



Diversity and Inclusion CFA Strategy

2023–2025

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA



cfa.vic.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country

Country Fire Authority acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters upon which we volunteer and work.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been looking after Country for more than 60,000 years through complex land management practices including the use of fire. We honour First Nations peoples as the world's oldest living cultures and acknowledge and value the diversity of their traditions and customs.

We recognise that the impact of colonisation exists today and that there is still much work to do to close the gaps between First Nations Australians and other Australians. We are committed to the principles of self-determination and to working closely with First Nations communities to drive actions and improve outcomes.



The terminology used throughout this document was current as at March 2023.

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Foreword

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) has a long and proud history of working with the Victorian community to protect lives and property. One of our greatest and most enduring strengths is our ability to work together, drawing on the different capabilities and characteristics of individuals and local communities.

CFA has strong recognition across Victoria because we support communities in their times of need, and we also offer opportunities – to gain skills, to contribute, to belong. Our long-term sustainability depends on our capacity to offer a rewarding and supportive environment for all people who want to work and volunteer with us. By recognising and valuing all contributions, regardless of rank or role, we create an inclusive environment where people feel connected and valued, one where they want to join and want to stay.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is a call to action for all members to support diversity, access, and inclusion across CFA so that we can best serve the communities in which we operate. This Strategy outlines where we want to be in 2026 and beyond. It highlights where we need to focus attention to achieve our diversity and inclusion goals, explains why each priority matters and describes what success will look like.

This Strategy recognises that diversity is broader than gender, cultural background, age, ability, or sexual orientation. It is a way of thinking, a way of interacting with each other, and an approach that will enable us to deliver the best services to Victorian communities. It's about embracing difference in all its forms because we know that diversity delivers the capability we need to fulfill our mission. It commits us all to a plan of action to ensure that together, moving towards 2026, CFA continues to be a well-respected and trusted organisation of choice and is a great place to volunteer and work.

Greg Wilson
CFA Board Chair

Natalie MacDonald
Chief Executive Officer

Jason Heffernan
Chief Officer

Introduction

This Diversity and Inclusion Strategy builds on the positive steps undertaken over the past few years to improve our culture including the development of our first Gender Equality Action Plan. It also addresses the more recent recommendations from the External Review of Culture and Issues Management that CFA increase diversity and inclusion across all levels of our organisation.

This Strategy sets out a framework for achieving our vision of a diverse, inclusive and respectful organisation that embraces difference. It outlines each diversity and inclusion goal, CFA's current position and the key actions we will take to achieve progress. Importantly, our Strategy reinforces our shared obligation – diversity and inclusion is the responsibility of all our members.

Strategic alignment

This Strategy supports CFA's Strategy and Outcomes Framework, in particular **Outcome 3 'We provide a great place to volunteer and work'** by creating an inclusive, respectful and supportive environment where all members, regardless of how they identify, can thrive. It also aligns to key deliverables from our Gender Equality Action Plan and from CFA's Culture Review Implementation Plan.

Vision

CFA is committed to creating and nurturing a culture of diversity, inclusion and belonging because we know this improves our ability to keep Victorian communities prepared for and safe from fire.

With this Strategy, we strive to lead the way for equality, diversity, and inclusion by taking sustained, enduring and measurable actions. Our organisation will be a place where all members are valued, all contributions are equally recognised and everyone feels like they belong.

Goals and diversity areas

The Strategy outlines five goals designed to support and embed diversity and inclusion from the ground up and the top down. These goals bring a considered, strategic approach to achieving our vision and build on and reinforce each other.

1. Improve education and awareness
2. Support leadership and accountability
3. Normalise and embed diversity and inclusion practices
4. Promote and support diversity
5. Understand our people and increase measurement of cultural change

The Strategy also highlights specialised actions for diversity areas. These are:

- First Nations Australians
- All-abilities (accessibility, disability, neurodiversity)
- Cultural and linguistic diversity
- LGBTQIA+ inclusion
- Older persons
- Women and gender equality
- Youth and young adults (11-24 years of age).

These focus areas are in line with Victorian Public Sector and industry best practice. They were also identified as areas needing attention throughout our comprehensive consultation process because these groups of people have had limited access to opportunities at CFA.



Living our values

Diversity and inclusion are core principles that underpin our values. Becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation will improve our overall culture and support CFA to deliver on our mission to protect lives and property.

We want CFA to be a great place to volunteer and work. This means **putting safety first** and creating an inclusive and respectful environment where differences are embraced, and all members can thrive and grow. An inclusive culture is a safe culture where people are comfortable being themselves. If members feel safe and supported, they will perform better on and off the fireground.

