

The passion for



AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin and former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick sign the contract to develop and implement gender, diversity and inclusiveness within the AFP.

The work of former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick was also intended to see the development and implementation of the AFP gender, diversity and inclusiveness reform strategy.



change

by Graham McBean

Bringing the AFP's four diversity networks under the Reform, Culture and Standards portfolio will harness the passion for change.

The AFP's Workforce Diversity networks were brought under the mantle of the new Reform, Culture and Standards (RCS) portfolio on 10 October, 2016. These include the National Women's Advisory Network (NWAN), Malunggang Indigenous Officers Network (MION), Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers' Network (GLLO) and AFP Ability Advisory (AAA).

AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin says a key area of focus for RCS is maximising diversity within the AFP and ensuring an inclusive culture where all people can thrive.

"The diversity networks play a vital role in improving inclusion and awareness across the AFP," Commissioner Colvin says.

The relocation of the Workforce Diversity team coincided with a similar alignment of the AFP's Confidant Network to RCS announced by Commissioner Colvin on 7 October, 2016.

The network is a group of over 100 trained appointees (confidants). It is available to all AFP appointees to reach out for information, options and support when dealing with inappropriate or unethical behaviour in their work environment.

The Cultural Change Report expressed support for the Confidant Network as a model. In line with that recommendation, this capability reports directly to the Coordinator Safe Place.

There is a natural logic to the migration of these support networks to RCS. National Manager Reform, Culture and Standards Ray Johnson says harnessing the passion and experience of the AFP's four diversity networks is a key strategy to draw on their knowledge. "The diversity networks are all very passionate about driving diversity in our organisation and supporting those of us with diverse backgrounds and experiences," Assistant Commissioner Johnson said.

Assistant Commissioner Johnson says the AFP has a proud history of championing diversity that spans 20 years with the establishment of the GLLO Network in 1996 to support operational capability.

Why diversity?

Assistant Commissioner Johnson stresses that the move is more than just a “goodness of fit”. He believes that the AFP needs to represent and reflect the community it serves. The first step to do that is to have an organisation that will attract diverse interest from across our community.

“There are various reasons why people don’t choose to come to the AFP from diverse backgrounds. And the people that turn up at our gate don’t necessarily reflect the community,” he says. “But ideally it is important that we reflect the community because that is who we are serving at the end of the day.

“If we have diversity, and diverse inputs and ideas are valued, you have the potential to be much more innovative, much more productive and much more adaptable. That is key for us to be ready for a continually changing future.”

Assistant Commissioner Johnson also emphasises that diversity and inclusion brings enhanced capability. He says inclusive leaders will get the best out of their people. He adds that no one particular group necessarily has all the skills required to drive the business of the AFP. It is harnessing real world skills and talents. “In and of itself” a strategy won’t be enough. “Diversity needs to start being part of the organisational DNA.”

“We just need to get on with preparing for what is a massively fast, dynamic environment. If we don’t make the best of the diversity that we have today and don’t increase diversity so that we can take advantage of that in the future, we are going to be poorer for it, and actually less prepared for the future.”

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Next steps

The AFP’s Cultural Reform – Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2016-2026 was launched on 8 March 2017. The strategy is designed not only to progress the Commissioner’s diversity targets but also seeks to address harmful workplace behaviours that are not consistent with inclusive workplaces.

The strategy is aligned with the Cultural Change Report and is a living document which will be reviewed and reported on regularly. Delivering on the strategy is everyone’s responsibility but particularly those in leadership roles.

Assistant Commissioner Johnson says leadership is at the core of any form of change. But in terms of change related to increasing diversity and inclusiveness it is “absolutely core”. The change that the organisation wants must start first in the leadership team. He says the executive has committed to inclusive leadership and challenging the spectre of unconscious bias in a more direct way.

“This is about challenging people’s thinking – and ultimately you need to help people. It is trying to shape people’s attitudes and beliefs and that is really difficult. And you can’t just tell people to change, it’s not enough.

“Our first 12 months is probably most about continuing the conversation with the organisation. That is about trying to show senior executive commitment and personal engagement with staff.

He says the continued conversation builds the collective knowledge library of the organisation about what we think it might look like and how we need to be different. So the strategy is a big part – but it is more than just a strategy. It is an ethical, values driven culture that embraces diversity, inclusion and mutual respect that will take us into the future.



Embracing diversity: NAIDOC celebrations, AFP members take part at Mardi Gras 2017 for the 18th consecutive year, the Australasian Council of Women and Policing (ACWAP) Conference.

