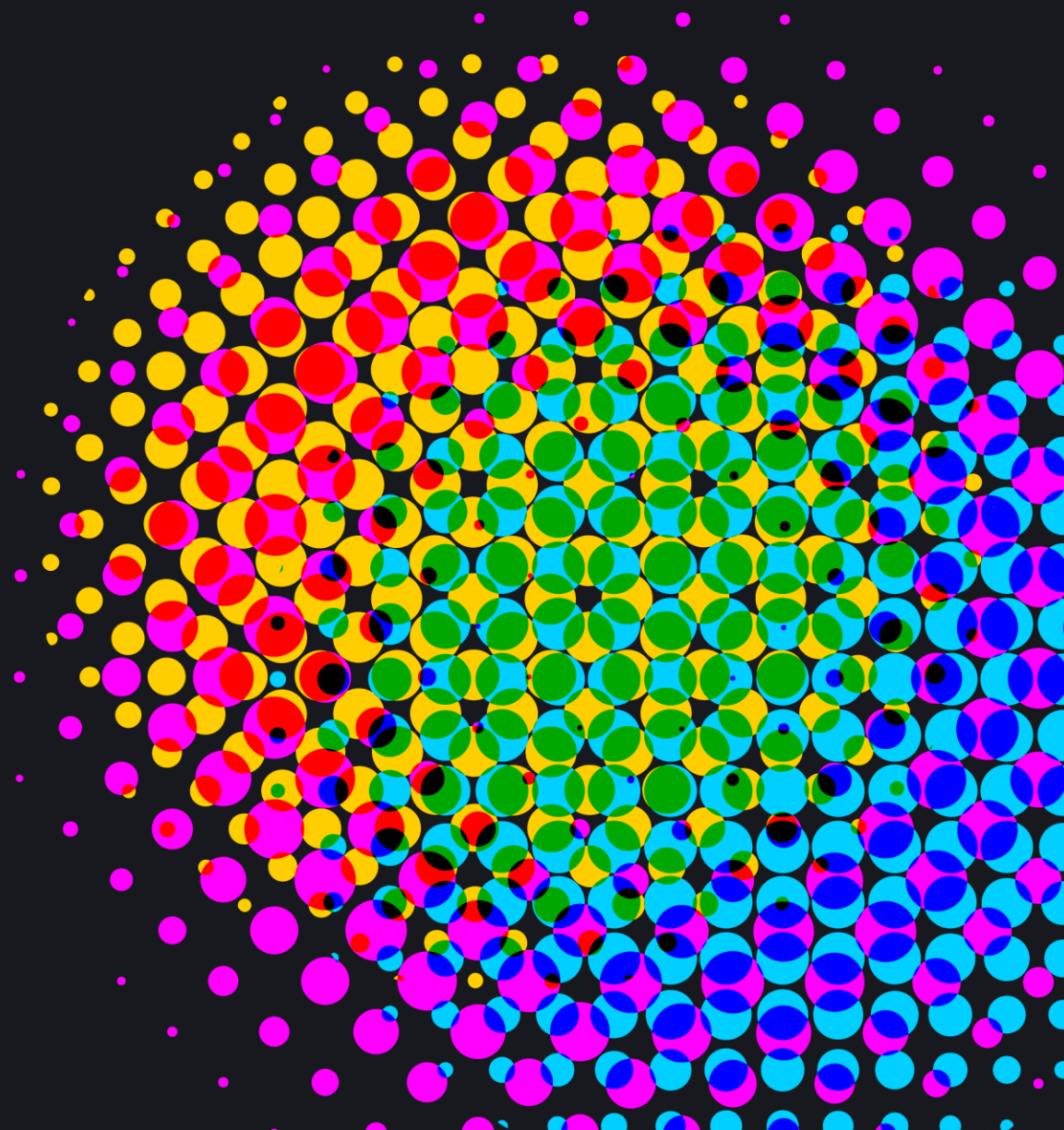


# Key Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Messaging for Engaging Senior Leaders

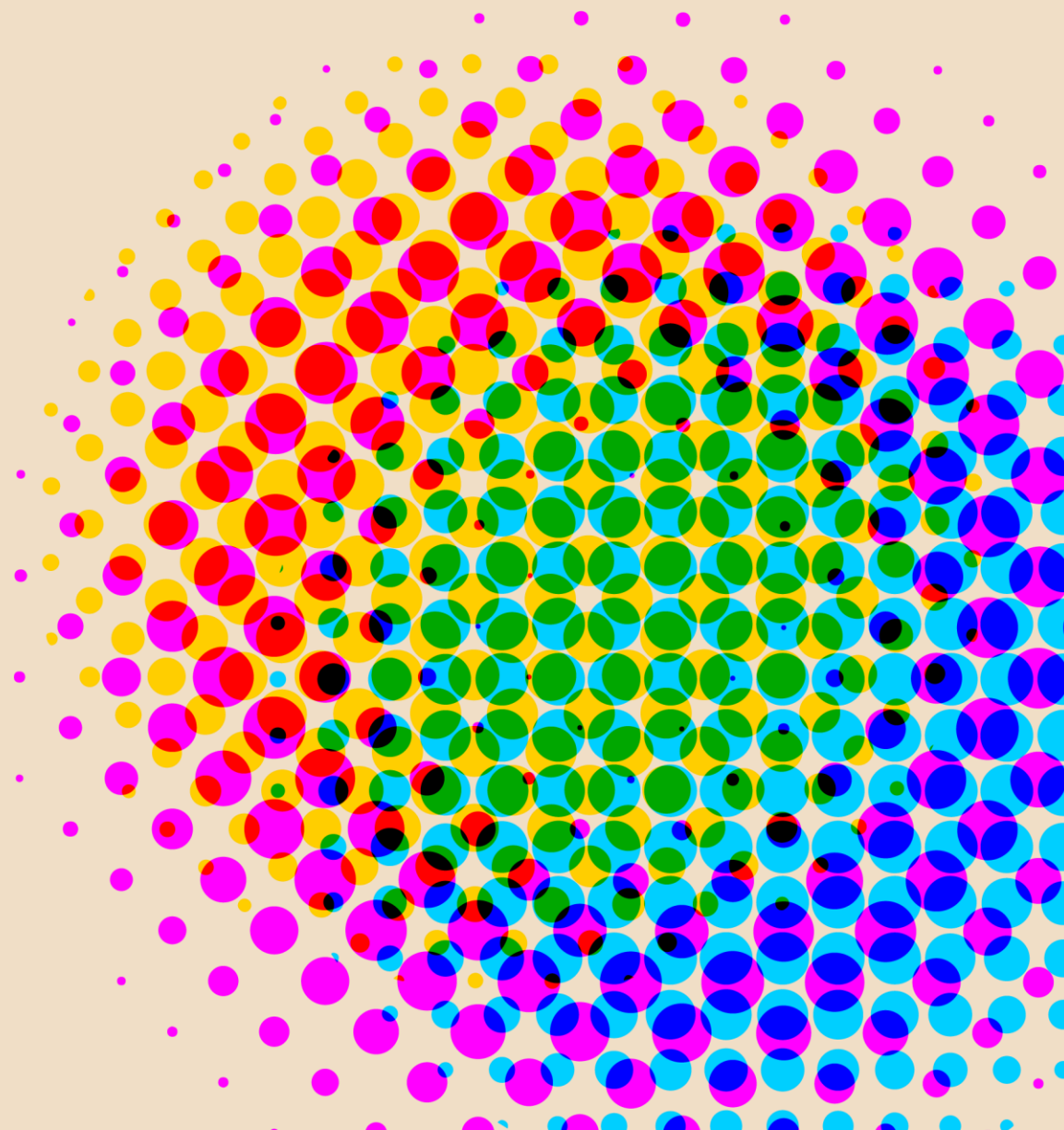
AHRI Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Futures Paper

Version 8: 25 February 2025



## Background ABOUT

This resource has been designed to provide clear, concise and impactful Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) messaging for use with senior leaders. Topics can be selected based on the needs of the audience. While the content on the slides is minimal, the detail can be found in the notes section of each slide. Content is based on the *AHRI DEI Futures Paper, October 2023* with other sources included where relevant.



