



2021

# Diversity & Inclusion

Annual Report





Acknowledgement of Country

# Content

- 2021 Inclusion at RMIT
- Inclusion Impact and Highlights
- Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2022-2025



In the last five years, RMIT has had a marked impact on our communities. As a place of learning and work we have made significant milestones towards a more inclusive culture where everyone can belong, feel safe and thrive.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a profound effect on all facets of the lives for our staff and students with many facing personal and professional barriers to their success.

In response RMIT has prioritised initiatives to respond to the challenges and opportunities emerging from the COVID-19 to support the success of our people in 2020 and 2021.

RMIT is in a strong position to maintain and sustain equitable outcomes for our students, staff and wider community for 2022 and beyond. Rebuilding an RMIT inclusive of all.



## Inclusion at RMIT 2021

We are continuing to innovate and translate our inclusive ways of learning and working

- The RMIT Diversity and Inclusion Framework, and related Action Plans, outline the University's key commitments to build a more inclusive environment for our diverse student and staff community, with priority for the following:
- **Gender Equality**
- **Accessibility**
- **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**
- **Diverse Genders, Sexes and Sexualities**
- **Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds**

**In 2022** we will be consulting with our community to develop the next iteration of the RMIT Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Action Plans to 2025.

- Our progress has been affirmed by staff and student experience, metrics, and in national and international recognition for our achievements in a series of awards and also our response to COVID-19 challenges and opportunities.
- Our journey towards a shared future with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges and cultures is outlined in the Reconciliation Plan [DhumbahGoorowa](#)
- We re-affirm the Bundjil Statement - 'do not harm the land, and do not harm the children', in all our communities.
- The following slides present an overview of progress during 2021 in our five diversity and inclusion priorities.

# Impact



#2

University internationally for 'reducing inequalities' on the 2020 THE Rankings for UN Sustainable Development Goals; top ten across all SDGs



#1

Victorian University in the Student Engagement Index 2020 (Good Universities Guide)



#2

Australian organisation for accessibility and inclusion with the Australian Network on Disability, first University to become an accredited Disability Confident Recruiter



Bronze

Recognition holder for the Athena SWAN strategy to support women in STEMM



EOCGE

Employer of Choice for Gender Equality since 2018



#1

Platinum organisation in the Pride in Diversity Index for our achievements re LGBGTQ+ inclusion for students and staff



We have drawn on a **best practice** approach at the systemic level as articulated by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, the Australian Network on Disability, Pride in Diversity, Athena SWAN and other organisations to develop a roadmap customized for RMIT, as an integral part of RMIT's strategic priorities.

We participate in these external benchmarking schemes for:

- accountability
- to provide independent advice regarding progress and where we need to improve
- as a tool for engagement and to drive priority action

As we gain recognition for our progress, we raise the expectations of RMIT among our students, staff, industry partners and community - and to maintain our reputation and achievements we need to continue our commitments through our new Strategic Plan.

## Areas of Focus 2022:



### Commence planning our 2025 Vision considering what's NEXT

- Our strategic focus for 2022 is to re-evaluate and deliver our diversity and inclusion action plans, including **priority actions related to RMIT KPI's** and **emerging COVID-19 challenges and opportunities**.
- **Gender Equality Plan** 1<sup>st</sup> year implementation and Gender Equity Impact Assessments.
- Development of a **Student Gender Equity** Plan.



### Living our value of inclusion and care for our student and staff community

- Focus on STEM including the conditions creating barriers for women in STEM representation including student outreach and engagement, disparity in pay gap between STEM and non-STEM.
- Reinforce and implement the **Culture of Care** and **Mental Health Strategies** that will continue to need to be prioritised.



### Promoting universal design and accessibility

- Leverage new organisational structures and roles to strengthen staff capability in **universal design and digital accessibility** and embed access for all from the outset for staff and students.
- Combine specialist expertise in learning and work adjustment and seek opportunities to build capability confidence to enhance access to learning and employment at RMIT.



