Barwon Water

Barwon Asset Solutions

Unity and Belonging at Barwon Water Group

2026-2030

Our Shared **Humanity**

Our Values in action

Systems that **work for everyone**

Table of contents

Content	Page number
A message of unity	3
Messages and attestation from Managing Director	4-5
Why this plan and why now – Strategy 2030	6
Who we are at our best and what we are proud of	7-8
The importance of both unity and diversity	9-10
Demonstrated progress and how we have identified our gaps	11-12
Goals of this plan	13
Consultation, guiding principles and commitments	14-16
Case for change and action plan	17-24
How we will know we are succeeding	25-27
Governance and resourcing (including Inclusion Council)	28-30
Appendix 1: Shared language and definitions	*32-34*

A message of unity

"This is our time to stop, take stock, and stay present. To come back to what actually matters. Our shared humanity. Not the labels. Not the differences. Not the hot takes or the commentary. Just people looking out for people. No matter who we are or where we come from, we are all bound by care, by grief, by the need to feel safe and be seen. Staying human is the work here. Staying kind. Staying connected. This is how we honour everyone."

First Nations Values Team

From Managing Director, Shaun Cumming

“At the heart of this plan is something deeply human: unity. Being safe to be ourselves, to speak up and connected in purpose. That is what this plan is about.

“We recognise the First Peoples of this land we work on, and the waters that sustain us. We acknowledge the deep strength and wisdom of First Peoples. Unity starts with truth, respect and listening deeply.

“We’ve made real progress on being an organisation where people feel they belong. I’m proud of that. And in developing this plan, we’ve asked where do we need to be braver? Where do we need to stretch? These questions have created the backbone of this plan.

“Unity is built in the moments we choose to show up for one another. Together, we create a workplace that reflects the very best of who we are.”

Attestation by head of organisation

As a Victorian public sector organisation with more than 50 employees, Barwon Water Group is bound by the Gender Equality Act (2020) which requires us to have a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). Our GEAP is contained within our Unity and Belonging Plan.

Name	**Shaun Cumming**
Role title	Managing Director
Signed	
Date	27 April 2026

I confirm that:

- I am the head of organisation (CEO or equivalent)
- I have reviewed and approved the submission of this gender equality action plan (GEAP) on behalf of my organisation (as named above), and I attest that the implementation of the GEAP will be adequately resourced as required under the Gender Equality Act (2020).

Why this plan and why now

We have built a strong foundation of care, flexibility and behaviours that reflect our values. This plan builds on those strengths in response to where inclusion, safety and equity are not yet consistent for everyone.

This plan connects directly with Strategy 2030 and the People Strategy, focusing on how we work and how we treat one another. It ensures we strengthen our values, and create a work environment where people can show up as themselves, and perform at their best. This will better enable us to achieve Strategy 2030.

Who we are at our best

We come together and show up for one another through being caring, safe, inclusive, accountable and courageous.

Here’s some examples of our values in action in the context of Unity and Belonging.

Being inclusive is creating opportunity for people to contribute and be heard.

Being caring is checking in with others after tough moments.

Being courageous is taking action when we see something disrespectful.

Being safe is using a person’s correct pronouns.

Being accountable is examining our own assumptions and biases.

What we're already proud of

This plan builds on what already makes Barwon Water Group a great place to work.

Recognised as top 10 employer for women nationally by Work180.

More men are accessing carers leave (12.3% increase since 2023 to 50% of men).*

Challenging gendered stereotypes with more women in operational roles and more men taking parental and carers leave.*

We have a strong culture of flexibility, with support from leaders.

The gender composition of men taking parent leave has increased from 31% in 2023 to 59% in 2025*.

Reduced base salary gender pay gap at Barwon Water from 8.6% to 0.0% in just four years.*

Ranking highest amongst water authorities for trust and reputation.

Having a humanistic and encouraging culture that fosters trust, support and collaboration.

Strong interpersonal connections and relationships.

Improving partnerships and employment opportunities with First Peoples.

Representation of women has increased to 42% (it was 33% 10 years ago).*

Almost 2 in 3 (62%) of women have a formal flexible work arrangement, and 1 in 3 men.*

**** Denotes data from 2025 Gender Equality Audit**.*

Where can you find yourself?

