

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

**CHAMPIONING LOCAL
GOVERNMENT INCLUSION
AS EVERYDAY PRACTICE**

2026 – 2030



Contents

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026–2030	7
Message from the President and CEO	8
LGPro’s commitment to diversity and inclusion	9
LGPro’s diversity and inclusion context	11
Developing this strategy	15
Engagement insights	16
LGPro’s diversity and inclusion vision	18
Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2026	21
Introduction	22
Bold leadership	24
Everyone can fully participate	25
Future-ready programs	26
Listening and acting	27
Meaningful representation and visibility	28

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways across Victoria where local government professionals live, work, and serve communities.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of our communities and our sector. We recognise their enduring connection to land, waters, culture, and community.

As we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable sector, we recognise that this work must begin with truth-telling, respect, and meaningful engagement with First Nations peoples. We are committed to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in a spirit of learning, partnership, and shared leadership.

Bringing member contributions to life

LGPro acknowledges the contribution of the Sketch Group at the 2025 Annual Conference. Their graphic recorders brought member aspirations to life in a way that has shaped this strategy and actions to come.



STRATEGY

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2026–2030

Message from the President and CEO

LGPro's commitment to diversity and inclusion

At LGPro, we are deeply committed to strengthening our approach to diversity and inclusion – both within our organisation and across the local government sector in Victoria.

We recognise that while we may be small in size, our impact is far-reaching. Our work influences the careers and experiences of the incredible people who choose local government as their profession. We are proud of this role and aware of the responsibility it brings.

This is a pivotal moment. Across our workplaces and communities, there is a shared opportunity to push forward – together. The momentum for greater inclusion is growing, and we are ready to meet this moment with boldness, accountability, and action.

Our vision is not only to ensure LGPro is inclusive in all that we offer but to support the sector in becoming leaders in this space.

With 79 councils and a diverse community of local government professionals across Victoria, we know our reach, and our responsibility.

In shaping this strategy, we listened to the voices of our members and sector colleagues. You told us that inclusion is about more than intent; it is about access, representation, and belonging.

We heard the need for more regionally accessible events, hybrid and affordable participation options, neurodivergent-friendly environments, and practical inclusion measures in every interaction.

You also called for more authentic representation, inclusive leadership, equitable access for early-career and historically underrepresented staff, as well as greater visibility of inclusion as a leadership responsibility. These insights have guided our priorities and will continue to shape how we deliver our work.

Through this strategy and action plan, we are actively reviewing our practices to ensure they are inclusive and future-focused. The jobs of tomorrow will demand new thinking about work and inclusion. That's why this strategy has been shaped around your needs and the areas where we can have the most meaningful impact.

We also acknowledge that change starts with listening. Your ideas, feedback, and experiences have shaped this strategy, and we invite you to continue to share your experiences with us. Our ears remain open, and our commitment is strong. We will continue to learn, adapt, and do better, together.



Sue Wilkinson
President



Jill Brown
Chief Executive Officer

LGPro's diversity and inclusion commitment and journey is well underway. As the member association for local government professionals in Victoria, LGPro's work with over 1,000 members across 79 councils positions it to influence the experiences of inclusion in the sector.

Like many of its Council Subscribers, LGPro is a small but dynamic organisation navigating change and transformation, both internally and through its leadership and advocacy in the sector.

LGPro, as an employer, has affirmed its aspiration to be a workplace that is inclusive, respectful, safe, and flexible. LGPro has seen that aspiration translate into practice as the team has become more agile, and its internal culture has matured to reflect the values it advocates for sector-wide. In LGPro's professional development and member engagement work, inclusivity is now embedded as a design principle.

LGPro has:

- Diversified its delivery modes to include online, hybrid, and rural-based formats
- Developed award categories and learning opportunities that reflect the unique contexts of diverse professionals and smaller rural and regional councils
- Made access a priority by offering targeted scholarships, especially for Indigenous professionals and women
- Improved content accessibility and updated systems to respond to the future workforce of local government
- Taken feedback seriously, particularly on cultural safety, and acted to make events and offerings more inclusive.