### RMIT return to campus building vibrant community connection

- Be responsive to known and emerging needs especially of our **student and staff cohorts and their engagement coming back to campus**
- Leverage the learnings of remote working and learning and continue to progress options including flexibility - **providing our people choice and agency**
- During 2022, reactivation of networks, allyship and Diversity and Inclusion **Champions beyond STEM**.

# Gender Equality:

## Towards 2025 Sustained Commitment for our Community

### Victorian Gender Equality Act and the development of the GEAP

Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) - Consultation and development of RMIT's Gender Equality Action plan 2022 – 2025 was actioned in 2021.

This required deep analysis and review of gender and intersectionality, resulting in embedding the lens of intersectionality in our new plan. Launch IWD 2022.

**Student Equity Plan** under consultation and development 2022.

**Prevention of gender-based violence** in our structures, strategies, and policies including discrimination, everyday sexism, and bullying).



### University Response

• **44%**

of our leaders are women, up from 33.9% in 2015

• **84%**

Strongly agree that 'My immediate supervisor/manager genuinely supports equality between genders'

• **60%**

Managerial promotions go to women compared to 33% in 2017

• **10.0% - 6.2%**

Closing the Pay Gap Total Rem at RMIT from 2015 to 2021

• **+10%**

In our staff reporting that they have the flexibility for work and life responsibilities

### University Response

RMIT is committed to enabling and leading gender equality outcomes in Victoria, based on the **Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020**.

- **The Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025** has been developed in consultation with RMIT workforce, student, and staff representatives, along with diversity and inclusion working groups, networks.
- RMIT will continue to engage with our staff community and support a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative process in shaping RMIT's future direction in Gender Equity both internally and externally.
- Victorian Gender Equality Agency will be publishing our Gender Equality Action Plan and related metrics in 2022, post Council endorsement.

### Workplace Gender Equality

As the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) leading practice recognition program, it aims to promote and improve gender equality.

#### Athena SWAN STEM

- Our STEM Diversity & Inclusion Advocates gathered information from across their Schools to identify concerns and opportunities. Patriated in intersectionality training from Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) and RMIT DGSS Ally training.

#### Athena SWAN Initiatives included:

- Pathway to Silver Accreditation
- Show casing RMIT Women in STEM
- Entry supports for women entering tech field in partnership with MYOB and the Federal Government Cadetship Program
- Women in STEMM PhD scholarships for female-identifying students supervised by at least one female-identifying academic staff member
- Special Measures, female only recruitment in disciplines where women represent less than 40% of the workforce
- Executive Leadership Inclusive Capability Program

## Accessibility and Mental Wellbeing:

### Culture of Care and Access to Education and Employment

#### Australian Network Disability:

The AND Access and Inclusion Index report for 2020 submission informed 2021 priority actions. In 2021, in recognition of **our sustained achievement as a leading organisation** in the Index,

AND has invited RMIT to join its Advisory Group to review the Index. RMIT will maintain recognition as a leading organisation.



#### University Response

- **2954 students registered for an individualised Equitable Learning Plan in 2021** gaining access to advice, services and adjustments to ensure their equitable participation and support their success in their studies.
- 2,218 students accessed 7,300 appointments with the **RMIT Counselling Service**. 510 staff, 43 people leaders and 19 family members accessed **RMIT's Employee Assistance Program** to support a wide range of work, life, study and health and wellbeing issues.
- RMIT celebrated **Global Accessibility Awareness Day** and **International Day of People with Disability** with numerous events, guest speakers, panels, student and staff videos/ resources
- **Disability Confident Recruiter Re-Accreditation** for staff. RMIT supports our students to obtain and maintain employment, newly-appointed **Careers Consultant –Disability** connecting with employers/industry/ **GradWISE program**

**Revised resources and professional development opportunities** were delivered to staff participants in a range of modes including online training, refreshed websites, and communications and resources for specialist audiences such as teachers.