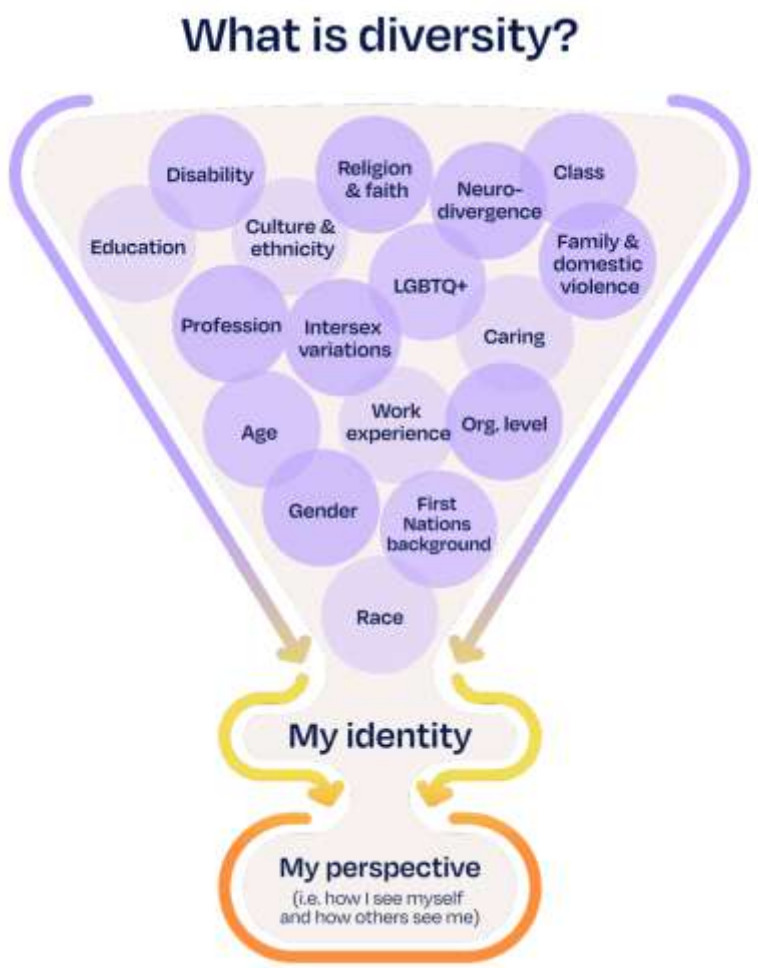
Unity needs difference

The Diversity Council Australia describes diversity as the mix of people in an organisation – that is, all the differences between people in how they identify socially such as gender, caring responsibilities or First Nations background, and professionally such as their role and work experience.

Diversity therefore applies to all of us. It is about what makes each of us unique and includes our backgrounds and life experiences. We have better ideas and make better decisions when more diversity of thought and experience is in the room.

No identity is a default against which other identities are measured. In our organisation, a wide range of social and professional identities is expected and treated as a part of everyday working life.

Where can you see yourself in this picture? How are you similar, unique, or diverse to your peers?



Diversity Council Australia, Diversity Definition, Sydney, DCA, 2025

Unity requires equity

Some differences require specific recognition and action because history, power structures and organisational systems have created unequal outcomes, discrimination and harm. People experience our systems and ways of working differently because these systems were not designed with everyone in mind.

It is the systems that create barriers and shape inequitable experiences, not the people affected by them. Accountability therefore sits with organisations including Barwon Water Group, to take responsibility for changing and redesigning systems so they work fairly for everyone.

When assumptions, stereotypes, unexamined norms and language shape our behaviour and culture, exclusion, harm or unfair treatment can result. Naming this is not about blame – it is about living our values of safe, caring, inclusive, courageous and accountable.

We recognise lived experience as a form of expertise that strengthens how we design and improve our systems. By valuing lived experience, we are better able to understand how people interact with our organisation to create fairer, more equitable outcomes for our people and the communities we serve.

