

**WESTERN
BULLDOGS**



**2026
2024**

**WESTERN BULLDOGS
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
ACTION PLAN**



KYLIE WATSON-WHEELER & AMEET BAINS

COMMITMENT STATEMENT

We are delighted to present the Western Bulldogs' second Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, furthering our Club's heartfelt commitment to community and positive social impact.

We have always seen ourselves as more than a footy club and embrace the opportunity to provide both a connection point and significant positive influence for diverse audiences across Victoria's west and beyond.

We take great pride in being the AFL's community club and understand that having a credible claim on that designation requires ongoing meaningful effort.

Our facilities at Mission Whitten Oval are more accessible than they've ever been for all abilities, cultures and genders, with inclusion a key consideration of our recent redevelopment project.

Our Community Foundation aspires to create a connected, healthy, safe and equal community where every person can thrive. We harness the transformative power of sport to deliver community-led programs that break

down barriers, inspiring and empowering individuals to become agents of change in their own communities.

We are fiercely proud to have been a pioneer of the women's game and to have played a key role in making the AFLW what it is today: a beacon for elite female participation in our great game. Our Pride Game at Mission Whitten Oval has become a marquee fixture of the AFLW season and a wonderful opportunity for the entire league to gather and celebrate everything that Pride represents.

We are a long-standing member of the Champions of Change Coalition which seeks to realise the ambition of truly gender-equal sport in Australia within a generation. As part of this commitment, we have recently adopted the Champions of Change AI Prompt - a meaningful framework that guides our approach to artificial intelligence, ensuring the technology we adopt and advocate for reflects our core values of equality and inclusion. We will continue to devote time, energy and resources to the advancement of women within our Club and will continue to have

significant female representation on our Club executive and Club and Community Foundation boards.

The power of footy and the platform it provides to reach diverse communities and achieve tangible, positive change is not lost on us, and through this plan we firmly commit to leveraging our influential platform for the greater good.

While significant progress has been made there is certainly more to do. As a club we always strive to inspire and include our fans and members as we look to improve and grow.

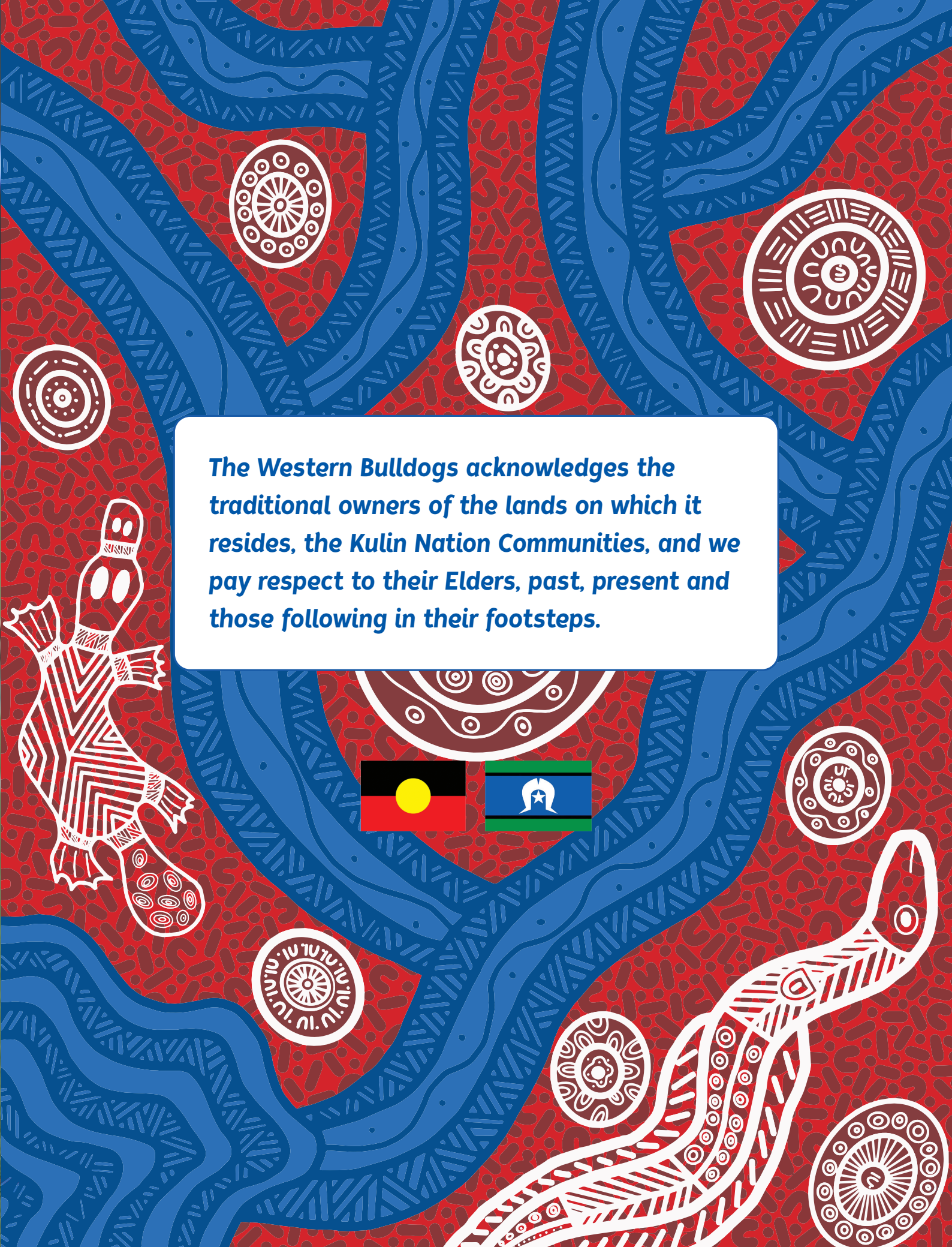
We look forward to furthering this journey with our entire community.