# Background GLOBAL CONTEXT

- DEI IS FOUNDATIONAL TO ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE** - DEI is more than business cases, press releases, and compliance—it’s about fostering connection, understanding needs, addressing inequities, and embedding inclusion into everyday behaviours and practices to create a culture where employees, customers and communities feel valued.
- BUSINESS, SOCIAL AND ETHICAL IMPERATIVE** - DEI enhances organisational effectiveness by removing systemic barriers that undermine fairness and equity. It attracts and retains diverse talent, driving innovation, better decision-making, financial performance and resilience. Ignoring DEI poses risks to productivity, sustainability, and reputation. A strong DEI strategy aligns with the principles of a modern, fair, ethical, and thriving society.
- SHIFTING CORPORATE APPROACHES TO DEI** – Despite media narratives, organisations remain committed to DEI, adopting an evidence-based approach that strengthens organisational strategy. Rather than treating DEI as a standalone initiative, they foster deep understanding of employee and customer lived experiences and integrate it into organisational strategy and culture to drive meaningful, long-term impact.
- ADAPTING TO THE SHIFTING LEGAL & POLITICAL LANDSCAPE** - Organisations are exploring DEI regulations, determining their impact, balancing U.S. mandates with local laws and cultural expectations in other countries and framing DEI within broader risk management strategies.
- UNDERSTANDING DEI RESISTANCE** - As DEI becomes increasingly politicised, organisations are re-evaluating their approaches by engaging diverse perspectives. Leaders need clear, strategic guidance to foster inclusion for all. This requires sharing robust workforce data and insights, creating safe spaces for open dialogue enabling all voices to be heard, encouraging shared learning, and leading with empathy—ensuring concerns are addressed without deepening divisions.
- ECONOMIC PRESSURES** - DEI is facing increased scrutiny, with organisations expected to demonstrate measurable culture change, organisational impact and ROI.

# Background AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

- 1 **OUR POPULATION IS ONE OF THE MOST DIVERSE IN THE WORLD** - For Australian organisations to thrive its crucial to create workplace cultures and practices where everyone can participate, feels safe, thrives and fully contributes.
- 1 **SUCCESS OF DEI STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES** - relies on a strategic and collective whole of organisation effort, where everyone has a role . DEI is considered in all key decision-making, policies, and practices, and foundational to effective leadership.
- 1 **CHANGES IN LEGISLATION AND EXPECTATIONS** - have meant that many CEOs, Boards, and Executives are keen to understand their increased accountability, and play a vital role listening, learning and leading by setting the DEI tone of the organisation's culture.
- 1 **FEEDBACK FROM BOARDS AND CEOS** - is they want practical, effective, and creative strategies and tactics that are fit for purpose to their context, and positively (and measurably) impactful and sustainable for employees, customers and their organisation.
- 1 **BOARDS, CEOS AND SENIOR LEADERS** - want to play their leadership role well, and visibly. They require good DEI workforce and culture data and insights that reflects how things truly are and are keen to take good counsel on the best possible sponsorship they can do that will have the maximum impact.
- 1 **HIGH AND PROGRESSIVE STANDARD OF DEI** - cannot be sustained when it is driven solely by DEI specialists and HR professionals. Instead, it is connected from Board to CEO to Executive Leadership to every leader to every employee, anchored in the organisational strategy.
- 1 **EXPECTATIONS OF HR AND DEI ROLES** –has rapidly progressed from 'identification of issues' (critiquing the organisation or describing issues) to designing and delivering meaningful ideas and change that shift the dial and are sustainable.
- 1 **TRUST ALONGSIDE HONESTY** - and a confidence to create safety to speak the truth, is essential in the relationship with the CEO, the HR/DEI professional and employees with diverse lived experience.
- 1 **DEI DATA IS A CRITICAL ELEMENT** - in both designing and deciding on strategies and ensuring their meaningful impact on both the team and the organisation.

# Topics

- 1 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Elevator Pitch
- 2 Awareness, Intent and Capability
- 3 AHRI Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Maturity Model
- 4 Our Identities and Uniqueness
- 5 Employee Experience and Belonging
- 6 Inclusive Design
- 7 Considerations for Responding to Societal Issues
- 8 Measuring Outcomes and Impact
- 9 Discussion Questions



# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion value proposition

## DEI is Foundational to Organisational Culture

DEI drives financial performance and organisational resilience, ignoring it presents long-term risks to productivity, sustainability and reputation.

