

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

DIGITAL INCITE SUPPLEMENT

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The Australian Library and Information Association acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters, cultures and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and to Elders past and present.

Cover image: Moreland City Council

INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the digital supplement to the July/August 2021 issue of *INCITE*. This year's Presidential theme, Diversity, is explored in this special edition.

Thank you to the many university, public, school and special libraries who responded to the ALIA LIS Workforce Diversity Survey. This information helps to build a picture of what is happening on the ground in your libraries with regards to workforce diversity. Initial analysis shows that while diversity is considered by many institutions, there is still work to be done to implement significant and ongoing changes in recruitment, training, and setting and measuring of KPIs.

From your feedback, overall, our workforce is somewhat diverse but less diverse than the general population. Organisations are starting to measure workforce diversity in a number of categories, with First Nations and gender being the most commonly measured. This shows that more work needs to be done in the other diverse categories – people living with a disability, LGBTQIA+, those who speak languages other than English at home – and there is still a high percentage of organisations that do not measure workforce diversity at all.

Comments include statements such as 'we have lots of policies but not a lot of action'.

I am delighted to see contributors sharing best practices in the promotion and support of workforce diversity in the library and information sector. The building of a diverse and inclusive workforce starts long before recruitment – it needs to be embedded in the strategic direction of the organisation, in the staffing structure and progression planning, in the ways that the job advertisements are written, and in the partnerships needed to reach diverse applicants. What is also clear from your feedback, is that ongoing peer support after recruitment is required to help create sustainable change in the workplace. Recruitment of diverse staff needs to be complemented by cultural competency/awareness training across the whole of organisation in order to make a truly inclusive environment.

An area that I am currently working on in my own organisation is leading a gender equity strategy. In the action area of leadership, the organisation has pledged to ensure that the workplace culture, practice, policy, planning and programs demonstrate gender

equity and respect. This will be done by reviewing and updating the equal employment opportunity policy and other relevant policies, and ultimately having a fair and equitable gender balance. Another action in this strategy is to incorporate gender inclusiveness in infrastructure and facilities planning, including community support for inclusive initiatives. How wonderful would it be to see inclusive design of library spaces as a standard?

What does workforce diversity look like in an ideal world? A diverse workforce would have a strong representation of women and gender diverse peoples, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, neurodiverse and all other diverse categories. This workforce would be nurtured and supported by providing an environment that is inclusive, safe and where all staff are treated with respect and dignity. That would be my ideal.

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LIS WORKFORCE DIVERSITY SURVEY

75%
of respondents said that creating a more diverse workforce was very important

28%
of respondents said that they did not measure any form of workforce diversity

72%
of respondents said that they did not have any diversity measures set as KPIs

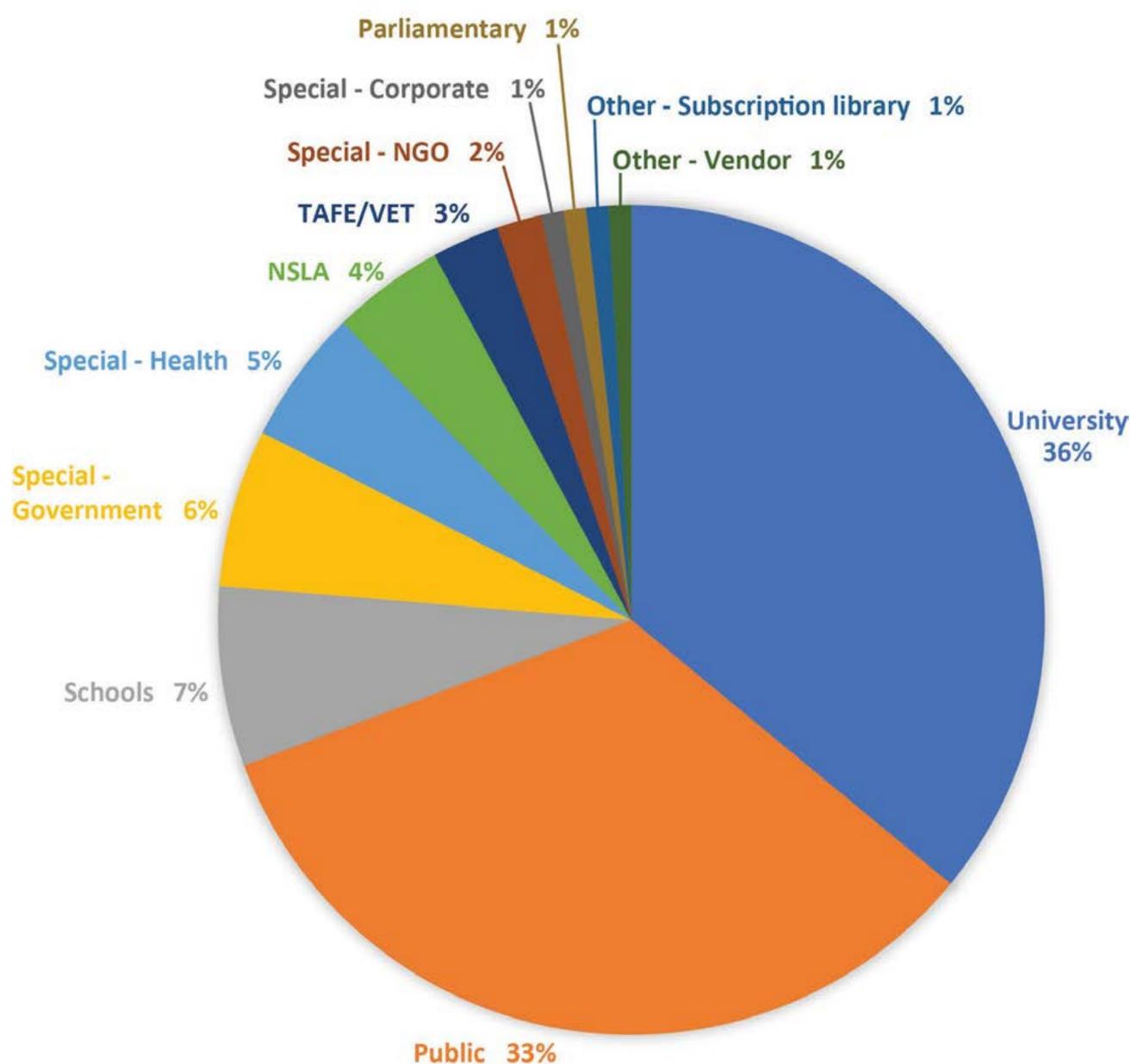
In 2020, the ALIA Board of Directors set, as the first of its strategic priorities: 'Supporting a resilient, diverse workforce: attracting and developing talented, committed individuals from different cultural backgrounds, who will have the strength and agility to navigate a rapidly changing workplace.'

To support this strategic priority, and as a feature of this digital supplement of *INCITE*, a short survey was devised with the purpose of gauging the library and information sector's current approach to recruiting and supporting a diverse workforce.

From 22 April to 31 May, ALIA called for responses to its LIS Workforce Diversity Survey, through targeted emails to HR departments that support library and information services, and through broad promotions across ALIA's communications channels.

In total, 114 responses were received. The public and university library each provided one third of responses, with the remaining third of responses coming from national, state, school, TAFE/VET and special libraries.

Who responded



RESULTS

We have considered the results in three sets: overall responses (including public and university library responses), public library responses and university responses, as the highest number of returns came from these sectors.

