

All In.
Human.
Courageous.
Brilliant.

**NDIA Inclusion
and Diversity**



NDIA Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Inclusion Plan 2024–27

ndis

Acknowledgement of Country

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Acknowledgements

The Agency would like to acknowledge the assistance and input of the many contributors to the creation of this document, including the NDIA CALD Inclusion Plan Working Group, CALD staff network committee, CALD staff and agency partners.

Contact us

The NDIA welcomes feedback on our CALD Inclusion Plan. For more information about the development of this publication, or to request an alternative format, contact us through cultureandinclusion@ndis.gov.au.

Living the values

The Agency affirms its commitment to being an inclusive workplace through its values. Underpinning the values is the central focus of the Agency, making the difference to the lives of our participants of the Scheme.

Values are beacons for reinforcing the guiding principles of an organisation's culture, including what drives employees' priorities, actions, and behaviours within the organisation.

To make the difference to the lives of our participants of the Scheme, our staff must live the values, and feel connected to the workplace by being supported and included to do their work.

Our staff are bound by the broader Australian Public Service (APS) values of being Impartial, Committed to Service, Accountable, Respectful, and Ethical.

All In.
Human.
Courageous.
Brilliant.

**NDIA Inclusion
and Diversity**



NDIA Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Inclusion Plan 2024–27

Contents

Message from our CALD Champion	4
Strategy background	6
Strategic alignment	8
Our Agency commitment	9
Diversity snapshot	10
Consultation overview	12
Our achievements at the NDIA	14
Focus areas	
Cultural competence and leadership	16
Inclusive culture	18
Inclusive policy and practice	21
Career development and advancement	24
How we will measure and report	26
Glossary of terms	28
References	30

Message from our CALD Champion



John Dardo
Deputy CEO Integrity
Transformation and Fraud
Fusion Taskforce and SES
CALD Champion

On behalf of the Agency, I am pleased to present the NDIA Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Inclusion Plan 2024–27.

My parents migrated from Greece to Australia before I was born. Upon arrival, their prior education and skills were undervalued by society, so they became comfortable within the embrace of the local Greek community, perhaps too comfortable. When I started school, I could fluently read and write Greek, but my entire English vocabulary was ‘please, toilet, thank you’. I went through school as “the wog boy” and whilst my brothers and I eventually helped my mother to learn English and

get a driver’s license, she spent most of her working life as a seamstress, kitchenhand or cleaner. When she retired, she still didn’t understand enough about Australia to know that she was entitled to an aged pension. So why does she still think that coming to Australia was the best decision of her life? Because my mother chose to celebrate the inclusive side of Australia!

For every teacher that struggled with the idea of teaching me and my brothers, there were dozens that made sure we were included and supported.



John Dardo and his mother Sam

For every person that ignored her as a “foreign” cleaner, there were dozens that said hello and treated her with dignity and respect. Despite being a “wog”, I got merit-based opportunities in the Australian Public Service. When my mum needs to navigate banking or insurance or government, their systems recognise that for her, inclusion means that they respect her wishes to be represented by her sons. As her sons married, her extended family grew to include

people of every colour and faith imaginable.

Perhaps you will read the rest of this document, perhaps you won't. However, I do ask, that as decent human beings, you all join me in making a commitment to respect and embrace the backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of all our people. My mother would be the first to tell you that inclusion is not perfect and that it takes effort from all sides, every day. Effort to be included,

effort to include others, effort to call out behaviours that are not respectful or inclusive and effort for everyone to be innovative, reasonable, sensible and safe as the journey and language of inclusion changes over time.

Signed,
John Dardo

PS... I still dream in Greek!

About this document

The CALD Inclusion Plan has been co-designed with staff across a range of cultural identities. We aspired to develop meaningful actions that foster authentic inclusion for our CALD staff. To create a space for everyone to show up in their truth and bring their authentic selves to work every day without hesitation.

Through internal and external consultation, we identified four key focus areas where the Agency will work to improve policy and inclusive practices, including building greater cultural awareness within our workforce. It has always been important to the Agency that our workforce is reflective of the communities that we serve. This strengthens our efforts to break

down any cultural and language barriers faced by our CALD stakeholders both internally and externally.

We recognise that embedding inclusion, equity, and belonging is an ongoing journey with no end point. Creating space for challenging but respectful conversations to become the norm will allow the Agency to continuously grow and enhance our position as an employer of choice for the CALD community.

The Agency has a separate [First Nations Employment and Inclusion Plan](#) (external) focused on creating a more inclusive workplace culture and supporting the needs of our First Nations staff.

Strategy background

The NDIA recognises that Australia has a rich multicultural community and history, and we want our staff to feel valued and respected, to share and celebrate their unique cultural diversity, so we can foster a sense of belonging for everyone.

To achieve this the Agency aims to create a workplace where everyone feels valued and able to bring their authentic selves to work. We do this by demonstrating openness to embrace diversity through the commitments outlined in the [NDIA Inclusion and Diversity Framework](#). A key action of the NDIA Inclusion and Diversity Framework is to develop a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Inclusion Plan so we can improve the Agency's reputation as an employer of choice for CALD peoples.

Australia's population is made up of a large proportion of people from a diverse range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. According to the [Australian Bureau of statistics](#) in 2021, 27.6 per cent of Australia's population were born overseas, and 22.8 per cent of migrants use a language other than English at home¹. Based on the [State of the Service Report 2022–23](#) this diversity is reflected in the APS workforce with 23.9 per cent of employees born outside of Australia, and 24.4 per cent speaking a language other than English at home².

By creating an inclusion plan for CALD staff within the NDIA we honour our Inclusion and Diversity principles, embedding inclusive practice in our Agency DNA by supporting a healthy workforce that embraces diverse representation across all levels of the organisation. In policy making, program management and decision-making forums we want our workplace systems, structures, and processes to accommodate and celebrate

diversity. This is how we will become visible in the community as an employer who values its diverse employees.