A strong DEI approach aligns with the principles of a modern, fair, ethical, and thriving society.

## DEI is fundamental to thriving, adaptable and resilient organisations and societies

A holistic, transparent, and evidence-based approach—centred on lived experience—fosters genuine inclusion, addresses systemic inequalities, and drives measurable cultural and organisational change.

## Current political, economic, and social factors are deepening divisions and challenging social cohesion

Leaders need clear, strategic guidance to foster inclusion for all. This requires sharing robust data, creating safe dialogue spaces, encouraging shared learning and leading with empathy to address concerns without deepening divisions.

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion value proposition



# Awareness, intent and capability

Recent research show that:

There is a clear gap between organisational awareness, intent and capability.\*

Unsuccessful efforts are often the result of not understanding the shift in mindsets and behaviours required to drive systemic and sustainable DEI impact.^

Outcomes and Impact

## EXAMPLE

*Improve First Nations employment outcomes.#*

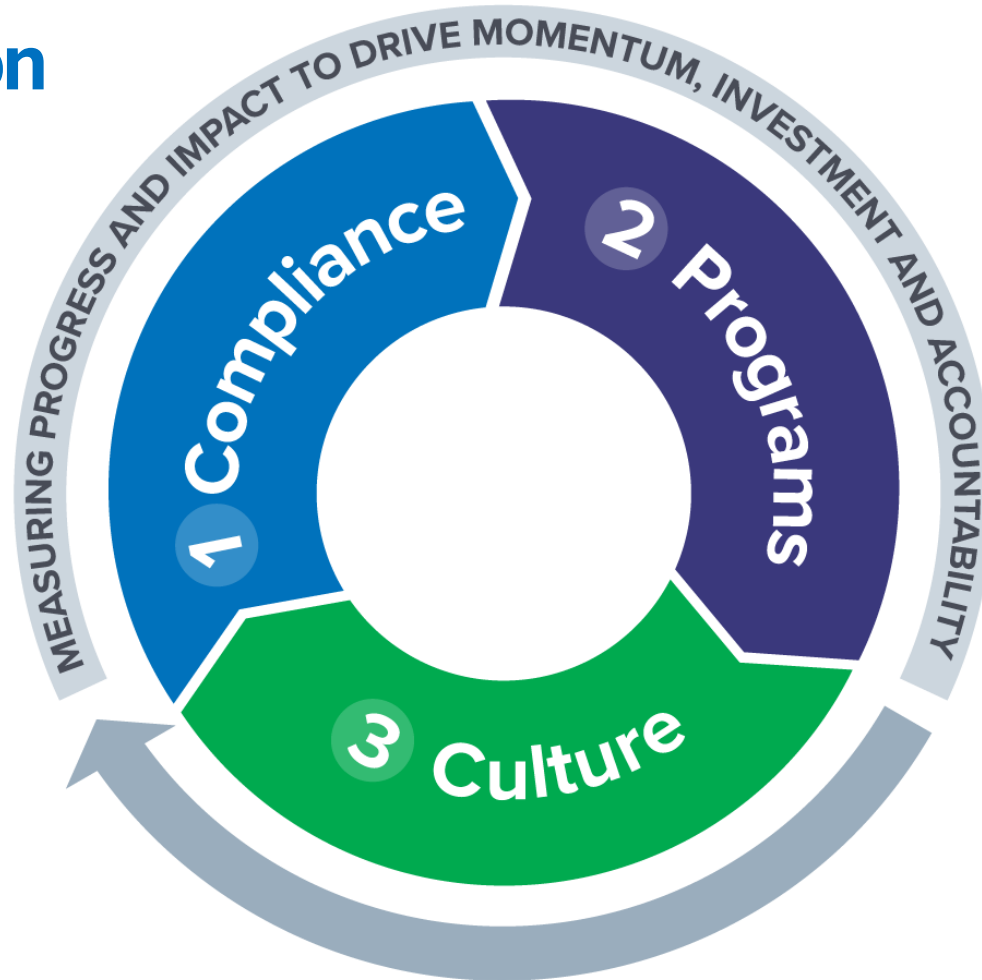
*Lack of a comprehensive approach with tailored strategies, cultural capability and an understanding of success that includes retention, safety, progression and partnerships.#*

*Cultural load, racism, feeling culturally unsafe or excluded at work = negative impacts and significant risks for employees and employers.#*

# AHRI Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Maturity Model

Where do we want to be?

