

Dental Health Services Victoria

Belonging Plan

One home for all the ways we are helping Dental Health Services Victoria be an inclusive place to work.

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Belonging Plan

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Vision
3. Overview
4. About us
5. About the future
6. About the Plan
7. Key terms
8. Governance
9. Appendix

Introduction

We want everyone to feel like this is a place where they can belong; we want to lead the way in inclusion so that we can deliver on our vision of a Victoria that is disease and cavity free.

Employees who strongly believe their employer values diversity are 84% engaged while those who strongly disagree are 20% engaged. Employees who strongly believe their organisation doesn't value diversity are 3.3x more likely to leave in a 12-month period (Culture Amp Workplace DEI Report, 2024).

The best way for us to make an impact is embedding diversity and inclusion into our existing ways of working and making it part of our day to day instead of one-off actions.

In 2024, DHSV created a People Plan to outline how we were going to encourage people to 'Come & Stay' with us, how we would give them every opportunity to 'Learn & Grow' and what we needed to do to make sure they were 'Well & Safe'. The final pillar of the People Plan is 'Engage & Belong: an inclusive culture where all belong'. The purpose of this plan is to bring all our diversity and inclusion activity together under this pillar. It will cover our multiple legislated diversity and inclusion bodies of and will extend to other parts of 'Belonging' that are important to us.

Our focus on Engage & Belong is guided by the bold vision in the DHSV Strategic Direction and enabled by the Value-based Health Care framework and our values. Together with our people, we can enable a future where every Victorian is disease and cavity free.

Vision

Empower— our goal is to remove barriers and create pathways for all our people to feel seen, heard and respected, ensuring that everyone has equal opportunity to learn from each other and contribute their unique perspectives.

Care – we are dedicated to creating a workplace where our people feel like they belong, where they feel safe to be themselves and safe to speak up about what is important to them.

Lead – we will set the standard for inclusion through innovative approaches and a commitment to accountability and transparency so we can drive meaningful change at work and in our sector.

Belonging Plan Overview

One Central Belonging Plan

The purpose of this plan is to bring all our diversity and inclusion activity together, under this People Plan 24-26 pillar of 'Engage & Belong'. It will cover our multiple legislated diversity and inclusion work and extend to other parts of Belonging important to us.

Leaders Steering the Plan

Our leaders are committed to driving the success of our Belonging Plan by being inclusion champions and by supporting our activity to help us progress towards our inclusion goals.

Inclusion Committee Accountable for the Plan

Our Inclusion Committee will be accountable for our Belonging Plan by ensuring that all perspectives are considered in decision making processes; identifying and addressing barriers to inclusion; and being advocates for all employees in our workplace cultivating a culture of 'belonging'. The Committee also plays a key role in educating and engaging employees on inclusion and monitoring the progress of all our relevant action plans.

The Plan's Focus on Action

We have flipped the focus of our plan. The focus will be on activity first, rather than specific community cohorts. This is so we can take a truly intersectional approach to inclusion that recognises the overlapping parts of our identity and lived experience. Our actions have been categorised to empower our employees and remove any barriers to inclusion and belonging at work.

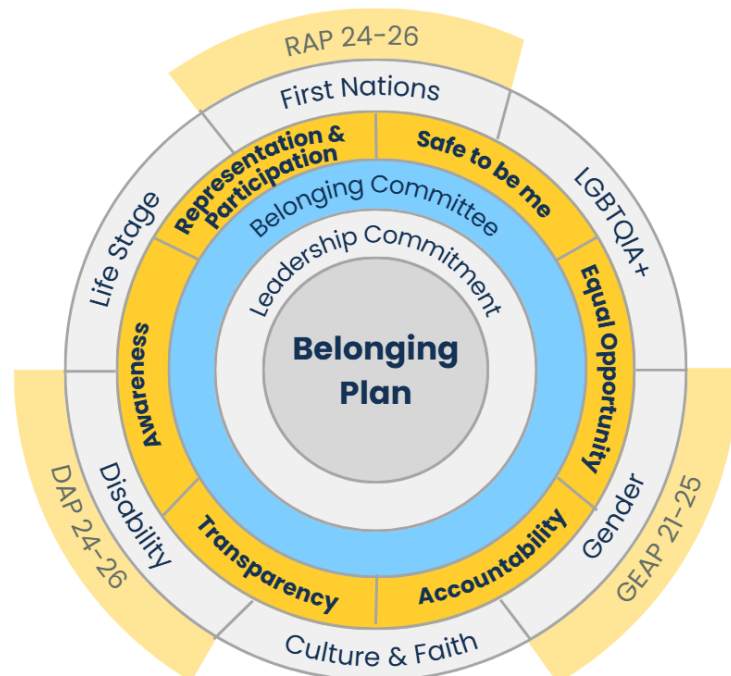
The Plan's Recognition of Priority Cohorts

