

QP: 12.1  
Version: 4  
Date: June 2024

## Diversity and Inclusion Policy



Authorised: Board  
ABN: 48 603 486 442

New England North West Health Ltd (Trading as HealthWISE New England North West) will be referred to as HealthWISE for the purpose of this document.

### Policy Statement

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The purpose of this policy is to support and facilitate an inclusive environment that embraces our differences and recognises the benefits of a diverse team. Diversity includes but is not limited to gender, age, ethnicity, religious or cultural background, disability, marital or family status, sexual orientation, sexual status, gender identity. Varied thinking and learning styles, behavioural profiles, skills and experience can enable better client connection, deliverables and decisions.

HealthWISE values diversity of thought and experience and believes that our inclusive and collaborative culture strengthens our organisation and contributes to successful client outcomes. HealthWISE is committed to supporting and ensuring a diverse work environment in which everyone is treated fairly and with respect.

HealthWISE recognises diversity is important and we believe that diversity sensitive practice in our workforce helps us:

- a) provide all people we support with a welcoming, inclusive environment.
- b) attract, retain and motivate employees from the widest possible pool of talent;
- c) foster a culture that reflects our values of empowerment, equality and client focus and is open to all;
- d) improve innovation, creativity and inspire critical thinking;
- e) create a dynamic environment that leads to higher performance and well-being and greater employee engagement and satisfaction; and
- f) improve the connection between our people and the community we serve.

### Scope

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This policy covers all HealthWISE staff, board directors and stakeholders – clients and people we support, community, partners, stakeholders, employees, contractors and consultants engaged within HealthWISE and its programs and activities.

### Definitions

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**Culture** - the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought.

**Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)** - refers to different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Cultural diversity embraces Indigenous Australian and multicultural perspectives.

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**Culturally safe** - respects the legitimate rights, values and expectations of people and acknowledges the diversity within and between communities living in remote, regional and metropolitan areas.

**Cultural Responsiveness** – Culturally responsive care recognises the centrality of culture to people’s identity and working with them to determine what is culturally safe care for them as individuals.

**Disability** - may be defined as an intellectual, mental, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments.

**Diversity** - refers to aspects of people such as beliefs, attitudes, languages, social circumstances, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender history, health status and age.

**Diverse sexualities** - includes people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and sexually diverse, trans and gender diverse and/or fluid, intersex or queer.

**Gender diverse** - An umbrella term that includes all the different ways gender can be experienced and perceived. It can be used to refer to people questioning their gender, those who identify as trans/transgender, genderqueer, non-binary, gender non-conforming and more.

**Harassment** is unwelcome conduct on the basis of certain protected attributes that could reasonably be anticipated to cause a person to be offended, humiliated or intimidated. **Inclusive language** - is free of bias, discrimination and avoids stereotyping and mistaken assumptions about people on the basis of their sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breast feeding, sexual orientation, intersex status, gender history, health status, race, nationality, colour or ethnic origin, age, religious or political conviction, impairment or disability, socio economic background and family responsibility or family status.

**Sexual and Gender Diversity** – is defined as sexual orientation and/or gender identity

### Background

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## 1. WHAT DIVERSITY MEANS TO US

### 1.1. What is diversity?

At HealthWISE, we are committed to a culture that embraces and fosters diversity and inclusion. Diversity encompasses differences in backgrounds, sexual orientation, qualifications and experiences, and also differences in culture, beliefs, approach and viewpoints. HealthWISE ensures that individuals are provided with equal opportunity, while also creating opportunities for those groups that may be disadvantaged.

### 1.2. Gender diversity

HealthWISE has a commitment to the fundamental principle that gender is not a barrier to participation in our workforce, management, senior executive and on the Board of Directors of HealthWISE (“Board”) or services. Our organisation is committed to providing opportunities for all individuals.

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### 1.3. Board and senior executive diversity

At HealthWISE, diversity of gender and background are two important criteria we take into account in developing our succession plans and appointment processes for our Board and senior executive positions. However, other selection criteria, in particular business acumen, community feedback and industry experience, are also fundamentally important.