There is a considerable body of research that shows that teams with members from diverse backgrounds and with diverse ways of thinking are more efficient, work with more accuracy, are better at problem solving and **excel through teamwork**.

CFA's future remains tied to its community roots and its ability to **adapt** with changing community needs and expectations, including adapting to increasingly diverse demographics.

For diversity and inclusion actions and initiatives to succeed, we need to act with **integrity, be accountable** and hold others to account.

At CFA we treat everyone **fairly and with respect**. This means we welcome diversity, and we give everyone a fair go.



Our current state

In the past few years, CFA has made progress towards becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation. We reached a major milestone in June 2022 with the development and approval of our inaugural Gender Equality Action Plan for employees. In particular, we have:

- established Women's and Young Adult Advisory Committees
- provided training opportunities including bystander training, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) awareness workshops, and inclusive leadership development programs
- recognised diversity and inclusion awareness days and events
- established regional and state Inclusion and Fairness Councils
- joined and worked in best-practice partnerships with diversity and inclusion organisations
- undertaken the External Review into Culture and Issues Management.

Despite these positive actions, we recognise there is much scope to improve our diversity and inclusion performance. Qualitative data from the External Review and recent focus groups show that CFA volunteer membership does not adequately reflect the communities we serve. We know that we do not have enough mechanisms to adequately capture the perspectives and experiences of young people, First Nations Australians, women, trans and gender diverse people, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the LGBTQIA+ community, and those who are neurodiverse or differently abled.

While we have some understanding of the representation gap between women and men, we don't yet understand how the experience of gender inequality intersects with other forms of diversity such as age, disability, cultural diversity, Aboriginality and sexual orientation. We also don't understand the experiences of trans, gender-diverse and non-binary members and acknowledge that we have some work to do to ensure we are improving gender equality for people of all genders and addressing instances of intersectional gender inequality.

The External Review found that CFA, like many fire services, has traditionally had a masculine culture in that it primarily values the work and roles historically held by men. In addition, there are perceptions of a hierarchy between operational and non-operational roles which leave some members feeling excluded. The External Review also found variable support for diversity across the organisation.

These views were confirmed by focus group findings. We heard many instances of members feeling less valued because they didn't fit the stereotype of an ideal firefighter (male, able-bodied, in an operational role). This included:

- members with a disability who don't get on a truck but who still want to contribute meaningfully
- the many members who work in headquarters, in community safety, or in Brigade Management Teams who feel marginalised because their roles were 'non-operational'
- some of our older members who were transitioning out of operational roles.

We also heard of members from diverse groups feeling excluded or that they didn't belong. However, while our members highlighted the challenges, many also shared examples of positive experiences of inclusion and the strong desire to increase diversity, to be more welcoming and accepting of difference, and to create an organisation where everyone belongs.

Ensuring that CFA is recognised as a diverse and inclusive organisation will require significant cultural change. The External Review noted that organisational culture change takes time. While CFA may have a long way to go, it also has solid foundations and values from which we can build. This Strategy is designed to move us forward through sustained, enduring and measurable actions so that by 2026 we can build a different story.

