



Australian Government  
Department of Veterans' Affairs

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# Workplace Diversity Policy and Action Plan 2016–2020

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## VERSION CONTROL

<b>Date of Change</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Approved by</b>
October 2016	Updated Policy and Action Plan 2016 – 2020.	Previous Policy and Action Plan 2011 – 2015.	Roger Winzenberg Assistant Secretary People Services Branch

## SECRETARY'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Workplace Diversity Policy and Action Plan 2016 - 2020. This builds on previous Action Plans and reflects DVA's continued commitment to embedding the principles of diversity into our workplace.



This Workplace Diversity Policy and Action Plan is the catalyst for supporting a culture where diversity is fully valued and utilised. The Policy seeks to embed the principles and practices of diversity as an integral part of DVA's vision and adopting the shared approach and Values outlined in our Corporate Plan.

The Workplace Diversity Policy supports us in meeting our business objectives as well as enhancing our ability to meet the needs and expectations of our workforce. It reflects DVA's commitment to providing a fair and equitable working environment, which encourages innovation and new ideas as we work towards meeting the challenges outlined in the DVA Strategic Plan, *DVA Towards 2020*.

DVA is committed to fostering diversity. While the Workplace Diversity Policy and Action Plan identifies key responsibilities and actions, DVA's success is the collective responsibility of all employees. This Action Plan aims to improve our recruitment, selection and retention performance as well as building an inclusive workplace culture where all employees are valued and recognised for their unique qualities, ideas, skills and perspectives.

I am also pleased to advise that Major General Dave Chalmers, First Assistant Secretary, Commemorations & War Graves Division, has agreed to continue as our Disability champion and our Indigenous champion.

Let us continue to work together to enhance our working environment through the utilisation of diversity, skills and talents.

Simon Lewis PSM

December 2016

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **COMMITMENT**

Australia has one of the most diverse populations in the world. People come from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, with different religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disabilities, family responsibilities, socio-economic background, life and work experience. Through managing workplace diversity, DVA is committed to reflecting the composition of the Australian community in our own workforce. Workplace diversity means recognising, celebrating and utilising these differences for the benefit of DVA, our clients and our workforce. DVA Towards 2020 Workforce Strategy includes respecting diversity amongst our people and clients and facilitating an environment where diversity flourishes.

### **PRINCIPLES**

Workplace diversity is an umbrella title for strategies that recognise and accommodate the differences in ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, different religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disabilities, family responsibilities, life and work experience of our workforce.

Workplace Diversity maintains the basic principles of equity, merit and non-discrimination which formed the basis of equal employment opportunity (EEO) legislation, and puts a new emphasis on valuing workplace difference as good management practice.

Workplace diversity principles should be incorporated into all aspects of human resource management, including workforce planning, recruitment and selection, performance management, learning and development, leadership development, workplace health and safety and workplace relations.

By adopting the strategies contained in this Policy and the attached Action Plan, DVA will be better placed to attract, select, develop and retain a diverse, skilled and motivated workforce and harness the benefits which will flow from that diversity.

### **WHY HAVE A WORKPLACE DIVERSITY POLICY**

The aim of the Workplace Diversity Policy is to create a workplace which encourages and supports equity and fairness, and eliminates all forms of discrimination.

Section 18 of *The Public Service Act 1999* and *Public Service Commissioner's Directions 1999* requires all APS agencies to establish a workplace diversity plan. This legal requirement exists to support the business and social outcomes DVA as a public service agency aims to achieve.

DVA's Workplace Diversity Policy will directly and indirectly help DVA to achieve the business priorities set out in DVA's Corporate Plan. Some of the benefits of a diverse workforce with a range of talents, perspectives and opportunities can include:

- increased innovation and creativity which are valued and encouraged
  - improved client service
  - increased ability to attract and retain quality employees
  - increased employee satisfaction and productivity, and
  - improved teamwork and internal and external relationships.
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## **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The *Public Service Act 1999* (the Act) requires the Secretary to establish a Workplace Diversity Program (Section 18).

The Program must include measures aimed at ensuring:

- we value diverse backgrounds and make use of the diverse skills and experience of our employees
- workplace structures, systems and procedures assist employees to balance their work, family and caring responsibilities
- the diversity of the Australian community is reflected in strategies to attract, recruit and retain employees.

The Workplace Diversity Program must be published on the DVA website and be reviewed every 4 years.

DVA must also provide information for the Public Service Commissioner's Annual Report.

The APS Code of Conduct (Section 13) sets out the standard of behaviour.

The APS Values and Employment Principles provide the ethical framework underpinning how we operate.

