

Sydney  
**WATER**

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan

2023-2026





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## Acknowledgement of Country

Sydney Water respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of Sydney, the Illawarra and the Blue Mountains where we work, live and learn.

Their lore, traditions and customs nurtured and continue to nurture the waters (bulingang or saltwater and muulii ngadyuung or sweetwater) in our operating area, creating wellbeing for all. We pay our deepest respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge their deep connections to land and waters. In the spirit of reconciliation, we remain committed to working in partnership with local Traditional Custodians to ensure their ongoing contribution to the future of the water management landscape, learning from traditional and contemporary approaches while respecting their cultural and spiritual connections.







## Message from our Managing Director

At Sydney Water, we are pleased to deliver our 2023–2026 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan.

While we have always been committed to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), this is our first official DEI Plan. It sets out our clear objectives for creating and fostering an inclusive culture where our people, customers and communities are connected to surrounding lands, waterways and each other – deepening their sense of belonging.

This plan also sets out the actions we take to get there. We achieve an inclusive culture through our determination to understand the diversity of our people, by building on this understanding, and by communicating this approach across our organisation.

We have achieved several milestones outlined in this plan, including improved diversity metrics.

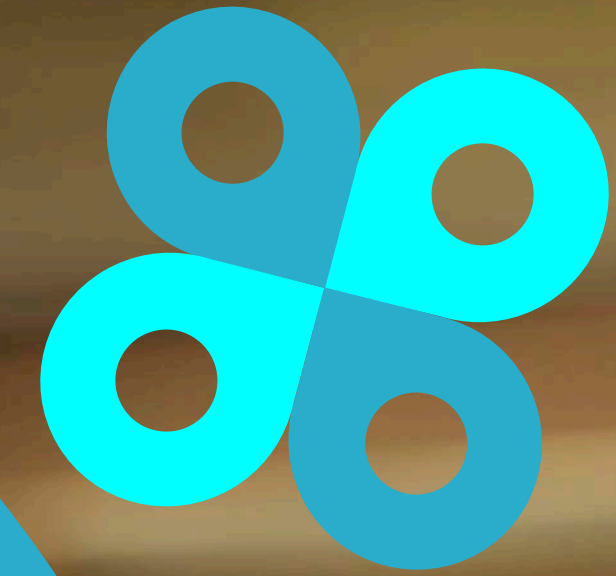
We commit to continuous focus on DEI, not just through the lens of representation but through tangible improvements in people's lives.

As we continue to work for better outcomes for our people, our customers and their communities, we commit to this plan – our roadmap for developing and maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships across our focus areas.

We are also committed to strengthening our partnerships and memberships, part of our adaptive, agile approach to DEI that will continue throughout the plan's lifetime.

I am the proud Executive Sponsor of our Sydney Water Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council. I will continue to work with the council and the DEI team to enable success as we work together to create a better life with world-class water services.

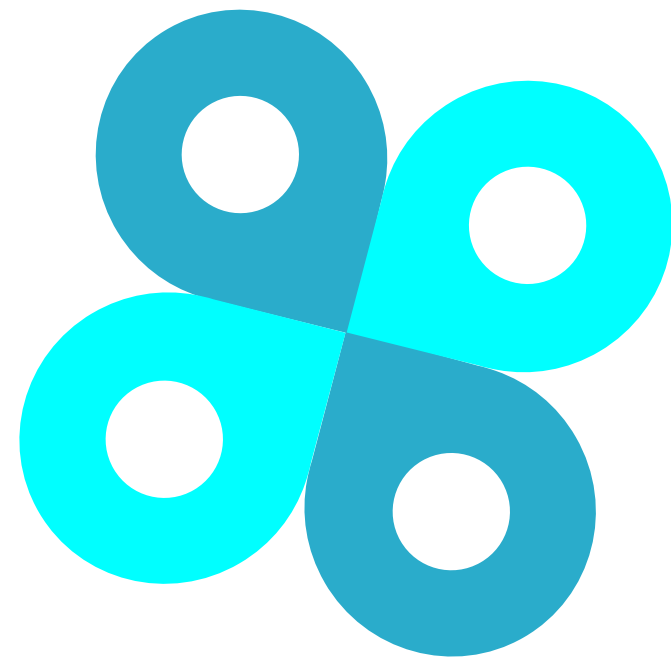
**Roch Cheroux**, Managing Director







## About Sydney Water



We are proud custodians of Greater Sydney’s essential network of water, wastewater, recycled water and stormwater services, with over 3,000 employees. We aim for our people, including contractors, to experience a positive, ethical, inclusive and contemporary workplace, to be empowered to innovate, learn and deliver for customers.

We are committed to representing our customers and to providing a supportive and inclusive workplace that allows all people to thrive and achieve full potential. Building a diverse and inclusive workforce supports the vision of creating a better life with world class water services.

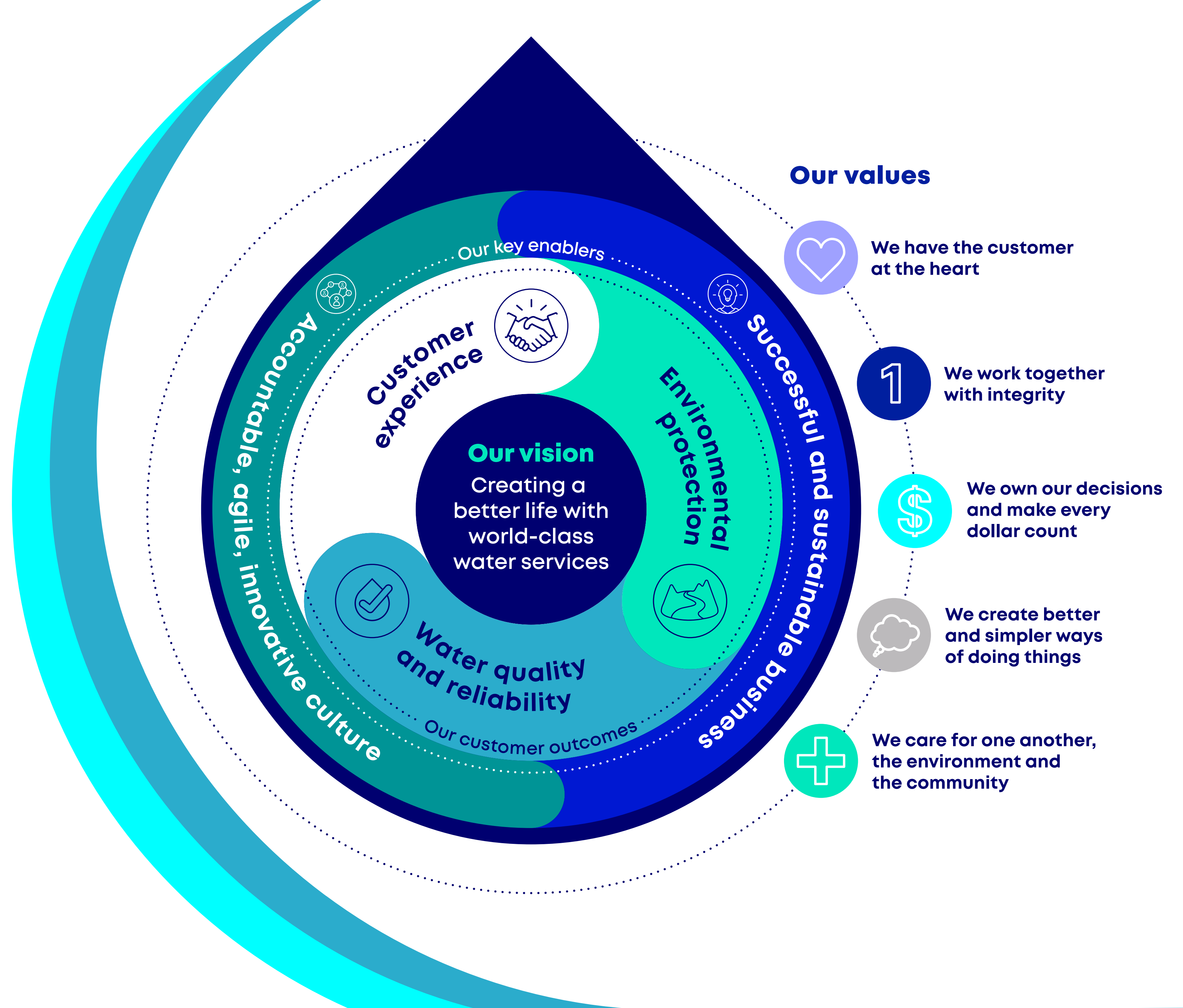
We are a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact, and we have pledged to embody principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption within our strategies, policies and operations. We celebrate, support and continue to build a diverse and inclusive workplace where people have a sense of belonging.



