



**S A G E**

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA  
GENDER EQUITY

# Strategic Plan

2023-2024



# Where we've come from

SAGE was established as a response to the persistent lack of women and gender-diverse people in the disciplines of science, engineering, technology, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) in Australian academia and research.

At this point in time, progress towards gender equity in these fields had stagnated, while systemic gendered barriers continued to prevent the hiring, participation, retention and promotion of talented researchers and professionals.

This presented a major challenge for innovation and achievement in Australia.

In 2014 the Australian Academy of Science and the Academy of Technology and Engineering founded SAGE as an initiative to address this problem. In 2015, with funding from the Australian Commonwealth Government and private donors, SAGE launched the Australian Pilot of the Athena SWAN Charter, a framework to improve gender equity, diversity and inclusion (GEDI) in the higher education and research sector.

This model was selected for its rigorous evidence-base and proven successes over a decade of implementation in the UK and subsequent countries around the world.

We have since delivered Athena Swan in the Australian context, working closely with the sector to make locally appropriate adaptations and build on the learnings of the global Athena Swan Charter network.

In 2020, following a successful Pilot phase, SAGE became a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee. We now have 43 subscriber institutions, representing a majority of the sector.



# Where we are now

This plan builds on the knowledge, experience and relationships SAGE has acquired over the last eight years through its pilot phase and first full term of operation. Over this period, the higher education and research landscape has changed, as has our capacity and our confidence to make change within it.

Over the decade we have witnessed a nation-wide interest in solving the problem of gender equity in the workplace.

Key legislative changes have been driving progress, with the landmark Respect@Work report prompting changes to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, including a 2021 amendment clarifying that discrimination or victimisation can form the basis of a criminal complaint; and a 2022 amendment introducing a new positive duty for employers to prevent sex-based harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

As the appetite and environment for gender equity grows, SAGE's approach must also expand to meet the challenge.

Athena Swan is not the only solution: we must seize the moment and tackle this problem from multiple angles and with renewed urgency.

SAGE is now in a period of transition.

We are responding by expanding our products, adding tools to the gender equity toolbox; and expanding our reach, through a change in the channels we use to advocate for and inspire progress.

We are broadening our mandate beyond STEM sectors to provide support across all HER disciplines – including the humanities and social sciences – and recognising the role of professional staff in facing and overcoming inequities.

We are also emerging as an influential voice on solutions to workplace gender inequity, providing leadership on gendered challenges in the workplace.

Our approach remains embedded in our roots and expertise in the HER sector, while also speaking more broadly to industry and other sectors and vigorously advocating for evidence-based change.



# Who we are

## Our purpose

To promote and advocate for gender diversity and equity in Australian tertiary education and research, thereby fostering excellence, building trust in the sector, and strengthening its future.

## Our vision

For the Australian higher education and research sector to be global leaders in gender equity, diversity and inclusion, providing safe and equitable workplaces where people of all backgrounds and identities can flourish.

## Our values

**Respect and inclusion:** We walk the talk.

**Integrity:** We prioritise trust and act with honesty, transparency and accountability.

**Innovation:** To drive transformational change, we seek and deliver new methods and ideas.

**Collaboration:** The best outcomes are achieved when we share our strengths and acknowledge our weaknesses.

## Our approach

As experts in intersectional gender equity, diversity and inclusion in the higher education and research sector, we guide and support employers in the sector to engage in the continuous improvement of their policies and practices through a process of self-assessment and action planning, to achieve transformative change.

We provide our subscribers with evidence-driven strategies, capacity building, professional development and collaborative practitioner networks that foster sustainable and embedded change, while providing a pathway to accreditation through the internationally recognised Athena Swan Charter.

By working towards and advocating for a more gender-diverse and equitable sector, we foster excellence, build trust in higher education and research, and strengthen the sector's future as employers, thought leaders and world-renowned researchers.

## Evidence-driven action

We cultivate transformational change in Australia's higher education and research sector using data-driven approaches and evidence-based solutions.

### Objectives

- Build institutional leaders' and change-makers' understanding of the need for GEDI progress and support them to independently advocate for change
- Provide the HER sector with access to an expert database of practical, solutions-focussed and successful interventions to improve GEDI
- With strategic partnerships, we commission research to thoroughly understand the obstacles to true workplace equity and diversity and engage with other industries that intersect with the sector's supply chains
- Create and maintain a global network to support collaboration, build on the evidence base and share knowledge
- Magnify our impact by working in enduring partnerships, including with leaders representing people from other intersecting marginalised groups, collaborative networks, international networks and alliances.



## Sustainability

**We ensure SAGE is a sustainable and well-run organisation.**

### Objectives

- Strive for professional excellence in all we do
- Build a strengths-based culture that values staff, improves capability and builds resilience
- Value long-term thinking
- Explore innovative opportunities to grow our impact.

## Leadership

We lead GEDI progress in Australia by identifying the challenges, advocating for change, providing useful tools, and building effective partnerships and networks.

### Objectives

- Increase the adoption of SAGE's tools and models in the higher research and education sector
- Set targets for the HER sector – sustained, annual improvements in gender equity measurement indicators
- Advocate for measures that will facilitate and expedite GEDI progress, including accreditation as a criterion for grant funding, regular audits, transparency and a sector-wide strategy for addressing sex-based harassment, violence and discrimination.
- Build the pressure to accelerate gender equity progress in the HER sector by increasing the visibility of SAGE's work with subscribers and partners, and raising awareness of successful interventions to improve GEDI.