Strategy implementation

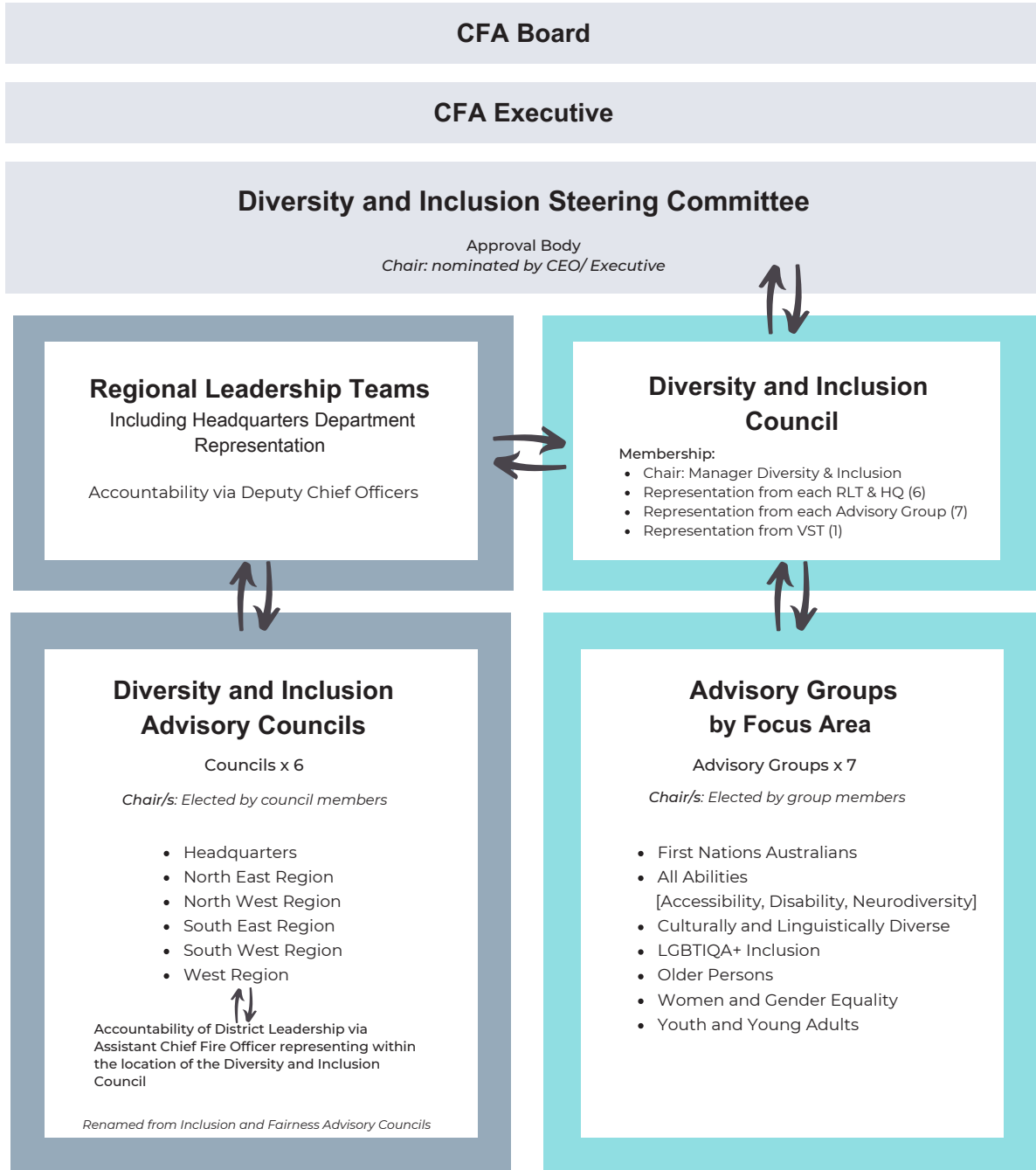
To ensure diversity and inclusion initiatives are embedded and supported as core business, we will evolve our governance arrangements. The governance framework below outlines key accountabilities and responsibilities and facilitates a constant cycle of communication and engagement between all areas of CFA. This will help ensure that decision-making and resource allocation are appropriately aligned with this Strategy to enable successful implementation.

The governance structure comprises the following components:

- The **Diversity and Inclusion Program Control Group (PCG)** comprised of Executives and Deputy Chief Officers, will act as the approval body. Chaired by the Chief Executive Officer/Chief Officer, the PCG will meet monthly in the first year to oversee implementation. Thereafter, approval and reporting will be via the Executive Committee and Board.
- Implementation at regional level will be via **Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Councils (DIAC)** that will report to Regional Leadership Teams. District Planning Committees will include DIAC membership to facilitate engagement with the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy at a district level. DIACs will be supported by Deputy Chief Officers and the Diversity and Inclusion Team via regular meetings.
- The initiatives in this Strategy will be further supported by the addition of two diversity advisory groups, **Older Persons** and **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**, as these groups are currently not represented within CFA.
- In addition, existing advisory groups will be renamed:
- The Koori Inclusion Action Plan Advisory Committee will become the **First Nations Australians Advisory Group**.
- The Disability Advisory Committee to become the **All-Abilities Advisory Group**.
- CFA Pride to become the **LGBTQIA+ Advisory Group** (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual Plus Advisory Group). All advisory groups will meet quarterly and will be chaired by a member of CFA's senior leadership group. Representatives from each group will form the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council, which will be chaired by the Diversity and Inclusion Manager.
- The Allies of Inclusion Network will not be included in this structure, and members encouraged to either join location-based Diversity and Inclusion Councils or participate in one of the advisory groups.



Governance structure (Version 1.1)



Act and Report

- Location-based Diversity and Inclusion contributors
- Implement the Diversity and Inclusion Framework at Region, District, Brigade and Headquarters
- Support and report on activities
- District Planning Committees connect to corresponding Regional Council through their District Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Advise and Inform

- Membership to be subject matter experts and those with lived experience within Advisory Group focus area
- Incorporates existing CFA Diversity and Inclusion Networks
- Groups to inform recommended priorities within their focus area

Note: Existing Advisory Groups will be incorporated into governance arrangements wherever possible. For example, Women and Gender Equality will leverage the existing CEO-CO Women's Advisory Committee and the Gender Equity Working Group; Youth will leverage the existing CEO-CO Young Adults Advisory Committee and Youth Engagement Working Group.

