



Every Heart

The National Heart Foundation of Australia's
strategy for improving equity, diversity,
and inclusion – 2024 to 2029





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CEO Message

**David Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer,
The National Heart Foundation of Australia**



As employees of the the National Heart Foundation of Australia we recognise that the good fortune we all enjoy in working for this iconic organisation also comes with responsibilities.

One of those responsibilities is to do everything we can to ensure our work contributes to those who need it most. Heart disease coexists with social and economic disadvantage, physical dislocation from services, and educational, language and cultural disparities. If we don't recognise this, and build our work in primary prevention, support for people living with heart disease, and research funding programs in a way that responds to it, then we're not doing the job the wider Australian community expects of us.

As *Every Heart* – our first Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy – makes clear, this also means our understanding of these issues must influence the way we make decisions, think about and measure our impact, our habits as an employer, and our approach to partnerships. Key to this is that we approach every situation with curiosity, humility and a desire to learn and adapt. If we get this right, then the number of Australians who see their needs reflected in the work we do, the way we do it and the way we communicate, will expand greatly. And our impact will reach into the communities that need us most.

This is above all a practical plan with clear measures of success. Our aim is to expand our reach, and to respond appropriately where the cardiovascular health need is greatest. The primary insight informing our approach is

that recognising inequity, responding with a commitment to meet health disadvantage on its own terms, and tailoring our responses to suit, is the best way to achieve impact.

We also commit, as an organisation and as a community of workers, volunteers, board, and committee members, to reflect on where habits of thought and approach might hold us back and prevent us from seeing and responding to inequities that exist. We will do everything we can to address equity, diversity, and inclusion from the perspectives of those with lived experience. We will ensure that when we respond, we do so not just with empathy and understanding, but with something of practical use. Again, it's all about impact, and about diving in where the need is greatest.

Finally, we have built a program of evaluation and review into this strategy. This will ensure that we don't fall into the trap of becoming satisfied with describing the problem, rather than dealing with it. We will call ourselves to account, and invite others to do so, as we progress with this. That's really the only way we will make honest, clear, measurable progress.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Lloyd".

David Lloyd





Acknowledgements

The Heart Foundation respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We also acknowledge and respect their right to speak and care for their country in accordance with their lore, customs, and traditions. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge all people with lived experience of heart disease, as well as their carers and communities which are central to the work of the Heart Foundation. Their experience and expertise are critical to inform the development of effective strategies and programs.

We would like to thank everyone at the Heart Foundation who has contributed their time, expertise, guidance, and support to the development of the strategy. We would also like to extend thanks to our community partners for their input to the strategy.

The Heart Foundation strongly supports equity, diversity, and inclusion for all. We condemn any kind of discrimination, be it based on race, religion, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

Why is equity, diversity, and inclusion important to the Heart Foundation?

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is integral to the Heart Foundation's vision towards an Australia free of heart disease.

By embracing an EDI approach in what we do, and who we are as an organisation, we can better address the unique needs and experiences of the diverse populations and communities across Australia. This will positively enhance our impact and improve heart health outcomes for people across Australia.

Why is this important?



Health equity

Heart disease can affect anyone, but we know that it does not affect everyone equally. EDI efforts are essential for addressing health inequities that exist among diverse populations and communities. We also acknowledge that multiple factors can overlap to create complex intersectionality.



Broader impact

An EDI approach broadens and maximises the impact of the Heart Foundation's work. By recognising and addressing the diverse needs and experiences of all people in Australia, we can more effectively reach and benefit a broader portion of the population in support of our vision.



Tailored approaches

By understanding and embracing EDI, we can develop and implement tailored approaches that are culturally and contextually relevant, with consideration to unique challenges and risk factors experienced. This improves the effectiveness of programs and actions making it more likely that people will engage with, and benefit from the supports offered.



Representation and participation

By focusing on the inclusion and active participation of people from diverse backgrounds, individuals and communities can have their voice represented and be involved in decision-making processes. This not only brings diverse and fresh perspectives into the Heart Foundation, but also helps in the creation of policies and programs that resonate with the people they are meant to serve.



