

## **WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY'S SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSITY STRATEGY 2017-2020**



With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocols and out of recognition that its campuses occupy their traditional lands, Western Sydney University acknowledges the Bundjalung, Darug, Gundungurra, Tharawal (also historically referred to as D'harawal) and Wiradjuri Peoples and thanks them for their support of its work in their lands (Greater Western Sydney and beyond).

## **Sexuality and Gender Diversity in Our Community**

Eleven percent of Australians identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and/or Queer (LGBTIQ), 1 in 10 young Australians experience same-sex attraction, and 1.5% of Australians are born intersex. Latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that in the last 15 years the reported number of same sex couples has tripled and children living in same-sex coupled families have more than doubled.

At Western, this means that approximately 4500 of our students and 350 of our staff are likely to identify as LGBTIQ. It also suggests our other University stakeholders are likely to increasingly openly identify as LGBTIQ, including prospective students and their parents, alumni, future staff and other community partners.

### **Impact of Discrimination and Harassment**

Beyond Blue recently conducted a research project surveying LGBTIQ individuals and reported that compared to the general population diagnosable symptoms of Depression and/or Anxiety Disorders are three times more likely in this group. Recent research by Headspace suggests that LGBTIQ individuals are six times more likely to attempt suicide, particularly in the immediate periods proceeding and following 'coming out'. The average age of Australians coming out is currently between 16-19 years; coinciding with the likely age of commencing university.

Beyond Blue and Headspace agree and emphasise that in their experience, this dramatically increased risk of mental illness and suicide is not an inherent characteristic of being LGBTIQ. Instead they consider these a result of the discrimination and harassment consistently experienced by LGBTIQ Australians.

### **Our Terminology**

We acknowledge the tremendous diversity of LGBTIQ people, including those from all possible cultural backgrounds and faith traditions. The University therefore recognises the highly individualised and varied lived experiences, values and issues faced within the group we identify as the LGBTIQ community.

At Western we use the phrase Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex, and the acronym 'LGBTIQ' to describe individuals who are from diverse sexualities and non-binary genders. The University adopted this particular term and acronym because our students and staff expressed this was, overall, their preference. We use this phrase and acronym with the intention that it signal the broadest possible inclusion of individuals within the wide spectrum of sexual orientation, biological sex, gender expression, and/or gender identity.

## Sexuality and Gender Diversity in the Higher Education Sector

In November 2016, University of Western Australia (UWA) released results from its own campus climate study, *The Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Students at the University of Western Australia*. UWA is a well-recognised and long-standing national exemplar in sexuality and gender diversity inclusion within higher education and beyond. Its recent study highlighted the following key issues from the 260 student responses:

- 69% felt safe at University;
- 63% viewed their classes to be accepting of LGBT people; however
- 54% did not disclose their status to the University out of fear of being harassed and/or discriminated against;
- 30% believed that being LGBT was an obstacle to being able to socially participate at the University; and
- 20% said that being LGBT had disrupted their academic progress.

Many of the recommendations arising from the UWA study have been incorporated into our own *Sexuality and Gender Diversity Inclusion Strategy*.

## Our Vision

Western Sydney University is proud to have a tradition of students and staff who identify from diverse sexualities and genders. We value the cultural, organisational and strategic benefits to the University that our sexuality and gender diverse people bring. The University also recognises the broader community shift which increasingly expects and demands equality and respectful inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) individuals in all Australian institutions, including our own.

At Western we understand that when a person identifies as LGBTIQ they can encounter discrimination and harassment. We seek to better understand the issues faced by our sexuality and gender diverse students and staff and create equitable and inclusive structures and University culture safe for all, regardless of sexuality and/or gender.

The University has a strong and ongoing commitment to the prevention of discrimination or harassment on the basis of sexuality and/or gender diversity. We are committed to equality of opportunity for all students and staff, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

## Strategic Context

*Western Sydney University's Sexuality and Gender Diversity Strategy 2017-2020* is informed by the views expressed by key stakeholders including sexuality and gender diverse students and staff, [Western's Queer Collective](#), and the [University's Ally Network](#). The goals and actions also derive from needs identified through benchmarking the University's current LGBTIQ inclusivity practice based on the [LGBTI Uni Guide](#) and the [Australian Workplace Equality Index](#). See Attachment 1 *LGBTIQ Consultation & Baseline Benchmarking Results* for full details.

