

SAGE Cygnet Awards application

Inclusive culture



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Baker Institute acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation, past and present, and the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

1. Key barrier

The Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute (Baker Institute) has identified parts of its organisational culture as a key barrier affecting our ability to attract, retain and progress the careers of women and other under-represented groups. Despite a friendly and collegial working environment, we acknowledged in our Bronze award application that the Baker Institute needed to become less 'gender-blind'. Implementation of the Bronze award action plan has seen the Institute become more 'gender-aware'. However, we are now aiming to become more 'gender-inclusive' and inclusive of other under-represented groups in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) to create a workplace where everyone feels welcome, safe, supported, respected at work, and has the same opportunities for development and success.

2. Evidence of barrier

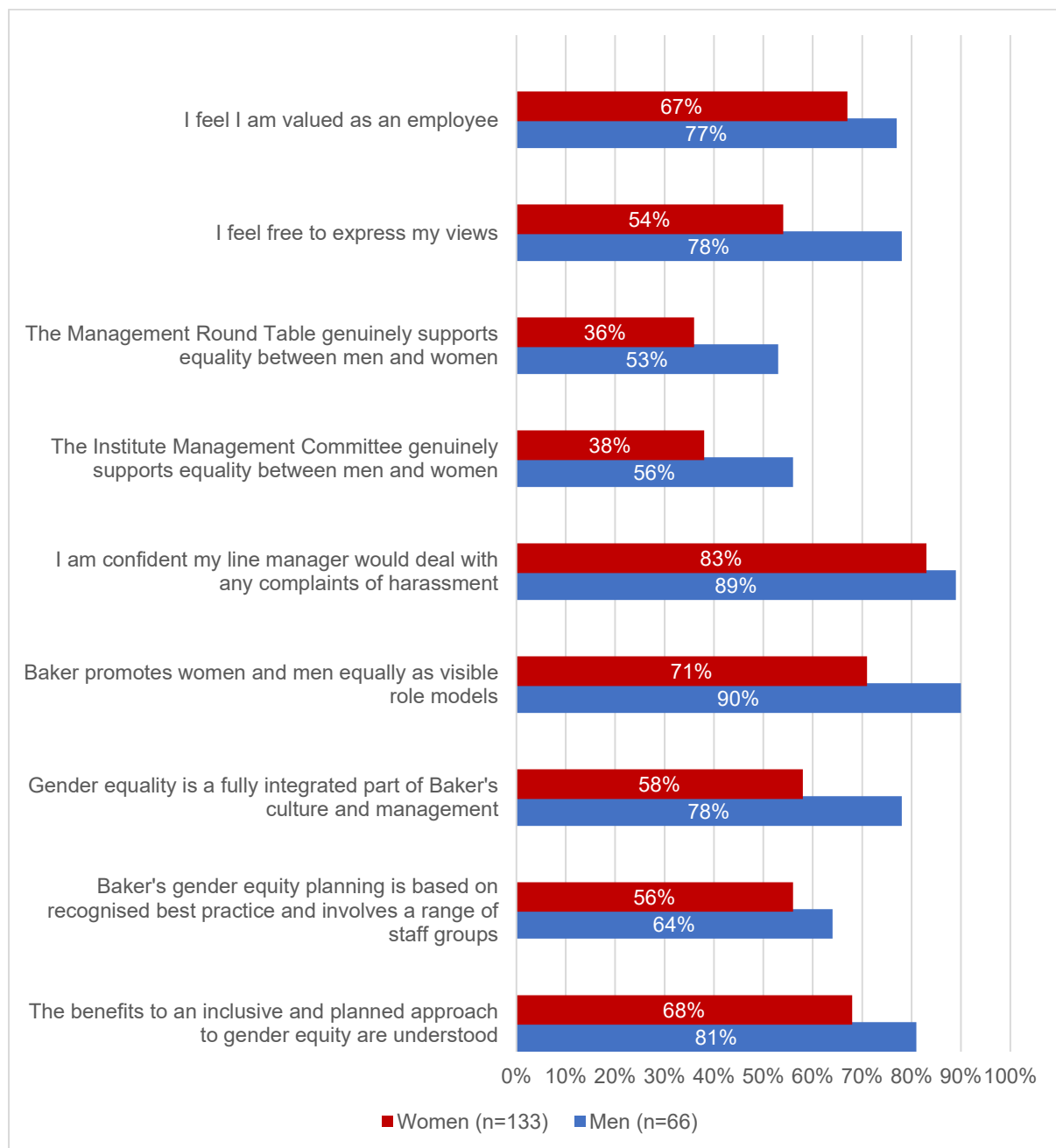
Our evidence is based on both qualitative and quantitative data. One of the key findings from the focus groups conducted (in the second half of 2017) for our Bronze SAGE Athena Swan application was that the culture at the Baker Institute required particular focus. Participants stated that:

