AWEI SUBMISSION PARTICIPATION TOOLKIT

Why this consideration?

The AWEI Submission is an instrument that assesses the workplace inclusion initiatives for people with diverse sexualities and genders within an organisation, based on evidence and responses supplied to questions within the submission document.

The Submission is based on 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. These criteria are updated every 3 years, to reflect ongoing shifts in Australian and International practice, and to keep driving improvement. There is one set of criteria for 'standard'-sized organisations (>500 Australian-based employees), and another set for 'small' organisations.

Organisations may choose to make a Submission and have their initiatives audited. All submitting organisations will have their Submission marked, and receive a scorecard to allow them to understand areas where they have performed well, where there are gaps, etc. They will also be assigned a 'tier' (Bronze, Silver, Gold), so they can benchmark themselves against other Australian organisations in their sector or industry, size and more.

Since its launch in 2010, the AWEI has witnessed a significant shift in practice. As a result, the criteria have been re-aligned four times to match the level of current practices within Australia and those measured by peer organisations internationally.

Benefits of participation

1. Many organisations are interested in doing some LGBTQ+ inclusion work, but don't know where to start. The AWEI Submission criteria provide a 'roadmap' that organisations can use to develop their LGBTQ+ inclusion strategies and plans, create an effective governance structure, etc.
2. Some organisations use the submission tool at the start of their journey to establish a benchmark, from which they are able to measure their future progress.
3. Completing the submission process provides an opportunity to internally audit the work done to date, against a best-practice model, receive an independent assessment, and utilise feedback from the marking process to 'sense check' and plan future work. This strategy planning can be done with valuable input from a Relationship Manager who has visibility of your work, plus the work of many other organisations.

4. The Submission tool allows organisations to benchmark themselves against other Australian organisations in their sector or industry.
5. Some organisations use participation in the tool to garner internal support and resources, through establishing an organisational goal (e.g., achieving gold), building desire to achieve this from senior leaders, planning projects required to achieve that objective, and requesting resources to deliver those projects.
6. Many organisations value the recognition that AWEI Submission tier achievement carries, and benefit from being able to use the AWEI branding to promote themselves as an organisation with a focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion.

CASE STUDY – ORGANISATIONS DRIVING IMPROVEMENT

AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACE EQUALITY INDEX

Pride in Diversity has been running the AWEI since 2011. 320 individual employer organisations have participated in the first 4 iterations, 2011 – 2022, using the Index Submission tool to track and drive their LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives.

72.5% (n=232) of organisations have participated multiple times, showing they are using the criteria to plan and measure their ongoing work. Of these:

- *86% have improved their score / tier over their time of submitting*
- *41% have increased 1 tier*
- *27% have increased 2 tiers*
- *14% have increased 3 tiers*
- *4% have increased 4 tiers*

Over the course of the first 4 iterations, 12 organisations have achieved Platinum Tier. Annual Platinum status is the highest obtainable recognition within the AWEI Submission. It acknowledges the highest levels of performance within the AWEI over a sustained period of time. Organisations qualify for Platinum recognition by achieving AWEI Gold Tier for four out of 5 successive years, or by being awarded Employer of the Year twice within that period.

For the 5th iteration, for the first time, organisations have been able to submit their Foundation Submission between 1st June – 1st December 2023, and resubmit if they did not achieve the pass mark. 114 organisations chose to 'fast-track' their Foundation Submission. Of these:

- *110 organisations (96%) achieved Bronze Tier, showing that organisations who use the structure have a very high success rate at putting the fundamentals in place*
- *10 organisations are completely new to LGBTQ+ inclusion, having never submitted before, and have used the structure to accelerate their cultural change*

Things to think about

Capacity / resources
While some award nominations have a quicker submission process, the AWEI Submission is extremely comprehensive, and evidence based. Therefore, it does take some time to complete. Think about developing a team of people who will contribute to pulling the submission together.

Since it is great practice to align the work of your organisation with the AWEI criteria, which are proven to make positive cultural change, you could assign responsibility for drafting the AWEI response to the people who are leading the related workstreams and projects and make the submission part of the annual plan.

Ensure all people who are involved in LGBTQ+ inclusion projects are aware of the AWEI criteria and evidence requirements, so they can contribute throughout the year.

Evidence provision
Employers are asked a series of questions in relation to areas that directly impact inclusion, or the perception of inclusion, and are required to provide evidence for most responses. This ensures that all employers are measured on the same criteria but allows employers flexibility in their approach to meeting required criteria – providing sufficient evidence is supplied. As the Submission is used for benchmarking purposes, the necessary rigour within the process provides an accurate gauge regarding the level of inclusivity efforts within a submitting employer organisation. Evidence may entail a detailed description of a process, copies of policies, videos or photos of events, meeting agendas, social media posts, data reports, etc.

