



South Gippsland Water Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025 - 28

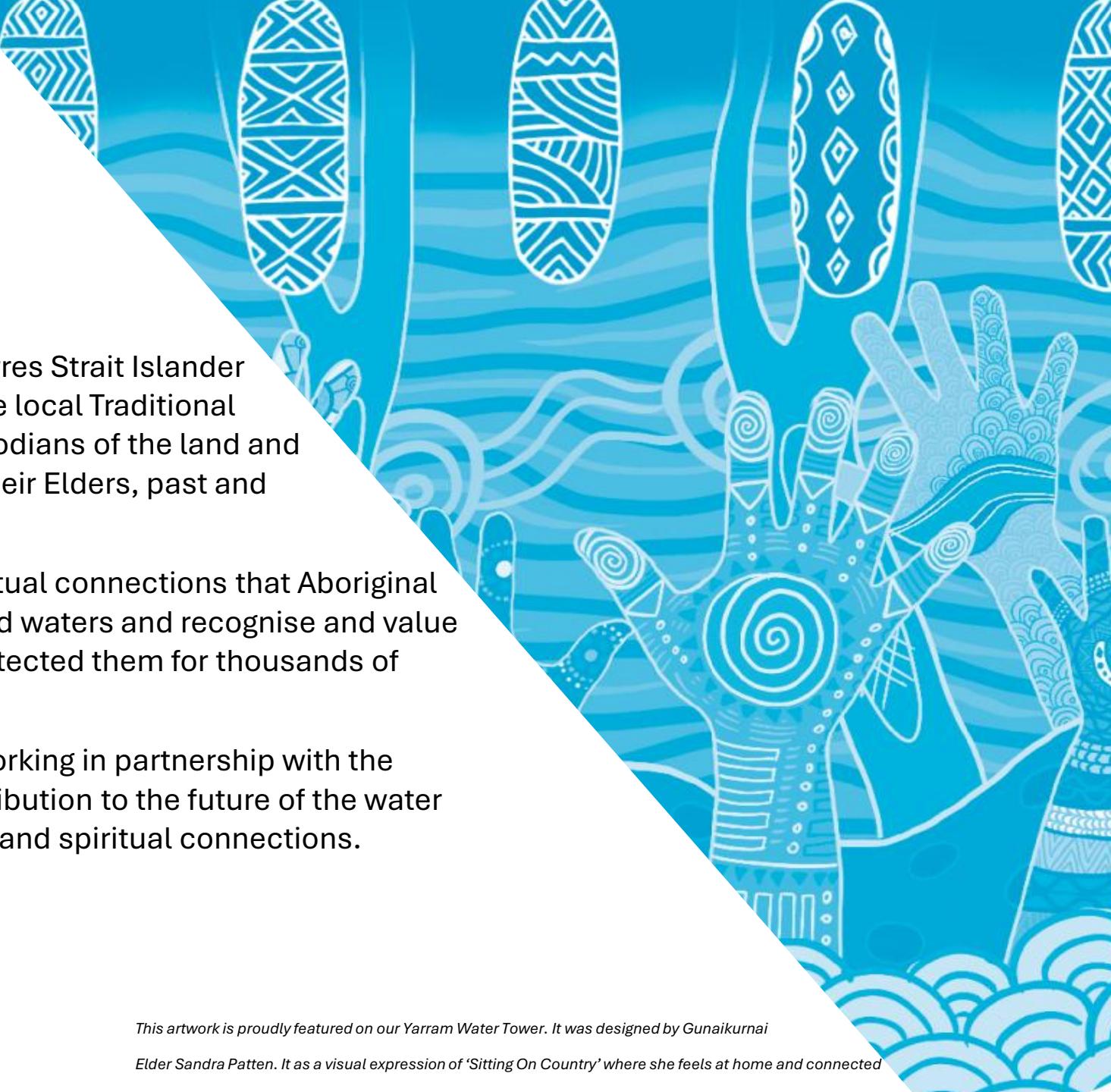


Acknowledgement of Country

South Gippsland Water acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's First Peoples. We acknowledge the local Traditional Owners, Gunaikurnai and Bunurong, as the original custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We pay our deepest respect to their Elders, past and present.

We acknowledge the continued cultural, social and spiritual connections that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have with the lands and waters and 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 the Gunaikurnai and Bunurong to ensure their ongoing contribution to the future of the water management landscape while maintaining their cultural and spiritual connections.



Our commitment

Working for better outcomes as a sector

Message from the Board

The Board is proud to support and champion South Gippsland Water's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, because it reflects our values and our vision for the future.

This strategy gives us the roadmap to do better: to remove barriers, to build a stronger sense of belonging, and to ensure that opportunity and respect are available to everyone, regardless of background.

When we embrace diverse perspectives, lived experiences, and everyone has a voice, we create a richer, more innovative, and more compassionate workplace.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion aren't just principles we aspire to; they are essential to how we lead, how we make decisions, and how we serve our communities with integrity and care.

The Board recognises this work is ongoing and that meaningful change takes time, intention, and accountability.

We are committed to walking this path alongside our leadership team and staff with humility, courage, and optimism.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to shaping this important strategy. Your voices are helping to build a culture that is more inclusive, more connected, and ultimately, more resilient.

South Gippsland Water Board Chair

Nicola Hepenstall



Our context and community

An inclusive organisation, diverse communities, equitable service

Our region enjoys the richness that diverse communities offer – bustling regional centres, thriving farming and agricultural districts, vibrant tourist destinations, and popular arts and culture hubs. Harnessing the collective commitment, knowledge, resources and passion of the Victorian water sector, South Gippsland Water is committed to be leaders in EDI within our communities.