### 1.4. Supporting frameworks and policies

Our approach to diversity is supported by a range of frameworks and policies, including:

- Cultural Inclusion Framework – HealthWISE is committed to working towards building a society where there is equity in health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and has formalised this commitment by implementing a Cultural Inclusion Framework.
- Gender and Sexually Diverse Framework – HealthWISE is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment for staff, stakeholders and community members who identify as gender and sexually diverse. This commitment is formalised by a working group undertaking the development of a Gender and Sexually Diverse Framework.
- Code of Conduct – HealthWISE is committed to not only complying with its legal obligations, but also acting ethically and responsibly. Our Code of Conduct sets out the minimum standards of behaviour and conduct expected of all HealthWISE employees, contractors and consultants.
- Recruitment – HealthWISE is committed to maintaining a supportive, healthy and productive work environment, free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation and to maintaining appropriate federal legislative commitments.
- Flexible Working Arrangements Policy – HealthWISE believes in assisting employees to maintain a healthy and holistic balance between work, family, domestic responsibilities and other commitments, activities and interests. To ensure that we meet the needs of our employees and clients and people we support, HealthWISE offers flexibility in working arrangements for all employees, across all organisational levels that recognise and accommodate individual needs whilst still meeting business objectives.
- Leave policies – A range of leave options are available to HealthWISE employees to ensure they have appropriate options for time off work. This includes annual leave, carers' leave, personal leave, parental leave, compassionate leave, community leave, ceremonial leave and long service leave.
- Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy – HealthWISE is committed to creating an environment that is free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation. HealthWISE is committed to supporting and maintaining a healthy and safe workplace which promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of our employees.

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- Education Assistance Policy – To support our employees to reach their full potential, HealthWISE offers a range of internal learning and development opportunities and supports employees to undertake additional study, relevant to their position.
- HealthWISE Style Guide - At HealthWISE, it is important to use language that is inclusive, appropriate and respectful of the diversity of all people. The Style Guide provides a guide of inclusive language use.
- Quality Framework, Complaints Management and Complaints Procedure – staff and clients are able refer to the complaints management and procedure to provide feedback.

## 2. HOW WE PROMOTE DIVERSITY

### 2.1. Areas of Focus

We aim to promote diversity by:

- striving to create an inclusive environment respectful of all diverse backgrounds and beliefs, including recognising and celebrating various events across the business, such as NAIDOC Week, International Women's Day and Harmony Day, Pride Month, Wear it Purple Day;
- fostering a culture which supports and respects the values and needs of all individuals;
- identifying program or service areas that require change to be accessible and effective for service users diverse needs;
- contributing to the update and review of programs and services to ensure that they are responsive to individuals with diverse needs;
- assisting with consultation of the people we support, clients and their carers, stakeholders and relevant expert organisations to assess and monitor service and program accessibility and relevance, as required;
- considering ability and not disability when we employ and promote people and aiming to create a physical and cultural environment which supports participation and reasonably accommodates special needs;
- ensuring recruitment and selection processes across all levels of HealthWISE are structured so that a diverse range of candidates are considered;
- actively reviewing the organisation's recruitment practices, policies and procedures to reduce bias, both conscious and unconscious, on a regular basis;
- providing staff with opportunities to participate in diversity awareness training, inclusive and safe service provision training and cultural immersion experiences;
- implementing programs that:

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- are provided in a way that maximises fair and equitable access to all employees and seek to ensure that employees are aware of their responsibilities in relation to equal opportunity and diversity; and
- assist in the development of a broader and more diverse pool of skilled and experienced employees that, over time, will prepare them for senior management and board positions;
- setting targets for gender balance in management and senior leadership positions to ensure accurate and fair representation; and
- ensuring that unlawful discrimination and harassment does not occur, that is, when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably (either directly or indirectly) than another person or group because of a protected attribute.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Inclusion Framework has identified the following areas as being crucial to enhancing and maintaining cultural safety in the workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and clients:

- The need to achieve balance between academic and/or clinical expertise and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge.
- The universal application and implementation of cultural safety across the workplace through inclusive strategies, workplace tools and mandatory training that will provide cultural awareness and education.
- Embedding the principles of 'cultural safety' within the accreditation of all health professional practice and health services.
- An awareness of the importance and applicability of both verbal and non-verbal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communication styles.
- Acknowledgement of and respect for cultural protocols and cultural awareness within the organisation.