Defining CALD

The Agency recognises the complexity that exists behind the use of the CALD acronym. We understand that as people's lived experiences change, the meaning of socially constructed language shifts too. The term CALD is broad in its span of culturally diverse groups whose experiences are not always equally reflected in the community. The Diversity Council of Australia defines Cultural diversity as:

“Cultural diversity means having a mix of people from different cultural backgrounds – it can include difference in cultural/ethnic identity (how we identify with ourselves and how others identify us), language, country of birth, religion, heritage/ancestry, national origin, and/or race and colour.”³

Linguistic diversity entails cultural differences but differs from the meaning of cultural diversity. It considers the varied ways people from different backgrounds communicate with each other. For example, in many regions around the world each language includes a variety of dialects spoken throughout different geographical regions of the same country⁴. The Agency also recognises people who use Auslan as being part of the CALD community. This includes people from the Deaf and Deafblind community. Embedding inclusive practices

to help people connect and communicate as easily and fluently as possible is at the heart of accessibility.

We acknowledge the nuance of cultural and faith-based diversity. How individuals observe the duties and practices of their culture or religion is a personal choice. Just as for people whose identity encompasses intersectionality across diversity groups, people will experience and express their cultural and/or religious beliefs differently. The Agency is guided by legislation that sets out the minimum requirements for providing a fair and inclusive workplace. As a public service agency, the APS Code of Conduct defines our expectation for inclusion and diversity. At the heart of how we operate as a workforce is the commitment expected of all APS employees to treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment⁵.

Recognising intersectionality

Intersectionality within the Inclusion and Diversity space describes people who identify as belonging to more than one diversity group. By nature of experiencing this intersectionality, people often face greater disadvantage and additional barriers to feeling a sense of safety, inclusion and belonging in their everyday lives.

For example, applying a cultural lens to people with disability uncovers many varied attitudes and approaches to how they are regarded within their home and community lives. It is staff within this space especially who may need extra support to ensure they are provided a fair and equitable opportunity to reach their full potential at work. The Agency is committed to working together with our CALD Staff Network to achieve this.

By addressing intersectionality to minimise the extra barriers it raises for all staff, we strengthen the service delivered to participants who equally may face these challenges. This creates more meaningful connections between Agency staff and participants from all diversity groups. Making those connections helps the Agency achieve our purpose of delivering participants better outcomes in life by improving their participation in the community and the workforce. This is supported by some of the actions included in the [NDIA Cultural and Linguistic Diversity \(CALD\) Strategy 2024–2028 \(external\)](#).

Our focus areas

To be fully effective and drive realistic and tangible outcomes, our CALD Inclusion Plan is centered around four key areas. Each will enable the Agency to implement targeted actions strengthening our commitment to accessibility and inclusive policy and practice for staff within the multicultural community. The four areas are:



Cultural Competence and Leadership



Inclusive Culture



Inclusive Policy and Practice



Career Development and Advancement

Strategic alignment

Alongside the Inclusion and Diversity Framework, this Plan aligns with other Agency documents including the [Corporate Plan \(external\)](#), and to other inclusion plans for staff across other diversity group identities.

The Agency takes a holistic approach in creating inclusive, welcoming, and culturally safe workspaces for its staff, and this inclusion plan is a key contributor to that outcome. This includes aligning with other Australian Public Service agencies, and efforts undertaken by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) overall.

In 2018, the Agency released its first [Cultural and Linguistic Diversity \(CALD\) Strategy \(external\)](#) as a public statement of commitment to working alongside people with disability from CALD backgrounds to achieve access to, and outcomes from, their NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) Plan on an equal basis with the broader population. An updated version is due for publication in 2024.

The strategy set priority areas for action focused on building connections and positive relationships with CALD communities, broadening choice and control, and increasing cultural competency within the NDIA and its partners. This CALD Inclusion Plan complements the strategy by setting a blueprint for how the Agency will support and empower our CALD staff to bring their authentic selves to work every day.

Agency inclusion and diversity principles

The Inclusion and Diversity Principles are the fundamental aspiration of the Agency when it comes to being an inclusive workplace that celebrates diversity. The actions contained in the CALD Inclusion Plan aim to progress these principles.

1 We are an employer of choice for workplace inclusion and diversity.

Support solutions that overcome barriers in the workplace and be visible in our community as an employer who values our people.

2 Our workplace systems, structure and processes accommodate and celebrate diversity.

Encourage diverse representation in policy making, program management and decision-making forums.

3 We foster a workforce that is fully informed about and committed to inclusion and diversity.

Diversity and inclusion practices are integrated into Agency activities, to be part of our Agency DNA.

4 We maintain a balanced working environment and ensure the wellbeing of our people.

Support a healthy workforce, offering a range of initiatives supporting health and wellbeing.



Our Agency commitment

We commit to fostering a culturally safe and respectful workplace, where we celebrate and embrace the collective wealth of diverse life experiences presented by our CALD staff, who weave a rich tapestry of multiculturalism through the Agency. We will work together to support your career goals and aspirations in a culturally safe, positive, inclusive, and accessible workplace.

While the Inclusion and Diversity Principles remain the fundamental aspiration across all diversity groups, it is important to clearly outline the Agency's commitment to our CALD staff.

The Agency wants to build a better NDIS with the right people, skills, and systems. We recognise the value and innovation that our CALD staff can collectively contribute to the NDIA in delivering a world-class scheme to participants. We create inclusive policies and practice that sew multiculturalism into our organisational make-up, taking a zero-tolerance stance for behaviours not aligned with the Agency's Values and the Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy. We also understand the need for less overt means of inclusion such as collectively celebrating [Harmony Week](#) and acknowledging cultural heritage days. We want to continue providing supports that empower CALD staff to embrace their own diversity by offering cultural leave, and choice over how their public

holiday entitlements are used so they can honour more personally meaningful cultural celebrations when necessary.

A culturally safe workplace is one where multicultural awareness and understanding is demonstrated through efforts such as targeted training, to ensure all staff are aligned with agency expectations on communicating in a culturally respectful and sensitive manner. We want to ensure cultural competence is expected as part of performance outcomes and adequate supports are in place, such as an active CALD Staff Network. We must continuously review and measure our performance to ensure the Agency leads with best practice inclusivity for our CALD staff.