Our Belonging Plan is for everyone. It goes beyond what's visible to include all the deeper ways we are diverse including, values, experiences, perspectives, expertise, knowledge and ideas. There are some parts of people's identity and lived experience that might create additional barriers to inclusion. We want to actively address this with our activity, including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples, people living with disability, people of all life stages, the LGBTQIA+ community and allies, multi-cultural and multi faith communities and all genders.

Within the Belonging Plan

The Belonging Plan brings the activities across all the legislated plans together in one place so we can focus on how they intersect to create a more inclusive environment for all people. There are three circumstances where we are required to have specific action plans as a public health entity in Victoria (Appendix 2):

1. Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025
2. Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2026
3. Disability Action Plan 2024-2026 (in progress)



About us

Who we are

Established in 1996, we are the leading oral health agency in Victoria. We work together to improve the oral health of all Victorians, particularly vulnerable groups and those most in need. Through The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne with its proud 120-year history, and in partnership with our community dental agencies throughout the state, we provide oral and dental health services for all eligible Victorians. We play a critical role in promoting good oral health, oral health research and advising on important oral health policy to support the future of oral health in Victoria. Over 40% of our employees are between the age of 35 and 54 and 75% identify as a woman. 67% of us have a flexible work arrangement.

Approximately 30% of our employees were born overseas and a similar amount speak a language other than English at home.

Less than 2% of our organisation identify as Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples and around 6% identify as living with disability.

An organisation with over 700 employees and an agency network of over 50 community clinics and over 100 school dental vans; we are diverse, and we are purpose driven. We are an inclusive organisation that invites people from all lived experiences and identities to come and work here and contribute to our common goals.

Who we exist to serve

Our purpose is to improve the oral health of all Victorians, particularly vulnerable groups and those most in need. We provide care to many people including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples, people living with disability, refugees and asylum seekers, children and other people who may have a Centrelink issued concession card.

Approximately 25% of the state's 6.8 million population are eligible for our public oral and dental health services. Of the services we provide, around 60% is delivered to children and 30% delivered to culturally diverse people and communities. Nearly half of the care we provide is in regional areas.

Who is our plan for?

Everyone! We will be considering the unique lived experience of everyone who interacts with us. We take a broad view of diversity that includes all the ways people are visibly and invisibly different. This definition encompasses all demographic characteristics of diversity including gender and gender identity, race and ethnicity including indigeneity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage, pregnancy, and parental/caring responsibilities. Extending on this definition we will go beneath what's visible to include all the deeper ways we are diverse including, values, experiences, perspectives, expertise, knowledge and ideas. We also recognise that when parts of our identity or lived experience overlap, it can create additional inequities, so we will consider the additional barriers people might experience through this 'Belonging Plan'.

Where are we now?

From consultation, people data and surveys, we have been learning about what it's like to work here.

For example, 78% of employees feel like they can be themselves at work, 72% of our employees feel that this is a place we belong and 80% of our employees feel culturally safe.

We have also learned that some of our employees have experienced or witnessed barriers to success at work due to part of their identity or lived experience.

In early 2024, we consulted with many of our employees to learn more about our work culture. There were clear themes around the importance of an inclusive culture and some great suggestions on how we might continue to achieve that.

What have we learned?

We learned that our employees feel a lot of pride in our organisation's diversity and feel that we are an inclusive organisation. We learned that DHSV is a place where people can come to grow their careers and contribute to our important purpose. In addition, our people feel they can bring their authentic selves to work and there is a supportive and respectful culture here.

Our consultation also revealed some great opportunities to do even better: to visibly support and prioritize inclusivity and continue to welcome people of all identities and lived experience to our organisation. We also have great opportunities to ensure accessibility and accommodation for all our people's diverse needs and to offer more mechanisms for sharing feedback for continuous improvement.

The Belonging Plan was developed using this feedback. It considers everyone who comes to work here and how we can remain connected to our vision, purpose and values. It also prompted us to flip the focus of the plan to being on action instead of individual identities and characteristics. Other hospitals such as Alfred Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Royal Melbourne Hospital and The Women's take a similar approach to actively advancing diversity and inclusion through targeted strategies that focus on improving employment outcomes, removing barriers to equitable participation in the workforce, emphasizing leadership, creating positive and inclusive cultures and environments and improving capability. We learned from the Royal Melbourne Hospital the importance of "People first, lead with kindness and excellence together" based on their aim to provide equitable opportunities for all staff to contribute, grow and flourish.

