

MEDIA RELEASE**14 January 2026****Diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACT Public Service**

ACT Auditor-General, Mr Michael Harris, today presented a report on **Diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACT Public Service** to the Speaker for tabling in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

The ACT Government has expressed a commitment to implementing the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACT Public Service (ACTPS). The principles of diversity, equity and inclusion seek to recognise and include the unique differences, contributions and needs of staff in the workplace in a way that is fair and equitable and allows them to participate in decision-making.

The audit considered the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate's activities to develop whole-of-government frameworks, strategies and plans for diversity, equity and inclusion and support ACT Government agencies to implement them. The audit also considered the activities of a selection of ACT Government agencies (the Education Directorate, Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, and the Emergency Services Agency) to recognise and implement diversity, equity and inclusion principles at key stages of the employment lifecycle.

The audit found that the overarching *ACT Public Service Respect, Equity and Diversity Framework* (RED framework), which was first implemented in 2010, is out-of-date. While there are many other strategies, policies, frameworks and plans, both at a whole-of-government and directorate-level, the absence of a roadmap makes it difficult for managers and staff to identify, understand and implement relevant diversity, equity and inclusion obligations.

Mr Harris says: 'more effective performance and accountability arrangements are needed to ensure the principles and practices of diversity, equity and inclusion are implemented across the ACTPS.'

The audit found that considerable effort is needed across the ACTPS to meet the two whole-of-government employment targets for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people (3 percent by 2026) and people with disability (9 percent). The ACTPS does not have employment targets for other diversity groups.

The report makes eight recommendations for actions to be taken by the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and ACT Government agencies.

The summary of **Diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACT Public Service: Report No 1/2026**, with audit conclusions and key findings are attached to this media release.

Diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACT Public Service is available to download from the ACT Audit Office's website www.audit.act.gov.au. If you need assistance accessing the report please phone 6207 0833.

Summary

The ACT Government has expressed a commitment to implementing the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACT Public Service (ACTPS). The principles of diversity, equity and inclusion seek to recognise and include the unique differences, contributions and needs of staff in the workplace in a way that is fair and equitable and allows them to participate in decision-making.

The audit considered ACT Government agencies' activities to implement the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion across the ACTPS. The audit considered:

- the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate's activities to develop whole-of-government frameworks, strategies and plans for diversity, equity and inclusion and support ACT Government agencies to implement them; and
- the activities of a selection of ACT Government agencies to recognise and implement relevant diversity, equity and inclusion principles at key stages of the employment lifecycle.

The ACT Government agencies considered for the purpose of the audit were the Education Directorate, Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate and the Emergency Services Agency.¹



Conclusions

Whole-of-government frameworks, strategies and plans

There are a number of different whole-of-government strategies and policies relevant to diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACTPS. The whole-of-government strategies and policies are also supported by various frameworks, strategies and plans, both at a whole-of-government level and directorate-level. The lack of a 'single source of truth' or 'roadmap' makes it difficult for managers and staff to identify the frameworks, strategies and plans and understand and implement the relevant diversity, equity and inclusion obligations.

The overarching *ACT Public Service Respect Equity and Diversity Framework* (RED Framework), which was first implemented in 2010, is out-of-date. It does not refer to current responsibilities and legislation or frameworks, strategies and plans developed since 2015.

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate has recognised the need for a more cohesive approach and an overarching strategy to diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACTPS and an intention to work 'towards an overarching ACTPS Inclusion and Belonging Strategy'. This needs to be progressed as a matter of priority.

¹ In July 2025, following the conduct of audit fieldwork, the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate was amalgamated with the former Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate to become the City and Environment Directorate. The findings in the audit report are made with reference to the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, while future activities and/or recommendations are made with reference to the City and Environment Directorate.

Implementation of whole-of-government frameworks, strategies and plans

More effective performance and accountability arrangements are needed to ensure the principles and practices of diversity, equity and inclusion are implemented across the ACTPS.