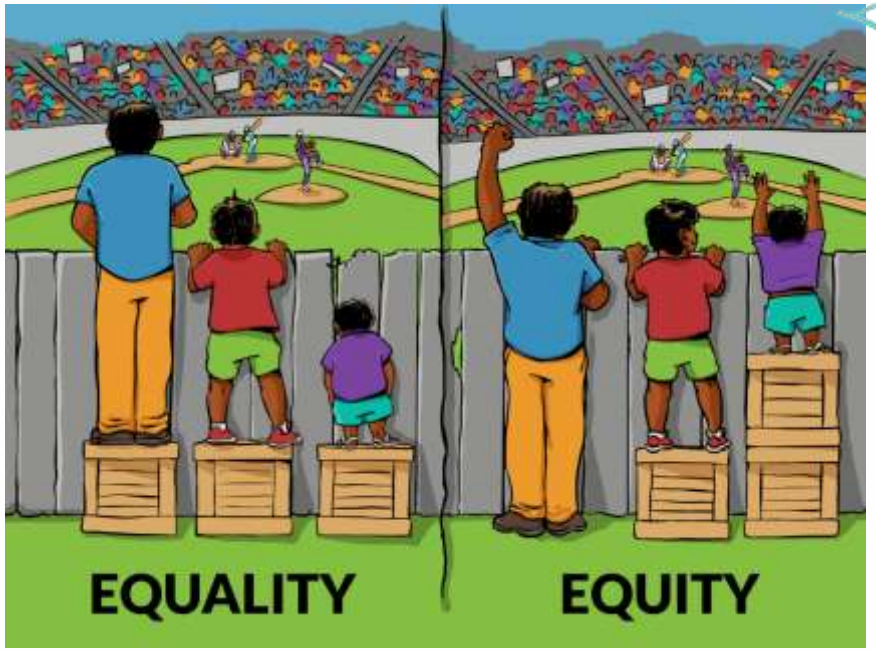


Image source: Illustrating Equality VS Equity - Interaction Institute for Social Change : Interaction Institute for Social Change

We've proven change is possible

Women were historically paid less than men for the same work, but now our gender pay gap is down to 0% at Barwon Water for base salary.

Men used to be much less likely to take carers leave, but now at Barwon Water carers leave is being taken at the same rate as women by men.

We joined the Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce which has helped us provide more employment opportunities for First Peoples.

We uplifted our Procurement Policy to enable strong social procurement opportunities with local social enterprises in our region.

These changes at Barwon Water positively impact beyond our workplace including families at home and communities more broadly.

We've achieved a lot, and our values aren't yet experienced consistently.

Organisationally, we set a strong benchmark with living our values. To determine our opportunities for improvement, we undertook extensive data collection in 2025 to uncover where we our gaps are when it comes to our values. For example, where courage is needed to change how we work. We commit to continuing to develop our people in living our values.

Key data points from 2025

- People Matter Survey
- Inclusion Gap Report
- Focus Group Outcomes
- Gender Equality Audit
- First Nations Cultural Audit
- Retrospective on 2022-2025 Belonging Action Plan and All Abilities Action Plan

Goals of this plan

Grounded in our shared humanity and our values of caring, safe, inclusive, accountable and courageous, we will:

1. Strengthen unity and belonging – by living our values, staying connected in purpose, and creating a workplace that is safe, respectful and free from mistreatment, so everyone can be themselves and perform at their best.

2. Make our systems fairer and more equitable – by listening and learning from lived experiences, we identify and remove systemic barriers that limit access, progression and representation, and create fairer and safer outcomes for staff and community.

3. Center First Nations sovereignty and self-determination – by embedding First Nations values, truth-telling, authority and genuine partnerships into decision-making and the redesign of systems.

4. Move away from 'othering' approaches to diversity– by recognising that diversity applies to all of us, and taking responsibility for addressing the biases, stereotypes, language, and assumptions that create unequal and disempowering experiences.

5. Share responsibility for change across our organisation– by strengthening inclusive leadership, building capability and normalising active bystander action. Living our values is a collective practice: noticing impact, speaking up with care, staying curious and being accountable for our actions.

Meaningful engagement and consultation

This plan has been developed in a consultative way with meaningful opportunities for people from across the business to engage. We have centered lived experience through the consultation process, which has provided critical input into the actions of this plan.