Goal areas

Goal 1: Education and awareness

We will invest in our people, build from our foundational values of safety, teamwork, adaptability, integrity and respect, and develop effective communication and training packages to enable all members to connect to the 'why' of diversity and inclusion.

Best practice shows that the most powerful way to engage people in diversity and culture is to create greater awareness and explain the benefits. The more members who understand and personally connect with the case for diversity and inclusion and how it contributes to our mission to protect lives and property, the more successful this Strategy will be.

Work is already underway to implement this goal. CFA currently supports 12 diversity and inclusion awareness days aligned to each diversity area via the distribution of concept plans and events. We also offer various training modules via the SBS inclusion modules on CFA's Learning Hub. We will continue with and enhance education and awareness training to ensure all members can learn about how diversity and inclusion initiatives benefit them.

Success measures

We will know we have achieved this goal when:

- there is an increase in understanding of and positive attitude towards diversity and inclusion as measured by a variety of indicators such as People Matter Survey, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) Welfare and Efficiency Survey and annual diversity and inclusion focus groups
- when there is an increase in visible and active support for diversity. For example, participation in diversity and inclusion awareness days
- at least 10 per cent of volunteers and 90 per cent of permanent employees have completed the SBS diversity and inclusion foundation training modules on The Learning Hub by the end of Year 3 of the Strategy.

Key actions	
1.1	Create an Inclusive Brigades and Teams Guide and incorporate it into the Brigade Management Manual and other resources where appropriate. The guide will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• community profile data and guidelines for engaging with diverse groups• diversity and inclusion awareness days and calendar of events• suggestions for how to embed inclusive practice• suggestions on how to deliver diversity and inclusion training
1.2	Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Communication and Engagement Plan that identifies targeted, appropriately timed messages and delivery channels and ensures activities are coordinated across regions and districts.
1.3	Continue to profile CFA recognised D&I awareness days aligned to strategic priorities, ensuring Executive sponsorship and visible leadership support for the annual calendar of events.
1.4	Embed diversity and inclusion material into existing development programs including induction and leadership development.

Goal 2: Support leadership and accountability

Recognising that capable leadership is essential for any form of organisational or cultural change, we will support our leaders, from brigades to Executive. We will encourage diversity at leadership level and build accountability by setting clear targets for improvement.

Effective leadership is essential for change to be successful. We must equip our leaders with the knowledge, skills, tools and resources to lead this change. Our leadership styles must fit the circumstances including the ability to manage members in non-operational roles, lead diverse and inclusive teams and relate to different cultures and world views. All CFA leaders are asked to champion diversity, and diversity and inclusion will be part of all CFA business plans. We will ensure that our leaders are supported with enhanced inclusive leadership training so that addressing culture, diversity and inclusion is a core capability for all CFA leadership roles.

Success measures

We will know we have achieved this goal when:

- diversity and inclusion training is delivered to CFA people leaders and is embedded into existing leadership development programs
- we see an increase in the diversity of those holding leadership roles
- we see more leaders speaking at diversity and inclusion events and communicating the benefits of diversity and inclusion via all-staff briefings, volunteer forums, Members Online and in Brigade magazine.

Key actions	
2.1	Provide diversity and inclusion training for all CFA people leaders to address unconscious bias and increase knowledge of diversity topics and inclusive practices. This includes working in partnership with Fire Rescue Victoria to ensure that Assistant Chief Fire Officers (ACFOs) and Commanders seconded to CFA are able to benefit from this training.
2.2	Leaders actively sponsor and champion diversity and inclusion by chairing a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group, participating in mentoring and sponsorship programs, regularly communicating the benefits of diversity and its role in organisational success, and by speaking at/sponsoring diversity events.
2.3	Incorporate diversity and inclusion KPIs into performance and development plans of leaders with achievement rates monitored and reported annually to Executive and Board.
2.4	Create diversity and inclusion standards and incorporate into brigade inspection processes to encourage regular review.

Goal 3: Normalise and embed diversity and inclusion practices

To ensure diversity and inclusion practices become part of our culture, we will strengthen our governance, policy and business practices. Diversity and inclusion practices will be normalised and embedded throughout CFA, rather than treated separately.

