

# Uniting Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2023

Always welcoming you, exactly as you are.



**Uniting**



**We acknowledge Aboriginal peoples in NSW and the ACT as the original and ongoing custodians of the lands and waters on which we all live and work. We recognise the continuing sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples in NSW and the ACT, and their inalienable right to self-determination. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and future, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.**

(Ref: Uniting RAP – Acknowledgement)

The term ‘Aboriginal peoples’ is used in this report to refer to the First Peoples of NSW and the ACT, and to acknowledge that Aboriginal peoples are the original inhabitants and ongoing custodians of lands and waters in NSW and the ACT. We recognise the great number of Aboriginal nations, and the great diversity of cultures, histories, languages and values of these many nations.

Commissioned artwork by Charmaine Mumbulla, a proud Kurna/ Narungga woman from Point Pearce in South Australia, with family ties to the Gumbaynggirr people of the NSW Mid North Coast. It pays tribute to the diversity of Aboriginal lands and languages across NSW and the ACT, where Uniting supports people and communities with the delivery of vital services. The vibrant circle unites us across the 4 landscapes of desert, forest, coast and mountain, centred by a cross symbolising our work through Christ. A lilly pilly fruit blooms in the heart of the circle, representing nourishment and growth.



# A message from our Chief Executive Officer and Chairperson.



Diversity and inclusion is at the heart of our purpose and values at Uniting. As part of the Uniting Church's Synod of NSW and the ACT, our purpose is to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice. We know that this can't be achieved without taking meaningful steps forward in our diversity and inclusion journey.

We are already a diverse organisation and are proud to have delivered many initiatives that lay a strong foundation for being an inclusive workplace and service provider. With our inaugural Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy, we are ready to challenge ourselves further. We understand that we need to be more intentional and visibly weave diversity and inclusion into everything we do. This ambitious strategy establishes a 3-year roadmap for tackling this challenge. It will guide us with clear approaches and targets as we address the structural, cultural and systemic barriers that prevent those from diverse backgrounds from feeling safe, from feeling like they belong, and from contributing fully to our communities.

Our D&I Strategy will equip Uniting with inclusive leadership, a commitment to continuously learning, and to seeking out and listening to diverse voices with open hearts, even when it comes to uncomfortable and hard truths. And, we approach the journey ahead of us with hope.

As the leaders of this organisation, we feel confident and proud to lead the way in this important area. We look forward to sharing this journey with our people, our clients and our communities as, together, we create a better world, where everyone feels safe and confident to be themselves, where diversity is valued and inclusion is truly experienced by all people. Our confidence comes from the Uniting Church's focus on inclusion, inspired by Christ's teaching and captured in St Paul's encouragement to the early church below:

**“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”. Galatians 3:28**

Thank you for joining us as we take these important steps towards a better future for all people.