Consultation on this plan occurred from December 2025 to April 2026 as follows:

- Co-creating the plan as a partnership with the People Team First Nations Values Team with multiple workshops.
- Input and feedback from the Inclusion Council at monthly team meetings.
- Undertaking a two-week feedback period with all employees where staff were provided opportunity to share their feedback through an anonymous online survey and directly with Inclusion Council members. Over 130 comments were received.
- Sharing the plan with employee representatives including unions.
- A feedback conversation was undertaken with a board sub-committee, the People, Culture and Executive Remuneration Committee.
- The final draft of the plan was provided to the Inclusion Council for final feedback.
- The final draft of the plan was provided to the entire Board for feedback and consultation.

Our Guiding Principles

In addition to our values guiding this work, we have also identified core principles to further strengthen our approach.

First Nations Values

We embed First Nations sovereignty, Lore, Cultural authority, and truth-telling at the heart of our business. This recognises that real change begins by centering First Peoples first. Every decision and action is guided by respect, genuine partnership, and a willingness to share power and resources to create meaningful, generational change for First Peoples and all communities.

Gender Equity and Pay Equity

We believe our staff should have equal access, resources, pay and opportunities which contributes to a safer and more equal society, including positively impacting families at home. Equality is an underlying condition for the prevention of workplace mistreatment including gender-based violence, which our plan is committed to.

Empowered Narratives

We recognise inequity is produced by systems, norms and practices. Many of the people impacted also have very rich, strong and proud histories of leadership, resilience and creating change. The narratives and language used to create and implement this plan will lead with and recognise these strengths and truths, whilst also acknowledging the historical and ongoing impacts of inequitable systems.

Our Commitments

Change happens when individuals are supported, relationships are strengthened, systems are redesigned and culture reinforces what matters. We will focus across all four aspects of our organisation to ensure change is systemic and sustainable. This will be done through 21 actions over the four years of this plan.

Individual level
We will strengthen skills, reflection and confidence to act in accord with our values.

Relational level
We will improve team norms, leadership behaviours, solidarity and psychological safety.

Structural level
We will redesign policies, processes, facilities and decision pathways so they work fairly.

Cultural level
We will strengthen narratives, rituals and communications that reinforce respect and unity.

Individual Level – Case for Change

- There is opportunity to improve staff skills and confidence in taking bystander action.
- There is a need to create more trust, safety and support about reporting workplace mistreatment including sexual harassment, and taking bystander action.*
- There is an opportunity to build on knowledge of how to report workplace mistreatment across teams.
- One in four staff do not feel like they belong at Barwon Water, and that individual differences are not celebrated.
- There is some skepticism about the concept of Reconciliation, and continued subtle questioning of First Nations Reconciliation activities.
- Around 25 percent of staff are yet to participate in the Connection to Country experiential onboarding program due to multiple challenges including inability of the program to run due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Understanding barriers and challenges faced by neurodivergent employees is low. Neurodivergent-friendly practices aren't yet standard.
- Neurodivergent staff feel pressure to mask in order to be accepted which creates fatigue and limits authenticity.
- Lack of understanding about identities and gender, adherence to rigid gender roles and stereotyping, and unconscious biases can perpetuate workplace mistreatment and inequality.
- Assumptions are made based on invisible identities (for example bisexuality) and invisible disabilities that can't be seen.

**** Denotes data from 2025 Gender Equality Audit***.

Individual Level Actions

Action	Commencing	Responsibility
1. Roll out active bystander training and toolboxes across organisation and refresher materials on sexual harassment prevention, equal employment opportunity and reporting mechanisms.	March 2027	People Team
2. Implement initiatives to be Treaty ready and build the cultural capabilities of staff to ensure shared responsibility to reconciliation and reduce the impacts of Colonial Load. Includes maximising participation in on Country excursions.	March 2026	First Nations Values Team People Team Management Team
3. Create regular story-telling opportunities with internal and external speakers to share lived experiences, create understanding, and challenge assumptions about gender identities, relationships, family structures, cultures, religions and all abilities including invisible disabilities.	February 2027	People Team First Nations Values Team
4. Run neurodivergence survey with staff to inform initiatives, set the plan and deliver on agreed actions to build awareness and understanding of neurodivergence and supports for neurodivergent staff.	May 2026	Inclusion Council