# Who we are

Our vision ‘to create a better life with world class water services’ is our highest goal. It exists to contribute to making life better for our people, our customers, and our communities. We’re working toward aligning our strategic outcomes to our customer priorities so we can achieve our vision.

Our strategic customer outcomes include focusing on the customer experience and how we can delight our customers, as well as having an innovative approach to our water quality, reliability and environmental protection. To enable these outcomes we strive to create a high performance culture and focus on being a successful and innovative business.





# Our customers and community

We're committed to continuing to lead the world in water services as we strive to deliver better outcomes for the community. To achieve better outcomes for customers, we focus on making a better life for our people.

## Creating better lives for our customers and communities starts with creating better lives for our people



### Make an impact

We're one of the world's 10 largest water utilities. Our people are passionate about working together to drive innovation, sustainability and exceptional experiences for our customers.



### Inclusive and diverse

We're committed to ensuring our culture is inclusive, and support First Nations employment, the advancement of women, the LGBTIQ+ community, people with disability and culturally diverse employees.



### Benefits

We support our people and their families, no matter what stage of life they're in. We offer many benefits, including Fitness Passport, carer's and parental leave, social networking, hybrid working and more.



### We care, we connect, we respect

- We invest in research, innovation, and new technologies.
- We deliver work together with integrity and dignity, celebrate success and focus on better ways.
- We care and respect our people, the customers and community we serve, and the environment.
- We offer support to customers in vulnerable times.
- We protect personal information and privacy.



# Our journey towards DEI

The global pandemic, social justice movements, corporate social responsibility and technology have emphasised the importance of personal connection, achieving together, and caring for one another. It's crucial to treat people fairly and value them in an equitable environment. Respect is non-negotiable.

A respectful environment empowers people to grow personally and professionally. It contributes to achieving our vision and delivering successful outcomes for our customers.

We want to represent the customers we serve. To do this, we need to understand our organisation's diversity demographic. Diversity statistics alone won't address systemic challenges related to workplace equity, bias or exclusionary culture. To understand where to focus, we need to know how we represent in relation to diversity. We get a better picture of our representation through our profile questions for employees.

To help gauge employee experience and perception, we undertake annual employee experience surveys. In 2022, we introduced an Inclusion Index as a measure. We amended the index in 2024. Questions reflect our new approach to diversity, equity and inclusion. We focus on building and maintaining an equitable workplace by removing barriers and enabling people to thrive.





# Our DEI ecosystem

Our DEI ecosystem is made up of key enablers to support achievement of progression within diversity, equity and inclusion.

