AWEI AS A ROADMAP

Welcome to the Australian Workplace Equality Index

Running for over a decade, the AWEI stands as the definitive national benchmark on LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion, and comprises a roadmap, auditing and benchmarking tool, and engagement survey by which national standards of best practice for LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion are set. The Index drives best practice in Australia and sets a comparative benchmark for Australian employers across all sectors. For this reason alone, the Index has to be comprehensive and rigorous. The work compiled annually by employers participating in the Index is a testament to the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion within their current D&I initiatives.

AWEI as a Roadmap

The AWEI contains a set of criteria that empowers organisations to develop their LGBTQ+ inclusion strategies and action plans, through an evidence-based approach, guided by best practice insights from national and global trends in workplace inclusion. Organisations can use the criteria solely for planning or may also have their work audited through the Submission process.

This roadmap walks you through those key areas of LGBTQ+ inclusion practice.

Where do we start?

When it comes to answering the question, "Where do we start?", our answer is always going to be "Get the foundations right first!"

This roadmap is designed to help you set up a plan, using the AWEI Submission criteria as a guide.

These criteria are updated every 3 years to ensure they continue to reflect and drive leading practice; for this reason, we recommend you refer to the latest submission documentation, which can be requested at: 2024 - 2025 AWEI Submission (websurveycreator.com)

The criteria are comprised of 10 sections:

1. HR Policies & Diversity Practice
2. LGBTQ+ Bullying, Harassment & Support
3. Inclusion of Trans and Gender Diverse Employees
4. Strategic Focus & Accountability
5. LGBTQ+ Employee Network
6. Training, Awareness & Professional Development
7. Visibility of LGBTQ+ Inclusion
8. Executive Leadership & Engagement
9. Data Collection & Reporting
10. Community Engagement

Within each of these sections there may be both 'foundation' and 'advanced' work.

This roadmap will step you through each section.

1. HR Policies & Diversity Practice

Have our policies and practices been reviewed to ensure they are explicitly inclusive of LGBTQ+ employees and their families? Have we removed any stigmatizing terminology? Do we recognise issues that uniquely impact LGBTQ+ people?

LGBTQ+ populations have a long history of stigmatisation and exclusion from society. Therefore, many people will expect to be excluded and will assume they are being excluded unless we actively show them otherwise. Organisations can put in place steps to use explicitly inclusive language in all workplace policies, and they can ensure no negative language is used. Additionally, by understanding some of the unique barriers that impact LGBTQ+ people, they can ensure their needs are catered for in all people policies and benefits.

Topic	Level	Initiative
LGBTQ+ inclusivity within policies and benefits	Foundation	On our policy intranet pages or upfront within our policy documentation, we have made it explicitly clear that all policies are inclusive of LGBTQ+ employees and their families.
Updated terminology	Foundation	We have updated our language and terminology across policy documentation, intranet pages and external web pages, to update the terms 'sexual preference', 'lifestyle choice', and 'gender transition' or 'transition'.
New parent leave inclusive of LGBTQ+ families	Foundation	We clearly communicate that our New Parent Leave is inclusive for employees who bring children into their family via arrangements such as surrogacy, adoption and foster/guardianship.
International travel advice for employees	Foundation	We have international travel advice available to our LGBTQ+ employees or employees with LGBTQ+ dependents, should they be required to travel for work (e.g., cultural context, safety, LGBTQ+ matters in other jurisdictions).
LGBTQ+ inclusive Domestic & Family Violence policy	Foundation	Our Domestic and Family Violence Policy or resources clearly acknowledges and identifies unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people in DFV situations, and identifies specialist LGBTQ+ avenues of support to assist HR Managers and employees impacted by LGBTQ+ DFV.

2. LGBTQ+ Bullying, Harassment & Support

Have we provided resources to help our employees understand what bullying and harassment of LGBTQ+ people may look like? Have we trained our grievance officers to understand how to support LGBTQ+ employees. Is our reporting process sensitive to the needs of LGBTQ+ employees? Do we analyse incidents to understand our culture?

Workplace incivility, bullying, and harassment is over experienced and under reported amongst LGBTQ+ employees. In order to tackle this issue, organisations can instigate a number of initiatives.

Topic	Level	Initiative
Resources on LGBTQ+ inclusive and negative language	Foundation	We actively promote the availability of resources to all staff that provide clear guidelines on what is both inclusive language and negatively perceived language regarding LGBTQ populations.
LGBTQ+ trained grievance officers	Foundation	Our organisation has grievance officers who are clearly communicated as a contact for LGBTQ+ related grievances and who are clearly identified as having been trained in LGBTQ+ inclusion and awareness.
Behavioural examples of what constitutes bullying / harassment	Foundation	Our organisation has documentation that is easily located within our bullying and harassment policy/guidelines that provide clear behavioural examples of what constitutes LGBTQ+ related bullying/harassment.
Tracking of incidents	Advanced	We have a formal process to sensitively collect, extract and report on LGBTQ+ related incidents of bullying and harassment.

