



## Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Strategic Plan 2021-2024

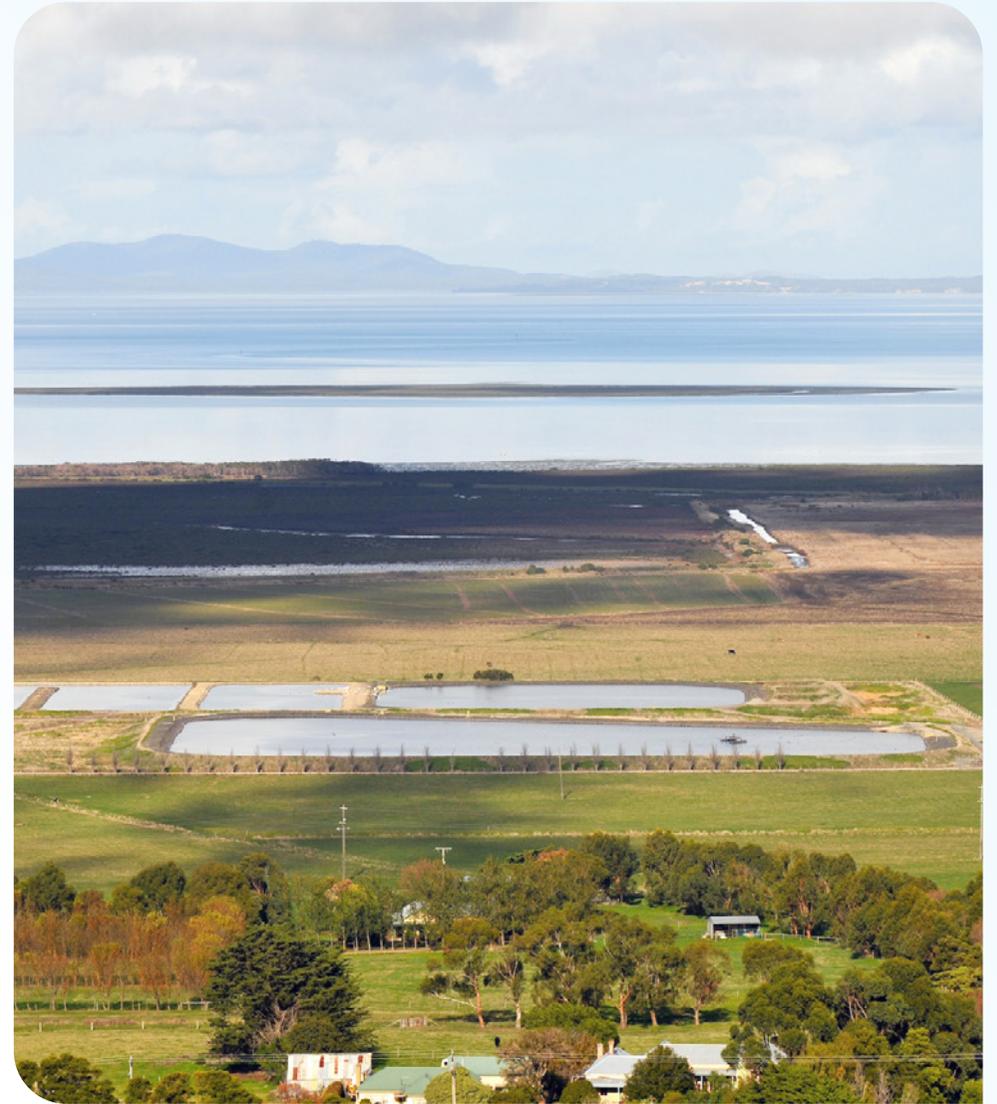
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# Acknowledgement

South Gippsland Water proudly acknowledges the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai peoples as Australia's first peoples and local Traditional Owners as the original custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We pay our deepest respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the continued cultural, social and spiritual connections that Aboriginal people have with the lands and waters - we recognise and value that the Traditional Owner groups have cared for and protected them for thousands of generations. In the spirit of reconciliation, we remain committed to working in partnership with local Traditional Owners to ensure their ongoing contribution to the future of the water management landscape while maintaining their cultural and spiritual connections.