Kylie & Ameet

CLUB PURPOSE

To create memories that
connect and inspire our
people and community





The Western Bulldogs acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands on which it resides, the Kulin Nation Communities, and we pay respect to their Elders, past, present and those following in their footsteps.

INTRODUCTION



The Western Bulldogs Football Club draws upon the power of football to bring together members of our community. We take pride in our commitment to diversity and inclusion across every aspect of our Club and our Western Bulldogs Community Foundation.

Sporting organisations have a significant impact and influence on their communities, and our Club fully embraces this responsibility, ensuring that the values of diversity and inclusion are modelled, communicated and maintained throughout.

Our 2026 - 2029 Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan stems from our dedication to building on our long-standing commitment to these values, striving for continuous improvement and growth. Its goal is to further promote and advance diversity and inclusion within our Club and the wider community, encompassing our players, staff, members, and supporters.

This plan is built around four diversity focus areas - gender, multiculturalism, LGBTQI+ and people with a disability. While these focus areas help guide our actions and

priorities, we acknowledge that identities do not exist in isolation. We are committed to an intersectional approach that recognises the overlapping and interconnected nature of people's experiences. This means considering how multiple aspects of identity may combine to create unique challenges and opportunities in the workplace.

This Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan follows on from the previous plan, spanning a three-year period and sits alongside our Club's Reconciliation Plan (RAP), which was first created in 2018. Our RAP aims to build a culture of equality, respect and recognition of the cultures, histories and contributions of First Nations peoples. As with our previous plan, our commitment extends across four key pillars of activity:

- **Governance and strategy**
- **Education and training**
- **Football**
- **Events and communications.**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To ensure our Club is aligned across key terms, our Diversity and Inclusion Working Group has defined the following terms to provide meaning to each of them:

Diversity = Traits born into or that a person identifies as. Presence of differences, such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic class/status, (dis)ability, nationality, body size, and spirituality or religion.

Equity = Being fair and recognising we do not all receive the same opportunities or access.

Inclusion = Equal Access, equal opportunity and a space you feel comfortable in and that caters to your needs.

Anti-bias = Challenge prejudices and mitigate the impact of individual or systematic bias. Relearning, opposing discrimination and increasing awareness and understanding.

Belonging = A sense of fitting in and feeling safe, happy, supported, connected and accepted.

Allyship = A significant commitment to understand one's own privilege and acting to work towards equity by breaking down the structures and everyday actions that contribute to inequality, whilst building relationships and supporting marginalised groups.

