



# Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment

Annual Report 2022-23

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# Letter of transmittal

**Hon Roger Cook MLA**

**Premier of Western Australia**

In accordance with section 144 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*, I hereby submit my report for the year ending 30 June 2023 for your information and presentation to the Parliament of Western Australia.



**Lindsay Warner**

**Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment**

14 September 2023

Copies are available in different formats on request.

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Public Sector Commission  
Dumas House, 2 Havelock Street  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

T: 08 6552 8500

E: [admin@psc.wa.gov.au](mailto:admin@psc.wa.gov.au)

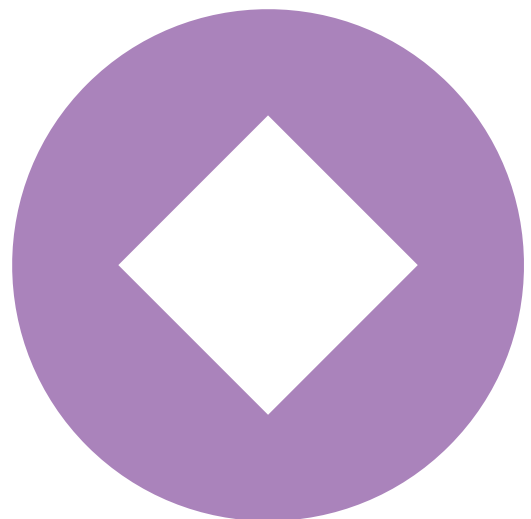
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## Acknowledgment of Country

We are proud to deliver our services from Whadjuk Noongar boodja.  
We acknowledge and pay respect to Elders, Traditional Owners and Custodians  
from the many land and language groups of Western Australia.

## From the Director



I am pleased to present the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report 2022-23.

This year's report articulates our ongoing

commitment to fostering equal employment opportunities, and highlights progress in outcomes for workforce diversity and inclusion in public employment. It complements the [State of the Western Australian Government Sector Workforce](#) report and accompanying [Statistical Bulletin](#) which provide detailed workforce and diversity data, analysis and commentary.

This year public authorities across the government sector experienced a highly competitive employment market. To support streamlined recruitment processes, the Public Sector Commissioner issued [Commissioner's Instruction 39: Interim Arrangements to Fill Public Sector Vacancies](#) with specific measures for increasing workforce diversity. It aligns with previous guidance about using the *Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1984* for [Recruiting and Developing Diverse Talent](#).

Data driven decision making remains at the core of our efforts. Data collection and review are critical to identify barriers to employment and progression, and to measure the effectiveness of diversity programs. It is through data collection that we gain insights into areas that are working well, as well as those that require improvement so we can

tailor our actions accordingly. This year the Public Sector Commission released guidance for [Understanding and Using Workforce Diversity Information](#) to inform design, delivery and evaluation of workforce planning, diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Compared with last year, workforce diversity data shows:

- an increase in the representation of women in the Senior Executive Service in the public sector and a decrease in the representation of women in leadership roles across other areas of the government workforce
- an increase in the representation of staff from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and young staff (aged 24 years and under) across the government workforce
- an increase in the representation of staff with disability across the government workforce, although only marginally in the public sector
- an increase in the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in local governments and government trading enterprises, but representation is unchanged in public universities and has decreased marginally in the public sector.

In addition to quantitative measures, understanding qualitative information such as staff experiences of belonging is important for fostering inclusive workplaces. The Commission's guidance about collecting and reporting staff views of inclusion, which was released this year, is an important initiative.

As Director, I support public authorities to uphold policies, programs and practices that address and eliminate discrimination, and promote equal employment opportunity. Discrimination in any form undermines equal employment opportunity and workplace inclusion. Additional guidance was included this year in the Commission's [Hiring Managers' Toolkit](#) to support identifying and managing unconscious bias in recruitment.

As we move forward, the focus remains on building psychologically safe and inclusive workplaces, addressing employment barriers, and supporting all staff to thrive and contribute meaningfully.

I extend my gratitude to public authorities for their efforts in building diverse workforces and fostering inclusive workplaces, and I look forward to continuing this important work in the coming year. I also thank the Public Sector Commissioner, Sharyn O'Neill PSM, for her ongoing support.



**Lindsay Warner**

**Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment**



A section of artwork installed in the Public Sector Commission's Dumas House offices. It showcases the 'attributes' behind each of the 9 symbols that comprise the Commission's visual identity. Each attribute is translated into Noongar and represented by art created by Acacia Collard.

## Role of the Director

The Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment is an independent office appointed by the Governor of Western Australia under the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (EO Act).

The Director's jurisdiction covers all public sector agencies, local government authorities, public universities, government trading enterprises and other statutory bodies. The term 'public authority' is used throughout this report to refer to these organisations collectively. For more information about the government sector see the [Structure of the Western Australian Government Sector](#).