# Our Commitment

Welcome to South Gippsland Water's second Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Strategic Plan (2021-2024). This Plan demonstrates our commitment to an inclusive, respectful and safe workplace.

We have learnt much as an organisation since the introduction of our first Plan in 2017. We have achieved greater gender balance and equity in leadership and in nontraditional roles. Our workforce has benefited from greater flexibility and we are determined to embrace and embed what we've learnt from many of us working from home during 2020, to hold on to the positive difference this made to our wellbeing, balanced with those for whom working with others daily is important. We have started to rethink and redesign how we might approach roles and tasks in the future so a broader range of people can fully and flexibly participate in our workforce and reach their potential. We have demonstrated the importance of inclusion and diversity within our organisation by raising it to Board level and forming a People, Culture and Safety Board Committee.

Most importantly, our experiences have confirmed that diverse thinking, skills, perspectives and experience brings real strength to our team and delivers better outcomes, in line with South Gippsland Water's Vision for 2023 – one of an Achievement Culture.



## Achievement Culture

- We invest in developing people to achieve their potential
- We foster inclusion, trust and constructive behaviours
- Our workplace practices empower achievement
- Our behaviours, systems and processes ensure we do not compromise on safety and wellbeing



## Our Commitment

Our 2021-2024 Plan demonstrates a level of maturity, where we have become motivated to move beyond compliance to ambition, with staff demonstrating their commitment through their many contributions to this Plan's development. While there have been wins the pace of change has been swift, but not without its challenges. There is still a lot to be done. Under this new Plan:

- We will further our achievements in the area of gender balance and equity, including implementing the Gender Equality Act 2020;
- We will build on early inroads and success in relation to flexible work practices and inclusive job design;
- We will move to achievement of Plan outcomes being a shared responsibility at all levels across South Gippsland Water, beyond human resources or management;
- We will make progress in providing a workplace that is culturally safe for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and provides local employment opportunities;
- We will ensure employees and their families who are members of the LGBTQI+ community feel safe and accepted at work; and
- We will improve our physical spaces and support structures, to make them safer and more welcoming for people of all backgrounds and abilities.



David Schultz,  
Board Chair



Philippe du Plessis,  
Managing Director

## Background

Increasing workplace diversity and an inclusive culture is a good business decision. A 2015 McKinsey report on 366 public companies found that those in the top quartiles for ethnic and racial diversity in management were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean, and those in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have returns above the industry mean.

Another global study of over 2,400 companies found that organisations with at least one female board member yielded higher return on equity and higher net income growth than those with no women on their board.

In recent years a body of research has been developed supporting these findings and also revealing other benefits of workplace diversity. Diverse teams are simply smarter.

Working with people who are different to us may challenge us to overcome our normal way of thinking and sharpen our performance. Diverse teams may process, recall and re-examine facts more easily, and are more likely to remain objective. They can encourage greater scrutiny of each others' actions and remain sharper and more vigilant. Diverse teams are more likely to introduce new innovations and develop new products. They can enable staff to become more aware of their own potential biases and entrenched ways of thinking.

*Why Diverse Teams Are Smarter [2016], David Rock & Heidi Grant.*



### **Diversity can make us smarter and more successful.**

Research has shown that enriching our workforce through employing people with diverse attributes can:

*Stimulate creativity and a variety of viewpoints; promote agile, flexible and adaptable practice; and significantly increase new ideas and innovation.*

### **The outcome of these benefits has been proven to include:**

*More effective leadership; enhanced teamwork and collaboration; more effective decision making and problem solving; higher productivity; and increased employee satisfaction, engagement and retention rates.*

*For this to happen workplaces must have inclusive practices to allow employees to feel safe and be heard.*

# Definitions

## Diversity

The quality of being different or unique at the individual or group level

*Includes culture, religion, ethnicity, language, age, gender spectrum, sexual orientation, family and carer status, disability, socio-economic status and other characteristics. Increases innovation, creativity and collaboration by bringing a variety of life experiences, skillsets and viewpoints to the table. Leads to more effective decision making, problem solving and teamwork as well as increased workplace engagement and retention rates.*

## Inclusion

The act of bringing together and harnessing differences in a way that is beneficial

*Creates an environment in which everyone feels valued, respected and listened to, has access to the same opportunities and is supported to reach their full potential.*

## Equity

The pledge of fair treatment, opportunity and advancement while striving to identify and eliminate barriers

**EQUALITY** treats everyone the same regardless of their needs or circumstances.

**EQUITY** treats people differently according to their needs in order to provide the same opportunities



## Our community profile

South Gippsland Water is unique in that it delivers services across three of the six Gippsland local government areas. Our catchment area spans 1,234 square kilometres and our service area covers 4,000 square kilometres, from Wonthaggi in the west to Port Albert in the east.

