

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION 2023–2025 STRATEGY

*We value every person every day*





## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

The University of Newcastle acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands within our footprint areas. We respect the wisdom of Elders, past, present, and emerging. The University of Newcastle extends this respect to the homelands of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.



# A MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

I am pleased to present the inaugural University of Newcastle Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2025.

The Strategy will facilitate incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion principles across all policies, practices, and activities of the University. Although the University already has many excellent existing programs, policies and plans supporting the equity, diversity and inclusion of its students and staff, these had not previously been integrated into one approach with targeted actions.

I encourage you to embrace equity, celebrate diversity and work together to achieve full inclusion of historically underrepresented cohorts. Our University's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusiveness is fundamental to everything we do. Together our commitment is to empower the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, financial status, sexuality or gender.

We value every person every day. We believe that every person has the right to participate and succeed. There is a place for everyone at this University.

# THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE VALUES

Our values set the standards that we expect, encourage and nurture in our staff and students. They guide our decision-making and position us to achieve our purpose.

## EXCELLENCE

We pursue the exceptional and strive for innovation in our teaching, research and operating environment.

## EQUITY

Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusiveness is fundamental to everything we do. We believe that every person has the right to participate and succeed.

## ENGAGEMENT

Our staff, students, alumni and communities are deeply connected to the challenges and opportunities in our regions and beyond.

## SUSTAINABILITY

We are ethically minded and prioritise responsible management of our environment and financial resources.



## STRATEGY LANGUAGE

This strategy is for all University of Newcastle students and staff irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, financial status, sexuality or gender. We use people-first language to be person-centered. However, there are varying views on language and terminology. We respect that people have a personal preference about the language of their identity.

## STRATEGY PURPOSE

The purpose of this Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy is to mature the University's approach to EDI, including integrating EDI principles across all practices, activities, and policies of the University of Newcastle. This EDI Strategy has five Action Plans:

1. Policy and Procedure Approach
2. Safety for Everyone
3. Inclusive Leadership for Senior Staff and Executives
4. Inclusive Behaviours for Academic and Professional Staff
5. Accessibility

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE EDI STRATEGY

This EDI Strategy has been developed in consultation with students, staff (professional and academic), and university leaders, with special consideration by the University EDI Committee. We are grateful to all participants for their shared knowledge and experience, which ensures our University is inclusive and accessible to all people – especially people who have experienced disadvantage(s). The experiences, cultures and knowledge of all people and their communities are central to this EDI Strategy.



# VISION FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

*We value every person every day*

## **EQUITY**

Equity seeks to create fairness and justice for marginalised people. Equity is different to equality as it is not just about providing an equal distribution of resources. The practice of equity recognises disadvantage and power imbalances and the need for tailored intentional, and comprehensive approaches to providing genuine pathways of access. Equity also includes challenging inequitable systems, so access and inclusion increase.

## **DIVERSITY**

Diversity is recognising a range of human differences, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, and religious and political beliefs.

## **INCLUSION**

Inclusion is the act of providing access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised. Some examples of inclusion are providing alternate pathways or access, learning adjustments, or additional time for tasks. Inclusion relies on an understanding of both equity and diversity to support communities of people to participate and succeed meaningfully.

## **BELONGING**

Belonging means a feeling of security and support that brings a sense of acceptance. It is an emotional need for connectedness, friendship, trust, and acceptance.

## **INTERSECTIONALITY**

Intersectionality is when people have multiple overlapping identities, which, when combined, can have a compound negative effect on the person. Healthy and vibrant university communities overcome forced dichotomies of identity, allowing students and staff to be themselves without fear of stereotypes, bias, prejudice, or violence.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY**

Psychological safety defines a culture of trust and support where people can question practice and voice concerns without fear of repercussions towards them. Psychological safety needs systems that value the growth and development of cohorts and allow for accountability and meaningful change when unsafe circumstances arise.

# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

This EDI Strategy complements and supports the University’s Looking Ahead Strategic Plan (2020-2025), which highlights the value of equity and excellence. The University is committed to being a leading advocate and driving force for excellence and equity in higher education and to supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of its students and staff. We authentically explore the challenges of varied lived experiences and disadvantaged communities.

## COMMITMENT TO EDI

EDI is integrated and prioritised into all aspects of the University and is everyone’s obligation. The University’s commitment to EDI is evidenced through its people and programs.

At the University of Newcastle, we believe everyone has the right to participate, engage and contribute. Throughout Australia and globally, there continues to be barriers to ensuring full inclusion. The University is passionate about advocating for access and inclusion of its people through various action plans and programs.

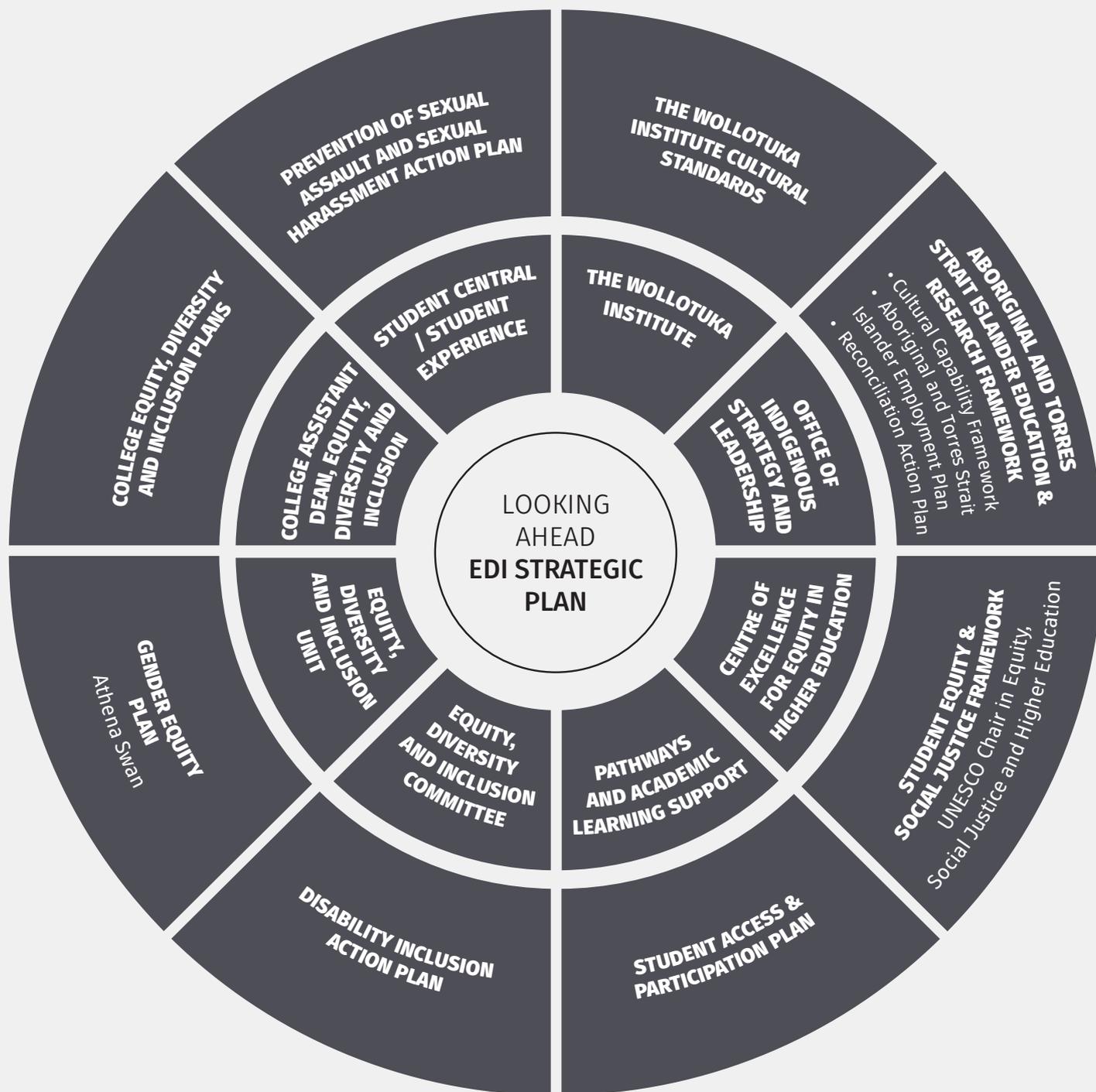
## STRATEGY AIMS

The four aims of this Strategy are to:

1. Strengthen the way the University undertakes its core functions and responsibilities to achieve impartial opportunities for the success of everyone.
2. Maximise accessibility and inclusion of everyone.
3. Purposefully seek, hear and act on the voices of everyone.
4. Create positive and safe places for everyone to learn and work.



# THE EDI ECOSYSTEM



## ACCESSIBLE IMAGE DESCRIPTION

This figure is a series of three nesting circles and describes the University's EDI ecosystem. The inner circle is the 'Looking Ahead and EDI Strategic Plan'. The next outer layer circle is divided into eight compartments: The Wollotuka Institute is at the top, following to the right the Indigenous Strategy and Leadership Unit; Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education; Pathways and Academic Learning Support; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee; EDI Unit; College Assistant Deans Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Student Central / Student Experience. The third nesting circle is divided into eight sections starting at the top with the Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards; and to the right, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education & Research Framework, Cultural Capabilities Framework, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan, and Reconciliation Action Plan; the next compartments to the right are the Student Equity & Social Justice, UNESCO Chair in Equity, Social Justice and Higher Education; Student Access & Participation Plan; Disability Inclusion Action Plan; Gender Equity Plan, Athena Swan; College Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plans; and Prevention of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Action Plan.

# FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES

This Strategy integrates five foundation principles into five focus areas. The principles and focus areas result from two EDI workshops with participants including the University EDI Committee, students, academics, professional staff, College Assistant Deans EDI and senior University leaders. These same workshop participants were invited to review and provide feedback on a draft of the EDI Strategy.

The University community will be a culture of care and belonging for students and staff, which is built on five foundation principles:

1. *The University community strives for **universal non-discrimination***
2. *The University community strives for **full and effective inclusion***
3. *The University community strives for **full and effective accessibility***
4. *The University community believes in the **equity of people***
5. *The University community believes in **equality of opportunity***



# OUR PLEDGE

## WE WILL ENGAGE, LISTEN AND CO-DESIGN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Action Plan 1:** Policy and Procedure Approach

**Strategy Link:** Looking Ahead Strategy – Inspiring People, Engagement

**Outcomes:**

- 1.1 Ensure diverse staff and student representation in co-designing and reviewing policies and strategies.
- 1.2 Ensure confidential engagement with people from equity cohorts.
- 1.3 Ensure diverse representation on committees.
- 1.4 Prioritise physical and psychological safety when consulting with students and staff.
- 1.5 Ensure communication is appropriate and respectful.
- 1.6 Collect quantitative, qualitative, and historical data from equity cohorts that builds understanding about EDI issues.
- 1.7 Provide research-informed advice and support the recruitment, retention, and career progression of people from diverse backgrounds.
- 1.8 Achievement of five Athena Swan Cygnets as pathway to Silver accreditation and implement further actions.
- 1.9 Ensure policies and procedures uphold the five EDI Foundation Principles.

## WE WILL STRIVE TO CREATE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL SAFETY FOR EVERYONE

**Action Plan 2:** Safety for Everyone

**Strategy Link:** Looking Ahead Strategy – Engagement

**Outcomes:**

- 2.1 A person's chosen identity will be respected and unquestioned.
- 2.2 Privacy will be respected.
- 2.3 Digital space will be inclusively and safely designed to ensure equity of access to a high quality for all students.
- 2.4 Digital learning and resources will be provided to enable accessibility for students who cannot access learning on campus due to a range of inequalities.
- 2.5 All people's rights will be respected.
- 2.6 Students on placement/WIL have the right to psychological and physical safety.