**RMIT contributed its learning and practice to a number of other forums and groups**, including by invitation at the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability on our leading employment practices and through the TAFE Disability Inclusion Strategy Working Group to enhance disability awareness and practice across the TAFE network.

The **Library purchased and subscribed to thousands of accessible electronic versions of texts and journals** in preference to print versions in a commitment to a 'digital first' strategy, for timely, flexible and equitable access to textbooks integrated with online course content.

#### Culture of Care :

Surveyed our staff and students in our first ever w hole-of-community Mental Wellbeing Survey, with 1857 staff and 1357 student participants and 107 participants w ho were both staff and students. Collaborative research project with University of South Australia.

Launched our staff Wellbeing Hub – with visits from 701 staff including additional 5 days (pro-rata) of mental wellbeing leave and a slow down week offered to staff.

Maintained our RMIT Together Facebook group, providing wellbeing information to a community of 3630 group members

Established Mental Wellbeing governance groups to guide, advocate and champion MW strategic initiatives

Developed a draft psychosocial risk management approach at RMIT, to prevent and mitigate risks to employee mental health and wellbeing.

Mental Health Day/Awareness Month and Calm Zone. 1144 staff and 788 student attendees at wellbeing webinars/training.



# Students from low socio-economic backgrounds:

## Access and Educational Achievement

### Inclusive Access to Education :

- The COVID-19 pandemic found many students in a position of disadvantage financially, academically, and personally.
- In response to this unprecedented crisis and transition, study, wellbeing, and financial supports were implemented throughout 2020/21
- Responded to shifts in government policy and funding aimed at improving the participation and outcomes of **regional, rural and remote students**
- Focus on Mature Aged Students from Non Traditional Backgrounds (MANTB) to increase the participation of students from a LSES background at RMIT.
- Creation of a dedicated Equity Community Outreach role focused on MANTB students.
- Re-imagining Admissions for growth that widens access at RMIT for underrepresented students and increase diversity in the student population.

### University Response

#### Equity Scholarships

- **5000+** students received over **\$9m+** of equity and inclusion based scholarships/grants
- Scholarships have a retention effect by assisting students to give more time and attention to their studies. Data shows that the **retention rate of commencing students** in 2020 is **higher at 91.7%** compared with non-scholarship holders at **88.3%. Continuing** low SES students who hold a scholarship have a retention rate of **92%** in comparison to non-scholarship holders at **88%**.

#### SNAP Equity Access Scheme

- **2106** students enrolled in a degree and vocational programs through SNAP Access Schemes, accounting for **61% of all low SES enrolments** made through VTAC. **7,635** secondary students were considered for a place in RMIT programs through the scheme

### University Response

#### Financial Inclusion Action Plan

- RMIT has **developed** our **Foundation Financial Action Plan (FIAP) Program** led by community organisation Good Shepherd to develop a university-wide action plan to support students in times of crisis, increase resilience and foster financial wellbeing.

#### Financial Advice & Assistance

- Student Hardship Assistance, emergency accommodation, food and transport vouchers
- Successful pilot of an **ATO Tax Help Centre** providing free tax return help for 248 RMIT students, by students. This initiative also provided 7 equity students with WIL/employment opportunities and comprehensive career mentoring and coaching. Two students later gained roles in the finance industry.

### Career Success:

#### Enhanced employability of students from LSES backgrounds

- **1,415** low SES, Indigenous and RRR students personally contacted through Career Success Project building awareness of career services and career support.
- **1,054** career consultations in 2021, a 156% increase from 2020. 95% of students indicated they were more confident in their career skills post intervention & 93% are now better able to identify



## Spotlight:

### The RMIT Financial Inclusion Action Plan – in collaboration with Good Shepherd

#### Student Financial wellbeing

RMIT understands the impact that financial stress can have on the access, participation retention and success of our students.