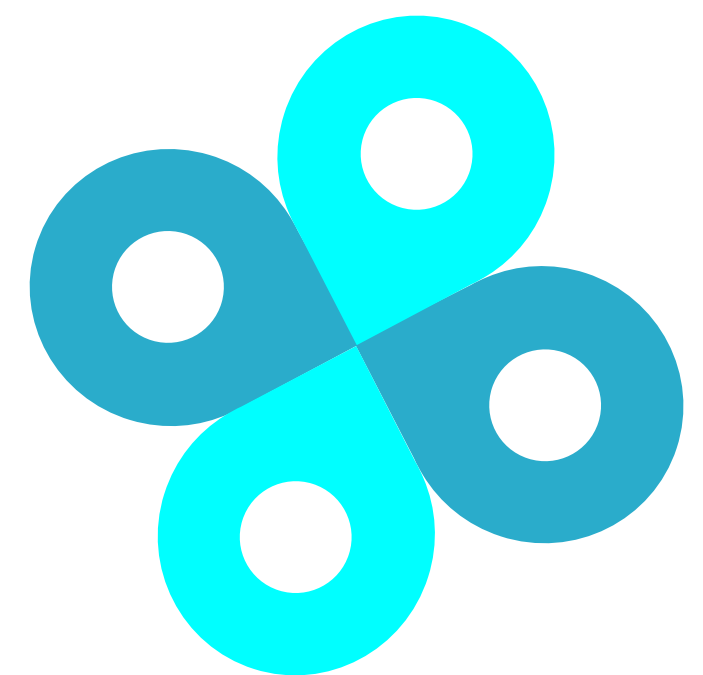
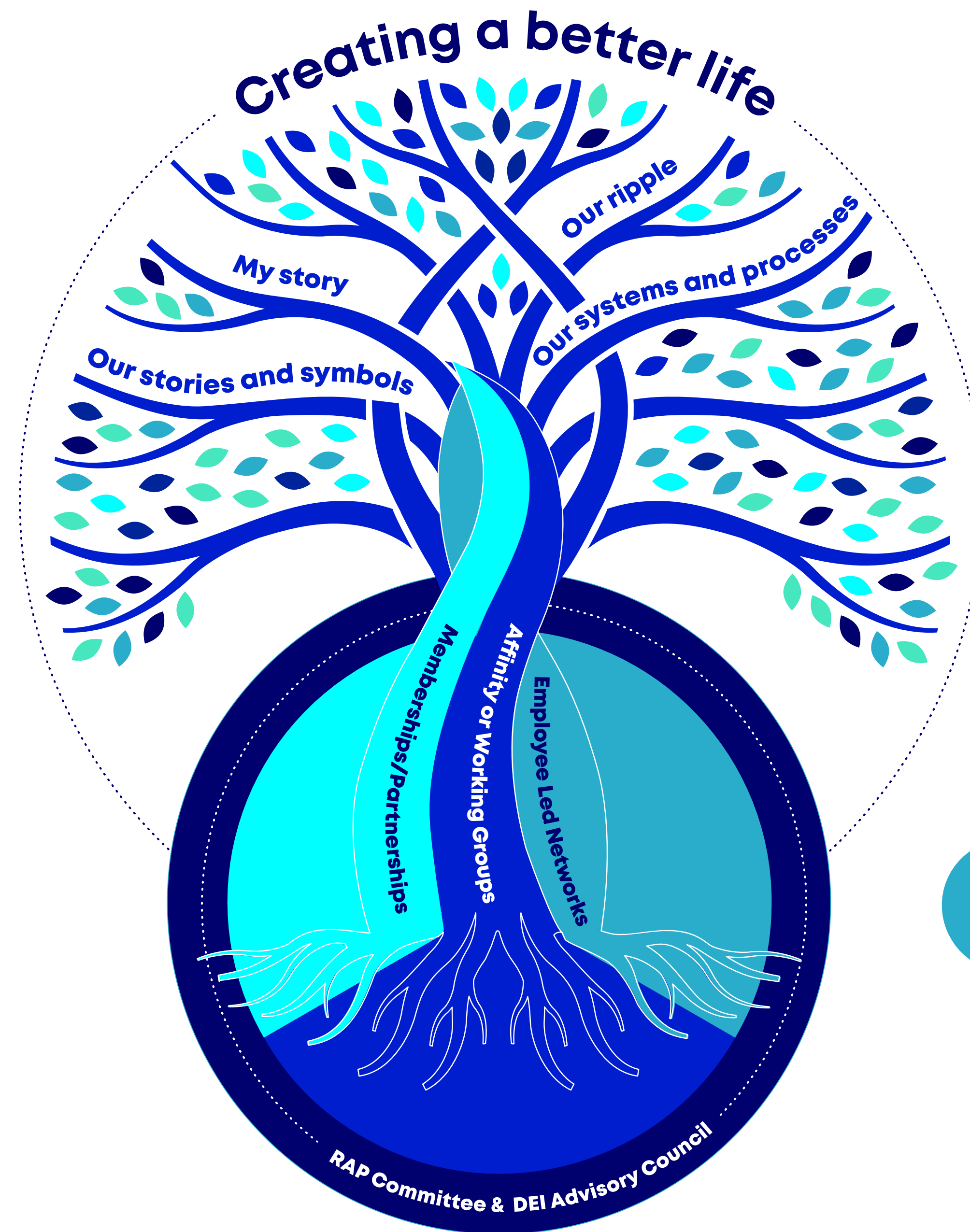
We pride ourselves on working towards a culture of accountability, agility and innovation through levers of safety, inclusion and learning.

Our cultural ecosystem describes the how and what we need across 4 aspects. These are:

- **our stories and symbols**
- **our systems and processes**
- **our ripple (we)**
- **my story (me)**

Key enablers include but are not limited to our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Committee, DEI Advisory Council, employee-led networks, affinity and working groups, and our external memberships and partnerships.

At the core of all work within DEI is the goal to achieve our vision, to create a better life with world class water services.

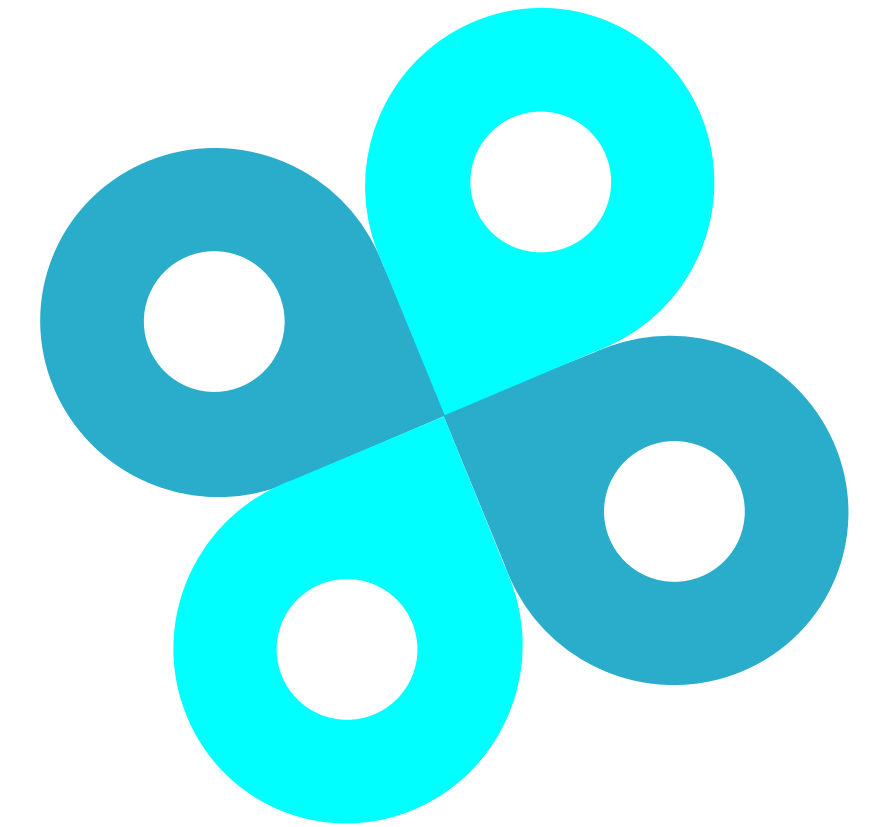




# Our DEI commitment statement

Creating a better life with world class water services is better achieved together. We understand the many benefits of having a diverse workplace, focusing on equity and inclusion to enable our people, networks and communities to thrive. We believe that for our cities to thrive, our people need to thrive first.

**We care, we connect, we respect.**



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## Our DEI objectives

**Promote** cultural safety – equity, inclusion and belonging is everyone’s business.

**Foster** a sense of community where our people are respected, are connected and belong.

**Advocate** for diversity, equity and inclusion so our people can contribute, feel valued and thrive.

**Embrace** difference, and a culture that is free from any form of discrimination or harassment.

**Continuously improve** diversity representation to enable better outcomes for the community.



# Definitions

## Diversity

Reflects difference between people represented at Sydney Water. It can include but is not limited to different thinking, different appearance, race, gender, sexuality, neurodiversity, and invisible and visible disability.

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## Equity

Is about enabling opportunity by removing barriers for people to thrive, by making adjustments and giving people what is needed to mitigate or eliminate social inequities at Sydney Water and beyond.

