



Inclusionary Leadership

Wisdom from 18 Australian leaders on what it takes to create and support a diverse and inclusive workplace

Diana Ryall AM

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More information: goodreturn.org.au

Dress for Success Sydney is a registered charity that improves the employability of women in need in New South Wales by providing them with professional clothing at no cost, a network of support, and the career development tools to help them achieve self-sufficiency.
More information: sydney.dressforsuccess.org

Dedicated to every current, aspiring and future leader,
in whose hands it lies to cultivate workplaces and communities
that reflect the diversity of all people.

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Without being able to actively relate to, engage and inspire one's workforce, an individual cannot deliver the outcomes so necessary for future success in business — diversity of thought, innovation, flexibility and a willingness to try something new.

FOREWORD **LISA ANNESE**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER | **DIVERSITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA**

Being an inclusive leader is almost like a journey of self-discovery. Some individuals are almost always acutely aware of their difference to the norm; others may learn about it because they want to become better leaders, better people and contribute to a greater good. There are others, still, who are blissfully unaware or may never have their interest piqued, either by circumstance or because of what it may mean for the status quo.

For this last group, there is perhaps little that can be done without active intent and a willingness to change; individuals may remain in their bubble, protected by their privilege. I have no doubt that over time, this type of leader will become redundant because without being able to actively relate to, engage and inspire one's workforce, an

individual cannot deliver the outcomes so necessary for future success in business — diversity of thought, innovation, flexibility and a willingness to try something new.

This book, by Xplore for Success, presents stories from 18 different Australian leaders equally spread across men and women. Importantly, we see a combination of individuals who have come from the other two groups highlighted above. Some have developed empathy and curiosity because of their own personal experience; others have been inclined towards it because of either a 'light-bulb' moment or a willingness to learn about difference. What unites them is a desire to allow authenticity and diversity to shine in their organisations. Without it, they will not only jeopardise their organisation but because as human

beings they want to create a future for Australia that is open-hearted, generous and inclusive.

The men and women profiled in this book cover the huge spectrum of industries in Australia and the many different roads to get to where they are now. What connects them in this book is the understanding that leaders must build their capability in inclusivity and move from a fixed to a growth mindset, where their thinking becomes agile, flexible and more genuine.

The organisation that I lead, the Diversity Council Australia (DCA), has conducted significant research in what it takes to be an 'inclusive leader' and without even knowing the academic steps, these stories mimic the behaviours of leaders that DCA have discovered to be truly inclusive.

It is with great pleasure that I endorse this excellent book and in Diana Ryall and her team at Xplore for Success for putting this book together. A must-read companion book for the serious leader who wants to make the most of Australia's wide-reaching diversity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Annese'.

Lisa Annese
CEO, Diversity Council Australia

Stories provide us with the inspiration to aim high, the courage to act bravely, and a sense of companionship to know we are not alone.



INTRODUCTION DIANA RYALL AM

FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR | XPLORE FOR SUCCESS

When I approached each of the 18 people featured in this book to invite them to contribute their experience of working to create and support a diverse and inclusive workplace, I discovered they all had one thing in common: an ability to see people first as unique individuals, and a drive to cultivate an environment where individual differences and talents are celebrated. In essence, an environment where each individual feels that they belong.

We know that leadership begins at an individual level — that our personal background and experiences inform our decisions and behaviour across all settings, be that in the workplace, socially, or in the broader community. Inspirational leaders are continuous learners and, as such, are constantly seeking ways in which to broaden their own skills and encourage those they touch to be at their best.

We also know — because the research tells us — that companies and organisations with leaders who value diversity and who have an inclusive mindset, thrive. As the Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau says, “Diversity is the engine of invention. It generates creativity that enriches the world”.

On this path to *enrich the world*, it is stories from the frontline that bring the research to life. Stories support learning, and they show what’s possible. Time and time again, we have found the sharing of experiences by and of others, is what *sticks* for many of the people who undertake our leadership development programs.

The people featured in this book — the fourth in a series of interview-style books that explore a range of themes under the banner of equality and inclusion — are representative of the

diversity that exists within both our workplaces and in the broader community. While they each hold titles that speak to their role as a leader within the company or organisation they represent, a number of them placed a high value on what their positions have enabled them to achieve for equality and inclusion in the community beyond the workplace.

We chose the word ‘inclusionary’ over ‘inclusive’ for the title because of its immediate aural connection with the word ‘visionary’. It does take vision to imagine new possibilities, and so ‘inclusionary leadership’ felt apt for a book that highlights the great work of leaders whose task it is to actualise these possibilities — in this case, in the area of equality and inclusion.

No matter what stage we are at in our careers, whatever position we hold, change begins with

the individual. Hearing from others about what has and hasn’t worked for them can provide us with the inspiration to aim high, the courage to act bravely, and a sense of companionship to know that we are not alone.

It is my hope that this book does all three of these things, and that the wisdom shared by these 18 exceptional people connects in some way with your own vision for a workplace and society, where everyone feels they are valued for their uniqueness and that they belong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Diana Ryall". The script is elegant and cursive.

Diana Ryall AM
Founder & Managing Director
Xplore for Success

STEPHEN BARROW

Executive General Manager, People, Culture & Capability | National Australia Bank, & Non-Executive Director, Diversity Council Australia

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Leadership is a privilege. I believe it is about creating an environment that allows people to give their best and perform beyond their own expectations, to learn and grow. Leadership is also an 'active sport', which means being engaged and invested in the performance and growth of those being led. As a leader, it is about being open to constant challenge and learning, while balancing the dialogue that shapes and directs performance alongside listening and adjusting.

We live in a country and at a time where the diversity of participation in our workplaces is amazing and enriching. Inclusive leadership to me is about understanding and valuing that diversity, and then creating the context and opportunity for it to thrive.

I try to lead based on principles that I have learned and understood through practice.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

I took a decision very early in my adult life to be open about my sexuality. At university in the early 80s, while not 'the only gay in the village', the closet was probably quite crowded and I only knew a handful of other gay people on campus.

Moving to London to work with a large multinational technology company, the environment and culture was one of 'work

Leadership is a privilege and that requires taking it seriously ... it's an active sport.

hard, play hard' and was strongly masculine. To begin with I think I was viewed as a bit 'odd', and there were plenty of what would now be unacceptable jokes. However, in that environment performance was the language that everyone understood and by outperforming I quickly became accepted and my sexuality became irrelevant.

I think this 'difference' made me highly attuned to not being part of the 'norm' group, and therefore mindful that others who are different and diverse, might similarly need to be treated as individuals and 'included'. This has been invaluable, and provided many lessons for my own leadership practice.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

There have been two contexts where I felt excluded. The first related to the technology company that I mentioned above. Having won an incentive to visit the US for skiing, I was not allowed to take my partner at the time, while my heterosexual colleagues were allowed to. I felt cheated and irritated.

The second was when I served as a residential tutor in a university single-sex residence. A number of students made my life very difficult, playing loud music and hitting golf balls very late at night outside my rooms to try to get me to leave. My tenacious, some would say stubborn side, led me to stick this out and over time mutual respect developed. This was a difficult period for almost a year. I felt at times at risk, but mainly determined that I would not give into those who wanted me to leave.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I believe that an environment and culture that is diverse and inclusive creates a feeling of safety and belonging. In this context you create the opportunity for people to perform and see the possibility for learning, growth and progress. This surely builds commitment and engagement. I have seen this repeated time after time. My personal view is that smaller teams (that are slightly under-resourced) aligned to shared goals, and working to tight timescales, perform best. When presented with a big goal and a tight time frame, invariably individuals and diverse teams will deliver, and nearly always, way beyond their own expectations!

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

The vast majority of people who have worked in a diverse team based on gender, ethnicity,

age, life experiences, professional discipline and differences in perspective will say what an enriching and amazing learning opportunity these teams provide.

It would be easy to narrowly focus on gender here; however, it is diversity of experience, perspective, subject discipline and problem-solving style, for example, that really add to teams. I always engineer my teams to have gender balance and look for cultural differences that will add to the chemistry.

How would you describe your leadership style?

Over the years and having worked around the world in different contexts, I have learned and developed a series of principles that I believe and try to live by:

- Be clear about what I stand for and be authentic.
- Strive to always treat people with dignity and respect.
- Remember that context really matters and is often misunderstood.
- Take the time to think things through and to be principles based.
- Constantly drive to make things simple. 'Being bold' isn't an abstract concept, it's about evaluating risk within a context and taking personal accountability.
- Balance the constant tension between the 'here and now' with the 'tomorrow and the future' — and ruthlessly prioritise.
- Do what you love and are good at and master it brilliantly.

“Steve is truly passionate about inclusion, and ensuring we create an environment that allows our people to bring their whole selves to work. He understands the importance of this from both an ethical and commercial point of view. He is quite simply a tireless champion of inclusion.”

Kate Dee, GM, Talent Management, NAB

- Get on with it — delivery and outcome trump talking about it, although refer to the point regarding grounded principles.
- Beg forgiveness rather than ask permission, within values alignment.
- The alternative to innovating and change is irrelevance.
- Pragmatism, pragmatism and more pragmatism.
- No drama!

How would you define merit?

The word 'meritocracy' has come under heavy fire in recent years, the argument being that the criteria and assessment is stacked in favour of the dominant leadership group, often assumed to be white, heterosexual men. The reasoning is that this renders meritocracy as an illusion. I believe that this is a shame! The notion of 'merit' is a worthy aspiration and one we should strive to achieve.

This starts with a clear understanding of the real criteria for success, a demonstrated track record of performance, robust assessment of capabilities, and importantly, as good an understanding of growth potential as possible. We know that managers struggle to unbundle capability, performance and potential, however building a talent-based meritocracy requires this as its foundation. In its purest sense, understanding these issues defines meritocracy. However, as I outlined earlier, context really matters, and this is where other factors rightly need to be considered and given 'validity'. For

example, for a company that wishes to reflect its customer demographic, tilting criteria for recruiting and promoting to reflect that diversity would seem reasonable. In the same way, where there are imbalances of gender either way, seeking to achieve better representation seems to me to be valid, for example, seeking to ensure there are more women in senior leadership or more men in human resources.

It has taken a long time for me, an organisational psychologist, to get my head around and accept that the concept of 'meritocracy' is situationally defined and that criteria other than performance, capability and potential should come into play based on context. That said, this requires intellectual honesty and huge amounts of humility as any 'tilting' of a playing field has the obvious risk of recreating the old problem by favouring a new group.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

One of the things I am proudest of in my career is having had the leadership responsibility for many women and men performing, learning, developing and progressing their careers. I believe that fundamentally you have to treat people as individuals and strive to understand their context and needs. On this basis, the treatment of men and women is no different because you treat each as an individual and respect and value that difference.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I believe the foundation for this is identical to openness, working in diverse contexts, seeking to understand my own biases, listening to others and building up experience. I have had the privilege of living and working all over the world and this has provided an

amazing learning context. Being open, having a heavy dose of humility, and 'seeking first to understand' are all important conditions for that learning.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Diverse teams not only problem-solve and perform better, they are also in my experience more fun to work with. Leadership is a privilege and that requires taking it seriously, and as I said earlier, it's an active sport. You therefore have to be open and constantly challenging yourself to learn and be better.

“Steve is a truly visionary leader, whose wide experience means he understands the detail, meaning and day-to-day implications and actions required to bring that vision to life. Steve is a principle and value-based leader, providing his team with just enough guidance to allow them to make their own choices, and therefore develop themselves as leaders.”

Ben Dunn, General Manager Future Capability Strategy, NAB

ELIZABETH BRODERICK AO

Business & Social Change Leader |
Elizabeth Broderick & Co., & Founder &
Convenor, Male Champions of Change

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

When I think about inclusive leadership, I think about leading in a way that makes everyone feel they're part of what I call the 'in crowd'. In most organisations there will be an 'in' group and an 'out' group. Being on the outside is a really uncomfortable place to be. The work I do is related to helping people who have or who are suffering exclusion.

I work to create an environment where they belong so that they are valued and have equal access to opportunities, for example, training development opportunities, promotion opportunities, and removing forms of discrimination.

If I could sum it up, an inclusive leader is about leading with a human rights-based approach. We have a right to be consulted about decisions that will have an impact on our lives, and to participate in decisions that will affect us. It's our right to be heard, not to be discriminated against, and to be treated equally.

For me, the use of language is so important in terms of building inclusive leadership. I just can't overstate the importance of language in building inclusive leadership because every case of exclusion that I examine, the starting point is non-inclusive language.

**It's my role as
the facilitator
or leader to
make sure that
I live by the
human rights
principles,
one of which
is equal share
of voice.**

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

It's never not been important to me. I suppose I started to really feel more committed to inclusive leadership when I saw the impact of exclusion. When I really started to understand not just what exclusion looked like, but the impact it could have on individuals and the team was when I became the sex discrimination commissioner. Over my career, I have become more and more committed to inclusive leadership.

I grew up in a very close family and in quite a feminised household — an identical twin, a younger sister, my mum, and my dad who had a really strong feminine energy. It wasn't until I probably went to university or got my first job that I started to see the in crowd and the out crowd. You can sometimes find yourself on the inside or on the outside, but the experience is very different depending on where you find yourself.

I might have had a slightly different experience, because I came into the world as an identical twin. I wasn't an individual trying to find my place in the world. I was part of a couple right from the beginning.

Interestingly, my mother and father decided that at age five, both my twin sister and I would go to separate schools. We had to make our own way at that point. Part of that

was to make sure that we developed as individuals as well as part of a strong pair.

I talk about the fact that one of the greatest gifts in my life is having had a father who believed fundamentally that his daughter's life would never be limited by the expectations of society. I think a lot of women, because of their conditioning and the family expectation, don't fundamentally believe that, whereas I was always brought up to believe gender equality is my birth right. Why would I accept anything less?

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

I've had moments in organisations, in settings, where I have felt excluded. I can't say I've ever worked for an organisation where I felt right from the get-go that I

Photo: Helen Melville

was excluded. I stayed in organisations for considerable periods because for the majority of the time I always felt included, but there are those moments where I felt left out.

For example, once I was the only female representative on the board. The way the board operated was so deeply rooted in a male way of being that it unintentionally excluded people like me — female and young. In a sense, it was an intersectional, indirect discrimination. I was a different voice on the board. Sometimes it wasn't that I wasn't able to participate in the discussion, it was just that when I put forward a view, that view was either minimised or wasn't listened to. This probably was never explicitly said, but I felt that I was labelled as an agitator. I do remember thinking at one stage that I felt like I'd dropped in from Mars. You know those moments of 'what am I doing here?'

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I think there's a critical link between the two. You can't be an engaged employee if you don't feel valued; if you are not given equal share of voice; if you are not heard; and essentially if you are not included. Employees who are engaged feel valued and included. Not only that, they often have control over where and when they work, how they work, how they're respected, and all those types of things.

“Liz is an authentic and inclusive leader.

She treats staff and teams with deep respect and integrity; supports and mentors women; and models and champions flexible work practices to realise the optimal potential of all she works with.”