There is variability in how the numerous whole-of-government frameworks, strategies and plans relevant to diversity, equity and inclusion identify and articulate:

- strategic objectives and outcomes;
- actions with timeframes for implementation; and
- performance measures with targets.

Some of the frameworks, strategies and plans do this well, either in the document itself, or in a supporting action plan(s). Some of the frameworks, strategies and plans identify high-level concepts and identify that specific details on actions and timeframes for implementation are to be found in directorate-specific documents. Such an approach weakens whole-of-government performance and accountability arrangements.

The ACTPS has two whole-of-government employment targets, for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people (3 percent by 2026) and people with disability (9 percent). The ACTPS does not have employment targets for other diversity groups, such as LGBTIQ+ employees or culturally and linguistically diverse employees. The current percentage of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees in the ACTPS is 2.0 percent, which is representative of the percentage of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the Territory (2.0 percent). The current reported percentage of employees with a disability in the ACTPS is 3.0 percent, which is lower than the percentages of the ACT population living with a disability (women: 22.1 percent; men: 18.9 percent). Considerable effort is needed across the ACTPS to meet these employment targets.

Annual ACTPS State of the Service Reports are a key mechanism for reporting on diversity, equity and inclusion matters in the ACTPS. However, reporting on such matters is dispersed throughout the reports, and this makes it difficult to quickly obtain a snapshot of diversity, equity and inclusion activity and progress across the ACTPS. State of the Service Reports also do not consistently present multi-year trend analysis of diversity, equity and inclusion data. Collating and tracking data across multiple years would facilitate more meaningful trend analysis and performance reporting.

The ACTPS Employee Survey is held once every two years. The survey is voluntary and anonymous and reported data is de-identified. There are known challenges with the accuracy of data on diversity groups as collected through the ACT Government's HR21 system, which the Employee Survey offers an opportunity to address.

Agency practices (strategy and monitoring)

The three agencies considered as part of the audit have demonstrated a general commitment to the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion through the development of overarching strategies or plans. The way in which the agencies have developed and demonstrated this commitment has varied.

The three agencies considered as part of the audit have also undertaken a significant range of activities in support of diversity, equity and inclusion. The size, scale and expected impact of the activities has necessarily varied across the agencies, depending on each agency's staffing cohort, focus and priorities.

Throughout the chapter are examples of how the agencies have considered, recognised and sought to support diversity, equity and inclusion practices.

Agency practices (employee lifecycle)

The three agencies considered as part of the audit have undertaken a variety of activities to attract, retain and develop employees from diversity groups. The way the agencies have sought to do so has necessarily varied across the agencies, depending on each agency's staffing cohort, focus and priorities.

Throughout the chapter are examples of how the agencies have considered, recognised and sought to support diversity, equity and inclusion practices.



Key findings

Whole-of-government frameworks, strategies and plans

Paragraph

Whole-of-government frameworks, strategies and plans

There are eight separate frameworks, strategies or policies relevant to diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACTPS. Five relate specifically to the ACTPS, while the others have a broader focus but are also relevant and applicable to the ACTPS. The *ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2033*, the *Capital of Equality Strategy 2024-2029* and the *ACTPS Gender Equity Strategy 2024-2029* reflect a contemporary understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion. Several others do not, including the overarching *ACT Public Service Respect Equity and Diversity Framework* (RED Framework). The RED Framework has not been updated since 2015 and does not refer to the current responsibilities and legislation or frameworks, strategies and plans developed since 2015.

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There are many frameworks, strategies and plans and other requirements relevant to the implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACTPS. There is no 'single source of truth' or 'roadmap' provided by CMTEDD that sets out the relevant legislation, codes, frameworks, strategies and plans. The lack of a 'single source of truth' or roadmap makes it difficult for managers and staff to identify the relevant frameworks, strategies and plans and understand and implement the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion.