Diversity snapshot

The results of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 census revealed a nation that is now more multicultural than ever. Understanding this data helps the Agency to work towards creating a more inclusive workforce that reflects the diversity of the community we serve.

Our Inclusion and Diversity Framework sets the objective of increasing representation of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds beyond 16.5 per cent. Agency diversity data taken from our HR (Human Resource) Information System at February 2024 shows current CALD representation at 14 per cent. It is voluntary for staff to share information on this system, so not all staff may choose to share their background with us. We know there is more work to do to understand and increase CALD representation at the Agency. Implementing our CALD Inclusion Plan to embed cultural and psychological safety into our workforce and ways of working is a key milestone towards reaching this goal.

ABS 2021 Census⁶

48.2% of Australians have a parent born overseas.

7 million people in Australia were born overseas, representing 27.6% of the population.

5.8 million people (22.8%) reported using a language other than English at home.

71.8% of people who spoke a language other than English at home were first generation Australians⁷.

Religious diversity is increasing in Australia. The most common religions are Christianity (43.9 per cent), No religion (38.9 per cent), Islam (3.2 per cent), Hinduism (2.7 per cent) and Buddhism (2.4 per cent)⁸.

APS Employee Census 2023 NDIA Highlights Report

25.7% of NDIA staff born outside of Australia.

22% of NDIA staff speak a language other than English at home.

84% of NDIA staff who identified as CALD believe the Agency provides a safe work environment*.

82% of NDIA staff who identified as CALD believe the Agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture[†].

* , † based on staff who selected an option other than 'Australian (excluding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander)' to the question 'How would you describe your cultural background'.



‘This CALD Inclusion Plan will further contribute to ensuring the NDIA continues to be a great place to work, so that the NDIS supports our people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.’

Adrian Wong
Planner, Liverpool, NSW

Consultation overview

The NDIA adopted co-design principles in its approach to the development of this inclusion plan, working closely with and listening to the voices of our staff.

Bringing together CALD staff across all work levels and business areas of the Agency was key to creating an authentic and meaningful inclusion plan. An internal CALD working group was formed to deliver the project, engaging in extensive internal and external consultation to inform the content of this plan.

The consultation process occurred over several months engaging a range of sources including:

- Staff and partner focus groups
- HarmonyHub@NDIA (CALD Staff Network)
- Service Design and Improvement Group (Strategy Branch)
- Enterprise Agreement Strategic Initiatives team
- External peak industry bodies including National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) and Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA).

By centering CALD staff as our key collaborators, we have formed actions based around their direct thoughts, expertise and lived experiences to ensure this Inclusion Plan meets current best practice.

CALD staff focus group responses



'My faith/religion does influence my approach in my work; however, I actually don't feel safe to let others know about faith/religion in the workplace.'



'It is important to raise awareness and knowledge around different cultural aspects and beliefs as it will assist in building trust and respect between staff and participants.'



'... It isn't just about how I look or sound... it is about what I can do and bring to the role and the agency.'