Social and ethical responsibility

Embracing EDI aligns with our social and ethical responsibility by fostering fairness, respect, and equal opportunities. Our commitment to EDI contributes to creating environments that are not only just and respectful but also ethically sound, ensuring that everyone has a chance to thrive, succeed, and contribute meaningfully to society.



Cultural consciousness

Embracing EDI allows us to develop and deepen cultural consciousness around people belonging to, and/or relating to various cultures, societies, or periods. This involves recognising and appreciating others' beliefs, identities, customs, and values leading to greater awareness of cultural difference, more effective engagement, and communication. This further supports the journey to develop greater cultural capability and competence in all we do and offer at the Heart Foundation.



Community engagement

To effectively address heart health for all people in Australia, it is essential to engage with diverse communities and groups. Community engagement aims to build trust and understanding and allows us to work together to identify specific needs, co-create solutions, implement strategies that work and achieve sustainable outcomes.

Development of our equity, diversity, and inclusion Strategy

Our commitment to EDI has led to the development of the Heart Foundation's inaugural equity diversity and inclusion strategy ('the strategy').

The strategy has been developed with strong leadership commitment, establishment of an Equity team and Equity strategy working group, a comprehensive process of engagement and consultation with our teams and people across every state and territory, our advisory boards, governance groups and key stakeholders. We have taken time to reflect on our past learnings and achievements, to create a shared understanding of what we hope to achieve through the development of the strategy, to understand what values guide us in this work, and what success looks like.

We acknowledge this is the start of an ongoing journey of learning, reflection, and change, and we are committed to implementing this strategy to meet our objective and goals for every heart.

Our objective

The objective of our equity, diversity and inclusion strategy is to ensure that the work of the Heart Foundation positively impacts the heart health of all people in Australia by meeting diverse needs and experiences.





Our guiding values

To deliver on our strategy we will embed EDI in all that we do. Our EDI values guide and encourage reflective practice, collaboration and ethical ways of working. These guiding values also align with our organisational values.

- We are brave, innovative, and reflective, embracing a culture of continual learning in our efforts to achieve our objective.
- We listen and draw upon the expertise of consumers and those with lived experience as partners in our work.
- We act with curiosity and humility in understanding diverse needs and experiences in our population.
- We align with our values to be a trusted and credible organisation with authentic leadership.
- We are a socially responsible charity of choice and are transparent, accountable, and responsible for our actions.



How will we achieve our objective?

To achieve our objective of ensuring that our work positively impacts the heart health of all people in Australia – meeting diverse needs and experiences – we have produced three key goals. We are confident these goals will drive the necessary transformation journey within our organisation to enhance heart health for all people living in Australia.

For each of these three goals we have identified the impacts that will result from our initiatives in the area, the actions we will employ to get there and how we will know we have achieved our goal.





1

Goal 1 is to ensure that we make a positive impact.

Through the delivery of our strategy, we will:

- Improve health outcomes and reduce health inequities in cardiovascular health.
- Measure our impact and contributions.
- Be a reliable, credible, and influential partner across sectors.
- Be a trusted partner for investment.

2

Goal 2 is to ensure that our programs and resources are accessible, relevant and valued.

Through the delivery of our strategy, we will:

- Meet the diverse needs and experiences of identified population groups and communities.
- Ensure programs and resources are accessible in a way that is relevant and valued by our population, communities and sector
- Be flexible, adaptive, continually learning, improving and evolving.

3

Goal 3 is to foster a culture that champions equity, diversity, and inclusion

Through the delivery of our strategy, we will:

- Be a culturally competent, inclusive, and respectful workplace.
- Ensure our people feel safe, valued, included, and empowered.
- Have policies, practices, and tools to support and enable our people and the organisation.
- Be considered an employer of choice for all people including those with diverse backgrounds and needs.



Goal 1

We make a positive impact.

As an organisation committed to making a positive contribution to the improvement of heart health outcomes for our diverse population and communities, it is essential that we understand and act on the social, cultural, and economic determinants of health that contribute to health inequities.

To drive our long-term vision and achieve our EDI objective, we acknowledge the importance of partnership and collective action to achieve our goals. We will use the best available evidence to inform our work, measure our impact and translate research findings into actionable strategies and policies that create positive impact.

Why this goal is important?