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Inclusion of people with lived experience in policy and practice development and decision-making is central to better practice diversity and inclusion. A participatory approach to community engagement, which involves diverse populations in decision-making, ensures that policies reflect the lived experiences of individuals and community perspectives, strengthening their effectiveness and relevance. A review of consultation processes for the development of frameworks, strategies and plans

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shows consultation within the ACTPS and with the community has been generally effective, but that consultation has been less effective with community organisations and the private sector. The development of the *ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2033* demonstrated strong and extensive engagement with ACTPS and community stakeholders.

There are dedicated frameworks, strategies or plans for the majority of identified diverse groups in society, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability and women. However, there is no ACTPS-specific framework, strategy or plan to support people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, younger workers, older workers, neurodivergent workers or individuals from low socio-economic status. 2.51

Building effective diversity, equity and inclusion requires managers and leaders to recognise the importance of belonging and intersectionality and cultivate an environment in which individuals feel authentically accepted and their distinct perspectives and contributions are actively sought and acknowledged. This involves building a sense of belonging and celebrating individual uniqueness to create meaningful and sustainable inclusion. The RED Framework does not specifically acknowledge the importance of building a sense of belonging. It does not identify how belonging will be specifically fostered nor does it identify specific processes to monitor employees' sense of belonging, which could be used to directly inform improvements and adjustments to frameworks, strategies and plans. 2.59

In 2021, the ACT Government conducted a research project to review the RED Framework. The outcomes of the research project are summarised in the December 2021 report: *Beyond RED: Respect, Equity and Diversity* (the *Beyond RED* report). The report identified a systemic challenge related to a 'revealing and alarming' number of diversity and inclusion commitments and actions across directorates and that there were 'almost 1000 D&I commitments and associated actions in our stock take across the ACTPS'. The report recommended that all directorates pause, review their existing actions and prioritise their activities to reflect desired outcomes. The report indicated that this review 'could take part in the first half of 2022', with a renewed strategic direction set in the second half of 2022. 2.69

CMTEDD has recognised the need for a more cohesive approach and an overarching strategy to diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACTPS and an intention to work 'towards an overarching ACTPS Inclusion and Belonging Strategy'. The development of the strategy has been delayed. CMTEDD's Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy has developed an *Inclusion and Belonging Team Plan 2024-2025* which refers to pre-planning for an Inclusion and Belonging Strategy in May-June 2025. 2.73

Implementation of whole-of-government frameworks, strategies and plans

Guidance and support for agencies

CMTEDD seeks to provide guidance and support to directorates and agencies in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion frameworks, strategies and plans by providing information via the ACTPS Culture, Inclusion and Belonging Hub, the ACTPS Employment Portal and the ACTPS Rehabilitation Management System. The ACTPS Culture, Inclusion and Belonging Hub provides useful advice on support services 3.16

available to ACTPS employees. The ACTPS Employment Portal provides information and resources for key audiences including ACTPS employees, managers and supervisors, executives and HR practitioners, but is also accessible to people outside the ACTPS. The Rehabilitation Management System outlines the policies, procedures, guidelines and tools used to manage the work rehabilitation and return to work of an employee following an injury or illness. In doing so it includes, more broadly, policy and associated guidance about making workplace adjustments for people with disability. This is not ideal because it suggests that disability is equated with an injury or illness.

Gathering, tracking and analysing diversity, equity and inclusion employment data is important for the purpose of measuring whether frameworks, strategies and plans are successful and facilitating planning for future initiatives. There are currently three mechanisms to gather data and information on new and existing staff: when people apply for a position through ACT Jobs; through new employees' completion of the New Employee Personal Information Pack; and by allowing employees to update their diversity information. These processes do not reflect all diversity groups or the current terminology used to describe them. 3.31

At any point after their commencement as an ACTPS employee, an employee can update their diversity information via an HR21 employee portal. Updates to name, gender and title must be manually inputted via the employee submitting a separate form to Shared Service HR. This dual-step process may be impeding updates being made by staff as well as the accuracy of the data that is maintained. 3.32

