Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan

May 2026 – May 2028

Turning inclusion from intent into everyday practice

Victorian Legal Services
BOARD + COMMISSIONER

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of Naarm (Melbourne), the land on which our office sits. We pay our respects to their Elders; past and present. We support Treaty for Victoria.

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Our path towards reconciliation

In May 2026, we released our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. Reconciliation Australia describes this phase of our reconciliation journey as a time to 'implement change', with 'actions for achieving the organisation's vision for reconciliation'.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Plan reflect a shared commitment to fostering a workplace that is inclusive, respectful and equitable. The RAP provides a targeted framework to advance reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, while the DEI Plan strengthens inclusive practices across the broader workforce.

Together, these plans reinforce one another, ensuring that cultural safety, equity and inclusion are embedded in our organisational practices, decision-making and behaviours. This integrated approach supports us to deliver on our values and meet our obligations as a Victorian public sector employer.

A message from our Board CEO and Commissioner

I am proud to launch our new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan May 2026 – May 2028.

At the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner (VLSB+C), we aspire to embed diversity, equity and inclusion principles in our work and workplace culture.

Our workforce and the community we serve are made up of a rich diversity of identities, experiences and perspectives. We deliver our best work when we wholeheartedly embrace this diversity by listening and learning from everyone in our organisation and community.

We recognise that achieving fair outcomes often means adopting different approaches that take account of and seek to address existing inequalities in our workforce and community. We will keep working towards equity and looking for new ways to level the playing field.

We will achieve this by:

- creating inclusive systems and adjustment processes
- ensuring we have fair and equitable recruitment and progression opportunities
- embedding communication, trust and follow-through in our workplace
- adopting accessible and inclusive workplace practices.

This plan has been shaped through research, consultation and collaboration across the VLSB+C. It is designed for and by our employees.

Through this plan, we will keep diversity, equity and inclusion principles at the forefront, striving to provide a more equitable workplace for our staff, improving our community's access to justice, and supporting a fairer and more inclusive justice system for all Victorians.

Fiona McLeay
Victorian Legal Services Board CEO and Commissioner

What Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) means at the VLSB+C

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the VLSB+C

At the VLSB+C, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are essential to how we do our work. These principles shape how we design systems, lead people and influence our regulatory and service responsibilities.

In practice, DEI at the VLSB+C means:

- enabling our people to participate fully and do their best work
- designing systems that are fair, accessible and consistently applied
- engaging with the community in ways that are ethical, trustworthy and inclusive.

What we mean by diversity

Diversity recognises that our workforce and the community we serve bring a wide range of identities, experiences and perspectives.

At the VLSB+C, diversity includes (but is not limited to):

- culture, race and ethnicity
- gender, gender identity and sexuality
- disability, neurodiversity and mental health
- age, caring responsibilities and socio-economic status.

We value diversity. It strengthens judgement, decision-making and public trust.

What we mean by equity

Equity means recognising that people do not start from the same place and that fair outcomes sometimes require different approaches.

At the VLSB+C, equity is about:

- identifying and removing barriers in systems and processes to ensure access to adjustments, support and opportunities
- using data and lived experience to understand where inequities exist.

Equity focuses on fairness in experience and outcome, not sameness of treatment.

What we mean by inclusion

Inclusion is about the everyday experience of working at, and engaging with the VLSB+C.

Inclusion means:

- people feel safe to speak up and be themselves
- differences are respected and valued
- inclusion is reflected in how meetings are run, decisions are made and services are delivered
- clear systems and accountable leadership.

Inclusion is not a one-off activity. It is built through consistent behaviours.