- **Health equity:** To achieve a positive impact for all people living in Australia, we acknowledge and understand that race, gender, socioeconomic status, Indigenous status, location, age, physical ability, sexual orientation, culture, language, health literacy, economic means and other factors can intersect and impact health status. We recognise that we need to respond in ways that are relevant and meaningful.
- **Long-term impact:** Our commitment to long-term impact is reflected within the Heart Foundation's strategic vision as we move towards an Australia where all people, including those from diverse backgrounds, have equal access and opportunity to achieve heart health. We are focused on a healthier population today, and for future generations.
- **Partnerships:** We actively partner and collaborate with diverse sectors, communities, organisations, and stakeholders aligned with our values to improve health equity and EDI. Our partnerships strengthen our impact and increase our reach. We are a credible and trusted partner for investment.
- **Advocacy and influence:** We use our advocacy and influence to make positive contributions to advancing health policy and equity.
- **Promoting accountability:** It is important for us to establish clear goals, metrics, and accountability mechanisms related to EDI. We actively monitor and evaluate our progress, hold ourselves accountable for achieving our objective and continually reflect and learn through our efforts. This commitment ensures that EDI is not merely a token effort but an integral and measurable part of the organisation's vision.
- **Evidence and data:** Data are vital to inform our EDI work and provide an evidence-based approach for identifying inequities in health, access to care, prevalence of risk factors, and outcomes among different population groups. This approach ensures our work is targeted, underpinned by evidence and measurable.
- **Research translation:** The Heart Foundation supports high impact research that facilitates life-saving breakthroughs for heart disease. We aim to translate research findings into actionable strategies and policies, that advance practice, foster innovation, enable knowledge sharing and drive heart health improvements for our diverse populations and communities.





How will we achieve our goal?

- We seek and build partnerships aligned with our values to improve health equity and address disparities.
- We use evidence, data, and research to identify priority populations and measure our impact.
- We invest in programs that make a positive impact and contribution to the community and sector.
- We are strategic and responsible with our funds and resources in support of our EDI objectives.
- Our advocacy and influence make a positive contribution to advance health policy and equity.
- We support research to address health equity and promote research translation.
- We acknowledge and seek to influence the social, cultural and economic issues that contribute to inequitable health outcomes.



How will we know we have had impact?

1. We have partnerships with key stakeholders that improve health and social outcomes for communities.
2. Independent peer and consumer reviewer panels assess how proposed research promotes EDI as a part of the assessment criteria.
3. We collect, analyse, and present EDI data in relation to research teams funded each year.
4. We see policy change and increased investment to improve health equity and reduce disparities because of our advocacy.





Goal 2

Our programs and resources are accessible, relevant, and valued.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death worldwide. Ensuring that our programs and resources are accessible, relevant, and valued by a diverse population is essential for promoting equitable health outcomes, reducing disparities, and maximising the impact of health interventions.

It not only improves individual heart health but also contributes to the overall wellbeing of communities and societies.

Why is this goal important?

- **Reducing health disparities:** Heart disease affects people of all backgrounds, but it disproportionately impacts certain population and community groups. By ensuring our programs and offerings are accessible and relevant, we can work to reduce these disparities and promote more equitable health outcomes for all people.
- **Community engagement:** By engaging with diverse communities and groups in the development and implementation of our heart health programs, people are more likely to actively participate and relate to programs with a greater sense of ownership and trust. This level of involvement can lead to more sustainable outcomes.
- **Maximising impact:** By recognising and addressing the diverse needs and experiences of all people in Australia, we can more effectively reach and benefit a broader portion of our population.
- **Culturally sensitive:** Different communities and groups have unique cultural practices, beliefs, social influences, and dietary preferences that can impact their heart health. Culturally sensitive programs build trust and safety and make it more likely that individuals will engage and adopt heart-healthy approaches.
- **Language and literacy:** A diverse population includes people with varying levels of language and health literacy. To make our information and programs accessible and relevant to our diverse communities across the country, it is important for us to consider the language, tone and other communication methods we use.
- **Research and innovation:** Diverse populations can have unique risk factors, strengths and challenges related to heart health. By including a wide range of individuals in research and program development, we can uncover insights, develop innovative and person-centred solutions, and better understand the multifaceted nature of heart disease.





