



# Diversity and Inclusion at RMIT

A celebration of our progress

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where it conducts its business.



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# Becoming a more inclusive RMIT

By living our values, and listening to the experiences of our staff and students, we can all help to build a great place to study and work.

RMIT has a long and proud history of inclusion.

Since our establishment, we have sought to make education accessible. We have continued to grow into a vibrant and global institution, welcoming staff and students from all walks of life.

A great culture is shaped by strong values. By putting inclusion at the centre of everything we do, RMIT is working towards becoming a place where our whole community can thrive.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Action Plans outline not only our commitment to building an inclusive RMIT culture, but the practical and sustainable steps we are taking.

Informed by the lived experience of our staff and students, and guided by best practice and current research, these Action Plans represent an ambitious body of work, but an achievable one. And our progress so far is proof of this.

Since the launch of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Action Plans in 2016, RMIT has been publicly recognised for our progress. We have won national awards, ranked highly in prestigious inclusion benchmarks, and heard first-hand from staff and students the profound impact that our initiatives have had in making their RMIT experience a transformative one.

In recent years it has been my honour to be the Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, and to see first-hand the great work of our staff and students in making RMIT a better place to be for everyone.

It is clear that inclusion and diversity are deeply important to the RMIT community. But there is still much to do.

We need to be planning beyond 2020 to ensure that the great work we're doing is sustainable, and that we are continuing to learn, improve and respond to a changing world.

In the coming years, I am personally looking forward to working more closely with our colleagues in Vietnam and our international partners to create inclusion initiatives that respond to, and will succeed in, their specific cultural contexts. I am also committed to our long-term vision for an inclusive RMIT, and to working with our entire community to bring this to life.

I invite you to join me in celebrating our achievements so far, and to be part of our ongoing journey towards inclusion for all.

## **Professor Calum Drummond**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, and Vice-President  
Chair, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee





# Diversity and inclusion: our journey so far

RMIT creates life-changing opportunities for all, welcomes students and staff from diverse backgrounds, honours the identity and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations, and is an accessible and open institution dedicated to serving the needs of the whole community.

Endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive in 2016, our Diversity and Inclusion Framework is the high-level statement of our aspirations.

The Framework outlines our commitment to:

- increase access, and build a more diverse student and staff community, and
- provide an equitable and inclusive experience and outcomes for all students and staff.

While the commitment to an inclusive and diverse university community applies to all, our suite of Action Plans outline specific objectives to support:

- gender equity for staff
- staff and students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- staff and students with disability
- staff and students of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities

We seek to create an RMIT that values a shared future with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges and cultures. Our journey towards that future is outlined in our Bundyi Girri strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan.

## What this means for our community

There are several common themes across the five Action Plans.

*demonstrating leadership, accountability and values*

- visible leadership and accountability
- benchmarking our progress
- sponsoring relevant events and awards
- building staff and student capability

- clear communication and promotion of values and behaviours
- elimination of discrimination and harassment

*improving facilities and services*

- accessible campuses
- inclusive digital services, websites and platforms
- inclusive facilities on all campuses
- values-based procurement and supply chain processes

*ensuring access, retention and success*

- equitable recruitment and admission processes
- inclusive teaching, learning and professional development
- reasonable adjustments in teaching, learning, and employment
- support services for staff and students

## Staff and students leading the way

Since the endorsement of our Framework and Action Plans, RMIT has taken many significant steps towards becoming a more accessible and inclusive place to work and study. This work has been led by Working Parties comprised of staff and students from throughout the institution with a passion for inclusion and diversity.

Each Action Plan has its own Working Party and Executive Champion, who bring their expertise, enthusiasm and lived experience to the task of ensuring we meet our ambitious goals.

