



Equity+Diversity WORKING PARTIES

Championing Inclusion & Belonging

Annual Progress & Impact Report 2024

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School Acronyms

SoM	School of Medicine
SoNM	School of Nursing the Midwifery
SoB	School of Business
SoEDBE	School of Engineering, Design and the Built Environment
SoCDMS	School of Computing, Data, Mathematics and Statistics
SoL	School of Law
SoHS	School of Health Sciences
SoP	School of Psychology
SoSS	School of Social Sciences
SoHCA	School of Humanities and Communication Arts
SoS	School of Science
SoE	School of Education
MARCs	MARCs Institute

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocol and out of recognition that our campuses occupy traditional lands, Western Sydney University acknowledges the Darug, Eora, Dharawal and Wiradjuri peoples. We thank them for their support of our work in their lands.

EDWP Network – 2024 Summary



14

Total number of
EDWPs operating

Total No. of members
(as at end of 2024)



93



3

Average number of
meetings per EDWP

Top EDWP
Focus areas
in 2024



- Professional/ Career Development and/ or progression
- Respectful Relationships or sexual harm
- Gender equity and inclusion
- Indigenous inclusion and engagement

- Member workload recognition and capacity
- Delays in finalising new memberships.
- Engaging professional staff on EDWPs due to lack of workload allocation.

EDWP key
barriers and
Challenges



EDWP members
attending
Annual Forum

60

Introduction

The Equity and Diversity Working Party (EDWP) Network is a collaborative platform for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion priorities across Western Sydney University, originally conceived by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team (previously Equity and Diversity) and the Western SAGE team. This initiative has built a network of Working Parties and related members embedded across Schools, Institutes and Divisions. This collective group continues to work to bridge the gap between strategy, policy and practice and implementation at the local level. At its core the EDWP Network is about supporting a culture across the University, which is inclusive, respectful and creates a sense of belonging for all our students and staff.

The University is recognised as a sector leader in the diversity, equity and inclusion space, and the work of the EDWPs continues to have a pivotal role in supporting the University in practically addressing systemic and cultural issues. Of note Western is:

- #1 in the world under the 2024 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (third consecutive year)
- #1 in the world for SDG 5 – Gender Equality (ranking in the top 3 since rankings inception)
- #8 in the world for SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities (ranking in the top 15 since ranking inception)
- SAGE Athena Swan Bronze Institutional Award recipient and Silver Cygnet Awards for Indigenous Staff, Academic Promotions and Flexible Work.
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency Employer of Choice for Gender Equality (22 years).

The EDWP Network is foundational to Western's recognition as an Athena Swan Bronze Institutional Award recipient, and in our endeavours to move towards Silver Award status.

The following report provides examples outlining the key focus areas and activities of the EDWPs across 2024.

Year in Review

In 2024 14 EDWPs were operational across the University - 13 within Schools and one representing the Divisions. Reporting EDWPs convened on average three times annually (either formally or informally), often supplementing online discussions via email or Microsoft Teams. The EDWP Network also engages its members using an active shared mailing list to facilitate additional pathways for collaboration and information exchange. DEI provided advisory and administrative support to the EDWPs, with Western SAGE providing targeted advice and project support throughout 2024.

A major innovation for the EDWP Network in 2024 was the launch of an inaugural EDWP Annual Forum, held in September on Parramatta South Campus (see profile below). The EDWP Forum was coordinated by a Steering Committee of EDWP members and administered by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team.

Three EDWP Chair meetings were held in February, August and November, co-hosted by Michelle Falconer (Director, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging) and Assoc. Professor Chloe Taylor (SAGE Academic Lead), focusing on EDWP progress, emerging issues, and collaborative opportunities. Chairs were also included in consultation for the new *People Plan* for the Office for People as part of formal focus groups.