Public authorities are responsible for having policies, programs and practices that ensure the absence of discrimination and promote equal employment opportunity. Creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce ensures public authorities are better able to meet the needs of Western Australians.

The Director works with public authorities to eliminate and prevent discrimination, and promote equal opportunity in public employment by:

- advising and supporting them to develop equal employment opportunity (EEO) management plans

- evaluating the effectiveness of their EEO management plans
- reporting and making recommendations about the operation of EEO management plans, and other matters relating to workforce diversity and inclusion in public employment.

## Relationship with the Public Sector Commission

The Director holds concurrent appointments as the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment and Executive Director Workforce Policy and Diversity at the Public Sector Commission. While the Director is an employee of the Commission, the role remains independent.

In promoting equal opportunity and preventing discrimination in public employment, the Director works closely with the Commission. The Director's functions are delivered with the support of staff, office accommodation, corporate services and administration provided by the Commission.



Participants in the Public Sector Commission's Launch program

# Report on activities

## Advising and assisting public authorities

### Equal employment opportunity management plans

Every public authority is required to develop and implement an EEO management plan and provide this plan to the Director. The plan needs to outline how the public authority promotes equal employment opportunity and eliminates and prevents discrimination in the workplace.

Each plan must include information on the public authority's work to:

- develop, implement, communicate and evaluate policies and programs for promoting equal opportunity and eliminating discrimination in public employment
- collect, analyse and report on relevant workforce information
- review people management practices and policies to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices
- set goals and targets which support measuring the effectiveness of the plan
- revise and amend the plan
- appoint staff to be responsible for implementing the plan.

EEO management plans typically span a number of years. In June this year, 282 out of 285 public authorities had EEO management plans in place, with the Director receiving new and updated plans from 73 public authorities throughout the year. The Commission has followed up to support authorities without plans in place.

Public authorities continued to be encouraged to use the [Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020–2025](#) in their EEO management planning. In 2022-23, 276 out of 285 public authorities reported they had considered or are considering the strategy in their approach.

### Contribution to government strategies

The Director continued to support a range of WA government and national strategies aimed at delivering positive outcomes for underrepresented and vulnerable groups including contributing to:

- implementation of Western Australia's actions in [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#)
- the development of the Second Action Plan, and implementation of the state disability strategy, [A Western Australia for Everyone](#)
- implementation of Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence, [Path to Safety](#)
- implementation of [Closing the Gap – WA's Implementation Plan](#)
- implementation of Western Australia's plan for gender equality, [Stronger Together](#), and participation in the Stronger Together Implementation Group.



# Supporting the work of the Commission

## Workforce diversification and inclusion

The Director continued to support the Commission's actions under the [Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020–2025](#). This included developing guidance resources, programs and other initiatives aimed at delivering better workforce diversity and inclusion outcomes, and promoting equal opportunity in public employment.

The Director supported the Commission to undertake the following in 2022-23:

- Releasing the [Commissioner's Instruction 39: Interim Arrangements to Fill Public Sector Vacancies](#) to temporarily streamline recruitment processes to support agencies respond to the competitive employment market and to increase workforce diversity.
- Publishing and promoting information to support [Understanding Diverse Sexualities and Genders](#) for building inclusive and respectful workplaces.
- Updating the [Hiring Managers' Toolkit](#) including information about managing unconscious bias to support better recruitment outcomes for staff from diversity groups.
- Publishing guidance about [Cultural Considerations in the Workplace](#) for creating inclusive work environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Publishing guidance about [Understanding and Using Workforce Diversity Information](#) to inform workforce planning, diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- Hosting discussions with public sector chief executives and their direct reports with a focus on fostering workplaces which support women's career development and progression, and breaking down workplace structural and cultural barriers impacting women.
- Introducing the Women in Executive Leadership Development Experience Initiative, directly supporting leadership development for 24 accomplished women across the public sector.
- Delivering the 2023 [WA Public Sector Census](#) trial that collected information from 47,115 staff across 66 agencies, including new information to support understanding of diversity and inclusion.
- Providing public sector guidance on collecting information on staff views of workplace inclusiveness and requirement of agencies to report on activities to improve diversity and inclusion in annual reports.
- Continuing to publish and provide public sector workforce diversity information and metrics including the diversity dashboard and insights on the gender pay gap. Information provided this year included more detail on the gender pay gap by occupation and analysis of key factors influencing the pay gap in the WA public sector as well as guidance on setting equity index targets for diverse groups.
- Enhancing the [Diversity and Inclusion Calendar](#) of Western Australian, Australian and international days of recognition, commemoration and celebration to include a wider range of days of significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to increase the visibility of diversity and foster inclusive workplace cultures (webpage received 6,994 views in 2022-23).