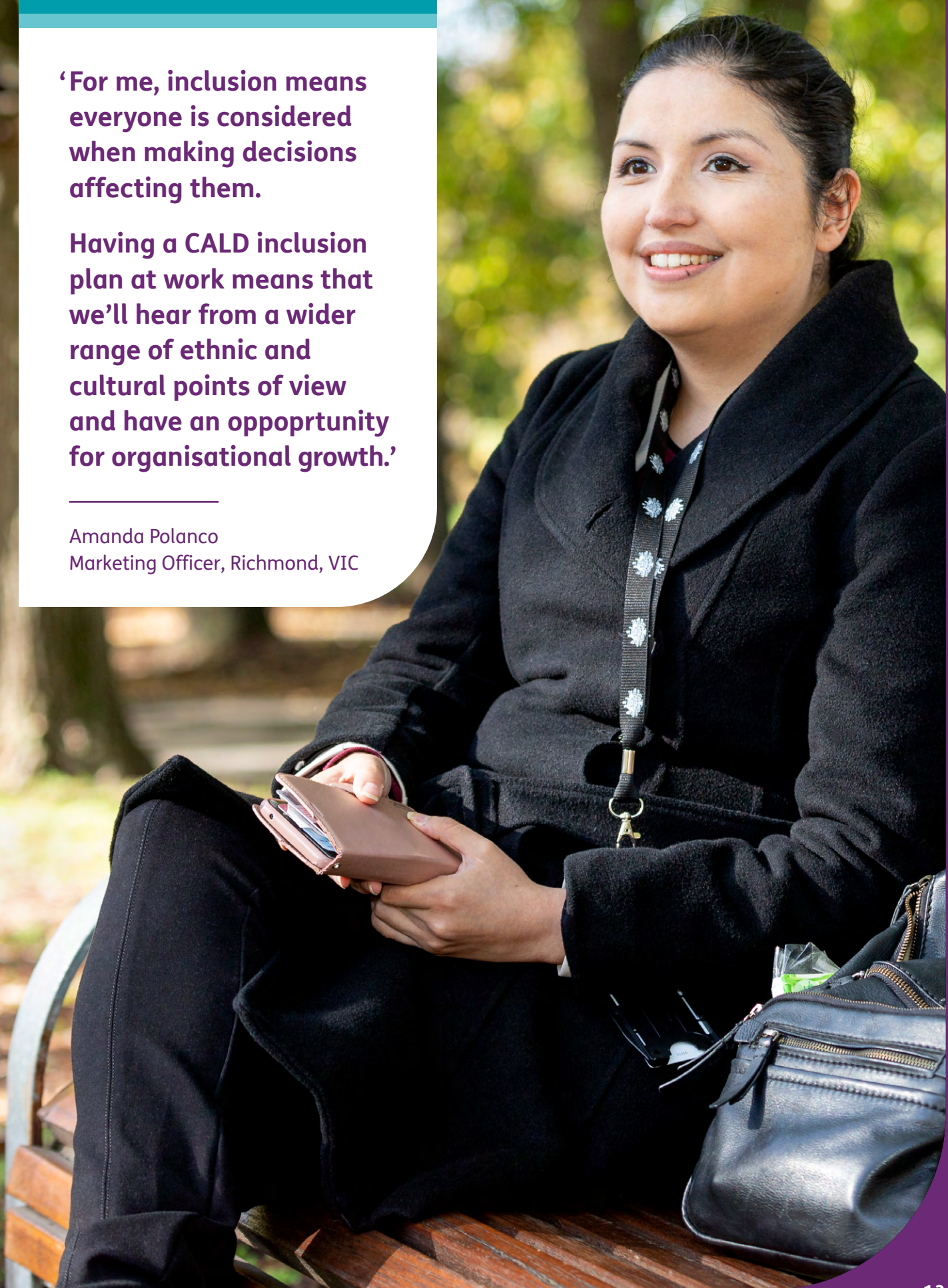


'I love that the Agency Strategy is for open consultation and contribution from 'us'. Everyone needs to feel safe and secure coming into the office/hybrid workplace.'

‘For me, inclusion means everyone is considered when making decisions affecting them.

Having a CALD inclusion plan at work means that we’ll hear from a wider range of ethnic and cultural points of view and have an opportunity for organisational growth.’

Amanda Polanco
Marketing Officer, Richmond, VIC



Our achievements at the NDIA

The Agency has made considerable progress towards embedding CALD inclusion since our early days of inception in 2013.

While we have a way to go yet to cementing our reputation as an employer of choice for the CALD community, we are proud of the efforts achieved so far:

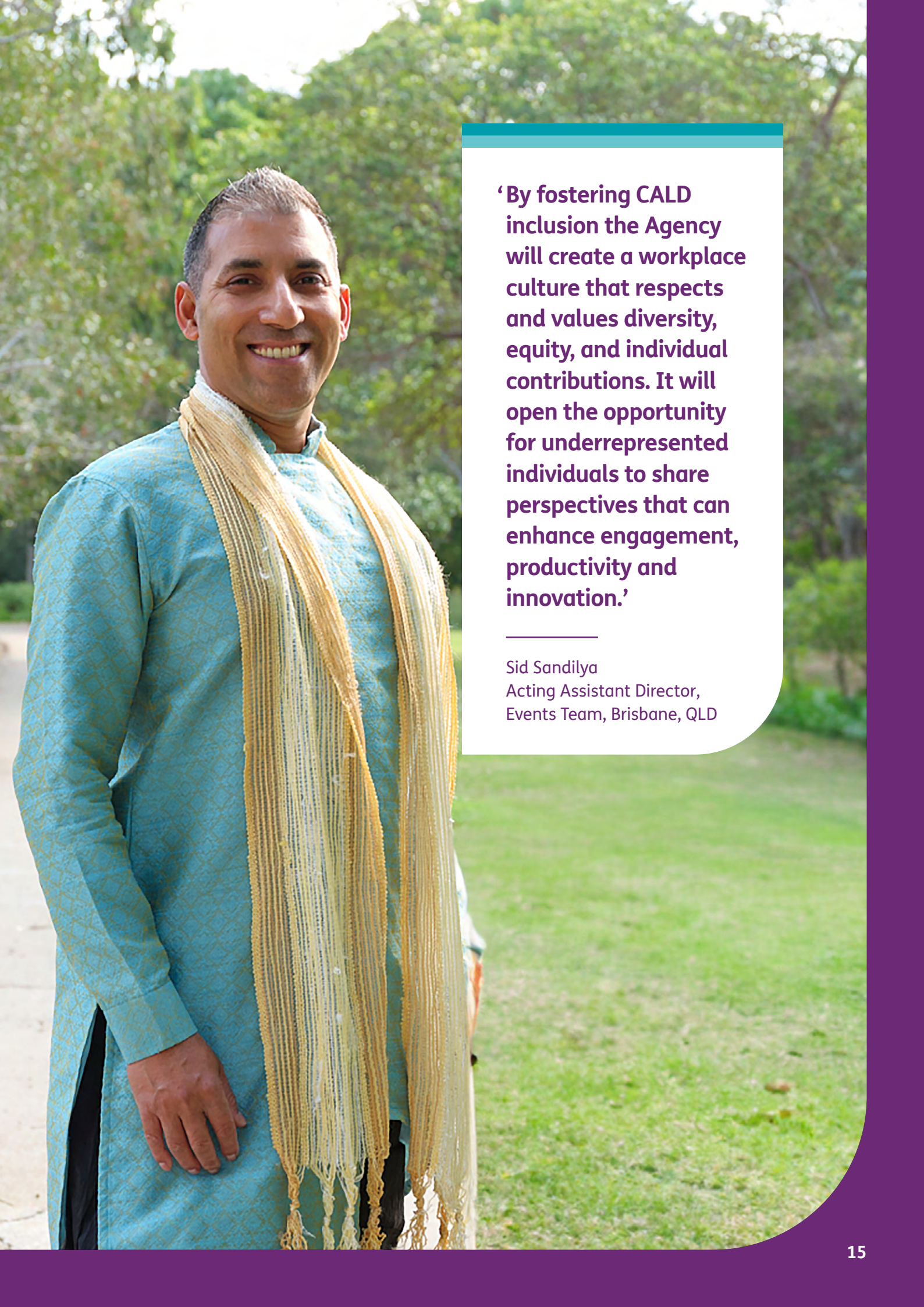
- Harmony week celebrations since 2013
- Cultural Leave and Floating Public Holiday entitlements introduced since 2013
- Diversity Council Australia Membership held since 2016
- Mandatory Celebrating Diversity: Multicultural Awareness training since 2019
- NDIA Positive and Productive Workplace Policy implemented 2020
- NDIA Safe and Respectful framework launched May 2023
- HarmonyHub@NDIA - CALD Staff network formalised in July 2023
- SES CALD Champion appointed in 2024.



Diwali Festival, 2022



Harmony Week, Adelaide, 2023

A man with short dark hair, smiling, wearing a blue patterned kurta and a yellow shawl with fringe. He is standing outdoors in a grassy area with trees in the background.