Relational Level - Case for Change

- There is opportunity to expand efforts to progress to a workplace that is free from bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination and aggression.
- There is a continued need to call out racism including sharing a public anti-racism stance based on cultural audit findings.
- Data on belonging, inclusion, workplace respect and stress appears less favourable for women, First Nations staff, people with a disability and people whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual.
- Some of our systems and norms are experienced inequitably depending on gender, culture, ability, identity and sexuality.
- Solidarity, feeling like others have our backs and that we aren't doing it alone are key enablers for bystander action and reporting workplace mistreatment.*
- Staff want opportunities to engage meaningfully with inclusion and belonging topics, and to share experiences in an accessible and inclusive way. They want activities to be participatory and regular, and to provide deeper (rather than surface level) explorations of barriers and enablers to inclusion.
- Team ways of working are not entirely conducive to supporting carers to take leave entitlements.
- Some staff feel reluctant to access carers' leave or other entitlements to manage caring responsibilities. This is due to internal struggles to prioritise one's own wellbeing, and feeling a sense of guilt due to internalised expectations.
- Leaders are well trusted and there is also opportunity to consistently role model our values, show vulnerability and authenticity, and embed accountability for doing so.

**** Denotes data from 2025 Gender Equality Audit***.

Relational Level Actions

Action	Commencing	Responsibility
5. Co-design Safe and Respectful community of practice of similar social support system for unity, connection, solidarity and debriefing after bystander moments.	August 2026	People Team Safety Team
6. Introduce ally collateral for LGBTQIA+ communities , First Peoples and all abilities such as signage and lanyards, including avenues to encourage pronoun sharing for everyone.	May 2026	People Team
7. Introduce team protocols for workload redistribution, catch up processes, delay of key meetings where possible, and other practices to support carers in accessing leave. Use coaching conversations to support staff in taking leave.	2027	Management Team
8. Implement new Leadership Framework and performance measures, with a particularly focus on psychological safety, including ensuring regular belonging conversations, accommodations for different communication styles, and considering reasonable adjustments.	August 2026	Management Team People Team

Structural Level - Case for Change

- Equity Impact Assessments are not yet widely adopted creating missed opportunities to break down systemic inequities.
- There have been examples of non-inclusive language being used in policies.
- Metrics and reporting reflect a binary view of gender (reporting Men/Women only and using terms such as “gender balance”).
- Strategic decision making occurs without genuine engagement with representative communities such as First Peoples.
- Opportunity for implementation of best practice methods allowing for anonymous reporting of workplace mistreatment.
- The most commonly described way people said they experience discrimination is through promotion processes.
- Barwon Water median total remuneration gender pay gap is 1.4% but there are higher pay gaps for certain occupational groups.*
- For Barwon Water in 2025, 52% of newly recruited staff were women and 48% we men. Women accounted for 40% of promotions and men 60%.*
- For Barwon Water in 2025, more women than men believe recruitment and promotion processes are fair, however the percentage of women who believe promotions are fair dropped 3.6% from 2023 to 2025, while perceptions of recruitment fairness rose 9% for men.*
- Staff don’t apply for promotions for leadership roles based on perceived limited flexibility and job share options, and perceived workload pressures.
- There are reports of extended reliance on agency staff arrangements impacting job security, access to benefits, and training.
- Barwon Water consists of 58% men, 42% women and no data is available for non-binary people. 90% of part time staff are women*
- Sections of the organisation such as operations and technology continue to experience gender segregation due to systemic challenges.*
- Leadership diversity is currently limited, which can reduce opportunities for different perspectives to be heard and for existing ways of working to be challenged.
- There are sensory challenges with facilities for neurodivergent staff such as bright fluorescent lighting, minimal options to work in dimly lit areas, limited quiet space, confusion about the wellness room, and hot desking.