- The culture at the Baker Institute was less progressive than other organisations.
- They would like senior leadership to play a more active role in supporting and promoting gender equity across the organisation.
- Women were more likely than men to believe that gender plays a role in determining who succeeds at the Institute.
- Women scientists at the Baker Institute continue to encounter gender discrimination which affects both their confidence and opportunities for advancement.
- Initiatives designed to improve the organisational environment for women are often met with resistance.

Results from the 2020 culture survey, instituted as part of our Bronze award and now run biennially, indicated that a lack of progress had been made on issues relating to the workplace culture at the Baker Institute. Figure 1 shows that women continue to feel less valued as employees than men (67% vs 77%) and feel less free to express their views at work (54% vs 78%). Fewer women believed that the Management Round Table (36% vs 53%) and the Institute Management Committee¹ (38% vs 56%) genuinely support equality between women and men. Figure 1 also shows that women were less likely to agree that the Baker Institute promotes women equally in terms of visible role models (71% vs 90%) or that gender equity is fully integrated into culture and management (58% vs 78%). Fewer women than men thought the Baker Institute's gender equity planning was based on best practice (56% vs 64%) and that the benefits of an inclusive and planned approach to gender equity were understood (68% vs 81%). These results suggest that women viewed the workplace as less welcoming than men and that its culture could be improved to be more inclusive.

¹ The Management Round Table (MRT) is the executive committee responsible for high-level strategic decision-making while the Institute Management Committee (IMC) is responsible for the administrative leadership of the Institute.

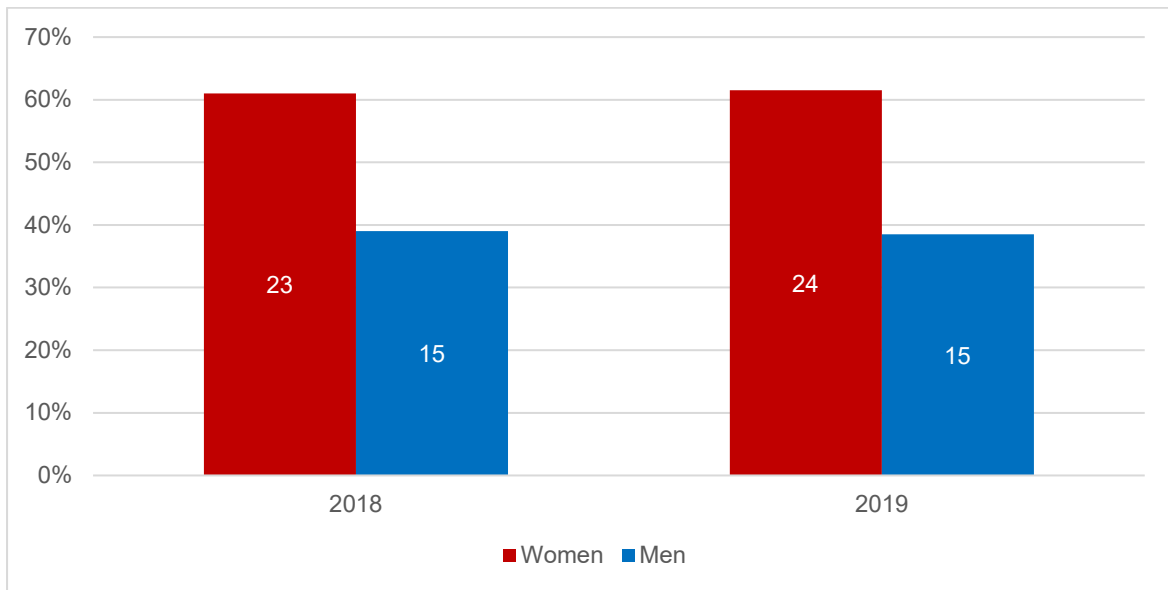
Figure 1: Baker Institute culture survey results for women and men, 2020