Connecting our DEI Action Plan to our Strategic Plan 2026–2029

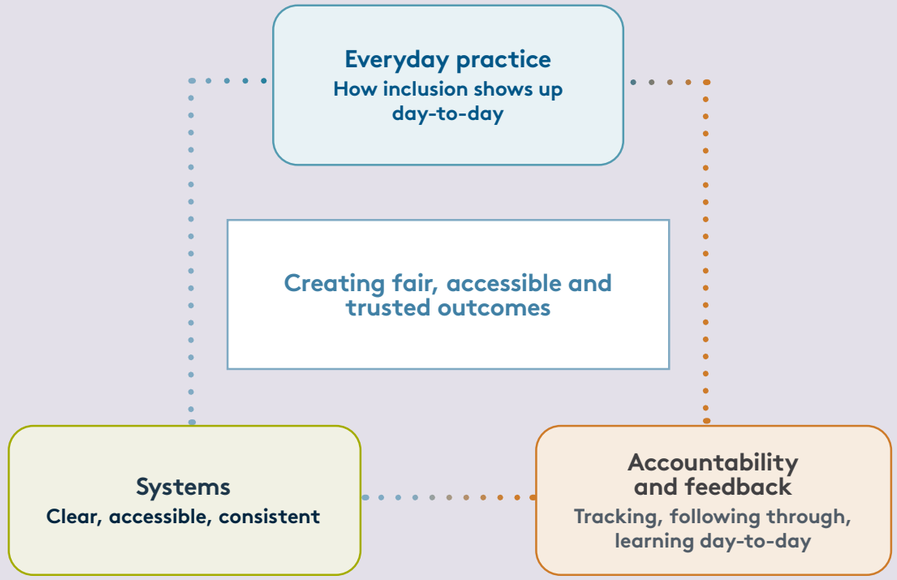
Maintaining and enhancing our culture of wellbeing, inclusion and diversity is a strategic priority in our Strategic Plan, with the development of this DEI Action Plan as a key activity in delivering on this priority.

The DEI Action Plan focuses on building the systems, behaviours and leadership capability required for our people to do their work effectively, ethically and inclusively. By embedding inclusion into how we work, lead and make decisions, the DEI Action Plan enables consistent, fair and trusted delivery of our regulatory and service responsibilities.

How we will create change

Real and lasting inclusion does not happen through individual effort alone. It happens when systems, everyday practices and accountability mechanisms work together and reinforce each other.

The DEI Action Plan applies a systems approach to DEI. Rather than relying on goodwill or informal action, the plan focuses on embedding inclusion into how our work is designed, delivered and reviewed.



To bring the systems approach to life, each action in the plan has been connected to one of the below approaches:

Everyday practice

Inclusion is experienced through everyday ways of working, meetings, onboarding, communication and interactions. The Action Plan prioritises practical guidance that supports inclusive practice in real work contexts.

Systems

We focus on strengthening systems, so inclusion is predictable and does not depend on individual discretion. When systems are clear and accessible, people know what to expect and how to navigate support, processes and decisions.

Accountability and feedback

Trust is built when commitments are followed through and progress is visible. The Action Plan emphasises feedback, transparency and continuous improvement.

How we developed this plan

The DEI Action Plan was shaped through research, consultation and collaboration across the VLSB+C.

The process began with a review of existing policies, programs and data to understand where inclusion is already strong and where barriers remain. This included analysis of the People Matter Survey and our previous DEI Action Plan.

Staff contributed through focus groups, interviews and written responses. Their insights helped identify what inclusion looks like in practice and what still needs to change. We held a planning workshop with key people from across the organisation to create a plan grounded in context and with the support of VLSB+C leaders.

The result is a plan designed by and for VLSB+C employees.

Connections to our Customer Experience (CX) work

The Customer Experience (CX) function contributes to the organisation's diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives by improving equitable access to our services and information. We have focused on building organisational capability to better recognise and respond to diverse needs, including achieving SCOPE accreditation and developing guidance and training to support staff to identify when people might require additional support or reasonable adjustments and how to respond appropriately.

We place lived experience and user feedback at the centre of our approach. Through surveys we actively seek to understand accessibility barriers, communication challenges and user needs across different cohorts. This insight informs the continuous improvement approach we are developing, enabling us to identify themes, trends and systemic issues and to respond in proportionate, evidence based ways over time.

Through our user experience stream of work, we rigorously test and validate whether our services, communications and responses are meeting user needs in practice. We are embedding accessibility and inclusive design principles alongside major technology and communications initiatives to ensure systems, processes and governance support sustainable and equitable outcomes.

Whilst the focus of our DEI plan is our internal employees, there are obvious connections to our CX work. Further detail on our CX work can be found on our website: lsbc.vic.gov.au.

Governance architecture

Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

Strategic oversight and decision making authority

- Approval of the DEI Action Plan and any amendments
- Monitors progress through DEI meeting minutes

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEI)

Advisory and implementation oversight

- Guides implementation of the DEI plan
- Monitors progress against actions
- Supports reporting requirements

Inclusive systems and adjustments

Title and objective	Actions	Indicators of success	Lead	Timing	Approach

1.1 Clear and consistent workplace adjustments
 	
Ensure workplace adjustments are applied consistently, confidently and equitably across the organisation.
	• Develop a clear, step-by-step workplace adjustments guide for staff and managers, with practical examples across disability, neurodiversity, chronic and mental illness.
	