Question 1: How would you describe the workforce in your organisation?

Most respondents (56%) said that their library workforce was somewhat diverse – though less diverse than the general population. Diversity was higher for academic libraries (66%).

Question 2: Does your organisation measure diversity in any of the following categories?

More than 50% of all respondents said that they measured their workforce diversity for First Nations (61%) and gender (54%).

The next two ranking categories of diversity were people living with disability (39%) and those who spoke a language other than English (LOTE) at home (34%).

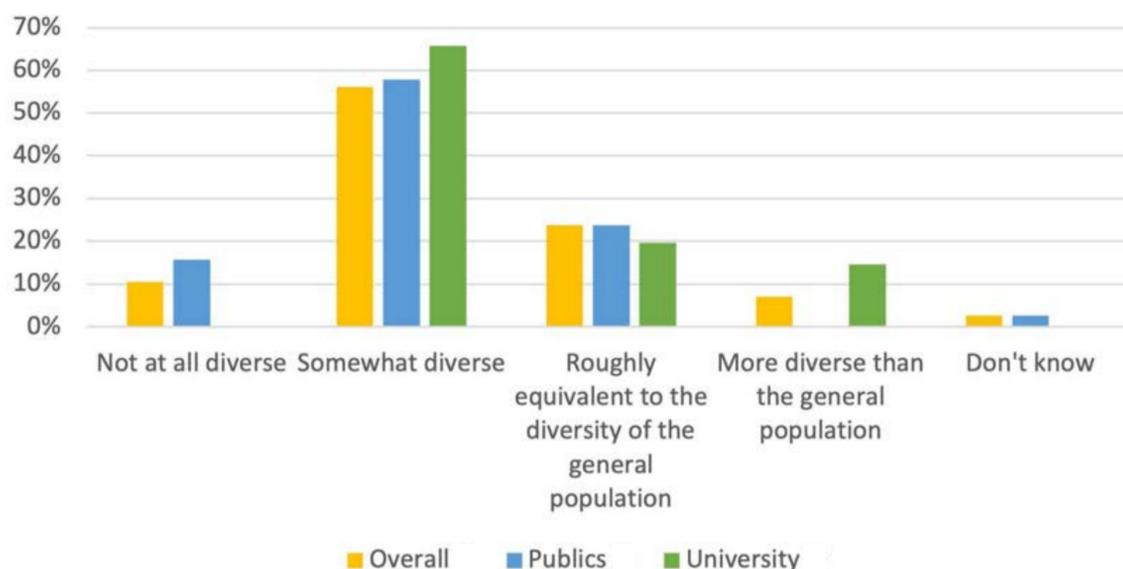
Fewer than 25% of responses measured any of the remaining categories of diversity – with the notable exception that 35% of university library responses that said that they considered their LGBTQIA+ staff when measuring their workforce diversity.

Finally, 28% of all responses said that their organisation does not measure workforce diversity.

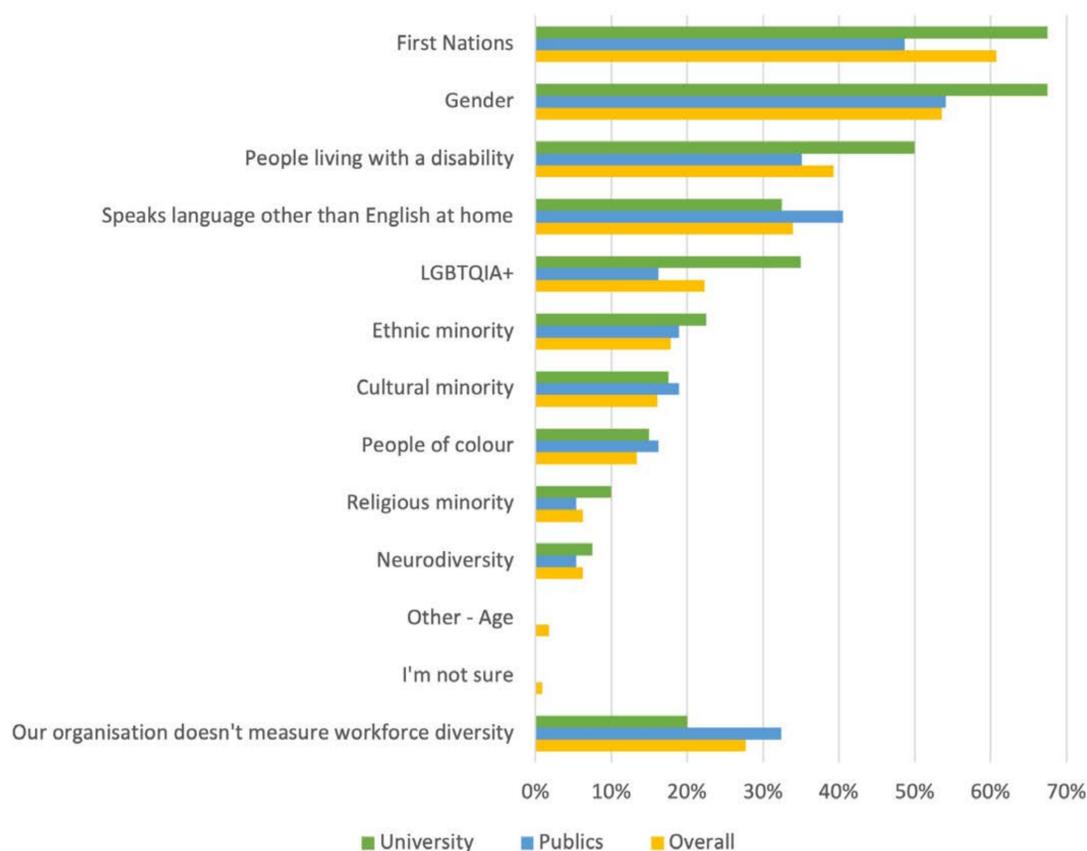
Question 3: When evaluating your workforce, do you set diversity as a KPI in any of these categories?

Overall, 28% of all respondents said that they set diversity in any category as a KPI. University libraries were higher at 40% and public libraries lower at 16%.

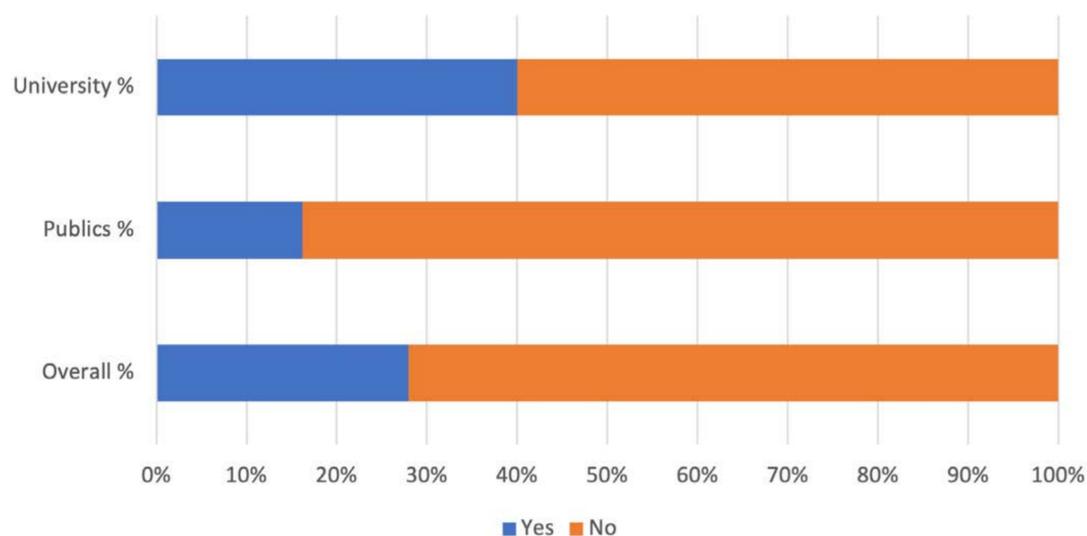
How would you describe the workforce in your organisation?