- Continuing the [Solid Futures Aboriginal Traineeship Program](#), including support for the 2022 trainees and celebration of their completion of the program at a graduation ceremony. In 2023, 35 young Aboriginal people commenced their traineeships in 29 public sector agencies in metropolitan and regional locations (homepage received just under 10,000 views).
- Continuing the ‘[A place of opportunity](#)’ initiative to attract high quality students to public sector graduate and cadetship programs to start meaningful and rewarding careers. Advertising and engagement strategies included targeting students in regional areas as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. The 28 programs on the ‘A place of opportunity’ website included 3 specifically created for Aboriginal students (homepage received more than 42,000 views).
- Coordinating traineeships for students entering Year 11 through the [School Based Traineeship Program](#). In 2023, 17 new school based trainees were employed across 10 public sector agencies.
- Supporting public sector internships through the [McCusker Centre for Citizenship Internship Program](#) at The University of Western Australia, with 115 interns contributing new ideas and fresh thinking to programs and projects across 29 public sector agencies.

## Using and aligning data to add value

### Equal employment opportunity annual collection

Each year, public authorities are required to provide information to the Director about their workforce as well as current and planned initiatives to improve employment representation and inclusion of diverse groups.

The Commission facilitates the Equal Employment Opportunity Annual Collection on the Director’s behalf to assist public authorities to meet these reporting obligations.

The collection took place from late March to early May. The Commission provided information, communications and advisory support to public authorities leading up to and throughout the collection period. This included facilitating information sessions for public authority contact officers to help them prepare for and complete the collection.

Similar to last year, the Director collected data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training across public authorities. This information will be published in the [State of the Western Australian Government Sector Workforce](#) report.

In 2023 all 234 public authorities completed the collection, responding on behalf of 285 authorities.

## Staff sharing their diversity information

Response rates are the proportion of people who have responded to questions (that is, shared) about belonging to a diversity group. The importance of increasing response rates for accurate workforce diversity data was highlighted in last year's report.

Rates of sharing can be influenced by factors including [Psychologically Safe and Inclusive Workplaces](#), and approaches to data collection and reporting which are inclusive, transparent and secure.

This year, public authorities reported implementing initiatives to support sharing such as:

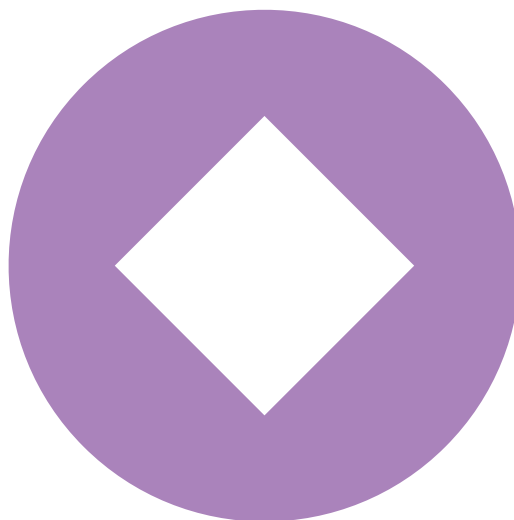
- enhancing diversity questionnaires to include options for people of diverse sexualities and genders to share their information
- providing regular opportunities for all staff to share their diversity information and using tailored approaches for staff who have not shared previously
- raising awareness and sharing stories of workforce diversity and workplace inclusion, and using these opportunities to promote the positive impact of sharing diversity information
- establishing and supporting staff resource groups to foster connection and promote workplace diversity and inclusion
- using qualitative and quantitative data to better understand workforce diversity and tailor workplace programs and initiatives.

This focus on activities providing staff with opportunities to share their diversity information is encouraging. For lasting change in workforce diversity there must be a continued effort in building psychologically safe and inclusive workplaces through leadership, organisational culture, systems and policy.