While much of LGPro's approach has been responsive by listening and adapting, the organisation knows the next step is to be proactive.

That includes developing better systems to draw out the lived experiences of members, particularly from underrepresented groups, and using those insights to shape offerings from the start.

Members and Special Interest Group (SIG) participants, including the Diversity and Inclusion SIG, are helping LGPro better understand emerging needs. Their input has directly influenced program content, events, and strategic thinking. Through initiatives like profiling of inclusive leadership initiatives and embedding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion topics across conferences and programs, LGPro has helped normalise these conversations across the sector.

The journey is not complete. LGPro's most engaged members, particularly those from historically excluded cohorts, have reiterated the importance of moving beyond good intentions. LGPro understands that to shape the future pipeline of local government leadership, it must lead. LGPro attracts many diverse members and non-members to its events and training programs, and the association needs to ensure that it is welcoming to all within the sector.

This strategy builds from these foundations, moving LGPro from commitment to deeper impact, from responsive inclusion to structural equity, and from promising change to sustained transformation.

LGPro's diversity and inclusion context

Purpose

This strategy aims to bring to life the aspiration and vision of LGPro to be the voice and member association for all people working in Victorian Local Government, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, ethnicity, faith, language, sexual orientation, life experience, or role within this diverse sector.

Language

LGPro always aims to use inclusive, person-first language that respects individuality and the diverse ways people identify.

LGPro acknowledges that language evolves, and people may describe their identity in different ways. LGPro honours these choices and aims to reflect respectful and affirming language throughout this strategy and its work.

LGPro Strategic Plan 2021 to 2026

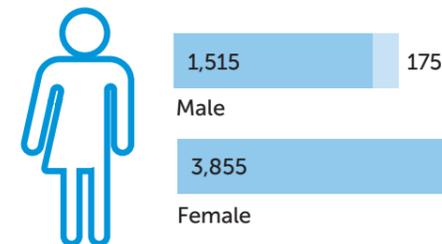
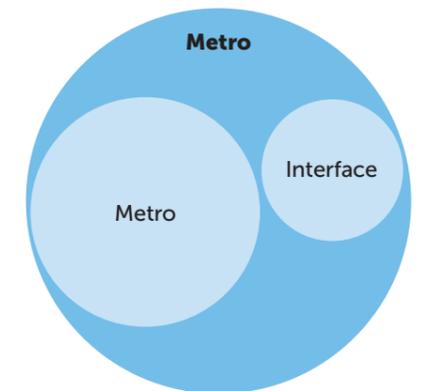
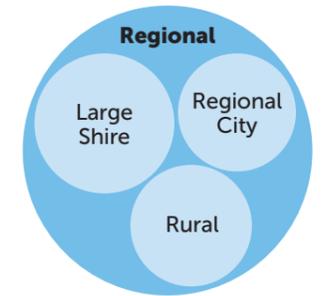
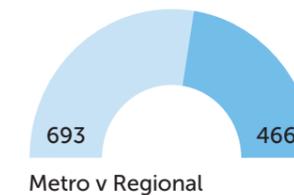
LGPro Strategic Plan 2026 to 2031

LGPro Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026 to 2030

LGPro Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

LGPro's Membership and Reach

LGPro represents a diverse and growing network of local government professionals across Victoria. Its membership includes leaders and professionals from metropolitan, regional, and rural councils, with roles spanning the full gamut of vocations within the sector. This cross-sector reach provides LGPro with a unique view into the lived realities and challenges around diversity, equity, and inclusion across all levels of local government.