While our region enjoys the richness that diverse communities offer - bustling regional centres, farming and agricultural districts, coastal towns and arts and culture hubs - the profile of our residents and customers remain fairly consistent.

Snapshot of community profiles	Bass Coast	South Gippsland	Wellington
Total Population	34,390	29,914	43,417
% Female	51.1	50.6	49.1
% Male	48.9	49.4	50.0
% Total ATSI persons	0.9	1	1.5
% ATSI participating in workforce	56	58.3	52.5
% Born overseas	14.4	11	10.6
% Speak LOTE at home	4.8	3.4	3.8
Main Religions	Christianity 48.3%	Christianity 49.3%	Christianity 53%
	No religion 39%	No religion 38.4%	No religion 33%
	Other religions all < 1%	Other religions all < 1%	Other religions all < 1%
% Persons who need assistance with core activities	6.6	5.5	5.9
% Persons with a disability	26.4	24.4	NA
% Primary carers aged 15+	6.1	5.4	NA

ABS Datasets: Regional Statistics by LGA, 2019, 2011-2019 - Bass Coast, South Gippsland, Wellington Shires



## Our workforce profile

- 33:67** gender balance in senior leadership roles
- 0%** of our workforce identify as ATSI
- 2%** of our workforce identify as belonging to the LGBTI+ communities
- 6%** of our workforce speak a language other than English at home
- 4%** of our workforce identify as a person with a disability
- 51%** of our workforce identify as having caring responsibilities
- 98%** of employees work flexibility



## 2023 Water Industry Targets

- 50:50 gender balance in senior leadership roles
- 10% of our workforce identify as a person with a disability
- 20% of our workforce speak a language other than English
- 3% of our workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 35% of our workforce identify as having caring responsibilities
- 7% of our workforce identify as belonging to the LGBTI+ communities

Flexible work arrangements are available to all employees unless there is a specific operational constraint

- 35% of employees work flexibly

The State Government and the Victorian Water Sector have collectively established diversity targets for the Victorian Water Industry for 2023. These are collective or combined targets that span across the Industry, with individual Corporations each able to determine their own targets.

South Gippsland Water's 2023 targets are based on local community profiles, achievements to date, and future priorities.

## Our 2024 Targets

- 50:50 M:F gender balance in senior leadership\* roles
- 70:30 M:F gender balance in engineering, maintenance and treatment roles
- 40:60 M:F gender balance in corporate support and customer service roles
- 6% of our workforce identify as a person with a disability
- 5% of our workforce speak a language other than English at home
- 1% of our workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander AND/OR partnership with regional organisations provide employment
- 50% of our workforce identify as having caring responsibilities
- 4% of our workforce identify as belonging to the LGBTI+ communities
- 7% of our workforce is aged under 25
- 100% of employees work flexibly

The Psychosocial Climate Index score is sustained as 15+ (Positive Climate)\*\*

Necessary upgrades to facilities and technology are identified as part of the 2021-22 Capital Plan process and delivered as scheduled