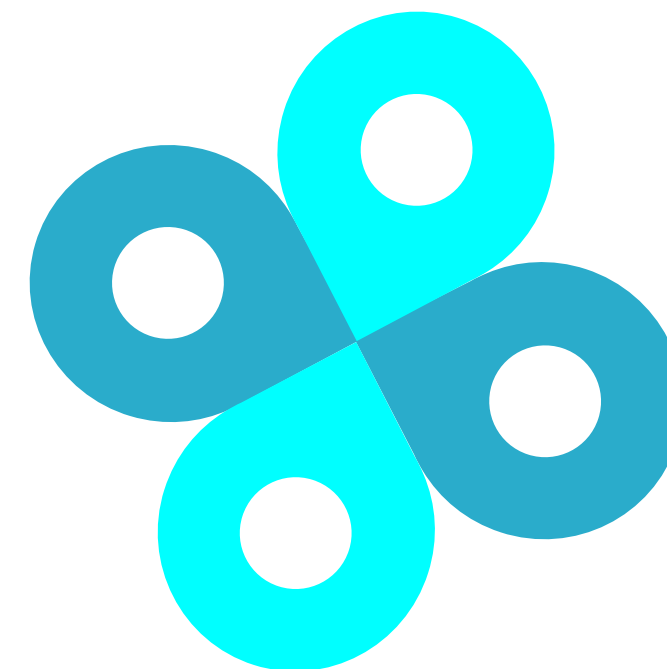
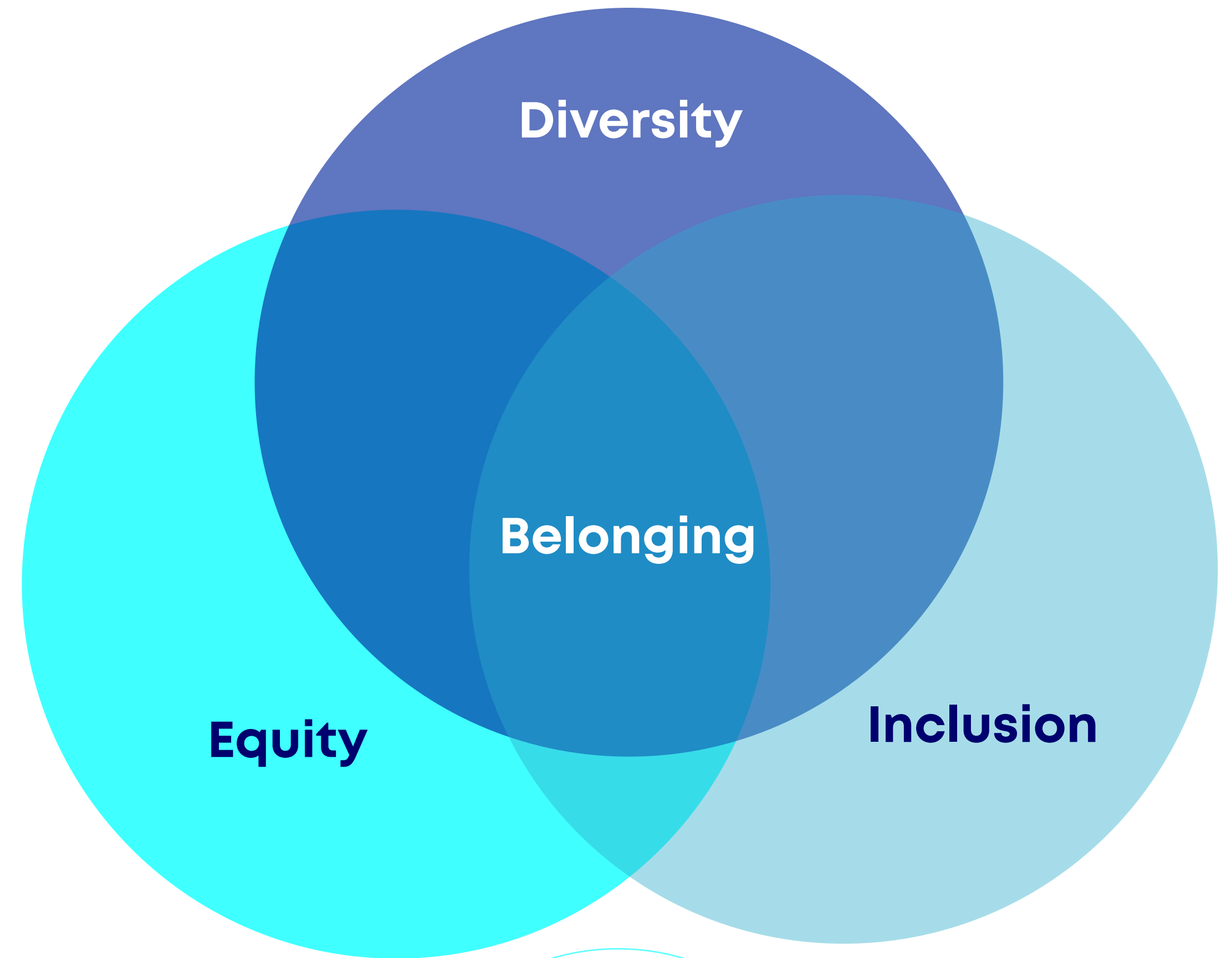
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## Inclusion

Is when people are respected and connected, feel safe to engage, encouraged to contribute and assured voice and perspective is valued and is heard.

**“Individually, we are one drop.  
Together, we are an ocean.”**

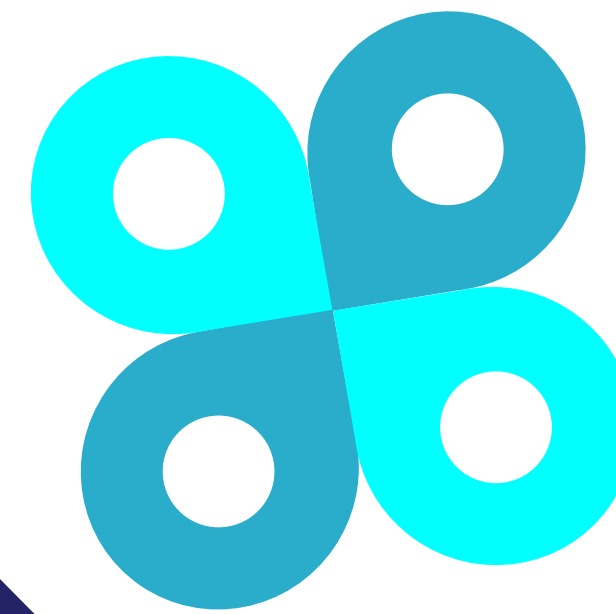
– Ryunosuke Satoro



**Belonging**  
is an outcome  
from our DEI  
initiatives and  
activities and  
approach



# Our pillars and areas of focus



## Our foundations

- be bold and intentional
- strengthen our foundations
- share stories and lived experience
- explore the ‘why’ of DEI
- identify barriers within talent and sourcing, performance, and career progression.

## Our engagement promise

- provide safe space for sharing stories
- learn from lived experience and implement change around improvement opportunities
- implement various channels for sharing information and communication
- encourage a culture of allyship.

## Our capability and awareness

- raise awareness and increase knowledge at all levels of the organisation about DEI
- provide insight into programs that can uplift leadership capability
- contribute to building on and developing our employee talent pipelines through leadership.