The ways forward outlined by the plan respond to the overarching context of Western's five year whole-of-university '[Securing Success 2015-20 Strategic Plan](#)'. Each goal directly aligns with one of the six fundamental objectives of 'Securing Success', with particular emphasis on advancing our mission to be distinctly student-centred offering a unique learning experience that is innovative, flexible and responsive using our dynamic and innovative culture and acting as a leading advocate and champion for the Greater Western Sydney Region and its people.

Overall, *Western Sydney University's Sexuality and Gender Diversity Strategy 2017-2020* articulates the University's aims to:

- a) build organisational structures and culture which are demonstrably equitable, inclusive and safe for sexuality and gender diverse students and staff;
- b) signal to our stakeholders that the University is an inclusive and safe place for LGBTIQ individuals where equal opportunity is promoted and respected; and
- c) harness the whole-of-organisational benefits of our sexuality and gender diversity and inclusive practice.

## Implementation Coordination, Reporting and Monitoring

Western's Equity and Diversity unit will act as lead agency in coordinating the implementation of the strategy, and will do so under the direction of the Vice President of People & Advancement, as the Executive Champion for LGBTIQ Inclusion. This will include reporting annually on implementation to the Executive Committee and working closely with critical stakeholders to help drive progress. Equity and Diversity will support those stakeholders with implementation responsibilities by advising on legal responsibilities and emerging practice; helping to facilitate cross-unit collaboration; and maintaining linkages with external experts and partners.

The University's Queer Collective and Ally Network will play a key role in steering the strategy and monitoring its impact. Throughout the term of the strategy LGBTIQ student and staff voices will be taken directly into account to help measure the effect of actions taken across the University.

### Priority rating and alignment

A priority rating is featured to help determine strategic priorities. The following broad ratings are used:

<b>A</b>	involves potential serious and/or imminent risk to the students, staff and/or the University; and/or involves essential benchmarking criteria
<b>B</b>	involves other risk to students, staff and/or University; and/or higher standard benchmarking criteria with medium term timeframe
<b>C</b>	involves other student and/or staff need identified by the LGBTIQ Consultation & Early Benchmarking project; and/or longer term benchmarking criteria

The table also includes quick reference information about the source/s used to identify the need for each strategy action point. The following key is used:

<b>AWEI (Foundational) –</b>	refers to Australian Workplace Equality Index criteria required to be eligible for consideration as a recognised employer of excellence at the Bronze
<b>AWEI (Intermediate) –</b>	refers to Australian Workplace Equality Index criteria required to be eligible for consideration as a recognised employer of excellence at the Bronze or Silver level
<b>AWEI (Leading) –</b>	refers to Australian Workplace Equality Index criteria required to be eligible for consideration as a recognised employer of excellence at the Silver or Gold level
<b>Uni Guide –</b>	refers to the LGBTI Uni Guide (online publication ranking each Australian University against criteria of LGBTI equality, inclusion, support and safety)
<b>Stakeholder –</b>	refers to a need frequently identified by student and/or staff stakeholders within the University

## GOAL 1: The University is recognised for its demonstrable LGBTIQ inclusive, safe and friendly student experience.

**Securing Success Objective 1:** A distinctly student-centred University where academic and personal support is well integrated at all student lifecycle stages.

The University will create highly visible tailored supports to sexuality and gender diverse students to help ensure our LGBTIQ students are meaningfully included, respected and safe within the University Community. To be recognised for its demonstrable LGBTIQ inclusive, safe and friendly student experience, Western Sydney University will:

Strategy	Executive Responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
<b>1.1</b> Provide readily accessible and clear information about our LGBTIQ-related student supports, activities and consultation (including on the University's web pages and other communication formats).	Chief Student Experience Officer	Ongoing	A		✓	✓
<b>1.2</b> Monitor and evaluate student experiences in University residences to evaluate whether LGBTIQ students are safe, respected and included whilst living on campus.	Chief Student Experience Officer	By end 2017	A		✓	✓
<b>1.3</b> Consider the effectiveness of the current set up of Queer Rooms (including location, facilities, access, and usage) to ensure these spaces match contemporary best practice and demonstrably contribute to LGBTIQ student safety, support and engagement. Student consultation and collaboration to be a key and visible element of this project.	Chief Student Experience Officer	By end 2017	A		✓	✓
<b>1.4</b> Refresh the Queer Collectives and University support to these groups to ensure their structure and activities align with contemporary best practice and demonstrably enhance student safety, support and engagement. Student consultation and collaboration to be a key and visible element of this project.	Chief Student Experience Officer	By end 2017	A		✓	✓
<b>1.5</b> Provide gender neutral facilities (including toilets, change rooms and sporting facilities) on campus and provide reasonable options on each campus.	Chief Student Experience Officer  Executive Director, Capital Works & Facilities	By end 2018	A	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>	✓	✓



Strategy	Executive Responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
<b>1.6</b> Investigate emerging sector practice and implement changes to ensure student administration processes reflect contemporary, non-discriminatory and best practice inclusion of transgender and intersex students.	Chief Student Experience Officer	By end 2018	A		✓	✓
<b>1.7</b> Promote and provide support to transgender students undergoing gender transition, including development of a support plan describing assistance from the University to the individual with university processes for any name and/or gender change; information and/or training to relevant students and/or staff; access to counselling services; student welfare services; leave and/or special consideration with studies; and other relevant issues as appropriate.	Chief Student Experience Officer	By end 2017	A			✓
<b>1.8</b> Continue to demonstrate the University's improved performance in LGBTIQ student support, inclusion, equity and engagement, via public benchmarking instruments such as the <a href="#">LGBTI Uni Guide</a> and <a href="#">Australian Workplace Equality Index</a>	Vice President, People & Advancement  Chief Student Experience Officer	Ongoing	B	✓	✓	✓
<b>1.9</b> Promote the University's efforts to visibly include, celebrate and respect LGBTIQ students, staff, and broader community, and the expectation of all students and staff to be respectful and inclusive, throughout the calendar year.	Exec. Dir. Marketing	Ongoing	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>	✓	✓
<b>1.10</b> Monitor and evaluate the quality of LGBTIQ student experience and satisfaction to ensure that support provided positively differentiates the Western LGBTIQ student experience.	Chief Student Experience Officer	By end 2018	B		✓	✓
<b>1.11</b> Scope possible options, in collaboration with students, for strengthening LGBTIQ student voice and participation in student representative avenues.	Chief Student Experience Officer	By end 2018	B		✓	✓
<b>1.12</b> Provide career advice specifically tailored to students identifying as sexuality and/or gender diverse.	Chief Student Experience Officer	By end 2018	B		✓	

## GOAL 2: The University continues to lead the sector in researching issues affecting LGBTIQ communities and translates its academic knowledge into meaningful impact.

**Securing Success Objective 2:** To be a research-led University with regional, national and global impact.

Western is already a sector leader in the research it conducts into issues affecting LGBTIQ communities and a major contributor to the academic knowledge in the area. The University will support this continuing leadership and seek to translate our research findings into meaningful outcomes for community and sector partners regionally, nationally and globally. The research activities and partnerships will align with the University's four interdisciplinary research themes: Urban Living & Society; Health & Wellbeing; Environmental Sustainability; and Education. To continue being a sector leader in LGBTI-related research and translate our learning into meaningful outcomes for the broader community, Western Sydney University will:

Strategy	Executive responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
<b>2.1</b> Promote the University's research achievements to the public, private and NGO sectors, and broader community on a regional, national and global basis.	Exec. Dir. Marketing	Ongoing	A	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>	✓	
<b>2.2</b> Continue to support and develop the interdisciplinary <a href="#">Sexualities and Genders Research (SaGR)</a> and its engagement with teachers, school systems, medical practitioners, allied health professionals, professional associations, families, communities and policy makers on issues affecting sexuality and gender diverse communities and individuals.	Dean, School of Social Sciences & Psychology	Ongoing	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		
<b>2.3</b> Map significant research planned/currently being conducted by Western into issues affecting LGBTIQ communities and consider ways this research can be used as a 'game changer' in lived experiences of sexuality and gender diverse individuals/groups.	PVC (Research and Innovation)	By end 2017	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		
<b>2.4</b> Build further research collaborations with LGBTIQ-related community, corporate and/or sector partners to conduct mutually-beneficial research and/or other projects applying Western's research findings into meaningful outcomes.	PVC (Research and Innovation)	Ongoing	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		✓
<b>2.5</b> As a part of Our People Strategy, develop a mechanism to support and recognise individual academic staff teaching and/or researching LGBTIQ related issues.	Exec. Dir. Human Resources & Organisational Development	By end 2017	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>	✓	✓