Where are we now?



### Compliance: The way we comply

Organisations ensure adherence to legal and ethical standards and as laws and expectations change, revisit and respond.

### Programs: The way we support

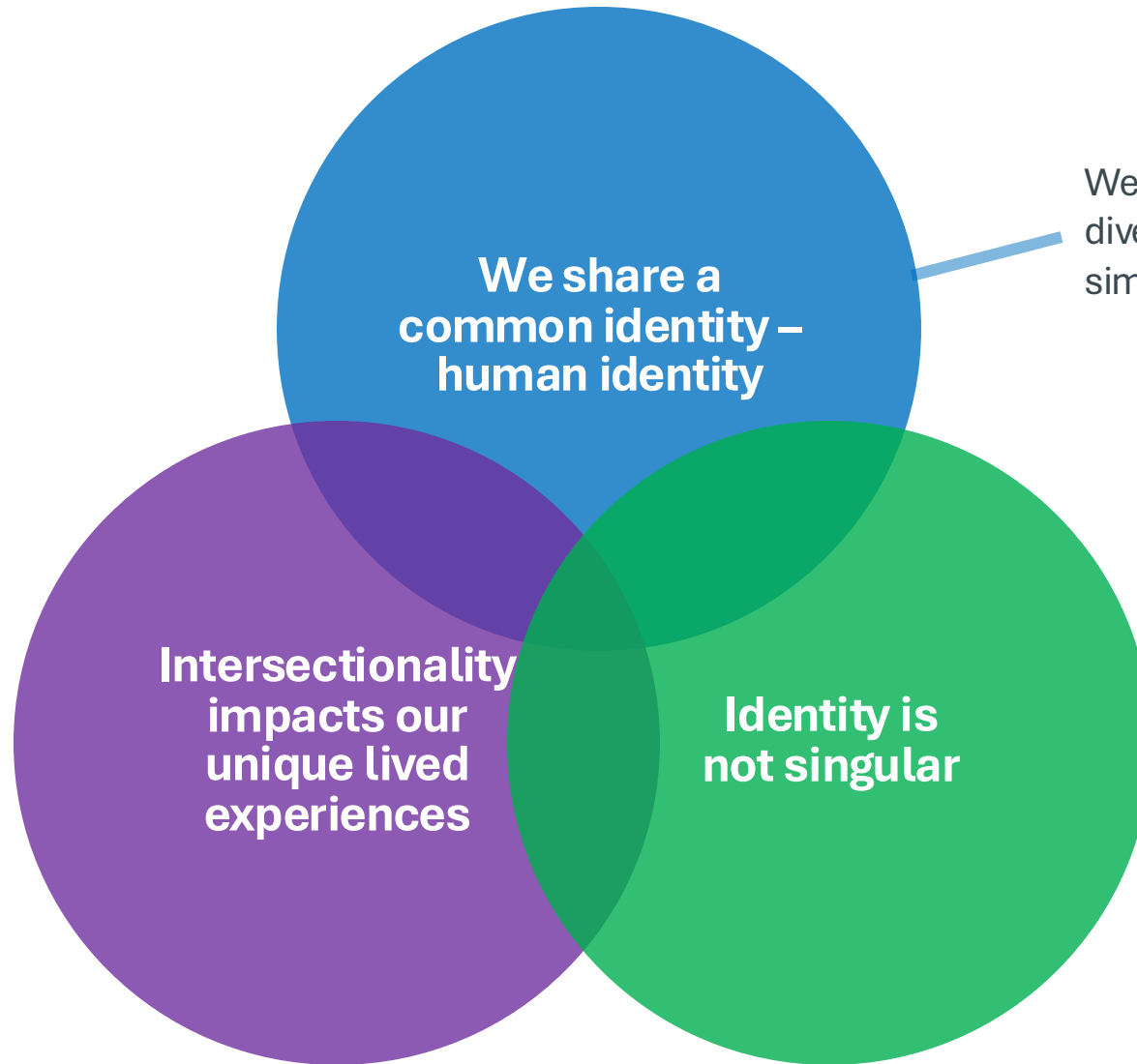
Organisations implement structured and targeted DEI initiatives, moving beyond compliance to considering different lived experiences and actively fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment.