It is essential that our organisation is appropriately responsive to the needs of the diverse community that it serves and promotes health and well-being through equitable access to culturally safe services.

### Gender and Sexually Diverse Inclusion

It is essential that our organisation is appropriately responsive to the needs of the diverse community that it serves and promotes health and well-being through equitable access to culturally safe services.

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The organisation develops and maintains working relationships with gender and sexually diverse health services and provides appropriate referral pathways when needed. Staff training and development supports HealthWISE to ensure a welcoming, accessible and safe environment for staff and clients who identify as a member of the gender and sexually diverse community.

### **People with a disability**

HealthWISE services will be inclusive for clients and people with a disability. Education, information and support are provided to staff and volunteers on service responsibilities and best practice when working with people with disabilities.

Working relationships with disability services are developed and maintained. Where appropriate, clients and people we support are linked to disability support networks as part of case management and continuing care.

### **Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and culturally safe practices**

HealthWISE considers issues of culture and diversity in the delivery of programs/services and involves other services to support the needs of culturally diverse consumers and is aware of potential issues when considering using an interpreter. Client concerns may include confidentiality, the interpreter coming from their own community or being known to them, and difficulty translating some languages accurately.

Our staff have a professional obligation to ensure they understand our clients and the people we support and can assist them when necessary to understand any verbal instructions or written information. Clients who do not speak or read English or who are more proficient in another language, or who have special communication needs, are offered the choice of using the assistance of a language service to communicate with the team members. The needs of carers and other relevant parties are also considered.

Information on translator and interpreter services and services for clients with a disability is maintained, updated regularly and readily available to all staff. For example, the National Relay Service (NRS) for clients that are deaf or the Translation and Interpreter Service (TIS) for clients from a non-English speaking background.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES**

The Board and management believe that this policy contributes to achieving the organisation's corporate objectives and embeds the importance and value of diversity at HealthWISE.

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Roles	Responsibilities
The Board	<p>Endorse and ensure compliance with the Diversity &amp; Inclusion Policy.</p> <p>Be familiar with the organisation's legislative requirements regarding Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and discrimination.</p>
CEO/Executive	<p>Set the tone for the organisation by modelling inclusive behaviour</p> <p>Ensure an organisational culture that supports diversity and inclusion for all.</p> <p>Manage and monitor compliance with this policy.</p> <p>Support staff competence and compliance with this policy and procedure.</p>
Team Leaders	<p>Set the tone for the organisation by modelling inclusive behaviour</p> <p>Manage and monitor compliance with this policy.</p> <p>Support staff competence and compliance with this policy and procedure.</p>
Staff, volunteers, contractors and students	<p>Comply with the Diversity and Inclusion Policy</p> <p>Act in accordance with legislation and HealthWISE policy to ensure anti discriminatory practices.</p>

### Document Control

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The electronic version of this Policy Document stored on the HealthWISE Intranet is the controlled version.

Printed or hard copies of this Policy document are uncontrolled.

Before using or relying on a printed or hard copy of this Policy document, the user must verify that it is the current version.

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### Revision History

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The following table shows the changes that have been made to this document.

Author	Version	Date	Reviewed by...	Comments
Sally Urquhart	1	23 August 2018	Senior management	Submitted to the board for approval on 1 November 2018
	2	February 2021	Cultural Inclusion Framework Group and the Board	Approved March 2021
Jay Ramirez	3	May 2022	Cultural Inclusion Framework Committee and the Board	Submitted to the board June 2022  <b>Approved by the board June 2022</b>
Susanne Kable	4	June 2024	Cultural Inclusion Framework committee and Gender and Sexually Diverse Working Group- Sally Urquhart	

### Update Schedule

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This document should be reviewed on the following dates: June 2027.

Reviews should also be undertaken after significant changes such as restructure or changes in the regulatory environment.