**Heather Watson**  
Chairperson

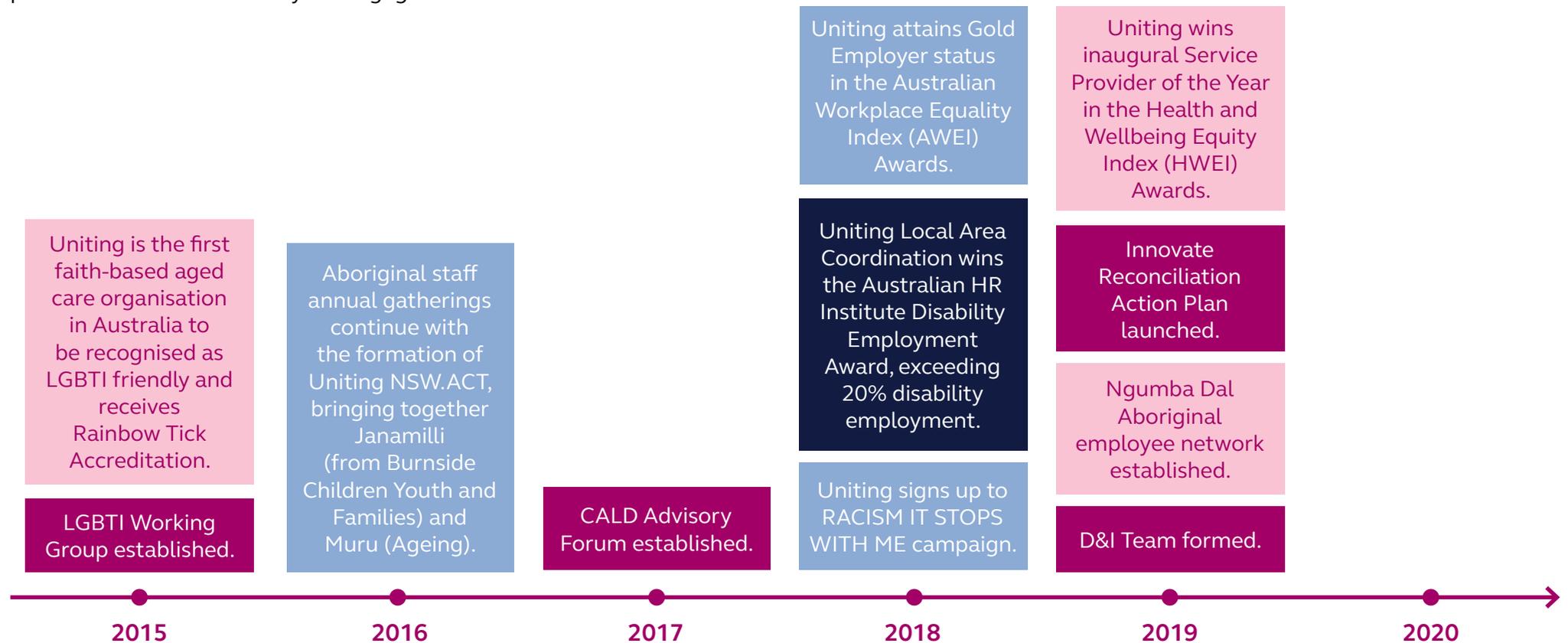
**Tracey Burton**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Our diversity and inclusion journey.

Uniting NSW.ACT is responsible for the social justice advocacy, community services and chaplaincy work of the Uniting Church in NSW and the ACT. We provide care and support for people through all ages and stages of life, with a focus on people experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability.

Our organisation has a proud history and deep commitment to diversity and inclusion (D&I). Steeped in the Uniting Church's mission for social justice, Uniting has always valued diversity and pursued inclusion in the way we engage our teams and deliver

services. Since the formation of Uniting ACT.NSW in 2015 we have actively sought to deliver greater diversity and inclusion through a series of initiatives and commitments. They provide us with a strong foundation for this strategy and include the following highlights:



# How our D&I Strategy was developed.

In late 2019, Uniting established a D&I Team, with responsibility for an enterprise-wide D&I Strategy. The development of this strategy was led by a Working Group of diverse voices and experiences from across the organisation, and began with a dedicated phase of exploration. Through extensive research and consultation, the team identified challenges and opportunities for maturing our D&I approach and for achieving greater consistency, intersectionality and authenticity of our aspirations. Formal and informal networks of employees shaped the strategy through focus groups, surveys and interviews. External experts were consulted, contemporary D&I research was reviewed, and internal D&I data was analysed against external data sets to identify a pathway forward. The Strategy is also designed to enable and build on existing strategies including Uniting's 10-year Vision and our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

The Uniting Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020 to 2023 covers the 3 years from 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2023. It sets out our diversity and inclusion aspirations, our strategic goals, and the steps we will take to bring this strategy to life. The D&I Strategy was endorsed by Uniting's Executive in July 2020 and approved by the Board in August 2020.