Often organisations are doing really great work, but they forget to save emails, take photos, etc., throughout the year, and are not able to provide evidence at submission time. Sometimes there are many people involved in different projects, but the person/team who is compiling the submission is not even aware of this work.

When considering submitting, familiarise yourself with the evidence requirement for each of the criteria, and get into the habit of saving details of work as it is completed. This will make it much easier to pull together the submission document at the end of the year.

You can create a folder system that aligns to the criteria question numbers, and all members of the LGBTQ+ inclusion steering team may contribute. Consider developing a planning document that allows the team to collaborate on developing the submission. Pride in Diversity will supply a template along with the submission documentation.

Please note that the markers need to be able to read the evidence, so take care not to provide links to your internal intranet (especially those that are not accessible to external people); or to make images too small to read. Please ensure the evidence is easy to find, clear to follow, and labelled appropriately. If in doubt, ask someone else to review your Submission and check they can understand everything.

CASE STUDY – FROM ZERO TO EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR IN TWO SUBMISSIONS

In 2018, Capgemini Australia set an ambitious goal - to be Employer of the Year in 5 years. They did it in 3 years and two AWEI submissions.

Capgemini joined Pride in Diversity in July 2018, starting from scratch regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion, but with a strong culture of values and ethics. The network leads, Steph Sands and Wayne Marshall, played a pivotal role in championing the cause in Australia in those early days.

Before joining PID, Steph had a frank discussion with then-Australian CEO, Olaf Pietschner, about what inclusion should look like. They agreed that inclusion impacts all aspects of their work in technology, consulting, and innovation. Therefore, as core to Capgemini's DNA, they need to embed Diversity and Inclusion through their people, environment, and products, and that it should sit across their whole business to be truly impactful and transformative, and it must have the absolute support of their executive team to transform the culture. They decided to join PID, leverage the organisation as subject matter experts, and start working with their Relationship Manager (RM).

Wayne comments, "We were absolutely forensic in our focus! We trusted that the AWEI works. We knew that this was not just about points and awards – that if we implemented everything and ensured it was embedded into all the different parts of our organisation, every location, every team, every employee, it would achieve cultural change and make our organisation better for our LGBTQ+ employees."

Steph adds, "We were quite strategic in our approach. We knew our RM had lots of experience of having done it or seen it being done in other organisations, and Wayne and I understood the culture of Capgemini. The three of us would meet, and invite, for example, people from comms, from recruitment, from the legal team, L&D team, etc. Then, our RM could speak to them directly about the AWEI requirements for their areas and discuss what that might look like for Capgemini. Having our RM be heavily involved and very hands-on in the discussions with the functions that needed to deliver some new processes and procedures meant a lot as these conversations were fast-tracked, and our RM built relationships with many different people in the organisation, who could all go to them for advice." Wayne adds, "We also had two excellent executive sponsors, a Network Executive Sponsor and an Ally Executive Sponsor, which helped drive that strong leadership support."

Capgemini submitted for the first time in February 2020, achieving Gold Tier - the first organisation to achieve Gold in its first submission. They then achieved Gold again in 2021, won Employer of the Year, and repeated this in 2022. Since then, there have been many changes at Capgemini, with the Australian organisation tripling in size. There has been a renewed effort to embed that early LGTBQ+ inclusion work into all the new areas. And with the policies and framework already in place, the new OUTfront team is moving quickly to achieve this.

But, as a Platinum Tier organisation, the approach has also matured, with Head of CSR, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, Steph, taking an increasingly intersectional approach to inclusion. Steph's approach to DE&I has been a 'hub and spoke' model, working across ENGs to integrate their strategies and action plans into the organisation's overall strategy. While encouraging collaboration among ENGs and focusing on ERG sustainability and succession planning, Capgemini has created diversity champions at every business level. And by ensuring that ENG work is valued, all ENG members are empowered to foster positive change across the business, develop their leadership capabilities, and advance their careers.

Timing
There are 2 components to the AWEI Submission:

The Foundation Submission covers the 'foundational' and baseline of LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts across an organisation. It contains criteria which are the building blocks for creating an inclusive culture within an organisation. Organisations may submit for Foundation level, and if they achieve the pass mark, they will be awarded Bronze Tier.

Foundation Submissions may be submitted at any time between 1st June and 1st December. The submission will be marked, and results returned. If an organisation doesn't reach the score required for Bronze Tier, they have the opportunity to resubmit at any time within this period. Once they have achieved Bronze Tier, they will maintain Bronze status throughout the entire iteration with no further Foundation Submission required.