## Our authenticity and transparency

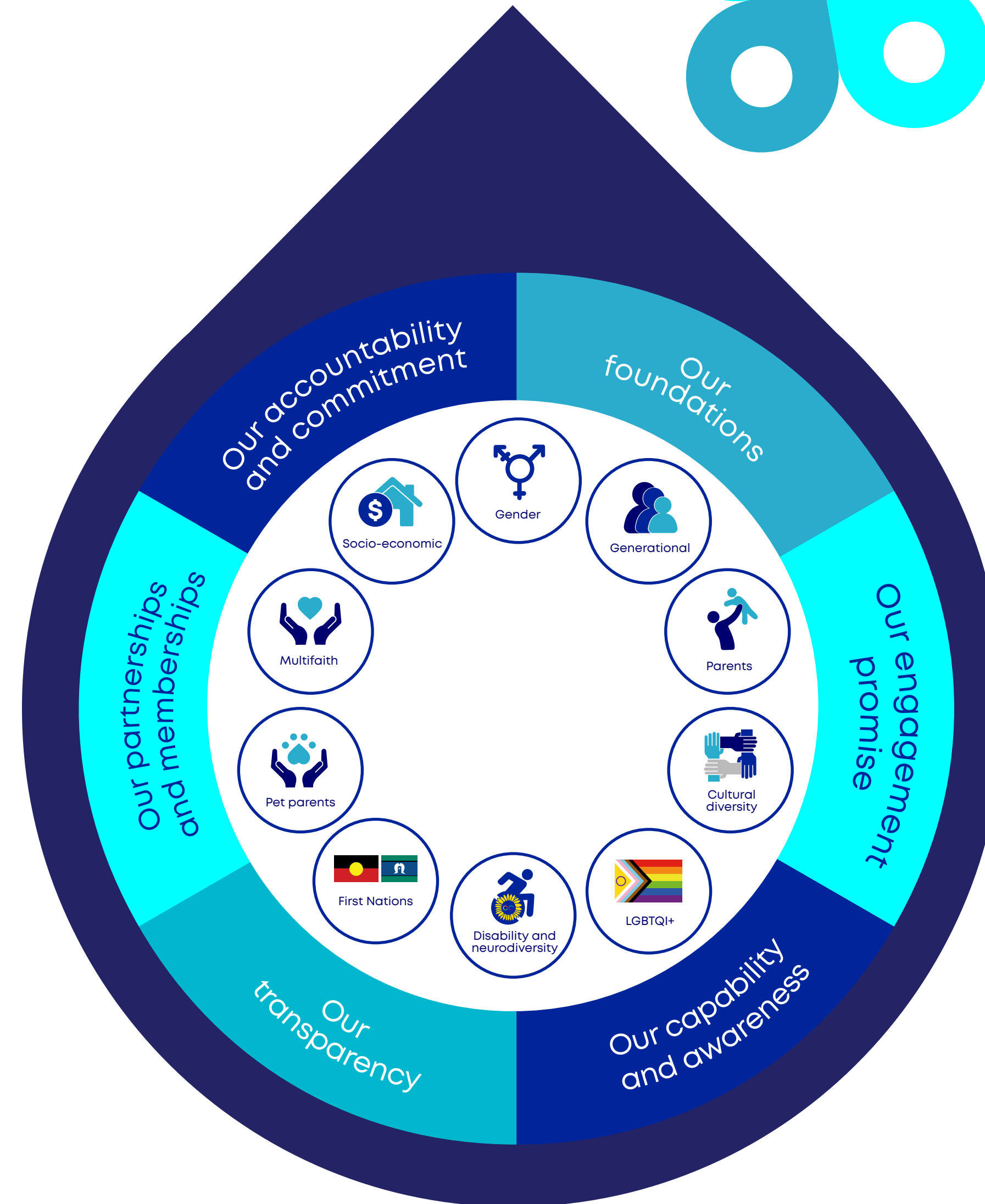
- review metrics and improve data collection
- review targets and aspirations
- share and encourage sharing of our aspirations
- report on and share achievements and learning internally and externally.

## Our partnerships and memberships

- develop new and build on existing community and industry bodies, RTOs and pipeline agencies
- leverage from partnerships to gain up-to-date knowledge around good practice
- maximise outputs from partnerships and relationships, knowledge, and expertise.

## Our accountability and commitment

- benchmark our organisation against others through partnerships and memberships
- seek feedback, review and take action
- challenge the status quo
- engage with leaders and inspire engagement and accountability
- embed DEI into our DNA.



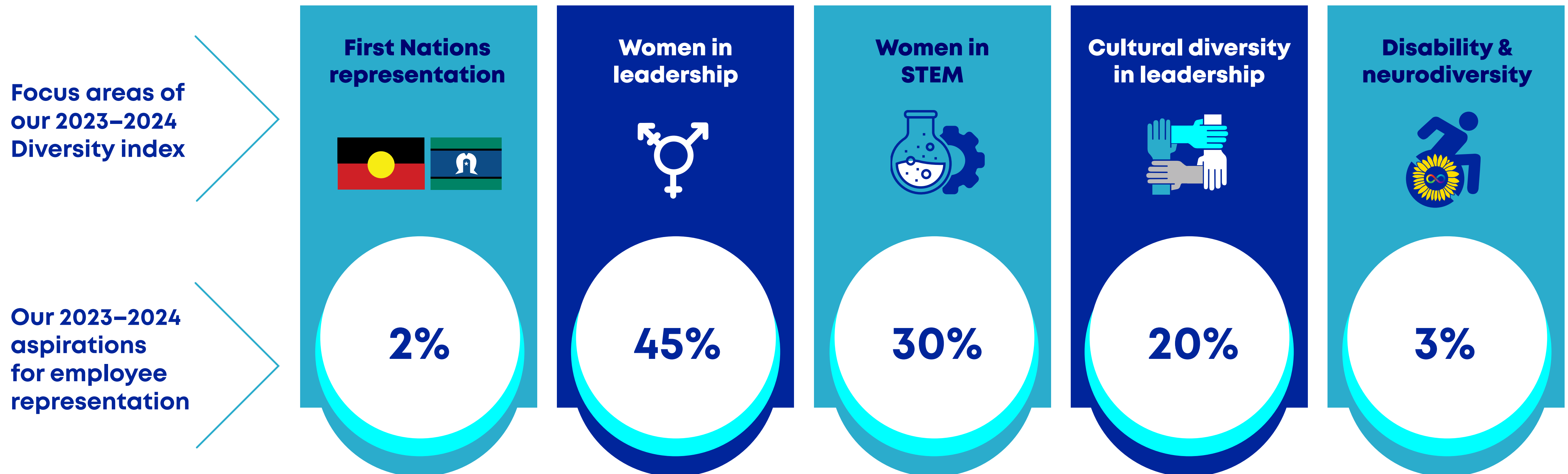


# Our DEI aspirations

Our goal is for our employees to represent the diverse community we serve. Our Diversity Index is part of our plan to get there.