	• Promote the guide internally so staff and managers understand what is available and how to access support.
	
	• Consider adding the guide to the Manager Essentials training.
		• Increased staff confidence in knowing how to request adjustments, measured through People Matter Survey Results to the questions:
		  ○ Have you asked for an adjustment at work?
		  ○ Why did you ask for the adjustment?
		
		• Improved manager confidence in applying adjustments, measured through People Matter Survey Results to the question 'How was your experience when you asked for the adjustment?'
			People & Culture with support of the DEI Committee	December 2026	Systems

1.2 Clear and understood gender affirmation systems Ensure gender affirmation processes are clearly understood and consistently implemented. Ensure guidance supports dignity, privacy and timely implementation.	• Clarify and promote existing gender affirmation processes so staff and managers understand their roles and responsibilities. • Identify and address any system barriers that delay or complicate gender affirmation (e.g. IT, payroll, records). • Consider adding the guide to the Manager Essentials training.	• Increased awareness of gender affirmation processes among managers measured though DEI Champions seeking qualitative feedback from their teams. • Increased staff confidence in accessing gender affirmation support from the organisation measured though DEI Champions seeking qualitative feedback from their teams.	People & Culture with support of the DEI Committee	July 2027 and then annually	Systems

1.3 Understanding and navigating complaint and reporting pathways
 	
Improve staff understanding of internal complaint and reporting mechanisms so issues can be raised early, safely and appropriately.
	• Develop a clear, visual flowchart that explains:
	  ○ available complaint and reporting pathways
	  ○ the difference between informal and formal options
	  ○ where to go for advice and support at different stages.
	
	• Design the flowchart in plain language, with practical examples.
	
	• Deliver short training or briefings (e.g. 10–15 minutes) to support understanding of the flowchart, integrated into:
	  ○ onboarding
	  ○ DEI Champion-led inclusion conversations
	  ○ existing team or leadership forums.
		• Increased staff confidence in knowing where and how to raise concerns measured via the People Matter Survey results to the question 'Did you tell anyone about the discrimination?'.
		
		• Reduced confusion about complaint and reporting options, measured through People Matters Survey results to the question 'What was your reason for not submitting a formal complaint?'.
			People & Culture	June 2027	Systems

Title and objective	Actions	Indicators of success	Lead	Timing	Approach

1.4 Culturally safe responses to racism
 	
Build organisational capability to respond appropriately and safely to experiences of racism.
	• Develop internal guidance for managers on responding to experiences of racism, including:
	  ○ recognising subtle and systemic racism
	  ○ avoiding minimisation or defensiveness
	  ○ responding in ways that prioritise safety and trust.
	• Align guidance with VPS complaints pathways without duplicating or overriding formal processes.
		• Mandatory Bullying & Harassment training completion rates.
		• People Matter Survey results to question 'I feel culturally safe at work' at or above Comparator group.
			People & Culture	March 2028	Systems

1.5 *Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender Improve understanding of factors contributing to the gender pay gap in the organisation (Indicator 3 of the GEAP).	• Conduct a documented gender pay gap analysis for all senior roles, including a review of base salary and total remuneration identifying the presence, size or drivers of any gender pay gaps. • Use the analysis to identify contributing factors and inform targeted actions to address identified gaps. • Findings and recommended actions will be reported to Executive Leadership Team (ELT) by People & Culture (P&C) on an annual basis.	• Increased understanding of the drivers behind any gender pay gap. • A system in place to review and address gender pay gap for senior roles resulting in a clear reduction of pay gap in the workplace gender audit.	People & Culture	Annually	Accountability & Feedback
1.6 *Creating an inclusive experience for employees with family or caring responsibilities Develop and enhance practices to promote inclusion and connection for employees returning to the organisation after a period of leave (Indicator 6 of the GEAP).	• Develop and implement a clear procedure for Keeping in Touch (KIT) days, which includes how employees are informed of new roles, secondments and training opportunities during parental leave. • Conduct a survey or interview with returning employees to better understand their return-to-work needs and inform continuous improvement. • Develop and implement a structured re-onboarding process for employees returning from parental leave, long service leave or secondments of 12 months or more, including touch points from managers during time away.	• Increased staff and manager confidence in how to request and utilise KIT days measured via feedback given to DEI Champions. • Increased uptake of KIT days. • Awareness and utilisation of re-onboarding process measured via feedback given to DEI Champions.	DEI Committee People & Culture	May 2028	Everyday Practice
1.7 *Gender diverse representation across People & Culture related committees Encourage increased participation of diverse cohorts to support continuous improvement of the organisations culture and avoid gendered segregation (Indicator 7 of the GEAP).	• Communication to all employees on benefits of having diverse representation in Committees. • Understand limits of participation from employees and put actions in place actions to address where possible.	• Increased participation of gender diverse employees in P&C aligned Committees (Health & Wellbeing, Social Club, DEI and RAP).	People & Culture DEI Committee RAP Committee Health & Wellbeing Committee Social Club Committee	Ongoing	Everyday Practice