## GOAL 3: A unique learning experience responsive to the contemporary social, cultural and political changes for people of diverse sexualities and genders

**Securing Success Objective 3:** Provide a unique learning experience that is innovative flexible and responsive.

The University will provide a learning environment that is reflective of the broader community's sexuality and gender diversity and responds to the evolving social, cultural and political issues affecting and recognition of LGBTIQ people. To deliver this Western Sydney University will:

Strategy	Executive responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
<b>3.1</b> Conduct a university-wide mapping of students' learning experiences to ensure inclusive, safe and respectful learning environments are provided in all courses.	DVC & VP (Academic)	By end 2018	B	✓ <i>Additional</i>		✓
<b>3.2</b> Establish a Community of Practice, in collaboration with the Western Sydney University Ally Network, within the University of staff interested in sharing and extending LGBTIQ inclusive learning, support and teaching practices.	DVC & VP (Academic)	By end 2019	C	✓ <i>Additional</i>		✓
<b>3.3</b> Build staff capacity to use LGBTIQ inclusive teaching practices and deliver content that meets the changing needs of professions and industry in relation to sexuality and gender diversity, in collaboration with the Western Sydney University Ally Network	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	By end 2019	C	✓ <i>Additional</i>		✓

## GOAL 4: An international profile highlighting LGBTIQ safe and inclusive staff and student experience and impactful LGBTIQ research

**Securing Success Objective 4:** An expanding international reach and reputation

Western will progress this goal by promoting where the University has positive LGBTIQ staff and student experiences, support, inclusion and broader LGBTIQ community engagement to help build the University's reputation as a vibrant and outward looking university attractive to talented and diverse international students and staff. To deliver this Western Sydney University will:

Strategy	Executive responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
<b>4.1</b> Promote our LGBTIQ student positive experiences to prospective international students	PVC (International)	By end 2019	C	✓ <i>Leading</i>		
<b>4.2</b> Promote our LGBTIQ research internationally and contribute our academic knowledge to global discussions of matters affecting sexuality and gender diverse people.	PVC (Research & Innovation)	By end 2019	C	✓ <i>Leading</i>		

## GOAL 5: As an advocate and champion for the Greater Western Sydney region and its people the University shares its LGBTIQ-relevant knowledge, positive practices and activities with LGBTIQ-relevant partners

**Securing Success Objective 5:** Act as a leading advocate and champion for the Greater Western Sydney region and its people

Western will progress this goal by being a University of Choice for all students within the region, including LGBTIQ local students. The University will be a generator of public discussion on a wide range of matters affecting the sexuality and gender diverse communities of Greater Western Sydney region and invest in linkages with local LGBTIQ-relevant stakeholders. To deliver this Western Sydney University will:

Strategy	Executive responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
<b>5.1</b> Host regular open public forums to discuss contemporary issues affecting sexuality and gender diverse communities within the Greater Western Sydney region and involving local LGBTIQ-relevant stakeholders.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity Unit)	By end 2017 and ongoing	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>	✓	✓
<b>5.1</b> Open existing Ally Network training sessions to local partners seeking to establish their own student and/or staff support network.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity Unit)	By end 2018	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		✓
<b>5.3</b> Make University spaces and/or facilities available for community-based not-for-profit LGBTIQ-related organisations and/or programs.	VP (People & Advancement)	By end of 2018 and ongoing	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>	✓	✓
<b>5.4</b> Promote across the broader Greater Western Sydney region the University's efforts to create LGBTIQ inclusivity.	Exec. Director Marketing	By end 2019 and ongoing	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		

## GOAL 6: A dynamic and innovative culture reflecting the sexuality and gender diversity of Greater Western Sydney and broader community that helps secure strategic success for the University