Research shows that for diversity and inclusion initiatives to be successful, they cannot be separated from an organisation’s core business, but must be hardwired into everything we do including policy, business planning, training, and even on the agenda of every meeting. To ensure diversity and inclusion initiatives are embedded and supported as core business we will evolve our management of them to ensure they are operating in a cohesive framework.

Success measures

We will know we have achieved this goal when:

- annual business plans contain measurable diversity and inclusion actions aligned with this Strategy
- performance and development plans contain commitment to participating in diversity and inclusion activities and initiatives
- we see an increase in participation in diversity and inclusion networks and groups
- District Planning Committees include a position for a Diversity and Inclusion Representative to bring a diversity and inclusion lens to all business and to ensure district policy and business plans include reference to this Strategy
- annual Diversity and Inclusion Summits are scheduled, held and well attended by our people leaders.

Key actions
3.1 Create a new diversity and inclusion policy and procedure which outlines CFA’s commitment to a safe and inclusive environment and our positive duty to address and eliminate discrimination. Ensure the policy explicitly addresses gender, race, culture, age, sexuality, ability.
3.2 Implement the new Diversity and Inclusion Governance Model to assist with the implementation of this Strategy.
3.3 Hold a yearly Diversity and Inclusion Summit with members from all diversity and inclusion reference and advisory groups.
3.4 Ensure Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and actions are incorporated into district, region, department and portfolio business plans and there is congruence and interconnectedness between these.
3.5 Include diversity and inclusion positions on District Planning Committees with the position to be filled by a member of the regional Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council.

Goal 4: Promote and support diversity

We will work towards removing barriers to the participation of underrepresented groups, so we are an attractive organisation to all people who want to join and our volunteers and staff from diverse backgrounds are supported.

CFA membership does not adequately reflect the communities we serve. While this is not uncommon in fire services, we are a community-based organisation and we must work harder to reflect and embrace the perspectives and experiences of First Nations Australians, those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, those who are neurodiverse, people with disabilities, additional learning needs, women and gender diverse people, youth and young adults, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex and asexual community.

Specific actions are listed below for our seven priority groups, however some actions we will take regarding recruitment, access to training and communication will improve inclusion overall.

Success measures

We will know we have achieved this goal when:

- the training nomination process has been revised and access to training for all members has been improved
- there is an increase in the diversity of applicants (employee and volunteer)
- there is an increase in the diversity of our volunteer and paid workforce including in leadership cohorts
- there is an increase in women in active volunteer operational roles, senior staff roles and leadership roles.

Key actions	
4.1	Create a Diversity Impact Assessment Guide to review existing CFA strategies, policies processes and programs to identify structural barriers.
4.2	Work with all teams involved in recruitment (staff and volunteer) to develop specific recruitment schemes to attract, recruit, progress and retain a more diverse membership.
4.3	Implement recommendations from the AFAC Review of Training and External Review to improve equitable access to training.
4.4	Embed diversity and inclusion statements into position descriptions and the volunteer recruitment process to ensure we are communicating our commitment for a safe and inclusive culture and our expectation that members will behave in accordance with our values.
4.5	Further develop the CFA Inclusive Language Guide and integrate into existing resources to ensure our language is inclusive of all diversity.

Goal 5: Understand our people and increase measurement of cultural change

We will create accurate baselines from which to measure progress, including increasing the capture of diversity data. This will improve our understanding of our membership and uncover potential barriers to inclusion.

We currently do not have a full picture of the diversity of our people. Our People Matter survey data provides insights with respect to gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, cultural and linguistic diversity of our staff. We have not traditionally captured volunteer diversity data other than gender. Increasing the capture of diverse demographic data enables us to focus on gaps and disparities between groups and measure whether all members feel a sense of belonging. It will ensure that future iterations of this Strategy are informed by accurate volunteer and employee data.

Success measures

We will know we have achieved this goal when:

- at least 25 per cent of new members have recorded their diversity data by the end of Year 3 of the Strategy
- we see an increase in the People Matter Survey response rate to 70 per cent by the end of Year 2 of the Strategy.
- we have established a baseline and targets for improving diversity within CFA.

Key Actions	
5.1	Implement Recommendation 10 from the External Review of Culture and Issues Management – a review of the current Record Management System to support best practice people management, including a mechanism to collect diversity data.
5.2	Continue to encourage participation in the People Matter Survey.
5.3	Work with VFBV to increase participation in its Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey and encourage inclusion of diversity questions.
5.4	Use community profile data to establish baseline and targets for improving diversity at regional level.
5.5	Introduce quarterly reporting on diversity and inclusion data to Executive Committee and Board.

Diversity areas

The first part of this Strategy outlines a holistic approach to achieving an inclusive environment, this next section highlights priorities for our seven diversity groups.