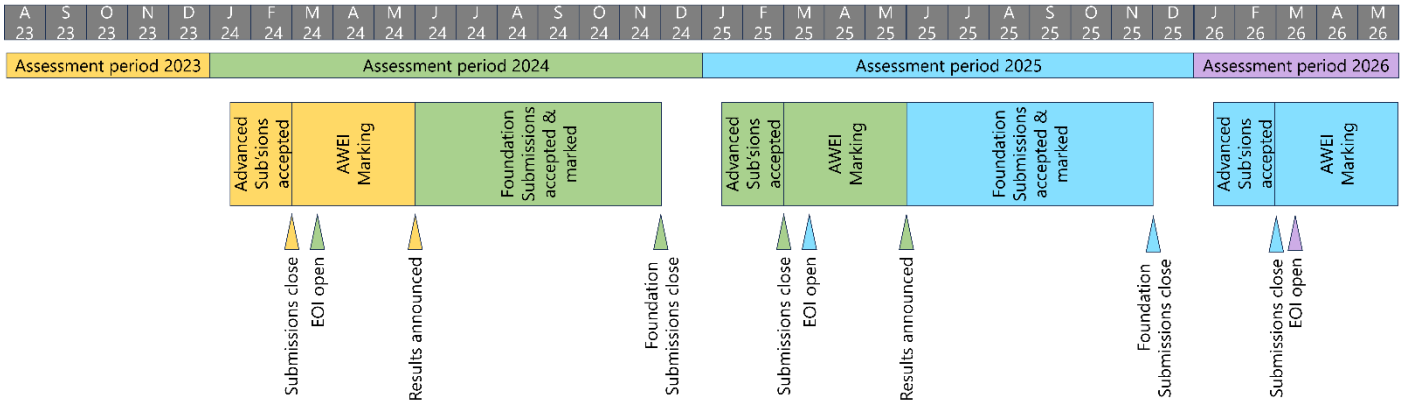
Once an organisation has completed the work to achieve Bronze Tier, they may choose to progress to the Advanced level criteria. Organisations who achieve required scores may be awarded Silver or Gold Tier status within the annual Advanced Submission.

The Advanced Submission covers further work that organisations frequently progress toward in relation to their LGBTQ+ inclusion work, as they move towards achieving leading practice. It also covers work undertaken on an annual basis; this part of the Submission will need to be completed each year to obtain and maintain Silver or Gold Tier Status.

Advanced Submissions must be submitted prior to the communicated deadline around the end of February each year. Submissions will be marked, and all results will be announced at the end of May, immediately following the annual Australian LGBTQ+ Inclusion Awards.

Please note: If an organisation completes and submits both a Foundation and Advanced Submission during the annual assessment period in January – February, the Submissions will be marked separately. If Bronze Tier is not obtained within the Foundation, there will be no opportunity to resubmit for that submission cycle, and the Advanced submission will not be evaluated.

Therefore, we encourage all participating organisations to submit their Foundation Submission prior to 1 December, in order to ensure eligibility to submit an Advanced Submission.



CASE STUDY – FROM 0 – 100, REAL QUICK!

IPGMediabrands is global business combining a range of media and marketing agencies. They established their group-wide network, made the decision to submit to AWEI, and achieved Bronze Tier in just 1 year!

At IPG Mediabrands, the business had considered themselves inclusive until they recognised they were formally championing LGBTQ+ inclusion in just one of their agencies. They addressed that immediately with an objective for broad accreditation across all their agencies and to do so as a group not agency by agency. With their maturity growing in Diversity, Inclusion and Equity, the ELT voted unanimously to formalising their Pride in Diversity relationship and to participate in the AWEI submission process across the entire organisation at a multi-agency level. They set themselves a goal to achieve Bronze Tier in year one and to continue to elevate each year.

In early 2023 as they established the Pride committee, made up of LGBTQ+ employees and allies across the company, they engaged with their PID Relationship Manager to guide them through the process. Committee Chair Millie Gribby and Strategy Pillar lead Henry Feagins said that, initially, they found the Submission intimidating. Upon recognising some of the criteria was work the company had in place already or had just started with, it was really a matter of creating realistic milestones and organising around the work clearly outlined in the documentation from PID. The Pride team, being a new team, harnessed their ambition and enthusiasm, adapting quickly to leverage the expertise of PID, and it was with this strong partnership they achieved their goals.