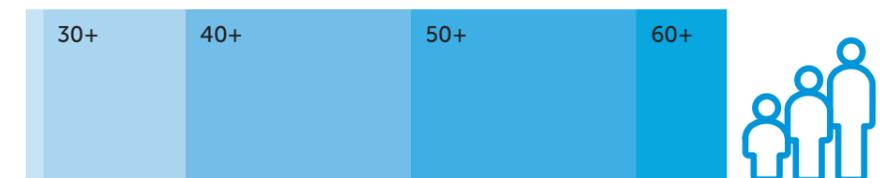


Gender

LGPro has gender data on 5,373 contacts. Of those, three identified as other. LGPro has gender data on 592 members*, of which 417 are female and 175 are male.

Age

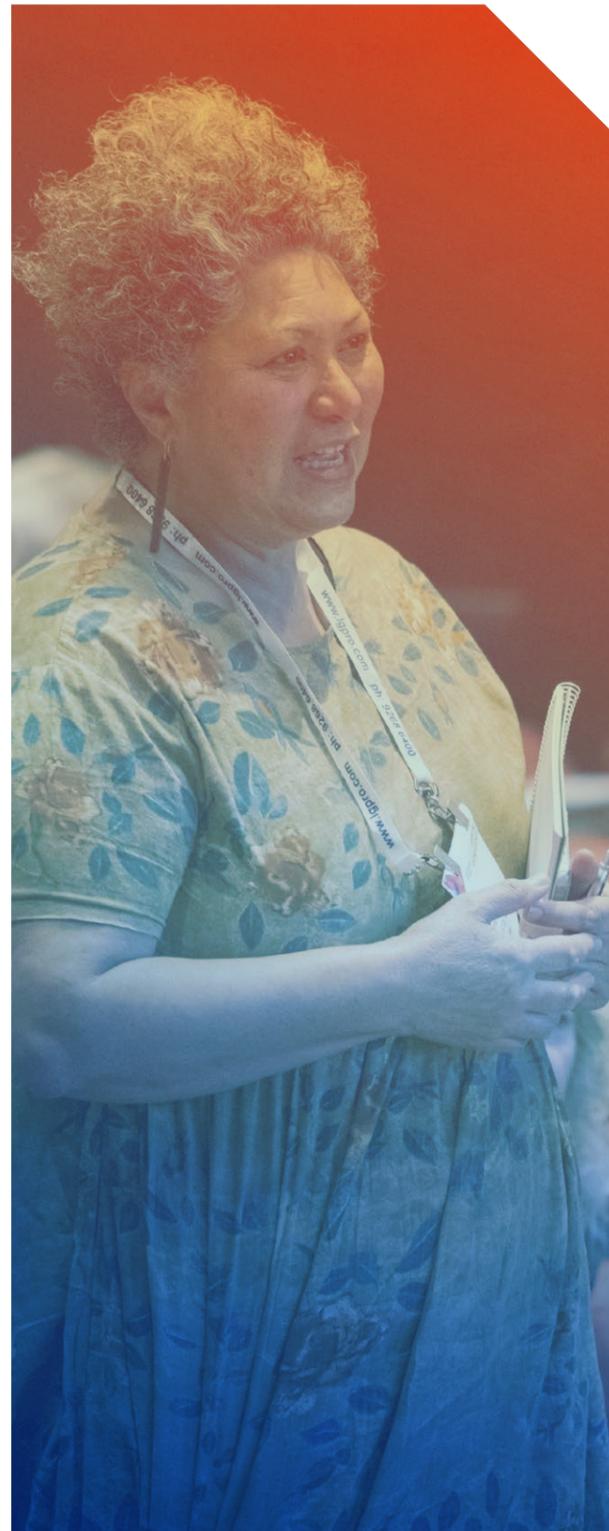
LGPro has age data on 679 members*. Half of the membership is between 41–56 years old. Very few are under 30 or over 70. Membership is heavily weighted toward mid-career professionals.



* Members includes current non-financial, lapsed and recently retired members.
Reach refers to the number of councils represented by at least one member.

Roles

Over half of the LGPro membership works at operational levels (Officer to Manager) but most are in leadership roles. Of the data available, the gender split of leaders is 55% female and 45% male.