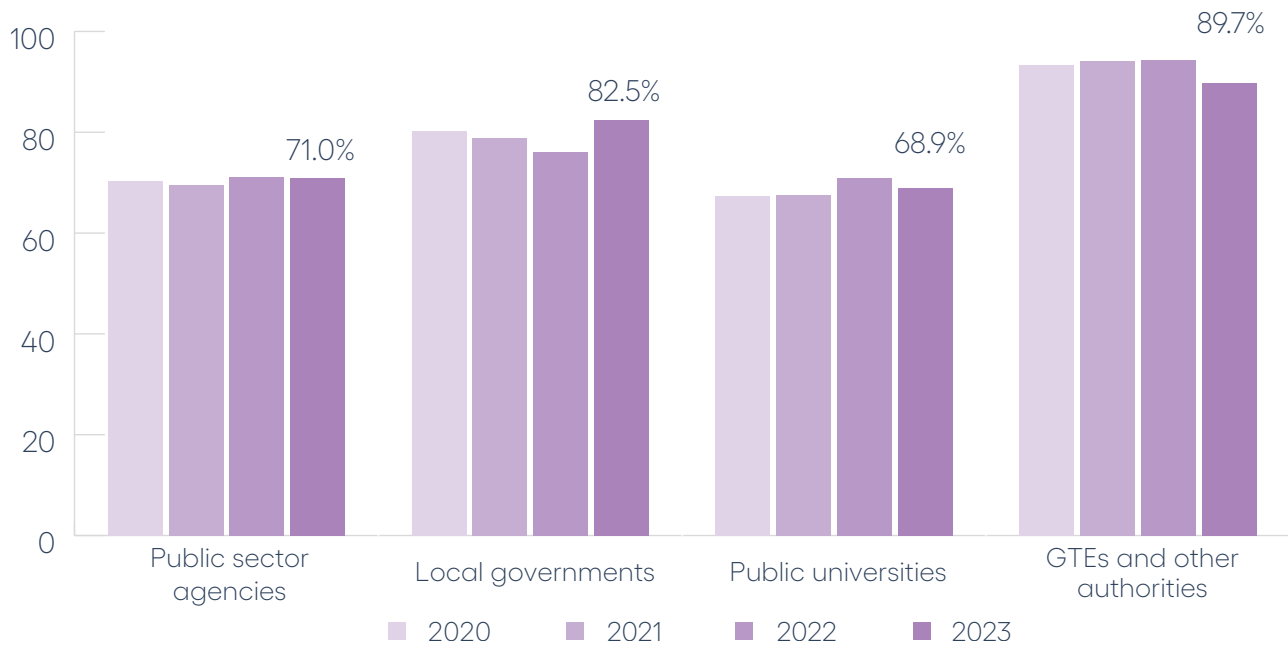
Along with using quantitative workforce diversity and inclusion data, understanding staff views about their workplace experiences can also support taking meaningful action to foster safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces.

This year, the Director supported the Commissioner to introduce a requirement for public sector agencies to include staff views of workplace inclusiveness in annual reports. From the 2023-24 reporting period, each public sector agency must include information about activities to improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace including specific reference to staff views of workplace inclusion.

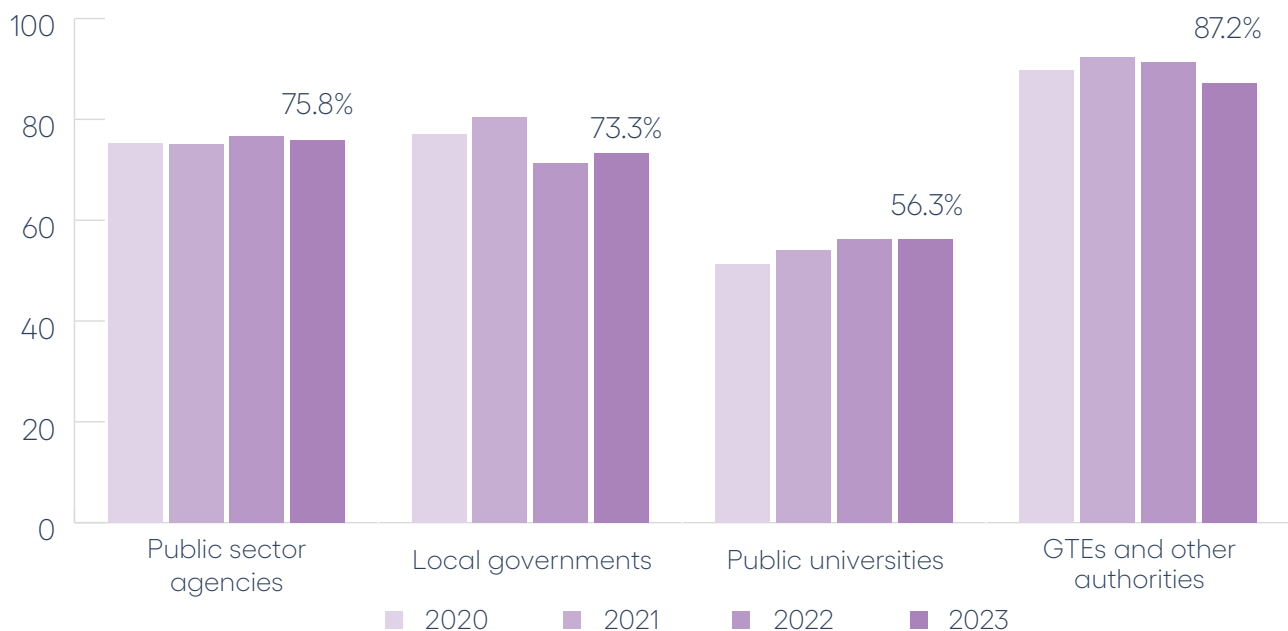
In taking appropriate actions, all public authorities are encouraged to collect and consider staff views of workplace inclusion combined with other workforce diversity and inclusion measures.