**** Denotes data from 2025 Gender Equality Audit***.

Structural Level Actions

Action	Commencing	Responsibility
9. Embed Equity Impact Assessments into how we create or update policies, programs or services so fairness is built in to ensure decisions don't unintentionally exclude or disadvantage people.	March 2026	Management Team supported by Inclusion Council
10. Audit policies, forms, data collection and metrics for cisnormativity and reference to gender in binary terms.	September 2026	People Team
11. Review decision-making authorities and processes using RACI or RAPID model to ensure the right people are involved, perspectives are represented, and engagement is built into how decisions are made.	2027	To be confirmed
12. Introduce anonymous reporting for mistreatment such as sexual harassment and enhance report communications.	September 2026	People Team
13. Conduct audit on remuneration for occupations highlighted in gender equality audit as having higher pay gap.	October 2026	People Team
14. Consider job-share arrangements, flexibility and other resourcing options when recruiting (e.g. one senior role and one junior role rather than job share) to remove perceived barriers to career progression.	Early 2026	Management Team supported by People Team
15. Continue with recruitment strategies for teams with gender segregation (including strategies focused at leadership level).	Early 2026	Management Team, People Team
16. Audit pay and conditions, social engagements and application of supplementary workplace policy for possible inequities for agency staff. Develop clearer career pathways for long-term agency staff.	2027	People Team
17. Review facilities to ensure more neuro-friendly, gender accommodating and accessible for all abilities, and embed into standard operating procedures. Includes quick wins and long-term actions to be included in 2028 Pricing Submission	May 2026	Inclusion Council Facilities Team

Cultural Level - Case for Change

- Opportunities exist to create more regular and consistent conversations and rituals about respectful behaviour to help prevent workplace mistreatment such as sexual harassment, racism, and discrimination.
- More consistent communication and leadership visibility about the seriousness of workplace mistreatment, and safety and support available through the process, could create more trust for staff to report such behaviour and reduce barriers to speaking up.*
- There is opportunity to more openly share experiences and outcomes of challenging inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour such as taking active bystander action.
- The authorising environment to challenge disrespectful or harmful behaviour could be strengthened.
- Training for prevention of sexual harassment and other harmful behaviour tends to happen as an isolated event.
- Communications protocols could better support the challenges of heteronormativity, cisnormativity and First Nations Values, and shift to language that focusses more on empowered narratives.
- Our language and communications could more strongly recognise non-binary and other genders
- There is opportunity to enhance our celebration of the full range of relationships and family structures - particularly for people in LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Values are alive in everyday actions, yet not always consistently demonstrated.
- Storytelling and communications focused on unity and our values could be enhanced.

**** Denotes data from 2025 Gender Equality Audit***.

Cultural Level Actions

Action	Commencing	Responsibility
18. Promote consistent internal and external communications to challenge workplace mistreatment including racism, discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and aggression, which includes a clear organisational stance of zero tolerance and a moral and professional expectation to speak up, and visible commitment from Executive Leadership Team.	June 2026	Executive Leadership Team Communications and Engagement Team People Team Safety Team
19. Develop or adopt existing inclusive language and communication guidelines and upskill staff in the use of these – ensuring use of empowered narratives and challenging heteronormativity and cisnormativity.	March 2027	Communications and Engagement Team People Team First Nations Values Team
20. Expand regular communication about support services and leave provisions beyond Converge EAP such as Rainbow Door, Qlife, 13YARN etc. Includes communications about new Enterprise Agreement clauses such as surrogacy leave, and gender affirmation leave.	July 2026	People Team Safety Team
21. Introduce Story Of The Week taken from personal real-life stories or submitted Moments of Gratitude that reflect our values and unity. Can include stories from leaders in powerful communities such as LGBTQIA+, First Nations, All Abilities and neurodivergence to model authenticity at work. Also stories of successful flexibility arrangements.	August 2026	People Team Inclusion Council

How we'll know we are succeeding – feedback loops

Unity and belonging are outcomes we must earn, measure and protect. To ensure we continue listening, learning and adapting, the following feedback avenues will be used, and the plan adjusted as required:

- Feedback via Inclusion Council (track monthly)
- Participation in engagement activities (track monthly)
- Read rates of online communications (track monthly)
- Exit interview themes (track quarterly)
- Number of Equity Impact Assessments completed (track quarterly)
- Recruitment candidate experience feedback (track quarterly)
- Reporting of workplace mistreatment including sexual harassment (formal and anonymous) (track quarterly)
- Gender representation for gender segregated teams (track quarterly)
- Incident reports, particularly focused on psychological safety (track monthly)
- Uptake rates of leave provisions (e.g. carers and family violence), flexibility options, and accessibility adjustments tracked by gender (track six-monthly)
- People Matter Survey results including experiences of sexual harassment and barriers to reporting (track bi-annually)
- Gender Equality Audit including tracking of gender pay gap by occupation, and tracking of recruitment and promotions by gender (track bi-annually)

How we'll know we're succeeding – Barwon Water metrics

Barwon Water

Representation

First Peoples
2025: 3%, 2027: 4%, 2030: 4.5%

All Abilities
2025: 7%, 2027: 17.5%, 2030: 20%

Neurodivergent
2025: Unknown, 2027: 15%, 2030: 20%

LGBTQIA+
2025: 9%, 2027: 12% 2030: 20%

Culture and Language
2025: 10.0%, 2027: 25.0%, 2030: 30%

Gender:
2025: 42% Women, 58% Men, 0% Non-binary/Different term

2027: 43% Women 54% Men, 3% Non-binary/ Different term

2030: 45% Women 50% Men, 5% Non-binary/ Different term

Equity

Median base salary pay gap
2025: 0.0% 2027: 0.0% 2030: 0.0%

Median total remuneration pay gap
2025: 1.4% 2027: 1.0% 2030: 0.0%

My workplace puts a stop to unacceptable behaviour
2025: 75% 2027: 85% 2030: 90%

If I asked for flexible work, I think it would be considered fairly
2025: 90% 2027: 95% 2030: 97%

Belonging and Inclusion

I feel a strong connection to my workplace
2025: 69% 2027: 80% 2030: 85%

I can be myself at work
2025: 79% 2027: 85% 2030: 90%

I feel culturally safe at work
2025: 83% 2027: 90% 2030: 95%

Barwon Water values individual differences
2025: 74% 2027: 80% 2030: 90%

Unity

When things get tough, people here pull together rather than blame each other
2025: N/A 2027: 80% 2030: 85%

I can work well with people in other teams
2025: 88% 2027: 90% 2030: 95%

I feel safe to call out unacceptable behaviour at work
2025: 78% 2027: 83% 2030: 90%

I feel connected to our organisation's purpose
2025: N/A 2027: 85% 2030: 90%

How we'll know we're succeeding – Barwon Asset Solutions metrics

Barwon Asset Solutions

Representation

First Peoples
2025: 1%, 2027: 2%, 2030: 4%

All Abilities
2025: 2%, 2027: 7%, 2030: 12%

Neurodivergent
2025: Unknown, 2027: 15%, 2030: 20%

LGBTQIA+
2025: 4%, 2027: 8%, 2030: 12%

Culture and Language
2025: 12%, 2027: 25%, 2030: 30%

Gender:
2025: 22.5% Women, 75.5% Men
0% Non-binary/Different term

2027: 26% Women, 72% Men
2% Non-binary/Different term

2030: 32% Women, 63% Men
5% Non-binary/ Different term

Equity

Median base salary pay gap
2025: 16.7%% 2027: 10.0% 2030: 5.0%

Median total remuneration pay gap
2025: 16.7% 2027: 10.0% 2030: 5.0%

My workplace puts a stop to unacceptable behaviour
2025: 77% 2027: 85% 2030: 90%

If I asked for flexible work, I think it would be considered fairly
2025: 79% 2027: 83% 2030: 90%

Belonging and Inclusion

I feel a strong connection to my workplace
2025: 62% 2027: 70% 2030: 80%

I can be myself at work
2025: 80% 2027: 85% 2030: 90%

I feel culturally safe at work
2025: 85% 2027: 90% 2030: 95%

Barwon Water values individual differences
2025: 78% 2027: 82% 2030: 90%

Unity

When things get tough, people here pull together rather than blame each other
2025: N/A 2027: 80% 2030: 85%

I can work well with people in other teams
2025: 82% 2027: 85% 2030: 90%

I feel safe to call out unacceptable behaviour at work
2025: 78% 2027: 83% 2030: 90%