Diversity in Local Government

The local government sector in Victoria is a major employer, comprising 79 councils statewide. The sector employs over 43,000 people (approximately 37,000 full-time-equivalent roles) across the state. In recent years, the workforce has grown modestly and continues to grow, indicating a stable or gradually expanding workforce despite the disruptions of COVID-19 and rate capping. Victorian local government has a distinctive employment mix with a high prevalence of part-time work. A 2017 workforce survey found the sector's staff comprised roughly:



This part-time share is much higher than in other states' local government sectors. For example, only 12% of local government employees in New South Wales were part-time.



The sector employs people in over 300 different occupations, reflecting its wide-ranging service responsibilities and the breadth of skills required to deliver them. Over the past decade, there has been marked growth in professional and managerial roles, signalling a shift toward increasingly complex and specialist functions within councils.

Between 2006 and 2016, the number of specialist managers in Victorian local government rose by about 1,100.



Gender

The Victorian local government workforce has a majority of female employees, and this majority has grown in recent years. As of 2021–22, women made up roughly 61.9% of council staff, while men made up 38.1%.

62%
Female



Age

The sector skews older, particularly in regional councils, which face the most pronounced ageing, with just 7.7% of staff under 30 and nearly 68% aged over 45. Metro councils are slightly younger, with around 55% aged 45 or older.

65%
Over 45



Staff Turnover

Staff turnover has increased since the pandemic, rising from 14% in 2018–19 to 20% in 2021–22, with a slight improvement to 18% in 2022–23. Smaller rural councils face the highest turnover, averaging around 22%. Retention and recruitment are now key priorities across the sector.

18%
Leaving their employers

Developing this strategy

Recent Insights

Recent research commissioned by LGPro reinforces the urgency of rethinking workforce inclusion. The report identifies structural imbalances, legacy systems, and inequities in workforce access and progression, particularly for smaller or under-resourced councils. It calls for the sector to design flexible, skills-based, and culturally responsive workforce models that reflect and serve their communities more effectively.

Victoria's Future Local Government Workforce Insights Report Findings

- The local government sector in Victoria employs over 43,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, making it one of the largest public sector employers in the state.
- The workforce composition within the sector does not consistently reflect the diversity of the communities it serves.
- Councils collectively span more than 300 distinct occupations, although many employment systems remain role-specific, and there is an opportunity to explore a more skills-based approach.
- There are stark differences in workforce capability across the state, affecting local service delivery and workforce sustainability.
- An ageing workforce continues to present a growing challenge.
- The sector continues to underutilise workforce potential, particularly where inflexible job structures, limited career pathways, or a lack of cultural safety prevent some individuals from fully engaging or progressing.
- There is a strong need for inclusive and supportive workplace cultures that prioritise wellbeing and inclusion.
- The sector struggles to attract diverse candidates, with rural and regional councils facing persistent attraction challenges and higher staff turnover, highlighting the need for inclusive workforce strategies that tap into under-represented talent pools.
- Some innovative inclusion initiatives are emerging, including local workforce programs targeting migrant communities and people living with disability, although these efforts are not yet consistent across the sector.

As the voice of the sector, LGPro has both the responsibility and opportunity to lead an inclusion-informed workforce transformation.

By grounding this strategy in this context, LGPro can ensure that actions respond to real needs, close equity gaps, and future-proof local government leadership. This context informs the priorities and actions that follow.

This strategy reflects LGPro's commitment as a priority aligned with its broader strategic plan. Guided by values of inclusivity and diversity, responsiveness and customer focus, and integrity, the development of this strategy was inclusive, evidence-informed, and action-oriented.

- ✔ **Strategic Alignment**
This work directly advances LGPro's mission to support and strengthen the local government workforce across Victoria. It contributes to creating a more capable and connected sector by embedding inclusivity in professional development, reducing barriers to membership, and ensuring LGPro services are accessible and welcoming to all.
- ✔ **Engagement and Consultation**
The strategy was developed through wide-reaching engagement. LGPro facilitated staff workshops, one-on-one interviews, desktop reviews, and surveys with members and customers. LGPro made efforts to centre diverse voices and perspectives.