How does your organisation measure workforce diversity?



When evaluating your workforce, do you set diversity as a KPI in any of the above categories?



Question 4: How important is creating a more diverse workforce when making recruitment decisions?

The majority of respondents (74%) said that creating a more diverse workforce was 'somewhat or very important', which rose to 81% for university libraries.

Respondents further elaborated with comments:

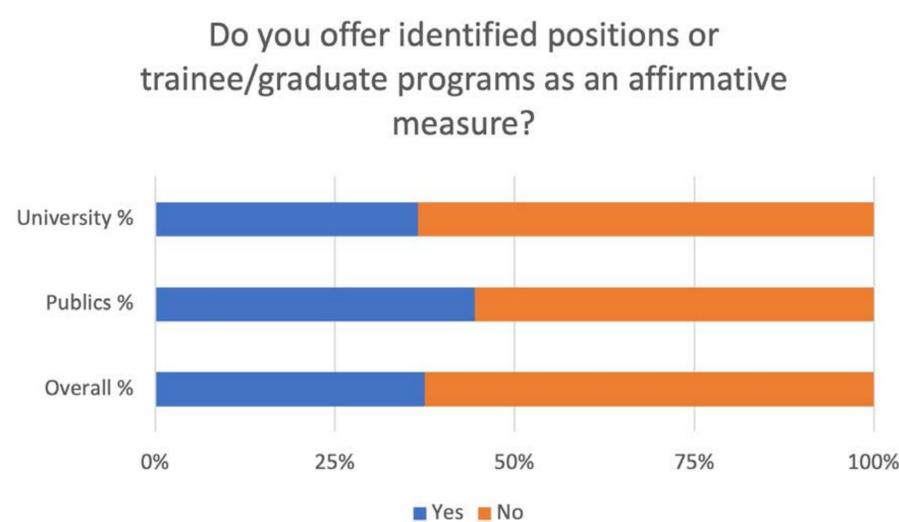
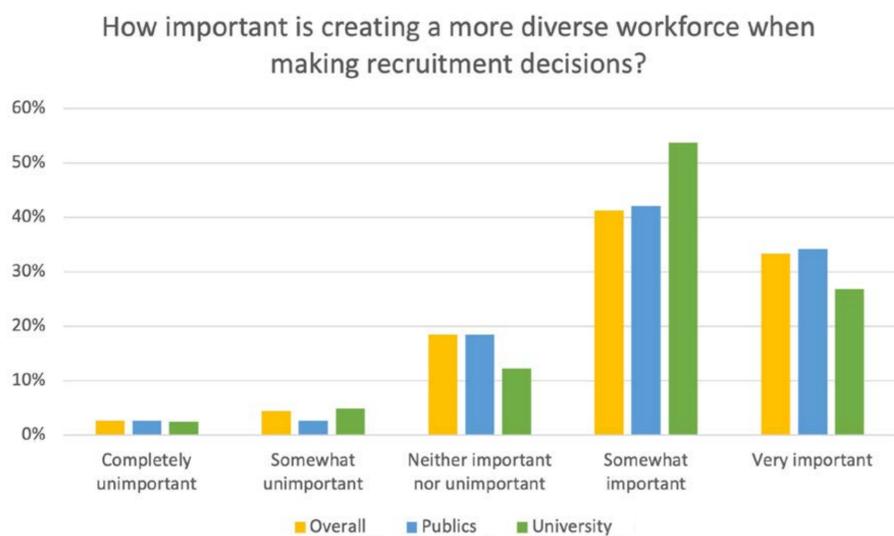
- 'There is a basic statement about diversity in our recruitment policy but it does not provide specifics around race/gender/sexuality etc.'
- 'There are lots of policies but there is not a lot of positive action.'

- 'We do not use a formal mechanism to measure workforce diversity in our library service, but it is highly desirable to recruit candidates who reflect our diverse community and who also meet the skill set of the position. Recent recruitment has allowed for our workforce to include more gender diverse, neurodiverse, and language diverse individuals to join our team which has provided a new energy and excitement for our library team and the future direction of our library service.'

Question 5: Do you offer identified positions or trainee/graduate programs as an affirmative measure?

More than a third (37.5%) of all respondents said that they offered affirmative measures in the form of identified positions or trainee/graduate programs. The rate was 44% for public libraries.

Of those that answered yes, 52% indicated that these were in the form of Indigenous trainee programs, whilst others mentioned identified roles for people living with disability or social disadvantage.



DIFFERENT LIBRARY SECTORS

It is notable that public and university libraries were best represented in responses, as well as a proportionally large number of National and State libraries. It is fair to say that the bigger the library team, the more practical and imperative it is to consider the diversity of the workforce, especially when recruiting staff. For special and school libraries, many of which would have a team of fewer than five staff, diversity would be considered within the context of their wider institutional diversity policies, rather than at the library team level.

When considering the responses of public and university libraries, there are a few notable differences. Overall university libraries reported greater diversity in staff than public libraries, most notably having higher responses to being more diverse than the general population, and having no universities responding that they were not at all diverse. Interestingly looking to affirmative action, public libraries offered more trainee programs and identified positions.

MEASURING DIVERSITY

These results suggest that many libraries consider their workforce diversity in terms of First Nations and gender, but less in terms of people from other minority cultural, ethnic or racial backgrounds. Part of this can be attributed to the long-standing difficulties when considering how we define multiculturalism, often reduced to the catch-all of 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD), and indeed we see this by the comparatively high number of responses that consider

whether their staff speak a language other than English at home.

Comparing public and university libraries, much higher percentage of public libraries said that they did not measure any workforce diversity. This was also reflected in the number of public libraries that did not set diversity as a KPI when evaluating their workforce. There were also differences in what was measured. More university libraries measured people in their workforce with disability than those who speak a LOTE, whereas the converse is true for public libraries. It should be noted, however, that this may reflect alternate approaches to measuring cultural diversity with university libraries reporting higher rates of measurement for ethnic and religious minorities than public libraries.

It is interesting that less than 50% of organisations measure their workforce in terms of people living with disability. Whilst staff are often not obliged to disclose whether they have a disability, it is still perhaps surprising to see that so few organisations measure this.

LGBTQIA+ staff were not commonly measured for workforce diversity data, less surprising given privacy concerns. However, it's interesting to note that this was still substantially higher in university libraries than in public libraries.

Finally, the low number of libraries that consider neurodiverse staff in workforce diversity indicates that this is still a relatively new area of understanding and awareness for employers.

VALUES VERSUS PRACTICES IN CREATING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

What is perhaps most striking from these results is that, whilst around 75% of respondents said that creating a

more diverse workforce was somewhat or very important, 28% of respondents said that they did not measure any form of workforce diversity, and 72% of respondents said that they did not have any diversity measures set as KPIs for their workforce.