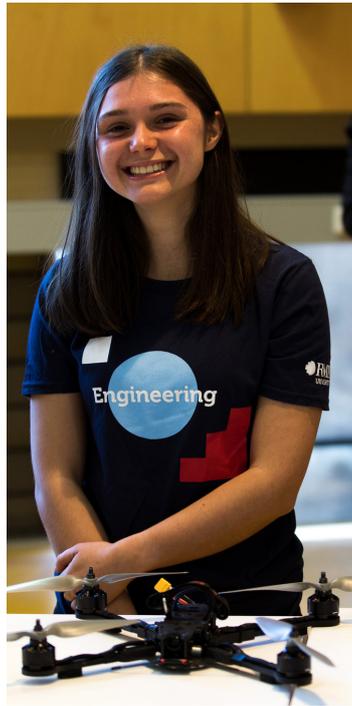
Our Working Party members have helped to transform RMIT systems, policies, facilities, and culture to better reflect our values, and to improve the RMIT experience for our entire community.



We achieved Gold Employer status in the 2018 Australian Workplace Equality Index, in recognition of our work to make RMIT a great place to be for our LGBTIQ community.



Since 2016, over 5000 students have entered RMIT through the SNAP Access Scheme.



We are ranked among the top 5 employers for accessibility, based on the Australian Network on Disability's 2018 Access and Inclusion Index.



We are a multicultural institution, with staff and students from all over the world.



We are proud of our accessible facilities, including gender neutral toilets and multi-faith prayer rooms.



We are an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality, and proud members of the Athena SWAN network.



In 2018, we awarded over 1900 scholarships, with most going to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.



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# Secondary students show their SmArts



A group of secondary students from Wyndham Central College and Hume Central Secondary College enjoyed their first taste of university life, taking part in a unique arts program which saw them transform a shipping container into an extraordinary piece of urban art.

The unveiling of the artwork in RMIT's Alumni Courtyard marked the culmination of the four-day SmArts program, which was delivered in collaboration with The Smith Family, National Gallery of Victoria and the Urban Agency: living laboratory project.

SmArts is designed to inspire students through the creative arts and encourage them to aspire to further study. The program is part of *I Belong*, a program of on-campus opportunities for students attending selected Schools Network Access Program (SNAP) partner schools.

The students, from years nine and ten, participated in the SmArts program and revelled in the opportunity to hone their artistic skills under the guidance of industry experts and RMIT staff.

Chloe Preston from Wyndham Central College said the program encouraged her to think about art as not just a hobby, but something she could build a career in.

"Ever since I was really young, I've been interested in drawing and creating art – but I had no idea about all the possibilities out there," she said.

"Not only have I now learned that nearly anything can be transformed into art, but the whole experience has opened my eyes to the things I could study in the future."

The students' Andy Warhol-inspired artwork was on display in the Alumni Courtyard for several months. You can see a small detail of the vivid installation in the image above.



# When language matters: rainbow families

Rainbow families are families with LGBTIQ+ parents, children, siblings, grandparents or loved ones. They are diverse in make-up and can experience unique challenges.

Gina Lambropoulos from RMIT's Enrolment Services team says that it's important that employers and services providers are aware of what's important to rainbow families, especially when it comes to choosing childcare.

"We do need to make sure every space we walk into is a safe space, where our child won't be treated differently to any other child there," Gina said.

"It's learning basic things with language. I'm not the 'partner'. I'm not the other thing they don't know how to put words to. I'm a parent.

"I'm this child's parent and my concern is my child's wellbeing."

Gina gave an example of how language can help to create a culture of inclusion and diversity.

"Forms do not need to say 'mother and father.'

"Parent, carer, guardian, these are simple things to make sure people are included. Then it's not only including rainbow families but all varieties of families."

John Gill, Assistant Coordinator of the RMIT City campus Children's Centre, says that all families are welcome at the Centre.

He notes that being inclusive and respectful can be as simple as using the correct means of address.

"If we were referring to a transgender parent, for example, that would involve introducing the parent by their preferred name and pronouns," John said.

John says that the Children's Centre looks forward to welcoming more families. To learn more about the Centre, call 9925 8500 or email: [childcare.city@rmit.edu.au](mailto:childcare.city@rmit.edu.au).

RMIT's *Guide to Inclusive Language* can be downloaded from our staff diversity and inclusion website.



# Pure gold: RMIT recognised for LGBTIQ inclusion

**In 2018 RMIT was among just 12 Australian organisations — and the only university — to receive Gold Employer status in the Australian Workplace Equality Index, the national benchmarking instrument for LGBTIQ inclusion.**

Gold Employer status is awarded to organisations who can demonstrate substantial work towards LGBTIQ inclusion, and is a testament to RMIT's commitment to becoming the best possible place to study and work for people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities (DGSS).