Padma Raman, Executive Director, Australian Human Rights Commission

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

The way I look at diversity and inclusion is that if you have an inclusive culture, that is a magnet for diverse talent. In most of the work that I've done, we've ensured that we have the widest possible range of applicants for a particular role. For example, that they represent diverse groups.

It was less so at the Human Rights Commission, because the Human Rights Commission was actually quite feminised. Attracting men into the area of sex discrimination was not that easy. Where I could, I targeted a group that wasn't represented already in the team. I think in terms of including diversity in the team, you need to go out and look for diverse talent because unless you intentionally go out and look to find diverse talent, it won't just automatically arrive at your door.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I would hope that it would be very inclusive and authentic, given that I've been a Human Rights Commissioner and my overarching mantra is human rights starts at home. For me, my leadership style is very much around shared vulnerability. I think that's the essence of feminine leadership. It's about psychological safety and allowing people to

be deeply authentic in the work environment and about a shared human experience. If those things are there, then I think you can reach levels of performance and work agility that other teams can't reach. I think the heart of my leadership is that it's deeply human.

For example, I remember I had to facilitate a session of senior men from corporate Australia. I agonised over it and remember thinking, 'Oh, he's the CEO of this and that one's on the board of that'. Then I had a light-bulb moment: 'Yes, that is true. They do hold those senior positions, but first and foremost, they're human beings and if I can just connect with them on a human level, none of the rest should matter'.

Really, from that day on, I learned that if I'm going to have influence and power, I have to connect in a deeply human, and that means vulnerable, way.

How would you define merit?

For me, merit is not just about what you've done in the past. It's your potential to shape the future. When an organisation looks at who has merit, it's not just finding someone who's a younger version of yourself or someone who's had exactly the same experience as the incumbent. It's actually really looking at the skills and talents of an individual to take an organisation into the future. That's what's important.

I think the way we define merit at the minute is about the status quo. That's where we're at and what we need to do is define true merit. If I believe that merit is evenly distributed between men and women, why aren't I seeing 50% of women and 50% of men in the most senior levels of organisations or the leadership/talent development programs? That's the starting point for me.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

The great thing about my role is I get to engage in the lives of women from so many different sectors including Aboriginal women, corporate women, and sports women. I'm currently mentoring a federal agent. Seeing them succeed is what makes me, not just proud, but so optimistic about the future of Australia.

In terms of requiring me to do things differently, I think the experiences that I've had around sponsorship and mentoring have actually taught me things about myself. It's always been a two-way thing. When you're working with someone to try and draw out the wisdom, both from yourself and from another individual, I think you both learn together. That's what I've seen with all the great people that I've been able to help thrive, particularly Fiona De Jong, who has taught me more about sport than anyone else that I know, and June Oscar, where I've learned more about Aboriginal culture and engagement than from anywhere else.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

One of the skills that I think I have is that I'm a good listener. It's a skill that you develop as a lawyer, the ability to listen, but not in a way so much as to respond, but really listening to understand.

I think most of the skills to support diverse employees are just hearing the stories of the impact of the current way of doing things, the current systems and practices, and then ensuring that any harmful impact on those employees is reduced through the way you

lead. When you listen deeply to understand their lived experience of culture, that's when you can really understand.

Some things that I do differently is I always make sure that there's equal share of voice. The fact is some people can dominate the conversation. Others come from cultures where putting yourself forward and speaking up is not encouraged so it's my role as the facilitator or leader to make sure that I live by the human rights principles, one of which is equal share of voice.

With my Aboriginal and CALD employees at the Human Rights Commission, they had greater kinship responsibility and care responsibility than non-Indigenous employees. I had to lead in a different way, an authentic way to ensure that they didn't have to choose between their families and their jobs.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

The advice I would give other leaders to develop greater inclusivity is to start with listening. When I step forward now to lead or to create change, it's not just me, Liz Broderick. It's me, Liz Broderick, informed by the thousands of stories that I've heard about the impact of exclusion. That's what makes me influential, I believe, and the ability to hold your compassionate self with your strategic self. What I've now learned to do is to listen deeply and to take the emotion of the stories and use it to inform a very strategic and systemic response. When I take that emotion with me, I am going to lead in a highly inclusive way and ensure that any roadblocks are minimised.

The other advice I would give is to not be scared to show vulnerability. I absolutely think that's core to inclusive leadership. Also to creating environments where there is strong psychological safety and where people can be their authentic self in the work environment.

“The AFP has been privileged to work closely with Elizabeth Broderick. I have seen firsthand her compassionate, practical, but uncompromising approach to gender parity. Her leadership style is unique and well suited to the challenges she faces, with a clear emphasis on bringing the community on a change journey, and promoting ownership of solutions rather than unproductive enforced compliance. Her inclusive leadership approach is a large part of her individual success, and underpins the significant impact she is having on Australian community attitudes and understanding of gender issues.”

Andrew Colvin, Commissioner,
Executive, Australian Federal Police (AFP)

LISA CHUNG

Chairman | Benevolent Society & Urbis; Non-Executive Director, APN Outdoor Group

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Leadership is inspiring others to join you on a journey to pursue a common vision. It's about guiding that journey to achieve outcomes that promote the common good. Inclusive leadership involves listening well; respecting and leveraging differences; building trust; modelling appropriate behaviours; and encouraging all to strive to be their best individually and collectively.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

It has always been important to me. From the beginning of my career, although I did not consciously think of myself in these terms, I was always an 'outsider' in terms of gender and cultural background. However, I knew no other career context and was brought up to be very adaptable, and so fitted in to the work environment well. As I became more senior in my legal career, there were increased numbers of graduates and other staff from diverse backgrounds seeking opportunities in the law firm where I was a partner. That greater critical mass created a stronger imperative to address diversity and to create a more inclusive workplace for the benefit of all.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

I can't say that I have. I grew up in Tasmania where there was a very small Chinese community. My sisters and I were the only girls of Asian background at the school we

**Step outside
your own
sphere of
experience
and go out
of your way
to listen to
diverse voices.**

attended and we were brought up to be adaptable and so, from the beginning, we just fitted in and were accepted. This is also how I approached the workplace. I knew no other way.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

The work I do in the social sector as the Chair of The Benevolent Society has made me acutely aware of how important a sense of belonging is to wellbeing. This applies to all of us, not just those who are socially disadvantaged or marginalised. In the workplace, a sense of inclusion is critical to wellbeing and engagement, which in turn results in much greater productivity, not to

mention a more enjoyable and harmonious workplace environment.

When all work colleagues feel included, it also encourages greater freedom to participate and contribute diverse ideas and views for the overall benefit of the organisation.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

For some time, the focus was on facilitating a more level playing field for women, particularly in view of the well-documented challenges for women in law. Many years ago, when I was a partner at Blake Dawson (now Ashurst), I established a women's mentoring program and also informally mentored a number of women lawyers over many years.

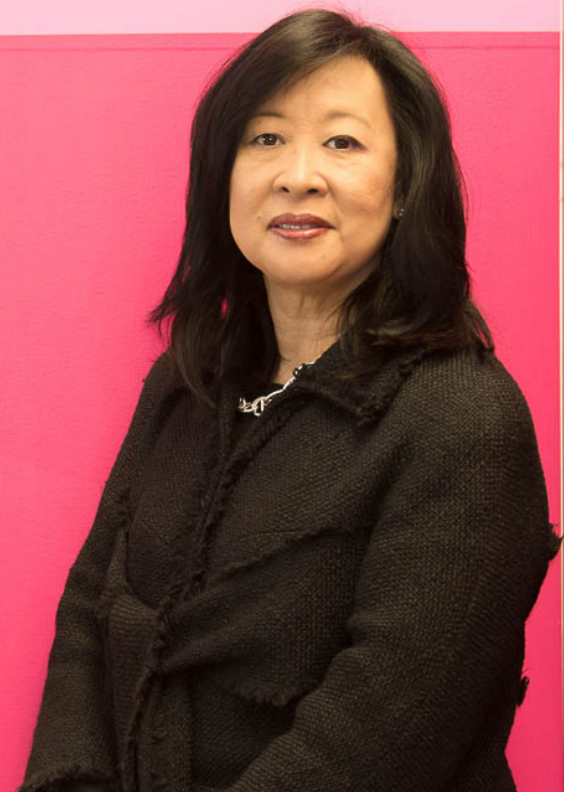
More recently, there has been a focus on workplace inclusion around cultural diversity and LGBTI community members at the

various organisations I am involved in. At The Benevolent Society, our Reconciliation Action Plan places strong focus on building our Indigenous workforce and ensuring an organisation-wide understanding of Indigenous culture and customs.

There have been times when I haven't actively done much at all. For example, I was once told that a young lawyer of Chinese background had decided to accept an offer to join Maddocks, where I was a partner, on the strength of the fact that a woman of Chinese background was in a leadership role in the firm.

How would you describe your leadership style?

By nature, I am an open person and happy to share my own experiences (both good and bad) to further learning, whether my own



or that of others. Whenever possible and appropriate, I prefer to take a collaborative approach and to build consensus in decision making. To successfully build consensus, it is essential to engage all members of the team and to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. I strive to draw out a range of views, facilitate a constructive debate, and then bring it all together to create a coherent decision supported by the team.

How would you define merit?

It's a loaded term and can be manipulated to mean anything or nothing. What should constitute merit is different in every context and therefore, it is important to define it at the outset and to take into account all qualities and skills relevant to the circumstances. This promotes greater objectivity and ensures accountability in the process of assessing merit.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

The most rewarding aspects of my career have been the relationships I have built with many of the people I have worked with over 30 years in law. I remain in contact with many of the younger lawyers I have worked with and it is wonderful to see them enjoying great success in their careers and beyond. It

is too simplistic to suggest that they thrived under my leadership as they have no doubt benefited from a wide range of positive influences from many others. They are all different and are each succeeding on their own terms. My interactions with each of them were specific and individual and, to that extent, my approach was different in each case, particularly as our discussions often revolved around the interplay between work and life outside work.

One example stands out more than any other. As a very young partner, I interviewed my now colleague, Bronwyn Badcock, a graduate candidate, whom I successfully persuaded to join Blake Dawson. After she completed her graduate year, I persuaded her to join the practice group I was leading, where she built a successful practice in her own right and became a partner. Six years ago, we joined Maddocks where we worked to build a new practice together until my retirement as a partner five and a half years later. Bronwyn has gone on to take the practice from strength to strength and is an elected member of the Maddocks Board. It is very rewarding to look back on how our relationship has evolved and to think that I have played a small part in her career success.

“Lisa is an authentic leader, values based and strategic, with a great capacity to drill into the detail. Lisa, as a leader and manager, creates space for all those who work alongside her to contribute and grow. This inclusive approach consistently delivers great outcomes on all levels.”

Kate Cato, Former Director People Development/Head of CSR, Ashurst

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I had great teachers who supported me in my career development as well as that of others. From there, I learned from my own experiences and listened to others about the issues they were confronting. Progress in addressing such issues is best achieved by a collaborative approach with those affected to find common ground and solutions.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Step outside your own sphere of experience and go out of your way to listen to diverse voices. Build a dialogue and take a collaborative approach to addressing issues which are barriers to others feeling truly included. Then ensure that any program agreed is rigorously implemented and that it is clear to others that it is your program. Be conscious of being a role model and lead by example.

“Lisa’s leadership style is considered, composed and direct. She has a knack of understanding the right balance between influencing, persuading and encouraging those around her — resulting in her being an inclusive and inspiring leader.”

Lucille Scomazzon, Partner & Healthcare Sector Leader, Maddocks

DALE CONNOR

Managing Director, Building |
Lendlease

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Firstly, as a leader of a business you are representing all of the people within that business, and it is your job to make sure you support all your people.

I lead a design and construction business that creates great buildings and places, but we are really just a business of people. Inclusion applies to all staff and workers not just those who are like you or those who surround you. It is important that you go out of your way to seek to understand all people's views in an organisation and ensure you create an environment where everyone can participate. You will have a more honest and dynamic business through inclusion, and one which is no doubt better for the engagement and contribution of all.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

One of my first leadership positions was running our construction operations in China. While this was challenging from a commercial perspective, what it taught me most was about dealing with different people, and the benefits of all types of people to an organisation. Our business was a mixture of locals from various Chinese provinces, and expats from all over Asia and the Western world. The business was made up of 50% women and 50% men. One of my key roles was to make this diversity work positively rather than it be a siloed, exclusive environment. The diversity of background and gender made it a high performing and enjoyable environment.

To develop
greater
inclusivity it is
essential to be
open, engage
with your
people, and
listen.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

I have worked overseas, in Asia and the US, and therefore have been someone who is different in an office. I was very fortunate though to have never felt excluded, but certainly felt different. That slight sense of difference, of being the odd one out, was uncomfortable at times. I can only imagine what that would be like for someone who has no authority and is excluded every day. I would not want that for anyone in our organisation.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I believe there is an obvious link. If you do not provide an environment where all employees are included, respected and valued, then those who are not included will not be engaged. And this will then be seen and felt negatively by others in the organisation.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

I deal with this in three different ways. Firstly, I like to set diversity goals for our overall business and for the units within. This is to challenge my leaders and make them accountable to promote a more diverse business. Secondly, I like to ensure that for all the meetings, conferences, programs and the like we undertake, there is a diverse group of participants. Lastly, it is my role to ensure

that I recognise diverse achievers for their performance.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I would describe my leadership style as honest, open, hardworking, and authentic. Someone who is approachable and who listens. Someone who is always focused on what is best for the business in the long term, and is prepared to make hard decisions in the best interest of all.

How would you define merit?

I want my people to be recognised, rewarded and promoted based on the strength of their performance, measured against objective goals. This should be regardless of who they are. Progress should occur by merit.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

In various businesses I have led, I have promoted women into key business or functional positions. To do so required me to understand them better and make sure they went into a flexible, non-hostile environment. I have also found that this approach applies to men and, actually, to all deserving talent.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I have always tried to be as authentic as possible in all dealings with people. I think if people can trust you and you are welcoming, you will learn so much more about them. And once you genuinely know people and their value, the result will be a more diverse organisation.

“Dale demonstrates inclusive leadership every day in the way he addresses complexity, manages difficult issues, and encourages employees to go the extra mile to produce great outcomes. He has welcomed employees from across the business into his leadership forum; he regularly and openly communicates at all levels; and ensures a sense of camaraderie is fostered across the business.”

Liz Potter, Head of Indigenous Affairs, Building, Lendlease

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

To develop greater inclusivity it is essential to be open, engage with your people, and listen. As a leader, you need to provide clear direction and goals for a business and how everyone can participate and be a part of that success. Lastly, ensure you are the voice and visible advocate for all parts and all people of your business.

“Dale’s passion to create a workplace where everyone can flourish is evident in his commitment to workplace flexibility, gender equity, Indigenous engagement and the creation of safe places for our LGBTIQ workers.

Dale’s personal style is highly engaging, accessible and disarming. He has an incredible ability to be available to all that seek his counsel and is clearly interested and invested in all aspects of creating not only a safe and profitable business, but one that is also fun and inclusive.”