Regular learning and development reinforces the importance, and continuing and growing consciousness of, diversity, equity and inclusion issues in the workplace. It is better practice for there to be mandatory training requirements for staff (including managers/executives) and recruitment panels. There are no mandatory workplace diversity training requirements for staff at a whole-of-government level, nor are there mandatory training requirements for recruiters and selection panels. Training requirements are set by directorates and this has resulted in inconsistency in practice across the ACTPS. 3.38

The Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy has coordinated a range of cross-directorate programs to recognise and support diversity and inclusion across the ACTPS. These include the ACTPS Vocational Employment Program (a 12 to 18-month entry-level employment pathway for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and close family of serving or former members of the Australian Defence Force). Other programs have also been offered (e.g. the Veterans' Peer Network and Neurodiversity Pilot Program) but there is no indication they will be offered again. 3.52

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers short term counselling and wellbeing support for ACTPS employees and their immediate families. In November 2024, the utilisation rate of the Program across the ACTPS was 12.4 percent (four percent higher than the industry rate of 8.4 percent). The Program had 30,830 engagements in the contract year prior to November 2024, of which 3,496 remained active clients. In April 2022, a workshop was conducted by CMTEDD with several directorates and agencies to discuss the purpose of the Program and its utilisation. Issues raised in that workshop were low utilisation rates of the Manager Support and Career Assist services and confusion about the extent of the services that are available. 3.60

Performance and accountability arrangements

A review of cross-agency frameworks, strategies and plans relevant to diversity, equity and inclusion shows there is variability in how they identify and articulate: strategic objectives and outcomes; actions with timeframes for implementation; and performance measures with targets. Some of the frameworks, strategies and plans do this well, either in the document itself, or in a supporting action plan(s). Some of the frameworks, strategies and plans identify high-level concepts and identify that specific details on actions and timeframes for implementation are to be found in directorate-specific documents. Such an approach weakens whole-of-government performance and accountability arrangements.

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Employment targets are measurable objectives with timeframes for increased numbers of people in roles. The ACTPS has two whole-of-government employment targets, for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people (3 percent by 2026) and people with disability (9 percent). The current percentage of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees in the ACTPS is 2.0 percent. This is representative of the percentage of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the Territory (2.0 percent). The current reported percentage of employees with a disability in the ACTPS is 3.0 percent. This is lower than the percentages of the ACT population living with a disability (women: 22.1 percent; men: 18.9 percent).

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The ACTPS does not have employment targets for LGBTIQ+ employees. On 30 June 2024, the ACTPS is tracking slightly above other jurisdictions in the employment of LGBTIQ+ employees. Seven percent of respondents identified as LGBTIQ+ in the 2023 ACTPS Employee Survey, compared with 5.9 percent in the Australian Public Service in 2021, 6.0 percent in the Queensland Public Service in 2024 and 5.6 percent in the Victorian public sector in 2021.

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The ACTPS does not have employment targets for culturally and linguistically diverse employees. The proportion of ACTPS employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (24.4 percent) is less than the population of culturally and linguistically diverse people in the ACT (27.1 percent). Culturally and linguistically diverse employees are under-represented in SES roles. In response to a 2022 Legislative Assembly resolution the ACT Government committed to implementing 'a mentorship program for aspiring SES who are from a CALD background'. A pilot mentoring program that was due to be launched in February 2024 was launched in May 2025.

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The proportion of ACTPS employees who are women (65.0 percent) exceeds the proportion of women in the ACT (50.6 percent) as well as the Australian Public Service (60.4 percent), the Queensland Public Service (57.7 percent) and the Victorian public sector (59.6 percent). Women are also represented in 58.0 percent of ACTPS leadership roles. This is a higher proportion than other jurisdictions.