Anti-racism = Actively engage in the fight against structures that perpetuate racism. Conscious efforts and deliberate actions promoting racial tolerance behaviours.

WORKING GROUP

Working group members are current employees who have helped to shape the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and will help to see out its implementation.

Dan Fisher
AFLW List Manager & AFL Recruiting Officer

Naomi Fitzgerald
Senior Health Promotion Coordinator (WBCF)

Kon Karavias
Chief Commercial and Strategy Officer

Sophie Porra
General Manager People & Culture

Anna Palma
Creative Lead

Hannah Singleton
General Manager Western Bulldogs Community Foundation (WBCF)

Sally Zacharewicz
People & Culture Manager

Brent Prismall
Player Welfare and Support Manager

Meg Thompson
Venue Engagement Manager

Andrew Plant
ICT Process and Application Specialist

Shelley Karpathakis
Equity and Inclusion Manager

Rhys Contessa
Membership Engagement Manager

Eva George
Head of Philanthropy and Fundraising

Jasmine Parsons
People and Culture Business Partner

Marcus Bontempelli leads out the Bulldogs to warm up ahead of the 2026 AFL Pride Game against the Swans at the SCG.



OUR JOURNEY



- 1947** First women's football side fielded in charity matches supporting war efforts and local causes
- 2004** Susan Alberti appointed as the Club's first female board member.
- 2007** Launch of Ready Settle Go and Team Up (formerly CALDplay) sports programs, promoting social participation and healthy living for newly arrived migrants.
- 2013** Participation in the first-ever AFL Women's Exhibition Match.
- 2014** Launch of Sons of the West, a 10-week health and wellbeing program for men in Victoria's West.
- 2015** Launch of the Nallei Jerring program for First Nations young people
- 2017** Inaugural AFLW season.
Launch of Daughters of the West, a 10-week health and wellbeing program for women in Victoria's West.
Appointment of Ameet Bains as the Club's - and footy industry's - first CEO of Indian heritage.
Establishment of the Pride Support Group.
- 2018** Hosting of the inaugural AFLW Pride Game against Carlton.
Launch of the Club's first Reconciliation Action Plan.
- 2019** Launch of the GOAL Mentoring Program for African youth aged 12 to 17 in Melbourne's west.
Appointment of Debbie Lee as the Club's first General Manager of Women's Football; later inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame.
Launch of Leaders of the Pack, a program for multicultural young women in Melbourne's west.

- 2020** Kylie Watson-Wheeler unanimously elected as the Club's first female President.
Introduction of culturally specific Daughters of the West program for the Vietnamese community.
- 2021** Implementation of the first Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan, focusing on gender equity, LGBTQIA+, multiculturalism, and disability inclusion.
- 2022** Introduction of culturally specific Sons of the West program for the Vietnamese and African Diaspora communities.
- 2023/4** Completion of the Mission Whitten Oval Redevelopment, featuring accessible facilities including a Changing Places room, family room, prayer room, and inclusive seating, while also offering equal and fully integrated facilities for our men's and women's football programs.
Appointment of Tamara Hyett, the Club's first female AFLW Senior Coach
Jerril Rechter appointed as Club Vice President.
Expansion of the culturally specific Sons and Daughters of the West programs through Movember funding funding to Indian, Vietnamese, Iraqi/Syriac, Afghan and African Diaspora communities.
- 2025/6** Launch of the second Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan (2026-2029)
Partnering with the Sydney Swans for their annual AFL Pride Game.
Launch of Social Study Club for multicultural young people in the West

The Western Bulldogs and Sydney Swans run through a joint banner ahead of the 2026 AFL Pride Game at the SCG.



The Western Bulldogs AFLW team run out ahead of the 2024 Pride Round Game at Mission Whitten Oval.



OVERVIEW

Club Purpose	To create memories that connect and inspire our people and community.
Plan Purpose	1. To foster a culture of belonging where every person regardless of background, identity, or ability feels empowered, respected, and connected. 2. Harnessing the transformative power of sport to foster a connected, equitable, and empowered community where individuals belong and feel seen.