When examining the culture survey results, two-thirds of the 199 responses were from women (67%; n=133). This number is reflective of the proportion of women and men working at the Institute in 2020. Specifically, total staff numbers at the time of this survey equate to a response rate of 63% for women and 55% for men (211 women and 119 men). This suggests that the issue of workplace culture appears to be slightly more important to women than men at the Institute.

Other evidence that the culture at the Baker Institute could be more inclusive can be seen in the differing resignation rates of women and men researchers. Figure 2 below shows that in both 2018 and 2019, women researchers were more likely to resign from the organisation than men, despite representing approximately half of the research cohort.

Figure 2: Percent and number of scientific staff resignations, 2018 and 2019



3. Actions and outputs

The aim of building a more inclusive culture underpins many of the actions implemented by the Institute since achieving the Bronze award. While other Cygnets will address actions related to the recruitment, career progression and advancement of women, and flexible working arrangements at the Baker Institute, this Cygnet focuses on workplace culture. We understand workplace culture to mean the shared values, belief systems, attitudes, and the set of assumptions that people have in a workplace.² Culture change however, is hard and we view our actions as part of a longer-term, ongoing journey aimed at shifting deeply embedded behaviours and norms. Our actions focus on three areas:



3.1 Enhancing leadership commitment to gender equity

Research indicates that leadership plays a large role in influencing workplace cultures. We therefore believed that it was important to implement actions that enhanced the Baker Institute's leadership commitment to gender equity.

² Agarwal, P. (29 August 2018) Forbes. [How to create a positive workplace culture.](#)

Table 1: Actions taken to increase leadership commitment to gender equity

<p>Unconscious bias training for Baker Institute leaders</p>	<p>Face-to-face sessions exploring and responding to unconscious bias in the workplace were held for senior staff. Conducted in 2018³, more than 60 senior staff attended including the director, deputy directors, lab heads and managers. A total of six sessions were conducted by Chrysalis Consulting and included practical strategies to address bias in everyday work activities. Attendance was incorporated into the performance development of senior staff.</p>
<p>Fellowships for women researchers</p>	<p>In 2016, the Baker Institute awarded early to mid-career fellowships to women to support their career development. Named after the women philanthropists who helped establish the Institute, Alice Baker and Eleanor Shaw, these fellowships represented leadership commitment to supporting the careers of women researchers. The fellowships ran for two years and were awarded to three women.</p> <p>In 2019, the Baker Institute leadership team agreed to elevate these fellowships, extending them to five years in duration and we opened applications to recruit senior women or support existing senior researchers. Three of these have now provided longer-term salary and project funding to women researchers at the Baker Institute, of which two were recruited from outside the Institute. The fellowships are jointly funded by the Institute and its long-term philanthropic supporter, the Baker Foundation. These are advertised globally, including in <i>The Lancet</i>, and recipients are promoted in forums, online and in the media. Fellowship recipients are acknowledged on a permanent panel in the foyer, in our impact reports, on our website and in other marketing material.</p> <p>These awards are unique in the medical research area and represent a significant investment by Baker Institute leadership given the small size of the Institute (approximately 200 scientific staff). Five-year funding is particularly rare. While directly aimed at enhancing women’s career development and attracting women to the Institute (which will be discussed in another Cygnet), they also represent a visible top-down commitment to enhancing gender equity and diversity at the Baker Institute.</p>
<p>Women and men co-leads on scientific programs</p>	<p>Another action undertaken in 2019, signalling leadership commitment to an inclusive culture, was to implement women and men co-leads of our five scientific programs. These programs guide our big-picture work and before this initiative, only one of these programs was headed by a woman. Program co-leads are displayed on our website and promoted internally at program presentations. The title of co-lead can be used in website bios and other external material. These changes were put in place by the Institute Director.</p>

³ This was a joint initiative with the Burnet Institute who are our neighbours in the Alfred Research Alliance precinct.