About the future

What are we working towards now?

We have already made our commitment to inclusion, and we have already done some great work raising awareness of the importance of inclusion at work. We have been introducing new and reviewed policies to support this and have introduced some training to support our people in creating equitable experiences. Our leaders support our inclusion efforts and are visible in their participation in driving our inclusion goals. We still have lots of work to do though, and over the next 12 months, some of it will look like this:

- Embedding our approach to inclusion into our culture
- Reviewing and updating our policies and processes
- Providing training and development to support our inclusion capability
- Demonstrating progress towards our goals
- Participation in inclusion efforts from leaders, managers and all employees

What we aspire to

We aspire to create a workplace where everyone feels seen, heard and respected so they can be their authentic selves at work. We want to be the thought leaders in diversity, inclusion and belonging by setting the standard for an approach to inclusion that creates true impact. In such a workplace, diverse perspectives are actively sought out leading to greater innovation, creativity and problem solving. Ultimately, this will help us deliver the world's best oral and dental health care to the community we serve and lead the way in advocating for better oral health for everyone. Some of the things that we will need to do to get there might look like:

- Inclusion is core to our business and reflected in every aspect of our organisation
- Our policies and procedures support our inclusion goals
- We provide ongoing training and development opportunities
- We see diverse representation across all levels of our organisation
- We are all accountable for inclusion outcomes

How we will get there.

Each calendar year, we will create an annual work plan aligned to our People Plan with all the relevant, universal actions to help us progress towards our inclusion goals.

About the Plan

A home for our action

Bringing together our inclusion activity

To help us achieve our inclusion goals, we have countless activities happening and action plans in place to guide us but until now, they have operated separately. Going forward, they will now all be housed in this central Belonging Plan, under the principles of Representation & Participation, Safety, Equal Opportunity, Accountability, Transparency and Awareness.

By focusing on these key areas, we can make a tangible impact on our workplace culture for our employees. It will help us continue to offer inclusive employee experiences and support our organisational performance. By partnering with our employees, consumers and the broader community, together we can drive positive change.

Representation & Participation:

I have the support I need to fully participate at work

Action	<p>We believe that everyone can be and should be included. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to participate. We aim to support people to fully participate at work by having the policies and procedures in place that support people's lived experience. An example of these policies might be our flexible work arrangements policy, our leave policy or our frameworks around opportunities for growth and development.</p> <p>The Workforce Strategy will inform how we support the representation of the community we serve in our teams.</p>
Measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographics of our employees• Recruitment data• Number of employees with flexible work arrangements• Demographics of exiting employees• Return from parental leave
Progress	<p>73% of our workforce are women 69% of new hires were women Increase in utilisation of flexible work arrangements by senior leaders</p>

Safety

"I am safe to be me, safe to speak up"

Action	<p>This is a workplace where we focus on the psychological safety culture so that everyone feels safe to show up as their authentic self and they know it's safe to speak if they see or experience something that does not align with our values.</p>
Measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal and informal reports of harassment, sexual harassment and bullying• Utilisation of domestic violence leave and supports• Employee experience data
Progress	<p>Formal and informal reports of sexual harassment have decreased and the satisfaction with the outcome of investigations has improved.</p>

Equal opportunity

"I have equal opportunity to contribute, grow and flourish at DHSV"

Action	We will put the processes in place to ensure that everyone has equal access to remuneration, promotion and development by assessing the impacts of our programs and services both internally and externally.
Measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pay gap• Assignment of promotions, higher duties and secondments• Utilisation of learning and development opportunities
Progress	Our gender pay gap has been improving year on year. 69% of promotions were awarded to women. Our scholarship programs has enabled more women to participate in development opportunities.

Accountability

"We hold ourselves and each other accountable for creating an inclusive workplace"

Action	We build capability in our leaders and people managers so we can achieve our inclusion goals. Our leaders take responsibility for our inclusion goals and are champions of our belonging plan.
Measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation in training and education provided for leaders and people managers• Sponsorship of events, initiatives and communication by our leaders and people managers• Employee experience data
Progress	Our Board and Executive team completed Gender Equality training. Our project leads and people managers have participated in training offered like Equity Impact Assessment training and A practical guide to inclusive leadership training

Transparency

"I have full visibility of how DHSV is progressing towards their inclusion goals"

Action	We share with our staff a report sharing what we hope to achieve and how we are tracking towards our goals so they can feel part of the journey and confident that we are committed to our goals.
Measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual transparency report published• Leaders to participate in the annual transparency report• Consultation with our people
Progress	We will be publishing the results of our Gender Equality Progress Report in late 2024 and our first Transparency Report in 2025.