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Whole-of-government monitoring and reporting

Annual ACTPS *State of the Service Reports* are a key mechanism for reporting on diversity, equity and inclusion matters in the ACTPS. Reporting on such matters is dispersed throughout the reports. This makes it difficult to quickly obtain a snapshot of diversity, equity and inclusion activity and progress across the ACTPS. *State of the Service Reports* also do not consistently present multi-year trend analysis of

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diversity, equity and inclusion data. Collating and tracking data across multiple years would facilitate more meaningful trend analysis.

State of the Service Reports published between 2019-20 and 2024-25 show: 3.121

- the employment of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees has not changed between 2019-20 and 2024-25 (2.0 percent). Without growth the target of 3 percent of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people employed in the ACTPS by 2026 is at risk; and
- the employment of people with disability has remained relatively static (minor increase from 2.8 percent in 2019-20 to 3.0 percent in 2024-25). This is well below the target of 9 percent. The report relies on human resources data. Alternative data, however, obtained through the 2023 ACTPS Employee Survey, indicates that 7.0 percent of ACTPS employees identified as a person with disability.

The *State of the Service Reports* include data and information on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees in the ACTPS. *State of the Service* reporting on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment in the ACTPS has become less comprehensive and thorough over time. The *State of the Service Reports* do not present multi-year analysis of data and there is little or no analysis of whether the results are above or below expectations, the reasons for the results, or the likelihood of achieving targets. 3.126

The *State of the Service Reports* include data on the ACTPS median salary and median salary for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, employees with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse employees. A review of the median salary for these employees between 2019-20 and 2024-25 shows: 3.131

- the median salary for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees and culturally and linguistically diverse employees has been consistently lower than the ACTPS median salary since 2019-20; and
- the median salary for people with disability was marginally lower than the ACTPS median salary between 2019-20 and 2022-23 but exceeded it in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The *State of the Service Reports* include data on the gender pay gap for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, employees with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse employees. A review of the median salary for these employees between 2019-20 and 2024-25 shows: 3.137

- the gender pay gap in the ACTPS has generally been within 1.0 percent (with women earning less than men over this period). An exception was 2022-23 and 2024-25, when the gender pay gap was marginally in favour of women;
- the gender pay gap for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women has been in favour of women in 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2024-25, but in favour of men in 2022-23 and 2023-24;
- the gender pay gap for people with disability has been consistently in favour of women and better than the ACTPS average since 2021-22; and

- the gender pay gap for culturally and linguistically diverse employees has been consistently in favour of men and worse than the ACTPS average.

The *State of the Service Reports* typically include some discussion and analysis of the gender pay gap. For example, the *2024-25 State of the Service Report* includes three pages of analysis of the gender pay gap in the ACTPS compared to the Australian and ACT labour forces, the proportion of women in the ACTPS and executive roles, and the gender pay gap by directorate and diversity group. However, the *State of the Service Reports* typically do not provide any analysis or explanation of the gender pay gap differences for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people or culturally and linguistically diverse employees.

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The ACTPS Employee Survey is held once every two years. The survey is anonymous and reported data is de-identified. There are known challenges with the accuracy of data on diversity groups as collected through the ACT Government's HR21 system, which the Employee Survey offers an opportunity to address. For example:

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- on 30 June 2024, 2.9 percent of employees identified as people living with disability according to self-reporting in the HR/payroll systems but 7 percent of respondents to the 2023 ACTPS Employee Survey identified as people with disability; and
- on 30 June 2024, 2.4 percent of employees identified as LGBTIQ+ in the HR/payroll system but 6 percent of respondents to the 2023 ACTPS Employee Survey identified as LGBTIQ+.

