How to use this template

This template is designed as a guide or reference point for creating an inclusive environment for <insert sporting organisation>. It can be used for making decisions around:

* Language to use to maximise accessibility and understanding;
* The types of offerings to include;
* What level of detail to provide.

Throughout the document, please note the following prompts:

* <Text highlighted yellow> is designed for you to update or tailor to your organisation;
* Text in red is included as a tip and should be removed from the template before completing.

This is a national template that can be used in any State or Territory however it is your responsibility to ensure that any specific regulatory requirements in your State or Territory are incorporated in the final version of your policy. Similarly, you may need to make content additions or omissions depending on the specific needs of your organisation.

Don't have Microsoft Word?

See instructions below on how to open this document in Google Docs.

1. Open your Google Drive.
2. Click "New" and select "File Upload," or you can drag and drop your file into Google Drive.
3. Right-click on your document, hover over "Open with," then select "Google Docs," or you can double-click the document and that will open it in Google Docs.
4. That's it! The Word Document will now be converted to a Google Doc, and you can start editing.

Best Practice Inclusion Guide

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| --- | --- |
| **Approved by:** | *<Insert name and position>* |
| **Effective date:** | *<Insert date effective>* |
| **Review date:** | *<Insert review date, recommend in two years (except where legislative changes required updates)>* |

Introduction

At <insert sporting organisation>, we are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment. We want to encourage and enable workforce who are committed to supporting <insert sporting organisation> with their time, knowledge and expertise to bring their whole selves to work.

This guide is divided into two sections: First, the reason why and how to create an inclusive and diverse workplace is outlined. Second, it will be discussed how to create a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment in the boardroom. It is a non-contractual arrangement where staff may seek guidance in order to support their direct reports, peers and other board members to create a sense of belonging at <insert sporting organisation>.

To align to best practice, organisations should adopt a proactive approach to drive a sense of belonging in the workplace. An organisation can do so by following the steps below.

Why is diversity and inclusion critical for organisational success?

Diversity refers to intersectional criteria such as age, gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, religion and disability. 'Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people are respected, connected, progressing and contributing to organisational success' (Diversity Council Australia 2021).

Suppose an employee is experiencing unfair treatment at work due to one or multiple intersectional characteristics as a member of a minority group, the workplace might be diverse but not inclusive. This is critical because it means that the workplace does not enable employees to bring their authentic selves to work. As a result, the employee's wellbeing as well as that of the witness of any unfair treatment can be negatively impacted.

It is proven that employee well-being impacts job satisfaction and productivity. A study by Tweedie et al. (2019) agrees with the damaging impact of mental health on collaboration, which directly influences organisational performance. People and culture significantly impact the organisational performance and customer perception of the employer brand. Inclusion in the workplace allows employees to bring their authentic selves to work, promoting innovative and creative thinking. Kwon's & Kim's (2020) study is the first to report a correlation between innovative thinking and employee engagement. It is shown that engaged employees are better equipped to meet their job demands and more likely to overcome challenges.

In summary, a sense of belonging in the workplace is not just a nice-to-have but a critical factor that affects employee well-being, performance, and overall organisational success. Organisations that actively cultivate a culture of belonging are more likely to have motivated, engaged, and loyal staff who contribute to a positive and thriving work environment.

How to create an inclusive environment

### Understand the specific risk factors for your organisation or industry.

Each organisation and industry faces unique circumstances that contribute to the risk of unfair treatment. Some of these risks may include:

* Lengthy working hours or scheduling meetings outside of regular business hours.
* Extensive travel and working away from home.
* Hierarchical structures and power imbalances among staff.
* Alcohol use among colleagues during work hours in events, meals, or meetings.
* Level of education or awareness of staff – ignorance of laws and regulations may be a contributor to unfair treatment.
* Accepted organisational or industry culture – some industries are more prone to unfair treatment such as industries heavily dominated by men.

### Understand how your organisation or industry benchmarks with other organisations or industries.

While all organisations should aim to create a diverse and inclusive culture, looking at similar organisations in your industry or your national statistics enables your organisation to understand where your organisation sits and the work needed to improve your workplace. This also helps guide your organisation regarding pitfalls to avoid, best practices, and implementation strategies.

### Uphold organisational accountability and openness.

Accountability and openness communicate to your staff and stakeholders that the organisation is fully committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace environment.

You can show accountability by:

* Publishing statistics on diversity in your annual or periodic reports.
* Enabling a positive work culture to foster ethical employee behavior which encourages employees to speak up.
* Gather data through EES (Employee Engagement Survey) to identify desirable policies and managerial skills.
* Providing a job description outlining ethical behavior expectations.
* Ensuring that values and behaviours are a significant part of the performance review process (focus not only on the actual achievement, but how it was achieved).
* Allowing access to adequate training such as unconscious bias training or how to lead with trust and empathy.
* Publicly rewarding positive behaviour through leaders.
* Explicitly calling out inappropriate behaviours especially from senior leaders (‘Walk the talk’).
* Monitoring incidents and any emerging patterns in the organisation.
* Ensuring the well-being of persons reporting incidents is prioritised.
* Evaluating outcomes to incident reporting and trends emerging.
* Driving all related initiatives under the core messages around care and consideration for each other to enable cultural change.

How to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment in the boardroom

You can show accountability by:

* Communicating clearly expectations to foster a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment and that each board member is regarded to treat each other with respect and take accountability to contribute to a welcoming environment.
* Explicitly calling out zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment or any form of disrespectful behaviour.
* Ensuring that the board has a diverse composition concerning intersectionality and a clear understanding of the value of diverse perspectives and experiences (i.e. avoid group thinking).

The ASC’s Board Skills Matrix can be used to assess this.

* Provide training to raise awareness concerning cultural sensitivity, unconscious bias, active listening, the difference between good conflict and bad conflict.
* Explicitly holding the board meeting on a weekday during business hours (between XX and XX) to avoid any caring responsibility conflicts.
* Publishing an agenda XX days in advance before the board meeting that allows for a balanced discussion on various talking points and all board members get to speak.
* Encouraging active listening by giving each board member time to share their perspective without interruption and genuine consideration of each other's viewpoints.
* Asking clarifying questions such as “I heard you saying xyz, can you help me understand why abc”.
* Consider implementing a time limit of xx minutes for each board member to speak at a time to avoid extroverts taking over the discussion. Alternatively, assign a skilled moderator to enhance a balanced discussion.
* Ensuring that notes are taken in alternating order.
* Encouraging consensus-building rather than enforcing a particular viewpoint when it comes to decision making and drawing on a variety of perspectives and input of all board members.
* Asking introverts or quieter individuals for their thoughts as they might struggle to ‘slot in’ at the right time instead of assuming they do not have anything to say.
* Implement a mentorship program (internally or externally) to support underrepresented board members and enable them to advance in their roles.
* Finish on time.
* Allow xx minutes at the end of each meeting to rate the meeting between 1 - 10 (1 very poor and 10 excellent) and outlining the reason for the rating to learn and make adjustments as needed.

