

# Guide Dogs.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

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## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework.

2025-27



# Acknowledgement of Country.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



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**Warning:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this brochure contains images and names of deceased persons.

# A message from our CEO.

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For more than 65 years, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has supported people with low vision or blindness to live the life they choose. Our current Strategy 2030 is focused on leading the charge towards an accessible and inclusive world. One of the key deliverables of our Strategy is to eliminate systemic barriers to participation and inclusion, and to do this we must invest in the people, processes and systems that will help us to maximise impact for our Clients.

Fundamental to our work is the understanding that all Australians contribute to the richness of our communities. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is committed to being a leader of diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure all our current and future employees, Clients, donors and other valued stakeholders feel a sense of belonging in all their interactions with us. We have already begun to deliver on this commitment as demonstrated by our efforts to progress our Disability Inclusion Action Plan and

our Reconciliation Action Plan. I am incredibly proud of our achievements to date.

This Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework expands upon these focussed activities to broaden our organisational capacity through increased consultation, consideration, education and understanding on how we can better meet the needs of everyone we engage with, regardless of their diverse experiences and identity.

Through this Framework, we hope to further our efforts to build a community who shares our aspirations to create an environment that embraces and enables diversity, inclusivity and accessibility.



**Dale Cleaver**

CEO  
Guide Dogs NSW/ACT



# Overview.

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## Our Strategy.

Our Strategy 2030 outlines the key initiatives we will invest in as we lead the charge towards an accessible and inclusive world.

## Our vision.

A world that is inclusive and accessible for everyone with low vision or blindness.

## Our purpose.

Break the boundaries that limit people with low vision or blindness.

## Our mission.

Create opportunities and champion the rights of people with low vision or blindness. Build a community of individuals who share our mindset and ambition for accessibility and inclusivity.





## Our values.

Our Clients come first in everything we do. Our core values are all underpinned by our focus and dedication towards those in our communities who need us the most. We believe that everyone should have access to the support and tools required to live a free and independent life.



### Lead with head and heart.

Forever focused on our purpose and mission, we combine care and careful planning to deliver successes worth celebrating.



### Walk the talk.

The buck stops with us. So we keep our word and keep going, no matter what.



### Never stop exploring.

We're fearlessly creative. We've always asked and answered the tough questions and if there's a better way, we'll find it.



### Lift each other.

From a guiding hand to a high five, we unleash and acknowledge everyone's potential.

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework.

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Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework 2025-27 (DEI Framework) serves as the overarching commitment and guiding direction for all existing and new DEI initiatives across Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

The DEI Framework comprises of the DEI Strategy, which incorporates specific actions and initiatives under five key diversity areas to deliver a more enlightened, informed and collaborative workplace for our current and future employees, and our Clients and communities we serve.

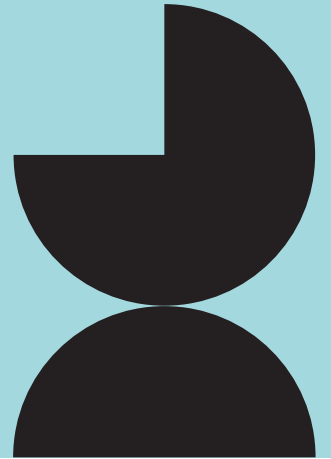
This is supported by the DEI Plan, which aligns to our collective vision, mission, purpose, values and 2030 Strategy. The DEI Plan incorporates current focus areas and initiatives from our Disability and Inclusion Action Plan 2024-27 (DIAP) and Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-27 (RAP) and our Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Plan 2025-27 (CALD).

The outcomes of our DEI Plan will help us better understand and connect with the communities we serve and engage with, including our Clients and supporters to enhance our broader impact.

Strategy 2030				
DEI Framework				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	Ability and Accessibility	Cultural and Linguistic Diversity	Gender and LGBTQIA+	Life Stages

## Process to develop our DEI Framework.

Several workshops and focus groups were conducted for input into the initial design of the DEI Framework, with participants sharing valuable insights to build understanding, commitment and accountability. Team members from all parts of Guide Dogs including the senior leadership teams, who share a collective passion for diversity, equity and inclusion participated in these workshops and focus groups. We came together to discuss lived experiences and ideas for future planning which have all been incorporated into our DEI Framework.