**Indicates actions that form part of VLSB+C's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2026-2030 which runs for a 4-year period and is a requirement under the Gender Equality Act 2020. The GEAP is subject to review by the Commission for Gender Equality.*

Fair and equitable recruitment and promotion

Title and objective	Actions	Indicators of success	Lead	Timing	Approach

2.1 Accessible and fair recruitment processes
 	
Reduce barriers in recruitment so all candidates can participate equitably and demonstrate their capability.
	• Introduce consistent, low-barrier recruitment practices, including:
	  ○ exploring where it might be appropriate to provide interview questions in advance, such as part of a reasonable adjustment, and build into the Recruitment Policy and Procedure
	  ○ offering a clear list of available adjustments, and
	  ○ explore using alternative assessment methods where appropriate (e.g. work samples) and build into the Recruitment Policy and Procedure.
	• During recruitment processes, review interview question design to improve clarity and accessibility (e.g. avoiding multi-part or overly complex questions).
	• Explore providing guidance for interview panels to define outcomes in order to create consistency in scoring.
		• Increased candidate confidence in recruitment fairness measured by feedback survey at the completion of the process.
		• Any negative feedback from surveys to be assessed and actioned as required.
			People & Culture with support of the DEI Committee	April 2027	Systems

2.2 *Equitable promotion and development opportunities Ensure access to promotion and development is fair and transparent (Indicator 5 of the GEAP).	• Review access to acting roles and development opportunities through existing data to identify potential barriers for staff. • During recruitment processes, promote flexible working models (e.g. job-share, part-time or flexible secondments) where feasible. • During recruitment processes, clarify expectations around backfilling and workload management to reduce disincentives for participation.	• Increased staff confidence that access to acting roles, secondments and development opportunities is fair and transparent measured through People Matter Survey responses to ‘My workplace hires people fairly’ and ‘My workplace promotes people fairly’. • Reduced perceptions that promotion opportunities depend on informal networks measured through People Matter Survey Results questions detailed above.	People & Culture	February 2027	Systems

**Indicates actions that form part of VLSB+C’s Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2026-2030 which runs for a 4-year period and is a requirement under the Gender Equality Act 2020. The GEAP is subject to review by the Commission for Gender Equality.*

Title and objective	Actions	Indicators of success	Lead	Timing	Approach
2.3 *Monitoring equity in recruitment and promotion Build an evidence base to understand whether recruitment and progression outcomes are equitable (Indicator 1 of the GEAP).	• Conduct biannual reviews of recruitment and promotion outcomes using available workforce data. • Analyse outcomes through an intersectional lens where data allows (e.g. how different combinations of gender, disability, and cultural background affect outcomes). • Use findings to identify barriers and inform future actions that can be added to this plan.	• Recruitment and promotion outcome data is reviewed and analysed every 6 months. • Any clear equity-related trends or gaps are identified. • Identify and respond to any equity issues in recruitment and promotion. Targeted actions are introduced in response to identified issues.	People & Culture with support of the DEI Committee	Ongoing	Accountability & Feedback
2.4 *Fair and transparent leadership pathways Improve employee understanding of leadership and career progression opportunities (Indicator 1 of the GEAP).	• Review pathways to senior roles for employees and understand potential barriers to access those roles. • Develop, endorse and publish a clear leadership and career framework that outlines pathways into senior and decision-making roles.	• Framework endorsed by ELT and communicated to employees as well as embedded into the recruitment guidance.	People & Culture DEI Committee	May 2028	Systems
2.5 *Inclusive advertising for Board vacancies Maintain a gender diverse Board (Indicator 2 of the GEAP).	• Ensure that all advertisements for vacant Board positions explicitly encourage applications from women and gender-diverse people. • When advertising for a Board role, liaise with the Executive Adviser to the CEO on Victorian Government Board guidelines (DPC) process.	• We have a gender diverse board composition.	People & Culture DEI Committee	Ongoing	Systems
2.6 *Review the Employee Value Proposition and job advertisements Ensure flexible work options are communicated clearly and consistently (Indicator 5 of the GEAP).	• Review the organisation's Employee Value Proposition (EVP) and job advertisements to ensure flexible work options are clearly and consistently communicated, and update materials where required to reinforce accessibility to flexibility. • Reflect those changes in position descriptions, the website and other collateral.	• The Employee Value Proposition clearly communicates availability of flexible work options. • An increase in employees accessing flexible work arrangements as measured in the next gender equality audit.	People & Culture DEI Committee	December 2026	Systems