Pillars	Governance & Strategy	Education & Pathways	Football	Events & Communications
Objectives	Embed inclusive leadership and accountability across all levels of the Club, ensuring diversity is a strategic imperative.	Cultivate a culture of continuous learning, allyship and opportunity.	Drive equity, inclusion and alignment across all football programs through integrated operations, equitable access and strengthened visibility, advocacy and community impact.	Celebrate diversity and inspire change through authentic storytelling, inclusive events and bold advocacy.

Key Deliverables	Quarterly meetings of the DIAP working group Inclusive policy and Member Code of Conduct review Complete external reporting and benchmarking exercises for Workplace Gender Equality, Champions of Change Coalition and AFL Industry Diversity Dashboard. Establish Women's and Multicultural Working groups to ensure minority groups are represented, supported can provide feedback to guide our efforts.	Mandatory unconscious bias, ethical bystander, and sexual harassment training for all staff and players. Creation of meaningful employment and development opportunities for people with disabilities. Continue targeted investment in women's leadership, mentoring, and succession planning. Continued delivery and evaluation of our community programs through our Community Foundation. Annual calendar of cultural and/or diversity celebrations and initiatives to foster awareness and belonging.	Seamless integration of men's and women's football programs to foster unity and shared purpose Continue to elevate inclusion, accessibility and equity of our shared facilities. Gender equity audit to identify and address systemic gaps. Increase education to enhance player understanding of diversity and inclusion Encourage the involvement of players in community programs and schools.	Review Club's communication and marketing strategies to ensure, where possible, equal and appropriate representation of diverse focus areas across collateral and events. Celebration of key cultural and diversity milestones in a way that is authentic, respectful and community informed. Accessibility audit of digital platforms to enhance user experience. Promotion of safe reporting channels for discrimination and misconduct. Promote the accessibility features of Mission Whitten Oval precinct. Promote the adoption of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program to better support individuals with hidden disabilities.
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Graduates of the Daughters of the West program run by the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation.

ACTIONS

GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC PATHWAYS

	DIVERSITY PILLAR	COMPLETED IN	RESPONSIBILITY
Ensure robust governance guidelines.			
DIAP Working Group to meet at least quarterly to ensure planned actions are being delivered in line with key focus areas across all diversity pillars	All	Ongoing	People & Culture Team
Provide annual updates to the Board on progress against DIAP action items	All	Annually	General Manager People & Culture Team
Provide additional training opportunities for those in DIAP Working Group so they can confidently drive change initiatives in the diversity space.	All	Ongoing	People & Culture Team
Annually review members of the DIAP Working Group to ensure a diverse representation of people from across our Club, including the AFL and AFLW staff and playing group.	All	Annually	People & Culture Team
Complete reporting and benchmarking exercises for Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) and provide transparency in our communication around this data and our journey to improve	All	Ongoing	General Manager People & Culture Team
Gather demographics via onboarding and a survey of Club employees to inform decision making and measure progress.	All	2025 Ongoing	People & Culture Team
Participation in AFL Industry Diversity Dashboard quarterly to help direct focus	All	Quarterly	General Manager People & Culture Team
Introduce, drive and facilitate diversity, inclusion and empowerment through the Club Strategy, Guiding Principles and Club Policies.			
Ensure Guiding Principles and Club Strategy are designed to drive belonging and inclusivity.	All	2025-36	CEO
Remain an active member of the Champions of Change Coalition Sport group. Listen, Learn and Lead with Action across the Club.	Gender	2027	CEO
Establish and develop a Women's Working Group to ensure minority groups are represented, supported, and to guide our efforts throughout the Club.	Gender	2027	People & Culture Team
Establish and develop a Multicultural Working Group to ensure minority groups are represented, supported and to guide our efforts across the Club.	Multicultural	2027	People & Culture Team
Review Club's policies to ensure Diversity and Inclusion responsibilities and processes are clear and understood and that they support increased inclusion and diversity.	All	Ongoing	People & Culture Team
Review and update our Member's Code of Conduct regarding expected behaviour and communicate both internally and externally	All	2027	People & Culture Team
Update auto-signatures and other outward-facing material, eg job advertisements, induction material, event registrations, course registrations, social media posts etc to be inclusive and provide the option for people to use inclusive descriptors including pronouns and flags.	All	2026	Marketing, Communications
Promote the accessibility features of the Mission Whitten Oval precinct.			
Highlight accessibility and inclusive features of Mission Whitten to our members and fans.	All	2027	Media & Communications
Update MWO marketing material to showcase accessible and inclusive features including prayer room / parents' room / cultural spaces / gender neutral bathrooms.	All	2027	Marketing & Communications
Look at ways to identify our members who have accessibility needs and share information on our MWO precinct with them to encourage engagement with the facility and the Club.	All	2027	Membership,Marketing & Communications
Inclusion of Pride Flag within MWO precinct.	LGBTQI+	2026	General Manager People & Culture Team
Join the Sunflower Program and adopt use of it on game days to support those with a hidden disability. Make the invisible, visible at MWO Reception area for those entering the precinct.	People with a disability	2026	Consumer Team & General Manager People & Culture Team