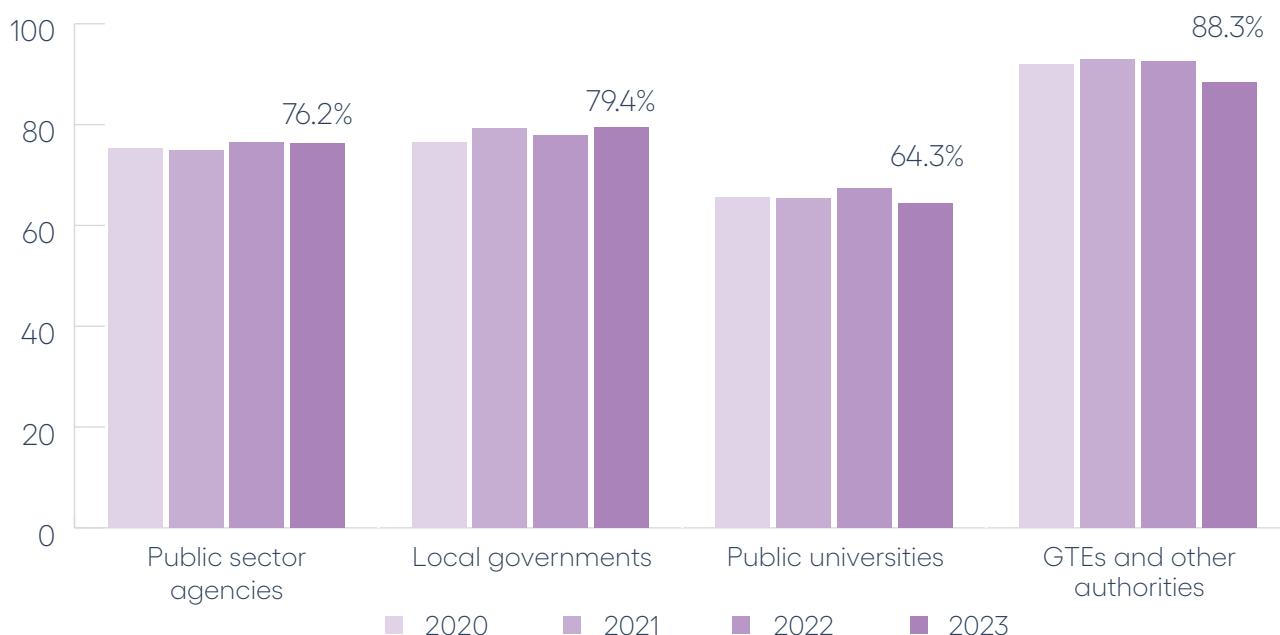
## Response rates for culturally and linguistically diverse people by sector



## Response rates for people with disability by sector



## Response rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by sector



In 2022-23, government trading enterprises and other authorities again had the highest response rates, although response rates for all 3 diversity groups have decreased compared with last year. This was in part due to one authority reporting an error in previous years.

In the public sector, response rates for all diversity groups decreased marginally from last year, however remained above 70%.

In local government, the response rate for all 3 diversity groups increased from last year.

Of note, the response rate for staff from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds increased to 82.5% (76.1% in 2022).

Response rates for diversity groups remained unchanged or decreased for public universities. These low response rates impact the reliability of representation numbers and the equity index. Public universities are encouraged to investigate opportunities to increase sharing including using Public Sector Commission resources and tools for understanding and using workforce diversity data and building psychologically safe and inclusive workplaces.



Staff from the Commission's Aboriginal Employment Unit

## Equity index

The equity index provides insight into where diversity groups exist across a public authority's hierarchy.

An equity index of 100 is considered optimal, indicating the distribution of staff from diversity groups is equitably spread across salary ranges when compared with all staff.

An equity index of less than 100 means staff from diversity groups are concentrated at lower salary levels and therefore underrepresented at higher salary levels.

An equity index of greater than 100 means staff from diversity groups are concentrated at higher salary levels, indicating overrepresentation at higher salary levels.

The equity index is a useful measure in workforce planning, providing insight into whether staff from diversity groups are employed in senior roles and whether a pipeline of diverse talent exists.

This year, public authorities reported implementing initiatives to support improved representation of diversity groups. There was a clear focus on gender equity, and women's capability and career development.