The Diversity Index measures how we're doing. It adds together the percentage of people with diverse backgrounds within our organisation. Our 2023–2024 Diversity Index focuses on 5 specific areas. We combine these measures and use a formula to calculate a percentage. We aspire to achieve a total Diversity Index score of 75%.

We will be agile and continuously check in on our progress throughout 2023–2024. We will review and refine our Diversity Index measures in 2025 and 2026.





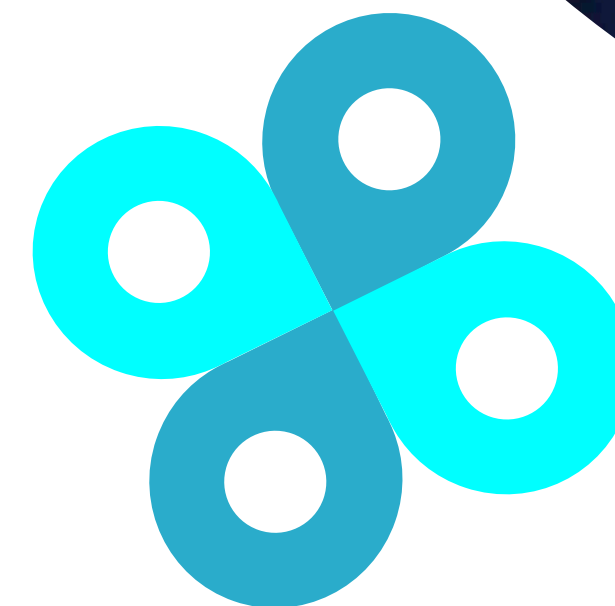
# Role of psychological safety in DEI

Psychological safety is an enabler of a culture where people feel safe to be their authentic selves. If it is not present, there can be a risk people may feel excluded. People may socially withdraw and withhold information or ideas and solutions that can contribute to achieve the vision of creating a better life with world class water services.

Sometimes, people do not share their diversity information due to risk of judgement and discrimination. In psychologically safe teams, team members feel accepted and respected. They believe it is safe to openly share backgrounds, experiences, feelings, and beliefs. Creating conditions where people can be themselves will influence their sense of belonging and inclusion.

An inclusive environment will stimulate innovation and contribute to building cohesive and collaborative teams. Collaborative teams come in many forms. At Sydney Water, we encourage engagement through employee-led networks.

Networks promote psychologically safe spaces so employees can connect openly and contribute to and enable a learning culture. Psychological safety is not the goal alone, but a means to achieve a high-performance culture and create a better life with world class water services.





# Recognising intersectionality

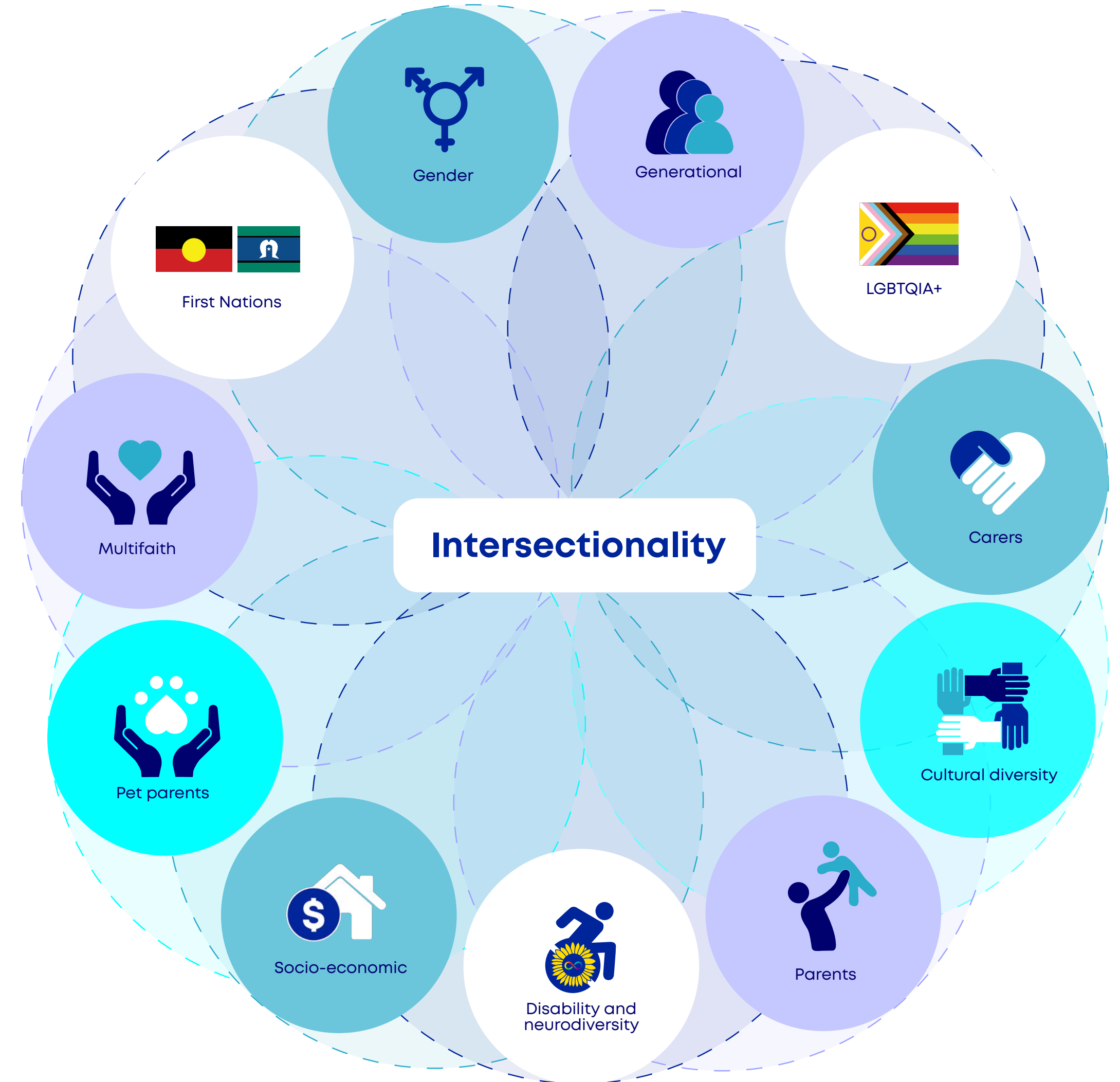
Intersectionality describes a combination of diversities and characteristics that may increase privilege or risk of marginalisation and discrimination due to social inequities. We acknowledge the importance of reducing risk through systemic changes and learning through the lens of lived experience, so we are an equitable and inclusive workplace.

It is important to take an intersectional approach when designing, delivering, and evaluating diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives within the workplace to impact any compounding factors on employees. We aim to foster an environment where all employees represented in the infographic have equitable opportunities and are treated with respect and impartiality, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation and cultural diversity.

This includes making decisions regarding:

- recruitment and selection
- internal promotion and remuneration reviews
- performance management
- education, training and development
- career advancement
- flexibility
- accessibility
- policies and procedures.