**Securing Success Objective 6:** A dynamic and innovative culture that secures success.

Western aims to be an employer of choice with a dynamic, innovative and respectful culture. The University will leverage its highest performance, engagement and capabilities by recruiting, retaining and developing a workforce reflective of the sexuality and gender diversity of the Greater Western Sydney region and having a commitment to the health and safety of the whole University community, including our LGBTIQ students and staff. To deliver this Western Sydney University will:

Strategy	Executive responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
<b>6.1</b> Conduct an audit of the University's policy instruments to ensure universal inclusion of sexuality and gender diverse individuals.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By April 2017	A	✓ <i>Foundational</i>	✓	
<b>6.2</b> Introduce an Executive Champion for the whole-of-university LGBTIQ inclusion with accountabilities to report to the Executive Committee on an annual basis.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By April 2017	A	✓ <i>Foundational</i>		
<b>6.3</b> When released, review and incorporate the relevant and feasible recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission's <i>Respect. Now. Always. Report</i> , into the University's Sexuality and Gender Diversity Strategy, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By end 2017, subject to report release.	A			✓
<b>6.4</b> Provide LGBTIQ awareness training, including blended learning options, for all staff across the University on a regular basis, including compulsory Ally Training for all managers.	Exec. Dir. Human Resources & Org. Dev.	By end 2017	A	✓ <i>Foundational</i>	✓	✓
<b>6.5</b> Include information about the University's sexuality and gender diversity initiatives and Ally Network in Orientation for commencing staff.	Exec. Dir. Human Resources & Org. Dev. (in partnership with Equity & Diversity)	By end 2017	A	✓ <i>Foundational</i>		
<b>6.6</b> Develop a policy articulating the University's support to students and staff undergoing gender transition.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By end 2018	B	✓ <i>Intermediate</i>	✓	

Strategy	Executive responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
<b>6.7</b> Promote and provide support to transgender staff undergoing gender transition, including development of a support plan describing assistance from the University to the individual with university processes for any name and/or gender change; information and/or training to relevant students and/or staff; access to counselling services; student welfare services; leave and/or special consideration with studies; and other relevant issues as appropriate.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By end 2017	A	✓ <i>Foundational</i>		
<b>6.8</b> Establish a rolling calendar of whole-of-university events with Executive endorsement marking days of significance to LGBTIQ communities, including the Sydney's Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras, International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, and Wear It Purple Day, in collaboration with the Ally Network and Queer Collective.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By end 2017 and ongoing	A	✓ <i>Foundational</i>	✓	✓
<b>6.9</b> Senior leaders, Equity & Diversity team, HR team and/or Ally Network members to present at external conference and/or industry events about the University's work on LGBTI inclusion and issues.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By end 2017 and ongoing	A	✓ <i>Foundational</i>		
<b>6.10</b> Demonstrate our performance as LGBTIQ inclusive and equal opportunity employer via participation in the Australian Workplace Equity Index and continued membership of Pride in Diversity.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	Ongoing	A	✓ <i>Foundational</i>	✓	
<b>6.11</b> Establish an Advisory Group to help steer the University's development of a policy, guidelines, staff development programs and resources on inclusion of transgender, transitioning, and intersex students and staff.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By end 2017	B	✓ <i>Intermediate</i>		
<b>6.12</b> Develop new web content and other communications to articulate the University's ongoing commitment to LGBTI workplace inclusion, including addition of online resources about LGBTIQ workplace inclusion.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By end 2017	B	✓ <i>Intermediate</i>		
<b>6.13</b> Promote, support and strengthen the Ally Network across the organisation including the development of a 3 year strategic plan, annual activity plans, strategic membership drives to incorporate members from crucial organisational functions, sustainability plan, and establishment of executive endorsement and champion/s.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity)	By end 2018	B	✓ <i>Intermediate Leading</i>		✓
<b>6.14</b> In consultation with key stakeholders scope the options, feasibility and value of	VP (People & Advancement)	By end 2018	B	✓ <i>Inter-</i>	✓	✓