## WE WILL GROW OUR INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

**Action Plan 3:** Inclusive leadership for Senior Staff and Executive

**Strategy Link:** Looking Ahead Strategy: Inspiring People

**Outcomes:**

- 3.1 Ensure diverse leadership across Schools, Colleges, Divisions and the Executive Committee and all other leadership groups.
- 3.2 Develop all senior leaders and executives to be EDI Champions.
- 3.3 Senior leaders and executives prioritise and embed EDI in all meetings.

## WE WILL BUILD THE CAPACITY OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

**Action Plan 4:** Inclusive behaviours for academic and professional staff

**Strategy Link:** Looking Ahead Strategy – Inspiring People

**Outcomes:**

- 4.1 The University is a leader in EDI policies and practices.
- 4.2 Implement a continuous cycle of learning related to EDI.
- 4.3 Recognise and address/redress direct and indirect discrimination.
- 4.4 Ensure students' reasonable adjustment plans (RAPs) are appropriately developed and implemented.
- 4.5 Ensure that staff workplace adjustments (physical and digital) are available and appropriately implemented in a timely manner.

## WE WILL ENDEAVOUR TO MAKE THE UNIVERSITY ACCESSIBLE

**Action Plan 5:** Accessibility Action Plan

**Strategy Link:** Looking Ahead Strategy – Re-imagining Our Campuses, Campus Accessibility, Digital Excellence

**Outcomes:**

- 5.1 Provide new and refurbished buildings with enhanced accessible facilities, beyond the minimum standards in the National Construction Code.
- 5.2 Outdoor paths will be accessible.
- 5.3 Accessible toilets will be available throughout our campuses.
- 5.4 A variety of safe, learning, culturally appropriate, and social spaces will be available throughout our campuses.
- 5.5 Accessibility standards will be adhered to by partners and third parties.
- 5.6 Ensure access to existing and future digital resources and tools to support diverse needs.
- 5.7 Ensure our social media is accessible.
- 5.8 Ensure staff understand digital accessibility capability.
- 5.9 Ensure all students have access to high quality, inclusive and enabling teaching and learning courses and materials.
- 5.10 Ensure academics understand, apply and have time for accessible communication support for students.
- 5.11 Ensure LDTI and academics understand and apply principles of Universal Design for Learning.
- 5.12 All digital learning experiences will be governed by evidence-based EDI practice.
- 5.13 Academics will use evidence-based pedagogies and adaptive techniques to support diverse learners.
- 5.14 All events will be accessible.

# EQUITY COHORTS

In Australia, it is unlawful to discriminate on the basis of protected attributes, including **age, disability, race, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation** in certain areas of public life, including education and employment. While specific categories of people are described in this strategy, many people have intersecting and fluid identities.

## **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES**

Refers to Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander peoples, who are the Indigenous peoples of Australia. They are not one group but rather comprise hundreds of nations that have distinct languages, histories, and cultural traditions.

## **PEOPLE WHO ARE YOUNGER/OLDER**

People of a certain age deemed less deserving or capable or incapacitated and in need of protection by some; this misconception is referred to as ageism.

## **PEOPLE WHO ARE NEURODIVERGENT**

Refers to a variation of neurotypes that affects a person's social, educational, emotional, and sensory needs and includes autism spectrum disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, dysgraphia, and tourette's syndrome.

## **PEOPLE WHO ARE CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE**

Refers to communities with various languages, societal structures, traditions, nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, and religions. Many people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experience racism through prejudice, microaggressions, explicit exclusion and violence.

## **LGBTIQA+ COMMUNITIES**

Refers to an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual and/or aromantic communities. The + in the LGBTIQA+ acronym represents other communities of people with diverse sexualities and genders, such as non-binary and pansexual. There is worldwide ongoing stigma, discrimination, violence, and abuse of LGBTQA+ people.