In April 2022 the ACT Public Service Strategic Board agreed to an 'ACTPS Workforce Inclusion target of 80% positive responses, to be measured by the 2025 ACTPS Staff Survey'. In setting the target as 80 percent it was recognised that the ACTPS was 'currently 10 percentage points behind the APS inclusion ratings. Therefore, an ACTPS KPI of 80% would align us with the APS, being our primary workforce competition'. The Strategic Board was advised that 'inclusion scores from different ACTPS diversity groups were generally lower than the 70% ACTPS average' and that the lower scores for diversity groups were identified as 'both a strategic risk and an opportunity to understand where our efforts can be focussed to achieve the most traction on workforce inclusion'.

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One means by which an organisation's maturity in diversity and inclusion practices can be measured is through a self-assessment process against a relevant diversity and inclusion maturity model. In 2021 CMTEDD assessed the maturity of the ACTPS against the Australian Human Resource Institute's (AHRI) Diversity and Inclusion maturity model. CMTEDD assessed the ACTPS as Level 2 (mid-level) maturity overall with some variation across the service. A Level 2 organisation is identified as moving beyond a tick-in-the-box approach and has gained leadership buy-in to drive greater diversity management. It has established diversity and inclusion programs, unconscious bias training and actively promotes diverse events.

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The AHRI model has strategic advantages because it is aligned with Australia's legislation and workplace culture policies and enables organisations to assess the impact of their engagement strategies and leadership commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. There are also other better practice tools by which organisations can assess and improve their diversity, equity and inclusion policies, such as the Global Diversity Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) framework.

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The AHRI model and GDEIB framework may be used in combination, as the AHRI model can provide guidance on enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion in the Australian workplace and legislative context, while the GDEIB would align the ACTPS with global better practices.

Agency practices (strategy and monitoring)

Strategies and plans

The three agencies considered as part of the audit have demonstrated a general commitment to the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion through the development of overarching strategies or plans. The way in which the agencies have developed and demonstrated this commitment has varied. 4.15

The three agencies considered as part of the audit have demonstrated a specific commitment to supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff: 4.25

- the Education Directorate promulgated its *Statement of Commitment to Cultural Integrity* in July 2024 and developed an *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2024-2027* 'brings together and promotes career opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and enhances the development of our existing workforce';
- the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate promulgated a *Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2026*, which comprised 16 action areas and 104 deliverables. The Plan was further supported by the *Cultural Integrity Framework 2024-2025 Action Plan*, which identified specific actions to be undertaken in 2024-25; and
- the Justice and Community Safety Directorate has developed a *Reconciliation Action Plan April 2023 – March 2025* as well as a one-page *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2021-2022*. The Action Plan describes ten actions to attract, develop and retain Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees. Both the Action Plan and guidelines had an identified end-date of June 2022. They have not been updated, but are still being used.

The requirement for 'larger public service entities to have gender action plans' was a requirement of the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement (Tenth Legislative Assembly). The Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate developed gender action plans. The Education Directorate has drafted a *Gender Equity Action Plan 2024-29*, but the plan has not yet been finalised. Not having a finalised gender action plan is recognised as a strategic risk for the Education Directorate. 4.36

The three agencies considered as part of the audit have expressed commitment and support for other diversity groups in different ways: 4.45

- the Education Directorate has drafted an *Access and Inclusion Employment Action Plan 2024-27*, which is intended to '[detail] practical and measurable actions that will improve the experience of Directorate staff with a disability'. A Statement of Commitment for other diversity groups (LGBTIQ+, people from culturally and

linguistically diverse backgrounds, women, veterans and carers) is identified as a deliverable in the Education Directorate's *People and Performance 2024 Branch Work Plan*;

- the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate has developed a *Veterans Network Action Plan 2024* and *Pride Network Action Plan 2024*. The Directorate's *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (Extended to 2025)* indicates that a further six action plans are under development: LGBTIQ+ inclusion, women, people with disability, veterans, gender equality and people from non-English-speaking backgrounds; and
- the Justice and Community Safety Directorate has an '*Our abilities*' *Employment Strategy for People with Disability 2022-24*. The strategy aims to eliminate barriers to employment, improve the experience of work and achieve positive employment outcomes for people with disability within the directorate. The Strategy came to term in June 2024 and has not been updated since then.