Purpose made a difference too. The Pride committee made the decision early they did not want to just 'tick a box'. They committed to focusing their work on initiatives and actions to deliver real value to the people this served and to create an ongoing respect to inclusion. Millie said they found the explanations of WHY in the criteria as important – the high-level objective of each of the criteria was particularly valuable in designing and implementing the actions to create meaningful impact. The committee used the AWEI Submission process to also structure their annual action plans, considering the implementation and culture-needs across their multi-organisation group. Since their plans were so closely aligned to the AWEI criteria, they were able to draft their submission as they went, and they submitted their Foundation at the start of December 2023, successfully achieving Bronze Tier.

Henry said they found going through the process has created community connections for the LGBTQ+ committee and broader community. Ultimately the process elevated the industry and community standards across their People and leadership practices, and importantly, created more space for those from diverse background to feel supported, connected and valued.

"We'd strongly recommend the process to any business looking to attract and retain young, talented minds and keeping up with industry and community standards.

"Remember – Pride in Diversity are the experts, and genuinely partner with you to get you to your goal – they've been our 'candle in the dark' when we've felt overwhelmed or a little lost in the process and submission.

"We're immensely proud of achieving our Bronze Tier status in our first year – it's achievable, and valuable. This year, we're doubling down, and our ambition is to attain Gold Tier!"

Data privacy, legal / compliance signoff
When submitting, especially for the first time, please be aware that many organisations will have questions about the security of the information you are providing, and you may be required to get approval from legal or compliance teams prior to submitting.

Please note that you will be supplied with ACON's Pride Inclusion Program's Research Data Security Policy, along with the submission documentation, when you complete the EOI (Expressions of Interest) form.

Please ensure you build enough time into your process to allow internal approvals. We cannot accept late submissions.

Submission technology
We will accept submissions via any large file transfer system. Please ensure we will be able to access the system you plan to use, prior to submitting. If in doubt, please let us know and we can arrange a test prior to the submission deadline.

What are the next steps?

To participate there are four easy steps:

1. Complete the Expression of Interest Form
2. Get approval from your organisation to participate in the Submission
3. Develop your internal team
4. Develop an action plan

When you complete the EOI Form to participate in the AWEI Submission, the Pride Inclusion Programs team will send:

1. The Foundation Submission document
2. The Advanced Submission document
3. AWEI Collaboration Worksheets
4. ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs Research Data Security policy
5. AWEI Submission Participation Toolkit

This will give you the information you need to develop a business case in order to get approval to participate, and liaise with your senior leadership team, internal communications team, and other key stakeholders, to develop your action plan.

Should you have any questions, please speak to your Relationship Manager or contact awei@acon.org.au

CASE STUDY – USING AWEI CRITERIA AS A ROADMAP

Gold Coast Health leveraged the AWEI Submission criteria as a 'roadmap' for their inclusion work for several years, resulting in undeniable success during their inaugural Submission.

When it comes to LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion efforts, Gold Coast Health strives to be at the forefront in comparison to similar organisations. As legislation in Queensland changed, they used the opportunity to ensure their work was leading the way in this space. Despite initial targets being difficult because LGBTQ+ people were not included in the census, an action plan was put in place.

Gold Coast Health has dedicated several years to implementing LGBTIQ+ inclusion initiatives, so they were not starting their first AWEI Submission from scratch. They had leveraged the recommendations and guidelines provided within the AWEI Submission documentation as a 'roadmap' to executing necessary and desired changes. They built support structures including a Diversity and Inclusion strategy, an LGBTQ+ Action Plan, the Rainbow Alliance Employee Network (alongside executive champions), and unwavering executive leadership support, all of which significantly contributed to their positive outcomes when they did submit.

Gwendolynne Scaini, Gold Coast Health's Diversity and Inclusion Advisor, emphasised the importance of their Pride in Diversity membership and the AWEI criteria.

"You have access to a guide for implementing best practices in LGBTIQ+ workplace inclusion. It gave us a clear opportunity to identify our strengths and our areas for development. And our PID RM gave us assistance in the form of advice, guidance, and support in implementing our workplace inclusion initiatives.

Through these efforts, they affirmed that improved LGBTIQ+ workplace inclusion correlates with increased staff productivity and enhanced health and wellbeing organisation-wide.

When it came time to submit, they were ready! They commenced preparations early in the year, meticulously reviewing the criteria and evidence needed for each question, considering potential colleague partnerships, establishing timelines, and anticipating internal approval processes.

Gwendolynne Scianni recommends that "Submitters should be proactive by pre-empting what and how they might implement tasks/actions across the year to attain evidence, and to start compiling your evidence and relevant supporting documentation in a folder throughout the year (to make it easier at the end when you need to submit)."