## **PEOPLE FROM LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS**

Refers to the social and economic circumstances of a person, inclusive of income, wealth, education and employment and social support.

## **PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION**

Refers to people who have historically faced systemic and social barriers to education and financial independence and are at a greater risk of gendered and/or domestic-based violence.

## **PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY**

Refers to people who have long-term physical, mental health, intellectual, or sensory impairments.

## **PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS**

Refers to an enduring condition with persistent effects, which can have social and economic consequences and negatively influence a person's quality of life. Many people with chronic conditions do not have a single condition but rather multiple chronic conditions concurrently.

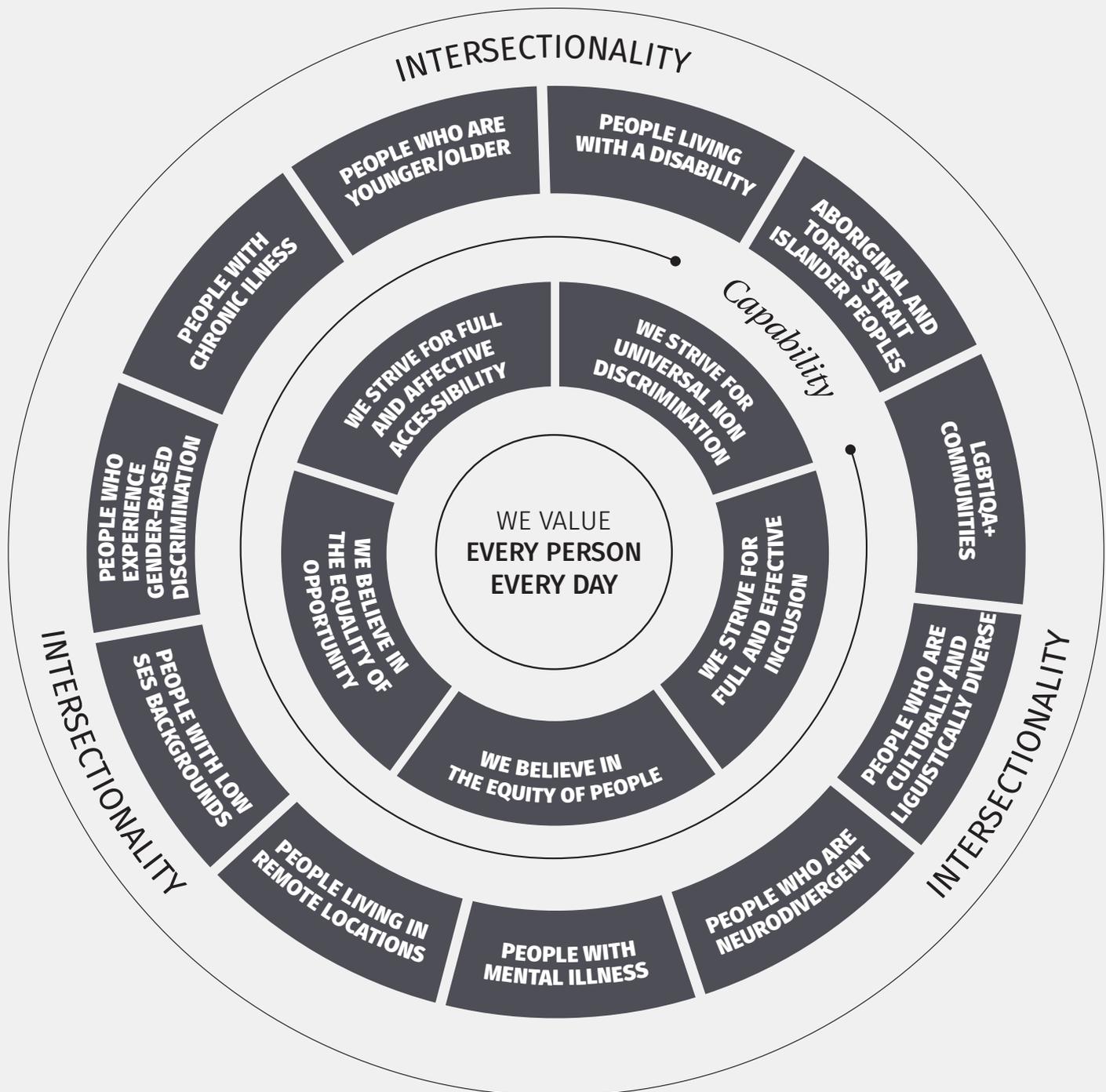
## **PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS**