The three agencies considered as part of the audit have sought to engage and consult with representatives from diverse groups for the purpose of developing and informing the agency's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. The way in which the agencies have done this has varied:

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- the Education Directorate has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network and Disability Advocacy Network, which have been consulted for the purpose of developing various initiatives, as well as a Pride Network and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Staff Network;
- the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate had a Women's Network, Disability and Carers Network, Pride Network, Veterans Network and a RAP Committee; and
- the Emergency Services Agency has consulted with staff and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds for the purpose of planning two initiatives: a Pilot ACT Emergency Services Agency Work Experience Program for ACT School Year 10-12 First Nations Students; and two ESA Guest Experience Officer roles as designated positions for people with disability.

Monitoring and reporting

Reports from Converge, the Employee Assistance Program provider, can provide useful information on the effectiveness of an agency's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and employees' overall sense of wellbeing. *Workplace Wellbeing Impact Reports* produced by Converge provide a variety of quantitative and qualitative information related to staff members' access to the Program. The three agencies considered as part of the audit do not incorporate Employee Assistance Program data or information from *Workplace Wellbeing Impact Reports* into their annual reports.

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The three agencies considered as part of the audit have undertaken a significant range of activities in support of diversity, equity and inclusion. The size, scale and expected impact of the activities has necessarily varied across the agencies, depending on each agency's staffing cohort, focus and priorities. Only on a few

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occasions have the agencies sought to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the specific activities.

The RED Framework provides for the identification of Respect Equity and Diversity Contact Officers (REDCOs) across directorates and agencies. The role of REDCOs is to 'model and promote the ACTPS Values and Signature Behaviours to develop positive work cultures across the ACTPS. REDCOs provide information to staff seeking a solution to improve or resolve a workplace issue or situation, which may relate to inappropriate behaviour or misconduct'. The three agencies considered as part of the audit have identified and established REDCOs. Each of the agencies has established regular meetings and forums for its REDCOs, but these are not always well-attended. REDCOs are required to submit a RED Contact Report for every contact they have related to RED Framework matters. Across all agencies it was noted that REDCOs sometimes have informal contacts with staff members, which are not recorded as a contact for reporting and monitoring purposes.

4.103

Exit surveys of departing staff are an opportunity to obtain information and insights into potential workplace issues and/or dissatisfaction of staff. These may include insights into staff members' feeling of belonging and inclusion. The Education Directorate and Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate have developed and implemented exit surveys of departing staff. The Education Directorate has systematically reviewed and evaluated exit survey responses with a view to identifying significant factors and trends. The Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate had only begun to prepare quarterly reports on exit survey results as of 2024. Neither the Emergency Services Agency nor the Justice and Community Safety Directorate more broadly have conducted exit surveys of staff. The Justice and Community Safety Directorate advised that it is developing a 'Leaving the JACS Directorate Survey' which it plans to implement in 2025.

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The ACTPS Employee Survey is conducted every two years. The Survey provides useful information on employees and their overall sense of wellbeing. Across the three agencies the proportion of employees who identified as belonging to a diversity group was reported as higher through the ACTPS Employee Survey than through HR21 data. This means that employees from diversity groups are under-represented in the HR21 data and more likely to self-identify in the anonymous ACTPS Employee Survey. For the Education Directorate, the annual School Satisfaction and Climate Survey (School Survey) also collects relevant feedback from school staff as well as parents, carers and students. The ACTPS Employee Survey (and School Survey) provide useful information on employees' wellbeing and inclusion.

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Agency practices (employee lifecycle)

Attraction

The three agencies considered as part of the audit have undertaken a variety of activities to attract potential employees from different diversity groups. The nature of the activities has necessarily varied across the agencies, depending on each agency's staffing cohort, focus and priorities.