Drawing on their success in the AWEI, Gwendolynne underscores the importance of nurturing both internal and external relationships. This entails actively participating in workshops, training sessions, and events to enhance knowledge and foster connections. Leveraging Pride in Diversity membership can facilitate this effort by promoting accessible events, resources, and training opportunities to staff. Moreover, Gwendolynne highlights empowering internal rainbow employee networks as a means to foster involvement in, and promotion of, initiatives.

Perhaps, most importantly, Gwendolynne also emphasises the value of maintaining communication with your dedicated Pride in Diversity Relationship Manager throughout – "They are there to guide, support, advise, and provide expert feedback regarding your Submission work."

Appendices

1. Information about criteria

AWEI Submissions measure work completed in the following areas:

- HR Policy and Diversity Practice – to ensure that all policies are clearly and explicitly inclusive of LGBTQ+ people
- LGBTQ+ Bullying, Harassment & Support – to assist in reducing heightened levels of targeted bullying & harassment that LGBTQ people face
- Inclusion of Trans & Gender Diverse Employees – an area that typically does not have the same level of awareness and/or support, but one that is becoming critical for employers as more people openly identify with a diverse gender at work
- Strategic Focus & Accountability – to show that you have targeted initiatives or plans in place to support LGBTQ+ inclusion on an ongoing basis
- LGBTQ+ Employee Networks; visibility of Inclusion; LGBTQ+ Training, Awareness and Professional Development – areas that contribute significantly to an LGBTQ+ inclusive culture
- Executive Leadership & Engagement – culture is led from the top and Senior Executive support for D&I speaks volumes to employees
- Data Analysis – which provides valuable information about the impact of your inclusion initiatives, highlighting where focus needs to be channelled or celebrated
- Community Engagement – which sends a significant message of inclusion to those outside of your organisation
- Survey Participation – optional participation within the annual AWEI Employee Survey
- Additional Work – any workplace-related LGBTQ+ inclusion work accomplished, not covered elsewhere within the submission

2. Information about Tier Entry Points and Benchmarking

Tiers have fixed entry points and information about the marking criteria, making it possible for organisations to estimate, realistically, which tier they may be able to achieve.

Organisations who submit Foundation Submission only, and obtain Bronze Tier, will be benchmarked against other organisation who achieve Bronze Tier.

- This will not include those who also obtain Silver or Gold within the respective submission year.
- These will not be broken into industry, sector, size, location, etc.
- Participating organisations who do not obtain a Tier will not be benchmarked.

Advanced Submissions will be benchmarked by:

- Tier: Silver, Gold, Platinum
- Industry
- Sector
- Size
- Head Office Location
- Note: Some benchmarks may include Bronze organisations who submitted an Advanced but did not obtain Silver or Gold.

To maintain confidentiality, and provide a robust set of data, the following 'rules' are applicable to all benchmark processes:

- A minimum of 5 organisations within each category is required to be benchmarked.
- The top 3 scoring organisations are listed alphabetically within each benchmark.
- AWEI only: There will be a set of benchmarks for Small Employers and a set for Standard Submissions.

CASE STUDY – USING A 'CITATION'-BASED APPROACH TO DRIVE SUPPORT

Custom Fleet is an SME organisation (~350 employees across Australia and New Zealand) operating in a traditionally male dominated industry. Keen to differentiate themselves from competitors, they are focused on developing a progressive culture with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) at the forefront of their employee experience. Custom Fleet submitted an AWEI Foundation Submission (small employer) for the first time in 2023, achieving Bronze Tier. They are aiming for Gold Tier in 2024 and are currently the only organisation in their industry to participate in AWEI.

Custom Fleet's Director of Talent and Culture, Shaun Cameron, leads Custom Fleets DEIB Strategy and is supported by a 0.5 FTE who works on DEIB with leadership of some DEIB initiatives, delivered through a network of volunteers, as part of Custom Fleet's Diversity Network, 'Intersection'. Given broad roles and tight resourcing capacity, Custom Fleet deliberately leverages external anchors (certifications, citations, etc.) to ensure they are developing leading inclusion practices. They decided to partner with Pride in Diversity and use the AWEI criteria to set their Pride strategy, recognising that PID are the leaders in this area.

Using this external expertise approach means Custom Fleet gained strong buy-in to their DEIB Strategy from the CEO and senior leadership team. They were then able to engage their passionate Diversity Network members with a clear action plan; everyone understands exactly what needs to be done (there are more than 256 specific improvement actions across Pride, Gender Equality, Cultural and Disability streams) because the pathways are laid out clearly in AWEI criteria. This approach has even helped with some more challenging actions, for example, discussing what all-gender bathrooms might look like with the facilities team. By citing the criteria as recommended practice, with the full support of the leadership team, progress was made.