3.2 Challenging stereotypes of the ‘typical’ scientist

Research indicates that the stereotypical image of a scientist is male, white, middle-aged, bearded, bespectacled and wearing a white lab coat. These stereotypes develop at a very early age and are persistent.⁴ We have therefore, undertaken several activities designed to challenge these stereotypes and to start generating new and more diverse images of a scientist.



Table 2: Actions taken to challenge stereotypes of the typical scientist

<p>Research prizes named after women scientists</p>	<p>In 2022, the Baker Institute named two early-career research prizes, which are presented annually, after prominent women scientists at the Institute. Prior to this, all awards were named after men. The new naming of the awards was widely promoted in the Baker Institute newsletters and on its digital platforms.</p>
<p>Increasing the number of women presenting at research meetings</p>	<p>Friday’s research seminar sessions are a prestigious fixture on the Baker Institute research calendar. We have worked hard to ensure parity in women and men researchers presenting in sessions. Organisers have been provided with a list of prominent external women speakers to invite. Since 2017, when women represented only 39% of speakers, the proportion of women speakers rose to 61% in 2022.</p>
<p>Raising the profile of Baker Institute women researchers</p>	<p>To support the introduction of more diverse spokespeople for the Institute, media training was offered to women researchers, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds. Focusing on practical skills, the training provided women with the opportunity to develop their confidence and skills in speaking to the media about their work and the work of the Institute.</p> <p>In 2020, we also undertook a review of the number of times the bios of our scientists had been viewed on the Baker Institute website. A total of 43,000 views were recorded but the top 10 views were all men scientists. Following this, we reviewed and developed the bios of all women lab heads at the Baker Institute and the top 10 now includes a woman.</p> <p>We developed a communication strategy which aimed to increase the representation of women, including those from diverse cultural backgrounds, in our marketing material and digital content. We also pitched stories to the media of women juggling careers and families to raise the profile of our women researchers and to normalise their lives as scientists.</p>

⁴ Lachance, K. (2020). Why do I picture Albert Einstein? Harvard University: Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Blog: <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2020/why-do-i-picture-albert-einstein/>

3.3 Creating greater allyship for gender equity

Changing a workplace culture requires both leadership commitment and the allyship of colleagues. We took a number of actions designed to increase commitment and engagement amongst staff to gender equity and diversity and to a workplace culture that is inclusive of everyone.



Table 3: Actions taken to increase allyship for gender equity

<p>Diversity training for all staff</p>	<p>A mandatory all-staff training module on diversity in the workplace was purchased, developed, and implemented through the Baker Institute learning management system in 2022. To date, 134 (out of 265) employees have completed the program.</p>
<p>Presentations by gender equity advocates</p>	<p>We wanted to highlight the positive impact of gender equity and diversity in the workplace. In both 2019 and 2021, we engaged external advocates to talk about their experiences of inclusive workplaces and the benefits of these. Speakers included Catherine Fox AM — a leading commentator on women and the workforce and an award-winning journalist, author, and presenter; Professor Sarah Russell, who spoke about gender equity projects she had been involved in and her immunology research at the Peter McCallum Cancer Centre; and Professor Andrew Vann, previous Vice-Chancellor, Charles Sturt University whose talk was titled, <i>Gender equity: how I learned to step up and why you should too</i>. Each event, open to all staff, drew an audience of more than 100 people.</p>
<p>Panel Pledge</p>	<p>The Baker Institute committed to the Panel Pledge, an initiative to advance gender equity and foster greater diversity on panels, at conferences and forums. In an email to all staff in 2022, a man who is a senior researcher encouraged other men at the Baker Institute to sign the Panel Pledge. He recounted how he had recently stepped off an editorial board so that a woman researcher could take his place and had refused to take part in a conference until more women were included. To date, 69 people have signed the Institute’s pledge which is available on the Baker Institute website.</p>
<p>Video exploring what gender equity means to men</p>	<p>In 2021, we produced a short video featuring four men scientists at the Baker Institute talking about what gender equity means to them and why it is important in the workplace. This video was uploaded to YouTube and has now had more than 1484 views on various social media platforms. The video features men speaking about their views on gender equity and how they have changed over time.</p> <p>“Like a lot of men, early on, the idea that you might have a woman-only scholarship did seem a little bit unfair. Isn’t that just reverse discrimination? I think the way my thinking has evolved on that is recognising it’s not reverse discrimination because there is already so much discrimination the other way that things like a women-only scholarship or other initiatives to promote women in the workplace [are] countering that gross imbalance.” Dr Jath Palasubramaniam, Cardiologist and PhD Student at the Baker Institute</p>