## Our understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

The interaction between diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, which is reflected in the way we exemplify our values, is critical to achieving our vision, mission and purpose.

### **Diversity: our workforce.**

Comprehensive and rich representation with intersectionality.

### **Equity: our practices.**

Unwavering commitment to fairness and individual needs.

### **Inclusion: our workplaces.**

Safe and nurturing spaces where people thrive.

### **Belonging: our people.**

We have a shared purpose, meaningful relationships and are deeply valued.





# Our people.

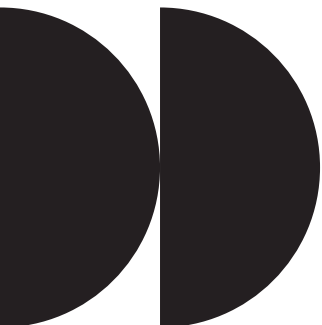
In June 2024, Guide Dogs had;



# Why diversity, equity and inclusion are important to us.

## Diversity, equity and inclusion are critical to achieving our vision, mission and purpose and implementing our Strategy through:

- Being an employer of choice and increasing the attraction, engagement and wellbeing of our employees.
- Having diverse representation of employees and a better understanding of the different identities of our people and Clients.
- Better recognition of the unique needs of our people and Clients.
- More personalised and responsive practices and services for our people and Clients.
- More empowered, inclusive and effective decision-making.
- Increasing donor relationships and funding.
- Increasing social impact and advocacy throughout our community.
- Increasing our reputation and social licence to operate.
- Considering our ethical and legal obligations to our people and Clients.



We are proud that our people come from over 25 different countries, speak 30 languages, and 11.5 percent of our workforce currently self-report they identify as having a disability. By 2027, we aim to meet or exceed our ambitious target of 15 percent. As of November 2024, 21 out of 334 total employees have lived experience of low vision or blindness. This equates to 6 percent of all Guide Dogs NSW/ACT employees.

Our employees and volunteers range in age from their late teens to within their 80s, and experience the diversity and intersectionality of being students, parents, carers and having other significant life experiences in addition to working with us.



## Our diversity, equity and inclusion guiding principles.

Our guiding principles are the foundation of our relationships and actions across the organisation, as they influence our decision-making and ensure we are agile in everything we do.

### Our guiding principles are:

- Alignment to our strategy, purpose and values.
- Collective responsibility and clear accountability.
- People-centred and driven, reflecting intersectionality.
- Practical and impactful.
- Relentless commitment.





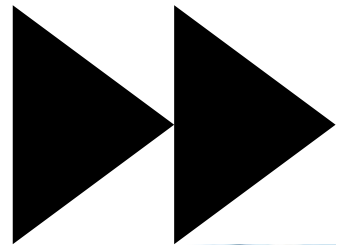
# Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-27.

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**What we want to achieve.**

**Our vision.**

Our shared purpose nurtures inclusive participation and genuine relationships and drives meaningful social change.





# Strategic goals.

## 1. Diverse workforce.

Cultivate a diverse workforce reflecting a wealth of experiences, capabilities and perspectives.

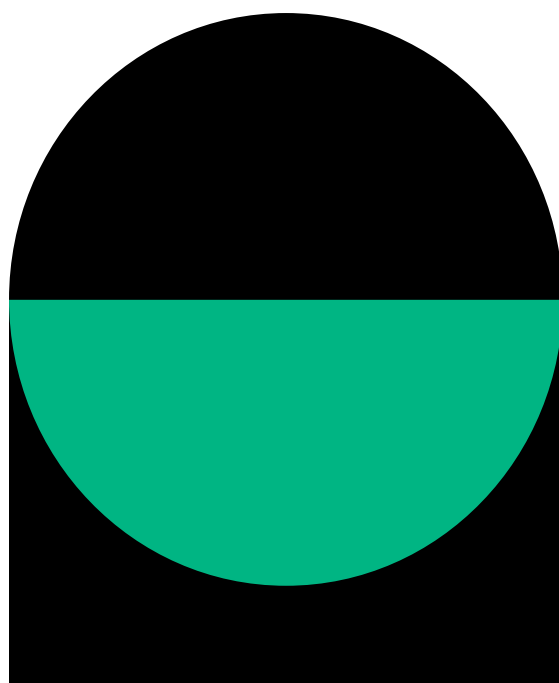
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### Initiatives