Shaun notes that the work on DEIB has been fully embraced by employees and reflects strongly in employee engagement data. Where success truly shows is where people feel safe to be themselves at work. Examples include an employee making the decision to disclose their gender affirmation journey through their recruitment process, another came out about their sexuality, and a third shared their experience of being able to support a friend who came out within a very religious culture. Custom Fleet also received 150 employee responses to the AWEI Employee survey, which shows very strong engagement.

Shaun recommends the AWEI to other smaller organisations:

"What is great about the AWEI criteria is the split between the small and the large employer categories. This is really, really helpful in comparison to the difficulty we have with some of the other certifications we are aiming for, where the same criteria are applied to all employers, small and large. Large brands have got an army of people working on DEIB, and equally large budgets to match, which is not often the case for smaller organisations.

"A really important point, especially for small employers, is that achieving an AWEI award feels manageable based on the size of organisation that you are. "

3. Information about Tier Recognition

Bronze Employer Recognition
Organisations who submit between 1st June and 1st December, and obtain Bronze Tier, will be publicly acknowledged on our website and on social media (unless they request to be kept confidential).

Organisations who submit between January – February, prior to the communicated deadline, and obtain Bronze Tier, will have achievement recognised at the annual Australian LGBTQ Inclusion Awards in May.

Organisations who have either previously obtained Silver or Gold Tier, selected public acknowledgement only at a higher tier, or wish to participate anonymously, will not have their Bronze Tier publicly acknowledged.

Bronze Tier status will be valid throughout the entire iteration period (2023 – 2026).

Silver or Gold Employer Recognition
Once an organisation achieves Bronze Tier, they may choose to complete an Advanced Submission to obtain Silver or Gold Tier Status; the Advanced Submission must be completed and marked annually.

Organisations that successfully achieve the criteria for Silver or Gold Tier will have their achievement recognised at the annual Australian LGBTQ Inclusion Awards in May.

Completing an Advanced Submission does not guarantee that a higher tier will be obtained. However, if Silver or Gold is not obtained, an organisation will remain as a Bronze Employer for a given submission year during that iteration.

If an organisation obtains Silver or Gold in a given year and then opts to not complete an Advanced Submission in a year following, they will be recognised as a Bronze Employer during that iteration.

CASE STUDY – SEEING LGBTQIA+ EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES IMPROVE

RMIT is an international university of technology, design, and enterprise that has been participating in the AWEI Submission process since 2017, and won Employer of the Year in 2019 and 2020, achieving Platinum Tier status.

RMIT has a vibrant and diverse staff and student community. They acknowledge that for many students, their time at university may very likely be the first time they are comfortable being out or being their true selves, so it is crucial to explicitly showcase that RMIT welcome ALL people, and that LGBTIQA+ students and staff are safe to be there, be themselves, and to thrive. RMIT launched their first D&I Framework in 2016.

RMIT were proud to continue the tradition of creating positive life changing experiences for those in its community through launching a structured commitment to LGBTIQA+ inclusion in 2017. RMIT played a strong role in the discourse around the Marriage Equality Campaign and recognised the need to have a formal structure to ensure that internal policies and processes explicitly support LGBTIQA+ staff and students.

On joining Pride in Diversity and submitting their first AWEI in 2017, RMIT achieved Bronze Tier. Since then, RMIT have been on a journey to smash stereotypes, remove barriers for their people and students, and live the value of inclusion. RMIT has since launched the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Framework, an intersectional approach to inclusion which guides them in supporting and recognising the extraordinary value that diverse lived experiences adds to working relationships, and the learning experiences of staff and students. The framework is moving away from siloed, identity-focussed planning to an approach led by intersectionality and universal design, while recognising that there are specific actions and projects that are needed to support community.

RMIT's IDEA Teams have seen LGBTIQA+ inclusion work go from strength to strength. Mat Lewis – Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Lead, and Lucy Taylor – Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Advisor believe "the AWEI Submission is a way to make sure we keep ourselves accountable, continuing to improve and not staying stagnant". In addition to the IDEA teams, RMIT is fortunate that LGBTIQA+ inclusion work progresses through collective efforts including through Employee Networks, executive group and leadership teams, and student groups.

Importantly, RMIT have seen a real improvement in the workplace outcomes of their LGBTIQA+ employees, through tracking via their annual staff survey. Improvements have been seen since 2017 in responses for those who identify as LGBTIQA+, with one example being an increase of 13% points on the question 'Bullying and harassment are not tolerated at RMIT', with responses agree/strongly agree improving from 60% in 2017, to 73% in 2023. Mat and Lucy explain that the staff survey process is a very important part of checking that their work continues to have a positive impact on the RMIT community.