This is also reflected in the comments provided, indicating that there is often disconnect between what is official policy, and what is implemented in practice. Setting KPIs, collecting baseline and subsequent data to track progress and identifying and implementing actions are all needed if progress is to be made.

TRAINEE PROGRAMS

With more than one third of libraries providing trainee programs overall, and more so for public libraries, it would be useful to consider the longer-term impact of these programs, particularly in whether they are a sustainable initiative to create a more diverse workforce.

CONCLUSIONS

Whilst these results are indicative rather than comprehensive, they do indicate that there is a notable awareness in library employers of the importance of diversity in their workforce, and that there are some initiatives in place to recruit staff to create a more diverse workforce. However more work is needed to support libraries to change good into intentions into measurable (and measured) progress.



PAINTING A PICTURE ABOUT **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER** EMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIAN LIBRARIES

The research report on the *National Survey on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment in Australian Libraries* conducted in 2020/21 – which will be released in mid 2021 – will paint a picture of the state of the library sector in Australia in relation to Indigenous employment.

Over the past year, I have been involved in leading a research project, through Jumbunna Research, University of Technology Sydney, funded by ALIA, to identify the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed across Australian libraries, as well as to understand the current types of employment across a range of library contexts and services.

As part of this work I formed and worked with an Indigenous Advisory Expert Working Group which included Lesley Acres, State Library of QLD, Rebecca Bateman, National Library of Australia, Nathan Sentance, Australian Museum, Ryan Stoker, University of Sydney and Damien Webb, State Library of NSW, to guide the project and to ensure that the invitations to participate were circulated widely.

The research has involved a survey component as well an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in a semi-structured interview (a research yarn) via telephone or Zoom.

I am currently working on finalising the findings of the research and will

share information widely on the major themes in a research report. The aims of the report will be to:

- Map out the current rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across Australian libraries and provide information about the location of this employment across states, territories and as well as across public, academic, and school (or other) specialist libraries. It will also provide data on what the current trends are in the types of Indigenous Australian employment across various library roles, whether they be as library assistant roles, paraprofessional or professional roles.
- Report on the major themes identified from a series of interviews that were conducted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the sector. The aim of these interviews was to gain insights about the experiences of Indigenous Australian peoples working in Australian libraries, including information on workplace conditions.

The results and findings of the research will provide opportunities for the sector to reflect on issues such as barriers to employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian libraries. It will also identify opportunities for supporting the ongoing workforce development needs of Indigenous Australian people across

Australian libraries and recommend pathways to support ALIA's *Workforce diversity trend report 2019* goal of doubling the number of Indigenous library workers.

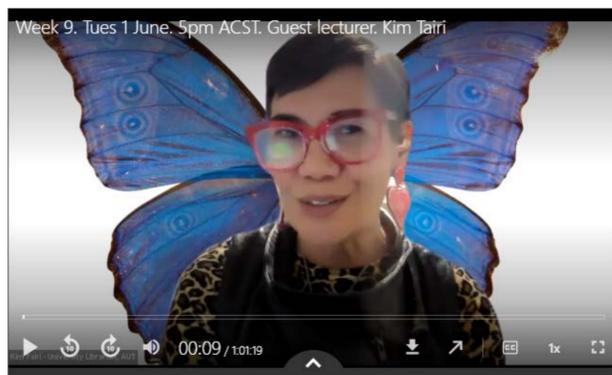
I look forward to sharing the research findings widely with the sector in the coming months and contributing to the important dialogue that must follow to address the outcomes that have been identified.

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank the participants of the survey and the interviews for their time to contribute to the research and thank members of the Expert Working Group for their guidance and support. Thanks also to ALIA for the support for the project by the 2019/20 ALIA Research Grant. This study has been approved in line with the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee *UTS HREC REF NO. ETH20-4964*.

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Kim Tairi presenting to students as a guest lecturer

ACKNOWLEDGING, VALUING AND MAKING SPACE FOR DIVERSITY IN LIS EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Librarians, records managers and archivists serve diverse people and keep diverse stories. LIS students vary in Indigeneity, language spoken at home, country of origin, physical ability, sexuality, economic background and life experience and choices.

Traditionally, university courses have not reflected this diversity. The voices students hear, the things they read and the topics they cover, all tend to normalise a white middle-class, middle-aged, able-bodied English-speaking perspective.

In 2021, the foundational course for University of South Australia's information management postgraduates was re-designed. This provided opportunity to align the course with the University's *Enterprise25 Strategic Plan 2018-2025* which values diversity and social justice. Here are some things I implemented:

PROMOTING AND MAKING SPACE FOR INDIGENOUS VOICES AND KNOWLEDGE

- Two Indigenous professionals, Kirsten Thorpe and Kim Tairi, provided guest lectures. They were invited to talk on whatever they believed foundational students needed to know, whether it fitted the curriculum or not.
- Where possible, Indigenous perspective is provided, using work by an Indigenous creator. For example, in the history topic, students are reminded that historical accounts of libraries in Australia value settler knowledge not Indigenous knowledge. They also read about current impact of historic collecting

of Indigenous knowledge by libraries worldwide.

- 'Kaya Nganyang kwerl Kathryn Greenhill'. My first words to my students are a greeting in language of the Noongar people from South Western Australia where I was born.
- When logging on to our course page, the first thing that students now see is Acknowledgement of Country.

FOREGROUNDING MISSING VOICES

- In Week 1, students read the *ALIA Workforce Diversity Trend Report 2019*. Statistics showing extreme lack of diversity are discussed. Students are invited to consider in future course readings who is speaking, the presumed audience, who is being represented and who is being excluded.
- Topics covered in the course now include human rights, the Sustainable Development Goals, equity, antidiscrimination, diversity, inclusion, non-neutrality, decolonisation, co-design, Indigenous cultural protocols, universal design, care, self-care ethics and critical librarianship. Where possible, students read work by people impacted. For example, work by Nikki Anderson, a librarian who lives with disability, in the inclusion topic.
- Diversity is not just a specialist, separate topic, to be trotted out for special weeks. I try to select readings and voices that are diverse for all topics, favouring Indigenous voices first, then the work of people of colour, women and economically excluded geographical areas.

ACKNOWLEDGING DIVERSITY AND INCORPORATING IT AS STRENGTH

- My introduction movie lets students know I value the diversity that they bring to the course. I invite them to share this to strengthen the learning environment.
- I acknowledge that students have different backgrounds and time or ability to study, mentioning that readings and assessments are 'one size fits most', which may not always work for them.
- I specifically name anxiety and depression as something extremely common in university students, not their fault, and suggest strategies and support for this.
- The first assessment students submit includes their learning goals for the course. Students are rarely asked their aims, with tutors and students treating everyone as though they are there to get high marks. Some students only want, or have capacity, to pass. This approach acknowledges people with family responsibilities, economic issues, dealing with health issues or discrimination at the same time as they study.

Increasing coverage of diversity in university coursework is both a social justice issue and a smart way to strengthen and improve student knowledge and outcomes.

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JUMPING HURDLES: 'HURDLE WORDING' AND HIRING FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Is your library or information service attracting an inclusive and diverse applicant pool? According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia is increasingly diverse (bit.ly/3x9TFGq) yet as the *ALIA Workforce Diversity Trend Report 2019* indicates, the library and information sector is a largely homogenous profession, characterised by a white, middle-class staffing base. In terms of staffing, we may often create a workplace 'bubble', not generally reflecting the diversities of the communities we serve. But what can we do if we are not getting a diverse applicant pool to choose from when hiring?