Sean Sheperd, Head of HR, Building, Lendlease

LUKE CORNELIUS

**Assistant Commissioner, VEOHRC
Review Response, Partnerships &
Innovation | Victoria Police**

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Inclusive leadership advocates for and supports everyone in reaching their full potential. Inclusive leadership works for the common good and is most apt when applied to the public purpose context. It is the difference between individuals and teams working for one another for a common purpose, rather than working as individuals driven by self-interest.

In my experience, being led by inclusive leaders and having the opportunity to practise inclusive leadership has always been the best way to support the delivery of public value and meet the diverse needs of our community. I have always found that where inclusive leadership is practiced, the service sector outcomes are more engaged and fit for purpose because everyone's contribution is valued and respected.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

As a police officer, I have found that inclusive leadership has always helped communities find solutions to their public safety concerns and has built and strengthened community capability.

An example of this comes from my time as Assistant Commissioner for Southern Metropolitan Region, servicing a community of 1.4 million. We saw a 40% spike in public order crime in Dandenong, which is one of the most diverse communities in Australia. Questions had to be asked, not just about

**Surface your
unconscious
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the 'what', 'when' and 'who' of the crime, but most importantly, 'why'. I asked my community engagement inspector to find out who was behind the crime spike. I learned that there were 15 youths involved and was told it would be a simple matter of targeting an enforcement campaign against them.

I did not think we could arrest our way out of the problem: we needed to know the drivers of their behaviour. I wanted to know why they were committing the crime, so I asked a local non-government organisation (NGO) youth service to line up a sausage sizzle with the youths in a local park. It was clear to me that they had never met a senior police officer before, nor had they ever had the chance

to share a meal with one. They thought they were there to cop a lecture from me, but I just wanted to hear their stories. Their life stories were at once both tragic and deeply moving. Most had come to Australia in 2006, having spent years languishing in refugee camps. They all had arrived as unaccompanied minors. On arrival in Dandenong they attended a local high school without a single word of English. None of them lasted a year at school and they all soon turned to the bottle and drugs. This brought on chronic alcoholism and antisocial behaviour which brought them into contact with police and the criminal justice system.

With no educational pathway open, no vocational opportunities and no employment, their days were spent on the street, both causing and attracting trouble. Their stigmatisation through the criminal justice system ensured pathways to opportunity remained closed.

I asked these youths, 'What would it need to look like for your and our behaviour to change?' Their answers were simple:

- Treat us with respect.
- Stop targeting us.
- Give us a second chance: we want to learn and want to work.

I spent three hours at that local park and learned more about policing and the criminal justice system in that meeting than I had in my previous 25 years of policing, my Honours Degree in Law and in my Masters in Public Administration. I learned about the human story and I realised that we needed to focus on the human element.

My next move was to organise a meeting with every agency that had contact with the youths. At the first meeting there were over 30 in the room and their advice reinforced the need for



us to work collectively to break the cycle. From there, we negotiated the Repeat Alcoholic Intervention Strategy. A public launch of the program followed with all partners present and for the first time in their lives, these young people found people across the service sector, working in their corner and working on a pathway to hope.

One of the proudest days in my policing career came a year later, when the first graduate of the program invited me to present him with his graduation certificate. In the previous 12 months he had significantly reduced his alcohol intake, had learned to read and write, had become a volunteer and mentor at the local NGO youth service and embarked on a meaningful vocational pathway.

I hope this story has cast some light on the power of co-production, collaboration, diversity and inclusion, rather than a top-down, command and control, 'we have all the answers' approach.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

I left my previous employer because the CEO did not practise inclusive leadership. I felt that my development as a policing executive would

be seriously constrained, if not damaged, by their leadership model. It was also clear that I could not practise leadership in a way that would conform to their leadership model.

I therefore chose to seek employment with the Victoria Police because I had identified Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon as an inclusive leader, whose approach to leadership would do much to enhance my own formation as a leader for the public good.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I have long maintained and practiced the principle, 'the way we treat one another is reflected in the way we police: treat everyone with respect'.

It is certainly a long-held business precept that if you treat your staff poorly, they will treat the customer poorly, so you might be forgiven for thinking that this business principle is what I am talking about. However, there is so much more to respect than that.

Our engagement with employees must therefore reflect a conception of 'respect', which is grounded in our recognition of the inherent dignity of another human, irrespective

of gender, sexual orientation, culture, or ethnicity.

The link between inclusion and employee engagement is therefore critical and should be fostered and tightly held. Just imagine the sense of unity, common purpose, support and productivity which could flow from that!

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

I must acknowledge that with my present team, on the basis of gender, I am not performing that well. I am one of two males in a team of 11 colleagues. This is not for want of trying however, but the men have just not been able to pass the merit test.

Our role calls for strong empathy for those who have the lived experience of harm occasioned by long-term exposure to sex discrimination and harassment in our workplace. Our team members must be great listeners as well as being excellent storytellers in building the engagement we need to drive the change in attitudes and behaviours in our workplace which cause so much harm to our female colleagues.

Quite apart from that, the very best project managers in our organisation are, by and large, female.

Notwithstanding my current poor performance in the gender equity stakes, I do assert that I have always striven to build teams which are both diverse and inclusive in their make-up. Diverse teams comprised of people from a range of experience and attributes have always been the most productive. I have also always found that I am not the smartest person in the room, and the experience of the collective which is grounded in the broadest diversity will always produce the best results.

How would you describe your leadership style?

My leadership style is adaptive, supportive and inclusive.

How would you define merit?

Merit is about giving people a fair go and allowing anyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation or other personal attribute, an opportunity to demonstrate their capability and potential.

Recently I had the privilege of hearing Sir Angus Houston address our senior leadership group. Of all the things he could have said to us about leadership, he first said, 'I want you all to know that I am ashamed of the ACT Father of the Year Award. I did not raise my children. My wife did. She made a decision all those years ago to leave her work and be a full-time mother, so I could focus on my career. She gave me the biggest free kick you can imagine, and every time I hear it said that gender equity is about giving women a free kick, I want the men who think that to know that invariably, the free kick has long been theirs'.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

Over the years, I have mentored and coached many people. I can also say that the gender mix of those I have mentored have tended to be majority females.

Reflecting on the mentoring relationships I have had, I have noticed a number of differences:

- My male colleagues, in keeping with the literature, do tend to oversell themselves.
- My female colleagues have proven much more reflective and self-critical.

“As a leader, Luke truly values the contribution of everyone in the team. He recognises that optimum outcomes for an organisation are only achieved through the inclusion of diverse perspectives which are based on a broad range of experiences. This style of leadership allows the organisation to grow and ensures individuals are respected.”

Therese Fitzgerald, Superintendent, Support Services Division, North West Metro Region, Victoria Police

- My female colleagues also tend to undersell and devalue their capability.

I am always delighted to learn of a colleague's success and in relation to my female colleagues, two have been promoted to superintendent and several to inspector. But when I reflect on the overall proportion of men and women I have worked with, most who have been promoted have been men.

So it does remain a work in progress for me. I think it has to do with needing to work not only with my female colleagues' capabilities, but more particularly on what my organisation values in its people. My current work does give me an opportunity to positively shift this.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

Practice, make mistakes, reflect and learn; practice, make mistakes, reflect and learn; practice ...

By and large, my skills have been developed and improved in the doing, and in the feedback I have been privileged to receive from my staff and colleagues. I must confess that 'management texts' have added little value to the process. Taking the time to read broadly, reflect on my practice and then test my reflection and learning has been where I have learned the most.

I should also pay tribute to the very first team I led. It was when I was with the AFP and led a local business services group. I was a 32-year-old team leader on a mission of self-advancement and my two staff were among the most experienced HR and finance

practitioners in the game. They were both women in their 50s and had the wisdom which came with years of practice. I am indebted to their generosity in sharing their experience with me. To Cornelia and Patrice, I owe you more than you can imagine.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Surface your unconscious bias and become aware of the shadow your leadership casts.

For example, when you have a vacant position in your area, ask yourself: 'What is the gender mix of your "go to" list? How diverse is it?' If, on reflection, your phone list looks a lot like you and your colleagues around you, recognise that you have some work to do.

Have you been intentional about your criteria for qualification? What are the settings and do you need to change these to promote greater diversity and inclusion?

What opportunities are you missing by failing to consider flexible work and job share opportunities? Will introducing flexibility increase the diversity and capability of your team?

“Luke’s inclusive leadership style is about honesty, respect, emotional intelligence, integrity and growth. His remarkable ability to combine these values enables buy-in, ownership and personal growth and reward for those around him, and ultimately achieves results. Luke connects to people, teams and communities by exploring and establishing shared understandings, goals and objectives, and provides opportunities to enable the development and exploration of solutions and outcomes. Luke takes people on the journey and provides advice, support, challenge and opportunity along the way. He inspires people to be the best that they can be.”

Narelle Beer, Superintendent,
Western Region Operations Support,
Victoria Police

FIONA DE JONG

Former Chief Executive Officer |
Australian Olympic Committee

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

For me, inclusive leadership is one that celebrates a diversity of insights from people throughout their organisation. Insights that reflect the different backgrounds, education, culture and life experiences that enable us to go about solving business problems differently. Never is this more obvious than in high-performance sport environments where it takes the contributions of many to have an athlete win an Olympic medal or break a world record. It's about every person contributing their very best and then optimising that collaboration for a better outcome.

Time and again I've witnessed sporting success when an athlete and support team is clear and united in its common goal — like winning an Olympic gold medal — yet diverse and collaborative in their thinking around how to go about achieving it.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

Early in my career I gained an appreciation of the importance of diversity and inclusion from working in different industries of law, finance, technology and sport. Having people in my team from different backgrounds enriched the discussions and delivered better outcomes.

The importance of diversity became significantly more important to me during my first Olympic Team. It was the Torino 2006 Winter Olympics and I was looking after a small number of athletes based in the mountainous Olympic Village. The athletes



were from a diverse group of sports — alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, bobsleigh, skeleton and luge. My role was to create a high-performance living environment for every athlete despite their different sports, schedules, equipment, coaching, medical, dietary, training and recovery routines.

The key to making it work was listening to their individual needs, and then working with the diverse coaching and support personnel to accommodate the unique requests while creating moments for shared experiences as Australians. By doing so all the athletes and officials felt able to execute their unique performance plan while feeling very

connected to, and included as, a member of the 2006 Australian Olympic Team. From that team I came to appreciate the importance of embracing diversity to build united and successful teams.

Our Australian Olympic Teams are made up of people who reflect the rich diversity of our nation — diverse age, gender, culture, height, weight, sport, religion, sexual orientation, education, geography and financial backgrounds. Just as our Olympians come in all shapes and sizes with diverse backgrounds, so too should the people within the organisation with responsibility for organising them. By doing so we have a better chance to create a high-performance environment where all our athletes feel included and ultimately able to perform at their very best.



Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

I've been fortunate to work in organisations where I have felt involved and included. Those times when I have felt my relationships were not as connected as I would have liked have often been times when I have not taken the time to nourish the individual relationship.

I've found the best way to build an inclusive environment is to let people know me on a personal level and, in turn, genuinely seek to better understand them as individuals with a life inside and outside of work.

Perhaps this is more important in an industry like sport where we spend a lot of time out of the office together and personalities are equally important as skills and expertise.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

In my experience, the most engaged employees are those who feel they are a part of shaping the organisation's future success. It's when they feel their work is valued and contributes to the organisation's purpose in a very real way. In a practical sense, the most important way I've found to engage employees is to involve them in the decision-making process — both big and small decisions. They not only feel included, but highly motivated to follow through with enforcing the decision with colleagues.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

Diversity is a very real part of the criteria when recruiting people into the organisation.

As an organisation, we recently amended our governance instruments to require the chair and deputy chair of our Athletes' Commission to be of different gender. It was a simple and effective way to achieve greater gender equality in leadership roles in the organisation.

Another simple and effective idea we introduced was to allow a different person to chair weekly senior management or department meetings. This helps us to cover a more diverse range of topics and encourages different leadership styles.

“Fiona is incredibly approachable. I feel like I can take ideas and questions to her and she is always willing to listen and offer advice and encouragement. She makes me feel like my ideas are valued and that I am an integral part of the business.”

Annabelle Williams, OAM, Legal Counsel, Australian Olympic Committee

In recent years, we have also developed a range of external and internal initiatives to increase our employee understanding of Australia's Indigenous past and create opportunities for Indigenous Australians to play a more active role in our Australian Olympic Teams.

How would you describe your leadership style?

Others describe my leadership style as collaborative, energetic and compassionate. I deeply believe in the importance of teamwork and creating an environment where people can do excellent work every day. I'm continuously looking for ways to uplift standards and encourage my staff to be the best version of themselves, both personally and professionally.

I value open, honest and respectful communication within teams and across the organisation and lead by example in my communications with staff at all levels of the organisation.

How would you define merit?

In the context of employing people based on 'merit', I view it as a series of relevant factors that demonstrate the individual has the requisite education, experience and skill to do the job. Merit does not include irrelevant factors that have no impact on the person's ability to perform the role.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

There are both men and women who have thrived under my leadership, but young female lawyers who transition from law to sports administration, as I once did, seem to be those who benefit most from my support. Naturally these smart, hardworking young women would be successful in their own capacity but I have the privilege of sharing their journey. I simply try to provide a safe space for them to confide their concerns, probe their thinking and offer advice when they seek it.

There are two things I find I do differently with these young women:

- I provide them with complex tasks they may at first think are beyond them. I help guide them to completion and publically acknowledge their accomplishments when they do so. This helps build confidence and helps them to see their own potential.
- I make time to understand who they are, what their ambitions are, and then actively do everything I can to open the doors of opportunity for them. Men seem to be more forthright in asking for something to further their career. Women less so.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I enjoy listening and learning from other people's stories. I read as much as I can on people, culture and performance in newspapers, magazines, books or short online articles. I attend as many forums and seminars as I can find time to.

I undertook a management program at Harvard Business School and found that to be hugely instrumental in refining my skills in this regard.

From a day-to-day perspective, I task a member of my senior management team to call me out on any biases and prejudices I may appear to carry.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Lead the organisation to take the biggest step possible. Then next year lead the organisation to take the next biggest step possible. It's a continuous evolution. Demonstrate your commitment in both words and deeds by making it something you and your leadership team are personally measured against.

“Fiona's leadership is certainly consultative and inclusive. Our business is comprised of many keenly interested stakeholders, so operating in silos doesn't work. Fiona champions the cause for wide consultation, stakeholder engagement and cross-functional communication. Her decisions as CEO are therefore representative of the bigger picture, and with the 'whole' being a part of the process.”