The strategy has been developed closely with the LGPro Board, whose message was clear: be bold, be overt, go faster, and ensure this work is informed by real experience. Their input sharpened LGPro's focus on removing barriers, improving accessibility, and communicating LGPro's commitments more visibly and consistently.
- ✔ **Evidence-Informed**
The strategy is grounded in robust research. LGPro reviewed data from its membership, the MAV, the Victorian Government, the ABS, and other sector sources. LGPro reviewed strategies from peer organisations and drew on best-practice examples to shape an approach that is both aspirational and practical.

Data from over
12,000
contacts and
members reviewed



21
staff and Board
Members engaged



66
survey
responses



248
ideas and
contributions from
members



1. Structural Access

1.1 Regional and Geographical Accessibility

Events are predominantly Melbourne-based, excluding regional staff. Strong demand for local delivery in regional areas and rotating locations across the state.

1.2 Hybrid and Flexible Delivery Modes

Preference for hybrid, online, and asynchronous formats that support flexible participation for carers, part-time workers, and those with health or travel constraints.

1.3 Affordability and Cost Transparency

Cost is seen as a significant barrier for staff outside of senior leadership or from smaller councils. Suggested strategies include tiered pricing, scholarships, and early disclosure of event costs for budgeting.

1.4 Neurodiversity and Sensory Inclusion

Need for neurodivergent-friendly environments with calm spaces and sensory consideration. Recommendations include advance agendas, accessible materials, and predictable session formats.

1.5 Practical Inclusion Measures

Importance of accessible locations, inclusive catering, and supportive tools. Physical accessibility and proximity to transport are key considerations for participation.

2. Cultural Inclusion

2.1 Authentic Representation and Inclusive Leadership

Desire for meaningful representation of a broader spectrum of groups, not just symbolic inclusion. Emphasis on centring voices from diverse backgrounds including First Nations People, People of Colour, LGBTIQA+, and People Living with Disability.

2.2 Inclusive Culture and Belonging

Participants want to feel explicitly welcomed without needing to conform or mask identities. Recognition and celebration of diverse lived experiences are seen as essential.

2.3 Networking and Connection

Need for structured networking to support those new to local government or attending alone. Interest in facilitated connections, buddy systems, and inclusive social spaces.

2.4 Event Design and Co-Creation

Desire for co-design opportunities, particularly from underrepresented groups. Inclusion is seen as more authentic when participants help shape event content and format.

3. Leadership and Sector Dynamics

3.1 Organisational Gatekeeping and Cultural Hierarchies

Event access is often limited to senior staff, excluding younger professionals, junior staff, or those in operational roles. Calls for more equitable access across all levels of local government.

3.2 Promotion, Lead Time, and Communication

Better promotion, early notice, and clear accessibility information are needed. Communication should reflect inclusive values and logistical clarity.

3.3 Leadership Gaps in the Sector

Perception that local government leadership lacks diversity and inclusion accountability. Expectation for LGPro to lead by example through visible, proactive inclusion strategies.



LGPro's diversity and inclusion vision

LGPro's vision is for a local government sector and an association that ...

CHAMPIONS LOCAL GOVERNMENT INCLUSION AS EVERYDAY PRACTICE

LGPro wants every local government professional to feel seen, heard, and empowered to thrive in their role, contributing fully to the communities they serve.

LGPro aspires to represent a sector that is inclusive, where diversity is not only welcomed but expected; where inclusion is built into systems, programs, and the leadership pipelines LGPro supports.

Inclusion is incorporated through every interaction and opportunity LGPro offers.

LGPro's vision is both aspirational and practical. It guides how the association supports the development of inclusive leaders and the sector, how it designs professional development for a changing workforce, and how it connects and celebrates the diverse strengths of local government professionals across Victoria.

LGPro recognises that true inclusion requires more than intention – it requires action and continuous learning.