Strategy	Executive responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Action aligns to:		
				AWEI Criterion	Uni Guide Criterion	Stakeholder Need
collecting and monitoring data on LGBTIQ staff satisfaction and engagement.	(via Equity & Diversity)			<i>mediate</i>		
<b>6.15</b> Work with the Ally Network to develop options for rewarding and recognising staff contributing to LGBTIQ inclusion beyond the University, including establishment of a VC's Award for Inclusion.	Exec. Dir. Human Resources & Org. Dev. (in partnership with Ally Network)	By end 2018	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		✓
<b>6.16</b> Expand the Ally Network to 250 members and ensure that its membership includes representatives from organisational units which deliver direct services to University stakeholders such as prospective and current students, alumni, community members and university staff.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity Unit)	By end of 2019	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		✓
<b>6.17</b> Help initiate and participate in sector networks and linkages with other higher education institutions also working on improved LGBTIQ inclusivity.	VP (People & Advancement)	Ongoing	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		✓
<b>6.18</b> Conduct an Ally Network member survey bi-annually to help evaluate performance, outcomes, impact, and gaps.	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity Unit)	Ongoing	B	✓ <i>Inter-mediate</i>		
<b>6.19</b> Conduct Australian Workplace Equality Index employee survey annually, monitor findings and incorporate key issues into the University's <i>Sexuality and Gender Diversity Inclusion Strategy</i> .	VP (People & Advancement) (via Equity & Diversity Unit)	Ongoing	B	✓ <i>Additional</i>		

# ATTACHMENT 1: WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY'S

## LGBTIQ CONSULTATION & EARLY BENCHMARKING RESULTS

### Background

Western Sydney University is developing a 3 year whole-of-university LGBTI inclusion strategic plan, as part of the LGBTI Benchmarking and Accreditation Project. The project was approved by Executive Committee in March 2016. To ensure the plan responds to the current status quo of LGBTI inclusivity across the University we have collected information from several sources including:

- key stakeholder consultation;
- baseline benchmarking results measuring our performance as an LGBTI inclusive and equal opportunity workplace via the Australian Workplace Equality Index; and
- analysis of our performance in the LGBTI Uni Guide.

### Key Stakeholder Consultations

Equity and Diversity, facilitated two group meetings with members of the Queer Collective to seek student views on our inclusivity practices. The following key issues arose:

- Transgender students described facing considerable difficulties including being harassed by other students in on-campus residential services and regularly feeling unsafe within the residences; the University processes and staff publicly using students' legal rather than preferred name and therefore publicly disclosing the person as transgender and causing distress; a lack of gender neutral toilet amenities (not also assigned as disabled toilets).
- The Queer Collective across the University has recently experienced substantial internal difficulties which seems to have seriously negated the group's capacity to engage and effectively represent LGBTI students. Each group asked for more and better connection with other University activities, processes, groups and networks. The group appears to need assistance to rebuild their structures and membership to better support and broadly represent students in any substantial way. The students demonstrated strong commitment to the University and the Queer Collective, and were especially articulate and constructive in their suggestions of future directions for the University.
- The students highlighted that they find it difficult to identify which staff are likely to be LGBTI aware and 'friendly' and explained they have experienced wide variance in staff's approaches to LGBTI inclusion. The group requested that the University consider mandatory LGBTI awareness training for staff.
- The Queer Collective members also observed that overall the University's pedagogy lacked inclusive curricula and materials reflecting LGBTI individuals, communities and/or issues. The members suggested this puts our graduates at a disadvantage by failing to prepare them for the increasing visibility and presence of 'out' LGBTI colleagues and clients in their future professional contexts.

The Director of Equity and Diversity also held consultations with key staff across the University to collect their views on our current performance and priority issues, representatives at the meeting included both Co-Convenors of the Ally Network, other Ally Network members, 'out' staff members, staff from crucial organisational functions within the University, and covered Professional and Academic staff including senior leaders. The following issues were identified by the party:

- A request that the University ensure that any benchmarking and accreditation be undertaken with a firm values-basis and commitment to effect measurable and structural improvement to lived experience for LGBTIQ students and staff;



- The importance of providing executive support where the University acts to progress a more visible position on LGBTIQ inclusion;
- Concerns about possible recent unwelcomed intrusions into the Queer Rooms and impact on students using this space.
- An ongoing need to communicate to students and staff the expectation to demonstrate respect and inclusion of LGBTIQ individuals.
- The need to provide career support to LGBTIQ staff because staff experience being 'out' professionally as a career disadvantage.
- A recommendation to consider ways the Ally Network could be more visible and strategic across the University.
- The growing need to improve awareness of transgender people, the issues they face at Western and broader, particular in relation to the need for more gender neutral toilets on campus.