## Ngumba-Dal means unity.

With the launch of our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan in 2019, Uniting affirmed its commitment to working with Aboriginal people to assist in healing the wrongs of the past and addressing the serious and ongoing impact of discrimination and disadvantage. The Uniting Aboriginal Strategy and Engagement Unit (ASEU) is an important leadership voice to ensure that our programs are accessible, culturally appropriate and effective. However, to achieve true cultural inclusion in our workplace, Uniting must genuinely engage with the Aboriginal Voice of our organisation, which represents diverse Aboriginal values, knowledge, culture and communities.

To meet this challenge, the ASEU led the development of a Cultural Governance Framework. This provides Uniting with a cultural practice for effectively engaging and consulting with and between Aboriginal voices, providing a central advisory on many important matters for the organisation. To ensure an active, respected and unified voice, a new Uniting Aboriginal cultural identity was formed, called 'Ngumba-Dal'.

Meaning 'unity/union/as one' in Wiradjuri language, the word was chosen by Aboriginal staff to encapsulate cultural identity, connection and voice as employees of Uniting. The Ngumba-Dal Network links more than 250 Aboriginal employees, providing a community within Uniting, cultural safety and peer support. Regular yarning circles across NSW and ACT also offer a platform for local collaboration, community engagement and the strengthening of skills and knowledge.

The Ngumba-Dal Network is represented by a lead governance group, the Aboriginal Cultural Governance Circle, who oversee our Cultural Governance Framework, leaning heavily on their cultural intelligence and capability for listening and consulting. This group facilitates the Annual Gathering, which is a way to showcase the strength and cultural knowledge of the staff collective.



**Ngumba-Dal: meaning 'unity/union/as one' in Wiradjuri language, the word was chosen by Aboriginal staff to encapsulate cultural identity, connection and voice as employees of Uniting.**

# Why diversity and inclusion matters to Uniting.

At Uniting, we don't just care about D&I because it's 'the right thing to do'. D&I is part of our identity and the future we see for ourselves.

The **Uniting 10-year Vision** was developed to establish how we will pioneer a more progressive and caring future. It specifically identifies a vision where:

**"We are prioritising excluded communities including Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and LGBTI people, as well as people living with a disability."**

The 10-year Vision is underpinned by 3 principles: mission, social impact, and sustainability. In everything we do, we strive to balance these principles, knowing D&I is inherent to each of them.



## 10 year vision

### Mission and purpose

Diversity and inclusion reflects the Uniting Church's commitment to live out the message of Christ. In this, the Church follows the example of Jesus of Nazareth, who welcomed into his circle the excluded people of his time (women, Gentiles, tax collectors, those with skin diseases) and builds on the radical inclusion gospel of Paul, who argued that social divisions were obsolete and that the Christian faith was about one renewed humanity. These commitments inspire the Church and Uniting to work for change, as equity and justice in Australia can only be achieved when the exclusion and disadvantage faced by minority groups is addressed.

### Social impact

Uniting believes we can best meet our purpose of inspiring people, enlivening communities, and confronting injustice by focusing on those who are socially and economically excluded. We also advocate for the changes in our society that are necessary to strengthen the common good. Across Australia, people from diverse backgrounds face the kind of marginalisation that results in poor health and wellbeing. Diverse communities are over-represented among the disadvantaged and vulnerable in all geographies. Therefore, any effort to advocate for the rights, safety and inclusion of diverse people is critical to Uniting.

### Sustainability

Our mission and social impact principles are complemented by an acknowledgement that as an organisation we must also be responsible stewards of our resources. We must operate as efficiently as we can, in line with leading practice, and thoughtfully innovate. We know that a diverse and inclusive organisation enables all of this. We must consciously include and actively seek diversity to meet the needs of diversifying communities across NSW and ACT. By drawing on the inherent wisdom of diverse people, we can offer employees and service users a safe, person-centred and engaging experience.

# Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2023

## Our aspiration

**A place where everyone feels safe and confident to be themselves, where diversity is valued to co-create a better world.**

We will focus on 3 goals as we work towards this aspiration. As a purpose-led organisation, our goals go beyond our employees and acknowledge that we must pursue greater inclusion for the people and communities we serve too.

## Our goals

### Know and empower our clients

We will innovate to deliver imaginative, culturally mindful and inclusive experiences for all clients.