How will we achieve our goal?

- We will co-design and co-produce strategies and solutions that seek to listen, understand, and respond to diverse needs and experiences.
- We will have a community of consumer experts and those with lived experience as partners in our work.
- We will promote the use of evidence-based and person-centred solutions to improve health outcomes for our target populations and end users.
- We will focus on high-quality content considering culturally and linguistically diverse language, literacy and accessibility and seek continual improvement.
- We will acknowledge inherent community strengths and enablers and build on them to develop our programs and resources.
- We will recognise and commit to removing barriers in achieving heart health where we can.

How will we know we have had an impact?

1. Our end-users report high satisfaction with our programs and resources.
2. Diversity* is reflected in the people, communities and services that engage with our programs and resources.
3. Positive action (such as health behaviour change) is taken because of engagement.

*The term diversity is used here to encompass diversity in experience, literacy (health and language), demographics and needs.







Goal 3

We foster a culture that champions equity, diversity, and inclusion.

To achieve our objective, we must be an organisation that fosters and embraces EDI through what we do, as well as who we are as an organisation. Championing EDI ensures that it is not just a surface-level effort but an integrated part of the organisation's values, mission, governance, and culture, leading to more equitable and inclusive health outcomes.

Why this goal is important?

- **Fostering inclusion:** We are dedicated to fostering inclusivity as a core principle in our organisation. We want to actively create an environment where individuals from intersectional and diverse backgrounds not only find a welcoming space but also feel respected and valued. This inclusive atmosphere encourages employees and stakeholders to share their unique perspectives and experiences, leading to more considered decision-making and effective problem-solving.
- **Building cultural competence:** Building cultural competence and developing cultural capability within our organisation is crucial for us to better understand and respond to the specific needs and experiences faced by diverse populations and communities. This requires us to reflect on our own practices and consider opportunities to address systemic issues, bias, and discriminatory practices within the organisation and the broader society.
- **Cultivating leadership:** Leadership plays a pivotal role in driving EDI efforts. We commit to cultivating leaders who champion EDI and set a clear example for others to follow. Our leaders will help to create a culture of inclusivity and accountability.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** We recognise that to foster a culture that champions EDI, our approaches and strategies need to be flexible, adaptable, and able to evolve and respond to meet changing demographics and needs. This ensures that the Heart Foundation will remain responsive to the communities we serve.
- **Continuous learning:** Our commitment to achieving EDI outcomes will be an ongoing process. We will prioritise continuous learning through feedback from our colleagues, communities and stakeholders and use this to reflect and refine our approaches and make continuous improvements.





How will we achieve our goal?

- We will cultivate and support strong leadership and commitment to EDI in the workplace and embed EDI practices into our governance, policies, and processes.
- We will ensure tools and training are available to staff to promote and embed EDI in their work.
- We will listen, learn, and reflect to evolve and continually build our understanding and actions to ensure people feel valued, respected and with access to fair opportunity.
- Our marketing and branding will reflect the diversity of people in Australian society.
- We will support supplier diversity in our business practices.
- We will commit to reconciliation action through our EDI strategy and related implementation activities to strengthen relationships between First Nations and non-Indigenous peoples.
- We will acknowledge our history, position, and privilege in respect of First Nations sovereignty through appropriate acknowledgements and seeking cultural guidance on relevant protocols and approaches in our work.

How will we know we have had impact?

1. Our annual people survey evaluates and measures our performance on engagement and wellbeing in the workplace, and we identify and deliver on improvement opportunities.
2. Our people have relevant training and tools to promote and embed EDI in their work.



Our next steps and ongoing journey

Our *Every Heart* equity, diversity, and inclusion strategy reflects the Heart Foundation's unwavering commitment toward achieving our objective to ensure that our work positively impacts the heart health of all people in Australia by meeting diverse needs and experiences.

To achieve our goals and embed EDI through our work, we will develop implementation plans in the first year of our 2024 – 2029 strategy to guide priority actions within each of our organisational functions. Over the following five years of the strategy, and in alignment with the Heart Foundation organisational strategic and operational plans, we will continue to deliver on strategic EDI actions to achieve our objective. Our impact measures will be monitored to hold ourselves to account, and we will evaluate and report on our progress to continually improve our efforts and impact.