Other activities included:

- using the [exceptions in the Equal Opportunity Act 1984](#) to make employment and development decisions in favour of diversity groups to support representation of staff from diversity groups in higher level roles
- using [Commissioner's Instruction 39](#) to appoint staff from diversity groups in mid to higher level roles
- developing innovative and engaging ways for sharing workforce diversity and inclusion information, such as interactive dashboards, to raise awareness and support decision making for better employment and development outcomes
- implementing employment, development and succession planning frameworks for diversity groups to support capability development and career progression

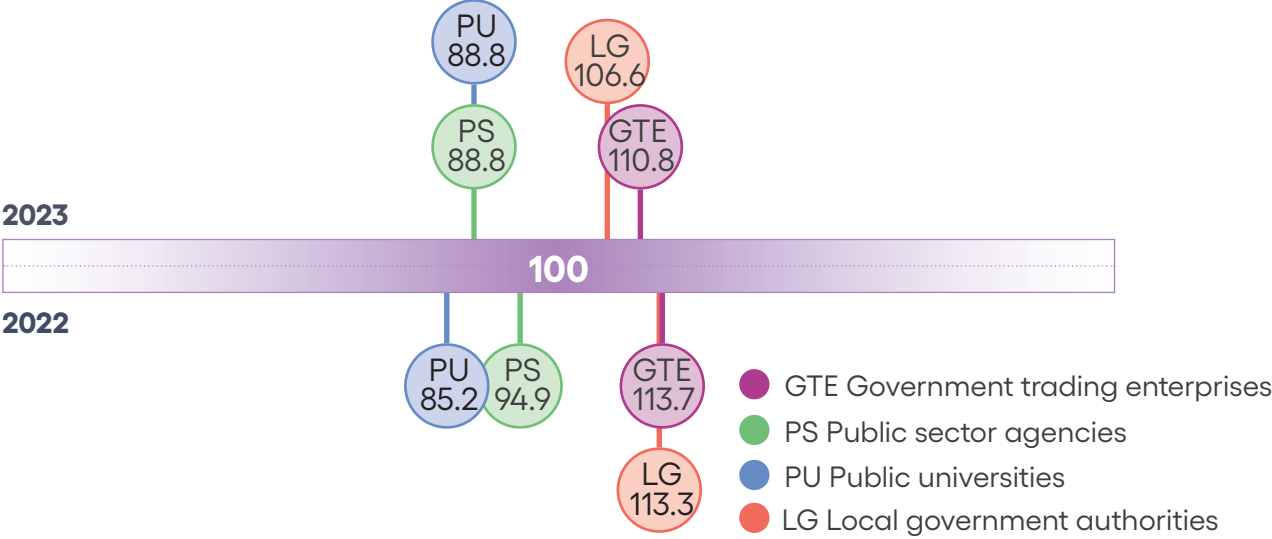
- implementing staff surveys to gather information about career barriers and bias experienced by staff from diversity groups, and using survey outcomes to inform strategic planning and the design of targeted initiatives to address systemic barriers for diversity groups
- establishing senior executive roles with leadership responsibility for gender equity and inclusion
- establishing dedicated budget or funding to support development opportunities for staff from diversity groups.

This year, the Director supported the Commissioner to introduce a requirement for public sector agencies to set targets to improve the equity index for staff from diversity groups to support representation in mid to senior level roles. Public sector agencies are required to report on implementing these actions in the 2024 EEO annual collection.