‘By fostering CALD inclusion the Agency will create a workplace culture that respects and values diversity, equity, and individual contributions. It will open the opportunity for underrepresented individuals to share perspectives that can enhance engagement, productivity and innovation.’

Sid Sandilya
Acting Assistant Director,
Events Team, Brisbane, QLD






Cultural competence and leadership




Cultural competence and leadership are fundamental elements to inclusion and diversity. The Agency recognises that the intersectionality of identity shapes everybody’s individual and unique experiences within the workforce. This is key to committing to be an employer of choice for all, regardless of anyone’s identity.

Educating and uplifting staff capability is essential to building a culturally intelligent and psychologically safe workplace. This does not happen without intention and effort. We must implement clear actionable objectives to set a consistent standard across the Agency.

Our staff consultation asserted that cultural competence must be demonstrated from the top down. Our leadership team and people managers needs to guide the way by modelling and delivering inclusive practices and behaviours every day.

We know we need to focus our efforts on building cultural competency for the Agency to become a leader in CALD inclusion.

 Action	 Outcome	 Timeline
<p>1.1 Review and refresh existing mandatory multicultural training to ensure the content is relevant to current best practice CALD inclusion. Explore the potential addition of SBS Cultural Atlas resource as a self-service tool available via the intranet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uplift cultural competence of all Agency staff • Expand staff knowledge of diverse cultural heritage customs and sensitivities • Build trust and confidence in the Agency’s commitment to remaining contemporary and leading by example as a multicultural workplace. 	<p>FY 2024–2025 Q1</p>
<p>1.2 All leaders provided with CALD resources to better manage and support CALD staff - expanding leaders toolkit, Policies and Induction Training packages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders with direct reports provided with enhanced resources, training and guidance to better support CALD staff, building leadership capability, trust and staff confidence. 	<p>FY 2024–2025 Q2</p>




 Action	 Outcome	 Timeline
1.3 Peer Support Contact Officers to receive targeted cultural sensitivity training to better support CALD staff including dedicated CALD wellbeing resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds CALD support capability • Builds staff confidence in support structure. 	FY 2024–2025 Q2
1.4 Integrate cultural heritage dates of significance into the NDIA Calendar on the Intranet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers a centralised platform of recognised cultural and religious dates to allow uniform application of cultural leave approval for all staff • Builds capability and cultural sensitivity for true inclusion Agency wide. 	FY 2024–2025 Q2
1.5 Collaborate with CALD network and government organisations to incorporate training on anti-racism and trauma informed practice into the Agency’s capability programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural safety and trauma-informed practice is consistently demonstrated across the NDIA and its partner organisations. 	FY 2024–2025 Q3
1.6 SES CALD Champion advocates, promotes, and provides regular communication amongst Agency stakeholders on CALD inclusion activities and the importance of cultural safety within the NDIA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides confidence to our people that CALD Inclusion is inherent to how the agency operates. 	FY 2024–2025 Q1



Inclusive culture

Creating a culture that champions empathy is at the core of the Agency’s wider Inclusion and Diversity Framework. A culturally safe workplace is one which embraces all who work at or come into contact with our Agency, so they are welcomed and accepted for who they are, regardless of their identity. We want our workplace to be a space where inclusive language, policy and practice is consistent, visible, authentic and meaningful.

Respecting CALD staff as the subject matter experts on their lived experiences is pivotal to the Agency’s plan for embedding true CALD Inclusion in our workforce. The Agency is committed to empowering CALD staff to collectively guide and shape our actions for fostering inclusive culture now and into the future. We understand this is a journey of continuous improvement that respects shifting cultural experiences and societal norms.

 Action	 Outcome	 Timeline
<p>2.1 Elevate CALD visibility and inclusion throughout the Agency by displaying relevant marketing materials promoting the CALD Staff Network and other CALD inclusion materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of intersectionality of staff across the Agency demonstrating enhanced value of staff members identifying across diversity groups • Fosters cultural safety and encourages meaningful exchanges that enhance the voices of CALD staff within the Agency • Raises visibility for CALD staff by demonstrating the Agency’s commitment to CALD Inclusion. 	<p>FY 2024–2025 Q1</p>
<p>2.2 CALD Staff Network Campaign - Develop and launch an awareness campaign to empower staff to join the network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New and existing CALD staff know about the network, its function and responsibilities and actively contribute to its expansion. 	<p>FY 2024–2025 Q1</p>



Action



Outcome



Timeline

2.3 The Agency will promote and lead development of a cultural engagement panel event series, through the CALD Staff Network, centred on highlighting heritage celebration dates of universal significance, engaging participants, and professional leaders from the community as guest panel members sharing personal cultural experiences.

- Foster increased sense of belonging and value to existing CALD staff in the Agency
- Build cultural competence for all Agency staff
- Embeds cultural sensitivity as a core part of the NDIA Workforce.

FY 2024–2025
Q3

2.4 Design and build a CALD Staff Network intranet page as the central source of all official CALD cohort communications and resources, including a regular ‘video on demand series’ that spotlights CALD Network members offering snapshots on their culture and religions.

- Strengthened sense of connection and collaboration between CALD Staff Network and the wider Agency
- Increased awareness of CALD staff and community practices
- Improves cultural sensitivity and awareness for all Agency staff and leaders.

FY 2024–2025
Q2

2.5 Actively build on and grow existing relationships with CALD peak bodies to ensure the NDIA maintains and leads contemporary CALD inclusion best practice.

- Ensures Agency remains informed on current industry benchmarks, advice and CALD community matters.

FY 2024–2025
Q4

2.6 Actively develop relationships with CALD networks across the APS to ensure the NDIA maintains and leads contemporary CALD inclusion best practice.

- Strengthens collaboration and connection with Partners and APS colleagues to drive consistency for CALD staff experience across agencies.