This strategy commits to an ongoing journey of reflection, action and growing together. We acknowledge that we are in the early stages of this work and have much to do. Nevertheless, we will draw on our successes, setbacks, and learnings to evolve and enhance our impact for every heart as we go.





A Look into our EDI work

“Our heart maps is an online data visualisation tool that allows you to take a closer look at heart disease indicators across Australia. Data related to cardiovascular health is summarised at various geographic levels and compared with demographic and socioeconomic data allowing us to identify patterns of inequity across Australia. Heart maps clearly shows strong patterns of poorer heart health for areas with greater socioeconomic disadvantage and remoteness. The tool will continually support the Heart Foundation’s advocacy efforts for improving access to services and support for those at risk and/or living with heart disease. The highlighted link between socioeconomic disadvantage, remoteness, and heart health outcomes also is a valuable tool for the health sector, local governments, researchers and policy makers in considering policy, research and service planning.”

Glen Wiesner – Health Data Insights Lead



“Our Heart Matters initiative was a community-driven education project aimed at raising awareness of heart attack warning signs. The project has been responsive to the feedback received from the community and seen the development of heart attack warning signs resources in five different languages with minimal text, plain language, and inclusive imagery. Engaging with and listening to culturally and linguistically diverse communities ensured our resources were reflective of their needs. Providing resources in languages other than English ensures that critical health messages can effectively reach identified priority populations and reflects the Heart Foundation’s recognition of, and dedication to, Australia’s diverse population which includes individuals whose first language is not English.”

Janelle Woods – Program Manager Heart Matters



“In July 2023, the Heart Foundation was invited by the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA) to view the nutrition policies that have been implemented across two of the community’s ALPA services; Galiwinku and Raminging. ALPA have a strong commitment to improve health and wellbeing of Yolngu people. Their member stores (community supermarkets) have implemented strong nutrition policies, supported by an all-Aboriginal board of directors, to ensure communities had a reliable source of nutritious food.

This was an important opportunity for a staff member from the nutrition team and First Nations team to visit remote Aboriginal communities in East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. Understanding some of the complexities and challenges that exist within remote communities is integral to driving improvements in food security and out internal approaches to providing nutrition information.”

Nikita Muller – Senior Evidence & Policy Advisor - Food & Nutrition





A look into our EDI work

“The Australian Government’s Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Gender Equality Reporting is one of the ways in which the Heart Foundation works to achieve a more diverse and inclusive workplace. By submitting an annual Gender Equality report we are not only meeting our compliance obligations but contributing to the Agency’s world leading dataset on gender equality in Australian workplaces. The annual report is also a way to measure, promote and improve gender equality in employment in our workplace. The reporting helps us to identify any gender inequalities such as differences in representation, pay, leave opportunities, flexible work arrangements and career opportunities between genders, and put action plans in place to address. Using this WGEA reporting as a continuous improvement and monitoring measure is one of the actions the Heart Foundation employs to work on addressing any inequities that exist.”

Katie Round (she/her) – P&C Business Partner

Guiding Definitions

Equality

Equality is a situation or state where all the members of a society or group have the same status, rights, and opportunities.

Inclusion

The practice or policy of including and integrating all people and groups in activities, organisations, political processes, etc. This includes those who are disadvantaged, have suffered discrimination, are living with disabilities, are culturally and linguistically diverse, or are among other minority groups.

It is creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and able to contribute.

Diversity

Refers to the spectrum of individual differences. It covers gender, age, language, disability, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, and religious belief. Diversity also refers to our many other differences in education, work experience, occupation, socio-economic background.

Belonging

Belonging is a feeling of security and support, and where people experience holistic wellbeing, with a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity. Belonging is our ultimate goal.

Fairness

Impartial and just treatment or behaviour without favouritism, or discrimination.

Equity

The absence of unfair, avoidable, or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically or by other dimensions of inequality (e.g. sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation).

Put simply, equity means recognising that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and adjust to ensure fairness and justice for all.



For more information, visit
heartfoundation.org.au

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