It reflects the hard work and contributions of staff and students to lift our rank from Bronze Employer status in 2017.

Professor Peter Coloe, Pro Vice-Chancellor Science, Engineering and Health and Executive Champion for DGSS inclusion, says that significant progress has been made since the DGSS Action Plan was implemented in 2016.

"We will continue to do everything in our power to ensure our DGSS community feels accepted for who they are, can work and study without fear of harassment, bullying

or discrimination and have the freedom to be themselves at RMIT and beyond."

PhD student and former co-Chair of the DGSS Working Party, Mohammad Taha, attended the Australian LGBTI Inclusion Awards luncheon in Sydney to accept the award on behalf of RMIT.

"It is truly wonderful to be recognised for the strides the University's made in one year's time," Mohammad said.

"Let us remember that the road towards a better university community and a better world is just beginning.

"Change is here, and I hope that we take everyone around us on a journey of learning where we all understand each other a little better and where DGSS individuals truly reach their potential without the hindrance of prejudice or bias."



# Making gender equality a reality

**RMIT was named an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency in both 2018 and 2019.**

The Employer of Choice for Gender Equality (EOCGE) citation encourages, recognises and promotes an active commitment to achieving gender equality in Australian workplaces. The citation serves as a guide for the University to maintain best practice for gender equality for our staff.

Pay equity, support for parents and carers, mainstreaming flexibility and preventing gender-based harassment are all primary categories for the EOCGE citation.

As a EOCGE recognised employer, RMIT has committed to continuing progress in each of these areas that positively impact all staff.

RMIT's Chief Financial Officer and Executive Champion for Gender Equality, Kate Koch, says that being named an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality is an incredible honour.

"We've seen that the work involved in this accreditation positively impacts the University.

"We know that we need to maintain a long-term view and sustain our efforts, promoting gender equality in every part of RMIT," she said.

Professor Kay Latham is another key figure in driving towards gender equality at RMIT.

She is lead author of RMIT's Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Athena SWAN submission.

SAGE Athena SWAN recognises and celebrates good practices in higher education and research institutions towards the advancement of gender equality.

"More diverse workplaces are healthier, far more productive and far more innovative than those that are not," Kay said.

## Our achievements



41% of our senior leaders are women (up 5% from 2017)



Promotion rates of female managers up 12% in 2018



Gender parity on RMIT Council and Vice-Chancellor's Executive



Member of Athena SWAN, aiming for Bronze citation in 2019



Positive feedback about flexibility up 8% in 2018 Staff Survey



Increased support and resources for parents and carers

# Putting student mental health front of mind

What do a ball pit, a message wall and a collection of marbles in a jar have in common? They're all part of an event designed by RMIT students to improve student mental health.

With one in four Australian students expected to experience a mental health challenge while at university according to youth mental health organisation Orygen, 40 students set about tackling this real-world problem through an innovative pilot program.

The students formed a group called Foremind with the aim of building mental health awareness among their peers, decreasing social isolation and creating a proactive student mental health culture.

Foremind's first event, *Wind Down Wednesday*, was held to coincide with World Mental Health Day.

A message wall for students to express support, anxieties and gratitude, a ball pit as a way fun to connect with a peer and a lush, green space to escape pre-exam study took over a section of RMIT's New Academic Street.

It is the latest initiative in a University-wide approach to improving student wellbeing.

As part of the program, the student leaders attended three day-long workshops that were facilitated by RMIT Activator and the RMIT Wellbeing team, in partnership with the RMIT University Student Union (RUSU).

With a program objective of students designing solutions to help students stay well, participants completed a full lifecycle of scoping, developing, planning, managing and implementing their innovative ideas.

Chemical engineering student Kareen Moraes said she had vowed to say yes to every opportunity that came her way in her first year at RMIT.

"My community and my family are not really receptive to the idea of mental

health so I thought being a part of this would help me bridge the gap," she said.

"[University] is mostly seen as something that is just all education, education, education. It shows that there's more to uni than going to your lectures and getting a good GPA."