Our focus on creating equitable outcomes benefits our employees, our customers and the diverse communities within South Gippsland as these same principles are reflected in every aspect of how we deliver services and serve our communities. An equitable, diverse and inclusive organisation leads to a healthier and happier workplace, increased innovation and improved business performance.

Our community (2021 Census)

	Bass Coast	South Gippsland	Wellington
Total Population	42,729	30,577	45,469
% female	51.4	50.6	49.6%
% male	48.6	49.4	50.4%
% Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander	1.1%	1.2%	2.0%
% born overseas	15.1%	11.5%	11.0%
% speak LOTE at home	5.1%	3.9%	3.9%
Main religions	Western (Roman) Catholic, Anglican	Western (Roman) Catholic, Anglican	Western (Roman) Catholic, Anglican
% primary carers	22.7%	25.0%	24.0%
% people with disability	7.1%	6.4%	13.9%
LGBTQIA+	Not recorded		

Our workforce (2025)

	All	Leadership Roles
Total employees	154	
% female	44%	36%
% male	56%	64%
% Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander	1%	
% born overseas	9%	
% speak LOTE at home	6%	
Main religions	Christianity, Sikhism, Hinduism	
% primary carers	60%	
% people with disability	4%	
% LGBTQIA+	7%	

Our targets

Year on year improvement or maintain compliance with target:

- Gender balance (40:40:20) in senior leadership positions
- Gender balance (40:40:20) across the organisation
- A reduction in gender segregation in all areas
- 7% of our workforce identify as belonging to the LGBTQI+* communities
- 10% of our workforce identify as a person with disability including neurodiversity
- 10% of our workforce identify as having a CALD** background
- 2.5% of our workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 80% of people leaders attend at least one E,D & I professional development activity each year

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex

**Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Year on year improvement in People Matter Survey results:

Selected questions/statements to identify opportunities to collaborate and improve

- I have equal chance of promotion in my organisation.
- My Manager listens to what I have to say.
- I feel comfortable to speak up in my organisation.
- I feel culturally safe at work.
- During the last 12 month in your current organisation, have you personally experienced discrimination at work?
- Were you discriminated against?



Our Framework

South Gippsland Water adopts a framework that is strongly aligned to the VicWater Strategy and the goal of sector wide progress.

Strategic priorities	INCLUSIVE We are an inclusive sector	EQUITABLE We provide an equitable workplace	DIVERSE We are a diverse workforce
Strategic outcome	WE PROVIDE a workplace that is safe and enables employees to thrive	WE ENABLE all employees to have the opportunities that are tailored to them	WE REFLECT the community that we serve
Achieved through initiatives over 2025–28	COLLABORATE for improvement ATTRACT and retain diverse talent SUPPORT programs to build talent pipeline CONNECT with the Safety Executive Group (SEG)	BUILD relationships to improve equity TRAIN leaders and frontline staff EDUCATE about equitable workspaces SUPPORT D&I technology	REFLECT our diverse communities MEASURE our maturity CHAMPION diversity ENGAGE with Traditional Owner Groups
Initiatives	ACCESSIBILITY AUDITS conducted to ensure services and communication channels meet the needs of all customers and people with disabilities GENDER-NEUTRAL RECRUITMENT review and ensure all job advertisements and position descriptions use gender-neutral language to attract a wider, more diverse pool of candidates. COLLATE PEOPLE MATTER SURVEY DATA on select questions* to identify opportunities to collaborate and improve DEVELOP A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY to attract and retain diverse talent LEADERSHIP TARGETS Increase the representation of women and other underrepresented groups in leadership and technical positions by setting clear, measurable targets. PARTNERSHIPS Partner with organisations within our service region and more broadly that support diversity CONNECT AND COLLABORATE with the Safety Executive Group (SEG) to ensure psychologically safe workspaces	AGREE AN ORGANISATION WIDE APPROACH to Gender Impact Assessments ARRANGE FOR GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT TRAINING for people leaders CONDUCT GENDER WORKPLACE AUDIT to identify opportunities to reduce the gender pay gap WORK WITH IWN to support E, D&I technologies in all workplaces DEVELOP EDUCATION material/ toolkits to provide equitable workspaces for all DEVELOP CAPABILITY of people leaders in ED&I through professional development activities	COMMUNITY REFLECTION aim to build a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP allocate a diversity portfolio to each Executive Leader to champion RECONCILIATION continue to develop and implement Reconciliation Action Plans
Measures for success	IMPROVED PERFORMANCE in key metrics AUDITS conducted and results shared	IMPROVED PERFORMANCE against key metrics INCREASED VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE of diversity measures ZERO NON-CONFORMANCE with GIAs REDUCTION in Gender Pay Gap	GREATER VISIBILITY of ED&I performance A POSITIVE SHIFT in ED&I maturity

*select questions identified in 'our targets' page 5

Inclusive  Respectful  Reliable  Innovative  Sustainable 

START SAFE  WORK SAFE  HOME SAFE 



Governance, Reporting and Review

Maintaining accountability and transparency

Governance

The Managing Director will nominate a member of the Executive to be accountable for implementation of this plan. The relevant executive and board committees will monitor implementation of this plan and approve the Annual Workplan.

Annual Workplan Development

The VicWater Annual Workplan will be reviewed when released and consideration will be given to how best to apply these to the South Gippsland Water context, making best use of SGW and industry resources. Additional organisation specific actions may also be identified, based on performance against targets, reported issues and employee feedback.

Reporting

Targets for progressing equity, diversity and inclusion will be measured in alignment with any specified guidance and reported to relevant executive and board committees.

South Gippsland Water will submit all relevant data and information to VicWater to enable industry wide reporting.

Following publishing by VicWater, the VicWater annual report and corresponding SGW report will be published on the SGW website.

Review

The outcomes and recommendations of any review conducted by VicWater will be adopted wherever practicable.