## Australian Workplace Equity Index Benchmarking Results

- There is a 10% gap between WSU's baseline performance and the Higher Education sector average, and about 20% gap between WSU and the average performance of employers recognised by a bronze award.
- It is crucial to note that this is a **baseline measure** only. It captures only Western's performance in the 2015 calendar year, therefore pre-dating our significant progress in 2016. For example, our latest Mardi Gras participation, VC efforts to promote LGBTIQ inclusion, improvement in LGBTI Uni Guide results, and the Australian Ally Conference will only be reflected in the next submission (March 2017) and benchmarking results (July 2017).
- Western's strongest areas of performance are our:
  - community engagement through our teaching and research in issues affecting LGBTIQ communities,
  - significant contribution to academic knowledge in the area,
  - work of the Ally Network, and
  - inclusive Staff Agreements.
- The University's performance was lower in the areas including:
  - visible signals of LGBTIQ inclusion,
  - executive sponsorship of LGBTIQ activities and commitment,
  - LGBTIQ-related strategic planning, and
  - absence of LGBTIQ-related content in compulsory managers' training and/or generally across the staff development programs.
- We anticipate the additional efforts being made across the University in the 2016 calendar year will help Western to substantially gain on the sector average and those employers recognised for high results. However, it's important to recognise that whilst Western is making significant strides, so too is the overall performance and number of benchmarked employers. PID report a marked increase in the standards of LGBTIQ inclusion across all participants last year.
- Pride in Diversity are working closely with us to assist with our next AWEI submission, including a detailed analysis of Western's baseline performance and a set of recommendations of steps forward. Attachment A lists the key suggestions by PID and corresponding actions we've already made in the 2016 calendar year.

- In summary, PID suggest we develop an overall LGBTI strategic plan including targets, accountabilities and regular reporting mechanism and include in the plan a commitment to embed LGBTI inclusion into existing structures such as: policies, staff development programs, staff engagement monitoring, and talent tracking. It also recommends we generate new and additional strategic directions such as, to:
  - produce policy and guidelines for support to transitioning students/staff,
  - designate an Executive Sponsor/Champion for the LGBTI strategic plan;
  - hold a background briefing for executive/senior managers re LGBTI inclusion;
  - develop a communications plan that includes public and internal communication by VC; communication to staff and student about the strategy and expectation of LGBTI inclusion, and promotion of visible signs of LGBTI inclusion;
  - install more visible signals of LGBTI inclusion externally and internally;
  - expand the University's engagement with LGBTI community and community groups;
  - support the Ally Network to develop their own strategic and activity plan, designate organisational responsibilities to key members, and allocate a budget, and
  - mentor other organisations on LGBTI inclusion.
- Between January and July the University has already progressed some of this work, including:
  - LGBTI Strategic Plan in development
  - Communication Strategy in progress and increased communication already happening to students and via social media channels
  - Policy audit in progress to identify any gaps in current policy
  - New and expanded visible signalling instituted throughout the year including to date: larger Mardi Gras float, Rainbow flags on campus, IDAHOT Day Staff Competition, more Ally Network promotional materials.
  - VC has communicated across the year about LGBTI inclusion at Western, within the Higher Education sector, and across the broader community.
  - Inaugural Australian Ally Conference co-hosted by the University in June which progressed the objectives of mentoring other organisations, making a public stand on issues affecting LGBTI communities, and creating visible messaging of LGBTI inclusion.
  - Improvements to LGBTI Uni Guide results moving Western up from 2<sup>nd</sup> last position on league table to middle range on par with institutions similar to this University.