This is LGPro's commitment to work together with the sector to lead from within and out.

LGPro commits to:



Creating environments that are culturally safe, physically accessible, and welcoming for all people, including those who have been historically excluded.



Modelling bold and authentic leadership in diversity and inclusion within LGPro and across the sector.



Shaping future-ready programs and practices that reflect the diversity of the local government workforce and the communities it serves.



Listening and acting with integrity, informed by lived experience and co-designed with those who know exclusion best.



Fostering meaningful representation and visibility, understanding that if people can see it, they can be it.

Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

2026

Introduction

The following are LGPro's strategic priorities and focus for the next 12 months to create a more inclusive and equitable local government sector. This is the beginning of a multi-year plan of action.

For each priority, the following sets out the change LGPro is working toward and the practical steps the association will take to make that change real.



Modelling bold and authentic leadership in diversity and inclusion within LGPro and across the sector.



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Shaping future-ready programs and practices that reflect the diversity of the local government workforce and the communities it serves.



Fostering meaningful representation and visibility, understanding that if people can see it, they can be it.

Bold leadership

Everyone can fully participate

LGPro commits to modelling bold and authentic leadership in diversity and inclusion internally and across the sector.



Goal

To model bold and authentic leadership in diversity and inclusion, setting the standard internally and advocating for change across the sector.

Change does not happen by chance. Change happens when those with influence take clear, visible, and accountable action.

As the peak body for local government professionals in Victoria, LGPro is uniquely placed to set the tone, raise the bar, and lead by example. LGPro knows that representation and commitment at the top shapes what is possible for the sector. If LGPro does not lead boldly, it risks reinforcing the status quo. This priority is about backing LGPro's values with action; this is about who we are as an organisation and how we lead.

What LGPro will do	Within the next 12 months, LGPro will ...
Build a more representative LGPro Board and leadership pipeline ahead of the 2026 election.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify leaders from underrepresented groups to stand for the LGPro Board. Offer targeted support (mentoring) to help them prepare and feel confident to nominate. Establish "How to Join the Board" information and support sessions to demystify the nomination process and open to any member considering Board involvement.
Build internal capability to strengthen inclusive leadership across the LGPro team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule and deliver quarterly inclusive leadership training sessions for all LGPro staff.
Use LGPro's platform to challenge exclusion and promote equitable access to leadership development and recognition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed equity criteria into LGPro's awards, leadership programs, and speaker selection to ensure recognition reflects diversity. Use publications, events, and networks to highlight and challenge barriers to leadership faced by underrepresented groups.

LGPro commits to creating spaces where everyone feels respected, valued, and able to fully participate.



Goal

To embed cultural safety and accessibility across all our environments and engagements, so all people feel welcome, respected, and able to participate fully.

Inclusion does not just happen in policy – it shows up in the spaces we create and the way people experience them.

Culturally safe, accessible, and welcoming environments are foundational to inclusion. If we want diverse professionals to engage with the local government sector and see themselves reflected in its work, LGPro must ensure that every interaction, from events and programs to digital offerings, feels safe and affirming.

What LGPro will do	Within the next 12 months, LGPro will...
Ensure all LGPro events are physically accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review event planning guidelines to require all venues meet physical accessibility standards (mobility, hearing, and sensory needs). Review event checklists, with input from the sector on the accessibility needs of members and customers. Provide staff training on inclusive event design and accessibility requirements.
Ensure communications include specific information about the accessibility and inclusion features of venues and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an accessibility and inclusion information checklist/template for events and programs. Embed accessibility and inclusion sections in all LGPro event and program promotional materials.
Provide targeted access supports (scholarships, travel subsidies, and flexible delivery) for underrepresented participants in leadership development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce scholarships or cost offsets for lower-banded staff, people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with CALD backgrounds, and regional staff.
Foster a safe, respectful, and inclusive culture at LGPro events through a clear and accountable Code of Conduct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Code of Conduct that outlines expectations on respectful behaviour, safe alcohol use, and zero tolerance for discrimination or harassment.