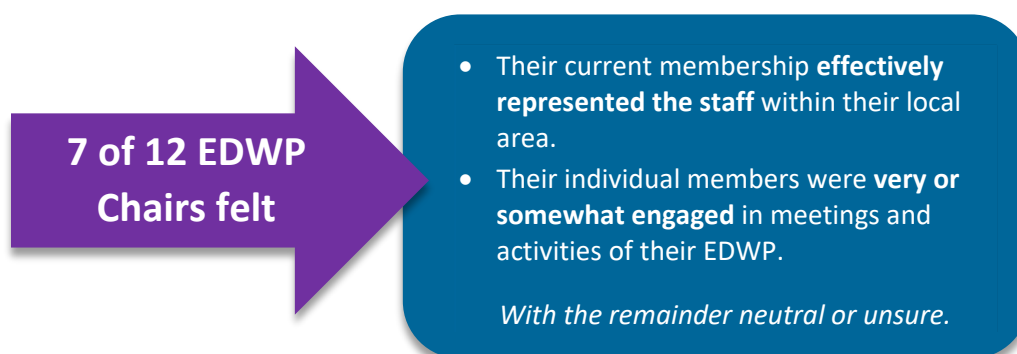
A review and simplification of the EDWP Network Terms of Reference (ToR) was undertaken at the end of 2024 to streamline guidance, clarify EDWP roles, and help reduce administrative burden on members. This updated ToR was endorsed by Chairs at their November meeting and can be viewed on the [EDWP Network member information](#) page.

Increased visibility and branding of the EDWP Network was also a focus in 2024. A presentation on the EDWP Network was provided by DEI, with support from SoNM and Divisional EDWP members, as part of the 2024 Staff Professional Conference (held in June) to help build the Network's profile and highlight opportunities for professional staff to get involved. The Divisional EDWP, in consultation with the Design Team coordinated the development of a series of branded assets, including a banner and promotional postcard, to support consistency across the Network. Further rollout of these assets and related communications is planned across 2025.

EDWP Membership

There are currently 93 EDWP members across the Network. In 2024 membership underwent regular turnover due to staffing and/or organisational changes. Notably, the SoM underwent a full membership change-over, including a new Chair. The Divisional EDWP Chair role is currently vacant and DEI is considering alternative Chair models which might help support this groups future continuity and capacity for impact. Formal meetings for the MARCS Institute EDWP were paused in 2024, with plans to reinvigorate it in 2025.

The SoCDMS have recruited a student representative to their EDWP and several other EDWPs are now considering opportunities to engage student members.



In 2025 DEI will be undertaking an anonymous survey of member demographics to better understand current EDWP membership profiles and ensure that the diverse lived experience across equity cohorts is represented in EDWP discussions and activities.

2024 EDWP Network Development Opportunities

Inaugural EDWP Annual Forum

The EDWP Network held its inaugural Annual Forum on 12 September 2024. The event was attended by more than 75 staff and students, including 60 EDWP members and additional attendees from key DEI stakeholder groups across the University. The theme of the Forum was *Learn, Collaborate, Connect* with sessions including:

- an update by the Chief People Officer on emerging equity, diversity and inclusion priorities at Western.
- an inspiring keynote presentation on 'Women, Power and Myths of Intersectionality' from Assoc. Prof Quah Ee Ling, a fire dragon feminist in the School of Humanities & Communication Arts.
- An engaging panel discussion featuring innovative projects being championed by the SoNM, SoHCA and SoB EDWPs in their local areas with a focus on sharing challenges and pathways to success.
- Two facilitated breakout sessions to support EDWP strategic planning, improving visibility in local contexts, connection with other EDWP members, and discuss of emerging issues.

“
It was fruitful to come together with others in the network because oftentimes the Working Parties in Schools are working in isolation. I would have loved to learn more about the priorities of other Working Parties
”

General feedback received from those in attendance was very positive, with respondents reflecting the Forum met their expectations. The keynote address and panel presentation were considered the highlights.

Attendees also reflected that for future forums greater time was needed to facilitate networking opportunities through general group work and discussions. This will be a point of reflection for future deliveries.



“
It was great to hear about the work of other groups and to possibly collaborate for larger buy-in or to gain ideas and ways to move forward.
”

2024 EDWP Featured Collaboration

Supporting Student Parents Project

Across 2024, three EDWPs have been engaged as partners in a SAGE-led Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Fund (VC GEF) project, *Supporting Student Parents*. The respective Chairs of EDWP SoHS, EDWP SoS and EDWP SoSS have contributed to an audit of WSU's student parent supports benchmarked against provisions at IRU network institutions and recommendations made by a recent NCSEHE report, *A Balancing Act* (Andrewartha et al., 2023). The benchmarking audit has identified several outstanding initiatives at other institutions for prospective implementation at WSU.

