

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 - 2027



The Strategy acknowledges and respects the diversity of people with disability. It recognises the importance of tailoring actions to take into account this diversity

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Country throughout Australia and recognise First Nations peoples' continuing connection to the land, water and sky.

We pay our respects to elders past and present and commit to working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in partnership and respect.

Together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we will work towards a better and more inclusive future for all Australians.

This strategy was created on Wurundjeri country.

Acknowledgement of people with disability and other disadvantaged Australians

NESA acknowledges people with disability, youth, First Nations people and communities, people with mental health issues, migrants, refugees, LGBTQIA+ and other disadvantaged Australians, their families and carers. NESA acknowledges and supports their rights to be heard, have a say and codesign the services supporting them achieve their goals.

Contents

Foreword from the Chair of NESA.....	1
Our Approach.....	3
Our Strategy.....	4
Our Goals	5
Including specific groups.....	6
First Nations people	6
People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities	6
Lived Experience.....	6
LGBTQIA+ inclusive	6
Young people	7
People in remote locations.....	7
Accessible Participation	8
Accessible Communication	9
Our Team and Workplace	10
Feedback for Continuous Improvement	11

Foreword from the Chair of NESA

Almost everyone will temporarily or permanently experience disability at some point in their life.

NESA is dedicated to a vision of opportunity for all Australians through employment and inclusion. We are working to achieve a common goal - providing high quality services for people with disability, youth, First Nations people and communities, people with mental health issues, migrants, refugees, LGBTQIA+ and other disadvantaged Australians.

We are proud to be Australia's peak body for the employment services sector since 1997 representing the full range of contracted employment service providers, including not-for-profit, for-profit and public sector organisations.

Disability is a part of life for many of us directly or indirectly.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics one in six Australians or almost 4.4 million Australians live with disability. Around 80% of people with disability have a non-visible disability and over one million Australians report having psychosocial disability. Of those people with disability who are of working age (aged 15 to 64), 48% are employed, compared to 80% of working age people without a disability.

And we should also not forget, around one in 10 Australians are carers providing unpaid care for friends or family members.

Most often the biggest challenges for people with disability are societal barriers impacting participation and engagement in, and enjoyment of, day to day activities.

Our members have described examples of these barriers as negative attitudes or low expectations of people with disabilities, lack of understanding of disability, inadvertent discrimination in laws and policies, workplace skills and expertise of supervisors and leaders, reluctance to consider different job designs and productivity contributions in the workplace, accessibility to and use of technology.

Whatever form it takes, exclusion can affect a person's ability to meaningfully engage especially when disability intersects with other factors like the person's age, gender identity or cultural background.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the Royal Commission), the co-design approach for important NDIS reforms, and Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities provide direction and guidance for Australia to improve the economic and social participation of people with disability in society.

The NESA *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy* builds on our 2023 commitment to transforming the impact of Employment Services through co-design and partnership. It sets out principles to guide NESA in its engagement with people with disability especially when disability intersects with other diversity factors like age, gender identity, ethnicity or cultural background.

Our strategy targets NESA employees, its members, service delivery partners and our supply chain putting people with disability and other diversity factors at the forefront of our work, paying particular attention to the experiences of First Nations people with disability and to the experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as well as people in remote areas.

NESA is committed to doing this in an accessible and inclusive way, putting people with disability at the centre of all we do. We are committed to continuously adapting the strategy, as we learn what can be done more appropriately and effectively and welcome any comments from our members, partners or service users.

Rebecca Nicholls
Chair
NESA Ltd Board

Our Approach

In building a better future for all, we want people to both be, and feel respected, safe and included at work and in their interactions with us. This means embracing differences, creating safe spaces to engage, recognising the things we have in common and staying connected through open communication.

Our Strategy sets out how NESAs will engage with its people and partners, design and implement its processes as well as informing our accessibility approach within our communication and engagement strategies.

At the centre of our service, we enable individuals to contribute by recognising their needs and right to be included in, and part of, making choices about goals services and support and who delivers those supports.

E ngagement	Active participation leading to more meaningful and effective outcomes.
N etworking	Person centred design and collaboration promoting inclusivity and diversity.
A ccessibility	Making information and resources available in ways that support people with disability to better engage.
B uilding	Strengthening capacity and skills of the provider network through professional development.
L istening	To people with disabilities ensuring they are heard and have shared ownership of their goals.
E quity	Recognising the unique challenges and experiences of individuals by creating an inclusive environment where everyone has equitable access to opportunities, resources, and support.

Our Strategy

NESA promotes full and effective participation and inclusion of all people, respecting difference, and accepting diversity, regardless of disability status, gender, religion, ethnicity or culture.

Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy core principles are:

NESA demonstrates and lives an inclusive culture so our members, partners and service users can feel included: We have a workplace and delivery environment where everyone feels they belong, that it is a safe place to share their ideas, and their views are valued as contributing to better outcomes

NESA staff are, and feel safe, supported and valued: Everyone appreciates the impacts of behaviours and actions in the workplace and is comfortable to raise an issue when something is not right

NESA creates opportunities to develop: Employees, members and partners have access to training and development opportunities and resources to enhance their career and increase diversity in leadership and the workplace.

Our Goals

To demonstrate and advance our commitment to inclusivity and representation of diversity across our workforce and delivery of our services, we have set goals and will review our performance and make changes to our processes based on feedback from people with disability.

NESA has set seven goals for 2024-25.