3. Inclusion of Trans and Gender Diverse Employees

Do we have inclusive gender options in our forms and IT systems? Do we have inclusive dress codes and expectations? Do we have documentation and processes to support an employee affirming their gender, and do we provide leave options? Are our recruitment processes inclusive of trans people? Do all employees have freedom to use bathrooms and facilities which align to their gender?

Transgender and gender diverse people experience the highest rates of stigmatisation out of all LGBTQ+ people. There are many societal barriers that exclude them, which can impact many organisational systems and processes, language, infrastructure, and expectations.

Topic	Level	Initiative
Non-binary gender options for employees	Foundation	We currently include non-binary options when collecting employee gender information within internal forms and/or IT systems.
Dress codes	Foundation	Our employees can easily locate an explicit statement that supports trans and gender diverse people to present according to their affirmed gender at work, alongside a contact point for employees who have specific questions regarding this.
Gender affirmation policy and process documentation	Foundation	We have a documented gender affirmation policy and guidelines to support an employee wishing to affirm their gender in the workplace, the manager and HR contact supporting them, and their colleagues.
Gender affirmation leave	Advanced	Employees can access additional paid leave, over and above annual, sick, other personal leave, if they require time away to undertake or manage their gender affirmation.
'All-Gender' bathrooms	Advanced	We have implemented 'All-Gender' inclusive signage and/or iconography at bathroom/s within our organisation.
Trans and gender diverse applicants	Advanced	Our recruiters and hiring managers have a documented understanding of the recruitment barriers faced by trans and gender diverse people, and a resource of the internal processes for navigating these recruitment barriers. Additionally, we have an easily located avenue of support available for trans and gender diverse people at the start of the application process, which they can access when first applying for a job.

4. Strategic Focus & Accountability

Do we have a clear strategy and action plan to drive our LGBTQ+ inclusion objectives? Do we have people, structures, and governance in place to support the strategy? Do we have access to appropriate knowledge and expertise? Do we support the people who are delivering our inclusion initiatives and recognise this work accordingly? Do we communicate our inclusion focus outside or our organisation, to customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders?

Since LGBTQ+ employees have traditionally been invisible in our organisations, and DEI is a relatively new and quickly changing area, many employers have little experience or expertise in LGBTQ+ inclusion; while they want to do the 'right thing', there could be little knowledge on how to achieve that. Organisations should treat inclusion work like any other strategic imperative, with appropriate objectives, plans, resources, reporting, etc. Organisations may also consider how they can promote and drive LGBTQ+ inclusion outside of their organisation.

Topic	Level	Initiative
External LGBTQ+ expertise	Foundation	We have access to external LGBTQ+ inclusion support/expertise that we can call upon, ongoing, for advice and guidance.
Organisational LGBTQ+ inclusion strategy	Foundation	We have an organisational Diversity & Inclusion strategy with an LGBTQ+ component.
Documented LGBTQ+ inclusion plans and accountabilities	Advanced	We have a documented LGBTQ+ inclusion action plan, aligned with the organisational strategy, which clearly states deliverables, accountabilities, and timelines, that can be used to track progress, plus a process for reporting against the plan.
External LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion promotion	Foundation	We have detailed information on our Australian LGBTQ+ inclusion focus or work on our external facing website.
External-facing social media communications	Advanced	Our external-facing organisational social media pages regularly show our LGBTQ+ inclusion work.
HR / Diversity professional accountabilities	Foundation	We have the following people within our organisation with documented accountabilities for LGBTQ+ inclusion: an HR/Diversity professional, an Executive Sponsor, Network Leader/s, an internally communicated LGBTQ Advisory service that provides subject expertise to the organisation.

Personal accountability for inclusion	Advanced	Our organisation has put steps in place to ensure LGBTQ+ related work delivered by network leadership and working groups is formally recognised as critical work within standard working hours, with formal accountability, and contributes toward individual employee's career development.
Strategic LGBTQ Inclusion Promotion	Advanced	We include our focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion when working with third-party recruiters/career services, suppliers, potential and existing buyers/customers/service users, funding bodies, strategic partners or key external stakeholders.

5. LGBTQ+ Employee Network

Do we have an employee network, plus succession planning and sustainability processes to ensure its longevity? Can the network act as a resource for LGBTQ+ employees who want to understand the inclusivity of our organisation? Does the network conduct work to advance inclusivity of our organisation for ALL LGBTQ+ people, and support inclusion more broadly? How visible is this important work?