Kevin Heinze Grow Supporting the Club environment through routine plant care and maintenance.

ACTIONS

EDUCATION & PATHWAYS

	DIVERSITY PILLAR	COMPLETED IN	RESPONSIBILITY
Create opportunities to increase awareness and provide learning and development opportunities for our employees, players and the broader community on the focus areas highlighted in this DIAP.			
Deliver ongoing training and education for staff and players, including WBCF gender equity training every two years across all areas of the club, including administration, football departments, and playing groups.	All	Ongoing	People & Culture Business Partner
Provide Unconscious Bias and Sexual Harassment training for all employees across Admin and Football.	All	Annually	People & Culture Team
Expand employment and training opportunities for people with disability by building on the existing work with Kevin Heinze Grow.	People with a disability	Ongoing	General Manager People & Culture Team
Seek regular feedback from employees with disability to ensure we continue to strengthen accessibility, inclusion, and the overall workplace experience.	People with a disability	Annually	People & Culture Team
Partner with Get Skilled Access to deliver disability awareness education through Sons and Daughters of the West programs.	People with a disability	Ongoing	Western Bulldogs Community Foundation
Continue to fund and support women's development and mentoring programs and succession planning for key leadership roles	Gender	2025 Ongoing	People & Culture Team & AFLW Player Development Manager
Continue to provide pathways and processes for the advancement of women, including in our Football Departments, Management Team, Executive Team and Board.	Gender	Quarterly	People & Culture Team
Continue to support women, particularly those from minority groups, through a variety of community programs including Daughters of the West, Goal, Youth Leadership Project, Leaders of the Pack, the Nallei Jerring Koori Leadership Project and Team Up.	All	Ongoing	Western Bulldogs Community Foundation
Continue to grow equitable and inclusive communities through the delivery of our WBCF programs: Nallei Jerring, GOAL Mentoring, Ahead of the Game, Changing the Game and CALDplay.	All	Ongoing	Western Bulldogs Community Foundation
Continue to use our trusted brand to engage men in meaningful conversations about gender equity, preventing gender-based violence, and promoting healthy masculinities through Sons of the West and Gender Equity sessions.	Gender	Ongoing	Western Bulldogs Community Foundation

Follow a yearly calendar to celebrate and raise awareness for our employees and community on the following days of significance:

- January 26

· International Women's Day

· Cultural Diversity Week

· International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

· Ramadan

· Lunar New Year

· Global Accessibility Awareness Day

· International World Refugee Day

· IDAHOBIT Day

· National Reconciliation Week

· Refugee Week

· NAIDOC Week

· Pride Round AFLW

· Diwali

· 16 Days of Activism / Walk Against Family Violence

· International Day of Persons with Disabilities.