As Platinum Employers, RMIT took the opportunity to work on a project instead of a submission in 2021/2022. However, they were very careful to not take their eye off the AWEI criteria, given how fast things change in this space!

"The IDEA framework we have now has evolved over time and allows us to iterate as we go because community evolves, language changes, context changes, everything happens. We need to be able to stay reactive to that. We've tied in a process of checking actions under the IDEA Framework against the AWEI criteria, so we can continue to improve and continue to be leading practice".

4. Example business case for participation

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA WORKPLACE EQUALITY INDEX (AWEI) SUBMISSION</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Sponsor</td><td></td><td>Project Manager</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Contribution to organisation</td><td colspan="3">In 2023, Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey data revealed that a staggering 58% of Australian employees who identify as having a diverse sexual orientation do not feel comfortable being open to everyone at work, and 16% feel they must conceal their identities entirely. The data is equally concerning for employees who identify with a diverse gender identity, with 64% not feeling comfortable being open to everyone at work, and 22% concealing their identity altogether.

More concerningly, 11% of employees with a diverse sexuality have been the target of unwanted jokes, innuendo, or negative commentary because of their sexuality, in their workplace in the last 12 month; 21% of employees with a diverse gender have experienced these workplace incivility behaviours targeting their gender, in their workplace in the last 12 months. Close to 70% of these incidents are unreported. LGBTQ employees experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts across the board, and their productivity and engagement is reduced if they are not comfortable being out or open in their workplace.

Two of our core values are [inclusivity] and [mutual respect]. We strive to embrace these values, particularly through the work of our DEI pillars and ERGs. LGBTQ+ employees have been identified as one of our key populations.

The Australia Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Submission is the definitive national benchmark on LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion in Australia. The Index drives best practice in Australia and sets a comparative benchmark for Australian employers across all sectors. It is managed by Pride in Diversity; and utilised by hundreds of organisations to plan their inclusion strategies, and audit their work, providing these organisations a benchmark with which to measure themselves against other organisations. AWEI participation is a well-recognised signal of organisations with a focus in this area.

It is recommended that we submit against the Index criteria to give us a benchmark at this point in our journey and allow us to measure year on year progress against leading practice. The results provided will allow us to identify current gaps and plan our 3-year strategy and action plans, resourcing accordingly.

Once we have submitted and our work has reached a tier achievement, we can also use AWEI branding to externally promote ourselves as an LGBTQ-inclusive organisation, for talent attraction, etc.</td></tr>
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Options considered	There is little expertise within the organisation specifically around LGBTQ+ inclusion, and while there are some passionate employees willing to drive the work, there is insufficient visibility of the most impactful tools. We have considered reaching out to other organisations to ask for help pulling together our action plan, however many of the organisation identified are using the AWEI and recommend it. We have researched other inclusion plans, and there are similar models used in other countries which we could access, but they are not specific to Australian environment, and have no brand value. There are some organisations that say they can advise in this area, but they do not have a formal benchmarking system.
Benefits	• The AWEI Submission process is run by an external organisation, and therefore is unbiased. • It is free to participate • Pride in Diversity is the national subject matter expert in LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion, and understand what themes are important; the benchmarking tool is widely acknowledged as driving leading practice. • Participation in the Submission would allow us to benchmark our organisation against other organisations, both nationally and within our industry. • We can access a Relationship Manager, publications, education, etc., that align with the criteria to help us deliver the goals via a membership of the PID (Pride in Diversity) program (which is inexpensive)
Timescale	• The AWEI Submission period is based on work done in a calendar year. Criteria are available in March, and we may submit the Submission component Foundation any time until December • It is proposed we request documentation now, do a quick audit and submit Foundation in 2 months' time to get our initial score. Then, work through the scorecard and plan the next 12 months' work to achieve Bronze Tier.
Costs	• Participation in the Submission is free as a Pride in Diversity member. • We require approximately 5 days support from the HR team to audit policies and draft Submission document(s). • After we have submitted and identified projects, we will re-cost and resubmit for approval of the plan.
Risks	• There is a risk that participation may attract negative feedback from some employees. However, the first draft of the Submission can be completed without any internal comms. • Once we have a plan, the HR team can work with the comms team to prepare a campaign to align future work with our organisation values and be supported from the senior leadership team. • There is a risk of having negative response from customers, however many organisations participate, and data shows that and overwhelming majority of Australian employees are in favour this work. Data also shows that many prospective employees favour organisations that participate in LGBTQ+ inclusion, both in and outside the workplace.