### Nurture and value our people

We will actively grow our employee and volunteer diversity to enhance capability, outcomes and sustainability.

### Transform our communities

We will be bold leaders and catalysts for societal change through active partnerships and shifting mindsets.



## Our HIPPY program unites 3 mums from 3 countries.

Uniting's Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters, known as HIPPY, prepares preschoolers and parents for primary school via fortnightly home visits with a HIPPY tutor, who engages the family in various educational activities. In South West Sydney our program works with multicultural families where, for 3 women in particular, HIPPY has extended way beyond its intended purpose, **fostering true community and cultural exchange.**

Shazia, Irfana and Fatim all got involved when their children were young. Being new to Australia, they shared an unfamiliarity with our education system, and a passion for giving their children the best start in life. Having benefited from the program themselves, they all went on to become HIPPY tutors, and they later found further employment as a result.

Though each of these women come from different cultural backgrounds and have different first languages, their connection is irreplaceable. Fatim is Assyrian and has lived in Australia for 15 years, Shazia is Indian and settled here 10 years ago, while Irfana is Bosnian and came to Australia as a refugee 20 years ago. The friends agree that the social aspect of HIPPY is just as important as the educational opportunities it offers.

Irfana – who refers to Shazia as her ‘multicultural mum’ – reflects, “HIPPY helped me socialise because I was very isolated. I made friends with other mums and built very strong friendships with people like Shazia. We now look after each other.”

“The most important thing is you’re not alone,” she says. “You know you can always knock on someone’s door. It’s more like a family.” For these women, the strength that came from the cultural diversity found at HIPPY is something they’ll never forget.



“It’s really good for children from all different backgrounds to come to our playgroup, because they can teach each other things that they may not be able to learn at home – and then pass those skills on to their parents,” reflects Irfana.

Fatim continues, “You may have a tutor who is Australian and speaks English, someone who is Vietnamese and does not know English very well, or an Assyrian tutor who speaks Arabic.”

“It’s the same with the kids. We don’t separate them, we bring together kids with disabilities, kids who are just beginning to learn English, those born in Australia, lower socioeconomic families, upper socioeconomic families. And it all comes together because all the kids are doing one thing. We are having Harmony Day every week here!”

# Diversity and inclusion is a journey, not a destination.

We are proud of our D&I history but we also know that we have a journey ahead of us. We look forward to confronting the hard truths of inclusion as we deliver on our aspirations.

2023 goals	From current state	To 2023 future state
<p><b>Know and empower our clients</b></p>	<p><b>A respectful and values-driven workforce:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing our best with limited time and resources</li> <li>• With strong D&amp;I mandates in some places where inspiring leaders drive change, while others are led by compliance</li> <li>• With pockets of excellence in inclusion innovation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A highly skilled and compassionate workforce where D&amp;I is hard-wired to achieve person-centred practices with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equitable access and an inclusive service experience for all</li> <li>• Enhanced client satisfaction and sense of belonging</li> <li>• Uniting positioned as a service provider of choice, especially for traditionally excluded groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nurture and value our people</b></p>	<p><b>Well-intentioned, respectful and compassionate workforce with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great diversity but not always by design</li> <li>• Varying levels of D&amp;I knowledge, skills and courage</li> <li>• Some areas of inclusion excellence</li> <li>• D&amp;I working groups and champions scattered throughout the organisation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A workforce proud of its diversity, that is innovative because we are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equipped with leaders who are confidently inclusive</li> <li>• Committed to learning and identity-awareness</li> <li>• Boldly standing beside diverse colleagues, challenging convention and consciously including</li> <li>• Led by those that value the voices of diverse employees and active employee networks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transform our communities</b></p>	<p><b>Community partnerships that are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliant on a motivated leader or a funding mandate</li> <li>• Visible and widely recognised in some areas of inclusion (e.g. LGBTI), but not all.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Uniting establishes strategic partnerships with diverse communities and advocates to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable our priorities and opportunities for shifting D&amp;I</li> <li>• Promote more inclusive services</li> <li>• Confront injustice and systemic change for diverse people and communities.</li> </ul>

## Walking our talk.

Uniting is a partner of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), delivering Local Area Coordination (LAC) and supporting over 20,000 National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants every year. With an ambitious goal for supporting the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability, our LAC service was determined to **address inclusion of people with disabilities through employment**. In 2019, the Australian Institute for Health and Wellbeing reported that only 48% of working-age people with disability were employed, compared with 79% without disability.