Workplace employee networks or resource groups are a highly valuable asset, often complied of passionate people, some with lived experiences. But often they are doing this work on a voluntary basis. How do we leverage and get the best out of our networks, and ensure their work is making a significant impact on LGBTQ+ people?

Topic	Level	Initiative
LGBTQ+ employee network	Foundation	Our organisation has an established LGBTQ+ employee network/resource group with a clearly documented remit.
Network leadership succession and sustainability	Advanced	To maintain the continuity and longevity of our network, our network has processes in place to ensure leadership roles are not left vacant, potential successors have the training and/or correct skills/motivation to take on leadership roles, contingency plans should current resources become insufficient, and network leadership representation spread across all sites, states or offices.
Orientation / onboarding	Foundation	Our network has a process to actively introduce itself to new employees.
Ally/champion reference guides	Foundation	Our employees can easily locate ally/champion reference guides that detail how to be an effective ally and/or active champion for LGBTQ+ inclusion within the workplace.
Confidential contacts	Foundation	Our organisation clearly identifies LGBTQ+ people or allies who can be contacted for a CONFIDENTIAL and informal (non-HR), LGBTQ-related discussion.
Internal LGBTQ+ social media stream	Foundation	We have a dedicated internal-facing LGBTQ+ social media stream to engage employees with our LGBTQ+ inclusion work and provide a safe place for LGBTQ+ employees and allies to interact.
Research into under-represented LGBTQ+ populations	Advanced	We acknowledge that certain groups within the LGBTQ+ population are less visible/represented and face additional/different barriers. Our network participates in activities/work to determine the less represented groups within the organisation's LGBTQ

		population and to research the population to better understand unique challenges they face.
Visibility of under-represented LGBTQ+ populations	Advanced	Our network participates in activities/work to increase visibility, awareness of or engagement of less represented groups within the LGBTQ+ population.
Broader inclusion support	Advanced	Our Network or Network Leadership has contributed to the organisation's inclusive culture by supporting or assisting the work of other diversity networks.
Network reporting	Advanced	Our network produces an annual report for senior leadership and/or the wider organisation showcasing progress against network targets, advice provided to the organisation, areas of significant contribution, and areas of future focus.

6. Training, Awareness & Professional Development

Do we have LGBTQ+ Awareness and Allyship training available to all our employees? Have we actively encouraged all our employees to participate? Do we ensure we always have employees in critical functions who have the role-specific knowledge required to perform their roles inclusively? Do our people managers and Senior Leaders have sufficient knowledge about LGBTQ+ inclusion, to be able to lead our organisation? Do we have routes to develop the careers of LGBTQ+ employees?

Education is a vital component of an inclusive organisation. Many employees have little experience of LGBTQ+ people, who have traditionally been invisible in our workplaces, and don't understand why inclusion is important, and what it looks like. Additionally, some roles within an organisation are particularly critical to the LGBTQ+ employee experience. It is important that people within these roles are equipped with role-specific LGBTQ+ inclusion training, to ensure that their role and specific practices are inclusive of LGBTQ+ employees.

Topic	Level	Initiative
LGBTQ+ training delivered	Foundation	We have delivered dedicated LGBTQ+ Awareness/Inclusion/Allyship training, available to all employees, and promote it as widely as possible so as to maximise uptake.
LGBTQ+ training for people managers	Advanced	We have completed work to ensure that all Middle Managers understand the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ employees and are equipped to address any issues that may arise within their teams.
LGBTQ+ training for critical functions	Advanced	We acknowledge that there are some roles within the organisation where it is essential that incumbents have a thorough understanding of the challenges that LGBTQ+ people face, so they are able minimise LGBTQ+ related challenges and roadblocks. We have ensured that people within these critical roles have been adequately trained/skilled to provide a role-specific inclusive experience for LGBTQ people.
LGBTQ+ content in leadership training	Advanced	We have company-specific internal management practices or leadership training that incorporate an LGBTQ+ component.
Professional development for LGBTQ+ employees	Advanced	Our organisation identifies high-performing employees for inclusion within talent programs, management training and/or organisational succession planning. We have a process to identify and develop high performing LGBTQ+ employees, and can report on LGBTQ+ participation within talent / leadership or succession programs.

7. Visibility of LGBTQ+ Inclusion

Do we encourage and provide options for individuals to show their support for LGBTQ+ inclusion? Do we show signs of support within our workspaces? Do we acknowledge LGBTQ+ days of significance and use them as an education opportunity? Is the work supporting LGBTQ+ inclusion done by individuals recognised and promoted?

For many LGBTQ+ people, there is an expectation of exclusion. Seeing visibility signs of support, from LGBTQ+ allies displaying cues of support within the workplace, to physical cues of support at an organisational level, allows people to assess the culture of an organisation and their safety there. Visible support contributes to a sense of inclusion for many LGBTQ+ people, regardless of whether they are out at work, as does seeing that inclusion work is highly valued.