Also called mental health disorders, refers to an array of mental health conditions that can affect thinking, behaviour, mood, and includes depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders and dissociative identity disorder.

## **PEOPLE LIVING IN REMOTE LOCATIONS**

Refers to people who experience disadvantage due to distance.

# VISION, PRINCIPLES AND EQUITY COHORTS



## ACCESSIBLE IMAGE DESCRIPTION

The EDI vision is in the centre of three nesting circles, “we value every person every day”. On the second circle are the five foundation principles: we strive for universal non-discrimination, we strive for full and effective inclusion, we believe in equality of opportunity, we believe in equity of people, we strive for full and effective accessibility. On the third circle, ten key demographics are listed, each in its own circle: people living with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+A+ community, people who are culturally and linguistically diverse, people who are neurodivergent, people with mental illness, people living in remote locations, people with low SES backgrounds, people who experience gender-based discrimination, people with chronic illness and people who are younger/older.

# EDI STRATEGY GOVERNANCE

The University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plans have more than 50 anticipated outcomes to be delivered across three years.

Each outcome is assigned a Lead, Support and Accountable staff or portfolio area to ensure the effective and efficient pursuit of success.

- The role of Lead is to implement the outcome via the designated action(s).
- The role of Support is to assist in implementing the action(s).
- The role of Accountability is to deliver the action(s).

Creating and fostering an inclusive and equitable university will require a whole-of-university effort. The EDI Unit (Academic Division) will oversee the strategy and action plans. However, ensuring successful outcomes ultimately resides with the University's Executive Committee.



## MEASURING PROGRESS

Mechanisms for measuring EDI accountability and progress will be co-designed with equity cohorts. Measurements will enhance and build upon those articulated in the University's Looking Ahead Strategic Plan. The design process will use a participatory method like the method used to design this EDI Strategy. There will be clear goals in place that are both quantitative and qualitative, data-driven, and measurable. Data will be reviewed and reported to the University's EDI Committee and Executive Committee consistently to assess if targets are being met effectively and, if not, how to modify them accordingly.

## RESOURCING

We are committed to improving the accessibility of the University's buildings, facilities and open spaces for everyone through renewal, upgrades and new works. Some actions in this Strategy are about continuing to do what we do well, and others are about improving how we do things. Many actions will not cost additional money but require us to do things differently. However, some actions in the Strategy will require additional funds to implement or upgrade a facility or service. The money to do this work will be allocated through the annual budget process via the Executive Committee.