For Uniting LAC, this underutilised workforce presents an enormous pool of untapped potential, with unique skills and experiences to bring to our service. In 2016, our LAC leaders made a commitment to tackling the inherent biases that prevent candidates with disabilities from securing jobs. The 'Walk the Talk' program was established with a 15% employment target built into the annual operational plan and leader KPIs. Targets were tracked quarterly and our recruitment processes were overhauled to make them accessible to candidates with disability. The holistic program also saw collaboration with local Disability Employment Services, a refreshed Workplace Adjustment Procedure, and Pathways to Leadership program to develop the skills and competencies required to progress everyone's career.

Ultimately, 77 employees with disability were onboarded, supported and developed as at FY2018/19. When our initial target was reached, the program's enormous value was recognised and the target was further raised to 20%. The cultural changes that this employment strategy created has enabled existing employees to feel safe, included, and more willing to disclose disabilities. Last year, our 'Walk the Talk' program was recognised through the Australian Human Resources Institute, winning the Graeme Innes Disability Inclusion award.



**“We will actively grow our employee and volunteer diversity to enhance capability, outcomes and sustainability.”**

# Diversity has many dimensions.

Uniting recognises that every individual brings overlapping social, professional, cultural, spiritual and political identities, or intersectionality, to their life at Uniting. We want to know, celebrate and value all lived experiences, and will achieve this through a greater focus on intersectionality. We will actively seek to understand the complexity and unique models of prejudice and privilege that diverse people face.

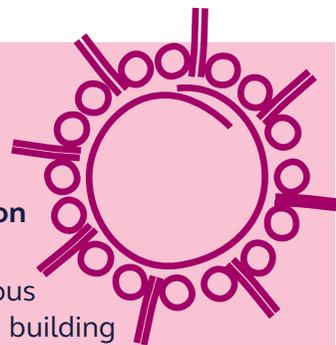
Led by the Uniting 10-year Vision, we will also focus on a few specific dimensions of identity where we see both a responsibility and an opportunity to affect change. Our D&I Strategy is therefore layered to address the unique discrimination and exclusion challenges of these 4 identity groups:

## Aboriginal

Advancing reconciliation at Uniting through:

- A culture of continuous cultural learning and building cultural capability
- Improved recruitment, retention and support for Aboriginal employees to meet our RAP commitments
- Partnering with Aboriginal communities to co-design social innovations

(Source: 2019-21 Innovate RAP and ASEU)



## Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

- Our teams confidently work cross-culturally
- CALD voices are empowered and leveraged for culturally inclusive leadership and practice
- The needs of our culturally diverse communities are met by thoughtfully building CALD talent pipelines

(Source: CALD Network)



## People with disability

- Increased employment of people with disabilities and a disability-confident environment at Uniting (beyond our Local Area Coordination).

(Source: D&I Team and Strategy Working Group)



## LGBTI

- A safe, welcoming and inclusive environment where LGBTI staff and clients can be their authentic selves, and where everyone steps in to eliminate bias and consciously include all

(Source: LGBTI Working Group)