James Edwards, Director Athlete Services, Fundraising & Community Events, Australian Olympic Committee

MICHELLE DIXON

Chief Executive Officer | Maddocks

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

To me, inclusive leadership is about driving a culture that values diversity and different ways of thinking. It is not about the numbers. It requires our leadership team to always be curious and question the assumptions that we make — how we work, how our teams work together, how we get the best out of our people and with that, the best results for our clients and our business. It means being conscious of people's differing circumstances and commitments. I want all of our people to feel valued and respected and to have the same opportunities to contribute, learn and progress.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

As I rose through the ranks in my organisation, I became conscious of being one of very few women firstly in the partnership, and subsequently, in leadership roles. I was made an equity partner while pregnant, and was conscious of being (at the time) the only female equity partner with young children. I was fortunate to have huge amounts of support both within the organisation and from my family. That said, as I rose up through the ranks, and having had the benefit of an upbringing where my parents had the same expectations for their daughters as for their son, and having graduated with more women than men (and significantly more women among the top graduating students), I did start to question why we had such a high attrition rate for women in the legal profession. My thoughts crystallised when I undertook some study at Harvard Business School and

Ensure you are the voice and visible advocate for all parts and all people of your business.

understood, for the first time, the impact of being (or not being) part of the 'club' in a professional services organisation. The course focused in part on the difficulty associated with getting into that club if you are 'different', the powerful impact that feeling like you belong can have, and the corollary if you don't, which impacts both the individual and the organisation.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

No I haven't, but I suspect that's because of my personality as much as the support provided by the organisation. I have always

been content to just get on with things. It probably reflects a lack of imagination. That said, the bulk of my career has been at Maddocks which has, I think, an exceptionally inclusive culture for a law firm.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I see an enormous link. The two go hand in hand. If our employees can bring their whole self to work, then they can stop spending energy trying to fit in, or to be some version of what they think the 'right' employee looks like. I firmly believe that an inclusive culture leads to higher attraction, engagement and therefore retention of staff, which in turn leads to improved wellbeing for our staff, better and more creative outcomes for our clients, and improved productivity for our business.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

As a business, we do a lot of things to drive diversity and have been on a journey over the last few years. The first element we tackled was unconscious bias — for every partner and employee of the firm. Five hundred and twenty-six of our people went through this training in eight months. We have also made unconscious bias training part of the induction process for new staff. We have developed a strategy to assist our women to maintain their practices while on parental leave. We have done this by ensuring there is a custodian partner managing their practices, with key performance indicators (KPIs) designed to measure their effectiveness in maintaining them. We are currently running a pilot program to coach people on their return to work.

We also wanted to create truly effective flexible working arrangements for both the individual and the firm. We have shifted the paradigm to be focused around work achieved, not hours spent in the office. At present, 36% of our workforce is on flexible working arrangements.

Maddocks set an initial target of 30% female partnership by 2015 and reached this before the deadline. We have now set a new target of 40% for 2020.

We have a quota for our board of not less than one man and not less than one woman.

Maddocks is committed to transparency in the appointment of senior leadership positions and advertise all roles internally, coupled with a positive obligation on the board to invite women who are qualified to nominate for the role given the various studies that show women are less likely to put their hand up.

We have signed up to Pride in Diversity and use blind CVs in our graduate recruitment program. The business also conducts pay equity reviews and monitors this annually.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I would like to think that I'm enabling and collaborative. But I am a very hard task master and expect a lot from the people working with me. Having been trained as a litigation

lawyer I also 'test' ideas a lot, which I suspect can feel a lot like being cross-examined. Although it can be challenging, it's helped me, the partnership and the business really test some of the assumptions that we held about leadership — what it looks like, sounds like and feels like — which has led to a greater understanding in the business of the unconscious bias that we all carry and of the benefits that come from a more diverse workforce.

How would you define merit?

I would define merit as the best person for the role, based on what the role really requires, when tested, not what or how we're accustomed to seeing the role performed.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

I've always been surrounded by brilliant women and I have no doubt that my career progression is due in large part to the wonderful people, men and women, that I've had working with me. Prior to being appointed as CEO I was the head of the firm's commercial disputes team. For a number of years, the senior roles in the team had largely been held by women working flexibly. This wasn't by design, I simply didn't hold the long touted view that you can't be 'a part-time litigation lawyer'. I had great staff, I trusted

them to look after the clients and by having some simple conversations we were able to accommodate the needs of all of our staff in the team. Our clients were all very well looked after and we had one of the highest performing teams in the firm by the usual financial metrics. With a bit of imagination, communication and trust, a flexible working arrangement is easy to embrace.

In recent times, I'm probably most proud of broadening the role of our CFO, who is now our COO. I think we've unlocked her real strengths in project management and driving operational change.

To develop greater inclusivity it is essential to be open, engage with your people, and listen. As a leader, you need to provide clear direction and goals for a business and how everyone can participate and be a part of that success. Lastly, ensure you are the voice and visible advocate for all parts and all people of your business.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I read a lot; I attend training courses (we recently had Diversity Council of Australia in to train our executive team); I attend seminars and I speak at lots of them, which forces me back to reading ... a lot. I have a diversity officer (appointed last year) to help, an exceptional people and culture team supporting the business, and I have some fabulous partners who have driven our diversity agenda with me.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Drive it from the top. It's not enough to leave this to the people and culture team. Culture is driven from the top. Some may ask what the difference is between leading and supporting. Within an organisation, support can be heard in comments such as: 'Happy to help', 'Isn't that a great idea' and 'Let's run a workshop and discuss the issue'. Leading change goes beyond that and asks questions such as: 'What are the KPIs around gender equality?', 'When will all partners and staff have completed their unconscious bias training?' and 'Have we done a wage review of all staff?'. It is action orientated, accountable, visible and transparent.

“Michelle has been a trailblazer in the legal profession. She is totally committed to providing opportunities for women at all stages of their career to maximise their potential. Her ability to influence others by presenting a compelling vision of how an inclusive culture can enhance and shape an organisation and society is truly inspiring.”

Liz Ryan, Former Director of People & Culture, Maddocks

“Michelle is someone who I look up to and who has taught me to ‘really’ understand what unconscious bias is. She has created a culture that ensures there is appropriate diverse representation at the meeting room table to ensure that key decisions made are considered fairly based on diverse thinking.”

Catherine Saliba, Chief Operating Officer, Maddocks

AHMED FAHOUR

Managing Director & Group CEO |
Australia Post

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Inclusive leadership means ensuring your people feel empowered to be honest and authentic. It's about being open-minded and respectful — so that you're giving people the confidence to feel free to be themselves and to fulfil their potential.

Being inclusive is a crucial leadership quality because it makes people feel valued and respected. In turn, that contributes to workplace morale and happiness, which is vital for creating a high-performing culture. So, in my mind, you can't truly be a great leader unless you're an inclusive leader — first and foremost.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

Diversity and inclusion have always been important to me. My parents, who migrated to Australia when I was a small boy, always taught me that there is wisdom in all nationalities and talent in both genders. So, from a very young age, I got to appreciate that the world is made up of many different cultures and life experiences — and everyone has something valuable to contribute.

On top of that, my mum was a tremendous role model. She built a very successful small business — and she ran it while raising eight kids. That required incredible work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit. I don't know how she balanced it all but she did. So, for me, diversity and inclusion weren't new concepts to grasp, they were just part of everyday life.

My mum was a tremendous role model. She built a very successful small business — and she ran it while raising eight kids.

Over recent years, I've come to really appreciate that the inclusion of minority groups is not only great for business, it is critical for the social and economic functioning of a multicultural society. As business leaders, I think we have a huge responsibility to not only lead inclusive cultures within our organisation, but also within the broader community.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

Personally, I've never felt excluded. But there was one occasion when I was working overseas and I was involved in a boardroom discussion about diversity, where it was highlighted that I was the only non-Anglo person. This particular

company had diversity quotas and we were discussing our performance against those employment targets. For a brief moment, I questioned whether I'd been recruited for that role because of my cultural background. It was a shocking thought because I'd never considered it before.

I really didn't like the idea that I might have been employed on any basis other than my abilities. And that's the reason I don't like diversity-based employment targets. I always want people to feel they've earned their job — based on merit alone.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

To me, there is a very strong and obvious link. Inclusion is the first step to engagement. People must feel they are included and belong before they can really feel engaged.

In our most recent employee engagement survey at Australia Post, diversity came out as one of the top drivers of engagement for us. I'm really proud of the fact that 75% of our 37,000 workforce believe that our business values diversity.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

On my first day as CEO at Australia Post I gave a speech to our top 200 leaders. I looked around the room and I couldn't help but notice that the audience was nearly all male. So, I made a spontaneous commitment and said, 'Although you may all be very competent leaders, I see a problem here. There are too few women in this room and that has to change'. That was an important moment because it sent an immediate signal that I was personally committed to cultivating a more diverse leadership team.

Since then, we have done a great deal to build the skills, confidence and networks of the talented women in our business. Over the past six years we've run tailored mentoring and development programs, especially for women, at all levels of our business. More than 2,000 women in our business have participated in these programs and the majority of them have since been promoted. An important part of our solution to improving female representation in our leadership ranks was to encourage more of our women to recognise their own talent and their own potential.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I'm very passionate about what I do. And I never really switch off from it. I can be pretty demanding of my leadership team because I'm ambitious and I want to get on with the important task of transforming the business quickly.

However, I like to think that I balance all of that with an inclusive, consultative style that enables everyone to make a contribution. I have a favourite quote from Cyrus the Great, the King of Persia. He said, 'Diversity in counsel; unity in command'. I think that's the best summary of my approach to leadership. In other words, I think you get the best outcomes when you have a diversity of viewpoints contributing to setting strategy. But once you've chosen your direction and you're starting on implementation, every member of the team needs to be united in the desire to achieve the same goal.

“Ahmed has made a profound impact on the culture of Australia Post through his commitment to ensuring everyone working here feels respected, included and accepted. I'd say his impact is most notable among the women in our business. They know that he's committed to gender equality because they see so many of their female colleagues either undertaking development programs, or getting promoted — or both.”

Chris Blake, EGM, Group Services, Australia Post

How would you define merit?

Merit is simply about the valuable qualities — or the potential — that you see in someone. I firmly believe in running business as a meritocracy, where people succeed and get promoted based solely on their talent, knowledge and abilities.

The 'merit' and 'quota' debate is always an interesting one. Personally, I don't believe in quotas, as I hate the idea that anyone in our team would feel that they've been chosen for a job just to fill a quota. I always want our people to know that they've been promoted on their own merits. I want them to know they've been recruited or promoted because we value the unique contribution that they can make to our team. When people accept that, then they have something to strive for.

I'm pleased to say that we have significantly improved the representation of women right across our leadership team at Australia Post over the past six years. And that improvement has been achieved without ever using quotas.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

It's really for others to judge whether the women I've led have 'thrived'. But I hope that anyone who looks at what we've done in terms of leadership development programs for women will conclude that, yes, we are encouraging the

women in our team to progress their careers. This was done by launching a series of tailored mentoring and development programs to build the networks and confidence of the talented women that were already in our business. All we did was give them a little extra support and encouragement.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I think the best way is just by talking to employees and dedicating some time to 'walk in the shoes of others'. For example, I didn't appreciate the challenges that many of our women face when transitioning to and from maternity leave, until I really started to talk to them about this very important issue.

Being involved as a Victorian Male Champion of Change (MCC) has been another important source of ideas and inspiration. The MCC is a group of 20 male leaders from across business and government who are committed to addressing issues of gender equality. The group is organised by the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner. It's such a great way to share ideas with my peers on practical measures to overcome gender inequality and encourage greater participation by women in organisations and across society.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Be clear on why inclusion is important to you, personally. And, then, be clear on why it is important to your organisation. To me, being inclusive is important because it is a fundamental precondition for attracting the best talent and having a healthy, respectful and happy working environment.

I also think it's important to articulate your commitment to having an inclusive workplace in the form of an action plan so that you can make progress and measure that progress over a period of years. I firmly believe that what gets measured gets done.

Another way to encourage workplace inclusion is by celebrating particular days that are all about inclusion, such as Harmony Day, International Women's Day and National Reconciliation Week. We celebrate all three occasions at Australia Post.

Be authentic and talk directly to your people about diversity and inclusion as a workplace issue. Don't shy away from it. Make sure that you deliberately engage with the issue as a core business activity.

“One of the things that I really admire about Ahmed is that he has a genuine belief in the benefits of diversity — and he's prepared to invest in programs that have helped us create a more diverse workforce. He's also given his backing to a whole range of activities that promote a more inclusive culture so that we're getting the very best out of our diverse team.”

Christine Corbett, Chief Customer Officer, Australia Post

TRACEY FELLOWS

**Chief Executive Officer &
Executive Director** | REA Group

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

For me, it's about remembering that people have different things that motivate, inspire and excite them and that means how you connect with them is going to be different. Your cultural background, age, and job role are all things that influence how people interpret what you say or do.

But it is also about creating an environment where people can just be themselves, with all their differences.

When I first started as CEO of Microsoft Australia, the people who challenged me most were the grads. I found them way more confronting, almost demanding. They would ask anything. They were completely unintimidated by talking to the CEO. I can't tell you how unintimidated they were!

Initially I found it almost annoying — but then I learned to love it. Because they were not afraid to ask me the tough questions that no-one else would ask. I really learned to value the fact they didn't care that I was the CEO, they just wanted to know whatever they wanted to know. That really taught me firsthand how important it is to have diversity — of all types. This group of young people brought a different energy and challenge to the organisation.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

It started to matter when I became aware that being a female leader put me in a minority. Before that, I'd turn up to meetings and wouldn't notice there were fewer women in the

People want
to work with a
leader who cares
about the **head**
and the **heart**.

room. But when I became a leader, it became more obvious somehow. I became much more aware of it and felt a desire to change it. In part because I could see in some of those forums how my voice was no longer equal around the table — and I really didn't like that.

I noticed that sometimes I'd respond differently because I was the only woman or that my views were sometimes overlooked as being typical of what a woman would say. And worst of all there were many times I felt truly spoken down to, almost as though I was a child. That made me want to change that for other women.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

Yes. It wasn't always conscious but there would be activities, jokes or banter that I wasn't part of because I was female.

I felt disappointed and left out but not angry. It was more frustrating and upsetting than anything.

To be fair, I am sure if I spoke out it would have changed, but it was my lack of confidence that stopped me doing that.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

Engagement is around people feeling connected to the place they work and who they work with. Inclusion is when people can show up as themselves and don't feel like they have

to be someone different at work. I want people to feel they can be the same at home and at the office. When people feel they can bring their whole selves to work they are much more engaged and motivated.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

When I joined REA, the executive team wasn't very diverse in gender. We're now a much bigger group and almost half are women. We talk about diversity across the whole company — particularly with leaders — and diversity and inclusion is part of everyone's commitments.

But it's not just about gender. We started out as an Australian business but now we're international and we have people from all different cultures and backgrounds. It has taught us that the way we do things in Australia doesn't necessarily work elsewhere. There are

different cultural norms and ways of interacting — and that's OK. We now do unconscious bias training at REA to cover all aspects of inclusion.

How would you describe your leadership style?

When I first started out as a leader, I had some great mentors. The most important thing they taught me is that people don't just want a leader who has all the answers, they want you to be authentic. People want to work with a leader who cares about the head and the heart. I like to know the person and what matters to them and I am very open about what matters to me. I'm the same in the office as I am at home.

How would you define merit?

When I think about merit, I think about people we are looking to promote or who are being given new job areas or responsibility — people who have proven themselves to take on new challenges.

I also think about people who have displayed the values of the company. They have proven themselves in the job but also how they do it. And increasingly the 'how' is more important than the 'what'. Although, I don't like to set people up to fail if they can't do the role, but how they handle stress is really important.