Future-ready programs

Listening and acting

LGPro commits to shaping future-ready programs and practices that reflect the diversity of the local government workforce and the communities it serves.

Local government is evolving, and LGPro’s learning and development programs must evolve with it.

If LGPro wants to support a sector that is innovative and inclusive, it needs to design programs that reflect the real experiences of people working at all levels, from frontline to executive, and remove the barriers that prevent many from participating in leadership development. For LGPro, this is about adjusting thinking on who gets access, whose stories are given the spotlight, and how to design for flexibility and inclusion.



Goal

To embed inclusive design across all programs. Ensuring diverse participation, content, and delivery that reflects the local government workforce and the communities it serves.

What LGPro will do	Within the next 12 months, LGPro will ...
Deliver a Diversity and Inclusion series across the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design program content with key organisations. • Focus first series on First Nations, Neuro Inclusive Leadership and Disability Inclusion
Ensure lived experience shapes our programs including through diverse facilitators, mentors, speakers and case studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set minimum expectations for diversity in program panels and facilitators and content utilised in our programs.

LGPro commits to listening deeply and acting with integrity, informed by lived experience and grounded in the voices of those who know exclusion best.

Inclusion comes from continuous listening and responding to the feedback and needs of the sector.

To support and develop an inclusive sector, LGPro must stay open to feedback - especially when it is uncomfortable - and be willing to shift how it works in response. LGPro wants to embed feedback loops, surfacing stories that shape the sector, and holding itself to account. Through regular engagement with members, customers, and staff, along with the guidance of people working in our sector, LGPro will listen with intention and act with care. LGPro’s goal is not perfection, but steady progress alongside a sector that learns and leads together.



Goal

To embed lived experience, storytelling, and sector feedback into how LGPro listens, learns, and acts so that its diversity and inclusion work is sector-informed and co-designed.

What LGPro will do	Within the next 12 months, LGPro will ...
Engage regularly with members, customers, and staff to listen, learn, and track inclusion experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual surveys focused on inclusion and belonging.
Invite diversity and social impact organisations as partners at LGPro events, offering them visibility and space to contribute.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and curate a list of potential DEI-aligned partners (e.g. Aboriginal businesses, disability inclusion networks, LGBTIQ+ organisations, women in leadership groups). • Develop a “Social Impact Partner” stream for events, offering exhibition or networking space at no cost. • Acknowledge and profile partners through event materials, signage, and digital promotion.

Meaningful representation and visibility

LGPro commits to fostering meaningful representation and visibility because when people can see it, they can be it.

Representation matters. It shapes who feels welcome, who steps forward, and who sees a future for themselves in local government.