5. Example submission timeline

March 2024

- Complete the EOI Form for the AWEI Submission
- Receive Submission documentation and collateral; and APIP (ACON s Pride Inclusion Programs) Data Privacy Policy
- Distribute criteria to LGBTQ+ steering group for review

April 2024

- Steering group to meet to discuss criteria
- Steering group to ensure annual strategy and plans cover the recommended workstreams, and amend if desired
- Allocate responsibilities for drafting submission response for each of the criteria
- Create evidence folders and submission action plan
- Steering group to prepare business case for submission if required

May – August 2024

- Review planned work within normal steering planning process. Invite PID RM to contribute if desired. Ensure submission action plan is covered within normal meeting agenda
- Continue to compile evidence of work completed against criteria
- Start to draft Foundation Submission
- Team review of draft (in conjunction with PID RM)

August – November 2024

- Final Foundation draft to be approved internally
- Testing of proposed large file transfer protocol
- Submit Foundation for marking
- If Bronze not achieved, rework Submission based on feedback received, and resubmit

October 2024 – February 2025

- Start to draft Advanced Submission
- Team review of draft (in conjunction with PID RM)
- Final Foundation draft to be approved internally
- Testing of proposed large file transfer protocol
- Submit Advanced for marking

May 2025

- Awards announced
- Celebrate your success!
- Register for the next year's AWEI Submission

6. Example submission action plan

Pride in Diversity will supply a 'collaboration spreadsheet' for both Foundation and Advanced Submissions. Organisations can turn this into an action plan by adding 'owners' who are responsible for completing sections, comments, status, evidence availability, etc. columns, and use this to provide visibility for the whole team who is working on the submission.

This is a document for your optional internal use, and not required upon submitting.

Section	#	Question	Responsibl	Deadline	Completion notes	Comments	Evidence required	Status	achievable	Available	Evidence Type	Question Text	Response Text
HR Policies & Diversity Practice	1	Updated Terminology	JL	1/08/2024	Audit required work. Search policy page on intranet and external website	Audit completed. 'sexual preference' is in bullying and harassment policy. Transition is in transition policy. Sent update request to policy review committee to be actioned	No evidence for submission. But Policy Review Committee will advise update schedule.	In progress	2	2	None	We confirm that we have updated our language and terminology across relevant policy documentation, intranet pages and external web pages. Please select all that apply: ☐ all instances of the words 'sexual preference' or 'lifestyle choice' have now been changed to 'sexual	
HR Policies & Diversity Practice	2	LGBTQ Inclusivity within Policies and Benefits	JL	1/08/2024	Check policy section of intranet for inclusive statement and individual policies	Policies do not have statement and are global so we cannot control. However the intranet has a local section and a statement has been drafted to be added. Additionally, it has been recommended that this is also added to ERG pages, and	we can screenshot intranet once it has been updated.	In progress	2	2	Statement	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 (where families are included within policies/benefits). Please provide the statement that makes it explicitly clear that all policies are inclusive of LGBTQ employees and their families.	
HR Policies & Diversity Practice	3	New Parent Leave Inclusive of LGBTQ Families	CN	1/08/2024	Review policy and ensure these groups are all covered	Reviewed policy and currrently adoption and surrogacy are covered, but fostering is not. PID RM advises that fostering can be treated similarly as adoption, as long as we define	Copy of policy, once updated. Current policy is fine for partial marks.	In progress	2	3	Evidence	We clearly communicate that our New Parent Leave (or equivalent) is inclusive for employees who bring children into their family via arrangements such as surrogacy, adoption and foster/guardianship. Please provide a copy of the exact wording of your policy regarding these areas.	
HR Policies & Diversity Practice	4	nternational Travel Advice for Employees	DEH	1/05/2024	We already have Smarttraveller which is fine	Recommend adding section into LGBTQ ERG section, as well as by the travel booking form. Also, PID RM advised considering inplications on career if someone refuses an overseas opportunity to a location that is unsafe.	Screenshot of smarttraveller section and link from intranet	complete	3	3	Evidence	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). Please provide a copy of travel advice available.	On our intranet there is a statement below: While travel has inherent risks for everyone, LGBTQI+ people unfortunately face additional risks when travelling abroad, particularly in places where sexual orientation or gender identity are criminalised or marginalised. The unfamiliarity with legal frameworks and protections in a country adds an extra layer of complexity which can be challenging and stressful under the best of circumstances. For example, very few jurisdictions across the world legally recognise the gender identity of trans people. Sexual acts between people of the same sex are criminalised in more than 70 countries and only a small minority of states recognise same sex partnerships. It's important for our LGBTQI+ employees travelling abroad to better understand the cultures they are stepping into, the potential