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Policy owner	Director, Human Resource Management
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Principal audience	Employees
Related documents	<a href="#">Parliamentary Service Act 1999</a> <a href="#">Fair Work Act 2009</a>

# Workplace Diversity Program

## 1. Introduction

The Department of the Senate (the department) is committed to supporting workforce diversity. Workforce diversity builds organisational capability – employees bring to the workplace different perspectives that can support innovation, efficiency and overall productivity.

Workplace diversity is a broad concept, which encompasses both equity and diversity. The key workplace diversity principles are:

- treating people with respect and dignity;
- valuing the differences and diversity of people;
- eliminating unfair and inappropriate barriers; and
- making judgements based on equity and merit.

This Workplace Diversity Program (the program) recognises and seeks to enhance the capability of employees to better deliver on the department's key purpose of providing the Senate, its committees, the President of the Senate and senators with a broad range of advisory and support services.

## 2. Legislative obligations

Section 18 of the [Parliamentary Service Act 1999](#) (the Act) requires the department to have a workplace diversity program in place to help give effect to the Parliamentary Service Employment Principles.

Subsections 10A(f) and (g) of the Act state that the Parliamentary Service is a career-based service that provides workplaces that are free from discrimination, patronage and favouritism and that the Parliamentary Service recognises the diversity of the Australian community and fosters diversity in the workplace.

The [Fair Work Act 2009](#) (the Fair Work Act) also provides employees with certain rights in relation to some entitlements related to workplace diversity.

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<sup>1</sup> This program continues to operate after its nominal expiry date until it is replaced.

Additionally, other Commonwealth and territory legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment decisions on the grounds of race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, age and disability.

### 3. Purpose

In pursuing the goals outlined in the Corporate Plan, the department:

- recognises the diversity of the Australian community and fosters diversity in the workplace in accordance with the Act;
- provides a flexible, safe and rewarding workplace where communication, consultation, cooperation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace is valued;
- respects all people, including their rights and their heritage; and
- implements workplace policies and practices that value differences in the workplace.

These principles are central to the achievement of a culture free from unlawful discrimination where workplace diversity is valued and contributes to the department's performance.

### 4. Roles and responsibilities

#### *The department*

The department is responsible for developing and implementing a workplace diversity program and ensuring that various legislative requirements are met. Additionally, the department seeks to retain its position as an employer of choice and provide a work environment that aims to create a supportive, flexible, and fair workplace in which differences between employees are respected.

#### *Employees*

Employees are also responsible for workplace diversity and can contribute by applying diversity principles every day in the workplace.

All employees must:

- treat each other with respect and courtesy, consistent with the Parliamentary Service Values, the Parliamentary Service Employment Principles and the Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct;
- seek to improve the quality of work outcomes by incorporating diverse ideas, opinions and perspectives;
- be inclusive and recognise and value the contributions from others;
- support employees who require reasonable adjustment <sup>2</sup> and flexible work arrangements; and
- comply with all anti-discrimination laws.

Managers and supervisors must also:

- lead by example in modelling the Parliamentary Service Values, and upholding the Parliamentary Service Employment Principles and Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct;
- foster a culture where the diversity of employees is recognised, valued and utilised;
- encourage the use of the flexibility available in the department's employment terms and conditions;
- adhere to the merit principle in selection processes, including supporting employees who require reasonable adjustment;
- work to resolve workplace issues quickly, sensitively and effectively;
- wherever possible ensure that the scheduling of meetings, travel and other work arrangements take into account the personal commitments and responsibilities of employees;

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<sup>2</sup> 'Reasonable adjustment' refers to the extent of workplace modifications (including work processes and job design) required to meet the needs of a person with a disability.

- seek to maintain a workplace that is free from discrimination; and
- help employees to understand the department's Workplace Diversity Program.

## 5. Workplace diversity strategies

While the department supports all employees through various strategies, this program has elements that particularly support the following identified groups:

- Indigenous Australians;
- people with a disability;
- women;
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- mature aged workers and the intergenerational workforce;
- carers; and
- gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex employees.

Specific objectives and strategies include the following.

Objective	Strategies
Use employees' differences to improve outcomes and achieve department goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise employee awareness of the value of diversity in the workplace, including the provision of information in induction packs.</li> <li>• Consider reasonable requests for flexible working arrangements in accordance with the Fair Work Act and the department's employment terms and conditions.</li> <li>• Ensure that merit is the basis for all engagement and promotion decisions.</li> <li>• Ensure employees have access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).</li> <li>• Provide for discretionary leave to allow employees to meet religious and ceremonial obligations, including attendance at National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee week activities.</li> <li>• Help employees maintain a work and life balance while developing or maintaining a career and give support to those who are transitioning to the next stage of their lives.</li> </ul>
Enhance the opportunities for employees to participate and contribute to the work of the department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage employees to identify their skills and develop new ones as part of the Performance Communication Scheme.</li> <li>• Ensure that reasonable adjustment takes place for employees, including the provision of flexible work arrangements.</li> <li>• Deliver education programs to employees, and specifically managers and supervisors, on the benefits of workplace diversity and how to promote and embed it in their sections.</li> <li>• Publish disclosed information about employees in the <i>Staff Bulletin</i> including staff profiles.</li> </ul>
Ensure that employment practices value and respect the diversity of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use identified positions, where considered appropriate, to engage Indigenous employees including the establishment of an Indigenous Apprenticeship Program.</li> <li>• Provide support and information to employees who are pregnant to ensure they are aware of their entitlements, including return to work</li> </ul>

Australian Community	<p>options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a 'keep-in-touch' program for employees who take extensive amounts of parental leave.</li> <li>• Provide access to and information on learning and development opportunities that support employees in identified groups to develop their careers and move into leadership positions if they so desire.</li> <li>• Provide employment terms and conditions that recognise same sex relationships on an equal footing with heterosexual relationships.</li> <li>• Foster an inclusive work environment in which employees are able to be open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.</li> </ul>
Uphold and promote the Parliamentary Service Values, Parliamentary Service Employment Principles and the Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct and to discourage and eliminate harassment, bullying and unlawful discrimination in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that employees have access to suitably qualified Workplace Harassment Contact Officers.</li> <li>• Provide training to employees on the identification and elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying.</li> <li>• Maintain various policies and practices which uphold and promote the Parliamentary Service Values, Parliamentary Service Employment Principles and the Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct.</li> </ul>
Ensure that work structures, conditions, systems and procedures foster diversity and allow employees to manage work and personal life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that relevant policies consider diversity in employment.</li> <li>• Seek to ensure that information systems allow people to enter information without the specification of gender being required.</li> <li>• Ensure that relevant policies are applied fairly and consistently across the department and that they are made available to employees via the intranet.</li> <li>• Provide designated car parking spaces for employees who are disabled.</li> <li>• Provide access for employees to a breastfeeding room and facilities.</li> </ul>

## 6. Review

This program will be reviewed in accordance with clause 50 of the [Parliamentary Service Determination 2013](#).

## 7. Further Information

For further information contact the Director, Human Resource Management on (02) 6277 5757.