First-year Masters of Analytics student Naveen Narayan said he wanted to be involved in the pilot as he felt it was a great way to get students out of the mindset that mental health was surrounded by stigma.

"People talk about going to the gym and going for a jog, but not many talk about mental health issues as a common occurrence," he said.

"It's often sidelined because people associate it with someone being crazy."



The pilot program complemented a range of other initiatives, including an RMIT student engagement campaign which launched in October.

The *It's OK to not be OK* campaign was delivered in partnership with students and RUSU and aimed to reduce the stigma around mental health conditions.

Students were encouraged to share insights into studying while experiencing mental health challenges, and members of the RMIT community shared messages of support.

RMIT student Benjamin told his peers: "You are human. You always have emotions. You are sometimes vulnerable. It is OK to not always be OK."

Director of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion, Fiona Ellis, said while many of the wellbeing challenges students face are not new, RMIT reflects the society in which it operates.

"Just as mental health and wellbeing has had a greater focus in the broader community, our commitment

to support students and staff has never been more important," she said.

"Our Academic Board endorsed the *Framework for Promoting Student Mental Wellbeing in Universities* in 2017. The Framework takes a university-wide approach to enhancing access to services, community awareness, supportive environments, mental health knowledge and skills and engaging curriculum."

Fiona said RMIT had created a student mental wellbeing advisory group and launched a three-year project that recognised students' mental health and wellbeing as a key priority.

"The latest research about student mental wellbeing highlights the challenges and opportunities, and, by partnering with students and RUSU, we're taking on the challenges laid out in Dr Benjamin Veness' *The Wicked Problem of University Student Mental Health*," she said.

**Our Accessibility Action Plan includes a significant focus on student and staff mental wellbeing.**

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# What does inclusion mean to you?

Three of our Diversity and Inclusion Executive Champions share their personal interpretations.



*"Inclusion means adjusting our mindsets to respond to the pursuit of equity and parity for our students, and in our workplace for our staff too."*

Professor Belinda Tynan  
Executive Champion, Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds



*"Inclusion means maintaining accessible environments and ways of working that are inclusive of people with a disability. It means ensuring our educational and staff services are upheld, evaluated and improved, to make a difference for all."*

Ms Dionne Higgins  
Executive Champion, Accessibility



*"Inclusion means a fair go for everyone, and truly respecting and valuing the talents, skills and expertise of every individual. It's vital that every person has the same opportunities and support to achieve their goals and contribute in a meaningful way."*

Professor Peter Coloe  
Executive Champion, Diverse Genders, Sexes and Sexualities

# Thank you to our Working Party members

We would like to offer our deep thanks to the following RMIT staff and students, who have contributed to our achievements as members of our Diversity and Inclusion Working Parties, including the Athena SWAN Working Party and the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Reducing and Responding to Sexual Harm.

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Mr Adam Rowland  
Mr Adam Shepherd  
Dist. Professor Adrian Mouritz  
Mr Alae Taule'alo  
Mr Albert Zejnula  
Ms Alice Boland  
Ms Alisha Taylor-Jones  
Ms Allison Shevlin  
Ms Amanda Penrose  
Mr Amro Amputch  
Ms Amy Love  
Dr Anastasia Powell  
Professor Andrea Chester  
Mr Andy Kimpton  
Ms Angela Sparks  
Ms Anne Lennox  
Ms Beatrice Co  
Dr Birgit Mumelter  
Mr Brad Costello  
Mx Bromley See Kee  
Ms Caitlin Frost  
Ms Carol Witney  
Professor Caroline Chan  
Cassandra Scott  
Dist. Professor Charlie Xue  
Mr Chris Hewison  
Ms Christine Stephens  
Ms Connie Merlino  
Mr Dene Cicci  
Professor Denise Cuthbert  
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Ms Jenny Cummins  
Ms Joanne Austin  
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Dr Julie Quach  
Ms Kariza Martin