Each of the three EDWPs led held face-to-face and online Student Parent Networking Events in September 2024, aimed at raising awareness of existing supports and fostering connection between student parents and key support figures. Events were attended by approx. 20 student parents and 40 supporting staff.

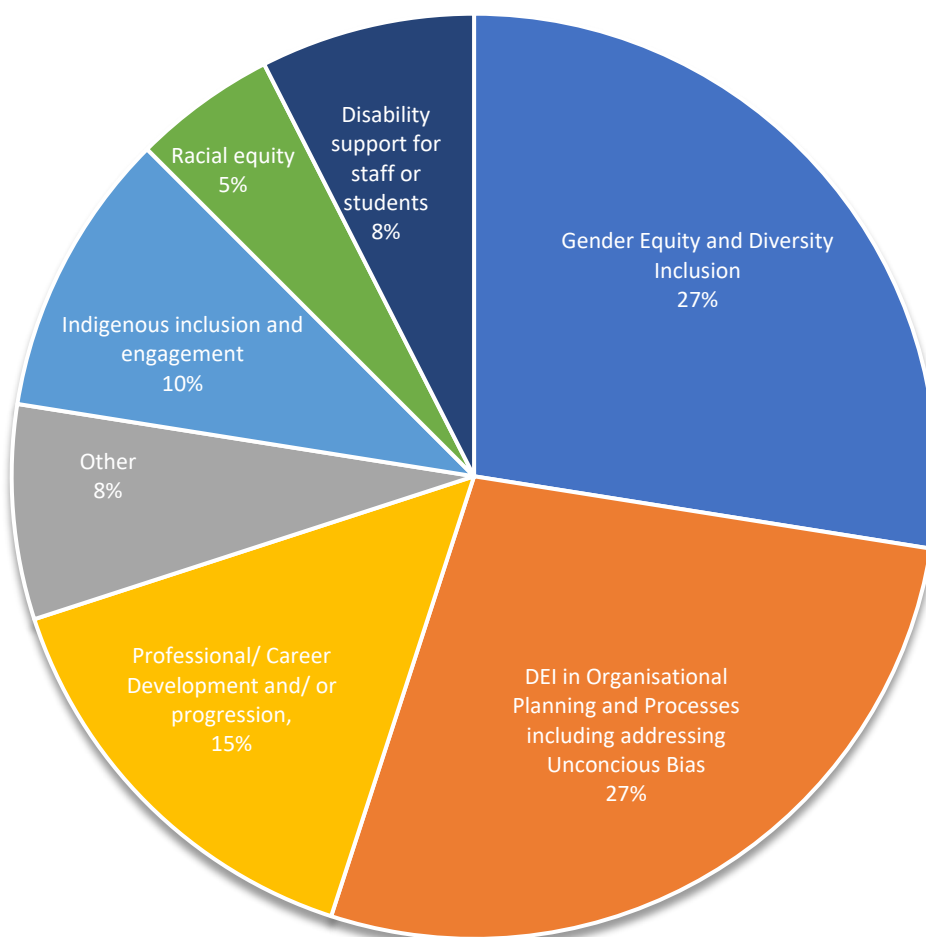
This VC GEF project is continuing, with project surveys and focus groups administered across October to December 2024 and a final report due for submission in March 2025.



EDWP Network Focus Areas in 2024

In reviewing responses to the Chair Reflections survey and from discussions at EDWP Chair meetings, the following discussion and initiative themes have been identified across the Network.

The chart below reflects the key discussion and initiative themes across the EDWP Network in 2024. Percentages reflect the proportion of EDWPs engaged in related activities or programs:



Spotlight on DEI in Organisational Planning and Processes

EDWPs continue to drive innovative and important equity and diversity initiatives in their local areas, with several championing programs or local activations with the potential to inform DEI embedded organisational and planning processes across the University. Highlight examples include:

- **SoE EDWP** have developed a values statement about inclusion and diversity which is now being used in all student materials within the School. A Statement has also been developed about wellbeing/respect/inclusion for colleagues working on the Bankstown City Campus.
- **SoB EDWP** have continued to champion and advocate for *Share the Dignity* initiatives and the accessible provision of free period products on campuses for students and staff. Discussions have now been taken up with the Chief of People.
- **SoHCA EDWP** has continued to focus on the implementation and expansion of their *Safety in the*

Classroom initiative, which aligns with the University's Respectful Relationship program. This initiative emerged from research delivered via the Gender Equity Fund (Smith, 2021) which highlighted some of the negative experiences of casual staff in the virtual and in-person classroom environment.