“Tracey to me exudes inclusive leadership. She instinctively knows that it is good for business and teams to have diversity in all its forms at the table. She doesn't take the easy road and has the courage to question the status quo, bringing a level of natural curiosity to the discussion and creates spaces for other voices to be heard and valued. Her self-awareness of her role as a leader on the impact she has on culture and how she acts on that sets her apart in the business world.”

Pip Marlow, Managing Director, Microsoft Australia

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

Managing women is incredibly different to men and that is not to stereotype my gender but I think women are different. I like to think I have had a positive impact on women I have worked with or have worked for me.

The person who replaced me at Microsoft was female. I don't think I am the reason she thrived though — she is an amazing leader! But I hope I helped in some way.

One way I have tried to help women, especially as I have gotten older, is to help them stretch themselves in their ambition. I was very nervous to voice my own ambitions and I know that to be true of others. So I encourage women to think more boldly about what they want in their careers and to speak up.

I find managing women much easier than men. Women generally have less ego and are more willing to say what is worrying them. I find women more accountable as they're not as afraid to say when things aren't going well.

But women can also be more self-critical and not believe in themselves. Mentoring can be great for women as they can confide in someone who is not their boss about what they want to achieve.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I don't know if I honed my skills but I do truly believe that diversity makes organisations better. When you really believe something, you work at it. We have made great progress on gender diversity, but cultural diversity is also really important and that sometimes creates different challenges. The key is to value different things in different people so that you don't end up hiring lots of people who are just like you.

I did have to adapt a little when I moved to Singapore as vice-president for Microsoft APAC. At Microsoft, we valued certain things that weren't as naturally apparent in Asian leadership, such as people who would speak up in a meeting and argue back. If you weren't those things, you somehow were not as good a leader, which is not true.

I found I had to be quieter and swear less! I think I still laughed as much and as loudly but over time people didn't find that so offensive. I would research countries before I went there versus going in and asking a ton of questions, which would be my natural inclination with Americans. I would ask about their family a lot earlier, as family is so important.

But, actually, when I'd do my roundtables with employees — especially women — the level of sameness blew my mind every time. Different countries, culture, and religions always face the same issues.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Be clear on what your motivation is for doing something and not do it just because you're

supposed to. You then have to make it really clear to others why it matters versus it being a nice thing to do.

Invest in working out what's preventing inclusion — and be open to that even being your own leadership style. Be aware of unconscious bias and what the impact of that is.

“Tracey inspires an inclusive and curious culture that encourages diversity of thought at every step. Her authenticity and time she makes to connect with people throughout the business expands the knowledge and mindset of everyone she engages. Tracey's leadership has been instrumental in rapidly transforming the culture to be more collaborative, creating endless opportunities cascading through the organisation and emanating through to customer relationships and strong success.”

Jacqueline Hasler, Executive Manager, Global Financial Reporting, REA Group

TRACY HOWE

Chief Executive Officer | NSW
Council of Social Service

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Inclusive leadership is the only way of having a fair and equal workplace. It means access to diverse experiences that create better ideas, better solutions and better outcomes for people.

Everyone in our community should feel they have a level of influence and power within their organisation and the capacity to lead in their own way.

It is so important not to get bogged down within set leadership structures, made for a select few. You leave yourself open to the dangers of groupthink and you stifle new and innovative thinking.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

Diversity and inclusion has always been important to me. I am a woman from working-class Glasgow. I think that helped me recognise early on the importance of listening to diverse views.

I think those beginnings meant that when I was confronted with challenges early on as a leader, I was always careful to ensure that I had access to thinking that was different from my own to overcome those challenges. The best way to always have access to a range of views is to develop a diverse team and to ensure they all feel engaged in the core work of an organisation.

I don't believe one person ever has all the answers and you don't do anyone any favours if you try and operate that way.

Take risks.
You can never anticipate the next idea around the corner, the next solution.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

I wouldn't say I have specifically felt that way. There have been a few instances where I've seen leadership roles in an organisation attributed only to a few people, who had a very rigid view of how the organisation should operate and blocked those entirely who offered new or different ways of doing things.

I can understand that there is a feeling of stability and safety in that approach, but I strongly believe the longer an organisation operates that way, the less able it is to thrive in changing environments and overcome unforeseen challenges which inevitably arise.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I would argue these are two sides of the same coin. Taking an active interest in prompting inclusion within a workplace ensures everyone feels welcome, feels part of the team and knows their contribution is valued.

Inclusion also has the capacity for staff to feel confident in the direction of an organisation, knowing that a diversity of views and experience have contributed to that direction.

When employees feel that way, their engagement with their work and with each other comes easily and leads to better outcomes for the organisation across the board in my experience.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

The core work of NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) is grounded in reflecting the broader community that we work to serve.

Seeking a diversity of views and experiences is in the DNA of an organisation like NCOSS. Our policy development and advocacy is based on broad consultation with our members and stakeholders across the state.

As such, our staff have to be reflective of this organisational DNA. We attract a diverse and highly skilled workforce. But what we are always asking ourselves, with every new appointment that we make, is who can bring something new to the organisation.

Having said that, we can always do more to ensure our workplaces are as diverse and

inclusive as possible. A diverse and inclusive workplace isn't something you achieve, it is a constant work in progress and requires constant review. We should never sit on our laurels in this respect.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I am an action oriented person. My focus is always on how to make things happen, and particularly in the work I do, to make change happen.

I encourage my team to be solutions focused and I find you get the most out of your team when you give them the freedom to implement agreed strategies without managing all the details. I find entrusting people with responsibility allows them to develop their skills and build confidence.

A team that can work independently also allows me the freedom to explore new projects and ideas and ensure our organisation is constantly improving and evolving.

How would you define merit?

I genuinely struggle to answer this question. Mainly because I think everyone has merit. Everyone's experience has merit; everyone has something they can bring to the table.

“Tracy is a visionary leader who works with passion, energy and commitment to alleviate poverty and disadvantage. She ‘dreams big’ and is well practiced at bringing people together from private, public, non-government and community sectors to find new solutions to old problems. Tracy not only leads but she is always a core part of her team; it’s a rare quality in a leader.”

Moo Baulch, CEO, Domestic Violence NSW Inc.

The important thing is to be able to recognise where that experience can do good and have the most impact; what combinations of experience will work best together and be the most powerful.

I believe when you are appointing someone to any position, an assessment of the experience gap (both professional and personal) that an organisation would benefit from filling is crucial.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

I've generally found that women I've worked with go on to take better, more senior roles.

I think this could be attributed to the way I work with my staff. I tend to take a high-level vision of the project or organisation I am leading and then hand it to my staff, who I trust to take over.

I think entrusting staff with responsibility to achieve the outcomes we've agreed means people can achieve those outcomes in a way that best suits their strengths.

In my view, this works as a way of developing any member of staff as it plays to their individual strengths and doesn't require doing things differently.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I wouldn't say that I've taken particular steps to 'hone' my skills to support diverse employees in any particular way.

I just remain focused on a few of key principles:

- An organisation should always be flexible and agile in its structure and approach to work. It should be able to embrace new ways of working and thinking.
- Look for and develop the strengths of your employees, give them responsibility and offer them support where needed.
- Constantly assess the skills, resources and experience in your team. What is needed will be constantly changing and evolving. Identify gaps and actively fill them.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Start actively seeking and valuing people with experiences and ideas that are different to yours. Only when you have a range of different experiences to draw on can you make the most informed decisions.

You have to be open to change and not allow yourself to constantly look at what's gone before. If you do, you risk getting locked out of seeing the potential in what else is out there.

Take risks. You can never anticipate the next idea around the corner, the next solution. What you can do is make sure you and your organisation are ready to capitalise on it.

“Tracy’s leadership shows a sensitivity to others that extends not just to treating them with respect and fairness, but also working with them to address issues of significant concern. Her interpersonal skills are underlined with warmth, openness and approachability that engages others easily, making them feel valued. Her desire to give back to others through constructively empowering them in various contexts of disadvantage drives her vision of enablement as CEO of NCOSS. Those who follow her are inspired by her and feel valued for their contribution. Tracy’s people-oriented leadership and her inclusive style is a testament to her personal valuing of people, and is exemplary on many fronts.”

Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey, Director,
Australian Centre for Leadership for
Women (ACLW) Pty Ltd

MERREN MCARTHUR

Chief Executive Officer | Virgin
Australia Regional Airlines & Virgin
Australia Cargo

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

For me, inclusive leadership involves valuing and enabling all members of your team, irrespective of seniority, gender, cultural background or education. I firmly believe we can achieve much more through teamwork and collaboration than we can through direction down a chain of command. The most successful ideas rarely come from a single individual. They are invariably the output of a number of different suggestions and discussions, which evolve into the breakthrough idea or solution. So the more diverse the perspectives and viewpoints of the team members, and the more they are encouraged to share their views, the more innovative and successful the team will be.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

As a woman who has always worked in male-dominated fields, I would have to say that diversity and inclusion have always been important to me. However, there have been a number of specific experiences which have highlighted and reaffirmed to me why it is so important. One experience is a time when I was leading a majority female team with just one male team member. Despite his relative seniority, I recognised in this man the same sense of exclusion and awkwardness that I had felt in male-dominated teams. In meetings the women were very quick to vocalise their opinions, and I had to interrupt the conversation from time to time to invite the male team member to contribute. I felt the team was somewhat one dimensional in

I place a high
value on
**teamwork and
cross-functional
communication.**

its approach and response to problems and situations. Through this experience I realised that lack of diversity is just as much an issue in female-dominated teams as it is in male-dominated teams.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

The only experience I have had of true exclusion was in my first job. I was the only female graduate in the corporate and commercial division of a national law firm, which at that time was a male-dominated practice area. It was obvious the male partners found it easier to relate to the ambitious young male graduates. They would

banter about football and exclude me from the conversation, assuming I wouldn't be interested. The high-profile takeover files went to my male counterparts, while I spent six months creating and transferring shelf companies to be used by my colleagues on these deals. I became bored and dissatisfied and started to question my own capability. I did not have enough experience to know whether the partners' refusal to give me quality work was based on my gender or my capability. Eventually a male colleague told me that if I was unhappy I should apply for a job at another firm. This idea had not occurred to me because my confidence was so low. I took his advice and to my surprise I landed a role with another national law firm and I spent 17 very rewarding years progressing to partnership and management positions.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I see employee engagement as an output of inclusion. If your people feel that their contribution is valued irrespective of their seniority, gender, age or cultural background, then they will be engaged in the organisational journey. They will be motivated to achieve the best in their role because they can see and understand the positive impact this will have on the broader goals of the team and the organisation. They will celebrate both their own successes and those of other individuals and the team.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

I actively seek out promotion opportunities for talented females across the business. One recent example of this was the appointment

of a female engineer to lead the Virgin Australia Regional Airlines (VARA) engineering division. This engineer showed promise but had been overshadowed by the authoritative leadership of her male boss. When her boss resigned I was unsure whether she had the capability to lead the division, but I sensed she had the potential so I appointed her the head of engineering on an acting basis and commenced a recruitment process. This gave her the chance to demonstrate her capability. In just a few months I was so impressed that I appointed her to the role permanently. She is now the only female head of maintenance in the aviation industry in Australia.

My focus is not limited to gender diversity however. At VARA we have identified Indigenous engagement as an area in which we can take a leadership role within the group due to our WA base, and this is now a core pillar in VARA's strategic plan. As part of this initiative we have introduced an Indigenous traineeship program and have also partnered with an Indigenous training institute, hosting student excursions and employment workshops.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I believe my leadership style is involved, collaborative and open. I place a high value on teamwork and cross-functional communication. I strive to break down silos within my team and across the organisation by clearly identifying and communicating common goals for everyone to work towards.

“Merren is an impressive individual in terms of her ability to grasp concepts quickly, to think strategically, and she has a phenomenal work ethic. These things make her inspiring on their own, but as a leader she welcomes ideas and challenging conversations. Her style encourages you to think critically and add value.”

Dayna Field, Chief Legal Officer, Virgin Australia

I actively seek input from frontline team members through to management to ensure that we access the broadest possible range of perspectives and ideas to enhance the success of our business.

How would you define merit?

The concept of ‘merit’ is a vexed one in the context of equal opportunity. It should mean that every appointment and promotion is determined based on the skills, expertise and capability of the individual without reference to gender, age, cultural background or other irrelevant factors. However, things get complicated when the concept of merit intersects with the concept of unconscious bias. We are influenced by our own experiences, education and beliefs, which create a bias in our decision making that we don't necessarily see. I liken this bias to a set of blinkers preventing us from seeing the full range of capability and talent before us.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

I have had a number of women in my teams who have achieved great success in their careers. Their achievements are naturally attributable to their own skills and capability. My role has simply been to support and enable their success. I act as a mentor, someone they feel they can safely share their anxieties and aspirations. I seek to build their confidence and help them identify and focus on their goals and coach them on techniques

to navigate a career in a male-dominated environment. I share my own experiences, both positive and negative, so they appreciate that challenges can be overcome and opportunities must be capitalised on. My role is also to sponsor and promote these talented women across the leadership of the organisation.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

It is important to remember that diversity is not all about gender. It is relatively easy for me to understand and seek to overcome the barriers for women entering and progressing through the workforce. What is harder and more important is that I recognise and seek to overcome any prejudices of my own that might be constraining the diversity of my teams. I recall attending a meeting many years ago at which an external consultant had been invited to present. The consultant entered the room and I was struck by how young he looked. I instinctively put the barriers up — how could someone so young possibly teach me anything? I subsequently worked closely with this consultant for a number of months and I grew to greatly respect his expertise. When I looked back at my initial reaction, I realised that I had exhibited the same prejudice that many senior men had exhibited when introduced to me. Out of that experience I learned how critical it is to continually look for and challenge prejudice in myself so as to enable me to build a diverse and successful team.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

To be successful in creating a truly inclusive workplace, the leader must genuinely believe that this is a worthwhile business goal to pursue. So as a first step, I would recommend

that leaders read some of the research that demonstrates the tangible benefits that a diverse and inclusive workplace will deliver to their business. The next step is to critically assess the diversity of their team: where the gaps are and what the barriers are to filling them. Finally, the leader must demonstrate commitment to diversity through their leadership and actions, by ensuring each team member's contribution is valued and by actively identifying and dismantling the overt and subconscious barriers to diversity.

“Merren values people's experience, strengths, talent and contributions. She is the type of leader who will always adopt a collaborative and consultative approach to problem-solving, challenging the status quo while encouraging and acknowledging the team she is working with. By listening to her people and trusting their advice, she has the patience and motivation to work through solutions to deliver the best outcome for the business.”

Hope Antzoulatos, General Manager, Network Management, Virgin Australia

DAVID MORRISON AO

Retired Lieutenant General of the Australian Army | Diversity Council Australia Chair | Australian of the Year 2016

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Diversity for diversity's sake is really just a box-ticking exercise. Real diversity is fostered by creating and maintaining an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, creed, sexual orientation or physical attributes, is encouraged to contribute; to be heard with respect. That enables true diversity of thinking on which individuals, teams and organisations thrive.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

Through a series of meetings and as a result of a growing number of periods of reflection, I began to see issues that I hadn't seen to that point in my life and to hear voices, especially of women, that I hadn't heard as clearly before. You can, of course, be critical that it took me five decades to get that point, but nonetheless it changed me — as a senior officer, but most particularly as a man.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

Never. That is hardly a surprise though. I am a white Anglo-Saxon male and part of the prevailing status quo. Further, I have worked exclusively in a male-dominated profession and have had my career path smoothed in ways that I now see benefited me over those who did not have the same advantages given to them at birth.