Awareness

"I can see what's important to me is important to DHSV"

Action	We raise awareness of what is important to our people, patients and the broader community so we can shine a light on important issues and causes.
Measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual calendar of events in line with our strategic direction and values• Education provided to our people on important matters in the community• Feedback from our Inclusion Committee, working groups and employee resource groups
Progress	Dental Health Services Victoria ran a calendar of events for our people across 2024. We host and participate in events that support what is important to us such as Naidoc Week, Reconciliation Week and the 16 Days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Governance

Together, we are accountable for helping DHSV achieve our inclusion goals

We believe that inclusion is a shared responsibility. Achieving our inclusion goals requires active participation and accountability from everyone in the organisation, from our leaders to every employee.

Leadership Accountability:

Our Executive Team and Leadership Network are committed to driving the DEI agenda across DHSV. They are responsible for setting the strategic direction, ensuring alignment with our inclusion goals, and holding the organisation accountable for progress. The Executive Team and People & Culture Committee will regularly review our inclusion performance, provide necessary resources, and communicate the importance of DEI to all employees.

Belonging Committee:

Our Belonging Committee is responsible for our Belonging Plan by making sure all perspectives are included in decision-making, identifying and removing barriers to inclusion, and advocating for all employees in our workplace. The Committee also helps educate and engage employees on inclusion and tracks the progress of our action plans.

Action Plan Working Groups:

We will establish dedicated Action Plan Working Groups for our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), future Disability Action Plan (DAP) and Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). These groups are responsible for developing and executing action plans that drive progress in their respective areas. They collaborate closely with the Inclusion Committee and the Executive Team to ensure that our DEI efforts are cohesive and impactful.

Employee Resource Groups:

In 2025, we will pilot Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to further support our inclusion efforts. ERGs will provide a platform for employees with shared identities or experiences to connect and advocate for change.

Community Engagement:

We will collaborate with consumers, groups and organisations that help us represent the community we serve when developing and implementing the actions in our Belonging Plan. This could include Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations, Job Access, Disability Employment Services and Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO). We will do this with community consultation, partnership and collaboration.

Appendix 1 - Key Terms

Belonging:

Describes the way someone might feel at work if they feel seen, heard and respected. It describes a sense of being accepted and valued for who we are, supported to fully participate at work and in the community and the connection we have with our colleagues and community.

Diversity:

All the ways people are visibly and invisibly different. This definition encompasses all demographic characteristics of diversity including gender and gender identity, race and ethnicity including indigeneity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage, pregnancy, and parental/caring responsibilities. Extension of this definition to go beneath what's visible to include all the deeper ways we are diverse including, values, experiences, perspectives, expertise, knowledge and ideas.

Inclusion:

Occurs when people feel, and are, valued and respected. Regardless of their personal characteristic or circumstance, and where they: have the opportunity to fulfil their individual and combined potential, have access to opportunities and resources, can contribute their personal best in every encounter, can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their organisation, can bring far more of themselves to their jobs, have a sense of belonging (Source: VPSC).

Intersectionality:

Describes how people's parts of their identity compound/add to each other to create a whole new identity. This overlap or combination of differences makes up a person's unique identity. Identities within an individual may come, go or converge, depending on time or place (for example life stages). The point of understanding intersectionality is to also understand the variety of privileges and/or forms of discrimination or exclusion that one may experience simultaneously at any given time (for example gender and race together) (Source: VPSC).

Appendix 2 - Action Plan Requirements

Gender Equality Action Plan Requirements:

- Gender composition of all levels of the workforce
- Gender composition of governing bodies
- Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender
- Sexual harassment in the workplace
- Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace
- Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities
- Gendered segregation within the workplace

Disability Action Plan Requirements:

- Reducing barriers to persons with disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- Reducing barriers to persons with disability obtaining and maintaining employment
- Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with disability
- Achieving tangible shifts in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with disability

Reconciliation Action Plan Requirements:

- Relationships: strengthening relationships between staff, consumers, stakeholders, and the wider community to enhance a stronger understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' needs.
- Respect: we endeavour to ensure our employees are culturally aware, sensitive, and confident to engage respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly in relation to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' oral health.
- Opportunities: providing employment and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples strengthens our workplace and supports a culture where staff are valued for their diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Governance: Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.