3.4 Other under-represented groups and intersectionality

Many of our actions were designed to create a more inclusive and positive environment for women. However, we applied where possible, an intersectional framework and broader diversity lens. Our efforts towards greater diversity have particularly increased in the last couple of years. Activities with a specific focus on other aspects of identity and diversity are noted below in Table 4.

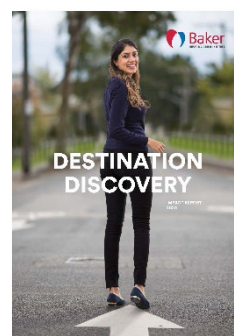


Table 4: Actions taken to improve diversity

<p>Indigenous staff and students</p>	<p>In 2021, staff were invited to use an email signature template which recognised the traditional owners of the lands on which the Baker Institute sits. The template was designed in consultation with our Aboriginal health team and the RAP Sub-Committee.</p> <p>In 2022, face-to-face Indigenous Cultural Training for managers and staff was conducted by Seona James, a Yorta Yorta woman, with 16 attendees. Another session was held in February 2024 with 25 attendees.</p> <p>In 2022, Acknowledgement of Country cue cards were placed in all meeting rooms across the Institute. Sixty-five per cent of staff reported that they have been present at a Baker Institute seminar that used an Acknowledgement of Country and 37 per cent of staff have been present at a lab or team meeting that used an Acknowledgement of Country.</p> <p>In 2022, a permanent sign was erected at the main entrance to the Baker Tower to acknowledge the traditional owners and welcome people of all backgrounds.</p> <p>In 2022, the Baker Institute developed an Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan which was endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.</p>
<p>LGBTQI+ Staff and Students</p>	<p>In 2021, we encouraged staff to use pronouns and supplied badges and rainbow lanyards. A total of 350 lanyards have now been distributed.</p> <p>In 2022, we introduced to the culture survey alternatives to woman and man. We included the category 'non-binary/genderqueer/other'.</p> <p>In 2022 and 2024, the Baker Institute had a stand at Melbourne's Midsumma Festival, a queer arts and cultural event that brings together a diverse mix of LGBTQIA+ artists, performers, communities, and audiences. We secured media for a staff member to talk about his experiences in science as a gay man.</p>
<p>Diversity</p>	<p>The 2018 unconscious bias training undertaken by senior staff and the 2022 mandatory staff diversity training covered many aspects of identity including gender, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation, gender expression, and disability to raise awareness of the ways in which bias has material effects on people's lived experiences at work.</p> <p>Since 2019, we have made a conscious effort to include more women, culturally diverse staff, and staff from the LGBTQI+ community in our marketing materials and media outreach work.</p> <p>In 2021, we held an intersectionality walk for our Gender Equity and Diversity Committee members which was provided by colleagues with research interests and expertise in intersectionality. Eighty percent of the committee attended with participants stating that before the walk, they did not appreciate how different aspects of a person's identity could expose them to</p>

discrimination and marginalisation. The walk highlighted how unintentional advantage and disadvantage plays out in our society.

Since 2021, we increased the proportion of members with diverse backgrounds and identities on the Gender Equity and Diversity Committee.

In 2023, we held diversity events, celebrating the rich, ethnic diversity of our staff. People put pins on a board to denote their country of birth and made dishes to share based on their heritage. Future events will focus on other forms of diversity.



4. Outcomes

All the actions described above were undertaken to create a more inclusive workplace culture that supports greater gender equity and diversity. Quantitative data collected since the implementation of these initiatives indicates that there have been positive outcomes.

4.1 Culture survey results

More recent culture survey data also suggests improvements in the workplace culture for women.