Having a **gender focus** to the exercise of your leadership is essential.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

It is intrinsic and integral to creating the working environment where all employees are given the chance to reach their potential. Without that link, initiatives to encourage diversity and inclusivity are really only words on a page, and catchy slogans on posters.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

The actions I have taken include:

- Setting targets for increasing the number of women in the Army and naming those targets publicly.

- Conducting a first principles review of how we judge merit and why the existing paradigm failed to recognise the value of different non-military life experiences.
- Engaging in one-on-one meetings with those affected by discrimination, harassment and bullying. That program began with me, but to date hundreds of senior officers have now met with victims to better understand the dreadful impact on an individual's self-esteem and dignity.
- Introducing into our selection panels for higher rank, people (in almost every case women) who have great life and professional experience, but no military background. They have ensured a much more complete appreciation of a candidate's merit.
- Conducting one-on-one coaching of senior officers and commanding officers with

Avril Henry to open eyes and ears to the benefits of diversity.

- Putting in place more attuned recruiting campaigns that focus on the real benefits of diversity and inclusivity — diversity of thinking and more capable workforces.
- Guaranteeing no loss of seniority for men and women returning to the Army after a leave of absence provided they could demonstrate their value to the long-term health of the institution.
- Taking active steps to 'celebrate' womens' successes in the same way that we had always celebrated those of men.
- Holding publicly to account those who would not live to our values of courage, initiative, teamwork and respect.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I think my leadership style is inclusive and empathetic to the needs of others. I hope I encourage their contributions and respect their opinions. That has certainly not stopped me from being focused and results orientated. Indeed, I think these attributes are very much complementary.

How would you define merit?

Merit is the value that an individual can offer to an organisation, institution or team. It is certainly dependent on the challenges being faced and the situation in which critical decisions are being made. There is nothing surprising in the fact that judgements about merit are subjective. After all, it's individual human value being judged by other humans. The contemporary problem, though, is that in far too many organisations, institutions and teams, that value is judged using the most questionable of criteria: gender, race, creed, sexual orientation and so on. Once those criteria are set aside, real value can be seen in a clearer, more equitable way.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

Certainly. Many women were given greater opportunities in the Army as the leadership team redefined merit and realised that we were

not making the best use of the available talent and potential. This most definitely required a recalibration of how we, as an organisation, selected the best person to fill critical appointments and more senior ranks. But the beneficial dividend was readily apparent as women thrived in the new environment and in turn delivered great results to the Army and the nation.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

Having a gender focus to the exercise of your leadership is essential. You need to be prepared to see issues differently and indeed to hear voices that you may not have heard before. It requires real attention, and initiatives need to be supported by both clear policies and an education campaign to explain to the existing workforce why these changes are being made. As the Army demonstrated — it can be done, and results can be achieved quickly.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Don't listen to the naysayers. Don't be swayed from making a difference. Know that there will be checks and setbacks but know that at the same time you are creating a legacy that will be of critical importance to the long-term health of the organisation you lead. Go for it!

“Don't listen to the naysayers. Don't be swayed from making a difference. Know there will be checks and setbacks but know at the same time you are creating a legacy that will be of critical importance to the long-term health of the organisation you lead. Go for it.”

Lieutenant General (retired) David Morrison AO,
Diversity Council Australia Chair, and Australian of the Year 2016

“What we need in leadership is people with their values in place, and the strength to hold to those values when challenged in the workplace and elsewhere.

David's example in the Australian Army shows us what happens when people are truly driven by values.

Once they see 'it', once they hear 'it', they must do something about 'it'. David didn't see he had a choice.”

Diana Ryall AM, Founder & Managing
Director, Xplore for Success

HUSEYIN (HUSS) MUSTAFA OAM

General Manager for Multicultural Community Banking Australia |
Commonwealth Bank of Australia

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

For me, an inclusive leader provides opportunities to all its team members to play an active role in adding value to the business and the team irrespective of each individual's background. It's about tapping into unique talents and experiences that each team member can contribute, by reference to their individual background. The more diverse the talent pool, the more innovative the outcome, and one that is usually more reflective of the broader community at large. Inclusive leadership creates an environment that enables individuals to participate freely and bring all of themselves to work, without fear of criticism or judgement. It encourages individuals to identify their value proposition and unique qualities within themselves that they can volunteer to enrich the business.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

I became cognisant of the importance and power of diversity and inclusion in 1992 when I became the first Turkish bank manager in Australia. I soon learned that this was a strong value proposition for my business. Before long, I had Turkish clients travelling from regional Victoria to Melbourne to meet with me and transfer their banking to my branch. This became a competitive advantage for me, and while the bank's business was growing at 3% per year, my branch was growing at 12% per year.

I found myself at cultural festivals connecting with my community and creating a sense of

People should feel proud to be their true selves at work ... it leads to greater, more positive outcomes.

affinity while building the brand and selling business. I developed a sense of trust in the community that lead to ongoing referrals and continual growth of my business.

The next step was to identify people in my team from diverse cultural backgrounds who could also connect with their own communities. I was appointed to a regional manager role and I identified the need for staff in branches with bilingual skills to ensure that members of the migrant community felt comfortable and confident in their dealings with the bank, in their own native language.

I was soon mentoring members in my team who became ambassadors of their own communities.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

I am proud to say that the only organisation I have ever worked for since the age of 16 is the Commonwealth Bank (CBA). I commenced work as a bank clerk at a time when multiculturalism was not celebrated and when assimilation was the key to surviving, compelling me to change my name to 'Chris'. I didn't possess the common traits of an Australian and this made it difficult for me to fit in and connect socially with my colleagues. I looked, spoke and thought differently to my peers and instead of this being regarded an asset to the organisation as it is today, at that time it made me feel like my co-workers didn't relate to me.

In the early days, when transparency and fairness was not a priority like it is today, I

felt it was difficult for me to secure the same opportunities as my peers. I recall that I was delegated less complex duties than my colleagues. This made me feel less valued and I remember wanting to be more like my peers. It troubles me to admit that I wanted to assimilate rather than be seen as different, including consciously speaking in the most 'Australian', accent-free way that I could.

Fortunately, I was able to overcome these obstacles and despite my earlier experiences, I was promoted to assistant manager within 10 years in the organisation. This was an above-average achievement at the time.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I see the link between the two as paramount. Employee engagement goes to the heart of feeling included in the workplace. I want

my team to feel supported and to have a sense of belonging in the business. I strive to encourage and inspire my people to be the best that they can be so that they reap the rewards of their efforts. Work should be enjoyable and a place where people can grow and achieve their career aspirations.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

I have taken steps to ensure my team is reflective of the diverse community that we live in. My team is made up of people from 36 different cultural backgrounds, and I actively seek out opportunities to enhance the diversity of the team as I value the benefit it produces. I am conscious of avoiding any unconscious biases that may exist, be it in relation to gender, cultural background, sexual orientation, disability or age. It is imperative to embrace people the way they are.

As a testament to my passion for diversity, I am a founding member of the bank's internal cultural diversity steering group called 'Mosaic', in which I lead the community stream that focuses on engagement with the local community.

I am proud of the achievements of Mosaic, particularly recently with the hijab being officially incorporated into the CBA corporate wardrobe.

As a founding member and current President of the Australian Turkish Business Council (ATBC), I have played an integral role in improving trade between Australia and Turkey

“Huss is a highly inclusive and values-driven leader who embraces all aspects of diversity within his team. He is a passionate advocate for multiculturalism and creates an environment where people can bring their whole self to the workplace.”

Adam Bennett, Group Executive Business and Private Banking, CBA

and hosting mutually beneficial events that promote business between the two countries. In my role, I have hosted 14 Iftar dinners during the holy month of Ramadan.

The next natural step was to continue this activity as part of the CBA and, in 2009, I hosted the first CBA Iftar dinner which has continued to be a successful event held annually. The event welcomes people from all faiths and cultural backgrounds, with the focus on promotion of social harmony and cohesion.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I am a highly motivated, energetic, and passionate leader with a firm focus on people. I live and breathe the business's vision and values, and I strive to be a role model for my people.

For me, integrity is key. I want to be that person who helps people get to where they want to be. I pride myself in being an approachable leader. I prioritise taking the time to motivate my team and instil confidence in them. I get great satisfaction from developing and producing great leaders.

How would you define merit?

In business, I think that 'merit' cannot be defined by an exhaustive list of attributes. Rather, it can be defined by those qualities and skills that best fit the requisites of the given role. Merit should be free from conscious and unconscious biases.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

Under my leadership, I have mentored and supported numerous female members of my team. I have recruited junior staff, identified talent and sponsored women in the organisation to grow and develop within and outside my team.

In particular, I first employed a young, ambitious female relationship manager and over the years I invested in her development and promoted her to an executive manager role. I recognised that to propel her further she would benefit from further tertiary education so I sponsored her to complete an MBA. I wanted her to have exposure to new opportunities and supported her transition to another business unit that would enhance her leadership capability. This resulted in her promotion to general manager.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I used my experience and story as a platform to celebrate the benefits of diversity and encourage others to do the same.

I was 10 years old when I migrated to Australia and did not know a word of English. In school, my teacher told my parents that my potential was limited to unskilled work. This was my driving motivation: to prove to myself that I could be more, and to prove my teacher wrong. This is something I have carried with me all my life. Notwithstanding the fact I left school at Year 10, I went on to undertake undergraduate and postgraduate studies later in life, as well as a master's degree in management.

HUSEYIN (HUSS) MUSTAFA OAM

I learned that when I shared my story, it inspired others to have confidence in their own ability to achieve similar career outcomes, despite how unique their journey in life may be.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

Get to know your team. Understand what motivates each individual and show interest in their ambitions. Ask yourself, 'Is my team reflective of the community we live in?', 'If not, why not?' and 'What can be done to ride the coat-tails of diversity in the workforce and all the benefits it can provide?'

People should feel proud to be their true selves at work and you will see it leads to greater, more positive outcomes.

“Often senior leaders can become distant from their broader team. Huss's passion to remain present in the everyday lives of his team, engage with people from diverse backgrounds, and connect his team with our multicultural communities is a distinct leadership capability.”

Claire Roberts, Executive General Manager, Business Banking SME, CBA

JONATHAN NICHOLAS

Chief Executive Officer | ReachOut Australia

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

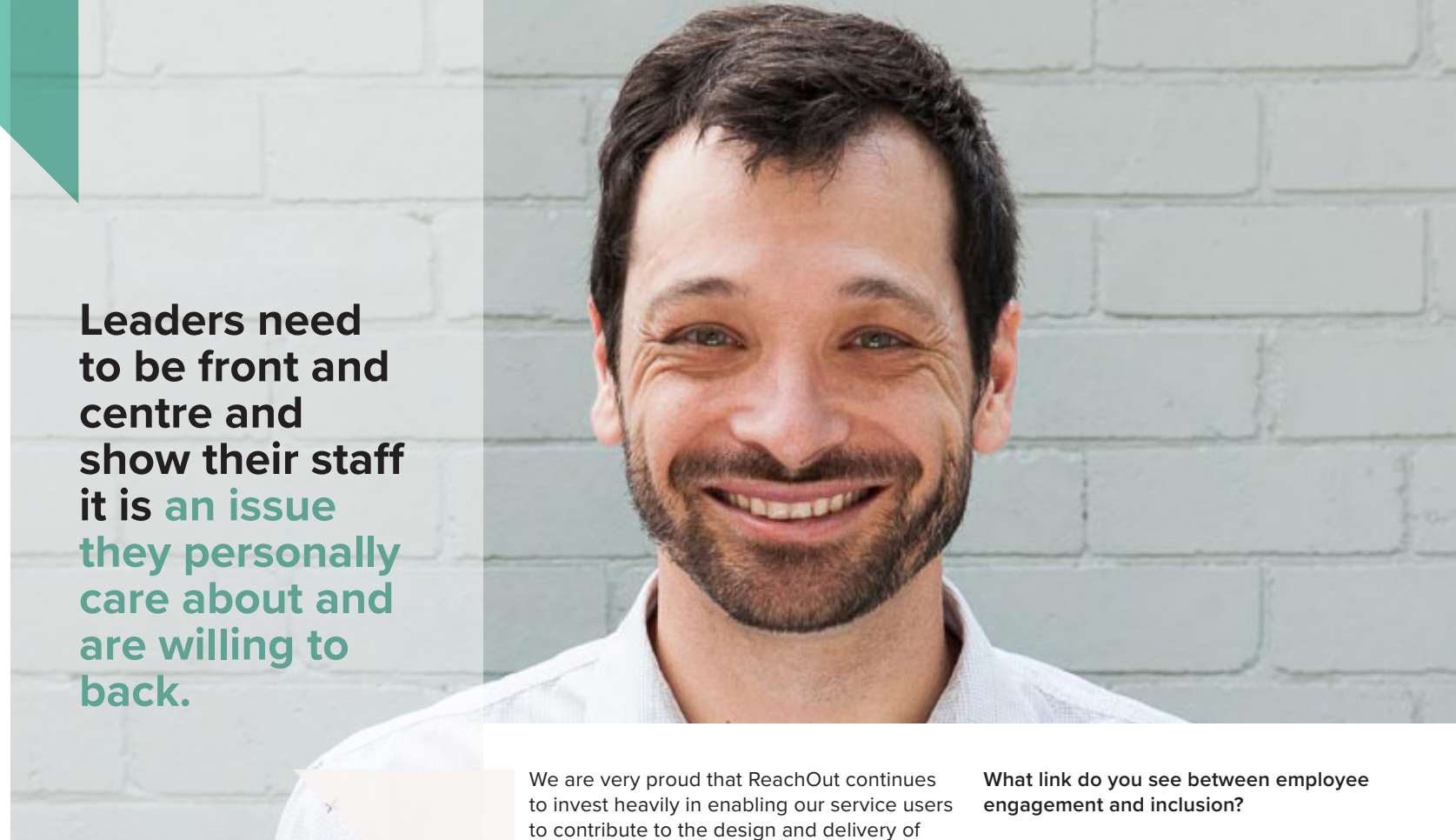
Inclusive leadership means you believe your organisation is at its best when it draws on a diverse talent pool. Both our differences and our commonalities should be celebrated. It means actively seeking and valuing the involvement of those whom have a different set of life experiences from your own.

ReachOut is an online mental health organisation for young people and their parents. To deliver our services, we draw on the expertise of three different groups of people. Within each of these groups we make every effort to incorporate diverse views.

The first group is service users themselves. All of our services are designed and delivered by those who use them and therefore we recognise the expertise that can only be gathered by having lived an experience yourself. To ensure diversity, we also actively seek the input of young people and parents who don't use our service. This is a critical part of inclusive leadership. To be truly inclusive you make a conscious effort to seek the input of those who have alternative and sometimes uncomfortable views on what you are trying to achieve.