First Nations Australians

We proudly acknowledge the Victorian Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters upon which we work and volunteer. CFA and First Nations Australians share a culture of fire, and we know we have a lot to learn about how to use planned fire in the landscape. We have a responsibility to ensure that emergency management practices are considerate of First Nations Australians' heritage. The building of a solid partnership with the First Nations communities based on the principles of self-determination will enable deeper cultural exchange and knowledge sharing to the benefit of all Victorians.

Key actions

6.1 Create a First Nations Australians Advisory Group.

6.2 Review content in the Koori Inclusion Action Plan by engaging with First Nations leaders and experienced practitioners. This will include the consideration of creating a Reconciliation Action Plan.

Key actions in the plan will be:

- working to increase membership of First Nations Australians
- increase our knowledge of Cultural Burning and use of fire in alignment with the CFA Vegetation Management Program
- create stronger links with Traditional Owners and Registered Aboriginal Parties
- develop procedures to assist CFA recognise and pay respect to First Nations Australians' culture by, for example:
 - preserving First Nations Australians language by considering First Nations Australians names for new training localities
 - allowing brigades and districts to action projects that support First Nations Australians' culture through identifiable visual representation. Examples of this may be hanging of flags or brigade-funded tanker artwork projects.





All-abilities (accessibility, disability, neurodiversity)

We acknowledge that disability is likely to impact us all at some point in our lives, if not in a permanent manner, then temporarily or through someone we are caring for. CFA is committed to creating a safe and inclusive work and volunteering environment for people of all abilities and we acknowledge we have work to do in this area.

Key actions

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 7.1 | Ensure diversity and inclusion policies support all abilities through including and addressing disability and accessibility. |
| 7.2 | Progressively audit CFA communication, marketing and education materials to ensure they are accessible for all, and support improvements as required. |
| 7.3 | Create an All Abilities Advisory Group and a Neurodiversity Network to inform, support and advance members with similar social identities. |
| 7.4 | Develop an implementation plan to assist CFA to meet its obligations under the proposed Disability Inclusion Bill 2020. |



Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Victoria is the most diverse state in Australia with 35 per cent of Victorians born overseas – the Australia-wide statistic is 27.6 per cent. CFA has decades of commitment to local community protection. We can continue to improve our services by looking for ways to engage more effectively with the diverse nature of Victorian communities to understand their needs and to seek their involvement and engagement. Teams with diverse membership that reflects community demographics are in a better position to understand community challenges and provide more targeted service delivery outcomes.

Key actions

- 8.1** Work with Volunteer Sustainability Team (VST) to create community profile data to give brigades a better understanding of the potential talent pools in their areas.
- 8.2** Work with VST, Community Engagement and community leaders to update Community Engagement Guidelines. Guidelines to be included in Inclusive Brigades and Teams Guide (action 1.1).



LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual)

Just over 1 in 20 adult Victorians openly identify as being LGBTQIA+. LGBTQIA+ Victorians are valued members of our community who add to our diversity and make Victoria a better place to live. While we have made great strides towards a fairer Australia for LGBTQIA+ communities, LGBTQIA+ people continue to face unacceptable levels of discrimination and inequality in their everyday lives, which can lead to poorer health, economic, social, and mental health outcomes than other Victorians.

Key actions

- 9.1 Use the Pride in Diversity Australian Workplace Equality Index to determine LGBTQIA+ areas of focus and identify priority actions.
- 9.2 Relaunch CFA Pride Network as the LGBTQIA+ Advisory Group.
- 9.3 Develop a CFA Gender Affirmation Policy and Guide.



Older Persons

CFA has a long, rich history and our older members have immense skills, knowledge and experience they can share with future generations. We understand that the needs of members constantly evolve as people get older and circumstances change. We recognise the importance of capturing the knowledge and experiences of our older members and the key role they play in building the CFA of the future. In Year 2 of this Strategy, we will explore ways to capture their histories. We will also expand our current mentoring schemes to ensure the wisdom of our elders is shared.

Key actions

- 10.1** Ensure the Diversity Impact Assessment Guide (action 4.2) includes an 'ages lens' to ensure age-related factors and demographics are included and inform language, policy and communications.
- 10.2** Ensure existing mentoring and sponsorship programs are intergenerational to create relationships across generations, positions and hierarchy.
- 10.3** Explore ways to record our collective CFA history through capturing oral histories, storytelling and engaging long-serving and retired members.