Hiring for a diverse workplace begins long before the applicant pool is reviewed to choose finalists for interviews. It starts as early as articulating the strategic direction and core values of your organization and continues through the selection of the search committee and writing the job advertisement. Job advertisements and hiring practices represent an outwards reflection on the employer that speaks to our values and priorities and how we see our community. The wording of the job advertisement can also convey subtle cues about a specific organisation – such as what diversity and inclusion mean in terms

of the community served, but also what this means in terms of the workplace dynamics.

You will often see advertisements including words like 'we are an equal opportunity employer'. However, later in the advert you might see that applicants have to have a C-class (car) state-based driving licence. Take for example a library officer position in a central Melbourne library service. At first glance you might not think that this is not an unreasonable expectation to have a licence, but is this truly a requirement of the job? What if the applicant only has a motorbike licence? Or, what if the individual lives in Melbourne central just down the road and uses public transport and so does not have a licence? Is the applicant being hired to be the sole driver of a delivery van? Is driving a primary duty of the job? Or is this a 'just in case' request that can be waived if the applicant is a strong fit in other aspects of the job description? If it is optional, can the wording be clear that this is not a core requirement, or can it be omitted from the job advertisement completely?

Some job advertisements note that all applicants must pass a medical exam, or must be able to lift 11 kilograms. An applicant on prescription medication could feel pressured to explain a medical condition that does not affect

17%
of the library positions
advertised welcomed people
with a disability

20%
of library job ads appearing had
some kind of 'hurdle wording'

16%
of ads specifically stated
that people from diverse
backgrounds, sexualities and
ages were welcome

their work abilities. Or what happens if the applicant can only lift 10 kilograms? Will there be a weightlifting segment of the interview? In reality, is lifting heavy weight a work requirement that is a 'deal breaker'? Potential applicants might decide not to apply – even though in reality, they may seldom or never need to lift 11 kilos by themselves!

These are examples of what we call 'hurdle wording'; wording or expectations that may appear in a job advertisement that are not related to the core requirements of the position.

We call this a 'hurdle' as this wording might prevent otherwise well qualified candidates from applying, thus reducing the number of applicants and the diversity of candidate pool. In Muir, Thompson and Qayyum's 2019 study of job ads, only 17% of the library positions advertised welcomed people with a disability and approximately 20% of library job ads appearing had some kind of 'hurdle wording'. Only 16% of ads specifically stated that people from diverse backgrounds, sexualities and ages were welcome.

Sometimes the wording might not appear to be 'hurdle wording' at first glance. For instance, a job advertisement might mention that 'reasonable adjustments may be made for the successful candidate', but it is not always clear to hopeful applicants what this includes. Does this mean that 'reasonable adjustments' can be made to the application paperwork and process? At the interview stage? Or only once the applicant receives an offer? The advertisement may not mention what a 'reasonable adjustment' is, relying on applicants to argue their case, which may be uncomfortable for someone seeking a first job or who already feels the outsider as a diverse applicant. Or alternatively, a job advertisement might require 'strong English language proficiency'. This may deter some non-English-first-language speakers from applying due to confidence or cultural factors which means that they may not see their language skills as being of a high level.

As Thompson, Jaeger and Copeland (forthcoming) note in *A Tripartite Approach to Designing an Inclusive Hiring Experience and an Inclusive Workplace*, hiring for diversity starts well before a candidate begins, and even before the position description and job advertisement are imagined.

Think carefully about whether the wording creates unnecessary barriers. Here are some recommendations for hiring for diversity and inclusion in your organisation:

- **Look at your wording.** Does the wording of the advertisement reflect the core duties, or do you have 'hurdle wording' that could create barriers to diverse applicants?
- **Think about your community.** Where are you posting the job advertisement? Can the invitation for applicants be posted on an array of social media pages or in publications hosted by targeted diverse groups?
- **Consider your language.** Is the advertisement clear, and are expectations clearly outlined? Is there jargon that might create uncertainty to new information professionals as to whether or not they qualify?
- **Speak to your vibrancy.** Avoid cliched terms like 'we reflect our vibrant community' and instead clearly outline what you do around diversity and inclusion. If you offer flexible start and finish times, clearly indicate this to applicants. Welcome applicants from broad backgrounds with wording such as 'Library XYZ is committed to creating a workplace that represents diversity of ability/disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, national origin, background, experience and perspective. Doing so is intrinsic to our mission and improves the civic experience for all.'
- **Avoid the age and gender game.** Language like 'fast moving' and 'guy-brarian' immediately presents an image of your organisation that may deter otherwise qualified applicants from applying. What does your language say about your organisation and your staff?

- **Learn about diversity and inclusion:** Knowing what diversity and inclusion is can impact on how we speak about and frame diversity in job advertisements and recruitment. Look at how your organisation speaks about diversity and inclusion, such as in your Accessibility Action Plans (bit.ly/3g4ldGj); partner with providers in your community to run information sessions; and read and engage with articles or training in the LIS profession.

We can always improve our hiring practices. The way that we frame the advertisement and the language and wording that we use can have real implications for our hiring – and through this, for our diversity in the profession.

Interested in reading more? We consider LIS job advertisements in depth in 'The Diversity We Seek': researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/publications/the-diversity-we-see-a-document-analysis-of-diversity-and-inclus

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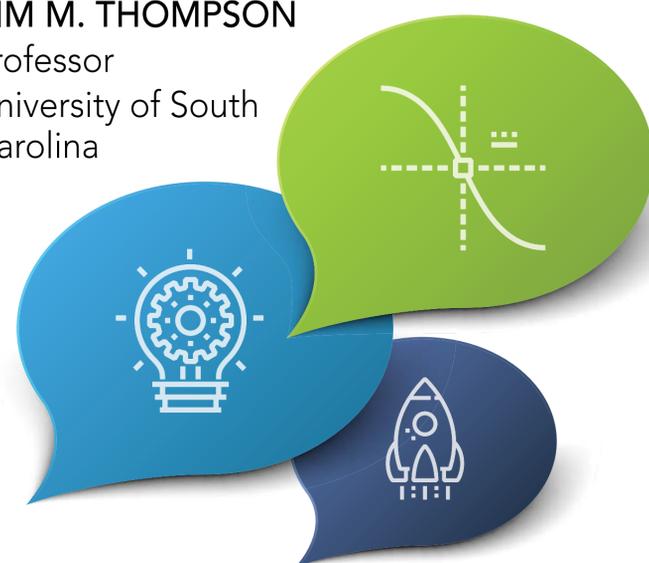