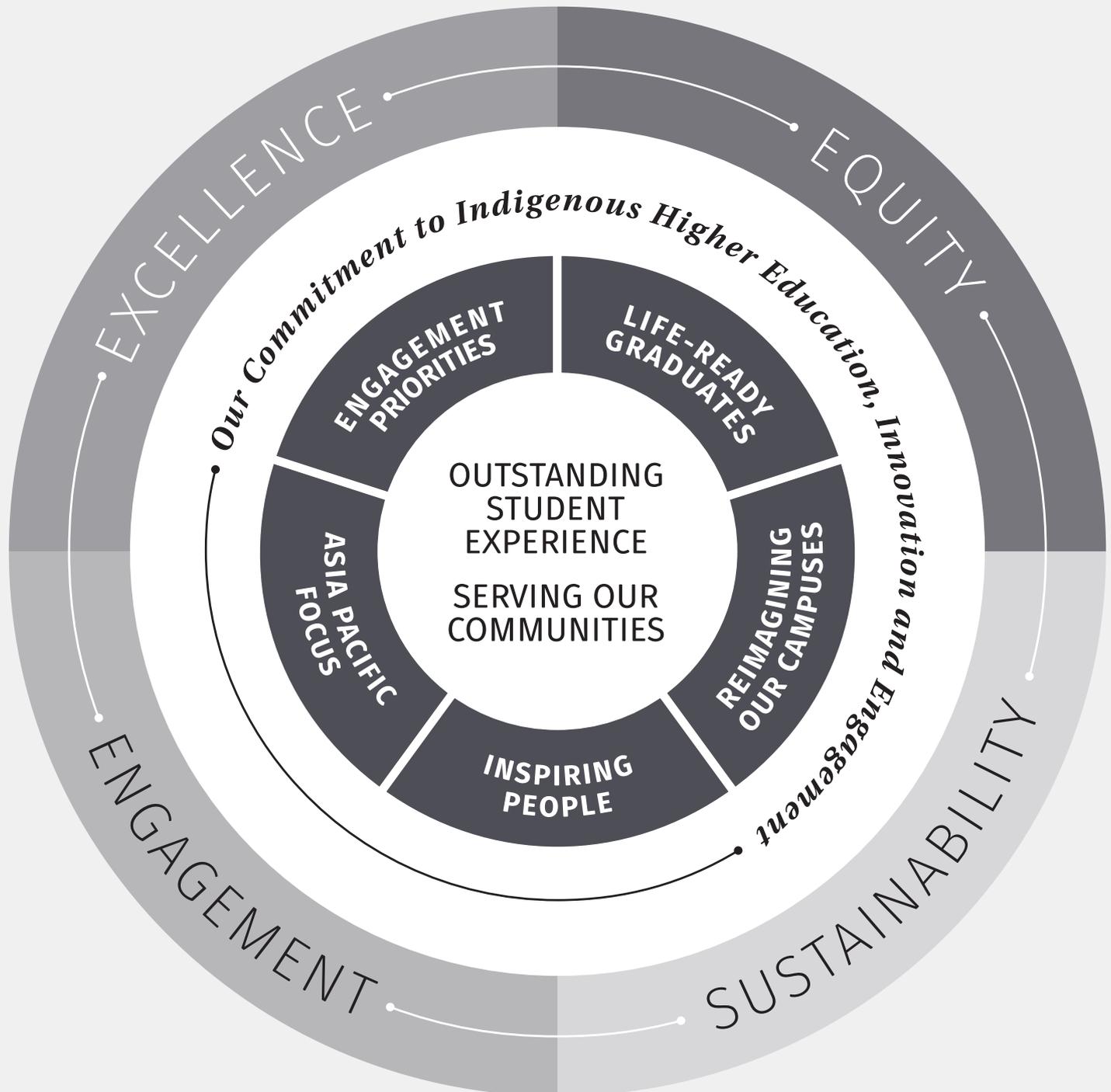
## LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The University understands and applies its legislative obligations, including these laws and associated regulations:

- The Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- New South Wales Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (Cth)
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)



# 'LOOKING AHEAD' STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025



## ACCESSIBLE IMAGE DESCRIPTION

This image is used in the University's "Looking Ahead" Strategic Plan. It is a series of nesting circles. The inside circle reads, "OUTSTANDING STUDENT EXPERIENCE and SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES. The next outer circle is divided into five sections as follows: Life Ready Graduates, Reimagining Our Campuses, Inspiring People, Asia Pacific Focus, and Engagement Priorities. The next outer circle is a continuous line that reads, Our Commitment to Indigenous Higher Education, Innovation and Engagement. The final outer circle reads, Excellent, Equity, Sustainability, and Engagement across in four quadrants.



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