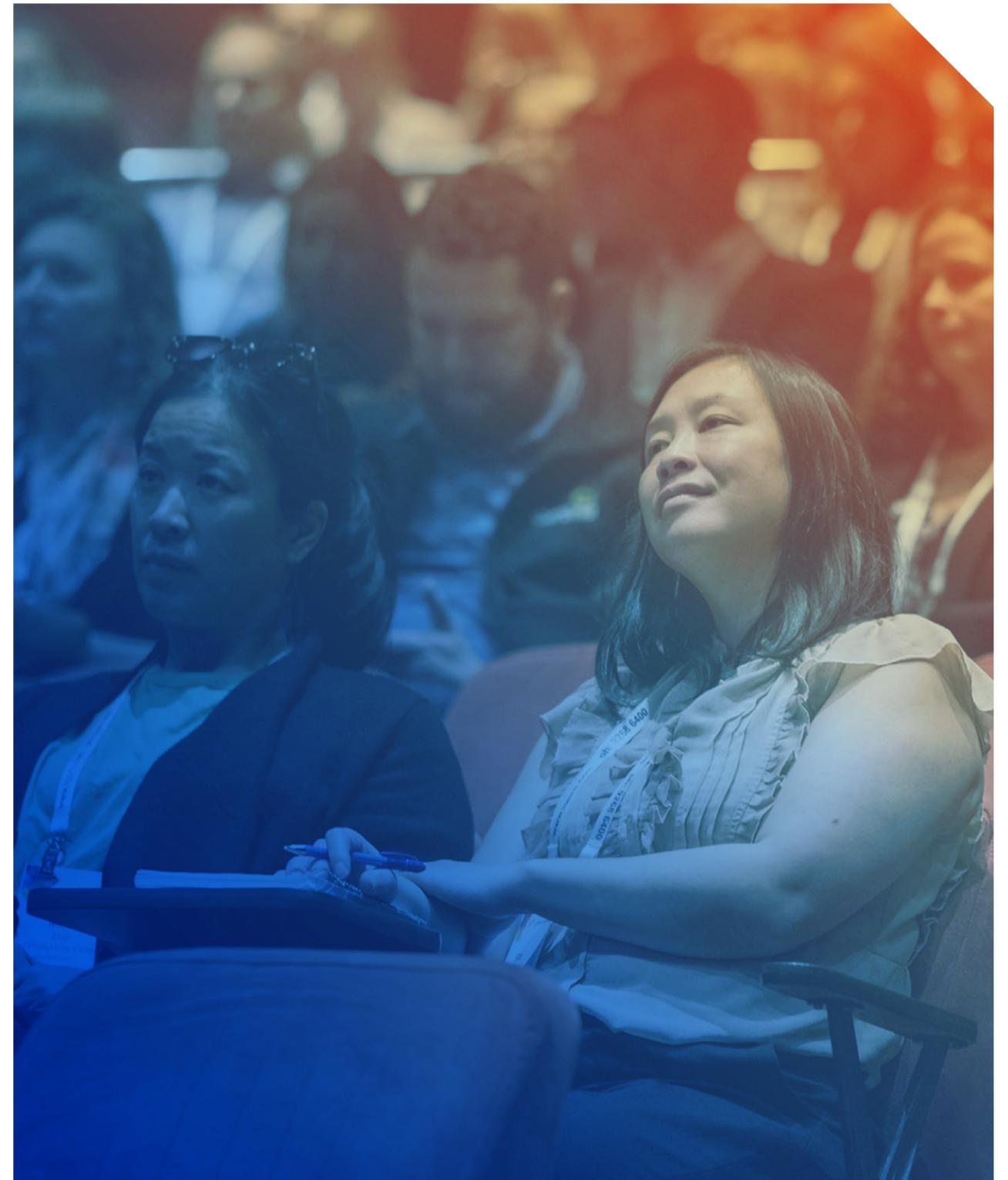
If we want an inclusive and future-ready sector, LGPro must support the visibility of diverse leaders and stories at every level of its work. That means reflecting the breadth of the sector in the LGPro boardroom, on its stages, in its communications, and within its everyday work.



Goal

To increase the visibility and participation of underrepresented voices across events, programs, governance, and communications so that leadership in local government is genuinely reflective of its workforce and communities.

What LGPro will do	Within the next 12 months, LGPro will ...
Track and use participation data across programs to monitor equity and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and report on demographic data (voluntary and confidential) across all LGPro programs and events.
Ensure gender equity across all LGPro public-facing platforms, including events, panels, and awards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a minimum 50/50 gender representation goal for speakers, facilitators, and award nominees/recipients. Maintain gender balance data for tracking representation across events.
Review and track diversity in event programming, including intersectionality across gender, culture, age, and experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track diversity across gender, culture, age, disability, LGBTQIA+ status, and lived experience. Update event planning templates to include intersectional diversity considerations.
Create open pathways for diverse voices to contribute as speakers, mentors, and facilitators in LGPro programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open a register of lived experience speakers, mentors, and facilitators. Promote expressions of interest for this register to underrepresented groups, networks, and communities.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
LGPRO
PROFESSIONALS
THE LEADING VOICE