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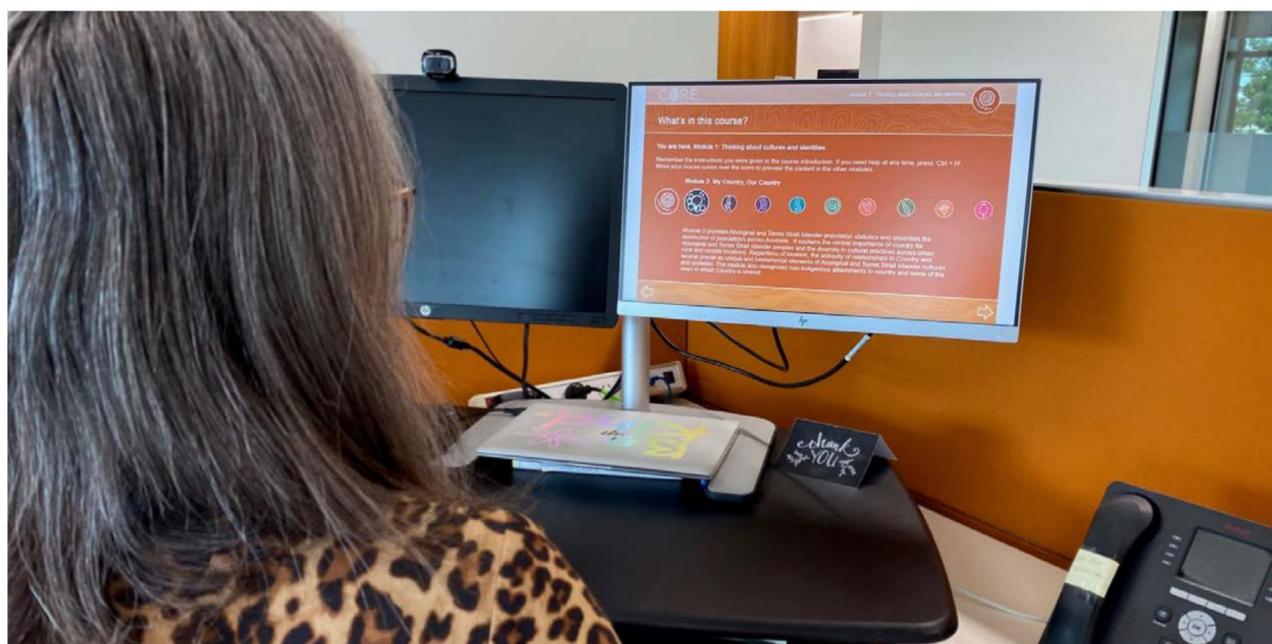
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CONNECTING PERSONALLY TO CULTURALLY SAFE LIBRARIES



State Library of Queensland staff are committed to ensuring cultural safety is demonstrated through everything that the State Library does, from delivering collections and services to the development of public programs and administration of grant funding. A fresh approach to building staff cultural capability came with the launch of the Culturally Safe Libraries program in 2019 as part of a national approach for all NSLA libraries.

Over two years, all State Library staff applied themselves to more than 10 hours of learning activities grounded in the AIATSIS online cultural learning platform. The course includes topics ranging from consideration of how culture shapes our national identity, to a historical review of Commonwealth Indigenous Affairs and recognising pathways to self-determination and autonomy for First Nations communities.

While the online content ensures State Library staff understand the many facets of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history in Australia, the opportunity to connect with each other

through several Talking Circles and reflection activities helped staff make a personal investment in cultural safety.

‘I’m now more interested in empowering people to understand their own histories... because the more we understand our history, the better can we understand each other and ourselves, and that’s really the only way forward to any sort of progress when it comes to national identity,’ said Engagement Officer Jacinta Sutton.

Culturally Safe Libraries also provided a platform for State Library staff to focus their attention on strategies to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into their work while also fostering a more supportive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff where they are able to confidently draw strength in their identity, culture and community.

‘We need to reflect and understand the diversity of our backgrounds,’ said Anna Raunik, Executive Director of Content and Client Services. ‘We’re all involved in service delivery. Whether

you’re the person who orders the book or pays the invoice that gets the book in to the building; whether you’re the team responsible for keeping the lights on or engaging with public libraries or creating marketing collateral, the more we know, the more we understand and the better our service delivery can be.’

With the next phase of the Culturally Safe Libraries project commencing later this year, staff have the opportunity to decide which pathway to take as they continue their cultural learning journey. Some have dedicated themselves to further research, while others will take a more culturally competent approach to their work.

‘The team that I work for is called Queensland Memory, and you don’t have Queensland memory without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives,’ said Gavin Bannerman, Director of Queensland Memory. ‘They are really what’s unique and central to an understanding of Queensland. We take very seriously how we collect those perspectives in an appropriate way which empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we’re also very mindful of how that material can be accessed, reused, and how meaning can be made from those collections. One of the starting points is for staff to be culturally competent.’

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NOT YOUR AVERAGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Vision Australia Library is not your average public library, evidenced by its lack of a physical library branch, and its emphasis on accessible content, including braille and audio. It is a unique service, that champions its mission of supporting people who are blind or have low vision to 'live the life they choose'.

Vision Australia has a diverse and inclusive workforce and supports the employment of people who have low vision. This starts prior to recruitment, and continues on through onboarding new staff, creating a work environment that encourages growth and career development, and provision of advanced assistive technology. The staff aren't only human, at Vision Australia Library, there are more than a few library dogs. These dogs support the librarians who support the blindness and low vision community. In fact, maybe they're the original library dogs.

The role of technology in a diverse workplace cannot be overstated. For Vision Australia this means providing accessible hardware such as large print keyboards, braille and embossing machines and software such as JAWS and ZoomText screen readers. Programs

and applications, including client management systems and catalogues, are chosen based on their accessibility credentials so that all staff and members can make use of the technology as their job requires. Job Access, an initiative of the federal government, supports Vision Australia Library by subsidising some of the associated costs of technology.

A visit to any Vision Australia site will be an education in accessible office design. Safe and navigable spaces are created by use of smart design, high colour contrasting palettes and signage in accessible formats. Braille, audio, and tactile displays share information. All offices are equipped with facilities for the many dog guides that accompany their handlers. Library clients wanting some one-on-one library support can receive this over the phone, with a librarian or technology expert. Clients can also choose to visit one of the offices nationally to have demonstrations of library players or get support with library needs.

Vision Australia assists people who are blind or have a low vision to gain skills that will support them in education or employment. Vision Australia Library offers traineeships for people wanting to

build their skills and gain qualifications in the library field. Over the course of three years, trainees acquire their Diploma in Library and Information Services and often move into other public libraries to continue their careers. The reward is twofold: supporting career starters to launch themselves into work, and supporting library clients with advice from staff who have lived experienced of disability, blindness or low vision.

Vision Australia Library continues to adapt to the needs of our community and support their reading for learning and leisure. Vision Australia Library can also support other public libraries to ensure their spaces are accessible so that every client can read the way that they want. For more information, please visit the Vision Australia website (visionaustralia.org/library) or call Sarah Bloedorn on (03) 9864 9486.

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UNDERTAKING INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

In 2019, the Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) Shared Leadership Program produced a report called *Who do we think we are? Understanding diversity in the Victorian public library workforce*, which aimed to evaluate the current state of diversity in the Victorian public library workforce.

Among its key findings was that there is a broad lack of representation within libraries, particularly of LGBTQI+ people, people with a disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people. Ageism is an issue; library qualifications are seen as a barrier to hiring and advancement; and many staff felt that their organisations were not doing enough to ensure that diversity and inclusion was prioritised during recruitment processes.

But why is this important? The report noted that diversity and inclusion is incredibly important to the public library sector – with inclusive workplaces engendering a sense of pride and belonging.

Moreland City Libraries hold inclusion as an organisational value, and have been undertaking measures to ensure that its staff reflect the diversity of the community we serve.

In early 2021, Moreland City

Libraries found itself with 12 roles to advertise and the Library Leadership Group saw it as an ideal opportunity to undertake an inclusive recruitment process that would increase diversity within our workforce.