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Recruitment

Better practice recruitment involves systematically replacing subjective decision-making in recruitment processes with objective decision-making by developing

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objective criteria and standards to reduce bias. Better practice recruitment approaches also include training for recruiters/selection panels in diversity, accessibility, cultural awareness, reasonable adjustments and unconscious bias. All three agencies considered as part of the audit have developed policy and procedural guidance in relation to the conduct of recruitment and selection processes, with a view to ensuring that recruitment processes are fair and free of bias. The Education Directorate and Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate have developed and implemented mandatory training for members of recruitment and selection panels. The mandatory training addresses the key principles of merit, equity, diversity and fairness; conflicts of interest; and unconscious bias.

Onboarding

Onboarding refers to the process by which new employees come to understand the expectations of their workplace and receive appropriate training. The three agencies considered as part of the audit have undertaken a variety of activities to onboard employees from different diversity groups. The nature of the activities has necessarily varied across the agencies, depending on each agency's staffing cohort, focus and priorities. In two specific instances the Education Directorate's Diversity and Inclusion team has made efforts to improve the onboarding experience for specific groups, namely people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women/new parents.

5.47

Retention and development

Targeted training and career development pathways equip employees with the skills and opportunities needed to grow within an organisation. This approach fosters engagement, satisfaction and loyalty and creates a cohesive employee experience that promotes retention. The three agencies considered as part of the audit provide a variety of training and development opportunities to their employees. The nature of the training and development opportunities has necessarily varied across the agencies, depending on each agency's staffing cohort, focus and priorities.

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Whole-of-government diversity, equity and inclusion strategy

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, in progressing the development of an overarching ACTPS Inclusion and Belonging Strategy, ensure that the Strategy specifically recognises and reflects:

- a) key contemporary concepts, such as belonging and intersectionality; and
- b) the broad range of the different diversity groups represented in the ACTPS and their specific needs.

Recommendation 2

Provision of information

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate should:

- a) enhance the information provided through the ACTPS Culture, Inclusion and Belonging Hub by providing an accessible and identifiable roadmap of relevant legislation, frameworks, strategies and plans for diversity, equity and inclusion relevant to the ACTPS; and

- b) provide ACTPS policy and associated guidance about making workplace adjustments for people with disability through an alternative forum to the Rehabilitation Management System.

Recommendation 3 Collection of diversity, equity and inclusion employment data

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate should:

- a) collect employment data for people who identify as neurodivergent; and
- b) develop systems and processes for ACTPS employees to directly update key personal information.

Recommendation 4 Learning and development requirements

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate should establish mandatory:

- a) workplace diversity training requirements for all staff and refresher courses for staff every two to three years;
- b) diversity, equity and inclusion training requirements for managers and supervisors; and
- c) diversity, equity and inclusion training requirements for ACTPS staff involved in recruitment.

Recommendation 5 Performance and accountability arrangements for cross-agency frameworks, strategies and plans

When developing future frameworks, strategies and plans for diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, ACT Government agencies should clearly identify:

- a) strategic objectives and outcomes;
- b) actions with timeframes for implementation; and
- c) performance measures with targets.

Recommendation 6 Employment targets

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate should establish employment targets for diversity groups, including LGBTIQ+, people with disability, older workers, veterans and people who are neurodiverse.

Recommendation 7 State of the Service reporting

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate should improve annual State of the Service reporting by:

- a) including multi-year tracking and trend analysis of diversity, equity and inclusion data;
- b) incorporating analysis of diversity, equity and inclusion data from the ACTPS Employee Survey; and
- c) including analysis of relevant and appropriate data from the Employee Assistance Program.

Recommendation 8 Assessing diversity, equity and inclusion maturity

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate should:

- a) undertake regular review of ACTPS maturity in diversity, equity and inclusion practices through self-assessment process against a relevant maturity model; and

- b) consider using multiple better practice tools or approaches, such as the Australian Human Resource Institute's (AHRI) Diversity and Inclusion maturity model and Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB).