

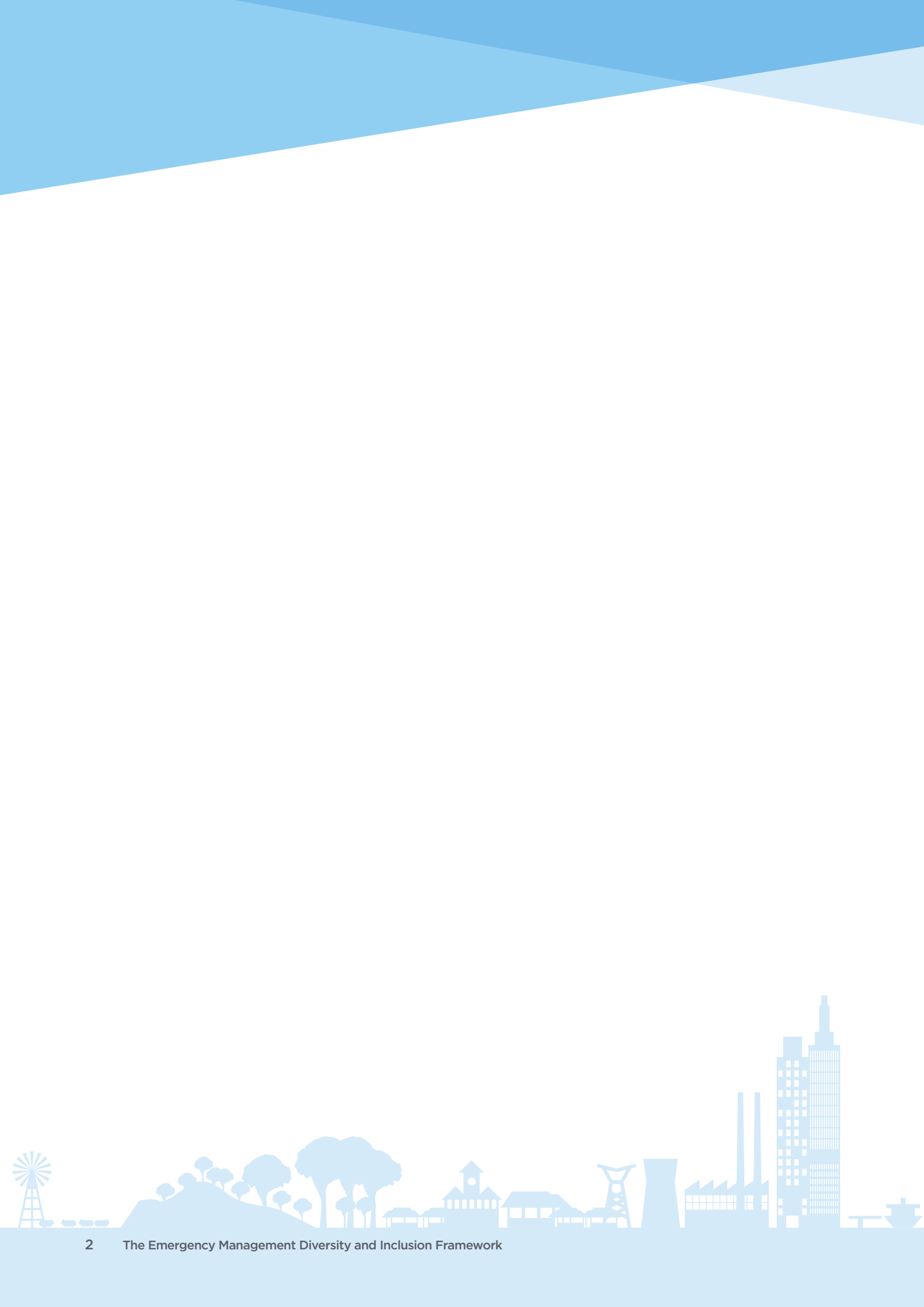


The Emergency Management Diversity and Inclusion Framework

“Respect and Inclusion for All”

Working in conjunction with
Communities, Government,
Agencies and Business





Minister's Foreword

The community is at the centre of everything we do in emergency management. It's about our safety and ability to thrive and grow even if struck by disaster. Emergency management is most effective when the community is participating before, during and after emergencies.

Victoria's communities are diverse and represent an enormous breadth of knowledge, skills, ideas and experience. This diversity enriches us and, when properly harnessed, makes us strong in the face of, and in the wake of, emergencies.

For emergency management to be successful, we need to expand our reach so that everyone feels welcome and supported to participate in planning for, responding to and recovering from emergencies.

Victorian communities have changed and will continue to change. The benefits and value that diversity and inclusion bring are significant and becoming more widely understood. The community is also becoming more aware of the ways in which biases and discrimination, deliberate or unconscious, can thwart progress and cause harm to those that are excluded.

Emergency management organisations, with their strong ties to the community, have a unique opportunity to be the leaders in building a more diverse and inclusive Victoria. They have the opportunity to strengthen their connection to communities and become more reflective of their communities.

The Emergency Management Diversity and Inclusion Framework outlines what needs to be done, acknowledging that some initiatives are already underway. It highlights the role that everyone must play to create working environments that are collaborative, agile, safe and inclusive. It addresses what is required to achieve a modern sector that is truly open to new ideas and perspectives from the whole community.

I look forward to working with the sector as it demonstrates its hallmark courage and commitment in implementing this Framework.



James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Emergency Services



Introduction

Safer and more resilient communities is the shared vision of Victoria's emergency management sector.

Victoria's communities are diverse, with people identifying themselves by reference to a broad range of attributes such as gender identity, race, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, cultural and linguistic background, religious belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, and socioeconomic status.

Understanding the diverse needs, capabilities and expectations of different communities is imperative for ensuring their safety and strengthening their resilience.

National and international evidence is clear that for any industry or organisation, diversity and inclusion brings innovation, productivity, enhanced understanding of the people it serves and improved service delivery.

The emergency management sector has a unique role in the community. It holds the trust of the community; its staff and volunteers are in and of the community. How it works – its culture, profile, leadership, decision-making, systems and processes – and how it connects with the community has a direct impact on the community's safety and resilience.

Diversity and inclusion are therefore fundamental to the sector's success.

The emergency management sector needs to better reflect the community it serves. This has implications for how it connects with the community, as well as for the individuals and organisations that make up the sector. It means the sector is not drawing on the breadth of capability, knowledge and perspective that exists within the community and is not fully gaining the benefits that diversity and inclusion bring in terms of innovation and productivity. It is missing opportunities to strengthen its service delivery and support the community to share in responsibility for its safety.

It is recognised that an absence of diversity and inclusion in an organisation or industry is an enabler of discrimination, resulting in harm to individuals, teams and organisations. This is currently a risk for the sector and poses a problem that it is not yet fully understood.

The evidence is also clear that organisations have an important role to play in influencing community attitudes about respect and equality, both with their staff and volunteers, and more broadly. Emergency management organisations are even more crucial for this because of their reach, their strong ties in communities across the state, and their focus on safety and resilience, before, during and after emergencies.

The Emergency Management Diversity and Inclusion Framework lays the foundation for creating a diverse and inclusive sector that draws on the full potential of all its members and connects with all the communities it serves. It is broad in scope and addresses the following two areas:

- embracing diversity and driving inclusion in the sector
- connecting with Victoria's diverse communities.

The Framework is built on four themes that run through both of these areas: lead, listen and learn, act to create opportunity and be accountable.



Figure 1: Framework Themes

Becoming a Diverse and Inclusive Sector	Connecting with a Diverse Community
Lead	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively cultivate a culture of respect and inclusion • Call inappropriate behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on and support community momentum
Listen and learn	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain a detailed understanding • Be respectfully open and curious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand needs, expectations and capability
Act to create opportunity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on the learning • Agility to adopt the new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage broad participation in planning and service design and delivery
Be accountable	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish measures with clear responsibilities for all • Provide regular and transparent reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult community on priorities and actions • Seek community feedback on progress

The Framework complements the broader efforts being taken under the *Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2015-18* (SAP). It will guide the development of a sector-wide strategic plan for diversity and inclusion, the successful implementation of which will result in:

- a high-performing, agile and sustainable sector that is based on a strong culture of respect and inclusion and is well connected to the community
- greater participation by the whole community in all aspects of emergency management and services that better meet its needs
- emergency management organisations that are fair, equitable and safe places for everyone to work, particularly for those people who currently experience discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Within the emergency management sector, there are varying levels of maturity in the approach to diversity and inclusion. For example, some community engagement programmes are well advanced in ensuring participation from a broad cross-section of society. In some areas, fledgling initiatives for organisational change are underway, while in others, a significant shift in thinking is required to adopt a contemporary approach.

The Framework, overseen by strong governance arrangements, will help bring a cohesive, sector-wide effort to achieving diversity and inclusion across the sector and in its connections with community. This is both a necessity and a vital opportunity for a safer and more resilient Victoria.

What we mean by diversity and inclusion

Diversity means all the ways we differ. This Framework adopts the definition of diversity used by the Diversity Council of Australia:

“All the differences between people in how they identify in relation to their age, caring responsibilities, cultural background, disability, gender, indigenous background, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background (social identity) and their profession, education, work experiences, and organisational role (professional identity).”¹

Inclusion is about creating an environment of involvement, respect and connection, where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create business value.² This Framework adopts the definition of inclusion used by the Diversity Council of Australia:

“Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people (e.g. different ages, genders) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their organisation.”³

Diversity is the destination and inclusion is the way to get there.⁴ Organisations need both diversity and inclusion to be successful.

Why diversity and inclusion are important

Community expectations

All members of the community expect, and are entitled, to have the same access to services, be treated fairly and with respect, and have access to equal opportunities in their workplaces.

Diversity in our organisations is a community and government expectation. Public services should reflect the communities they serve.

They also need to connect with communities when making decisions or taking action that will affect those communities. Emergency management has far-reaching implications, for people, property, the environment and our cultural heritage.

Benefits and opportunities

There is considerable research, particularly with respect to gender diversity, that diverse organisations perform more effectively and successfully than those that are not.⁵ The breadth of perspective available to diverse organisations leads to greater innovation and improved problem-solving, enabling organisations to be more flexible and agile and provide better products and services.

¹ O'Leary, Russell and Tilly, 2015, *Building Inclusion: an evidence-based model of inclusive leadership*, Diversity Council of Australia

² T. Hudson Jordan, *Moving from Diversity to Inclusion*, <http://www.diversityjournal.com/1471-moving-from-diversity-to-inclusion>

³ O'Leary, Russell and Tilly, 2015 op. cit.

⁴ Communiqué from Executive Forum for the Emergency Management System of 13 November 2015.

⁵ McKinsey & Company Inc., 2007, *Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver*; Credit Suisse, 2012, *Gender Diversity and Corporate Performance*, Credit Suisse Research Institute; Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2013, *The Business Case for Change*.



Diversity is critical to maximising productivity and building a high performance work culture. Diverse organisations, when founded on a culture of respect and inclusion, are likely to be harmonious and supportive working environments, promoting better employee health, well-being and productivity.

They are fairer and safer places and influence the community to be the same. The 2016 *Report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence* and the 2016 *Report of the Advisory Panel to the Commonwealth Organisation of Australian Governments on Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children* have strongly emphasised the importance of achieving gender equity in organisations and the impact this has on gender equality in communities more broadly and the safety and well-being of everyone in society.

Diverse organisations engage more meaningfully with the communities they serve, gaining deeper insights into needs and expectations and how best to meet them, and drawing on a broader base of knowledge and ideas. For example, through engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, fire agencies have learnt from some traditional land management practices, as well as understood how to better protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, a benefit for all Australians.

Diverse organisations are also more appealing to new employees, a distinct advantage in the increasingly competitive war for talent.

There is a clear business case for developing more diverse and inclusive organisations, in terms of social, financial and productivity gains.

A failure to embrace diversity comes at a cost, not just in terms of lost opportunity, but also in terms of the harm caused to individuals who are excluded or negatively affected in more narrow organisational cultures.

Each of us is unique. We are different. We are all Australians and call this home. Let us rejoice in our diversity and difference because it is they that will enrich us. It is who we are and where we want to be that will ultimately give us the strength, wisdom, inspiration and the generosity to get the job done.

Patrick Dodson,
Former Chair of the Council for
Aboriginal Reconciliation



Government expectations

The Victorian Government is focused on achieving diversity and inclusion. For example, it requires that no less than 50 per cent of all future appointments to paid government boards and Victorian courts be women⁶ and has introduced several other initiatives to address gender inequality. Senior government leaders have joined in solidarity in Pride marches celebrating sexual orientation and gender identity. Departments have set targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and must report annually on plans to engage with and respond to the different needs of those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with disabilities. State strategies have been developed regarding understanding and meeting the needs of those with mental health issues.

Legislative obligations

Under the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, discrimination is unlawful when it happens in particular areas of public life, including the workplace. Discrimination includes “direct” or “indirect” discrimination on the basis of 18 protected attributes, including age, gender identity, disability, physical features, race, political belief or activity, religious belief or activity, sex or sexual orientation.⁷

It is also unlawful to sexually harass or victimise someone.⁸ Sustained occurrences of low-level harassment harm individuals, teams and workplaces. Under the law, employers have an obligation to take proactive steps to eliminate sex discrimination and sexual harassment from occurring in the first place.⁹

Under the Victorian *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, employers must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain for its employees, a working environment that is safe and without risks to health.¹⁰ Employees also have a duty of care to ensure that they work in a manner that is not harmful to the health and safety of others.¹¹

Not only are these behaviours illegal but organisational cultures that enable discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation are barriers to diversity and inclusion.

Emergency management reform

The emergency management sector is currently engaged in an ambitious and necessary reform agenda that is focused on the community and based on government, agencies, businesses and the community “working as one”. This reform program includes embracing diversity in all its forms as a key element for building and retaining an inclusive, capable and sustainable workforce and delivering innovative services to the community.

Developed under the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, the SAP sets out the vision and strategic priorities for government and the emergency management sector and guides sector reform. The SAP outlines eight priorities, under four themes, for achieving the desired future state.

⁶ <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/balanced-boards-make-better-decisions/>

⁷ *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic), sections 6-9 and Part 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Part 6 and sections 103-104.

⁹ *Ibid.*, section 15.

¹⁰ *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic), section 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, section 25.



Under the theme of People and Culture, the SAP envisages a future in which:

- the emergency management sector is characterised by a culture of respect, cooperation and innovation
- the sector's leaders consistently promote and model these values
- the diversity of the workforce reflects the communities it serves.

One of the related priorities is to develop sector leadership that instils a positive workforce culture and promotes respect, cooperation, innovation and diversity.

As part of leading and championing the SAP, the State Crisis and Resilience Council has committed to:

- fostering a culture of leadership that meets the needs of the sector and Victorian communities
- promoting a fair and inclusive workforce that encourages greater diversity.

We all want to live in a safer, more respectful society where we embrace diversity and respect all cultures. Together we will make this happen because we have no choice.

Rosie Batty,
2015 Australian of the Year



Current context

Greater diversity and inclusion is an opportunity and a challenge for the emergency management sector. Achieving them will strengthen the sector's connections with Victoria's diverse communities and help build diversity awareness into service design and delivery. The benefits to be gained for individuals, organisations and the community, combined with the responsibility to ensure a safe, non-discriminatory working environment, offer compelling reasons for the emergency management sector to promote and support diversity and inclusion.

Emergency services have traditionally been dominated by able-bodied, Anglo-Celtic, heterosexual men. Information regarding participation in the emergency management sector by groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community or with a disability, is not consistently available across the sector. Anecdotal evidence is that the numbers from these groups are very low.

Organisational statistics disaggregated by gender may show some gender balance overall but this tips heavily in favour of men when looking at the breakdown for leadership or operational roles.¹² This has begun to change in some organisations. For example, as at 30 April 2016, women made up approximately 44 per cent of Ambulance Victoria's on road clinical staff and 64 per cent of its on road clinical volunteers.¹³ As at 30 June 2015, women made up 25 per cent of Victoria Police's sworn positions.¹⁴ In other organisations, such as the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB), change is much slower, with women making up only 3 per cent of paid firefighters and 15 per cent of volunteer firefighters in the CFA and only 4 per cent of firefighters in the MFB.¹⁵

Research has also shown there remains some bias in the nature of roles predominantly held by men and women in the emergency management sector, for example the higher numbers of women in administrative and support roles and the higher numbers of men in operational and technical roles.¹⁶ The prevalence of men or women in particular kinds of roles based on gender stereotypes exists in many industries. It is important to have an evidence-based understanding of how and why this has manifested in Victoria's emergency management sector.

It is essential to gain a detailed understanding of the current profile of the emergency management sector and continue to gather relevantly disaggregated data in order to measure the success of initiatives to create diversity and inclusion and identify where obstacles might persist.

We know that organisations benefit from a diverse workforce due to a wider pool of employee talent, a better understanding of the community they serve, and through leaders making better decisions due to more diverse thinking. A key part of that change is understanding that diversity brings different perspectives and when you include people from different backgrounds who have different stories, we all benefit.

Kristen Hilton, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner

¹² See the 2015 report, *Women in Fire and Emergency Leadership Roles*, commissioned by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

¹³ Statistics provided by Ambulance Victoria.

¹⁴ Victoria Police Annual Report 2014-15.

¹⁵ Statistics provided by CFA and MFB as at 30 June 2015.

¹⁶ *Women in Fire and Emergency Leadership Roles*, op. cit.

The Framework

The Framework focuses on two areas of change:

- within the sector
- how the sector connects with the community.

The former covers the sector as a whole, as well as the individual organisations that make up the sector. The latter addresses how we connect with and involve the community in decision-making before, during and after emergencies, with a particular focus on the recovery phase.

The Framework is based on four themes that run through both of these areas:

- lead
- listen and learn
- act to create opportunity
- be accountable.

Embracing diversity and driving inclusion in the sector

Achieving diversity and inclusion in the emergency management sector requires significant cultural change. There are well-entrenched stereotypes within the sector and society more broadly as to the image of emergency services personnel. These stereotypes are limiting and are focused on a narrow view of emergency management that overlooks the many different roles in the sector and the ability of many diverse members of the community to fill them.

Lead

Changing the culture to one of respect and inclusion requires strong leadership and sustained commitment.

Momentum is building in society to better understand and embrace diversity and realise the benefits this offers for individuals, organisations and the community. The sector leadership should continue to build on and contribute to this momentum by taking a stand and powerfully demonstrating, in actions and words, its commitment to promoting and supporting diversity and inclusion across the sector.

A respectful and inclusive workplace must be actively cultivated if the organisation is to experience the benefits of diversity.¹⁷ Leaders need to clearly describe the culture and supporting behaviours they expect to see and model them consistently. Most, if not all, of the emergency management organisations have policies that support equal opportunity and diversity.

However, a real shift towards diverse and inclusive organisations will only come about when the relevant values and behaviours are repeatedly emphasised as important for the organisation, and upholding them through increasing individual and organisational accountability is prioritised and supported. It is the actions more than the words of leaders that have the most profound impact on their organisations.

The emergency management sector's leaders have already committed to promoting and supporting diversity within their individual organisations and across the sector. Organisational initiatives - some new, some long-standing - are underway to translate this commitment into action. Some might need to be reviewed and more need to be added, along with cohesive, sector-wide approaches that will strengthen and accelerate efforts to achieve diversity and inclusion.

¹⁷ See more at: <http://www.dca.org.au/dca-research/building-inclusion---an-evidence-based-model-of-inclusive-leadership.html>

Through the governance arrangements outlined below, the sector leadership will come together regularly to work jointly and share initiatives for creating a culture of respect and inclusion and overcoming the systemic and attitudinal barriers to diversity that exist within the sector. The sector leadership will offer a clear and consistent message to its organisations, partners and the community, about the standards of behaviour it expects of its members and their interactions with the community.

If diversity and inclusion is a key priority for an organisation, everyone must have a responsibility to work towards it. In the past, the burden of speaking up or seeking safer or fairer work environments has often been left to the people being discriminated against or excluded. The onus has been on them to complain before any action is taken. This places considerable pressure on those people and can significantly increase the impact of the discrimination or exclusion on the individual and the organisation. Relying solely on this mechanism has at times inhibited rather than encouraged change.

While it is essential to have a safe and effective complaints system, in which complaints are immediately and appropriately addressed, the responsibility for creating change must be shared by everyone. Remaining a passive bystander instead of calling inappropriate behaviour, directly or indirectly, helps perpetuate the harm that is being caused. The leadership at all levels must ensure that individuals are, and feel, appropriately equipped and supported to call out harmful behaviours.

If we want change one of the best things we can do is have a diverse workforce that deals with what the community is chasing, that represents the community.

Craig Lapsley, Emergency Management Commissioner

A collective, collegiate effort is required to establish an inclusive and respectful working environment that captures the best from everyone. The leadership can support this effort by raising awareness of unconscious bias and discrimination and the resulting systemic and attitudinal barriers to diversity and inclusion. Leaders can develop the skills within their organisations to seek and utilise diverse perspectives, as well as safely and appropriately call harmful behaviour. They can strengthen managerial capacity, at all levels, to build and lead diverse and inclusive teams, and foster sector-wide supportive networks and mentoring arrangements for those who have not traditionally had equitable access to development opportunities.

Making such an investment will further demonstrate leadership commitment to embedding diversity within the organisation.

Listen and learn

Listening and learning is a positive approach to gaining an understanding of the professional aspirations, interests and needs of different members of the organisation or those who might wish to join the organisation. It provides a deeper awareness of the capability and potential that exists within the organisation and what is required to allow this to flourish.

It requires open and honest conversation and a willingness on the part of the leadership to genuinely listen and learn. It necessitates establishing a safe, and where necessary confidential, process for engaging with different members of the organisation to understand the opportunities they seek, the issues that they face, and the impact of different systems, procedures and practices on their work, well-being and realising their goals.



Through listening and learning, the senior leadership, supported by independent experts as needed, will gain an in-depth understanding of both the obvious and subtle ways that discrimination can play out in their organisations. In some cases, certain systems, procedures and practices may have been in place unquestioned for a long time and their impact on diversity may be unintended or unrecognised. In others, the impact may be clearer but requests to address it have gone unheeded or been afforded low priority.

Listening and learning also involves sensitively exploring how identified barriers might be appropriately addressed and new opportunities created. It is essential for the emergency management sector to understand fully the different obstacles to diversity that are in place and their impact on people within the sector, as well as their potential disincentive to those wishing to join.

Listening and learning is not confined to the sharing of personal narratives, although this is a central element. The approach extends to all channels for hearing from different members of the organisation, including formal meetings, small informal gatherings, surveys and feedback sites. The sector can also draw on findings related to diversity and inclusion from expert reviews into its own and other organisations,¹⁸ and discussions with other authorities and leaders on diversity and inclusion.

It is important that the sector bases its diversity and inclusion-related work on detailed current intelligence and evidence, not simply anecdote, assumption and past experience.

The understanding gained by the leadership and others should be shared in an appropriate, timely and respectful manner that helps everyone to learn and support the creation of a diverse and inclusive environment.

Act to create opportunity

For diversity to thrive, the right opportunities must be created. This requires agility, new thinking and applying the learning from the listening stage. This is not a linear process and will constantly evolve as new perspectives are shared and action is taken.

It is imperative that there is action.

Steps must be taken without delay to respond to the insights gained and actively address the barriers identified. Some efforts may be time or resource intensive and harder to launch quickly but clear intentions or plans should be outlined and shared so that people are aware that change will occur. Other actions may be easy to introduce but require persistent attention before they take hold and become lasting. Some initiatives may fail or have unintended consequences and these outcomes must form part of the ongoing learning.

Processes and practices must be established to make it possible for different views to be shared and current approaches to be questioned. Embracing diversity does not mean that every aspect of how an organisation operates has to change but rather that the current way of doing business is respectfully considered through a diversity lens, changes to support broad participation and inclusion are made, and the organisation remains open to new approaches and innovation.

Systems, procedures and practices that prevent diversity or inhibit people from realising or contributing their full potential should be addressed as early priorities. Career pathways or opportunities should be created for those people that have been disadvantaged, inadvertently or otherwise, by the current system, despite their ability to competently perform the job at hand. This may involve recruitment campaigns and retention initiatives that target specific groups.

¹⁸ For example, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) Independent review into sex discrimination and sexual harassment, including predatory behaviour, in Victoria Police (2015), the Report of the Expert Advisory Group to the Royal Australian College of Surgeons on discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment (2015), and the work of the Australian Human Rights Commission on women in male-dominated industries. VEOHRC will report in mid-2017 on its independent review of the nature, prevalence and impact of discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the fire services and recommended strategies to promote and improve respect and safety, including addressing barriers to equity and diversity.

Workplace flexibility is a key aspect of diversity. It enables people to work smarter and is critical to maximising productivity and building a high performance work culture. Flexible work and careers are a pathway to gender and other forms of equality. Research¹⁹ has found that mainstreaming flexible work and careers is a business imperative as it results in improved individual, organisational, and community outcomes through:

- organisations becoming more sustainable and adaptable to change
- talent being attracted and retained
- workplaces becoming more productive.

The sector leadership will establish some key priorities for action to create a more diverse sector through a concerted and consistent approach. Each organisation will incorporate related actions into its business plans to complement diversity initiatives already underway or pending.

Be accountable

The actions developed under this Framework must have clear and measurable outcomes. This is essential for determining their effectiveness, as well as demonstrating the leadership's commitment to change occurring. To ensure comprehensive and sustainable change, the actions will need to address different aspects of the business such as policy, awareness and visibility, operating procedures, training and recruitment.

Managers across the board must have clear responsibility for particular actions to promote and support diversity. They must be held accountable for achieving them through standard processes for evaluating performance against key performance indicators.

The issue of targets or quotas is often raised in the context of diversity, particularly regarding gender equality. Most important is that the sector's organisations set measurable goals or key performance indicators for creating more diverse organisations, as they do for any other organisational priority. Targets or quotas for participation by nominated groups, such as women, is one option for doing so which has had success in other industries and organisations.

The sector will be transparent about its action plans for achieving diversity, as well as monitoring and reporting on its progress against them. It will periodically evaluate whether the desired outcomes are being achieved and refine its plans as needed.

Strategic outcomes

The broad strategic outcomes of embracing diversity and inclusion in the sector are:

- a sector that better reflects and connects with the communities it serves
- high-performing, respectful, inclusive and safe working environments in which the full potential of all members is realised
- breadth of perspective and innovation in service design and delivery.

¹⁹ See more at: <http://www.dca.org.au/News/News/Get-flexible-or-get-real:-It%20%99s-time-to-make-flexible-working-a-legitimate-career-choice/245#sthash.LBAJSZgl.dpuf>.



Connecting with our diverse communities

Cohesive communities, in which people have strong links to one another, are also more resilient communities. There is a role for the emergency management sector to lead and encourage this cohesion, through embracing diversity within its own organisations, openly reaching out to diverse groups in the community, delivering services that meet the needs of the whole community, and positively influencing change more broadly.

The community faces many and varied challenges before, during and after emergencies. Helping the community prepare for and respond to these challenges is complex, with no set formula. Understanding diversity and the different perspectives and needs that make up the community is essential for more effectively involving the community in contributing to its own safety and providing optimum services to it.

I firmly believe in the importance of bringing our whole selves to work. Bringing our unique identities and experiences to what we do makes our organisations stronger, and helps us to better engage with our diverse communities.

Rowena Allen, Commissioner
for Gender and Sexuality

Lead

In recent times, the prevalence of gender inequality in society and its impact has received increasing attention. Mental health issues are being more openly discussed. Measures to enable those with disabilities to participate more fully in work and recreational activities are expanding and becoming more common. The voice of young people and older people is more frequently sought and acknowledged. Pride in sexual orientation and gender identity is more widely celebrated. The momentum towards embracing diversity is building but it will still take committed leadership for widespread acceptance of diversity in all its forms to become the norm.

In addition to creating change in its own organisations, the emergency management sector has an opportunity to play a leadership role in the significant change that is occurring in society. Emergency management personnel – paid and volunteer – are trusted members of their community and are often already leaders in their community. As such, they are uniquely positioned to take a stand and lead change towards more inclusive and cohesive communities.

Improved service delivery to diverse communities can only be achieved if the leadership understands and promotes diversity awareness and inclusion. This leadership can be manifested through reaching out to and inviting the participation of diverse groups in the community, constantly speaking about the value of diversity at public events, ensuring organisational premises appear and are welcoming to people from diverse groups, and utilising promotional materials that reflect the diversity in the community. Leadership can also be shown through being an active bystander and speaking out on behalf of others when discrimination or exclusion is occurring or supporting others who are taking a stand.



Listen and learn

A key element of the emergency management sector's reform program is that all emergency management activity be guided by community-focused outcomes. This means that all communities must be at the front and centre of emergency management planning, response and recovery.

Understanding what different community members need and expect before, during and after emergencies and how they can contribute to their own safety and resilience requires specific engagement with different groups to gain insight into their different approaches and likely responses to an emergency and how they best receive, understand and share information.

Ensuring that all voices in the community are heard before, during and after emergencies will strengthen planning and help minimise the impact and consequences of emergencies on all community members.

For example, men and women may assess risk differently and have different preferences regarding how to plan for and respond to an emergency, with research showing that women are often more likely to prefer leaving early, with many men preferring to stay and defend their property.²⁰ The elderly are often more vulnerable than other members of the community in certain emergencies, such as heatwaves and influenza epidemics, but are also often capable of taking steps to mitigate against the potential impact. Understanding what they need to know and how it is best communicated with them, their neighbours and their carers, enhances this capability. Cultural and religious practice needs to be understood and considered where it has implications for how an individual might respond during an emergency.

Listening and learning requires a new sector-wide approach to working with the community. It also requires humility and recognition that the community may have a clear understanding of what is required and can guide the way. Listening and learning therefore also depends on a willingness to follow, as well as a readiness to lead.

Organising opportunities for representatives of different groups to participate in genuine consultation and collaboration and share their needs, concerns, and perspectives is essential for gaining deeper understanding of the diversity within the community and motivating change in how the community participates in emergency management. This is important for everyone in the sector, as better serving the whole community is the focus for all. Genuine and respectful listening with a mindset open to new ways of doing business will also help strengthen relationships between organisations and the broader community.

Local government and community-based organisations can facilitate these conversations, as well as share their own perspectives and learning. New forms of partnerships will expand the sector's reach into the community, allowing it to utilise existing networks and gain new insights into the community's needs and expectations.

Within emergency management organisations, there are many people who are connected to and support members of diverse groups through roles that are not related to emergency management. Their knowledge and expertise is often untapped and unrecognised by their organisations. Organisations could identify and draw on these skills and relationships to strengthen their community connections.

²⁰ Zara and Parkinson, 2013, *Men on Black Saturday: Risks and Opportunities for Change*, Women's Health Golbourn North East; Eriksen, 2014, *Gendered Risk Engagement: Challenging the Embedded Vulnerability, Social Norms and Power Relations in Conventional Australian Bushfire Education*, Geographical Research.



Act to create opportunity

Creating opportunity for diverse members of the community to participate in planning for emergencies, respond more safely, and contribute to their recovery requires different approaches for different groups. Once involved in the discussions, the community can advise on how services might be optimally designed and delivered to meet diverse needs.

Providing information through the channels that are best utilised by different groups makes it more accessible. Members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including tourists, may have difficulty accessing and understanding emergency information and warnings and may respond in line with emergency procedures that are appropriate in other countries but are not the most safe in the Victorian context. For example, a siren in Japan warns of pending tsunamis to which the response is to move inland to high ground. This is potentially a dangerous response to a siren in Victoria alerting people to seek more information regarding an immediate bushfire threat.

Catering for the needs of diverse community groups is particularly important for optimal recovery. When key needs are not well met, the destabilising impact of an emergency persists, further problems may arise, and suffering or hardship can be exacerbated. For example, child friendly spaces at relief centres can support a speedier psychosocial recovery, as can arrangements that respect and enable the practice of important cultural traditions where appropriate.

The shock and stress of an emergency can cause pre-existing problems to intensify and new ones to emerge. Research has identified that the incidence of family violence can increase following emergencies.²¹ Increased use of alcohol and drug-taking, depression and suicide may also be more prevalent in the aftermath of disasters. Groups whose needs are often

overlooked in day-to-day life, such as the disabled or those with mental health issues, can be further isolated and disadvantaged when services are disrupted following an emergency and interim arrangements do not take their needs into account.

Inviting different community members to participate in emergency management planning and share their likely needs during and following an emergency, and the different impacts due to gender identity, age, cultural background, disability or other attributes, will enable recovery arrangements to be more effectively planned. This is as important for how relief centres are established and organised and immediate support is provided, as for longer-term economic and social support.

Where particular arrangements are required will vary for different groups at different stages of an emergency. A broad listening and learning process will identify when the needs of specific groups require particular consideration and tailored approaches. Local government and community-based organisations can again advise and facilitate opportunities for designing and implementing practical measures. Sometimes only a minor adjustment to an existing process or the introduction of a relatively simple step can make a significant difference to a certain group's safety and wellbeing.²²

The sector will coordinate its efforts to involve different communities and ensure their participation in emergency management planning so as not to create undue pressure and demands on those communities and associated non-governmental organisations through separate, disconnected, agency approaches.

The Victorian sector will also lead or participate in national approaches to strengthen diversity in emergency management.

²¹ Parkinson, 2012, *The Way He Tells It: Relationships after Black Saturday*, Women's Health Goulburn North East.

²² Such as the examples in the then Department of Human Services' 2013 *Emergency Management Planning for Children and Young People: Planning guide for local government*.

Be accountable

Strengthening and expanding the way of working with the whole community requires sustained commitment, clear responsibility and constant monitoring until the change becomes business as usual across the sector. In consultation with communities, the sector will establish some clear milestones and indicators for building and maintaining strong relationships with Victoria's diverse communities and increasing their participation in emergency management.

To maintain accountability, the sector will regularly measure its performance against these goals and report publicly on its progress, indicating where improvements have been made and what is still to be achieved. It will regularly evaluate and revise its activities. It will also refine its actions based on emerging leading practice and, where appropriate, align them with the efforts of other partners. Most importantly, it will seek constant feedback and participation from the diverse communities with which it engages to ensure its activities and approaches are appropriately designed and implemented and do not create any harmful unintended consequences.

The sector will endeavour to align its methods for reporting on diversity and inclusion, including how it disaggregates information by gender, age and other attributes, so that the information gathered is both useful for individual organisations and can be easily collated and compared to gain a sector-wide picture.

Strategic Outcomes

The broad strategic outcomes of better connecting with our diverse communities are:

- improved emergency management planning that addresses the needs of the whole community and limits the impact of emergencies
- improved service delivery for the whole community before, during and after emergencies
- all members of the community contributing to their safety and resilience.

The power of one is stronger when multiplied. The power of two or four or more is infinite. A group is as effective as the members want it to be... It's wonderful when people discover their own strengths and start targeting whatever needs changing.

Margaret Cooper,
disability activist



Setting the strategic direction

Implementation of the Framework will be challenging, requiring concerted effort and committed leadership. Its success is dependent on clear strategy and broad participation, supported by strong governance and oversight.

The Emergency Management Commissioner will establish an Executive Committee on Diversity and Inclusion to oversee the development and implementation of an initial, sector-wide, three-year strategic plan on diversity and inclusion to achieve the outcomes outlined in this Framework. This plan will complement and expand on the activities undertaken under the SAP.

Figure 2: Governance



The Executive Committee will comprise:

- the Emergency Management Commissioner
- the chair of an emergency management organisation's Board
- the head of an emergency management organisation
- the head of a local government or community-based organisation
- the senior operational officer of an emergency management organisation
- an independent recognised leader on diversity and inclusion.

It will initially be chaired by the Emergency Management Commissioner with the aim to have an independent leader on diversity and inclusion to chair longer-term.



The Committee will be supported by the following working groups that will respectively focus on the two key areas covered by the Framework:

- to address diversity and inclusion within the emergency management sector, the Committee will be supported by a leadership group drawing on the existing Emergency Services Leadership Group (ESLG) and the more informal leadership forum established to jointly reflect on and develop innovative solutions to specific challenges facing the sector. This forum, which comprises the members of the ESLG and heads of other agencies with emergency management responsibilities, and some of their senior operational officers, has already collectively committed to working together to move towards a more diverse and equitable sector and agreed to drive two key priorities:
 - > to develop a better understanding of the enablers and inhibitors of diversity and equity
 - > to identify business and work practices that foster diversity, inclusion and flexibility.²³
- to address strengthening the connections between the emergency management sector and the whole community, before, during and after emergencies, the Committee will establish a new, broad-based working group. This group will comprise representatives from community, departments, emergency management organisations, not-for-profit organisations, local government and academia.

The latter group will draw heavily on the work and membership of the Gender and Disaster Taskforce, established by the Emergency Management Commissioner in 2014 to bring a gender-focus to emergency management policy, planning, training and practice, but will be different in scope and representation. The Taskforce has helped build awareness of the critical need for attention to gender in emergency planning and community recovery. Its work provides a strong foundation for the new broad-based working group to increase the participation of diverse members of the community in all aspects of emergency management, with a particular focus on recovery.

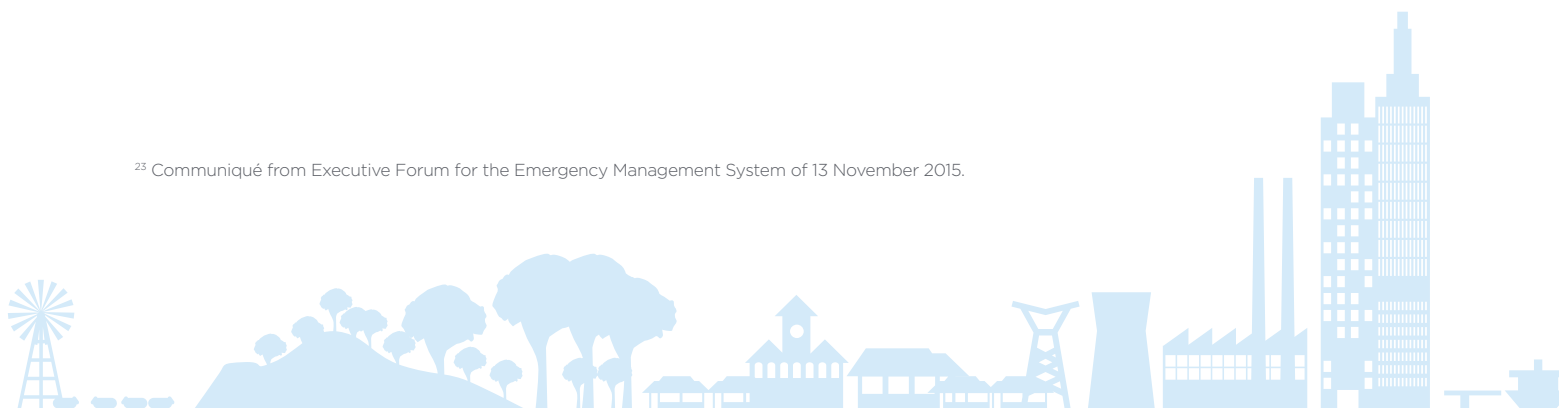
As part of developing the sector's strategic plan on diversity and inclusion, both working groups will identify key short and long-term priorities for their work and a set of measurable actions for achieving the desired strategic outcomes. These priorities and actions will be based on consultations with diverse communities within and external to the sector.

Both groups may invite independent expertise to contribute to their discussions and establish small project teams on specific issues as required.

The Executive Committee will provide the governance for and determine the scope of each group's work regarding diversity and inclusion and will approve the priorities for action. Both groups will regularly report to the Committee on their progress.

The Committee's members will actively champion the changes that are sought, provide support to the broader sector leadership, and help ensure a coordinated approach across the sector and with communities.

²³ Communiqué from Executive Forum for the Emergency Management System of 13 November 2015.



We have a collective responsibility to respect our fellow citizens and preserve the social cohesion and harmony that characterise Victoria and makes our society great. We also encourage genuine and constructive engagement and dialogue as a means to achieving greater understanding and acceptance of diversity.

From the Affirmation of Victoria's Multicultural Success signed by a coalition of multicultural, community and faith-based organisations and individuals from across Victoria



Conclusion

The emergency management sector is still a long way from exemplifying diversity and inclusion. But this does not prevent it from taking a stand and committing to real and lasting change. This Framework represents a commitment to bringing about diversity within the sector, connecting with all of the different communities that make up Victoria, and building the inclusive culture necessary to gain the benefits from this diversity and breadth of perspective.

A contemporary sector is one in which people matter. The Framework's implementation will see a highly effective and inclusive sector, in which diversity is valued and respected, and communities that are more cohesive, resilient, and involved in emergency management.

Action on diversity and inclusion is overdue. Leaders must make clear that discriminatory, harassing or exclusionary behaviour will no longer be tolerated and follow-up when harmful behaviour is reported. Managers have a responsibility to make sure their teams understand what is required and everyone has a role to play in upholding the expected standards – through their own actions and taking a stand when harmful behaviour manifests.

Community participation in emergency management, before, during and after emergencies, is fundamental to saving lives and reducing the impact and consequences of emergencies. The participation of all members of the community, irrespective of how they identify themselves, must be encouraged and supported. A culture of respect and inclusion must become one of the defining features of the emergency management sector.



For reasons beyond education or professional qualifications or willingness to contribute or a desire to be a part of our society and our community, too many of our fellow Australians are denied the opportunity to reach their potential. It happens because of their gender, because of the god they believe in, because of their racial heritage, because they are not able-bodied, because of their sexual orientation, and we as a nation looking forward to the future, realising the extraordinary contributions that we can all make, should be able to give them the chance to reach their potential because when they do, we all benefit. And that is what true diversity is about.

Ret. Lt. Gen. David Morrison,
2016 Australian of the Year and
Chair of the Diversity Council of
Australia



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