- Introduce a robust data collection approach.
- Introduce a DEI dashboard with regular reporting and insights for the General Management Team (GMT), the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Board.
- Implement an accessible and inclusive recruitment policy and process focusing on attracting people from diverse backgrounds.
- Implement a graduate program for people with lived experience of low vision or blindness.
- Implement a Client Services cadetship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### Measurement

- Share comprehensive reporting and insights with the GMT and ELT every month, and with the Board every quarter.
- Increase candidates from diverse backgrounds.
- Successful conversion of graduates with lived experience of low vision or blindness into permanent positions.
- A minimum of 15 percent of employees will self-identify as having a disability by 2027.



## 2. Inclusive workplace.

Foster an inclusive workplace where everyone feels respected and valued, has a sense of belonging, and implements innovative and people-centred solutions.

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### Initiatives

- Conduct a DEI review of Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures.
- Conduct an accessibility review of our premises and facilities.
- Implement a workplace adjustments process and passport.
- Provide Guide Dogs NSW/ACT mandatory disability training and build capability to deliver to accessibility standards.
- Implement innovative career pathways for people with disabilities.
- Create a portal with resources about different demographic groups.

### Measurement

- All HR policies and procedures are inclusive and reflect the diverse needs of our workforce.
- People with disabilities are reflected in a range of roles throughout career progressions.
- All employees complete our Disability and Cultural Competency training.
- External audit results demonstrate the high-level of accessibility of our premises, systems, processes and communications by 2027.



### 3. Enriched communities.

Foster an inclusive workplace where everyone feels respected and valued, has a sense of belonging, and implements innovative and people-centred solutions.

#### Initiatives

- Develop our community advocacy approach.
- Influence and educate our community and external stakeholders on best practice accessibility.
- Actively participate in key sector advocacy and peak bodies to affect systemic change.
- Contribute our expertise to public policy and political engagement.
- Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity.

#### Measurement

- Demonstrate active involvement with key external networks influencing industry and government policy and practice by 2027.
- Increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers for a range of products and services.
- Increase the number of external stakeholders who we provide with accessibility education.





# Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2025-27.

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## Our plan to achieve our strategy.

**Strategic goal: diverse workforce.**

**Activities to improve all diversity metrics across Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.**

1. Introduce a robust data collection and analysis approach.
2. Introduce a DEI dashboard with regular reporting and insights for the GMT, ELT and Board.
3. Conduct a DEI review of HR policies and procedures.





# Focus areas and activities throughout 2025-27.

## 1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

#### Responsibility

The ELT is ultimately responsible, with the RAP Committee to lead and implement the RAP.

#### Activities

- Implement an accessible and inclusive recruitment policy and process focused on attracting people from diverse backgrounds.
- Implement a Client Services cadetship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Provide cultural competency learning and events about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and practices.
- Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity.
- Throughout 2025, consult and develop our next RAP building on our collective learnings from previous years.



## 2. Ability and Accessibility.

### Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)

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#### Responsibility

The ELT is ultimately responsible, with the Disability Inclusion Steering Committee to lead and implement the DIAP.

#### Activities

- Implement an accessible and inclusive recruitment policy and process focused on attracting people from diverse backgrounds.
- Implement a graduate program for people with lived experience of low vision or blindness.
- Conduct a review of the accessibility of our premises and facilities.
- Implement a workplace adjustments process and passport.
- Provide mandatory Guide Dogs NSW/ACT disability training and build capability to deliver to accessibility standards.
- Implement career pathways for people with disabilities.
- Influence and educate our community and external stakeholders on accessibility best practice.
- Actively participate in key sector advocacy and peak bodies to affect systemic change.
- Contribute our expertise to public policy and political engagement.