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## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the Workplace Diversity Policy and Action Plan 2016 - 2020 are grouped under five Key Result Areas – Leadership, Recruitment, Selection and Retention, Working Environment, Communication and Education and Work/Life Balance. The objectives are as follows:

<b>Key Result Area</b>	<b>Objective</b>
Leadership	Leaders at all levels in DVA actively encourage and promote workplace diversity principles.
Recruitment, Selection and Retention	<p>Employees and those seeking employment with DVA are treated fairly and equitably in accessing employment opportunities and in selection and promotion processes.</p> <p>DVA increases the representation of Indigenous employees and employees with a disability in its workforce.</p>
Working Environment	Workplace diversity principles are integrated into the performance management process and learning and development programs.
	Managers and employees have the skills and knowledge to prevent and deal with any harassment or bullying behaviours.
Communication and Education	The Workplace Diversity Policy is accessible and its principles are understood and supported by Managers and employees.
Work/Life Balance	DVA provides a flexible employment framework which enables employees to effectively balance their work, family, caring, other responsibilities and interests.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Action Plan is attached. This plan details key activities against the Key Result Areas and Objectives outlined above. It allocates responsibilities and timeframes, and outlines success measures. Progress against the Action Plan will be reviewed annually by the People Committee.

All employees have an important role in creating an environment where diversity is valued. All employees need to contribute to the implementation of Workplace Diversity principles to ensure DVA has a desirable work environment and culture which is inclusive of all Australians.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **DVA RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- show its commitment to workplace diversity through its actions and decision making, supporting the aims and implementation of the Action Plan.
- demonstrate and embrace the principles of workplace diversity having a culture

where the diversity of the workforce is recognised and valued, and foster a culture of inclusiveness.

### **MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- model the APS Values and Code of Conduct and lead by example while fostering a culture where the diversity of the workforce is recognised and valued.
- consistently and actively support and encourage employees to participate in workplace diversity education activities.
- ensure that all performance agreements recognise, value and utilise the individual skills and strengths of employees.
- promptly deal with any complaints or observations of harassment or bullying in the workplace.
- uphold merit principles when recruiting and selecting employees.
- be supportive and assist employees to access flexible working arrangements or conditions where appropriate.

### **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- treat everyone with courtesy and respect.
- behave in ways to actively contribute to the enhancement of a culture in which diversity is valued.
- proactively address harassing or bullying behaviour in the workplace.
- behave in a manner consistent with the APS Values and Employment Principles, and the Code of Conduct.

### **PEOPLE SERVICES BRANCH RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- incorporate the principles of workplace diversity in the development and implementation of all human resources policies and activities.
- provide links to relevant programs and projects, including: recruitment and selection, learning and development, leadership development programs, and workforce planning.
- provide practical ongoing support and advice to management and employees on implementation of diversity principles.
- develop and implement education processes to assist teams to implement workplace diversity principles themselves.

## **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

The *Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2013* require agencies to develop performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of the agency's Workplace Diversity Program and to evaluate and report to the Public Service Commissioner annually on the effectiveness and outcomes of the program.

The Action Plan, which forms part of this Policy, includes performance measures which will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Policy, and to report to the Public Service Commissioner annually. Quantitative data (e.g. workforce data), and qualitative information (such as that gathered through employee attitude surveys and

evaluation of learning activities) will be used to evaluate the Workplace Diversity Policy, and modify or re-direct the Action Plan.

## **CORPORATE DOCUMENTS**

The Workplace Diversity Policy should be read in conjunction with a number of other corporate documents which specify related corporate requirements and commitments. These include:

- DVA Enterprise Agreement
  - DVA Corporate Plan
  - DVA Towards 2020 Workforce Strategy
  - DVA People Policies
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## **EVALUATION/REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed in July 2020.

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## **RESOURCES**

These are useful links about Workplace Diversity:

[\*Australian Public Service Commission\*](#). This site contains extensive information on Workplace Diversity in the APS.

[\*Human Rights Commission\*](#) This site contains information on Human Rights, Disability Rights, Racial Discrimination, Sex Discrimination and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice.

[\*Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency\*](#)

[\*Multicultural Australia\*](#) - Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

[\*Racial Discrimination Act 1975\*](#) – It is unlawful to discriminate in employment on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin.

[\*Sex Discrimination Act 1984\*](#) - It is unlawful to discriminate in employment on the grounds of gender, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, or to sexually harass another person.

[\*Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Act 2009\*](#) - It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability.

[\*Age Discrimination Act 2004\*](#) - It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of age.

[Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986](#) - Sets up a mechanism to deal with complaints of discrimination in employment through the Australian Human Rights Commission.

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) - Requires employer / Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) and employees to maintain a secure, healthy and safe working environment. It also requires the employer / PCBU to take practical precautions to prevent harassment.

[Fair Work Act 2009](#) - Prohibits discrimination against a person who is an employee, or prospective employee, because of the person's race, colour, sex, sexual preference, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family or carer's responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin in awards and agreements and in the termination of employment.

You can also seek information from the People Services Branch to find out more.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **WORKPLACE DIVERSITY – ACTION PLAN – 2016 – 2020**

## WORKPLACE DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2016 – 2020

### Key result area: Leadership

#### Objectives:

- Leaders at all levels in DVA actively encourage and promote the workplace diversity principles.

Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Promote the roles of our Indigenous Champion and our Disability Champion.	Secretary / Dave Chalmers	Ongoing
Include workplace diversity principles in leadership and management programs.	People Services Branch (PSB) / All DVA / Managers	Ongoing as programs are developed and reviewed

**Success Measures:** Employee attitude surveys and other feedback mechanisms indicate leaders are modelling and promoting the principles of workplace diversity.

### Key result area: Recruitment and Retention

#### Objectives:

- Employees and those seeking employment with DVA are treated fairly and equitably in accessing employment opportunities and in selection processes.
- DVA increases the representation of employees from a diverse background in particular Indigenous employees, employees with a disability and younger employees in its workforce.
- DVA improves retention of members of diversity groups.
- DVA maintains good gender equality across all levels in the Department.

Recruitment Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Enhance recruitment processes to maximise employment opportunities for Indigenous people and those with a disability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific employment opportunities</li> <li>• Use of Indigenous media for advertising</li> <li>• Implement participation in Recruitability</li> </ul>	Coordination PSB / Implementation Business lines	Ongoing
Participate in whole-of-APS Indigenous entry level programs, such as the APS Indigenous	PSB	February 2017

Recruitment Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Graduate Program and Indigenous Apprenticeship Program.		
Monitor on an annual basis DVA staffing profile for gender balance.	PSB / All DVA	Annually in July
Consider options for people with a disability in how they deliver work e.g. job sharing and seeking input from disability support services.	PSB / All DVA	2018
Encourage work areas, where appropriate, to utilise the affirmative measure provisions of the Public Service Act to identify a position open only to either Indigenous people or people with disabilities.	PSB / All DVA	Ongoing as jobs are advertised

Retention Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Encourage all employees and particularly members of diversity groups to update their APSED details.	PSB / All DVA	April 2017
Encourage all managers to work closely with new recruits to identify issues early, e.g. ease of access, and implement solutions.	PSB / All DVA	Ongoing as new recruits commence
Promote awareness of reasonable adjustment policy.	PSB	Underway
Actively promote reconciliation by implementing the Department's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).	Indigenous Champion / RAP Working Group / PSB	June 2017

**Success Measures:**

- Increased number of Indigenous employees, and employees with a disability in DVA.
- Practical information available for selection advisory committee members.
- DVA achieves gender equality target of 50/50 split.

**Key result area: Working Environment**

**Objectives:**

- Workplace diversity principles are integrated into the performance management process.
- Managers and employees have the skills and knowledge to prevent and deal with harassment and bullying behaviours.

Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Incorporate behaviours which support diversity principles into DVA's performance management scheme documentation and guidance material.	PSB / All DVA / Managers	June 2017
Identify specific career development needs and development opportunities for Indigenous employees and other diversity groups in their performance management meetings including mainstream programs.	Managers / Indigenous Employees / PSB	April 2017
Encourage Managers to be aware of issues for employees with disabilities e.g. when relocating	PSB	June 2017
Provide tools for managers in workshops and other learning activities to recognise and manage inappropriate behaviour.	PSB	June 2017
Increase profile of and support for Workplace Harassment Contact Officers (WHCO) and availability of the Employment Assistance Program for employees.	PSB	June 2017

**Success Measures:**

- Performance management scheme documentation/guidance incorporates behaviours that support diversity.
- Employee attitude surveys and other feedback mechanisms indicate that employees consider that the performance management processes incorporate workplace diversity principles.
- Employee attitude surveys and other feedback mechanisms indicate that employees have confidence in support processes.
- Decrease in number of harassment incidents reported.
- Time taken to resolve harassment issues.

**Key result area: Communication and Education**

**Objectives:**

- Workplace Diversity Policy is accessible and its principles are understood and supported by Managers and Employees.

Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Implement and promote the new DVA Workplace Diversity Policy 2016-2020.	PSB	December 2016
Maintain the currency of the Equity and Diversity Intranet site and promote to all employees.	PSB	Ongoing

Include a disability module in training for selection advisory committees.	PSB	December 2017
Support and promote support networks for employees from diverse backgrounds including Indigenous employees and those with a disability.	PSB / All DVA / Managers	June 2017

**Success Measures:**

- Policy finalised, promoted and included in induction packs.
- Intranet site updated and promoted.
- Disability module included in training for selection advisory committees.

**Key result area: Work/Life Balance**

**Objectives:**

- DVA provides a flexible employment framework which enables employees to effectively balance their responsibilities e.g. work, family, caring and interests.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Promote awareness of flexible employment practices including leave, part-time work, home based work, the Employee Assistance Program, and the Work/Life Links service.	PSB / All DVA / Managers	Ongoing
Ensure all employees with a disability have access to the necessary equipment and ergonomic items to actively participate in the workplace.	PSB	December 2016

**Success Measures:**

- Employee attitude surveys and other feedback mechanisms indicate employees are aware of and able to access flexible employment provisions.
- Employees have necessary equipment.