Workplace Gender Equity Strategy progress is reported annually to Macquarie University Executive Group and Macquarie University Council and shared via staff communications channels. This document summarises where there has been good progress, current challenges and future priorities for progressing gender equity and inclusion at Macquarie.

**Background**

The Workplace Gender Equity Strategy *Towards Gender Equity 2.0* (WGES) launched in August 2019 provides the framework for the University’s ongoing work to achieve sustainable change in gender equality. Our WGES reflects the complexity of factors that drive gender inequality and sets out a 2-year action plan to achieve specific and measurable gender equity outcomes. The strategy is co-sponsored by the Vice-President, People and Services and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research. It is operationalised through the Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Unit in Human Resources, with MQ Inclusion being the governing committee.

Since the launch of this strategy, Macquarie, and the broader higher education sector has faced challenges and significant change. Evidence indicates that COVID-19 and financial pressures have had implications for gender equity. Macquarie University has taken deliberate action to mitigate these impacts and embed diversity and inclusion principles within our organisational processes in the past year. These actions included the COVID-19 Gender Equity Action Plan, embedding inclusive practice into the academic workplace change process, and providing a set of diversity and inclusion principles to inform the work under the University Operating Plan.

**Progress**

We are now approaching the end of the 2-year timeframe for the WGES and we have seen significant progress in some areas, including:

- The establishment of MQ Inclusion Committee and the Faculty and Portfolio Diversity & Inclusion Committees has significantly increased engagement and action towards workplace diversity and inclusion across the University. Committees are playing a key role in identifying and targeting local issues, which is expanding the depth and breadth of diversity and inclusion activity and accelerating progress towards gender equality. While gender is a consistent area of focus, the distributed model is also enabling other diversity and inclusion priorities to be addressed, while reflecting the local context.

- We have seen a significant shift in engagement and conversation around diversity and inclusion. Our ‘fixing the system’ approach has resonated with staff and been extended beyond gender equity; we are seeing increased staff engagement with diversity and inclusion, a large increase in membership of the Ally Network, and a broad range of initiatives being established to progress inclusion across the University. For example, Academic Senate are progressing a project to understand and improve the diversity of membership, and a conference is being organised to focus on inclusive teaching practice.

- The positive gender equity impacts of the promotion process continue to be visible throughout the academic pipeline – particularly at Levels B and C. Applications increased by 76% in 2017-2020 in comparison to the previous 4 years (2013-2016) and increased by almost 100% for female applicants. Application rates from women have been in line with, or higher than the available pool at each academic level under the new promotion model.
MQ Inclusion provided a set of recommendations for embedding inclusive principles into the academic workplace change process. Actions to mitigate disproportionate diversity and gender equity impacts included an analysis of diversity data at each stage of the process, and a progressive approach to assessment of achievement relative to opportunity. Training was provided to decision panels and staff identified as ‘in scope’. Lessons learnt from this process are now being considered for the PST process.

There has been an increase in the proportion of men accessing primary carers leave over the past 5 years. This may have been impacted by increased communication of support and provisions available, with a particular focus on sharing case studies of male parents and carers at MQ.

Macquarie has been recognised across the sector as a leader on gender equity. We have influenced the development and direction of the SAGE Athena SWAN process to take a more systemic approach, and we have received several external awards including the WGEA employer of choice citation.

**Challenges**

While we have seen progress and achievements in some areas, there are other issues that have emerged since the launch of the WGES, or where further progress is needed. These issues include:

- The disproportionate gendered impacts of Covid-19 were highlighted in the 2020 Gender Equity Progress Report. Macquarie signed a joint Australian Higher Education sector position statement, *Preserving Gender Equity as a Higher Education Priority During and After COVID-19*, as well as launching a COVID-19 gender equity response plan that was endorsed by the Executive Group. However, following a second major lockdown in Sydney, there are renewed concerns about the significant gendered impacts of the pandemic.

- Female representation at Level E reduced from 31% in 2020 to 28% in 2021. This is primarily due to higher applications from senior academic women for voluntary redundancy.

- Survey data and staff feedback has highlighted a need to focus on workplace behaviours. This includes steps to ensure we provide transparent and accessible routes for reporting for staff experiencing bullying and harassment and appropriate support. However, our data, along with external research, shows us that we need to pay attention to behaviours that may not fall under the legal definition of bullying, but are behaviours that contribute to exclusion and a lack of belonging.

- Due to the hiring freeze and workplace change, little action or progress has been taken with a focus on inclusive recruitment.

- There continues to be a significant gender pay gap of 18% across the university. The pay gap is very small at lower levels, but higher for academic roles, particularly at senior levels (there is a 16% pay gap in total remuneration for staff on senior contracts). While this is largely due to uneven distribution of men and women across levels (rather than pay disparity at like-for-like roles) and this is a statistic that is difficult to shift quickly, more focus is required in this area.

**Next Steps and Priorities**

- The University will create an overarching Workplace Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy, with supplementary plans addressing specific challenges, including gender equity. This plan will be designed to respond to many of the challenges outlined above by further progressing a systemic approach that embeds diversity and inclusion within all staff related policies and processes, and within the University culture.
• The recent decision to position diversity, inclusion and belonging strategy as a workstream under the Operating Plan ‘Our People’ focus area will enable progress on some of the key areas of the WGES that need further work. These include:
  - A focus on organisational culture will provide a platform for further work to foster positive workplace behaviours aligned with a culture of inclusion and belonging. A focus is needed on fostering inclusive behaviours and workplace norms, and to strengthen initiatives around bullying, discrimination and harassment prevention and response.
  - Embed inclusive leadership as an expectation for all managers and provide training and resources to build capability in this area. Inclusive practice and visible commitment to D&I needs to become an expectation of managers and leaders at Macquarie University. Our leaders need to be visible champions of diversity and inclusion.
  - Ensure access to flexible work is consistent across departments and teams; through improved communication of provisions, manager training, and holding leaders accountable for progressing a flexible work culture.

• Targeted and specific action is needed to address the gender pay gap. A project plan will be developed for consideration by the Executive Group.

• We have identified a need for a review of our recruitment processes and implement a consistent, inclusive, and accessible approach to attraction, recruitment, and appointment.

Workplace Diversity & Inclusion (September 2021)
2021 PIPELINE
Overall, 45% of academic staff are female. However the proportion of women decreases from 55% at level A to 28% at Level E.

There have been some improvements in female representation in the academic pipeline. In 2016, there was a significant fall in the representation of academic women between Levels B (51%) and C (40%). The representation of women has since increased at Level C by 8%. In 2020, the most significant fall in female representation now occurs between Levels C (48%) and D (39%). The new academic promotion process has been a key driver of this improvement.

A success measure under the WGES is to reach 35% female representation at Level E – this has not yet been met (currently 28%). Female representation at Level E has fallen from 31% in 2016. Female representation has been impacted by the VR process (see page 12).
Women represent 69% of professional staff, and are in the majority at every HEW Level. However the gender gap narrows at more senior levels.

There have been some small changes in gender balance through the pipeline, with some small increases in female representation at HEW levels 9 and 10.

A success measure within the WGES is to reach gender balance (minimum 40% representation of women and men) throughout the professional staff pipeline – this has not yet been met as men are significantly underrepresented at HEW Levels 1 to 7.

So far, there are no clear significant changes in the data as a result of the VR process or PST, but this should be monitored over time (see page 12).