Education is transformative in many ways but particularly as a way out of financial hardship. RMIT's Financial Inclusion Action Plan defines our strategy to create a supportive, diverse and inclusive university and with financially resilient students.

The development of our action plan will help us to better understand the complexities of financial wellbeing and develop new and innovative responses to encourage meaningful economic participation and improve the economic status of our students.

This will include ensuring our programs and services are accessible and appropriate as well as building the capacity of the University to provide support and foster a culture that improves financial inclusion and wellbeing.

#### University Response – understand our students' financial wellbeing

- Became a member of The Good Shepherd's Financial Inclusion Plan program – with over 40 member organisations focused on taking strategic and practical actions that will improve the financial wellbeing of their customers, employees, business, and community partners.
- Consultation with RMIT community
- Vulnerable student groups challenges identified and documented
- identified actions to develop students' financial literacy, capability and resilience and to support in crisis

#### University Response – Create a Foundation Action Plan

- Reference group convened to consider all actions
- Foundation FIAP actions refined through quantitative and qualitative feasibility assessment
- Consultation with Good Shepherd
- Develop measurable outputs and outcomes
- Action Statements evaluated and approved by Reference Group and "Action owners"
- Evaluate our Foundation FIAP at the end of 2022

#### Impact

##### Through cross organisation collaboration the FIAP will:

- Improve support for financially vulnerable students and the wider community
- Ensure an organisational culture that enables staff to better identify and support financially vulnerable groups
- Develop more partnerships externally to the university as well as collaboration to support vulnerable groups
- Increase the targeted and scalable resources that RMIT has to build financial capabilities



**Employee Financial Wellbeing**  
Action Accelerator Series

## Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:

### Beyond Cultural Inclusion to Racial Equity and Inclusion

#### Towards Inclusion



In 2021 RMIT secured significant investment from the Victorian government for a purpose-built Multifaith Centre in CBD North. We have also continued our support for multifaith and religious observance and spiritual-based clubs on campus and online during 2021.

New development programs and resources were launched in 2021, with enhanced provision for inclusive teaching and learning as well as embedding diversity and inclusion within Program Learning Outcomes.

#### University Response:

RMIT engaged the social justice organisation **Hue to deliver Anti-Racism** training to a select group of staff as a pilot. This training will be revisited in 2022 to explore opportunities for key stakeholders and leaders to take part in the training as professional development.

A range of **programs and resources were delivered**, centred on themes of inclusivity, cultural intelligence and equal access, for students and staff to connect and collaborate on topics across equity, well-being and sustainability at an international and cross-cultural level.

**6,854 students participated in Global Experiences**, including 3,303 participating in the 'Global Leadership' programs of remote internships to short-term study options and learning modules.

Each year, RMIT hosts the annual **Women of Colour Melbourne Gathering**, as a part of an ongoing partnership. A number of free tickets were made available to RMIT students and staff who were encouraged to participate.

#### University Response:

- A review of **Coursework Scholarships** was conducted to consider and where necessary improve practices and outcomes across a range of diverse identities and circumstances, including consideration of the intersections across multiple identities.
- **Academic promotion success rates** for staff of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds continue to improve and are higher than non-CALD staff.
- A **qualitative review of recruitment practices** with a focus on intersectionality alongside a program of inclusive leadership professional development for STEM leaders were completed.
- Focus on **intersectionality** i.e., support staff to identify in WorkDay to better understand who we are and continue to utilise an intersectional approach to identifying barriers to career advancement and engagement.