ACTIONS

FOOTBALL

	DIVERSITY PILLAR	COMPLETED IN	RESPONSIBILITY
Strengthen the capability of our playing groups to advocate for our people and community through ongoing education and development			
Deliver equitable access to state-of-the-art indoor field and gym facilities for the women's football program.	Gender	Ongoing	Football Department
Launch our AFLW Education Program which will provide training, networking and career development opportunities for AFLW staff and players via the VU Education Fund	Gender	2025 & 2026	Commercial Team
Conduct Gender Equity Audit with women's program to identify areas that are working, as well as any challenges or gaps. Build into action items for remainder of the DIAP.	All	August 2025	WBCF Head of Programs & General Manager People & Culture Team
Increase player engagement in WBCF programs by presenting opportunities for involvement that support personal development, including facilitating, guest speaking, and mentoring.	All	2025	General Manager Western Bulldogs Community Foundation
Equip playing groups with the knowledge and skills to promote inclusion, respect, and safety through education sessions on Unconscious Bias, Ethical Bystander action, and Sexual Harassment prevention.	All	Ongoing	People & Culture Team
Drive the integration of men's and women's football programs across all levels of the Club and across all available opportunities.	Gender	Ongoing	Football Department

ACTIONS

EVENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

	DIVERSITY PILLAR	COMPLETED IN	RESPONSIBILITY
Strengthen education, celebration, and inspiration across our organisation by leveraging events, communications, and actions			
Review and update Club communications and marketing strategies to ensure equitable and appropriate representation of people across gender, ability, cultural diversity, and identity in all collateral and events.	Gender	Annual	Events, Marketing and Communications Team
Recognising key dates of significance in the calendar each year celebrating gender diversity, gender equality, LGBTQI+, multicultural and people living with a disability.	All	Ongoing	People & Culture Team
Continue to publicly advocate and lead conversations for equality.	Gender	2025 & 2026	Board and CEO
Conduct accessibility audits on all digital channels to find ways in which we can improve accessibility for consumers of our content.	People with a disability	October 2025	Communications and Marketing Team
Strengthen our position as an industry leader by delivering inclusive and engaging game day experiences at our home AFL and AFLW matches, including Pride Round and Cultural Heritage Round.	LGBTQIA+ & Multiculturalism	Ongoing	Whole Club
Strengthen and promote safe, confidential reporting channels that support employees, members, fans, and players to identify and report sexism, racism, homophobia, misogyny, and other unacceptable behaviour.	All	Ongoing	Marketing and People & Culture

RAP

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

In 2024, we proudly launched our second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, driven by our vision to build a culture of equality, respect and recognition of the cultures, histories and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians, and to stand as a beacon to the community around us.

This includes creating an inclusive and diverse workplace, where shared history is acknowledged, negative stereotypes are removed, and the road forward is clear, using our unique reach and influence to light the way to a better and brighter future for all Australians.

Possessing a strong societal voice, we will use our influence in sport to educate our members and fans, staff, players, partners and other stakeholders about First Nations cultures, to create an environment of inclusiveness and harmony for all Australians.

We strive to be a national leader on the road to reconciliation, a strong advocate for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander matters of national significance, and a Club which celebrates the achievements of First Nations people.

Please go to our [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) for further details.



Team Up Western Bulldogs Community Foundation Program 2026

Smoking Ceremony at Cultural Diversity Week Event 2024



Cultural Diversity Week Events 2024



AFLW Pride Game 2024

CONCLUSION

The 2026-2029 Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan reflects both who we are as a Club and who we aspire to be. We understand that our reach and influence carry a genuine responsibility to lead - not only on the field, but in the lives of the players, staff, members, supporters and communities we are privileged to represent.

This plan builds on the foundations laid by our first Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and on the many milestones that have shaped our journey - from fielding our first women's side in 1947 to transforming Mission Whitten Oval into a home that welcomes all abilities, cultures and genders. Across our four focus areas of gender, multiculturalism, LGBTQI+ and people with a disability, and our four pillars of Governance & Strategy, Education & Pathways, Football and Events & Communications, we have set clear and accountable actions that will turn our commitment into measurable change.

We do not see this work as a destination, but as an ongoing journey of learning, listening

and improvement. We remain committed to an intersectional approach that recognises the overlapping and interconnected nature of people's identities and experiences, and to progressing this plan in parallel with our Reconciliation Action Plan as we build a culture of equality, respect and belonging.

Delivering this plan is a shared responsibility. It will draw on the collective effort of our Board, Executive, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, staff, players and partners, supported by the engagement of our members and fans. Together, we will continue to harness the transformative power of sport to foster a connected, equitable and empowered community where every person feels seen, respected and that they belong.

While significant progress has been made, there is certainly more to do and we look forward to furthering this journey with our entire community.



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