## LGBTI Uni Guide Benchmarking Analysis

- When the *LGBTI Uni Guide* was published in 2014 it measured all Australian universities against a 15 point criteria. It evaluated each institution's compliance with anti-discrimination legislation obligations, and the inclusion and safety for sexuality and gender diverse individuals. It assessed each University's performance based only on existing publicly available online information.
- At the time of publication the Guide showed Western Sydney University as one the lowest performing universities in NSW, indicating we met only 4/15 criteria. Subsequently the University has improved its results, we now meet 7/15 criteria and perform at par with other similar institutions. However, there is still work to be done.
- This benchmarking tool is relatively rudimentary and its methodology was controversial across the sector. However, it's a valuable indicator of areas to improve student engagement and safety plus a source of information for prospective LGBTIQ students choosing their university. Therefore it is important we continue to improve Western's published results in this publication.

- Western’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotions Team recently conducted a student-led project through its Ambassador Program which considered our *LGBTI Uni Guide* performance. The report ‘*LGBTIQ+ Engagement Initiative*’ made recommendations on how the University could improve a portion of its results and the lived experiences of sexuality and gender diverse students.
- Summarily, this initiative recommended that the University:
  - Increase student participation in Ally Network and Ally Training
  - Strengthen the connection and collaboration between the Ally Network and Queer Collective
  - Rename the Queer Rooms to ‘Ally & Queer Room’
  - Develop a single resource (available online and in-print) which collates ‘orientation’ type of information for sexuality and gender diverse students about Queer-friendly services, facilities, activities, webpages, student groups, and relevant policy at Western plus details of community-based support services.
  - Revamp Western’s other web-based information for LGBTI students to improve visibility, navigation to important information, links to external agencies, and to add ‘news’ items of current events, activities, etc.
- Furthermore, Western’s results in *LGBTI Uni Guide* suggest these other issues also need consideration:
  - Inclusion, support and quality of service to transgender and intersex students.
  - Better clarity and visibility of process for consultation of LGBTIQ students
  - Provision of gender neutral toilet and sporting facilities on campus
  - Options, feasibility and value of collecting student data on the basis of sexuality and gender diversity
  - Promotion of existing support for LGBTIQ-relevant health needs on-campus

## Recommendations

1. Continue to develop a Strategic Plan that takes into account as many of the above issues as possible to address over the next 3 years across the whole University. The plan to include specific actions, timeframes, accountabilities, and an agreed regular reporting mechanism. Development of the plan to incorporate feedback and contribution directly from students, staff, the Ally Network, Queer Collective, and other key stakeholders. A sponsor from the Executive Committee to be appointed to oversee the progress of the strategic plan implementation.
2. Consider effective ways to embed LGBTIQ inclusion and issues into current policy, organisational development programs, staff promotional mechanisms, and student administrative processes.
3. Support the Ally Network to develop its own action plan setting out how it will continue to contribute to advancing LGBTIQ inclusion, issues, and the implementation of the above strategic plan. Within this plan address ways to ensure the sustainability of the network, build the Network’s profile, strengthen student participation and links, and respond to above identified student and staff needs.

4. Identify ways to refresh and strengthen the University's Queer Collective to help better support those students already involved and extend the group's engagement to a broader segment of students, existing University activities and programs, and maximise the value of the support this group provides to students.
5. Scope options for improving the appeal, impact, and wider engagement of the current Queer Rooms.
6. Investigate current practice and opportunities for providing gender neutral toilets, change rooms, showers, and other facility options for students and staff across Western's campuses.
7. Continue to develop a Communications Plan that incorporates messaging to students, staff, external LGBTIQ communities, and broader community stakeholders. The plan should promote the University's commitment to and efforts to progress LGBTIQ inclusion, safety, and equal opportunity on campus, across the sector, regionally and in the wider community.
8. Establish an advisory group on transgender issues to help steer the University's development of a policy, guidelines, an awareness raising campaign, and staff development programs and resources to improve inclusion and service to transgender and intersex students and staff.
9. Undertake a curriculum mapping exercise to identify where the University's teaching practices are already LGBTIQ inclusive and ways to extend exemplar teaching across all areas of learning and teaching at Western.
10. Describe the significant research activity due to be/already being undertaken within the next three years by the University into issues affecting LGBTIQ communities and consider how the University could maximise the impact of such research to advance 'real life' improvements to LGBTIQ communities, and opportunities to forge mutually beneficial partnerships with LGBTIQ-related community organisations and other stakeholders through our research activity.

*Developed by Michelle Falconer, Equity & Diversity Unit, July 2016*