- **SoL EDWP** has been investigating the possibility of implementing recommendations from A11Y (a community-driven effort to make digital accessibility easier) across their School to improve accessibility for students and staff.
- **SoM EDWP** Chair developed and championed a new disability-inclusive mission statement for their School and lobbied for and initiated a new disability access and inclusion webpage on the School website. This work will be built on by the newly formed SoM EDWP in 2025.
- **SoEDBE EDWP** have administered a workplace safety survey in their School (targeted at women staff), with analysis currently underway.
- **SoNM** and **SoB EDWPs** delivered innovations within their annual "Spring Forward" promotions workshops in 2024. SoNM introduced a panel discussion with past applicants focused on equity considerations. SoB tailored their session to address engagement, governance and service criteria.
- **SoP EDWP** with the Fatherhood Colloquium have supported conversations which consider how we can better support fathers in the workplace.
- **SoCDMS** looked at ways to gain insight into student issues and concerns and better connect students with staff and supports. This included formally recruiting a student member to their EDWP.
- **Divisional EDWP** supported the development of a suite of EDWP identity assets to consolidate and promote the Network and started the development of an induction guide for new EDWP Network members and support better understandings of topical EDWP priorities.

EDWP Chair Reporting – 2024

EDWP activities, experiences and emerging trends are captured via a 'Chair Reflections' survey and through deliberations within regular Chair meetings. These fora allow Chairs to report on the various challenges and opportunities experienced by each EDWP, and data collected is used to inform this Annual Report. The Annual Report is provided for the information of the Vice Chancellor's Gender Equity and Respectful Relationships Advisory Committee, Deans, Institute Directors, Divisional Vice-Presidents and to the broader EDWP membership to ensure ongoing visibility and accountability for the initiative.

As part of the Chair Reflections survey delivered in November 2024, participants were invited to comment on specific challenges and barriers for their members. 12 responses from Chairpersons were received to these questions. Highlighted challenges included:

- Difficulties in arranging meetings due to packed member calendars and changes in schedules.
- Delays in finalising new memberships.
- Some Schools struggled with engaging professional staff due to lack of workload allocation for EDWP roles.
- Workload issues also led to disengagement among members in some Schools.
- Additional challenges included connecting with members who are overseas, limited time due to competing demands, and the absence of a full-time chair in the Divisional EDWP. Invisible barriers impacting daily work productivity and career progression were noted i.e. as relate to cultural commitments or family responsibilities.

When asked how EDWPs could be better supported to achieve their aims, Chairs reflected that logistical support for meetings, and support in delivering events would help them to become more active in the future. A continued focus on EDWP networking and connection opportunities was also requested.

EDWP – Planning for 2025

EDWPs continue to be an important mechanism for the University's recognition as an industry leader when addressing equity, diversity and inclusion across the institution. Using Chair survey responses, discussions held across the EDWP network and with Executive Advisers within the DEI team, the following focal points for future development have been identified:

Administration & Governance

- Investigate possible opportunities for Institutes to establish their own EDWPs and join the Network.
- Reconfigure the Divisional EDWP to ensure continuity and longevity of activations, including considering a permanent ex-officio role for the Chair.
- Undertake a regular audit of EDWP membership and processes to ensure it continues to be inclusive of a diversity of student, academic and professional staff perspectives.

Research, Training and Supports

- Deliver a second EDWP Forum to invigorate and upskill members and foster collaboration across the Network.
- Consider mechanisms for the consistent rollout of induction information for new members, building on original introductory session provided by DEI and Western SAGE.
- Strengthen collaboration and partnerships across the Network to facilitate opportunity for training and research. For example, in the area of Indigenous inclusion and engagement, cultural diversity and LGBTIQ+ inclusion.