#### In partnership with:

- **23 students from asylum seeker backgrounds** were provided with fee-waiver access, cash living allowance scholarships, student services and career development, including industry experience in 2021, with 78 student participants and 32 graduates in total 2018-21. VCE endorsed the program continuing for a further three years in August 2021.
- As part of the **Gender Equality Action Plan Development** a clear focus will be on intersectional gender inequality and acknowledging that the gains of senior women in leadership have not been representative, for example, of women of colour or Indigenous women.
- Consultation and planning to support the development of the **next three-year action plan** will be conducted through focus groups, stakeholder consultation, and surveys. Ongoing advocacy and advice on policy and best practice has included developing the anti-racism approach for the return of students in 2022 and facilitating the Cultural Inclusion Working Group to provide diverse cross-RMIT insights and advocacy.

## Diverse Genders, Sexes and Sexualities:

## Gender Equality is for all

### Lived Experience and Allyship:

A range of surveys, including the DGSS staff survey, the Ally Network EOY survey, the AWEI survey, and consultation with relevant stakeholder groups including the DGSS Working Group and RUSU Queer Officers have offered variety of lived experience and insights to support the development of the 2022-2025 DGSS Action Plan.

We continued to work collaboratively across multiple dimensions of identity, including a first ever DGSS and Accessibility focused event for Pride Week.



### University Response

RMIT participated in the **2021 Midsumma Pride March and Carnival** for the sixth year.

The annual **Pride Week** was held 23-27 August with strong online engagement of both students and staff. The week concluded with a DGSS-themed online trivia event in celebration of **Wear It Purple Day**.

As part of Pride Week, RMIT and GLOBE partnered on a well-attended **career mentoring event for DGSS RMIT students**. Our partnerships with Minus18 and Out For Australia continued in 2021. RMIT continued to support inclusive recruitment, mobility and career development for RMIT staff and students, including through collaboration for events with our partners GLOBE and Out for Australia.

A range of **tailored training sessions** were delivered for student and staff groups across RMIT Schools and Colleges to improve awareness and inclusive practice and behaviour regarding diverse genders and sexualities

### University Response

We appointed a volunteer **Ally Network Chair** to provide support, strategic direction and drive communications for the staff network. We also provided **opportunities for students to share their voice** and lived experience with the RMIT community, including being profiled for Non-Binary People's Day.

RMIT received **Gold recognition in the annual Pride in Sport benchmarking index**, alongside delivering a sport Pride Party for students and staff which encouraged DGSS participation in community sport at RMIT, featuring stalls from Proud 2 Play and Transgender Victoria.

The **DGSS Research Network** has worked to raise the profile of research on the topics of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities at RMIT, as well as building a support network for DGSS researchers across Victoria and Australia. The network has delivered monthly seminars led by community voices, supporting the professional development and networking building of its members.

### Our Community:

We continued to improve RMIT system work-arounds for students using preferred and chosen names, including a review of processes and communications. Students can also now add their pronouns to Canvas, supporting them to affirm their gender in online learning environments. Finally, we offered open Transgender Awareness training for students and staff to build their knowledge and capacity as allies to our trans and gender diverse community.

WorkDay was successfully launched mid year, with the provision to include a 'preferred name' (different to a staff member's legal name) in support of gender affirmation.

The Pride in Disability event brought together LGBTIQ+ students, staff and community advocates with disability to share their experiences and knowledge and celebrate their intersecting identities. This was a highly successful event, including a warm introduction by our Accessibility

# Revision of the RMIT Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Focus Areas 2022



## Scoping and development

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- Research on best practice has begun, with initial planning of framework and action plans underway. Jan – March
- Next step is to identify key stakeholders to form an advisory group for the Diversity and Inclusion Framework development.
- Where possible we will be using existing working groups, networks and allies.



## Engagement

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- Consultation with staff, students and our global communities will be conducted throughout March – April.
- We encourage the entire RMIT community to engage and put forward feedback.
- Community activation and engagement will be key in the development and implementation of the D&I plans towards 2025.