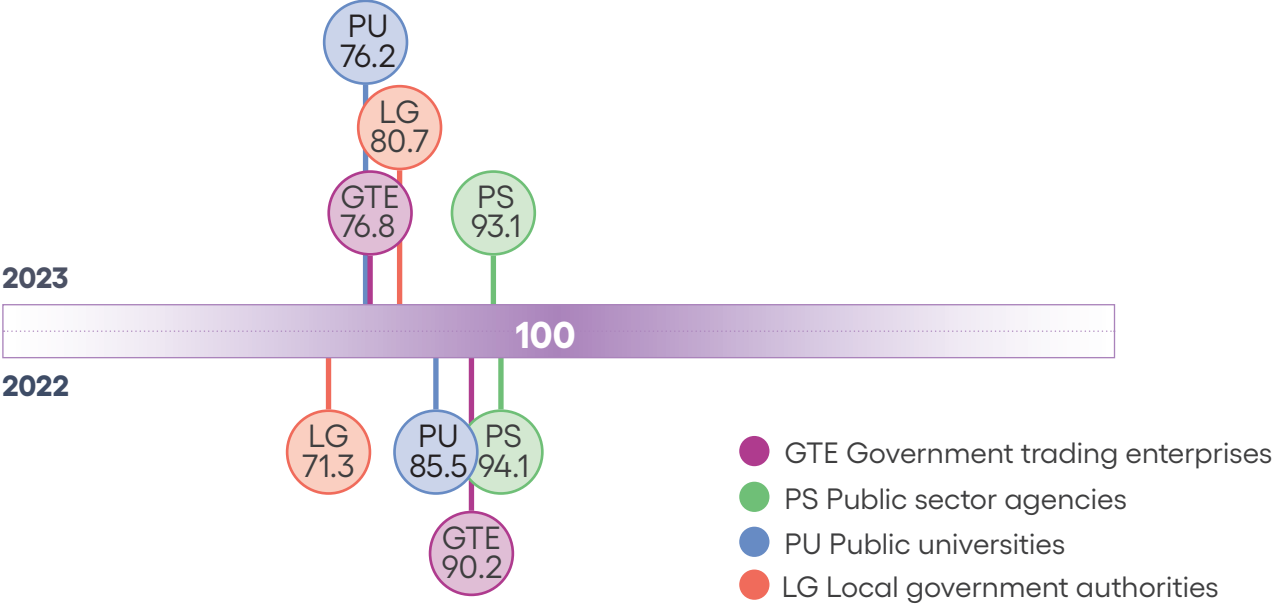


Feraidoon Safari, Graduate Officer at the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

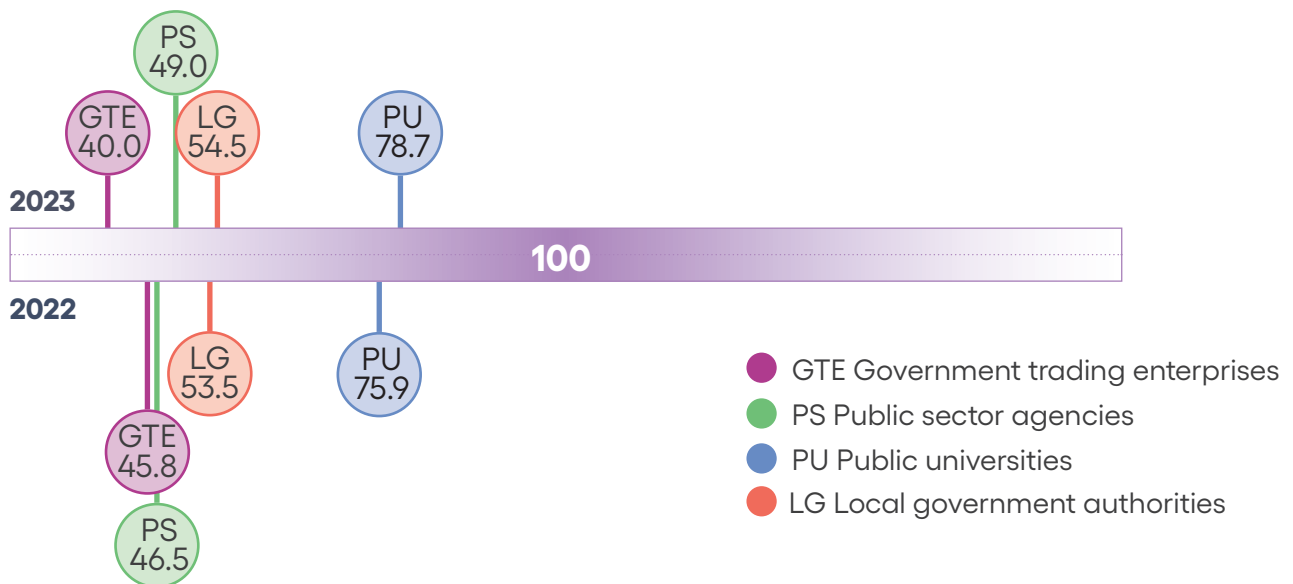
Equity index for culturally and linguistically diverse people by sector



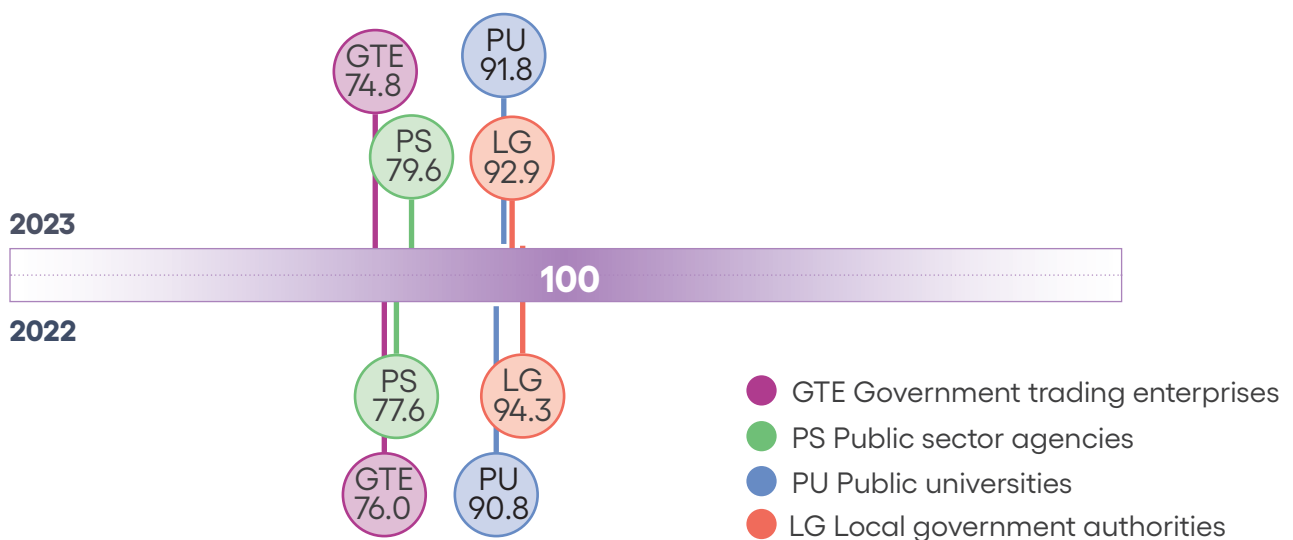
Equity index for people with disability by sector