The second group is mental health experts. People who have a deep knowledge in their own right gathered through formal training and professional experience.

The third group is ourselves. What does our own experience tell us is the right way forward? My belief is, that in any given situation, if we can merge the insights from



Leaders need to be front and centre and show their staff it is an issue they personally care about and are willing to back.

these three groups we will deliver services that are both helpful and engaging.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

It became important to me very early in my career. I first started at ReachOut as a 20-year-old, and the organisation hadn't thought to ask young people for their views on the service or tap into their expertise. As a young person myself, I felt that those views were critical. To his credit, our founder, Jack Heath, supported the establishment of a program within ReachOut to actively involve young people in the design of the service.

We are very proud that ReachOut continues to invest heavily in enabling our service users to contribute to the design and delivery of ReachOut.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

Yes, when I first joined ReachOut I did feel excluded because of my age. I was both frustrated and angry because I felt the service would be better if young people were involved.

On reflection, I also felt entitled to express that frustration and agitate for change. Given I was well educated, confident and male, I often wonder whether these characteristics meant it was easier for me to argue for inclusion, and for those arguments to be heard and accepted.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

In some organisations I can see why employee engagement would decrease as inclusion increases. The reason for this is that as your diversity increases you change your culture and diminish the power of the dominant group. In the long run, the organisation will benefit from this shift and employee engagement will increase again as employees recognise the value of an inclusive organisation. This is why inclusiveness is one of ReachOut's organisational values, and it is key in our recruitment of new staff. ReachOut has a very high level of employee engagement and I have no doubt that this is in part because everyone believes in the value of inclusion and sees the organisation and its people making every effort to become more inclusive.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

First, inclusiveness is one of ReachOut's organisational values. This leads to a focus on diversity in recruitment and therefore the diversity of our teams. Second, through our service design and research, we seek insights from a diverse group of people. Finally, we monitor diversity at an organisational level. Therefore, we are confronted to change when we are not as diverse as we would like.

A good example of this is that we traditionally found it hard to recruit men, both as users of our service, and as members of our organisation, and the team has continuously raised this as an area of improvement. Similarly, two to three years ago we were not particularly culturally diverse. We had an active conversation about how we could better advertise employment opportunities and increase our cultural diversity as we grew. In recent times we have committed to a Reconciliation Action Plan. I am confident that this will attract a greater number of Indigenous Australians to both our organisation and as service users.

How would you describe your leadership style?

Participatory. I think the best outcomes are delivered when people achieve a high degree of consensus on the way forward. My role as leader of the organisation is not to provide those answers for the team, but to facilitate the environments where those answers can be discovered.

“Jono was a young person himself when he joined ReachOut in 1998. As he took on different roles and more responsibility over the years, the organisation's value of inclusiveness has become a hallmark of Jono's leadership style.”

Vicki Forbes, Freelance Communication Specialist & former Head of Communications, Young and Well CRC

How would you define merit?

Merit is not a word I would ever use. For me it has connotations of entitlement. I prefer achievement and believe that if we focus on achievement, both individually and collectively, we will be doing a good job.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

Yes, many, although I think it has more to do with their capability than my leadership.

It is important to note that the not-for-profit sector is unique in that it attracts a high proportion of women, and ReachOut is no different. As a consequence, helping women thrive at ReachOut is critical to our overall success. To achieve this, I have focused more on individual differences rather than gender differences. In supporting staff to thrive, you have to understand and maximise their talent and direct that towards the organisation's mission. It has been my experience that you need unique strategies for every member of your team in order to do this well.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

My background is in psychology so I always try to understand and empathise with the people I work with, and with the young people we serve. I haven't thought too much about honing my skills to support diversity but I believe that if you lead a diverse organisation, you need to lead from a position of respect,

value and celebrate difference, and enable people to come together around a common mission. If you do these things well, you will have an environment where people from diverse backgrounds will feel at home and can therefore thrive.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

First, name inclusiveness as one of your organisational values. This sends a strong statement both internally and externally that you want your organisation to be held accountable on this issue.

Second, measure it. Set reasonable goals around diversity and have open conversations as to how you are performing and why. At stages throughout ReachOut's history, it has not been particularly diverse. At each of these times, we asked ourselves why and how we could do things differently. It's these conversations that are critical because it reinforces that inclusiveness is something you have to continually monitor and strive to be better at.

Finally, the organisation's leaders have to play a strong role in celebrating diversity. In many cases it is the symbolic acts that reinforce to your staff that you value diversity. It can be something as simple as sending a message to staff saying 'Happy Mardi Gras', organising lunches where everyone brings in food connected to their particular culture, or it could be asking staff to review organisational guidelines and how these could be made more flexible to support diversity. The main thing is, leaders need to be front and centre and show their staff it is an issue they personally care about and are willing to back.

“By keeping our very human organisational values at the centre of his and the organisation's decisions, activities and behaviours, Jono has created a culture for all of us to not only do our best for the young people we serve, but to develop and maintain our own wellbeing and personal growth. I started at ReachOut with the goal of getting a year of experience before moving on. As a direct result of Jono's ability to see how my and the organisation's needs could be further developed and met, I have been here for eight years and benefited from many opportunities to learn and grow.”

Kitty Rahilly, Product Manager,
ReachOut Australia

DALISA PIGRAM-ROSS

Co-Artistic Director | Marrugeku,
& Teacher, Cable Beach Primary School

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Inclusive leadership to me involves the ability to work well with others, from and with diverse backgrounds, towards a common goal. This ability is valued in my dual role as both a co-artistic director of Marrugeku, an intercultural dance theatre company (together with non-Indigenous friend and fellow artist Rachael Swain), and as a Yawuru language teacher at a primary school in my hometown of Broome. I work hard with both non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to promote respect and inclusion of our Aboriginal culture and perspectives within the arts and education sector.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

I feel that both diversity and inclusion have been important in the work I do since the beginning. I am a Yawuru/Bardi woman of mixed cultural heritage (including Yawuru/Bardi/Malay/Filipino/Irish/English) who was born and raised in Broome, a town with a multicultural history due to the pearling industry. The importance of respecting different cultures has been a part of who I am and the community I grew up in since childhood. I feel the work I do is always inspired by and relates back to where I come from and my experience of being a part of a culturally diverse community.

With Marrugeku, our work with artists who are also from diverse cultural backgrounds is crucial to our exploration of finding new forms of storytelling. We do this by developing methods to draw out new dance languages,

**A part of our
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and share these stories and perspectives through our artistic expression with local, regional, national and international audiences, which has powerful outcomes. Our work is an intercultural process and draws from Aboriginal experiences and communities.

It is equally important in my teaching role of sharing Yawuru language and culture with staff and students from many different Aboriginal language groups as well as non-Indigenous people who live in Yawuru country. Offering a local Indigenous perspective and insight towards educating our children and those who work with them is important to me, as the next generation can see firsthand the positive effects of being culturally inclusive and, by

working together, it helps everyone develop better understanding and acceptance of our similarities and differences.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

Working in organisations and situations where little to no knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture exists is probably the most challenging and frustrating setting to be put in as an Aboriginal person. To be in a position where you feel misunderstood or to have people make assumptions of who you are is not much fun. Also, to be made to feel as though the responsibility is mine to ensure those misconceptions are corrected adds extra pressure in those situations. It took a while to learn how to articulate my feelings and to develop a voice, but I feel it is very important to 'be the change you want to see'. I'm lucky to

work with people who acknowledge, respect and value Aboriginal culture and cultural diversity, and a part of our challenge is to bring those lagging behind forward with us.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

There is nothing more rewarding or encouraging than to feel a part of something that is working well and to successfully achieve set goals. Whether it is a small project or larger one, I think the satisfaction is shared between a group of people who have worked productively together and supported one another to achieve common goals. Those who feel included in a process where their individual perspectives and skills are valued and celebrated will engage in activities willingly and purposefully, which benefits all. Providing the opportunity and environment for this to happen requires trust and time, to



build good relationships where people feel safe to have a voice, and where openness and transparency encourages genuine respect for one another.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

The company I co-direct, Marrugeku, creates innovative intercultural dance theatre from North West Australian experience, where desert meets sea, Australia meets Asia, and where cultures twine, fuse and morph. Drawing from the lives of people and communities living in remote North West Australia, together we share the memories and traditions of Indigenous culture and experience through contemporary dance theatre. Our ambitious large-scale outdoor and indoor productions are created through long-term collaborations with artists from remote and urban locations, and internationally, and in dialogue with Indigenous cultural custodians. The company utilises contemporary dance, traditional and contemporary music, circus, installation and video art to create its visually spectacular productions. Our works are presented in a variety of alternative locations, from remote Indigenous communities to international arts festivals in Australia and around the world.

“Dalisa’s leadership style exemplifies decolonisation in action. Her innate commitment to consultation and collaboration and respect for difference mean she demonstrates her leadership style through doing, listening, teaching and dancing. These qualities enable her to open doors for change in complex circumstances. She inspires those around her to the highest levels of commitment in facing cultural change through dance and language revival.”

Rachael Swain, Co-Artistic Director & Creative Producer, Marrugeku

Marrugeku maintains a rare position as an innovative contemporary performing arts company that practices in North West Australia. The company conceives, creates and presents its body of work wholly in Indigenous contexts and in remote conditions and, as such, responds directly to key issues facing those communities.

At Cable Beach Primary School we are committed to teaching Aboriginal language and culture, and respecting and maintaining Australia’s rich linguistic heritage. We promote reconciliation, acceptance and understanding of cultural diversity. We want to increase understanding of local history and knowledge.

The school acknowledges that it is basic respect and protocol to learn the language of the country you are living in or visiting. We focus on teaching Yawuru because we exist and live in Yawuru country.

All languages are valued at our school and we recognise that we have students who are from many different language groups. During Yawuru lessons, all languages are valued and respected and students’ own cultural knowledge and experiences are welcome.

How would you describe your leadership style?

It’s hard to describe a leadership style that has been acquired simply by learning on the job. I am proud of how much I have learned from my amazing mentors and leaders, including my elders who I look up to and would like to emulate. I focus on what I’ve learned over time with the intent to pass those experiences on to others through the projects and programs I am involved in within the arts and education. I feel that the valuable and priceless knowledge that my elders have offered me leaves me with the responsibility to ensure it is passed on.

How would you define merit?

Merit could be part of how others measure your success. It could also be seen as your achievements, big and small, that add up to how you see yourself and the attention you may bring to yourself and your work.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

The women in the cast and creative teams of the arts projects I have worked on, and the teaching staff and students I have worked closely with, have learned from the approach I take and the methods I have helped develop with colleagues to achieve their own goals. Sometimes we need to change and adapt to different circumstances, but if we are ready and open to learn from every experience, then those around us will find it easier.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

I develop my skills through working with Rachael Swain to create artistic projects that

encourage artists to broaden their cultural knowledge and artistic potential, and make productions that showcase our creative ideas to help others and our company reach their potential.

Working at Cable Beach Primary School, I always carry with me what I’ve learned from my mentors and elders to represent my Yawuru language and culture respectfully and genuinely, to pass on to the next generation. I work with other leaders within the school to seek the best culturally inclusive education for the students we teach.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

To be a leader is to help others develop leadership qualities, so my advice is to encourage others by creating opportunities and fostering the right environment for them to thrive.

“Dalisa is a consummate, inclusive leader in that she sets high standards for herself and is able to identify talent and bring out the best in everyone through respect for individual differences and culture and passion for everything she does.”

Suzanne Temple, Principal,
Cable Beach Primary School

GIAM SWIEGERS

Global Chief Executive Officer |
Aurecon

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

I define leadership as leading teams to agreed outcomes while ensuring every team member performs to the very best of their potential. Inclusive leadership means that every employee who joins the organisation has the right to aspire to any role within the organisation, with the knowledge that their gender, religion, and background will not prevent them from achieving their aspiration.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

From the moment I was admitted to the partnership of Deloitte in South Africa, I realised that inclusive leaders had a better ability to attract the quality talent that was required to have a sustainable competitive advantage. When I became CEO of Deloitte Australia in 2003 the firm was in a very weak position. Attracting diverse skills that others had ignored was the obvious business strategy.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

As an Afrikaans-speaking South African joining an English-speaking firm (Deloitte) in South Africa, it was always made clear to me that there were limitations to what I would be able to achieve in the organisation. It was often a source of frustration and embarrassment but also resulted in me becoming determined to prove them wrong.

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A dealer in
hope.**

When I moved to Deloitte in Australia, I joined a firm that had prior negative experiences with South Africans. I had to work hard to overcome those perceptions.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

I am convinced that you need good engagement from your people if you want them to perform to the best of their potential. I believe it is most unlikely that you could achieve reasonable employee engagement in an organisation that does not have inclusive leadership.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

Our strategy has clearly articulated the importance of diversity as a driver of innovation and therefore differentiation to our competitors. We continue to highlight the risk of groupthink where groups are not suitably diverse. Changes are quickly made to those in leadership roles where leaders are incapable of working with diverse teams and where they make members feel excluded.

The tone at the top is vital if you want to succeed. We ensure that what senior leaders say, value and reward, always reflects our commitment to diversity.

How would you describe your leadership style?

It is always hard to describe your own style. I have often been told that I am capable of articulating the future vision for the organisation and help people understand the benefits that would accrue to them. I have always believed that the role of a leader is to take people where they ought to go, rather than where they want to go.

A leader is a shock absorber for an organisation. A dealer in hope. If you cannot find some reason to be excited about the future of the organisation, get out or sell it.

I am often described as 'soft on people — tough on performance'.

How would you define merit?

Merit is the reward earned by (and gratitude shown to) an employee in recognition of their good contribution to a number of the firm's strategies or tactics that are aligned with the agreed key performance indicators (KPIs) of the individual.

It is important that one considers these KPIs carefully. They often work against diversity or don't reward diversity.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

I am proud of the fact that I have succeeded at Deloitte by Cindy Hook. I had recruited Cindy from our US practice five years earlier and had worked hard at helping her succeed in the various roles she undertook. The foundation of our relationship was very honest conversations about strengths and weaknesses, as I always believed Cindy could achieve a lot.

I am also very proud of the success achieved by Deloitte partner and board member Margaret Dreyer. I had been her mentor for a long time and it was very rewarding watching her grow. The day she was voted as one of Australia's 100 Women of Influence was a very proud moment.

“Being inclusive is core to Giam's success as a leader. I've worked with Giam for over 30 years and during that time I've observed commitment to redefine himself as a leader, inspiring others to do the same. Giam is driven by what's possible and bringing those around him on that journey. An inspirational leader!”

Margaret Dreyer, Partner, Deloitte Australia

I did not do anything differently — I just treated women in the same way I would have treated a man with talent. Very importantly, I was also very tough on their performance as I knew how much potential they had.

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

This is a tough task for any leader as we all have our own unique approaches. I have found that talking to people and encouraging honest debate helped me understand what mistakes we were making. Talking about my own past experiences and frustrations seemed to help people feel that they have the right to speak up and to contribute to creating a better organisation for all.