Women and Gender Equality

CFA has had a significant focus on gender equality in the past few years and we now better understand the barriers to progression for our women staff and actions in place to address them via our Gender Equality Action Plan. We have also made progress towards gender equality for our volunteers in recent years through the development of a Women's Advisory Committee, piloting a women-only General Firefighter (GFF) course, forming a Women Captains Forum and a Mentoring Program for women leaders. We acknowledge that we have more work to remove the barriers to women's full participation, particularly in operational roles.

Key actions	
11.1	Increase the range of training options for women (and consider the needs of those with caring responsibilities) including women only GFF.
11.2	Increase frequency of Women's Challenge Camps (four per year) and include advanced training opportunities.
11.3	Support existing initiatives to support women volunteer leaders including the Women Captains Forum, Women's Facebook Page and Women's Mentoring and Sponsorship Programs.
11.4	Continue to improve access to gender-appropriate facilities and availability of gender-appropriate uniform and PPE.
11.5	Consider introducing further targets and special measures to increase the pace of change.
11.6	Work with Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector to undertake a gender equality audit with volunteer data to further identify gaps and opportunities.



Youth and Young Adults

Attracting and retaining young volunteers is a priority for CFA, as noted in the CFA Outcomes Strategy and Fire Services Reform and the Volunteerism Strategy currently under development.

In the past few years, CFA has implemented several strategies to increase the number of young volunteers at CFA including:

- establishing the Young Adults Advisory Committee (18-30 years old) to highlight and explore solutions to systemic issues from a volunteer perspective
- delivering a Youth Advisory Forum (11-17 years old) as part of CFA Championships
- developing and delivering a pilot Cadets program for 16-17 year olds to support the transition into senior ranks
- continued delivery of the Juniors program in brigades.

Key actions

- 12.1.** Continue to support the work of the Youth and Child Safety teams to support young people including but not limited to:
- The Child Safety Learning and Development Plan
 - The Junior Volunteer Development Program
 - The Young Adults Advisory Committee
 - The Youth Advisory Forum (11-17 years old), delivered annually as part of Championships.



Appendix

Strategy development

Our approach

The Strategy reflects the voices of more than 200 CFA staff and volunteers and VFBV delegates. We thank all members who shared their personal experiences and stories during consultation by joining a focus group or contacting us directly.

It is also underpinned by equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation and public sector expectations. We recognise our positive duty to eliminate discrimination and acknowledge that this means doing more than just fixing issues when they arise, but addressing and preventing the systemic causes of discrimination and creating an environment where unfair treatment and problem behaviour is unlikely to happen in the first place.

Our design process included:

- a literature review of 'leading practice' in the emergency services sector and other sectors in Australia and abroad to identify current strengths, gaps, and opportunities
- an audit of existing diversity and inclusion initiatives at Burwood Headquarters, region, district and brigade level
- engaging with a range of internal stakeholder groups
- seven facilitated focus groups with representation from Headquarters, regions, districts and brigades
- engaging with subject matter experts and diversity networks including Pride in Diversity, the Champions for Change Coalition, Diversity Council of Australia and Job Access Australia.

Key findings from consultation

- The need to develop a strong 'case for change' and engage all members about CFA's culture journey.
- A strong desire for more information and assistance about how to build and support diversity.
- A need to support our leaders to develop enhanced people skills.
- The positive impact when leaders actively champion diversity and inclusion.
- A strong desire from members to be involved in diversity and inclusion initiatives and to be more connected to others across the state who share their enthusiasm.
- A need for clearer mechanisms to embed diversity and inclusion in business as usual.
- The need to amplify underrepresented voices and empower diverse communities and provide mechanisms for these voices to be heard.
- Improve equitable access to training.
- 'What we report on matters' – the need for this framework to be underpinned by accurate people data and realistic measures of success.
- Assistance with engaging with diverse communities.
- The need for a coordinated approach to working with our First Nations Australians members that prioritises the principles of self-determination.
- More assistance for members affirming their gender.
- The need to address the many gendered stereotypes about fire and emergency services.
- The difficulty being the only woman on a team or doing training.
- The need for special measures or targets for women's representation to increase the pace of change.
- The importance of capturing the wisdom and experience of our older members.
- The strong links between diversity and inclusion and sustainability of brigades.

Glossary of key terms

What's the difference between 'diversity' and 'inclusion'?

Diversity refers to what makes us unique – our background, personality, thinking style, life experiences, and beliefs that shape our perspective and our approach. Diversity includes our age, sex, gender identity, intersex status, ethnicity, cultural and/or linguistic background, religion, disability status, family or caring responsibilities, socio-economic background, education and other differences.

Inclusion refers to an active process of change or integration, as well as an outcome – such as a feeling of belonging. Inclusion recognises, respects, and values the inherent worth and dignity of all people. It is about creating environments that include everyone and exclude no one.