## Uniting is making a rainbow of difference in aged care.

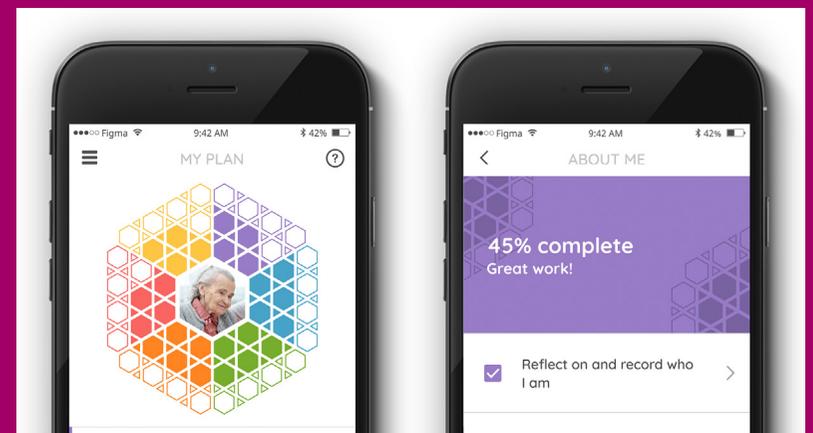
Through our Rainbow of Difference project, in partnership with the University of Technology Sydney and funded by the Australian Government, Uniting is engaging innovative technology to improve health outcomes for LGBTI clients as they grow older.

The MOSAIC app supports people to better manage their ageing services, and assists care teams to better know their clients and build safe inclusive practices. This was a truly collaborative co-design. Members of our LGBTI communities were consulted and contributed at every stage of program development.

The app is a tool that empowers Uniting staff to deliver culturally safe and inclusive experiences for LGBTI clients and their families. MOSAIC was publicly launched in 2019, and won the prestigious Good Design Award. The application and training program is now being promoted beyond the Uniting community, to enhance the quality of care and cultural safety for all LGBTI people using ageing services.



**“We will innovate to deliver imaginative, culturally mindful and inclusive experiences for all clients.”**



# Bringing our D&I Strategy to life.

To meet these goals, we will focus on 7 pillars of activity. We believe that by working across these, Uniting will see the change we aspire to achieve.



We will build and strengthen these to deliver our 2023 goals.

# The D&I Strategy will be mobilised through priorities and initiatives set to meet the unique opportunities of our teams.

## Corporate

Headline D&I challenge	2023 D&I priorities	What success will look like
<p><b>Our Corporate Directorates need to create a place where everyone feels safe and confident to be themselves so we can leverage our people's diversity to empower staff, clients and communities to co-create a better world.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Build collective inclusive leader capability of senior and middle managers.</li> <li>2. Build corporate capability for inclusive design and communication.</li> <li>3. Expand and build D&amp;I employee network (Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTI, PWD) capability to drive change.</li> <li>4. Improve safety to disclose identities, and quality of D&amp;I data sets to inform decision making.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 80% of senior and middle managers participate in D&amp;I events. Existing leadership initiatives incorporate a D&amp;I lens.</li> <li>2. Inclusive design and communication guide completed and adopted by business: 60% Y1; 80% Y2; 100% Y3. Consistent D&amp;I narrative and message established Y1.</li> <li>3. Increased staff participation from all directorates, with manager endorsement Y1. D&amp;I employee networks are visible and deliver innovative 12-month action plans Y2-Y3. PWD network established Y2. D&amp;I Consumer Ref Groups established and feedback informs practice Y2.</li> <li>4. Accurate employee D&amp;I data sets for employees Y1; enhance client data collection Y2; leaders have access to regular and accurate D&amp;I reports Y2.</li> </ol>



## AGEING

Headline D&I challenge	2023 D&I priorities	What success will look like
<p><b>Our Ageing Directorate needs to ensure that our teams are confident to deliver respectful and inclusive client experiences, because this is critical to person-centred care, where everyone feels a sense of safety and belonging. This needs to be hard-wired into our systems and processes.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scale the Confident Communicator training program across Residential Aged Care.</li> <li>2. Support place-based recruitment to achieve the client and staff diversity that will meet community needs.</li> <li>3. Deliver on Ageing Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) commitments.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 80% of priority RAC services complete Confident Communicator training program Y2.</li> <li>2. Diversity and RAP recruitment, retention and learning targets are prioritised (Q1) and met annually at a place-based and operational level Y1, Y2, Y3.</li> <li>3. Implement inclusive practice tools (including RAP commitments) Y1, Y2, Y3.</li> </ol>