**Indicates actions that form part of VLSB+C's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2026-2030 which runs for a 4-year period and is a requirement under the Gender Equality Act 2020. The GEAP is subject to review by the Commission for Gender Equality.*

Communication, trust and follow-through

Title and objective	Actions	Indicators of success	Lead	Timing	Approach
3.1 DEI Champion-led inclusion conversations Increase engagement, understanding and ownership of DEI by shifting communication to active team-based conversations led by DEI Champions.	• Clarify and support DEI Champion roles within business units, ensuring lived experience representation and adequate time in workplans to contribute. • Introduce a structured, ongoing DEI communication approach where DEI Champions attend team meetings with a short monthly DEI topic, update or prompt. • Establish a light-touch mechanism for capturing high-level themes or insights from these conversations (e.g. what's working, recurring questions, emerging issues), without attributing comments to individuals. • Use this feedback to inform ongoing DEI priorities, communication and improvement actions that can be added to this plan.	• Each team has participated in at least one structured conversation annually. • Demonstrated flow of information between teams and the DEI Committee and other relevant groups that will help inform DEI actions in this or future plans. • Increased staff awareness of DEI activity within their teams and areas of work with increased participation over time.	DEI Committee	September 2027	Everyday P ractice
3.2 Tracking and reporting progress transparently Build confidence through clear, proportionate reporting on DEI progress and impact.	• Establish a simple, quarterly approach to reporting progress against this Action Plan, which is communicated to staff.	• Staff can clearly see progress demonstrated by feedback to DEI Champions and increased participation and interest in DEI activities. • Staff have increased trust in organisational accountability via feedback to DEI Champions.	DEI Committee	September 2027	Accountability & Feedback

3.3 Using lived experience to inform improvement
 	
Ensure lived experience informs policy, service design and actions towards continuous improvement.
	• Establish clear procedures for lived experience insights (from staff and community engagement) to be gathered, to inform:
	  ○ policy development
	  ○ service design
	  ○ system and process improvement.
	
	• Clarify how lived experience insights gathered through consultation and, feedback is considered in decision-making, prioritised, and reflected in final outcomes.
	
	• Close the loop by communicating how lived experience has informed decisions and changes.
		• Lived experience insights have been demonstrably considered in policy, service or system changes.
		
		• Feedback from a lived experience perspective has informed decisions or improvements to the organisation.
			DEI Committee	February 2028	Systems

Accessible and inclusive workplace practices

Title and objective	Actions	Indicators of success	Lead	Timing	Approach

4.1 Accessible and inclusive meetings and engagement
 	
Ensure meetings, events and engagement activities are planned and delivered in ways that enable broad participation, internally and externally.
	• Introduce simple guidance for accessible and inclusive meetings, events and engagement activities, including:
	  ○ clear agendas and materials shared in advance
	  ○ consideration of sensory, communication and accessibility needs
	  ○ hybrid participation as standard, wherever possible.
	• Encourage teams to normalise accessibility considerations rather than responding only when issues arise.
	• Apply the same expectations to internal meetings and external engagement activities, without creating separate standards.
		• Demonstratable increased accessibility of meetings and engagement activities.
		• Fewer reported barriers to participation across internal and external settings (measured through staff and stakeholder feedback to the DEI Champions).
			DEI Committee	December 2026	Everyday Practice