### 3. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD).

#### Our CALD Plan

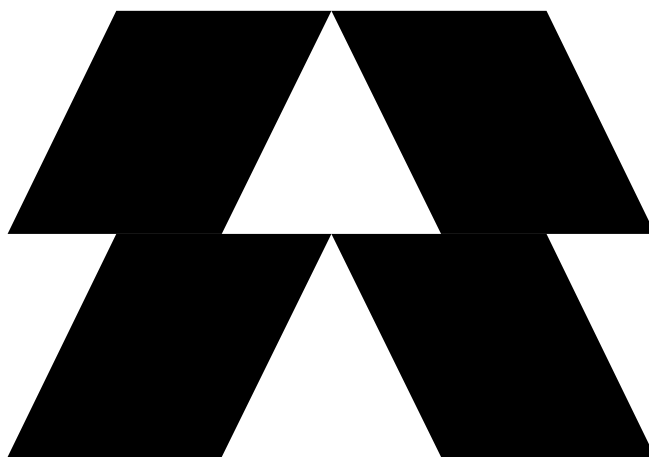
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#### **Responsibility**

The ELT is ultimately responsible to drive and implement the CALD Plan. However, project and specific activity leaders and teams will be convened by the DEI leaders within the People and Culture Team.

#### **Activities**

- Continue to consult our people about their cultural experiences and needs.
- Provide cultural diversity awareness training for staff.
- Provide appropriate spaces and opportunities for people to engage in cultural and religious practices.
- Provide opportunities for each office to engage in social and team building activities that lead to a better collective understanding of cultural diversity across Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.
- Engage with volunteers to increase cultural diversity knowledge and engagement practices. For example, introduce and expand Connections Services events for Clients of culturally diverse backgrounds and identities.
- Recognise culturally significant days of celebration in our internal events calendar and facilitate staff awareness and engagement in these events through our social channels and activities.
- Utilise technology and alternative translation services to assist practitioners to better serve our Clients.
- Provide Client and supporter materials in additional languages.
- Contribute our expertise to public policy and political engagement, particularly in relation to the intersectionality of disability and cultural diversity.



# Business as usual and continuing activities through 2025-27.

Note consultation on the future expansion of these areas will occur throughout 2025.

## 1. Gender and LGBTQIA+.

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### Responsibility

The ELT is ultimately responsible for this area. However, specific project teams will be convened by the DEI leaders within the People and Culture Team. Mardi Gras activities and events remain the responsibility of the Marketing Team.

### Activities

- Retain engagement with and participation in the annual Mardi Gras activities and parade. This demonstrates Guide Dogs NSW/ACT commitment to the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Engage leaders within the LGBTQIA+ community, including Dolly Diamond to facilitate wider community engagements and education.

## 2. Life Stages.

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### Responsibility

The ELT is ultimately responsible for this area. However, specific project teams will be convened by the DEI leaders within the People and Culture Team.

### Activities

- Ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
- Throughout 2025, conduct employee-wide engagement and consultation to ensure the needs and circumstances of the collective and individuals are considered and included during the employee agreement review process.
- Retain flexible workplace practices to recognise the intersectionality of life circumstances and commitments that impact employees outside the work environment.
- Develop clearer pathways to learn the communication preferences and distinct ways of working that may differ from person to person and across generations to provide an engaging, safe and knowledgeable workplace.



# Roles and responsibilities.

## DEI is everyone's responsibility.

Creating a respectful, inclusive, and safe workplace is not just about implementing initiatives. The critical driver is collective responsibility to uphold our values.



## Everyone is responsible to 'walk the talk' of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion commitments, by:

- Valuing and treating others fairly.
- Building authentic and meaningful relationships.
- Avoiding generalisations and assumptions that undermine individual uniqueness.
- Challenging our way of thinking and considering our impact.
- Where it is safe, speaking up when we notice behaviour that isn't aligned to our values.