## PROPERTY AND HOUSING (P&H)

Headline D&I challenge	2023 D&I priorities	What success will look like
<p><b>Our Property and Housing Directorate needs to better engage diverse communities through inclusive properties, jobs and services because our D&amp;I values can deliver best-in-class solutions that expand the communities we serve.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve resident identity data collection.</li> <li>2. Incorporate inclusion content into existing resources and training to assist village managers in building cohesive and inclusive environments for Social and Affordable Housing Fund clients.</li> <li>3. Support expansion of our diverse workforce and procurement for new sites.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Data fields identified and system modification Y1, resident identity data collected Y2.</li> <li>2. Inclusion content developed and included in health and wellbeing workshops and resources for village managers Y1.</li> <li>3. Diverse recruitment and procurement targets identified and met at new sites.</li> <li>4. Village managers Position Descriptions includes D&amp;I capabilities to engage with diverse residents Y2.</li> </ol>

## CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES (CYF)

Headline D&I challenge	2023 D&I priorities	What success will look like
<p><b>Our Children, Youth and Families Directorate needs to build staff capability and confidence for cross-cultural service delivery because our clients are diverse and this underscores inclusive practices, enables trust and delivers impactful change.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Build workforce cross-cultural capability and competence through engagement with Aboriginal and CALD cultural learning.</li> <li>2. Identify and implement resources to support culturally responsive service provision.</li> <li>3. Identify and implement CYF priorities for RAP.</li> <li>4. Build mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTI and disability communities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 100% of staff in agreed target locations complete Aboriginal and CALD cultural learning opportunities Y1.</li> <li>2. Develop task group to identify, prioritise and deliver resource practice requirements for regions or services Y2.</li> <li>3. CYF RAP deliverables are prioritised annually, and recruitment, retention and learning targets met Y1-Y3.</li> <li>4. Grow one mutually beneficial partnership in each region with Aboriginal, CALD or other diverse groups that supports local priorities Y1, Y2.</li> </ol>



**“We will be bold leaders and catalysts for societal change through active partnerships and shifting mindsets.”**

## Saying what we mean and meaning what we say.

Achieving cultural change and shifting mindsets requires us to be thoughtful, inspiring and intentional about the way we communicate our aspirations and goals.

Since the formation of Uniting in 2015, we've been proud to incorporate a powerful D&I strapline in our communications:

### **Welcoming you, exactly as you are.**

We expanded on this in Uniting's boilerplate statement:

### **We celebrate diversity and welcome everyone, exactly as they are.**

However, with a goal for D&I maturity in this strategy, we have revisited this strapline. Reflecting on our D&I journey, we sought a message that captured our evolution from acceptance and celebration to active valuing and leveraging of our differences in ability, age, ethnicity, spirituality, culture, gender, sexuality and all identities and lived experiences.

Several iterations of alternative straplines were developed in consultation with Uniting's

Aboriginal, LGBTI and CALD employee networks, and tested internally and externally with D&I audiences for resonance and meaning.

In quantitative and qualitative terms, the results clearly revealed that our **existing strapline, and variations of it, resonate the most**. Based on these findings, we've evolved our existing strapline and boilerplate statement to maintain core integrity while building maturity.

Our new D&I strapline is:

### **Always welcoming you, exactly as you are.**

Our new boilerplate statement is:

### **We value diversity and always welcome everyone, exactly as they are.**

The addition of 'always' reinforces the non-negotiability of our resolve, and the replacement of 'celebrate' with 'value' reflects progression from acceptance and celebration to active valuing and real growth.



A strapline is a sentence or caption used to communicate the essence of a brand or organisation. Ideally, it should capture what we stand for, our values, and our personality. It should be simple, meaningful and memorable enough to stand the test of time.



Please consider the environment before deciding to press print.



Get in touch  
[diversityandinclusion@uniting.org](mailto:diversityandinclusion@uniting.org)  
[uniting.org](http://uniting.org)

**Uniting**