4.2 Inclusive onboarding
 	
Support new starters to feel a sense of safety, inclusion and belonging.
	• Review onboarding practices to ensure they:
	  ○ clearly communicate inclusion expectations,
	  ○ provide information on supports, adjustments and flexibility,
	  ○ reflect diverse identities and experiences.
	• Ensure managers are equipped to have early, proactive conversations about support needs utilising the workplace adjustment guide detailed at 1.1.
		• Improved new starter experience and confidence measured via feedback to DEI Champions.	People & Culture	June 2027	Systems

4.3 Purposeful recognition of key diversity and inclusion days
 	
Ensure days celebrating diversity and inclusion provide meaningful opportunities for learning and impact.
	• The DEI Champions will select diversity and inclusion days to be recognised each year, based on relevance, impact and organisational priorities.
	• For each selected day, develop a clear project plan that includes:
	  ○ a defined education or learning objective,
	  ○ alignment with the DEI Action Plan priorities, and
	  ○ clarity on intended audience and outcomes.
	• Focus activities on education, awareness and practical insight, rather than celebration alone.
	• Review each activity to monitor learning outcomes and inform future planning.
		• Diversity and inclusion days are intentionally selected and clearly aligned to learning objectives.
		• Staff report increased understanding of inclusion topics following activities via feedback to the DEI Champions.
		• Reduced perception of DEI activity as performative or ad hoc measured via feedback to the DEI Champions.
			DEI Committee
			
			People and Culture
				Ongoing	Everyday Practice

Title and objective	Actions	Indicators of success	Lead	Timing	Approach
4.4 *Gender inclusive organisational culture and practices Create an environment for women in the workplace where they feel supported, represented and valued (Indicator 1 of the GEAP).	• Assess and explore organisational practices against criteria for Australia's Best Workplaces for Women certifications. • Complete a documented gap analysis, report findings to Executive Leadership Team, and integrate priority actions into this plan.	• Support and uptake of actions to explore becoming one of the Best Workplaces for Women.	DEI Committee	May 2028	Systems
4.5 *Awareness and prevention of workplace sexual harassment Improve staff understanding of internal complaints and reporting mechanisms so issues can be raised early, safely and appropriately (Indicator 4 of GEAP).	• Develop, approve and implement a stand-alone policy on sexual harassment (separate from the existing Appropriate Behaviour policy which currently includes sexual harassment guidance), which clearly defines sexual harassment, outlines prevention expectations, sets out accessible reporting and response pathways, and specifies roles and responsibilities. • Review People Matter Survey results annually related to sexual harassment in partnership with the Culture & Wellbeing Manager to identify opportunities for improvements and implement targeted prevention and response actions.	• Policy released and communicated to staff. • Maintain/improve People Matter Survey results on items relating to sexual harassment.	People & Culture DEI Committee	December 2026/ Annually	Systems
4.6 *Promote availability and utilisation of employee entitlements and practices that support gender equity Improve employee awareness and understanding of available support for employees with family or caring responsibilities (Indicator 6 of the GEAP).	• On an annual basis raise awareness around the availability of family violence leave, reproductive leave, and flexible work options for employees undergoing fertility treatment such as IVF through appropriate internal channels, using sensitive, trauma informed and confidential messaging. • On an annual basis, increase employee awareness of available flexible working arrangements by regularly communicating options and delivering an annual awareness program that highlights flexible work arrangements across roles and career stages. • Consider whether to add more questions to the People Matter Survey or run a pulse survey to assess results of this action.	• Increased employee awareness of where to find information around family violence leave, reproductive leave and other supports measured though the People Matter Survey question 'My workplace would support me if I needed to take family violence leave'. • Increased uptake of flexible work arrangements.	People & Culture	June 2027/ Annually	Systems
4.7 *Incorporate intersectional approaches to gender equality and inclusion Increase awareness, education and understanding of intersectionality to inform inclusive policies, programs and supports (Indicator 7 of the GEAP).	• Actively participate in relevant Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) led groups, including the Critical Friends Network (CFN) and the Intersectionality Community of Practice. • Explore and assess options for collecting additional voluntary and identified workforce data on intersectional attributes such as religion and sexual orientation.	• Learnings inform intersectional approaches to gender equality and inclusion for actions in this Plan.	DEI Committee People & Culture	Ongoing	Everyday Practice

**Indicates actions that form part of VLSB+C's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2026-2030 which runs for a 4-year period and is a requirement under the Gender Equality Act 2020. The GEAP is subject to review by the Commission for Gender Equality.*

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