Topic	Level	Initiative
Visibility in the workplace	Advanced	We actively encourage the visible support of LGBTQ+ inclusion by providing options for individual employees to visually indicate that they are an ally or supporter of LGBTQ+ inclusion, and by displaying visible signs of organisational support across our offices.
LGBTQ+ days of significance	Advanced	We promote LGBTQ+ days of significance while providing employees with an understanding of why these dates are important to the community.
Individual LGBTQ+ inclusion work recognition	Advanced	Our Senior Leadership has formally recognised the work of individual employees who have contributed to LGBTQ+ inclusion.

8. Executive Leadership & Engagement

Does our CEO and other Senior Leaders visibly support LGBTQ+ inclusion within our organisation? Do they advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion outside of our organisation? Do they have the confidence and knowledge to be able to talk about these issues?

It is widely accepted that culture is led from the top, so your Senior Executive support for diversity and inclusion speaks volumes to employees. Additionally, Senior Leaders often have a strong voice outside of their organisation and can use it to advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion from other stakeholders. However, often Executives can have little knowledge about LGBTQ+ populations and the barriers they face and may lack confidence when speaking about LGBTQ+ populations and LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Topic	Level	Initiative
Internal executive advocacy	Advanced	Our Senior Executives are visible in showing their support for LGBTQ+ inclusion.
Internal CEO advocacy	Advanced	Our CEO visibly shows their support for LGBTQ+ inclusion internally.
External senior leadership advocacy	Advanced	Our CEO or Senior Executives show their support for LGBTQ+ inclusion externally.
Peer support for senior leadership	Advanced	Our CEO or Senior Executives have access to ongoing external peer-led LGBTQ+ inclusion support, beyond general organisational training.

9. Data Collection & Reporting

Do we review the engagement / workplace experiences of LGBTQ+ people via our organisational surveys? Do we do work to determine whether LGBTQ+ employees are disadvantaged in any area of employment? Can we benchmark ourselves against other organisations in our industry or sector?

Being able to measure the experiences of different populations allows organisations to assess the success of their inclusion work, and where their focus needs to be channelled. It is good practice to compare the engagement of LGBTQ+ people with the wider employee population or other diverse employee populations. Whilst analysing LGBTQ+ engagement data is becoming common practice for those employers who work in LGBTQ+ inclusion, a deeper dive into areas over and above engagement that may lead to negative workplace experiences or career outcomes is also important.

Topic	Level	Initiative
LGBTQ+ employee engagement data analysis	Advanced	We report on LGBTQ+ engagement/workplace experience data.
LGBTQ+ employment outcomes data review	Advanced	We engage in activities or work to determine whether our LGBTQ+ employees are disadvantaged in any area of employment.
AWEI employee survey participation	Advanced	We regularly participate in the AWEI Employee Survey and use the results to benchmark ourselves vs other organisations in our sector.

10. Community Engagement

Do we provide support to LGBTQ+ charities or community organisation? Do we participate in LGBTQ+ community events?

LGBTQ+ charities and organisations typically rely heavily on philanthropy, sponsorships, pro-bono support and volunteerism to continue their work. Organisational support of these groups, plus participation at community events, sends a significant message of inclusion to both your employees and those outside of your organisation.

Topic	Level	Initiative
Pro-bono or financial support of LGBTQ+ charities / organisations	Advanced	We have provided support to LGBTQ+ charities/community groups.
Employer branded participation at community events	Advanced	We have participated in external LGBTQ+ community events with organisational branding.

3 Year Planning Cycle

It is unlikely that any organisation will be able to complete work in all these areas within a single year, particularly those just starting on their LGBTQ+ inclusion journey. We would recommend organisations map out a multi-year plan to cover all these areas. The AWEI criteria are updated every three years, to ensure they continue to reflect and drive leading practice, so consider working with a 3-year planning cycle, to ensure that the changing criteria are always reflected in your organisation's plans.

Once initiatives have been created and run once, it is equally important to consider how they are to be embedded within all parts of the organisation, so they become 'business as usual'. This means looking at how to build the criteria into organisational processes, reviewing the structure of your organisation to ensure that the different parts are implementing the initiatives and processes, etc.

While the criteria are classified as 'foundation' and 'advanced', you might decide that one particular 'advanced' area is particularly important for your organisation, and tackle it before some 'foundation' work. That is absolutely fine. The structure and criteria are to provide a guide, but they are intended to be broad enough to work for many different types of organisation.

We also acknowledge that all organisations are different. There will be differences in structure, culture, operating environment, etc., which means that other inclusion initiatives, not covered in the areas listed, may be necessary or beneficial. If organisations choose to have their work audited through the Submission process, additional work areas will be recognised.