What do we mean by 'intersectionality' and why is it important?

Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. These aspects can include gender, Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion or sexual orientation. When thinking about diversity we can't just focus on one aspect of a person's identity, for instance, gender because gender interacts with other forms of identity to compound a person's experience of disadvantage or inequality.

What's the difference between equality and equity?

Equality is treating every individual in the same way, irrespective of requirements and circumstances. The problem is that equal treatment of everyone can only promote fairness if everyone starts from the same place, which is traditionally not the case for those who belong to traditionally marginalised groups.

Equity provides everyone with what they need to be successful. It involves treating everyone fairly, based on their requirements and circumstances. Some examples include providing workplace adjustments for CFA members, creating specific support groups, special measures positions, employment programs for specific groups of people, and providing mentoring and/or sponsorship opportunities for specific groups of people who are traditionally marginalised.

What do we mean by psychological safety and safe and inclusive CFA environments?

'Safety' is well-known as one of CFA's values. When we think of safety at CFA, we automatically think of physical safety – our equipment, PPE, etc. But safety also refers to psychological safety – the belief that you won't be punished, rejected or humiliated in a particular role or setting. It defines a climate where people are comfortable being and expressing themselves. This allows for moderate risk-taking, creativity, and sharing of opinions in a respectful way without fear of negative repercussions.

Improving psychological safety has an even greater impact on people who are members of traditionally marginalised groups, as they often feel reluctant to speak up in environments where they don't see themselves represented or represented at the top. Inclusive environments refers to us all being willing to think beyond ourselves and our own needs and actively 'put ourselves in someone else's shoes' and see the environment from their perspective. This is an active choice and a shared responsibility. It is not created by someone else – it is created by all of us, through our individual actions every day.

Psychological safety coupled with inclusive environments enables all members to bring their whole selves to CFA and facilitates the willingness of people to contribute their ideas – the key to leveraging diversity of thought.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

The phrase ‘culturally and linguistically diverse’ is a broad term used to describe communities with diverse languages, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, traditions, societal structures and religions. A widely used definition of cultural and linguistic diversity refers to those people born overseas, in countries other than those classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as ‘main English speaking countries’. However, there will be differences in how people individually use this term and it’s best to ask someone directly what terms they use (for further guidance, refer to the Inclusive Language Guide).

Disability

CFA uses the Victorian Public Sector Commission definition of disability which is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Disability includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.



First Nations Australians

First Nations Australians have diverse and distinctive cultures which span more than 65,000 years. There is a wide range of nations, cultures, and languages across mainland Australia and throughout the Torres Strait. Given this diversity, respectful language use depends on what different communities find appropriate.

If possible, it is best to consult with Traditional Custodians, local Elders, or community to determine which language and terminology they prefer. However, it's also important to be mindful of the history of dispossession and colonisation. Some First Nations people who have been displaced may not know their language or cultural group.

'First Nations Australians' is an inclusive term for Australia's first peoples. The 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' may also be used, however should always be written in its entirety, capitalised, and never abbreviated (e.g., 'ATSI').

LGBTQIA+

LGBTQIA+ is an internationally recognised acronym which is used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, asexual and queer or questioning people collectively. However, language used to describe different LGBTQIA+ people and by different parts of LGBTQIA+ communities changes over time and can differ across cultures and generations. There will also be differences in how people individually use or define particular terms and it's best to ask someone directly what terms they use.

Non-binary

People who don't fall within the traditional binary notions of sex and gender, such as male and female. This may include people: who identify as a gender different to their birth sex; who identify as neither man or woman; or whose cultures may have their own terms for gender identities outside man or woman.

What do we mean by sex and gender?

Many cultures around the world, including Australia, have a dominant perception of gender as being limited to a binary where every person is either 'male' or 'female'. This categorisation is reinforced through gender norms that allocate various aspects of appearance, behaviour, preferences, and identification as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Dominant social and cultural assumptions about gender reinforce the idea that it is biologically predetermined and unchanging, but this fails to recognise and validate the ways that gender evolves and changes collectively over time and individually for many people.

Sex is a term that refers to the practice of classifying people into gender groups based on physical characteristics. These physical characteristics are the outcome of biophysiological processes of sexual differentiation that are initiated by a person's sex chromosomes, which lead to the production of sex hormones. These shape a person's primary and secondary sex characteristics provided that hormone receptors are functioning. Despite the widespread cultural practice of recognising only two sexes and genders (male and female), processes of sexual differentiation among humans are diverse and cannot be understood within a binary framework.