The twelve roles included five library officers (Band 3 level), four library technicians (Band 4 level) and three librarians (Band 5 level).

Some of the tactical approaches we took included:

- Leadership discussions. Moreland's Library Leadership group discussed our inclusive hiring priorities such as ensuring our workforce reflects the cultural makeup of our community, and that experience was valid in place of library qualifications. While the Library Leadership Group is supportive of diversity in hiring, it was helpful to have the conversation up front and ensure we were all on the same page from the outset as to what we were trying to achieve.
- Form hiring committees. Rather than individual team leaders leading recruitment of staff for their branches, we had one group hiring the library officers together, another doing library technicians and another

hiring librarians. This was to ensure we could see the diversity of the candidate pool at each band, something which cannot be seen with separate recruitment processes. As part of our commitment to this, we also invited a member of Moreland City Council's social inclusion team to join a recruitment panel, which provided a non-library perspective.

- Being clear in recruitment ads that certain skills and experience – while not essential to do the role – would be looked upon favourably. 'Ability to speak community languages' was listed as a favourable skill in all the recruitment ads. We also noted that library experience was not essential.
- Marketing widely. While we did utilise library channels for advertising, including internally and via the PLV mailing list, we put some effort into listing the job ads more broadly. We listed the library officer roles on Ethical Jobs and ArtsHub, and sent out the listings to a local Disability Employment Service agency and many of our community partners, such as Neighbourhood Houses, to request that they share with their networks as well.

- Running group interviews. For our library officer roles we ran group interviews which enabled us to interview dozens of candidates easily across one day, where a typical panel style interview would see us undertake half a dozen interviews only across one or two days. The group interviews allowed us to really test the values and attitude fit of staff, as well as digital confidence. It was especially good to see how applicants with no library experience would fare in 'library tasks' like customer service and tech help. It gave us a strong insight into how the candidate would perform in the role, which panel interviews don't always do.

So, how did we fare? Most importantly, the new staff hires brought a varied and focussed skill set including amazing customer service experience and digital proficiency. They are

community-minded, have outgoing personalities and demonstrated a passion for libraries. Happily, they were also an excitingly diverse group.

While it's uncomfortable to consider staff based on their 'diversity', of the 12 roles we advertised, we recruited several gender diverse people; many who are fluent in community languages – some more than one; a Muslim woman; and several people of colour. Within the library officer (Band 3) roles, half of the hires had never worked in a public library before. Of the library technician (Band 4) roles, one did not have formal library qualifications.

Excitingly, as we progressed along our inclusive hiring journey, the conversations we had with HR and others internally at Council saw a new opportunity arise, and as part of a Council initiative we were offered the opportunity to take part in an Inclusive Traineeship Program. Through that

initiative we have hired a young person with disability as a library trainee.

Inclusive hiring practices should be enshrined in organisational policies and procedures, and increasingly are, but where there are gaps, this case study highlights some tactics that library managers can implement to assist them to diversify their workforce through recruitment.

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TRAINEE LIBRARY OFFICERS AND WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

The City of Newcastle (CN) Libraries offers two targeted Trainee Library Officer opportunities; one specialising in digital inclusion & digitisation and the other Aboriginal community engagement.

Community consultation in 2018 regarding the Library Strategy highlighted a perception within sections of Newcastle's Aboriginal community that the library is a 'white' space. The resulting Library Strategy committed to diversify library staff and better represent the community we support, so the Trainees are both targeted Aboriginal roles. Our approach also supports an objective of CN's Aboriginal Employment Strategy to grow Aboriginal identified roles working across council's cultural facilities.

Council supports the recruitment of trainees and apprentices with additional staff, to address ongoing strategies outlined in the *Workforce Management Plan*. Our trainee program goals are to attract and retain talent, invest in the capabilities of our people, and plan for future workforce needs. Fundamental to workforce planning, trainee recruitment helps our organisation address issues such as succession planning for an ageing workforce, attracting applicants for hard to fill roles and supporting skill shortages for both our city and local region.

Our trainees are full time roles with a 2.5-year contracted time to complete a Diploma of Library and Information Services. Both trainees undertake work-integrated learning and are rostered for frontline service



The StoryWall at the Newcastle Digital Library. Trainees work to develop digitised content featured on the StoryWall

delivery across all 11 library sites and outreach services providing a broad-based learning experience across all specialist areas. The Diploma of Library and Information Services provides the trainees with the skills and knowledge to work within the city's museum, gallery, library or cultural centre. Digital services and outreach services are a core growth area within the library sector and experience in either of these specialist roles will be highly sought after within the Hunter Libraries ecosystem.

The CN Libraries and Learning, Art Gallery and Museums Service Units each have suitable post-traineeship roles that become available from time to time. Our traineeships place the trainee in a strong position to apply for these

at the conclusion of their contract. The ageing library sector and specifically the CN Libraries staff demographics will provide anticipated staff turnover within the next five years, opening career paths for Aboriginal workers, particularly for people who are also interested in further study. Our traineeships provide an opportunity for young Aboriginal people to find a pathway or to retrain older Aboriginal people with further qualification.

Past learning from trainees' reflections on their experience with us was that a single trainee does not have a peer network to share learning experience and develop a rapport. We now undertake traineeships in batches to provide a peer learning network.

As a learning organisation, our trainees are embedded across the organisation and are re-aligned every two years, based on the changing needs of the supervisors and trainees. The Library Trainee in Digital Services & Digitisation works in our Library Digitisation Lab and is coached by the Heritage Collections Digitisation Specialist. The Library Trainee in Aboriginal Community Engagement works in our Outreach Services and is coached by the Library Partnerships Facilitator. Both trainees are each buddied with a colleague from across the service who is not within the direct reporting lines for peer-to-peer support,