We aim to foster an environment where all employees represented in this infographic have equitable opportunities and are treated with respect and impartiality, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or cultural diversity.





## Our DEI focus areas



### First Nations inclusion

Sydney Water launched its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in July 2021. This was a pivotal point in our reconciliation journey, which began in 2018 with the formation of a small committee of dedicated employees. This group championed the early development of our RAP and then changes in the organisation, shifting momentum.

#### Achievements since our RAP was established include:

- a self-paced customised cultural awareness training module, co-designed with Pindara Training – an Aboriginal-owned company
- Traineeship Program – established pathway for First Nations trainees
- Aboriginal Procurement Participation Plan – to promote greater engagement and targeted spend with First Nations businesses
- First Nations employee network – launched in April 2022 to create a safe forum for First Nations employees to increase awareness, improve relationships, and share challenges and opportunities
- partnerships with First Nations employment and recruitment agencies.

We will continue to build on the RAP with the aim of greater alignment to our organisational strategy. Our RAP is a roadmap for developing and maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships with First Nations peoples.



First Nations employee networking event and smoking ceremony with Uncle Ivan



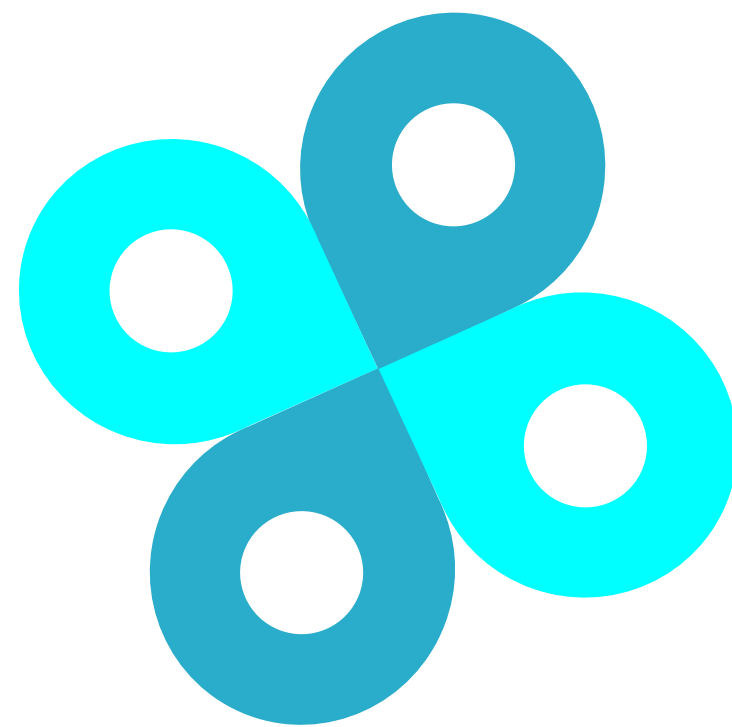
## Our DEI focus areas



### Cultural diversity inclusion

Greater Sydney is home to people with multicultural, multilingual and multiracial backgrounds. This diversity brings a wide array of skills, languages, cultures and experiences, providing valuable benefits. We're proud of our cultural diversity, and acknowledge and celebrate through internal events on significant dates which include but are not limited to Lunar New Year, Diwali, NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week.

One of the top 3 priorities within our DEI Plan is cultural diversity in leadership. Between 2023 and 2026, we are working with customers, communities and employees to understand challenges and opportunities that help our people to thrive.



Diwali event



## Our DEI focus areas

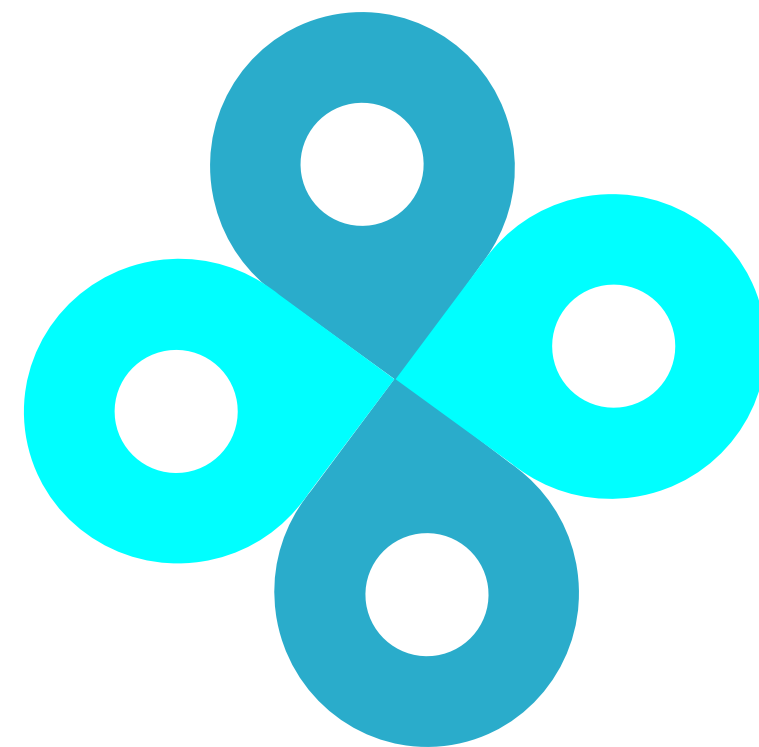


### **Disability and neurodiversity inclusion**

In 2022, Sydney Water recognised Neurodiversity Week for the first time. The goal was to raise awareness about neurodiversity and highlight the valuable contributions that neurodivergent individuals bring to our organisation.

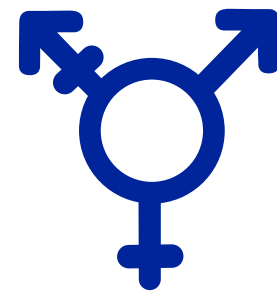
In 2023, consultations were held with employees who had direct or indirect experience with disability and neurodiversity. These discussions revealed a strong interest among employees in forming a disability and neurodiversity employee-led network. In November 2023, the network was officially launched with an executive sponsor.

As part of our ongoing commitment to enhancing neurodiversity and disability inclusion, we will continue to explore partnerships and memberships to ensure we receive tailored, expert guidance.





