

The HealthWest Partnership Standards for Workforce Mutuality



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Background

Workforce mutuality describes the extent to which the diversity of an organisation or a sector's workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves. It also describes an organisation or a sector's responsiveness to the needs of a diverse community.

In 2016 HealthWest Partnership held two strategic planning forums for its member organisations, which include a diverse range of health, human and community services from across five local government areas in Melbourne's west. During these forums HealthWest members raised concerns that the diversity of the health and community services sector's workforce in Melbourne's west did not closely match the significant diversity of communities living in this catchment area.

This "diversity gap" was seen as a barrier to responsive service delivery for the HealthWest membership. Increasing the diversity of the health and community services sector's workforce was therefore put forward as a key priority area that would lead to improvements in members' service capability.¹

The HealthWest Partnership Standards for Workforce Mutuality have been developed to address the diversity gap in the health and community services sector. In 2017 and 2018, HealthWest Partnership worked with an expert advisory panel made up of member and peak organisations in the health, community, employment and education sectors to develop the Standards (see the Acknowledgments at the beginning of this guide for a full list of organisations and individuals involved). Although these Standards were developed initially for use by health and community organisations in western Melbourne, their design is inclusive enough to be relevant for other catchments and sectors including the business, education and government sectors.

Purpose of these Standards

The purpose of these Standards is to provide organisations with guidelines of how to meet the needs of diverse communities by:

- ▶ **Attracting, developing and retaining a workforce that is more inclusive and reflective of the diversity of the community.**
- ▶ **Improving the responsiveness of organisations to the needs of people from diverse backgrounds.**

Principles

These Standards are based on three main principles:

▶ **Principle 1: Equity in employment is a right**

All people in the community have the right to access fair and equitable pathways to employment and professional growth.

▶ **Principle 2: Diversity is an organisational strength**

An organisation that is more inclusive and reflective of the diversity of the community is more in touch with community needs, provides better services and will have a more highly-skilled, healthier and innovative workforce.

▶ **Principle 3: Partnering with community improves consumer outcomes**

Organisations can meet the specific needs of diverse communities and improve overall consumer experience and outcomes by partnering with consumers and organisations from diverse communities.

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1 Rostant, 4-5

The benefits of workforce mutuality

There is a growing body of evidence that shows that increasing the workforce mutuality of the health and community services sector results in benefits for both organisations and consumers. These include:

- Increased effectiveness of organisations to engage with and support consumers from diverse backgrounds.
- More accessible employment pathways for people from diverse backgrounds.
- Services that are more adaptable and universally responsive to all members of the community.²

Workforce mutuality therefore supports the participation of people from diverse backgrounds in their own healthcare system. Increasing the workforce mutuality of the health and community sector changes the social determinants of health for a diverse community while at the same time improving the core business operations of organisations working in this sector.

Achieving workforce mutuality will not be simply a matter of making sure job positions reflect exactly the diversity of the community. For many organisations, especially smaller ones, this would not be achievable or appropriate to their core business. Instead, workforce mutuality describes a set of complementary practices and attitudes around recruitment, retention, workplace culture and community engagement. Workforce mutuality is not a means to an end, but is rather a continual process that needs to be embedded at the core of an organisation's business practices and vision and values.

Who workforce mutuality is for

Workforce mutuality builds upon the work done in the diversity and inclusion space over the past few decades. However, workforce mutuality is not the same as workforce diversity. For example, the workforce of an organisation can be highly diverse, and yet it may still not reflect the actual diversity of the community it works within.

The term "workforce mutuality" was developed by HealthWest Partnership as a way of reframing diversity and inclusion in the workforce. Similar terms or concepts have been used before such as "racial concordance" or "cultural concordance." These and other related terms appear mostly in the American clinical context, and are used to talk about matching patients with doctors who come from a shared cultural background.³

In the language of diversity and inclusion, "culture" has often come to mean the identification with a specific ethnic or linguistic heritage. For example, a person might identify as Anglo-Australian, or as an Australian of Greek heritage, or as a member of the Tigrinya-speaking community of Ethiopia. Taken like this, "culture" is very close to saying "ethnicity." It is also closely connected with other indicators such as country of birth, ancestry and language spoken at home.

In these Standards, we have chosen to use a broader definition of culture and diversity. Culture can be thought of as the sum of shared meanings and shared practices that a particular group or community of people hold in common.⁴ For example, there is a culture of people who identify as LGBTIQ+, a culture of people who use Auslan sign language, who have the Muslim faith, or who live and work in Melbourne's west.

To better reflect a contemporary Australian society that is more diverse than ever,⁵ these Standards recognise that a person may identify with more than one aspect of diversity and culture, including but not limited to cultural and linguistic diversity, gender, sexuality, age, religion and different levels of ability. This is called intersectionality.⁶ Some examples of intersectionality include:

- An Aboriginal woman from the Wathaurong people of the Kulin nation who identifies as being gay.
- A straight Anglo-Australian man who is Muslim.
- A recently arrived Italian immigrant who has a vision impairment.

2 See for example Spevick; Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, 14; Cohen et. al., 92-93; Williams et. al., 33, Lewis et. al., 3

3 Spevick,; see also Cooper and Powe; Shen et. al.

4 Braithwaite et. al., 2

5 Australian Census (2016)

6 van Mens-Verhulst

These Standards are therefore relevant to one, some or all the intersectional aspects of a person's identity as appropriate to that person's engagement with the health and community sector as a job seeker, worker and/or consumer.

The definition and scope of diversity will continue to evolve and change as our community and society changes. An individual person's sense of identity can also change across their lifetime. The aspects of diversity covered in these Standards (see the definition for "Diversity" below) are therefore not meant to be final and conclusive. Future editions of the Standards will change or update the definition of diversity as is needed.

It is also important to point out that these Standards are relevant for cultures and identities that might not usually be identified as being diverse. To give one very broad example in the Australian context, a cultural and linguistic community that is often considered to be "mainstream" rather than "diverse" is the English-speaking Anglo-Celtic Australian community.⁷ However, because workforce mutuality is defined as reflecting the actual diversity of the community, it is inclusive of everyone living in a specific catchment area. This means that cultures that might often be thought of as "mainstream" are seen through the lens of workforce mutuality to exist as part of the mosaic of diversity that in sum total makes up the community.

Therefore while the needs of different cultures will vary according to their existing access to health and community services and their participation in the workforce, the principle of workforce mutuality can apply to everyone in the community. Workforce mutuality is designed for the mainstream of Australian society in the twenty-first century – it uses the concepts and principles of diversity and inclusion because diversity is now the mainstream.

Definitions and scope

This section gives definitions for some key words used in these Standards.

Workforce mutuality

The extent to which the diversity of an organisation or a sector's workforce reflects the diversity of the community and is responsive to the needs of a diverse community.

Diversity

The full range of identifications that a person or a community can have. These Standards acknowledge and promote a broad definition of diversity that can include:

- cultural and linguistic diversity (or "CALD" for short)
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ancestry
- gender identity
- sexual identity
- age
- ability
- religion.

Equity in health

A person or a group of people can be said to have equity in health when there are no avoidable barriers or disadvantages stopping them from enjoying the same level of health compared to other people.⁸

Culture

All the shared meanings, understandings and practices that a particular group or community of people hold in common.⁹ Some examples of culture include the cultures of people who identify with:

- the Vietnamese-Australian community
- the LGBTIQ+ community
- being a woman
- being the employee of a particular workplace.

Workforce

"Workforce" refers to all persons engaged in at least one hour of paid or unpaid work per week.¹⁰ In these Standards the workforce can include:

- all staff in an organisation including management and CEOs
- members of boards and executive committees
- students and work experience placements
- volunteers
- all types of employment including:
 - Full-time
 - Part-time
 - Casual
 - Continuing
 - Contracted or temporary
 - Self-employed.

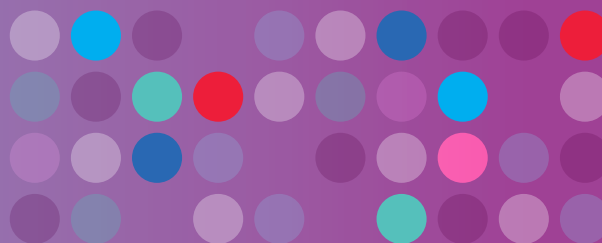
7 Cañas

8 World Health Organisation; see also Braveman and Gruskin, 254-258

9 Braithwaite et al., 2

10 Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013)

Workforce Mutuality Standards



Standard	Statement of Intent	Indicators
<p>Standard 1</p> <p>Making workforce mutuality a priority</p>	<p>All levels of leadership including board, executive, management and other decision-makers and influencers in the organisation promote the principles and practices of workforce mutuality and actively seek opportunities to improve the mutuality of the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Our leadership reflects the diversity of the community 1.2 Leaders in the organisation understand the benefits of workforce mutuality 1.3 Leaders promote diversity and workforce mutuality 1.4 Leaders demonstrate a commitment to workforce mutuality through their strategic workforce planning 1.5 Leaders foster and promote the involvement of staff from diverse backgrounds in organisational development 1.6 Leaders foster and promote the professional development of staff from diverse backgrounds in the organisation
<p>Standard 2</p> <p>Creating an organisational culture that values diversity</p>	<p>Diversity is recognised and supported as a core strength of the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.7 We promote diversity and inclusion as core values of our organisation 2.8 Workforce mutuality is included in strategic plans and policies 2.1 Adequate budget and resources are allocated for improving workforce mutuality 2.2 Staff are provided with diversity training and resources that are appropriate for the diversity of the community 2.3 Staff from diverse backgrounds contribute to building an organisational culture that values diversity 2.4 Diversity is valued in the workplace through celebrations and events 2.5 Mutuality with the community is reflected in internal and external publications, communications and other promotional resources
<p>Standard 3</p> <p>Building job pathways for a diverse community</p>	<p>The organisation seeks out opportunities to build equitable employment pathways and networks with community and other organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 The organisation seeks out opportunities to work together with community, other organisations and other sectors to build accessible and sustainable job pathways for people from diverse backgrounds 3.2 We share relevant diversity data with other organisations relating to both our staff and our community to foster a collaborative approach to building job pathways appropriate for our catchment area(s) 3.3 We provide and seek out peer review and feedback from other organisations to strengthen workforce mutuality practice in our catchment area(s) 3.4 We seek out opportunities to work with and learn from peak organisations and recognised leaders in workforce mutuality 3.5 We share outcome data among our networks and across sectors to promote the benefits of workforce mutuality

<p>Standard 4 Employing a diverse workforce</p>	<p>Recruitment processes are fair, accessible and equitable to all people from the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 The organisation sets and meets targets for employment and staffing based on mutuality with the community 4.2 Workforce planning processes result in appropriate budgeting and resourcing to employ a diverse workforce 4.3 Workforce planning processes result in the development of position descriptions, role scope and selection criteria that facilitate diversity and inclusion 4.4 Diversity-related skills that will add value to the organisation's programs, services, processes and other practices are identified and included in key selection criteria 4.5 Inclusive job advertisements and position descriptions are designed to eliminate barriers to people from diverse backgrounds applying for the role 4.6 Jobs are promoted in formats and platforms that will reach diverse communities 4.7 Recruitment processes are transparent and unbiased with respect to applicants from diverse backgrounds 4.8 Staff data collection is conducted in an appropriate and non-discriminatory way 4.9 Staff diversity data is collected and compared to available community diversity data to assess current levels of mutuality
<p>Standard 5 Supporting a diverse workforce</p>	<p>Staff from diverse backgrounds are provided with equitable support relevant to their individual needs and the requirements of their role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Workforce planning processes result in appropriate budgeting and resourcing to support a diverse workforce 5.2 Staff diversity data is used to set workforce mutuality targets 5.3 Managers actively support staff from diverse backgrounds to understand and engage safely with the workplace culture 5.4 The safety and wellbeing of a diverse workforce is ensured through identifying and managing potential risks and harms 5.5 Retention and support strategies for staff from diverse backgrounds are implemented 5.6 Leave entitlements reflect the needs of a diverse workforce 5.7 Internal pathways for promotion and career progression are inclusive and supportive of all staff 5.8 Staff are given the opportunity to use their personal cultural capital and expertise in their role where it is appropriate to do so 5.9 Staff are supported to work with consumers from communities different to their own 5.10 Assistive technology and other relevant supports are provided to meet the needs of our workforce 5.11 Staff feedback mechanisms include assessment of the support offered to staff
<p>Standard 6 Improving consumer experience for people from diverse backgrounds</p>	<p>Consumers from diverse backgrounds experience improved outcomes and satisfaction when engaging with the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 We consult and collaborate with consumers to identify what we can do to make our organisation more responsive to the needs of a diverse community 6.2 Consumer feedback demonstrates that services and programs are accessible to all members of the community 6.3 Consumer feedback demonstrates that services are delivered in ways that meet the needs of a diverse community 6.4 Consumer feedback demonstrates that consumers from diverse backgrounds feel they are treated with respect 6.5 Consumer feedback demonstrates that consumers from diverse backgrounds are likely to recommend the organisation to others in their community



The Standards

Standard 1

Making workforce mutuality a priority

Statement of Intent

All levels of leadership including board, executive and management understand and promote the principles and practices of workforce mutuality and actively seek opportunities to improve the mutuality of the organisation.

Indicators

- 1.1 Our leadership reflects the diversity of the community**
- 1.2 Leaders in the organisation understand the benefits of workforce mutuality**
- 1.3 Leaders promote diversity and workforce mutuality**
- 1.4 Leaders demonstrate a commitment to workforce mutuality through their strategic workforce planning**
- 1.5 Leaders foster and promote the involvement of staff from diverse backgrounds in organisational development**
- 1.6 Leaders foster and promote the professional development of staff from diverse backgrounds in the organisation**

Why this standard is important

Standard 1 is about how leaders can contribute to building an organisational culture that values and promotes mutuality as a core strength of an organisation. Research in Australia and overseas recognises the importance of leaders in shaping organisational culture and driving progress in building more diverse and inclusive workforces.¹¹ Buy-in from leadership is vital to providing the authorising environment, commitment and resources needed to make the organisational changes that will result in higher mutuality with the community. Leaders are a powerful force for cultural change within an organisation. When leaders model behaviours and attitudes that promote diversity and inclusion as core strengths for an organisation, it sends a powerful message to both staff and consumers that the organisation is willing and able to work with all members of the community.¹²

There is much evidence to suggest that a leadership that is more reflective of the community is also better equipped to understand the needs of an increasingly diverse community.¹³ However, current research indicates that senior leadership across the private and public sectors in Australia falls short of representing the actual diversity of the community. A 2013 study of board members and senior executives from two hundred of Australia's top publicly listed companies found that 21.9 per cent of CEOs, 19.9 per cent of senior executives and 13.5 per cent of chairs identified as 'culturally diverse.' All these results fell short of the 32.2 per cent of people in the Australian community who identified as being culturally diverse.¹⁴ The figures for women in positions of leadership were even lower, with women representing only 13.7 per cent of chair positions, 24.9 per cent of directorships and 16.5 per cent of CEOs in Australia as of 2018.¹⁵

Leaders can respond to these challenges by being the change makers in their organisation and by creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to attain positions of senior leadership. For a workforce mutuality plan to be successfully implemented it is crucial that leaders demonstrate accountability, engagement and oversight to achieve these goals.¹⁶

11 See for example Nair and Vohra, 21; Forbes Insights, 3; *The Rainbow Tick guide to LGBTI-inclusive practice*, 16

12 Nair and Vohra, 21

13 See for example Cohen et. al., 90

14 Diversity Council of Australia

15 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 1

16 Forbes Insights, 3

Standard 2

Creating an organisational culture that values diversity

Statement of Intent

Diversity is recognised and supported as a core strength of the organisation.

Indicators

- 2.1 We promote diversity and inclusion as core values of our organisation**
- 2.2 Workforce mutuality is included in strategic plans and policies**
- 2.3 Adequate budget and resources are allocated for improving workforce mutuality**
- 2.4 Staff are provided with diversity training and resources that are appropriate for the diversity of the community**
- 2.5 Staff from diverse backgrounds contribute to building an organisational culture that values diversity**
- 2.6 Diversity is valued in the workplace through celebrations and events**
- 2.7 Mutuality with the community is reflected in internal and external publications, communications and other promotional resources**

Why this standard is important

Standard 2 prioritises creating a whole-of-organisation culture that values the diversity of both its staff and of the community it serves. It highlights the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion as core values both publicly and internally within the organisation, while acknowledging that an organisation must also move beyond tokenistic efforts of inclusion to become more reflective of a highly diverse community.

Promoting an organisational culture that publicly values diversity is the starting point for achieving greater workforce mutuality with the community. For example, adding an Acknowledgment of Country statement to email signatures and all publicly available print resources shows respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as the traditional owners of the country, while also working towards ending the history of exclusion that has resulted in the inequalities in health experienced by Indigenous Australians.¹⁷ Similarly, when an organisation sets aside the budget and resources for its workforce to celebrate festivals such as Midsumma, Lunar New Year, A Taste of Harmony or NAIDOC Week, it sends a powerful message to staff that the organisation is making an effort to understand and celebrate what is important to the people who work there and the community it serves.

However, simply promoting diversity does not guarantee better health outcomes for consumers from diverse backgrounds, nor does it automatically improve the workplace experience of jobseekers and staff from diverse backgrounds. If diversity is restricted to a superficial representation of difference rather than being part of a long-term process of working towards closer mutuality with the community, it can easily become tokenistic.¹⁸ Accordingly, in addition to publicly promoting diversity and inclusion as core values, Standard 2 outlines indicators for embedding diversity in the core practices of an organisation, such as the inclusion of diversity in strategic planning, the provision of cultural competence training for staff, the inclusion of staff from diverse backgrounds as active participants in activities and processes that support mutuality, and the setting aside of budget streams for improving workforce mutuality.

Promoting an organisational culture that publicly values diversity is the starting point for achieving greater workforce mutuality with the community.

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¹⁷ Australians Together
¹⁸ Cañas

Standard 3

Building job pathways for a diverse community

Statement of Intent

The organisation seeks out opportunities to build equitable employment pathways and networks with community and other organisations.

Indicators

- 3.1 The organisation seeks out opportunities to work together with community, other organisations and other sectors to build accessible and sustainable job pathways for people from diverse backgrounds**
- 3.2 We share relevant diversity data with other organisations relating to both our staff and our community to foster a collaborative approach to building job pathways appropriate for our catchment area(s)**
- 3.3 We provide and seek out peer review and feedback from other organisations to strengthen workforce mutuality practice in our catchment area(s)**
- 3.4 We seek out opportunities to work with and learn from peak organisations and recognised leaders in workforce mutuality**
- 3.5 We share outcome data among our networks and across sectors to promote the benefits of workforce mutuality**

Why this standard is important

Standard 3 is informed by the first principle underpinning these Standards, that equity in employment is a right for all people in the community regardless of their identity, background or other personal circumstances. This means that employers have a positive duty to eliminate structural or systemic discrimination in their recruitment and employment processes, a duty that goes beyond moral considerations – in Victoria the right to equitable employment is outlined in legislation such as the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*¹⁹ and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)*.²⁰

Although much progress has been made towards decreasing discrimination in employment, people from diverse backgrounds still experience lower equity in finding work compared to the majority population. For instance, according to the 2011 Census the unemployment rate for recently arrived migrants in Australia was 8.5%, nearly twice that of the Australian-born population.²¹ Factors that contributed to this employment gap included a lack of Australian work experience (64 per cent), language difficulties (33 per cent), lack of local contacts (23 per cent)²² and overseas qualifications not being recognised in Australia.²³ People with a disability experience even higher rates of unemployment. According to 2012 Australian Bureau of Statistics data, nearly half (47.3 per cent) of all working-age people with a disability living Australia were not in the labour force, compared to just 17.5 per cent of working age people without a disability.²⁴

Figures such as these suggest that much work still needs to be done in making job pathways more accessible and inclusive for people from diverse backgrounds. Standard 3 takes a collaborative approach to tackling this problem, acknowledging that positive change on a sectoral or cross-sectoral level requires the coordination of multiple organisations, stakeholders and actors.

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People from diverse backgrounds still experience lower equity in finding work compared to the majority population.

19 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (b)

20 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012)

21 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011a);

see also Brotherhood of St Laurence, 1

22 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011b)

23 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, 11, 17

24 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012)

Standard 4

Employing a diverse workforce

Statement of Intent

Recruitment processes are fair, accessible and equitable to all people from the community

Indicators

- 4.1 The organisation sets and meets targets for employment and staffing based on mutuality with the community
- 4.2 Workforce planning processes result in appropriate budgeting and resourcing to employ a diverse workforce
- 4.3 Workforce planning processes result in the development of position descriptions, role scope and selection criteria that facilitate diversity and inclusion
- 4.4 Diversity-related skills that will add value to the organisation's business practices are identified and included in key selection criteria
- 4.5 Inclusive job advertisements and position descriptions are designed to eliminate barriers to people from diverse backgrounds applying for the role
- 4.6 Jobs are promoted in formats and platforms that will reach diverse communities
- 4.7 Recruitment processes are transparent and unbiased with respect to applicants from diverse backgrounds
- 4.8 Staff diversity data collection is conducted in an appropriate and non-discriminatory way
- 4.9 Staff diversity data is collected and compared to available community diversity data to assess current levels of mutuality

Why this standard is important

Standard 4 follows on from the previous standard but focuses on ways that individual organisations can make their internal recruitment processes more equitable and accessible for people from diverse backgrounds. This Standard therefore acknowledges that equal opportunity for all job seekers does not always translate to equitable opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds.

In Victoria it has been illegal since the adoption of the Equal Opportunity Act in 1995 to discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, language, religion, ability, sexuality or other aspects of a person's identity when recruiting staff.²⁵ However, despite the positive steps that such legislation has made, other forms of indirect discrimination remain. For instance, structural discrimination relates to the ways in which commonly held behaviours and equality-based legislation can actually create more obstacles for certain groups or individuals.²⁶ To give some examples, being asked in job application forms to identify with a limited range of gender identifications can limit opportunities for trans and gender diverse people,²⁷ while Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people may be put off from applying for jobs that they are otherwise well-suited for if job descriptions do not include leave entitlements for Sorry Business.²⁸

The indicators in this Standard suggest strategies for making recruitment processes more equitable for jobseekers from diverse backgrounds. Standard 4 also includes indicators for the collection and review of diversity data during the recruitment cycle, so that organisations can track how well they are responding to the targets set for greater workforce mutuality with the community.

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This Standard acknowledges that equal opportunity for all job seekers does not always translate to equitable opportunity.

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25 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (a)

26 Najcevska

27 *The Rainbow Tick guide to LGBTI-inclusive practice*, 16.

28 See for example the Fair Work Ombudsman fact sheet, "Do you need time off for Sorry Business?"

Standard 5

Supporting a diverse workforce

Statement of Intent

Staff from diverse backgrounds are provided with equitable support relevant to their individual needs and the requirements of their role.

Indicators

- 5.1 Workforce planning processes result in appropriate budgeting and resourcing to support a diverse workforce
- 5.2 Staff diversity data is used to set workforce mutuality targets
- 5.3 Managers actively support staff from diverse backgrounds to understand and engage safely with the workplace culture
- 5.4 The safety and wellbeing of a diverse workforce is ensured through identifying and managing potential risks and harms
- 5.5 Retention and support strategies for staff from diverse backgrounds are implemented
- 5.6 Leave entitlements reflect the needs of a diverse workforce
- 5.7 Internal pathways for promotion and career progression are inclusive and supportive of all staff
- 5.8 Staff are given the opportunity to use their personal cultural capital and expertise in their role where it is appropriate to do so
- 5.9 Staff are supported to work with consumers from communities different to their own
- 5.10 Assistive technology and other relevant supports are provided to meet the needs of our workforce
- 5.11 Staff feedback mechanisms include assessment of the support offered to staff

Why this standard is important

Creating more accessible and equitable employment pathways and recruitment processes are key steps to improving an organisation's workforce mutuality. However, organisations also have the positive duty to provide an inclusive workplace environment in which all staff are treated with respect and receive equitable opportunities for workplace satisfaction and career progression.

A diverse workforce can be supported through the adoption of inclusive principles and practices such as are outlined in this Standard. Inclusive practice needs to move beyond acknowledging and promoting diversity to facilitate the participation of staff from diverse backgrounds in the decision-making processes and core business practices of an organisation.²⁹ Additionally, staff from diverse backgrounds need to be consulted with and actively involved in the development of inclusive practices according to the principle of nothing about us, without us.³⁰ For example, when an organisation provides assistive technology to support a staff member who has a disability, that staff member should be consulted at every stage in the process to ensure that the resulting workplace adjustments meets their needs adequately.³¹

Investing in a diverse workforce will result in improved staff experience, higher retention rates, and ultimately will help build more accessible and equitable pathways for career advancement for all staff. Finally, this Standard also encourages organisations to recognise that staff from diverse backgrounds can draw upon their lived experiences to help make the workplace not only more inclusive of diversity, but also more responsive to the needs of a diverse community, thus improving the overall effectiveness of an organisation's services and programs.

**Inclusive practice
needs to move beyond
acknowledging and
promoting diversity.**

29 Nair and Vohra, 10

30 Cañas; see also Weisinger et. al., 115

31 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Equal Rights Commission (c)

Standard 6

Improving consumer experience for people from diverse backgrounds

Statement of Intent

Consumers from diverse backgrounds experience improved outcomes and satisfaction when engaging with the organisation.

Indicators

- 6.1 We consult and collaborate with consumers to identify what we can do to make our organisation more responsive to the needs of a diverse community
- 6.2 Consumer feedback demonstrates that services and programs are accessible to all members of the community
- 6.3 Consumer feedback demonstrates that services are delivered in ways that meet the needs of a diverse community
- 6.4 Consumer feedback demonstrates that consumers from diverse backgrounds feel they are treated with respect
- 6.5 Consumer feedback demonstrates that consumers from diverse backgrounds are likely to recommend the organisation to others in their community
- 6.6 Consumer experience surveys use platforms and formats that are relevant and accessible for diverse communities
- 6.7 We report back to our diverse consumers about our consumer experience findings and the resulting planned improvements, using platforms and formats that are relevant and accessible for diverse communities

Why this standard is important

It is very hard to measure improvements in health outcomes that can be attributed solely to healthcare.³² However, it is important that health and community organisations have some way of measuring service delivery changes that result from adopting the principles of workforce mutuality outlined in these Standards.

Standard 6 focuses on gathering feedback from diverse consumers on their experience of using an organisation's services. Collecting, analysing and using this consumer feedback to plan for future workforce mutuality initiatives will necessarily require organisations to commit budget and staff resources for this purpose. This Standard also recognises the rights of community members to be included in decisions that impact on their health. Participation of consumers through community consultation and engagement will ensure that community needs and opinions are included when organisations set out to implement these Standards. Including consumers and communities in the planning and decision making process benefits individuals, organisations and the health system as a whole. Consumers from diverse backgrounds are empowered to be active partners in their health which leads to better health outcomes, while health services and programs become more responsive to the actual needs of a diverse community.³³

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Recognising the rights of community members to be included in decisions that impact on their health.

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32 Australian Medical Association
33 HealthWest Partnership

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