FY 2024–2025
Q4



CALD Inclusion Plan Focus area 2




 Action	 Outcome	 Timeline
2.7 Participate in DCA Inclusive Employer Index to achieve Employer of Choice accreditation (DCA Inclusive Employer).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates Agency’s commitment to leading CALD best practice• Positions Agency as an employer of choice for CALD candidates.	FY 2025–2026 Q1
2.8 Engage and give confidence to candidates from a CALD background who are considering working at NDIA by having dedicated information on the NDIS website that supports why the NDIA is an inclusive place to work for CALD peoples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates Agency’s commitment to leading CALD best practice• Positions the Agency as an employer of choice within the CALD community• Supports the goal of increasing the number CALD staff employed within the Agency.	FY 2024–2025 Q4



Inclusive policy and practice




Our staff consultation process showed the need for more consistent delivery and application of inclusive policy and practice across the Agency. We heard that clearer policy documents and guidelines being consistently applied across all business areas would instill a stronger sense of equity and belonging for our CALD staff.

The Agency is working to create a platform that promotes best inclusive practice for CALD people by recognising and valuing unique and individual experiences of staff from diverse cultural backgrounds. We want to map out transparent policies that allow staff to be who they are and show up as their authentic self.

 Action	 Outcomes	 Timelines
<p>3.1 Explore options for identifying suitable safe spaces at each office/site that allows staff, partners and visitors to practice prayer and reflection when needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters Cultural and psychological safety in the Agency • Demonstrates the Agency’s commitment to true inclusion for CALD staff • Presents the Agency as an employer of choice for CALD candidates. 	<p>FY 2024–2025 Q3</p>
<p>3.2 Review and promote existing information available on cultural leave entitlements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds capability and confidence in delegates to ensure policy is equitably applied across the Agency • Demonstrates Agency’s commitment to embedding cultural and psychological safety for staff. 	<p>FY 2024–2025 Q1</p>
<p>3.3 Examine the definition of Kinship and ‘immediate family’ as applied to existing leave policies to consider inclusion of staff members’ cultural considerations and familial obligations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates the Agency’s commitment to leading best practice CALD Inclusion, by reflecting a more cosmopolitan view respectful of differing cultural customs • Provides cultural and psychological safety to staff through the Agency’s ability to support and encourage their work/life balance. 	<p>FY 2024–2025 Q1</p>



CALD Inclusion Plan Focus area 3

 Action	 Outcomes	 Timelines
3.4 Ensure Agency Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider demonstrates expertise in cultural competence and trauma-informed practice and care in supporting CALD staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EAP provider demonstrates knowledge and expertise to support CALD cohort is clearly communicated• Staff have confidence that they will be supported when they contact EAP• Further embeds cultural and psychological safety across the agency.	FY 2024–2025 Q1
3.5 Implement and maintain a recruitment target for CALD staff at executive and senior levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater CALD representation in leadership reflects true commitment to CALD inclusion• Positions Agency as an employer of choice for CALD community• Increases the scope for innovation in leadership with flow-on to improved system design and practice for all Agency stakeholders.	FY 2025–2026 Q4
3.6 Improve CALD recruitment approach to elevate the Agency’s presence in the CALD community as an employer of choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positions Agency as an employer of choice for CALD staff• Enhances Agency’s capacity to attract and retain CALD staff per Inclusion and Diversity Framework commitment• Demonstrates the Agency’s commitment to cultural competence and sensitivity.	FY 2025–2026 Q4

**Action****Outcomes****Timelines**

3.7 Encourage CALD candidates to disclose their heritage for recruitment data collection explaining why the information is being collected.

- Improves recruitment experience for CALD candidates
- Agency better understands and can support CALD candidates in their application process, rather than just use the information for diversity data
- Encourages data integrity in the collection of candidate's personal information.

FY 2025–2026
Q3

3.8 Recruitment review to identify and remove any potential barriers to inclusive recruitment for CALD applicants including the introduction of de-identified application screening and dedicated reasonable adjustments to support any language or accent gaps in translation.

- Improved candidate experience for CALD applicants
- Positions the Agency as an employer of choice within the CALD community
- Supports the goal of increasing the number CALD staff employed within the Agency.

FY 2025–2026
Q3

3.9 Update existing Recruitment Panel training program (for panel members) to incorporate cultural sensitivity and inclusion, eliminate unconscious bias and ensure adequate support is provided to CALD candidates through an equitable process.

- Provides consistent recruitment experience for CALD candidates across all roles and work levels
- Offers capability uplift for management and leaders serving on recruitment panels
- Demonstrates the Agency's commitment to being a culturally and psychologically safe workplace.




FY 2025–2026
Q2



Career development and advancement

Genuinely valuing inclusion and diversity means we need to create and offer opportunities for all staff to achieve their full potential. The Agency is mindful of the barriers to career growth that are sometimes presented to CALD staff through cultural and language differences. Our staff consultation showed us the need to implement meaningful strategies that ensure our CALD staff feel supported and adequately prepared to achieve their employment goals and career ambitions.

The Agency is committed to establishing a platform of fair and equitable access to career development and advancement opportunities for CALD staff. This applies to staff at all work levels and from across all business areas of the workforce.

 Action	 Outcomes	 Timelines
4.1 Managers, supervisors and CALD staff work together to establish career development pathway plans and professional development initiatives supporting individual staff to actively manage their careers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capability and capacity uplift of CALD staff encourages retention by empowering CALD staff to proactively manage their career development.	FY 2024–2025 Q2
4.2 Design and build targeted self-paced Recruitment Fundamentals Training in LEAP for CALD staff, to support retention through career advancement within the APS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourages retention of existing CALD staff• Demonstrates the Agency’s commitment to cultural competence and sensitivity.	FY 2026–2027 Q1



Action



Outcomes



Timelines

4.3 Design and implement a skills tag register identifying fluent multi-lingual staff in participant facing roles, who are approved for community language allowance.

- Capability and capacity uplift of existing CALD staff
- Allows for meaningful conversations between participants and Agency staff
- Promotes NDIA as an employer of choice for CALD candidates
- Demonstrates the Agency’s commitment to leading best practice CALD inclusion in-line with other APS agencies using similar models.

FY 2025–2026
Q1

4.4 Design and implement targeted CALD staff mentoring program.

- Provide staff with objective guidance and support for personal growth and building effective relationships
- Capability uplift for supervisors and managers.