I feel connected to our organisation's purpose
2025: N/A 2027: 85% 2030: 90%

Governance and Resourcing

Executive Sponsor:
Managing Director

- Accountable for achievement of the plan
- Removes barriers
- Aligns the senior leadership team
- Reports progress to the People, Culture and Executive Remuneration Committee three times per year

Steering Committee:

- Monitors progress of activities
- Monitors progress of metrics
- Monitors learnings from feedback loops
- Manages risks and issues
- Ensures integration of actions into business as usual
- Meets quarterly

Program Lead:
DEI Lead

- Manages the plan
- Coordinates Steering Committee and Action Owners
- Undertakes reporting, communications and evaluation of impact and metrics
- Coordinates data gathering from feedback loops and reports to Steering Committee
- Escalates blockers to Steering Committee
- Coordinates Steering Committee meetings

Governance and Resourcing

Inclusion Council

- Provide feedback on plan
- Implement actions allocated to Inclusion Council
- Share knowledge and experiences with leaders
- Share lived experiences within Inclusion Council
- Act as a listening post and share feedback with Inclusion Council in an appropriate way which maintains respect and confidentiality
- Flags emerging issues to Inclusion Council

People, Culture & Executive Remuneration Committee

- Provide feedback on draft plan
- Receives updates from Managing Director three times a year at scheduled meetings

Action Owners

- Deliver actions and track outcomes
- Report progress quarterly via Steering Committee
- Integrate actions into policies, practices and process to ensure change is sustainable

Board

- Participates in consultation on the draft plan
- Receives updates throughout the year on progress
- Ensures metrics are improving and outcomes are having impact

Inclusion Council

Why We Exist

The Inclusion Council exists to remove barriers and prioritise inclusion, to build ad maintain and diverse, empower and thriving workforce that positively impacts our community and beyond.

What We Do

- Contribute to development and delivery of Inclusion Council initiatives including Unity and Belonging Plan.
- Share our knowledge and experience about inclusion with our leaders and department.
- Safely and effectively challenge attitudes that are harmful, enable inequality and stifle inclusion.
- Share our lived experiences within the Inclusion Council where appropriate, and when have capacity to do so.
- Share insights about inclusion conversations we observe or are part of internally and externally.
- Share our experiences of being a member of the Inclusion Council either formally or informally with each other to ensure the care, wellbeing and inclusion of members is prioritised.
- Prioritise the wellbeing of ourselves and other members of the Inclusion Council, and respect individual and collective boundaries.

Over 2026, the Inclusion Council will improve their profile, including key points of contacts for different communities where possible. Opportunities will also be created for staff to provide feedback to the Inclusion Council.

"True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are."

- Brene Brown, courage, vulnerability and empathy researcher.

Appendix 1

Helpful Definitions

Barwon Water

Shared language and definitions

These definitions are included to support our shared understanding and consistency.

Cisgender: describes someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. It's sometimes written as cis for short.

Transgender: describes someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned a birth. It's sometimes written as trans for short.

Cisnormativity/cisgenderism: the assumption that all people are cisgender which reinforces gender norms and denies the non-binary and transgender experience.

Heteronormativity: the assumption that everyone is straight. It is based on the attitude or belief that heterosexuality is the normal and natural expression of sexuality.

Non-binary: an umbrella term used to describe gender that doesn't fit squarely into man or woman.

Shared language and definitions

These definitions are included to support our shared understanding and consistency.

First Peoples: The sovereign First Nations of these unceded lands and waters, whose inherent rights, Lore, Cultural authority and governance systems continue today. First People hold enduring connection to Country and remain the original custodians whose sovereignty has never been ceded.

Colonial Load: The ongoing impacts of colonisation carried by First People, including the cumulative burden of racism, exclusion, cultural suppression and systemic inequity. It reflects the added emotional, Cultural, and structural weight First People navigate in systems not designed for them, and the responsibility on organisations to reduce these harms.

Neurodivergent: An umbrella term for individuals whose brain and/or nervous system functions differently from the majority of the population. This includes Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Tourette's, sensory processing differences and more.

All Abilities: The recognition and support of people with diverse physical, cognitive, sensory and mental capabilities that ensures equitable access, adjustments, participation and opportunities for everyone.