## Implementation

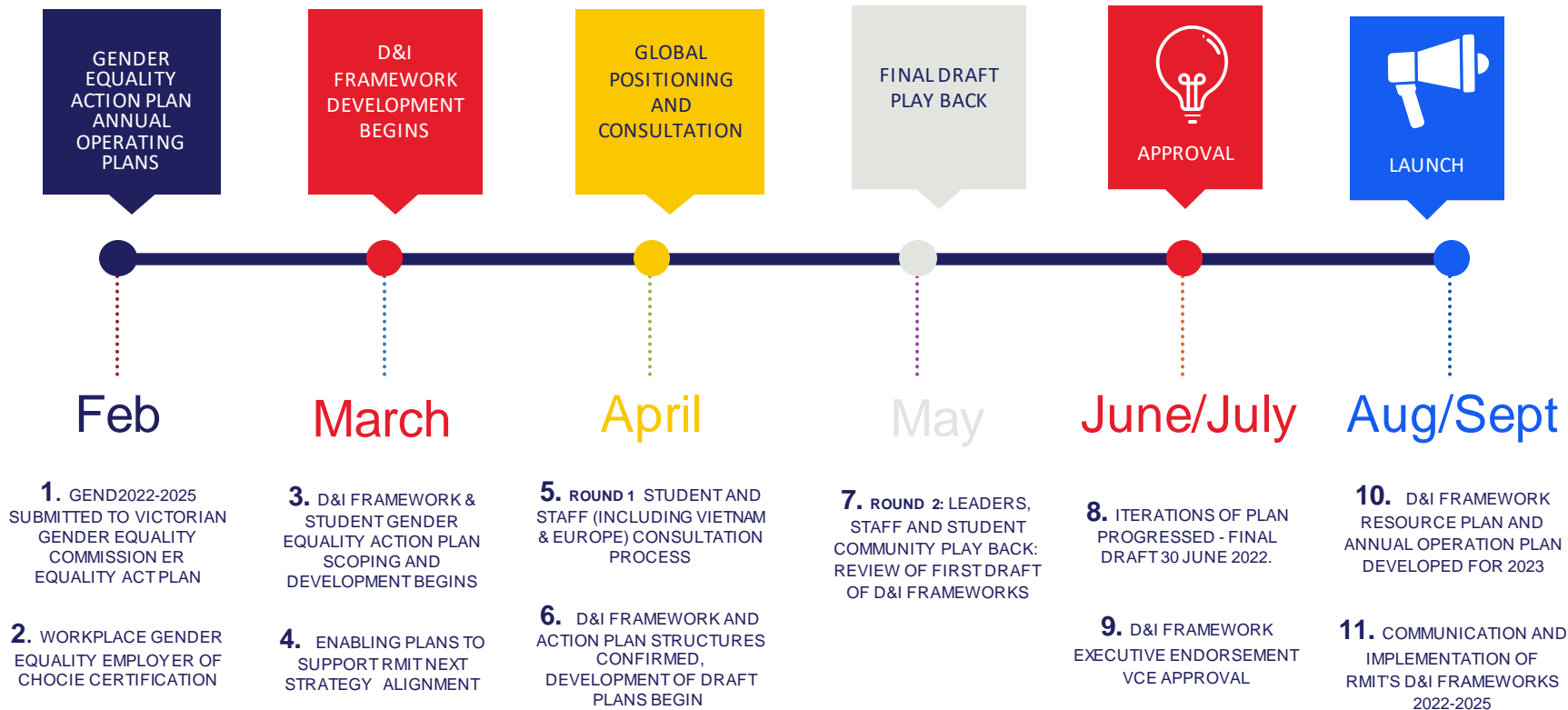
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- Expect to implement and launch the new D&I Frameworks by September 2022.
- Resource Plans and Annual Operating Plans towards 2023 will be progressed at point of launch.
- Our progress is to be evaluated for impact, and our plans will ensure responsiveness to emerging needs and circumstances over the next 3 years.



- Support your staff and our student community to get involved as we work together to build our new vision for 2025.

# Diversity and Inclusion Framework Development 2022-2025





Noon Gudgin

(Thank you)