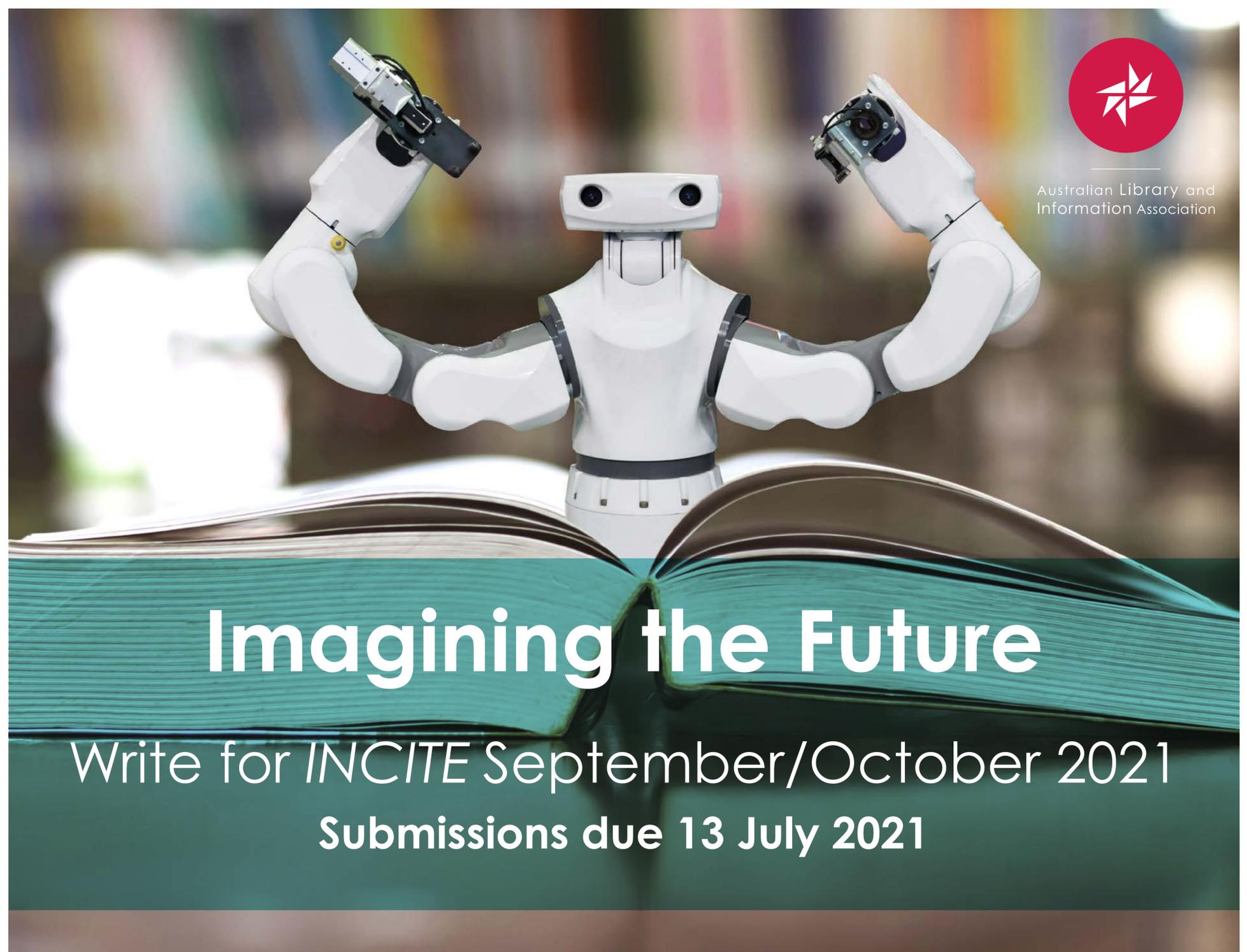
and during frontline customer service the trainee is paired with a Service Design team buddy for mentoring. Our trainees are included in service planning, programming and co-design of their own learning plans. The Manager Community Programs & Partnerships is the allocated senior workplace mentor for the duration of the traineeship and manages regular formal feedback meetings with both the trainees, supervisors and mentors. Our Outreach Services Specialist has also established a relationship with the State Library of NSW Indigenous Engagement team who offered public library service

training and a targeted Aboriginal support network.

Traineeships afford our libraries the opportunity to contribute to our region's youth professional development, support our existing emerging leaders with leadership and coaching experiences, and strategically address identified diversity gaps in our team.

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BETTER REFLECTING THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE

In mid-2017, Casey Cardinia Libraries (CCL) started on a journey to create a more socially inclusive and diverse workplace. It was important to us to ensure that we developed our workplace in line with our organisational values of social intelligence, fairness, teamwork, creativity, love of learning and humour. We were aware of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and were keen to play our part in any way possible to help make a difference. Our goal was to ensure that our team more closely reflected the community we serve.

TRAINEESHIPS

We had identified the importance of offering local students who had completed their Certificate IV in Library and Information Services a 12-month contract to gain skills and experience, but we wanted to do more.

Traditionally we had recruited through our local TAFE for candidates. Our first steps towards creating an identified Indigenous traineeship was to partner with MAX employment to help us identify eligible candidates. Two candidates were interviewed and recruited. As part of their traineeship, they were required to complete their Certificate IV in Library and Information Services. As staff budgets are hard

fought for, the federal government funding attached to these traineeships was really important.

We quickly identified that there was a real challenge for our Indigenous trainees commencing an intensive study program simultaneously with learning what public libraries are and how we run. Buddying up our Indigenous trainees with recently graduated trainees established great mentor relationships between work colleagues, and created a sense of acceptance and belonging.

Shaniace Daymond, a former trainee, is now a leading member of the team at Pakenham Library and has a long and distinguished career in public libraries in front of her.

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT

In mid-2019, CCL partnered with Outlook Disability Employment Services to foster inclusion in our workplace. Initial talks focused on how we could best welcome team members on placement from Outlook into CCL and support their needs.

Establishing an MOU with a local provider enabled us to gather resources and support on how to best educate the CCL team on inclusion. We workshopped how we could

support people with physical or hidden disabilities. From these discussions Outlook created a training package that was initially rolled out to team members who would be working alongside our new recruits. We were then free to use this training to create an online module that was easily available to all the CCL team. After interviews were conducted, Aidan and Callum were employed on a part-time basis for 12 months. They were so successful that the organisation committed to creating permanent part time roles for them.

The broader organisational benefits included our workforce having a much better understanding of people living with hidden disabilities, which in turn helped us deliver a better service to our community.

CCL procured a library-tailored Autism and Hidden Disabilities Awareness training package through Autism Spectrum Australia. This was rolled out to the CCL team in 2020.

DISADVANTAGED TRAINEES

In 2020, CCL embraced the opportunity provided by both State and Federal governments – Victorian Apprenticeship Recovery Package (VARP) and Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements (BAC) – to create funded trainee

positions. Four traineeships were offered to local disadvantaged community members. This meant that CCL was able to walk the talk and give young people in our community a fresh start.

We partnered with Max Employment and MEGT to identify eligible candidates. Interviews were undertaken and all four trainees were enrolled in their Certificate IV in Library and Information Services through Chisholm TAFE.

CHALLENGES AND REFLECTIONS

While the team at CCL have had many wonderful moments and successes, there are some reflections we want to share:

- Public libraries are universal – that one place that provides free and equal access to everyone. Inclusion

is central to all that we offer. We are focused on being that space to our communities and it is imperative that our communities see themselves reflected in our teams.

- When employing members of our community who are vulnerable and disadvantaged there is a need to be very aware of hidden hardships and barriers that make it really challenging for them to turn up every day. We discovered that complex family relationships, housing, mental health and simply having the money to cover the cost of phone credits were real challenges that a number of our trainees struggled with daily.
- Social intelligence, compassion and a real commitment to make a difference in someone's life underpin successful placements.

- Taking a chance on someone – it is unrealistic to expect that all of your trainees will thrive and succeed in the long term. To know that even four to six weeks of employment and feeling accepted and having a purpose is a wonderful achievement for some. It is a proud moment for our teams when they can acknowledge a difference has been made – success comes in many shades.
- Buy-in of staff – acceptance and commitment from existing teams – is crucial to successful placements.
- Education of team members working alongside trainees is necessary to ensure understanding of those hidden disabilities and how we can easily alter some of our behaviours to support a more inclusive workplace.
- Where possible, allow trainees to work together in same workplace. Buddying up new trainees with a past trainee helps.
- Partnering with external providers enables education, understanding of what is required and support to help with any unexpected issues.

CCL started this heartfelt and value-driven journey with small steps. We have learned along the way. The opportunities that we created for people who would otherwise never have got a start in public libraries have rewarded us with a new generation of rising stars. The success stories are people who have embraced all that we do and thrived in an environment of support and inclusion. Our workforce is more diverse and we have made a real difference in many lives. Our team is more resilient and accepting of difference and the community is stronger for it.

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Former trainee, Chamani, who is now a permanent staff member



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