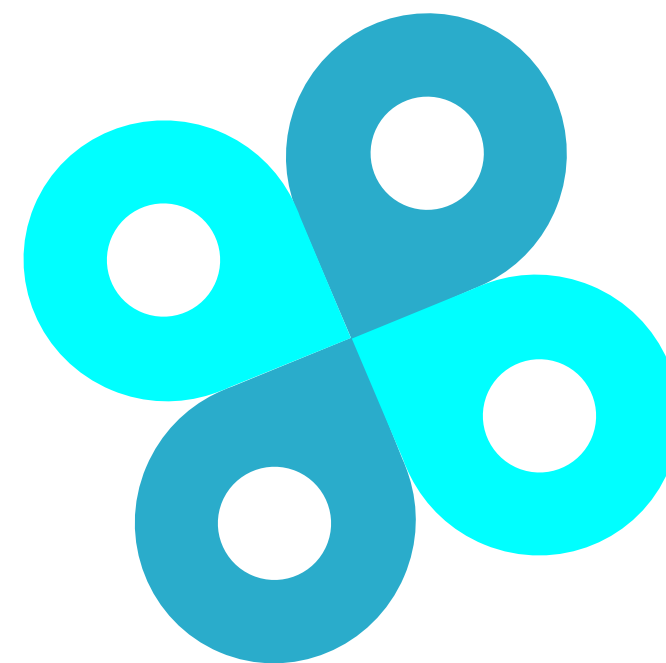
## Our DEI focus areas



### Gender inclusion

In recent years, efforts have centred around promoting female participation, decreasing the gender pay gap and increasing women's participation in leadership and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) roles. Our current focus is specifically on women in leadership and women in STEM roles. Initiatives are delivered through significant days such as Women in Engineering and International Women's Day as well as other strategic efforts outlined in our DEI Plan.

Women of Water (WoW) was relaunched in July 2022, with an Executive Sponsor. WoW provides a platform for women and allies to connect, collaborate, and broaden professional networks. Members are encouraged to share knowledge and stories about their successes and learnings. Additionally, a WoW Committee was established in 2022 to facilitate activities, support members, and drive inclusion initiatives that empower women to thrive.



Some employees at our Malabar site



## Our DEI focus areas



### **LGBTQI+ inclusion**

Our Pride Network was formed in 2020 and, in late 2020, a committee was formed to formalise the group. The network's mission is to increase LGBTQI+ inclusion by:

- raising awareness
- increasing visibility
- advocating for change
- improving a sense of belonging for LGBTQI+ people and allies.

The Pride Network is advancing its mission through promoting and delivering events, increasing social networks, and coordinating training and awareness. The Pride Network is a voice for LGBTQI+ inclusion, and provides insight for policies, procedures and frameworks through a rainbow lens.

In 2022, we participated in the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) and survey. The AWEI is a definitive national benchmark of LGBTQI+ workplace inclusion.

In 2023, the Pride Network facilitated and led involvement in WorldPride, and Sydney Water joined the Welcome Here project, as an organisation that supports a safe, and inclusive workplace for LGBTQI+ people.



**Staff painting a reservoir wall for WorldPride 2023**



# DEI Plan: looking ahead

Our foundations	Our engagement promise	Our accountability	Our capability and awareness	Our authenticity and transparency	Partnerships and relationships
Develop a DEI policy, statement, and objectives	Develop calendar of significant days to recognise and celebrate diverse representation	Develop and launch a framework around leadership actions using shared goals	Develop monthly schedule for DEI fact sheets	Develop a framework and scorecard for tracking and reporting on DEI metrics	Develop a First Nations procurement guide and collaborate with Supply Nation and NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce to educate on procurement targets
Develop inclusion plans across DEI areas of focus	Develop a DEI Hub (SharePoint site)	Identify and explore roles across Sydney Water and target under-represented areas of focus	Facilitate, develop and/or support delivery of Link to Learn sessions across areas of focus within the DEI Plan	Communicate and publish aspirations and achievements of employees across focus areas	Review partnerships and memberships and explore new opportunities across the DEI focus areas
Contribute to a review of policy, processes and systems through an equity and inclusion lens	Develop information packs, pre and post a period of parental leave	Review existing and/or collaborate to support, introduction of new structures for diverse hires	Review onboarding metrics, talent management and career progression metrics – collaborate to address improvement opportunities	Review and identify improvement opportunities to enable a more equitable and inclusive recruitment process	Enable engagement with external community agencies and organisations e.g. career days, community education, cultural events
Review and modify corporate induction to reiterate our commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	Schedule Listening Circles to receive feedback and lived experience stories from a diversity lens	Report on aspirations and progress within DEI Indices	Contribute to the development and implementation of a talent management and succession planning framework	Collaborate with internal business groups to develop tailored targets, tactical plans and initiatives	Collaborate internally to forge partnerships with schools, TAFENSW and universities to build networks
Take part in Diversity Council of Australia's Inclusive Employer program Index to benchmark progress across leading DEI employers	Influence and implement change, as appropriate using insight from Listening Circles around lived experiences of diverse groups	Report on progress through monthly, quarterly or annual reporting	Develop and implement second iteration of Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), Innovate RAP (2024-2026)	Explore appetite and support establishment of employee-led networks across areas of focus for DEI	Establish a DEI Community of Practice, consisting of membership from employee-led networks, committees and DEI Advisory Council
Adopt recommendations from self assessment of the Inclusive Australia's Diversity Workforce Diagnostic Tool	Review and contribute to improvements in talent and sourcing	Ensure DEI goals exist within to executive and senior leadership goals	Continue to contribute to building a talent pipeline at entry level programs that align to our areas of focus within the DEI Plan	Conduct benchmark surveys through partnerships and memberships, and collaborate internally to influence change	Engage with external partners and relationships to raise public profile and to reach new candidates across diverse focus areas
Analyse the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's reporting data and develop and implement innovative programs and initiatives	Implement a People Library with the DEI Hub for employees to share stories and learn from other's lived experience	On an ongoing basis, DEI Team will track progress within the DEI Plan, will be agile to achieve better outcomes for community, customer and people	Develop, deliver and review information sessions across sites in relation to Reconciliation at Sydney Water	Report on progress within the DEI Plan through our annual report to provide public access from our website	Explore 10-year partnership with Career Trackers, providing a pathway into the Graduate program
Identify and implement programs for talent retention and capability growth for employees	Develop a series of articles and podcasts to reflect 'the stories we tell is the culture we create'	Introduce monthly reporting of subcontractor spend with all of our large suppliers within First Nations area of focus, e.g. Regional Delivery Consortia, major projects, IT, etc	Source and seek endorsement for inclusive and reverse mentoring programs (intersectional lens)	Develop visible scorecard to tell the story of DEI at Sydney Water	In line with NSW Government requirements, introduce contractual obligations in contracts over \$7.5 million for 3% First Nations participation.



## We're proud to be associated with:

- Australian Disability Network (ADN)
- Diversity Council of Australia (DCA)
- Family Friendly Workplaces (FFW)
- JobAccess
- Jobsupport
- KARI Foundation
- National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO)
- NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (NSWICC)
- Pride in Diversity (PiD)
- Supply Nation
- WaterAble
- Welcome Here Project
- WORK180

## A message from the DEI team

We would like to thank all of our DEI ecosystem at Sydney Water for supporting and contributing to the delivery of this plan. We have our committees and council, our employee-led networks, affinity groups and working groups mentioned throughout, and this would not be successful without their input.

As a part of our ecosystem, all of these enablers make a meaningful difference for our people and play a major role in progressing our aspirations in diversity, equity and inclusion along with our vision to create a better life with world class water services.

Thank you all, from your DEI team.

**Bec Mede**, Manager, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