You have to learn to observe and listen very carefully. Mistakes made are often subtle and not easy to identify.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

If you want to create an inclusive environment, it starts at the top. It is what the leader rewards, punishes, and tolerates that sets the tone.

Australian leaders are generally uncomfortable talking about cultural differences. This is not helpful to those who are feeling excluded. An open discussion about differences and how these can be resolved is important to help all parties understand what needs to be changed and what needs to be encouraged.

Realise you will make some mistakes and learn from them. You need to ensure you remain focused on the outcome.

We always teach our leaders that they have to be focused on outcomes and to remember what they are trying to achieve. To quote Napoleon Bonaparte: 'If you say you are going to take Vienna, then take Vienna'.

“Since joining Aurecon, Giam has taken diversity from being a business initiative to being a core responsibility of senior leadership. Giam's ability to take our organisation on this journey while mentoring and coaching leaders such as myself gives me great confidence that we have the right person steering our ship. His commitment to inclusive leadership will undoubtedly help shape our talent and future leaders, ensuring we are best positioned to make Aurecon a firm where people aspire to work and are engaged and inspired every day.”

Louise Adams, Regional Director,
VIC/SA/ACT, Aurecon

STEVE VAMOS

Non-Executive Director | Telstra
& Fletcher Building

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

Leadership that extracts the full potential of the people around you and the teams they work in. It is leadership that cares about people and is keen to listen and learn from those around them. One that suspends initial impressions and perceptions until a more thoughtful understanding can be gained.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

My dad taught me what diversity and inclusion was at an early age. My brother and I, then aged 12 and 9, were overheard by our dad telling our sister (then 6) that she couldn't do something we were doing because she was a girl. Dad was very angry, he grabbed the two of us by the collar and said, 'If you ever tell her she can't do what you can do, you will be in trouble. Do you understand?'. Since then the concept of gender equity hasn't been lost on me.

What became important to me was surrounding myself with people who were (or had the potential to be) better than me. People who are great team players, see the big picture, and are willing to sacrifice their area of concern for the broader good. It so happened that in looking for these attributes, the people I attracted came from a diverse and wide range of backgrounds.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

Not in an organisation, but definitely in roles where my boss was a bad listener. I have always disliked the fact that in work hierarchies,

I am always willing to admit if I don't know something, and to stress that my views are not always right or the ones that people should refer to.

your title and level of seniority often defines the extent to which people listen to you.

This bias is not a good thing given that, every day that passes, knowledge and hierarchy reduce in alignment. You must be open to listening to people at all levels and backgrounds if you want to see the changes occurring in the business environment you work in.

It's funny how the more senior you get, the more people are willing to laugh at your jokes and listen to you.

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

If inclusion means being listened to in its most basic form, then there is an undeniable link with engagement. If someone listens to you, that means they care about you and respect you. If they care about and respect you, that most likely means they work in a less fearful work environment, where people are more likely to engage in making or suggesting proactive change for the better.

What actions have you taken to include diversity in your teams and groups?

I always demand that good female talent be presented by recruiters in any short list for a role that I am hiring.

I make sure in meetings I chair that everyone is given the opportunity to speak and be heard in as safe an environment as possible.

I am always willing to admit if I don't know something, and to stress that my views are not always right or the ones that people should refer to.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I lead like a head coach more than a star player. I care about the bigger picture and purpose of the organisation I work with. Making sure we have the right people in the right roles aligned to work together to achieve the top priorities of the business.

I demand that managers of people are either good with managing people or get good at it, otherwise they should get out of it. We all deserve to work for people who like managing people and treat that as their top priority.

I also encourage my team to confront the difficult issues, decisions and conversations that inevitably define most change journeys.

How would you define merit?

As per the dictionary ... *the quality of being particularly good or worthy, especially so as to deserve praise or reward.*

Merit means that your actions and contributions are assessed, respected and rewarded regardless of your background or perceived status.

Do you have examples of women who have thrived under your leadership? Did this require you to do things differently?

Yes, several women CEOs in the IT industry have worked with me. I hope they would all say that I made a positive contribution to their development. They include: Tracey Fellows (REA), Pip Marlow (Microsoft), Jane Huxley (Pandora Music) and Diana Ryall (Xplore for Success).

The main area that required me to do things differently in developing women, was to provide encouragement and belief in their potential. Additionally, the work environments I led made sure people on my teams all had the opportunity to be heard.

“Steve is an authentic leader who creates a culture where people can be themselves. He accepts and celebrates differences — in working style, in views and in gender. I saw and experienced firsthand how being myself brought out the best in me as a leader. What I have most to thank Steve for though was his confidence in me, even when I did not have the confidence in myself.”

Tracey Fellows, CEO, REA Group

How did you hone your skills to support diverse employees to thrive in your organisation?

A lot of reading, great management training at IBM, and various other courses. But most importantly, failing and succeeding in volatile and fast-changing environments.

A great experience for me was being CEO of ninemsn as a start-up. When I was appointed to the role, I had no domain knowledge of advertising, media and the internet. That experience forced me to listen and learn from others far better than I had previously when I could rely on my own knowledge and experience more. I discovered that building and leading a diverse team was all about enabling rather than a controlling mindset.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

The advice I would give includes:

- Care about your people — be as connected to others inside and outside your organisation as you can be.
- Be willing to try new things and fail — fear of failure stifles change and potential. Remember there is nothing you are good at today that you didn't get good at by making mistakes.
- Be a 'learn it all' not a 'know it all' — nothing is more certain to kill your business than past success or thinking you 'know'. It is important to stay curious.

“When Steve became my manager, he gave me some tough and direct feedback, especially around my communication style. Too often men shy from giving strong feedback to women — feedback that can be critical to their career progression. While Steve was my manager, he also became a true sponsor for my career as well as a mentor. I thrived under his leadership, and delighted in his outcomes-based approach to management. Steve is energised by new ideas and is open to these coming from all directions. Without Steve's guidance, I would not have developed the capabilities to lead Apple Australia. His support, encouragement and 'push' took me to a role within Apple Australia that became the pinnacle of my career.”

Diana Ryall AM, Founder & Managing Director, Xplore for Success

MARIAM VEISZADEH

Senior Manager, Inclusion & Diversity |
Westpac Group, & Radio Commentator
ABC

What does inclusive leadership mean to you?

An inclusive leader is one who has undertaken the journey of becoming conscious of their own unconscious biases and taken steps to overcome them.

A truly inclusive leader should be able to make their followers feel both a sense of uniqueness, in which their differences are celebrated (not merely 'tolerated'), while simultaneously also ensuring that they feel a sense of belonging.

Their leadership style and the environment in which they operate in must have a culture of inclusion embedded within it. Lone inclusive leaders will only have minimum success if the environment they operate in, those they are surrounded by, and the leaders whom are superior to them, do not value or foster inclusive leadership.

As you took on more responsibility as a leader, when did diversity and inclusion become important to you?

While I am not a traditional people leader, in my various capacities — whether formally as part of my community advocacy work or informally as part of mentoring younger lawyers climbing the ranks in the legal industry — I have always sought to treat others how I would want to be treated. This meant working to understand each person's individual operating style, and adapting my teaching method and delivering my feedback in a way that resonated with them and assisted them to reach their full potential.

The characteristics that I crave from a leader are the very characteristics that I try to embed in my own leadership style.

Perhaps if I hadn't experienced low levels of discrimination and less-than-favourable treatment from some of my superiors in my own career, I may not have been as aware of the impact that our words, actions and approaches can have in helping to either foster an inclusive environment, or an environment that privileges certain types of individuals at the risk of alienating and disadvantaging others.

Have you ever worked in an organisation where you felt excluded? If so, what caused this and how did you feel?

Unfortunately, yes, and those experiences have very much helped shape the person I am today. I have used those experiences

to help shed light on the varying forms of workplace discrimination that, for example, people of colour and those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds have had to, and continue to, endure in the corporate arena.

Whether it was being mistaken for the lawyer's personal assistant instead of the lawyer; being asked by a senior lawyer if I personally knew members of the Taliban when he found out I was from Afghanistan; or being victimised because I don't drink alcohol, in my almost decade-long career as a lawyer, I've had my fair share of bizarre, racist, and Islamophobic encounters.

Early on in my legal career, I experienced workplace bullying and was overlooked for opportunities that instead were given to a more junior, Anglo-Celtic colleague of mine.

More recently, a barrister walked into our meeting room at an informal settlement conference/mediation and, looking straight at me, said, rather arrogantly, 'Am I in the right place?'

What link do you see between employee engagement and inclusion?

There have been countless studies that have proven the positive relationship between inclusion and engagement. It's also worth mentioning that companies that ignore diversity and inclusion as key components to their business strategy have lower levels of employee engagement.

We know that people are likely to feel more engaged if they feel included and empowered. Even if one is not particularly fond of the nature of their particular role at a given point in time, an inclusive workplace environment

Photo: Jason McCormack

in which they are surrounded by inclusive and inspiring leaders and colleagues, may be sufficient on its own to get them through any dull or turbulent periods.

What actions have you taken to reinforce the need for diversity in the community more broadly?

In my various capacities as a diversity and inclusion practitioner, radio commentator, and in my advocacy work more broadly, I have sought to promote and reinforce the benefits of providing a platform to a diversity of voices and views. Despite being surprised and humbled in equal measure about my recent *Fairfax Daily Life 2016 Woman of the Year* win, I shall use the platform to further reiterate this point to ensure a level playing field is afforded to all.

How would you describe your leadership style?

My basic motto is — treat others the way you wish to be treated. The characteristics that I crave from a leader are the very characteristics that I try to embed in my own leadership style.

How would you define merit?

While the traditional definition of ‘merit’ is centred on ‘ability’ and being worthy or deserving of reward, the conventional, assumed definition that society appears to have adopted is deeply problematic in my view.

“Mariam is one of those rare leaders who genuinely makes you feel like you are on the journey with her rather than just a team member assisting her. She is calm, professional and caring. She always takes the time to stop and listen no matter what her schedule is.”

Shriya Narula, Lawyer, Retail & Business Banking Legal Compliance, Legal & Secretariat, Westpac

It is assumed that employees are hired on merit and that we live in meritocracy. To take these assumptions to their natural, inevitable conclusions would mean that the following is absolutely true:

- Men, generally, have more merit than women.
- Men, closely followed by women of Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, have more merit than men and women of non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds.

We know this is utterly false and you wouldn’t even entertain the idea, but these arguments are implicit in those who mount the ‘hire on the basis of merit’ argument.

If we truly lived in a meritocracy, we’d have more gender, cultural and other forms of diversity in all key arenas — be it in parliament, across corporate Australia or beyond — but this is not the case.

It is assumed that the status quo is all on merit but the reality is, it’s not. As sociologist Dr Michael Kimmel says, ‘privilege is invisible to those who have it’. Inherent societal privilege means that some of us are given a head start in the ‘race of life’, and because of that head start (which comes about because of privilege, not because we ‘worked extra hard’), they will always be miles ahead, even if all participants are running at the same speed and with the same ability.

Research has shown that we make a decision about hiring a person within 10 seconds of meeting them — we apparently use the rest of the interview to justify that decision. We have a very strong bias towards people who physically look like ourselves. It’s called unconscious bias. With odds like that, it’s no wonder that corporate Australia is lacking in gender and cultural diversity. We must conscientiously bring ourselves into a state of consciousness in order to tackle our unconscious bias.

What advice would you give other leaders who wish to develop greater inclusivity in their workplace?

We must practice what we preach and lead by example. Fostering diversity and inclusion isn’t about ticking a box, or engaging in a tokenistic gesture — it’s not even about generating a short-lived warm and fuzzy feeling. You have to believe it.

“As an advocate, mentor, leader, lawyer, and active community member, Mariam wears many hijabs — and she has handled all these roles and the challenges they encompass with warmth, sincerity, empathy and grace. She works tirelessly and generously not only for herself, but for her family, her community and the causes she is devoted to — for justice and for the rights of all. She is an important asset for our community and wider Australian society, and will continue to be in the future.”

Sara Saleh, Human Rights & Refugee Law Advocate, Poet and Performer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to each and every one of the **18 men and women** whose leadership stories make up this book. Thank you, not just for responding to our questions with such generosity and candour, but for the example you have set for other current, aspiring and future leaders in creating more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

It took many months of coordination and collaboration between many people to produce this book, and I would like to also extend my deepest thanks to the following:

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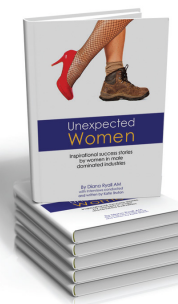
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Thank you to all.

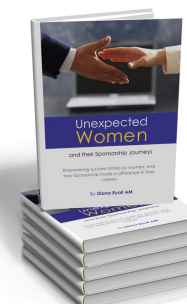
Diana Ryall AM

OTHER XPLORE FOR SUCCESS BOOKS



Unexpected Women: Inspirational success stories by women in male dominated industries

This book features the stories of 16 women working across a range of industries in which women are in small numbers. It explores the highlights and challenges of women pursuing careers in these areas, and demonstrates that, with resilience and drive, we can achieve our goals.



Unexpected Women and their Sponsorship Journeys

This book shows how we can harness the power of sponsorship to achieve greater success in the workplace. Through interviews with both sponsors and sponsees, the book offers insights and practical tips on how to engage effectively in a sponsorship relationship.



Unexpected Women: Women who have found their wings

This book features interviews with 18 women about their career progression and how they came to be where they are today. All of the women featured have taken part in one or a number of Xplore's career development programs.

Order at xplore.net.au

Inclusionary Leadership: Wisdom from 18 Australian leaders on what it takes to create and support a diverse and inclusive workplace, highlights the stories from nine men and nine women who are inspirational leaders in Australia today. Each of these leaders has a strong positive impact within both their workplace and in the broader community.

The term ‘inclusionary’ immediately brings to mind two vitally important leadership skills: *inclusion* and *vision*. In their stories, it’s clear that each of these leaders sees a culture of inclusion — that feeling in others of belonging while also being valued for their unique talents — as critical to their organisation’s success. Also clear is their ability to seek diverse input to create a purposeful vision that teams are motivated to follow.

Stories support learning, and it is our hope that the experiences and insights shared by the leaders in these stories, inspire and motivate other current and future leaders around the country to make diversity and inclusion a feature of their own leadership practice.

“In *Inclusionary Leadership* we read practical tips and deep commitment to diversity in all its forms, from a very diverse group of Australians. It is a very important contribution to an important dialogue that we should all participate in.”

Elizabeth Proust AO, Chairman of the Board at Bank of Melbourne,
Chairman of the Board of AICD, Chairman of the Board of Nestlé Australia

Presented by Xplore for Success

Founded in 2002, Xplore for Success offers equality and inclusion expertise, programs and services to individual leaders and their teams in workplaces around Australia. More than 11,000 women and a growing number of men have so far benefited from Xplore’s programs, workshops, professional coaching and consulting expertise. An increasing focus of Xplore’s work is on helping leaders to address specific challenges in their quest to create more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

xplore.net.au



Diana Ryall AM is the Founder and Managing Director of Xplore for Success. She is a highly respected mentor for professional women, and an outspoken advocate for gender equality in Australia.