## Risk management.

Our risk management approach includes identifying, monitoring and managing risks for the following focus areas:

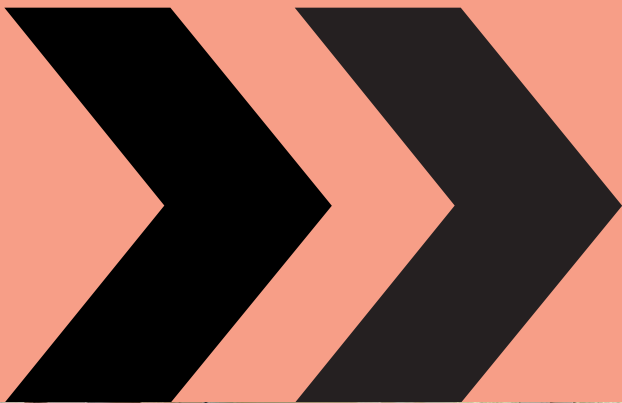
- Strategic goals.
- Key stakeholder engagement and communication.
- Capability and resourcing including volunteering.
- Strategy implementation.
- Employee experience.
- Regulatory requirements.
- Measures, reporting and accountability.

Roles and responsibilities are outlined in the DEI Leadership Committee Terms of Reference.

## Our impact.

We implement systemic, cultural and sustainable change reflecting inclusive mindsets and behaviours, demonstrated capability and robust accountability, through:

- Alignment to our business purpose, strategy and values.
- Deep understanding of strengths, gaps and opportunities.
- Authentic and consistent leadership commitment and actions at every level, including the Board.
- Systemic, comprehensive and sustainable approach.
- Robust measures and regular reporting.
- Awareness, engagement, capability and accountability.





## As a result of these actions:

### Our people will:

- Experience high levels of safety, fairness, respect and access to opportunities.
- Have an increased sense of connection and belonging.
- Experience high levels of health and wellbeing.
- Have authentic and meaningful relationships.
- Thrive and progress.

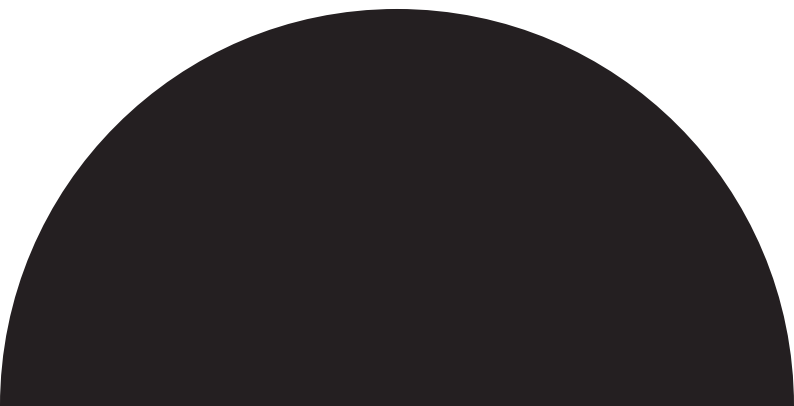
### Our teams will:

- Feel valued.
- Have access to information.
- Collaborate within and across different teams.
- Contribute to decision making and significant outcomes.
- Demonstrate our values and feel safe to speak up when these values aren't being demonstrated.

### Our leaders will:

- Believe different thinking styles are beneficial.
- Encourage curiosity and use a diverse range of knowledge and ideas.
- Demonstrate equitable and fair people practices.
- Encourage collaboration between others.
- Effectively manage disagreement, conflict and inappropriate behaviour.


### Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will:

- Clearly articulate the commitment and value of DEI for the organisation.
  - Demonstrate fair and equitable practices that motivate inclusive behaviours.
  - Embrace all employees and enable them to make meaningful contributions to the organisation.
  - Demonstrate inclusive decision-making.
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We're here whenever you need us.

 1800 484 333

 [nsw.guidedogs.com.au](https://nsw.guidedogs.com.au)

**Guide Dogs.**