## Equity index for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by sector



## Equity index for women by sector





In 2022-23, the equity index for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff increased across sectors, except for government trading enterprises. However, this index continued to be the lowest of all diverse staff except for public universities (where the index for staff with disability is lowest).

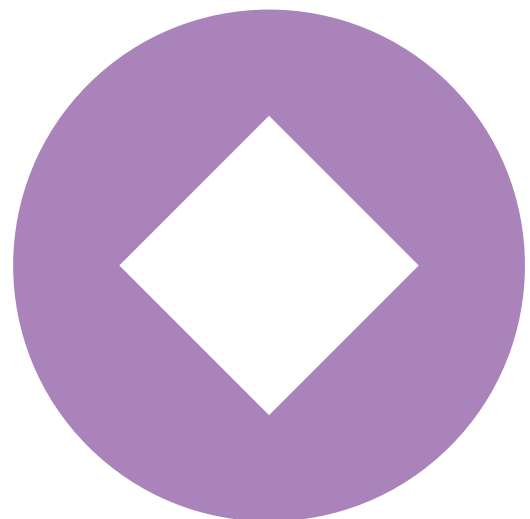
Although these increasing trends are encouraging, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff continue to be employed in lower level roles (with a notable exception in public universities). The importance of targeted interventions and initiatives to support employment opportunities and development pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff was emphasised last year. All public authorities are encouraged to gather detailed workforce diversity information, including the equity index, to assist decision making and taking appropriate actions.

With the exception of local government, the equity index for staff with disability has decreased across sectors, with notable decreases observed for public universities and government trading enterprises.

The equity index for staff from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has decreased across sectors, except for public universities. There are notable decreases observed for local government and the public sector.

Although equity index outcomes for staff with disability and staff from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds remain relatively high across sectors, all public authorities are encouraged to gather more detailed information to understand and address these decreasing trends.

[Understanding and Using Workforce Diversity Information](#) provides practical advice for using workforce diversity information, including the equity index, to inform workforce planning, diversity and inclusion initiatives.



## Appendix 1: Data quality statement

Data used in this report was acquired through the 2023 Equal Employment Opportunity Annual Collection and March 2023 Human Resource Minimum Obligatory Information Requirements reporting. For more information, see [Collection Processes and Methodologies](#).

The 2023 Equal Employment Opportunity Annual Collection sample frame comprised 69 public sector agencies (reporting on behalf of 120 public sector agencies), 145 local governments, 16 government trading enterprises and other statutory bodies, and 4 public universities. All 234 public authorities provided responses to the collection, responding on behalf of 285 authorities.

### Equal employment opportunity management plans

The count of public authorities reported as having EEO plans reflects responses to the 2023 collection and includes respondents that reported having either EEO management plans or workforce and diversity management plans.

In the public sector, some agencies are supported by departments or larger agencies. As in previous years, responding agencies were able to provide responses on behalf of other agencies. For the purposes of counting EEO management plans and workforce and diversity management plans, where a department or agency responded on behalf of another, both agencies are considered to have the same response.

### Workforce information

In 2023 workforce data was received from all public authorities in the sample frame that were required to provide it.

A data quality assurance process was undertaken in consultation with public authorities and some changes were made to workforce data provided. This quality assurance process focused on ensuring workforce data spreadsheets were complete, filled out consistently and contained meaningful data. Some errors and omissions (such as blank fields for 'unknown' or clearly erroneous dates of birth) were amended by the Commission. Where broader data quality matters were identified, public authorities were contacted to clarify or resubmit data. Information presented in this report reflects the final data set.

During the 2023 collection, one authority advised previous submissions had incorrectly categorised staff with unknown diversity status as not being part of a diversity group. This affected the number of valid responses used in response rate and equity index calculations for government trading enterprises and other statutory bodies in previous years. This correction, in part, resulted in a decrease in response rates in 2023.