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Professor Kay Latham  
Ms Kelsie Miller  
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Mr Kevin Moore  
Ms Kylie Supski  
Ms Lara Rafferty  
Ms Laura Mulherin  
Ms Laura Ricketts  
Ms Leena Thavisin  
Ms Lillian Lowe  
Ms Lily Hunt  
Ms Lily Tsang  
Ms Lisa Negri  
Mr Luke Buchanan  
Mr Luke Coster  
Mr Lyndon Medina  
Ms Maci Hamdorf  
Professor Madhu Bhaskaran  
Mr Marcus De Rijk  
Professor Margaret Jollands  
Ms Marilyn Capper  
Professor Mark Osborn  
Professor Martyn Hook  
Associate Professor Mary Tolcos  
Dr Meagan Tyler  
Associate Professor Melih Ozlen  
Dr Michael Crowhurst  
Mr Miles Hamilton  
Mx Mohammad Taha  
Mr Murray Alessandrini  
Ms Nicola Harrison  
Professor Olga Troynikov  
Ms Patricia Newstead  
Ms Penny Garrett  
Mr Peter Ryan  
Professor Rachel Caruso  
Mx Ray Adcock  
Dr Rebecca Leshinsky  
Ms Rebekah Taka  
Dr Reina Ichii  
Mr Rhys Cranney  
Mr Rick Boffa  
Mx Riley Edwards  
Professor Ron Wakefield

Professor Russell Crawford  
Dist. Professor Sara Charlesworth  
Ms Sarah Bell  
Ms Sharon Bush  
Ms Stacey Campton  
Ms Susie Birdsall  
Professor Swee Mak  
Ms Theresa Lyford  
Mr Thomas Hunter  
Professor Tim Fry  
Associate Professor Tom Steiner  
Mr Tony Aramze  
Mr Travis Pemberton  
Ms Trish Newstead  
Ms Vali Ratanavali  
Ms Van Pham  
Ms Victoria Carullo  
Ms Wendy Gander  
Dr Yan Wang

## Our Executive Champions

### **Professor Calum Drummond**

Chair, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee

### **Professor Belinda Tynan**

Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds

### **Ms Dionne Higgins**

Accessibility

### **Ms Kate Koch**

Gender Equality

### **Professor Andrew MacIntyre**

Cultural Diversity

### **Professor Peter Coloe**

Diverse Genders, Sexes and Sexualities (DGSS)

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# Our RMIT Allies

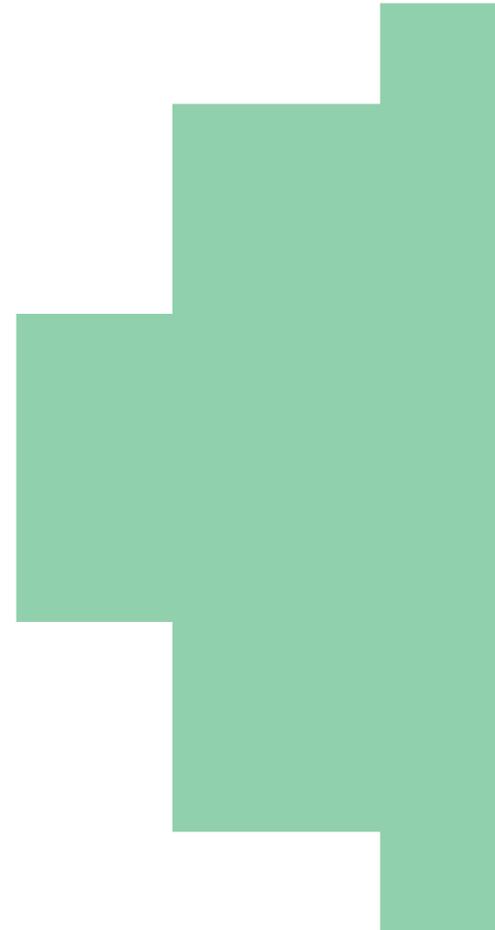
A huge thank you to the members of RMIT's Ally Network, a group of trained staff who have made a commitment to promoting and supporting DGSS inclusion at RMIT.

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Anthony Falzon  
April Bjork  
Asta Wilson  
Bec Clarke  
Bec Taube  
Professor Belinda Tynan  
Ben Andrews  
Beth Amos  
Dr Birgit Mumelter  
Brit Wood  
Caron Byrne  
Catherine McConville  
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Peter Clynes  
Professor Peter Coloe  
Associate Professor Phil Maude  
Rebecca Ashcroft  
Dr Rebecca Young  
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