1	Implement the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and ensure staff are familiar with the principles and objectives of this Strategy	September 2024
2	Undertake a Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity survey of NESA staff and Board members	September 2024
3	All NESA staff will undertake disability specific training to support a high level of service delivery	October 2024
4	Expand Diversity representation on the NESA Board to co-opt and attract a Director/s with lived experience	October 2024
5	Establish reporting measures designed to understand and improve performance	December 2025
6	Review and improve our communication approach (methods, formats) and accessibility of our website, content and resources to provide information that is easy to understand and helps people to engage	January 2025
7	Review of NESA Professional Development program content and material by a person/s with lived experience	March 2025

Our goals for 2025-27 include expanding our services to support our industry partners and supply chain to uplift their accessibility and inclusiveness policies and staff's skills and incorporate new diversity content into the Australian Employment Institute (AEI) curriculum and scope.

Including specific groups

NESA's Constitution defines its role as supporting a broad and wide-ranging cohorts reflecting its member base and also informing its products and services supporting Australians at higher risk of exclusion and exploitation to ensure they are inclusive, appropriate and accessible. These include, but are not limited to:

First Nations people

NESA will consult with, and seek advice from, First Nations representatives to ensure our processes are culturally appropriate and make information resources available specifically designed for First Nations people.

NESA has committed to Board representation for First Nations peoples and providers through its inclusion of a First Nations Director on the NESA Board in 2023.

This position specifically advises the Board and NESA on policies, practices and provide advice to ensure a culturally safe and respectful way of engaging with its members, Government and other stakeholders.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities

We encourage all people with disability to engage with us in their preferred language. Supporting our members, our website provides translation of published information resources in a range of community languages and embed trauma informed practices in our resources and professional development services.

Lived Experience

NESA will consult with and seek advice from people with disability and First Nations peoples.

NESA has committed to Board representation for First Nations peoples and providers through its inclusion of a First Nations Director on the NESA Ltd Board in 2023 and a Director with disability on the NESA Board in 2024. These positions specifically advise the Board and NESA on policies, practices and provide advice to ensure culturally safe, inclusive, accessible and respectful ways of engaging with its members, Government and other stakeholders. These positions also guide our advocacy work to ensure it is mindful and reflective of the experiences and aspirations of First Nations peoples and people with disability.

LGBTQIA+ inclusive

NESA will consider how people's experiences are affected by their gender identity, sexual orientation, or intersex status.

LGBTQIA+ people with disability often experience additional discrimination, particularly on the workplace or in seeking employment opportunities.

We will provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBTQIA+ people to share their stories and provide feedback and co-design for improvements.

Young people

Young people with disability may be especially vulnerable and often unable to recognise or express themselves.

We will take steps to support our members, through age-appropriate supports and resources, to reach young people who may experience difficulty in engaging with employment services.

People in remote locations

People in rural and remote communities may experience particular additional barriers compounding their disability or diversity circumstances.

We will work to ensure those in regional and remote areas have equal opportunity to speak out, to share their important stories and provide feedback and suggestions to improve service quality.

Accessible Participation

NESA is committed to providing programs and services that are fully inclusive. This includes ensuring everyone can engage with our digital platforms.

To ensure NESA Board members, staff, members with disability and other stakeholders are able to engage with NESA, participate in training and development opportunities and develop skills and capacity to enhance the quality of services delivered to people with disabilities, NESA will:

- Appropriately acknowledge and welcome those present at events and meetings held and facilitated by NESA
- Make its products and services available and accessible in various format and modes
- Schedule events and activities to maximise participation such as start times, duration of sessions and inclusion of breaks
- Include hearing loops and captioning.
- Publish on its website Video and written content including in easy read format and recordings of session or events to facilitate ease of revision and learning
- Provide as much notice and time as is practical to allow people to prepare to access services
- Where appropriate, customised and provide additional support to staff as necessary.

NESA has embarked on a digital journey to comply with the [W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#). A selection of NESA personnel will participate in accessibility training to maximise our capacity to deploy and use a suite of tools to support people with disability and other accessibility requirements. We are continuing to work on our accessibility, with the aim of reaching 100% accessibility compliance in late 2025.

Accessible Communication

We will offer a range of ways to allow people to engage with us in the way which best suits them.

Our approach to accessible communication includes the following measures:

- Our website will use universal design and adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 enabling content to be accessed using assistive technologies such as screen readers or voice recognition technology or interfaces appropriate to an individual's needs. NESAs will regularly review and update its website design and content in response to feedback from the community.
- Alternative file formats – including Portable Document Format (PDF) and Word documents (DOCX) – are provided and are made as accessible as possible.
- Where required, we will access specialists with skills in alternative and augmented communication.
- Video, audio and other multimedia used will include an accessible transcript, captions or other alternatives such as Easy Read and Easy English, as appropriate.
- NESAs's core ICT solutions maintain high accessibility standards, including the video conferencing solution.
- Auslan-English interpreters will be made available to assist people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment attending NESAs events.

Our Team and Workplace

NESA has an inclusive approach to recruitment and aim to be an employer of choice for people with disability. We promote flexible working arrangements by default as part of our inclusive practice.

Our staff and Board include a strong representation of people with a lived experience of disability and other diversity groups including First Nations peoples.

All NESA staff receive disability awareness training. We also provide a range of training programs delivered by leading disability experts that are designed to increase knowledge and awareness of disability, social inclusion and mental health awareness. These are available to NESA staff, members and their workforce, other human services sectors and the general public.

We use technology designed to be accessible. Our video conferencing technology is compatible and can be accessed via an internet browser. Our website and social media presence aspires to adhere to better practice standards.

NESA workplace and meeting and events spaces used are selected based on their compliance with accessibility standards, including entry, meeting and hearing spaces, facilities and amenities.

Feedback for Continuous Improvement

We will continuously monitor the implementation of this Strategy, performance against our goals and the level of engagement from specific groups and those in different geographic locations.

We will establish reporting measures designed to help us assess our progress on this *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy*, including on whether it is achieving its objectives.

We will continue to survey staff and Board members to obtain feedback, understand and improve our performance approach.