FY 2024–2025
Q3

4.5 Through the CALD Staff Network introduce an informal buddy system that links staff across all business areas and work levels, providing a safe space for informal networking and peer support.

- Fosters cultural and psychological safety
- Improves retention of CALD cohort by empowering them to collaborate freely and nurturing their capacity to bring their authentic selves to work (in line with Agency’s existing Inclusion and Diversity Framework ‘All In’ pledge).

FY 2024–2025
Q1



CALD Inclusion Plan Reporting

How we will measure and report

We want to be open and transparent about our progress towards creating an organisational culture that is genuinely inclusive and supportive of CALD peoples. To manage accountability against the action items in this Inclusion Plan the Agency will monitor and report to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) on a six-monthly basis.

Actions	Outcome	Business Area Responsible	Timeline
5.1 Plan progress reported to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)	Provide SLT with confidence that the Agency is advancing its inclusive practice regarding CALD people	Office of Agency Accessibility and Inclusion SES CALD Champion	Six monthly: Q2 2024–25 Q4 2024–25 Q2 2025–26 Q4 2025–26 Q2 2026–27 Q4 2026–27

To measure success, we will access a variety of sources to track our performance against including:

- APS Census Results
- Annual Inclusion and Diversity staff survey
- Internal action progress reporting
- Diversity training completion rates
- Employment target measures
- Diversity data across the Agency – HR information systems reflect increased sharing of diversity information by staff who identify as CALD.

Aspiring to DCA Inclusive Employer status

The actions in this inclusion plan will establish the foundations for the Agency to participate in the [Diversity Council Australia \(DCA\) Inclusion@Work Index](#) (external) benchmarking process. This enables Australian workplaces to measure diversity and inclusion in their workforce and compare findings to a DCA-Member Leading Practice Benchmark and a National Index Benchmark (derived from a nationally representative survey of 3000+ Australian workers). Participating employers deemed eligible are recognised for their commitment to diversity and inclusion by achieving a time dated DCA Inclusive Employer status⁹. This motivates us not only to achieve the accreditation and demonstrate the Agency’s commitment to being an employer of choice, but ensures we maintain that commitment so we can retain the status into the future.

Source	Success Measure	Target
Census	Staff identifying as CALD	> 16.5 per cent
HR Systems	Staff identifying as CALD	> 16 per cent
LEAP	CALD Mandatory learning	< 5 per cent overdue

Source	Questions	2023 Agency Census Results	2023 CALD Census Results*
Census	Engagement Index	77 per cent	77 per cent (0)
Census	I would recommend my Agency as a good place to work	73 per cent	74 per cent (+1)
Census	Wellbeing Index	73 per cent	73 per cent (0)
Census	My Agency does a good job promoting health and wellbeing	72 per cent	72 per cent (0)
Census	I think my Agency cares about my health and wellbeing	68 per cent	68 per cent (0)
Census	Experience discrimination in the workplace (per cent no)	90 per cent	88 per cent (-2)
Census	I receive the respect I deserve from my colleagues at work	84 per cent	81 per cent (-3)
Census	Subjected to harassment and bullying (per cent no)	85 per cent	85 per cent (0)
Census	My Agency provides a safe work environment	83 per cent	84 per cent (+1)

* Target for all these scores is to ensure they reflect Agency overall results

Glossary of terms

Understanding meaning helps to build inclusion. The more respectful and understanding we are in the language we use, the better we all will be in ensuring everyone feels comfortable.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate and effectively interact across cultures. It involves understanding that culture shapes worldview, and that individuals view the world differently based on their cultural background and related experiences. Cultural competence includes an awareness that individuals have different needs because of their cultural and linguistic background¹⁰.

Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts¹¹.

Cultural Safety

Robyn Williams describes this in a journal article published by Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health as “[A]n environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening”¹².

Faith

A more inclusive term referring to an intrinsic drive to search for meaning, purpose and significance, and can be used by a diversity of people and beliefs¹³.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person’s identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation¹⁴.

Non-Religious or Non-Faith

Covers a wide range of worldviews, usually of people who are indifferent to religion. In general, it refers to everything that is not religious¹⁵.

Partners

The NDIA funds and works together with community-based organisations to help deliver the NDIS in some parts of Australia. We call these organisations ‘partners’.

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is the belief that you won’t be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes. At work, it’s a shared expectation held by members of a team that teammates will not embarrass, reject or punish them for sharing ideas, taking risks or soliciting feedback¹⁶.

Religion

Usually associated with belief of God (most commonly in Jewish, Christian or Islamic traditions), but can also include an awareness of the sacred, or divine (e.g., Buddhism or Hinduism). Definitions of religion usually also include a connection with a community of people who share similar beliefs and practice rituals associated with these beliefs. The Australian High Court takes an approach along these lines, defining religion as ‘a complex of beliefs and practices which point to a set of values and an understanding of the meaning of existence’¹⁷.

Spirituality

Can be difficult to define as it has many different meanings for different people. Spirituality is viewed as the personalised path and effort someone makes towards the ultimate value they perceive and hold¹⁸.