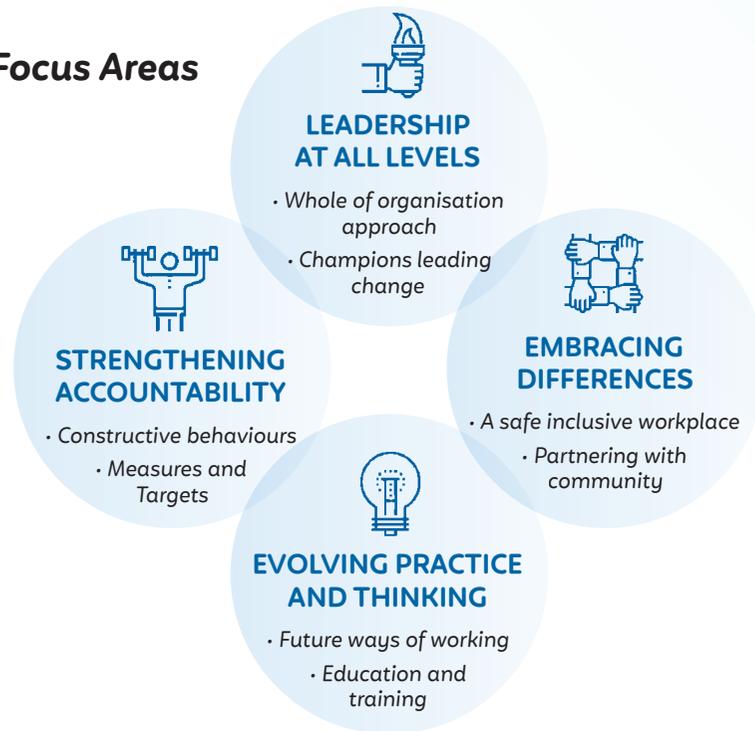
\*defined as Executives and SEO Managers including technical specialists without people management responsibilities  
 \*\* As measured in the People Matter Survey annually

# Framework

## Vision Statement 2024

*"Diversity is celebrated and respected as important for our wellbeing and success"*

## Key Focus Areas



# Our Plan - Year 1 Actions

## Whole of Organisation Approach

*Work group level actions are identified and implemented to support broader organisational strategies*

## Champions Leading Change

*A Champions Network is established, meets and reports to bring oversight, visibility and momentum to implementing the Plan*

## A safe inclusive workplace

*Communications present a diverse, welcoming, inclusive workplace through stories, images and articles*

## Education and Training (Hiring Managers)

*All employees receive training in Diversity and Inclusion topics including Aboriginal Cultural Awareness and unconscious bias. Mandatory for new starters*

## Constructive Behaviours

*Employees are equipped to recognize and call out inappropriate behaviour when they see it. Inclusive, respectful behaviour is recognised and where appropriate rewarded*



# Our Plan - Year 1 Actions

## Future Ways of Working

- Job Design** Position Descriptions and work methods continue to be reviewed and redesigned to ensure they are future focused, identify key capabilities in terms of outcomes and remove barriers to diverse candidates
- Facilities**
  - A.** Ensure facilities and spaces are physically and culturally safe, inclusive and welcoming including acknowledging and showing respect for the First Nations people who are the traditional custodians of the land we work on.
  - B.** Reduce barriers to equal participation for customers or employees experiencing disability
- Recruitment** Diversity criteria are embedded in recruitment and selection tools and activities including panel composition
- Job Pathways** Career pathways are developed with a focus on reducing barriers to participation (traineeships/ graduates / placements / secondments / higher duties / project roles / internal transfers / rotation)

## Measures and Targets

KPIs are assigned across Executive and SEO performance and development plans



# Our Plan - Year 2 & 3 Actions

## A safe inclusive workplace

- Events celebrating diversity are sponsored
- Corporate communications – internal and external – are reviewed to make sure they are accessible for all abilities

## Partnering with community

- Partnerships with local organisations and groups are identified to explore joint approaches to equity, diversity and inclusion outcomes in our community
- Development and implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan

## Education and Training (Hiring Managers)

- Best practice recruitment training for Hiring Managers

## Future Ways of Working (Flexible work practices)

- Leverage off flexible work practices while addressing challenges and inconsistencies and identifying and addressing barriers to flexibility

## Measures and Targets

- KPIs are assigned across Executive and SEO performance and development plans



# Implementing Our Plan

## A change management approach:

- Change takes time and people respond in different ways and at different paces
- We will support people in working towards a more inclusive and respectful culture
- Consultation, communication, awareness raising and education underpin all of our strategies
- This isn't about asking people to change their personal opinions. This is about how we act and speak at work

## Utilising champions:

- We understand that champions come in different shapes, sizes and roles
- We will equip our champions to influence change where it's needed
- Our champions will help us make implementation practical

## Sustainability:

- We will take a whole of organisation approach
- Our Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Strategic Plan will be everyone's responsibility

Develop > Embed > Sustain



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