### Culture: The way we do business

DEI is deeply embedded in the organisation's DNA and business strategy, inherently influencing all aspects of operations, experience and decision-making.

# Our identities and uniqueness

The convergence and overlap of our multiple identities impacts how we perceive the world, how the world perceives us and how we experience privilege, oppression, power, and marginalisation.



We undermined our extraordinary diversity when we forget the great similarities of our humanity.\*

We are all diverse. We identify with multiple groups and are unique in each of our communities of identification. Our identities and experiences are constantly changing.

Sources:  
[AHRI DEI Futures Paper, October 2023](#), \*Noel Pearson, [We The Australian People, ABC Boyer Lecture, December 2022](#), [Catalyst Intersectionality When Identities Converge, 2020](#)

# Employee experience and belonging

## Belonging is a core part of what makes us human

- It is a deep connection with people, places, and experiences based on our identities and uniqueness.

## The environments in which we live enable or hinder our sense of belonging

- Belonging is where people feel they are valued, supported, and empowered, have respectful relationships and can contribute to meaningful outcomes.
- Lack of belonging can lead to fear, trust and safety issues impacting the employee and organisational outcomes.

## Fostering a sense of belonging has positive impacts

- It enhances employee performance, knowledge sharing, engagement, retention, and wellbeing.

# Inclusive design

Ensuring accessible, equitable and inclusive practices starts with inclusive design for everyone.

People at the centre of the design process with outcomes that are useable by as many people as possible

**EMPLOYEES**



Approaches that are evidenced based, accessible, equitable and inclusive



Reflects a deep understanding of the diverse needs, capabilities and aspirations

**CUSTOMERS**



Exploration of a range of ideas and testing for desirability, feasibility and viability

# Considerations for responding to societal issues



## Decision Making

Lead with your strategy, purpose, and values

1



## Discussions

Lead with cultural and psychological safety and demonstrate genuine care, curiosity and respect

3



## Implementation

Embed a comprehensive, authentic and transparent approach with impact measures

5

2

## Leadership



Needs to be collectively decided on, owned and led, not based on a single leader's decision

4

## Communication



Timing and frequency is important

# Measuring outcomes and impact

Go beyond measuring workforce demographic representation including relevant organisational systems data.

**Identify meaningful data**

**Measure outcomes and impact**

Go beyond measuring outputs to measuring the short term outcomes and long term impacts on the business strategy, organisation, workforce and key stakeholders.

Develop deep understanding through integrating diverse quantitative and qualitative data sources and exploring intersectionality and the consequences of system changes.

**Draw robust insights**

**Drive targeted action and accountability**

Implement a systematic, data informed and targeted approach with comprehensive reporting, transparency, robust conversations and accountability.


# Discussion Questions

## DEI is foundational to organisational culture

- 1 Is our current DEI approach meaningfully tailored to our organisational context and integrated into our organisational strategy, values, day to day practices and behaviours?
- 1 How well do we articulate the organisational and ethical case for DEI to our people, in a way that is connected to our purpose, values and strategy and clearly communicates “what’s in it for me” for our people?
- 1 Does our culture connect our people, create safe spaces to listen to their stories and understand their experiences, aspirations and hardships they face?
- 1 What more can we do to build productivity, trust, connection, relationships and collaboration?
- 1 How well do we measure inclusion and belonging and the impact on employee experience and organisational performance?
- 1 Where are we on the AHRI DEI maturity model? Where do we want to be by XXX?



**What  
leadership  
role are you  
playing in  
taking people  
on the  
journey?**

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A large, vibrant graphic on the right side of the page. It is a dense cluster of overlapping circles in various colors including yellow, red, green, blue, and magenta. The circles vary in size and are arranged in a roughly circular pattern that tapers off towards the right edge of the page.