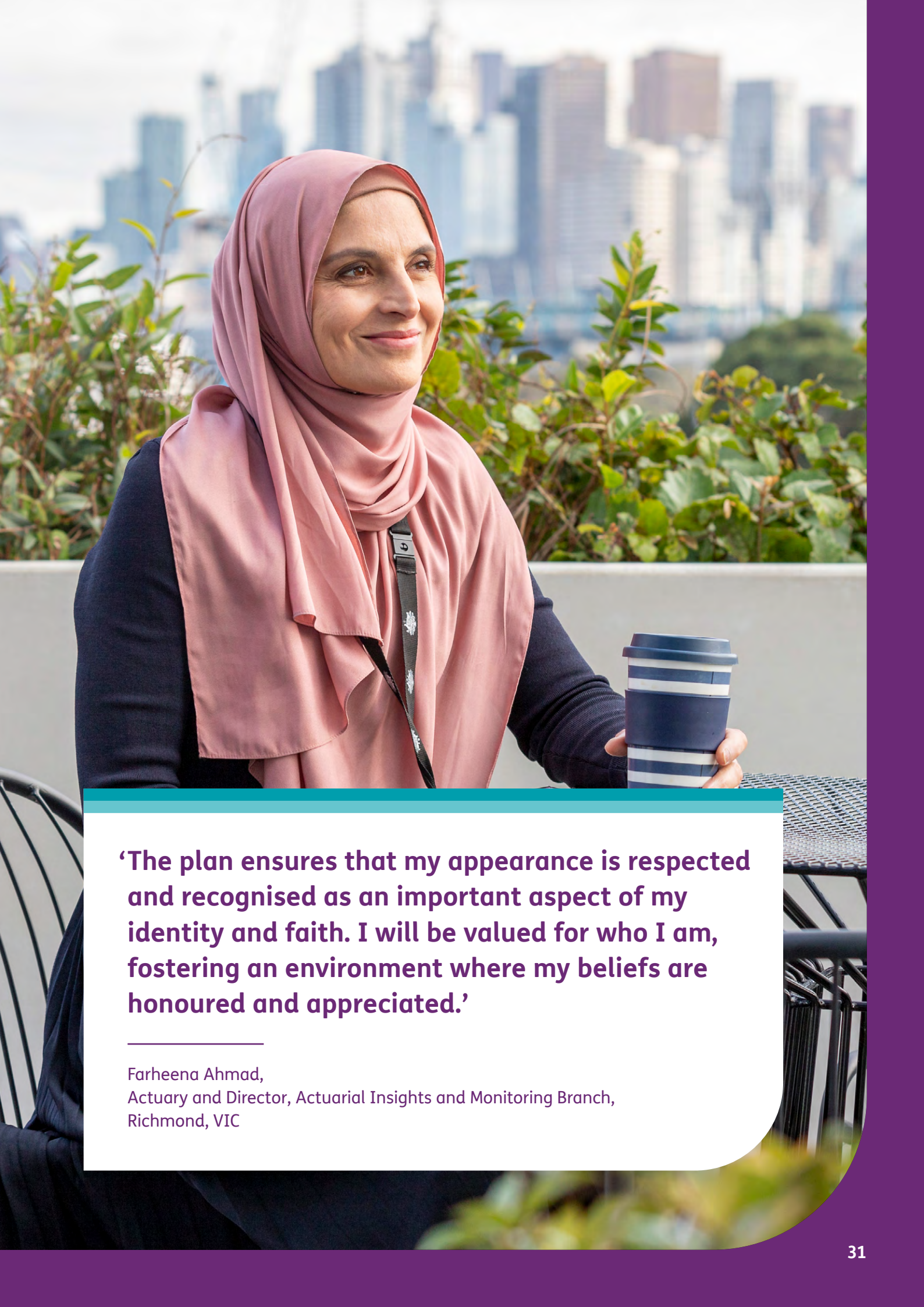


‘For me, upholding inclusion is not just a value, but a fundamental principle that guides how I interact with others in my workplace, community and beyond.’

Anji Perera
Communications Officer, Canberra, ACT

References

- ¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (20 September 2022), [Cultural diversity of Australia](#), ABS Website, accessed 18 January 2023
- ² The Australian Public Service Commission (2023), [State of the Service Report 2022–23](#), Commonwealth of Australia
- ³ Diversity Council Australia/University of Sydney Business School (R. D’Amada-Remedios, D. Groutsis, A. Kaabel, and J. O’Leary) [Counting Culture: Towards a Standardised Approach to Measuring and Reporting on Workforce Cultural Diversity in Australia](#), Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2021
- ⁴ Toke, Naia (23 July 2023), [‘Linguistic Diversity: What Is It, How to Encourage It and Why Is It Important’](#), Diversity for Social Impact website accessed 26 February 2024
- ⁵ [APS Code of Conduct | Australian Public Service Commission](#)
- ⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (27 June 2022), [2021 Census: Nearly half of Australians have a parent born overseas](#), ABS Website, accessed 30 January 2023
- ⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (20 September 2022), [Cultural diversity of Australia](#), ABS Website, accessed 30 January 2023
- ⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (4 July 2022), [Religious affiliation in Australia](#), ABS Website, accessed 30 January 2023
- ⁹ Diversity Council Australia (2023), [‘An Introduction to Inclusion@Work’](#), DCA Website, accessed September 15, 2023
- ¹⁰ Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (2019), [Cultural Competence in Australia – A Guide](#), FECCA website accessed February 1 2024
- ¹¹ UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (2023), [‘What is intangible Cultural Heritage’](#), UNESCO website, accessed February 1, 2024
- ¹² R Williams (1999), [‘Cultural Safety – what does it mean for our work practice?’](#) Volume 23(2), Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, p 213
- ¹³ Diversity Council Australia, [‘Creating Inclusive Multi-Faith Workplaces’](#), Sydney, 2019
- ¹⁴ Diversity Council Australia, [Diversity & Inclusion Definition](#), Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2017
- ¹⁵ Diversity Council Australia, [‘Creating Inclusive Multi-Faith Workplaces’](#), Sydney, 2019
- ¹⁶ Center for Creative Leadership [What Is Psychological Safety at Work? | CCL](#), Leading Effectively Staff, CCL website accessed Feb 5 2024
- ¹⁷ Diversity Council Australia, [‘Creating Inclusive Multi-Faith Workplaces’](#), Sydney, 2019
- ¹⁸ Diversity Council Australia, [‘Creating Inclusive Multi-Faith Workplaces’](#), Sydney, 2019



‘The plan ensures that my appearance is respected and recognised as an important aspect of my identity and faith. I will be valued for who I am, fostering an environment where my beliefs are honoured and appreciated.’

Farheena Ahmad,
Actuary and Director, Actuarial Insights and Monitoring Branch,
Richmond, VIC



Contact us

The Agency welcomes feedback of our inclusion and diversity practices. For more information about the development of this publication, or to request an alternative format, contact us through cultureandinclusion@ndis.gov.au.