Figure 3: Baker Institute culture survey results for women, 2020 and 2022

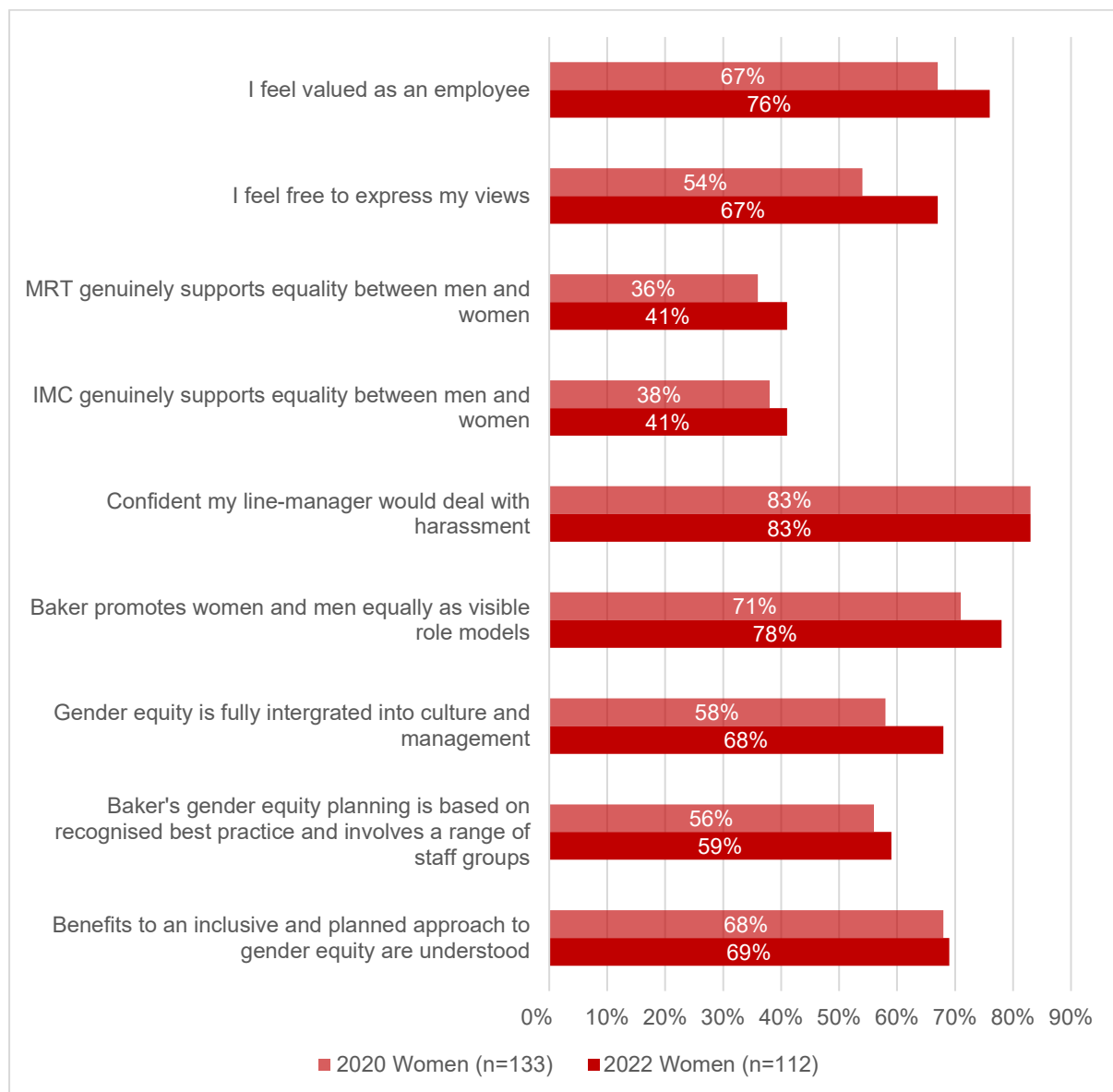


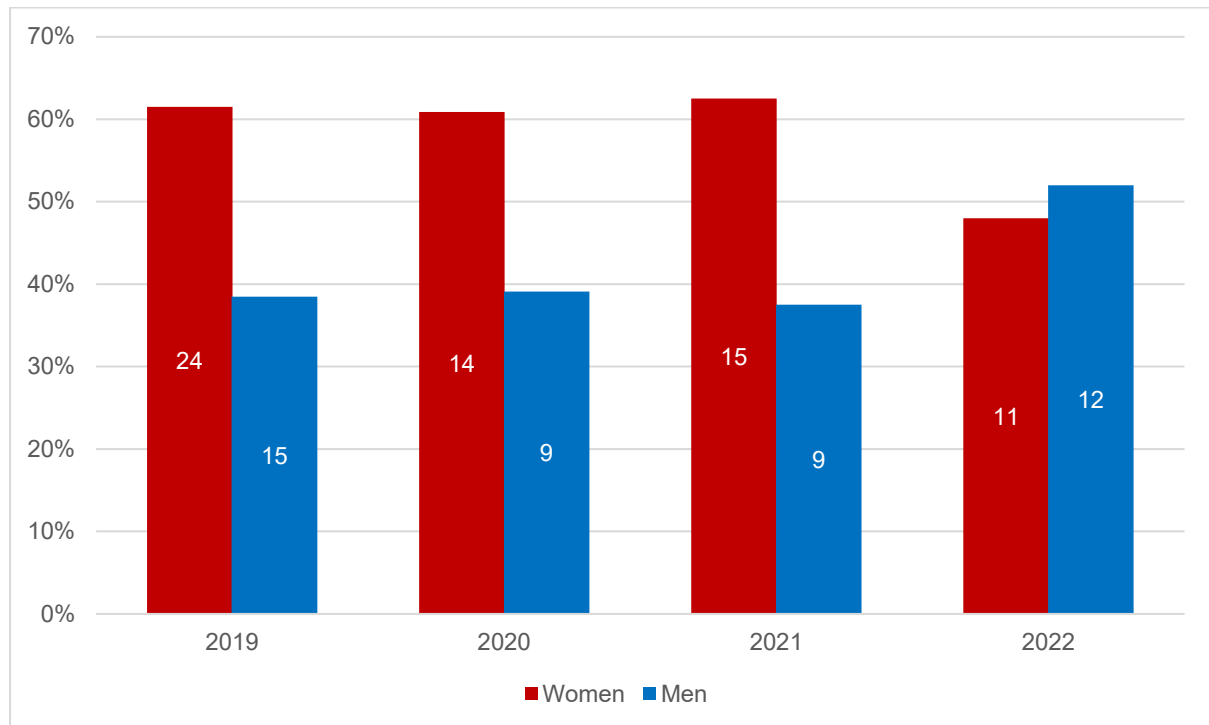
Figure 3 above compares culture survey data for women from 2020 with 2022 and shows that in 2022, women reported feeling more valued as an employee (67% to 76%) and more able to freely express their views (54% to 67%). Their views on whether the MRT and IMC genuinely support equality between women and men had also improved (36% to 41% and 38% to 41%, respectively) as had their views about the Baker Institute promoting women and men equally as visible role models (71% to 78%). More women in 2022 also felt that gender equity is fully integrated into culture and management (58% to 68%). There were also slight improvements in gender equity planning (56% to 59%) and whether the benefits of gender equity were understood (68% to 69%).

4.2 Resignation rates

We examined our resignation data for scientific staff for 2019–2022. Figure 4 below shows that for 2019, 2020 and 2021, the resignation rates of women researchers did not fall. We are disappointed with this result. We attribute some of this outcome to COVID-19 (with

women taking on the lion’s share of caring for children at home) and to the length of time it takes to change workplace culture. In 2022, we see improvement with only half of the resignations (48%) being women researchers. We would like to see this outcome become a trend and will continue to monitor resignation rates for women and men.

Figure 4: Percent and number of Baker Institute scientific staff resignations, 2019–2022



5. Impact

5.1 Interviews with senior staff

While the quantitative data above indicates a positive move towards a more gender-inclusive culture at the Baker Institute, further analysis suggests mixed results. Interviews conducted by independent researchers with the Director and Deputy Directors (3 men and 2 women) in the second half of 2023 suggest that this cohort believes that progress is being made on improving the culture at the Baker Institute to create an environment where women feel welcome, safe, supported, respected and successful. Participants indicated that there had been improvements to gender equity and that there had been a positive change in attitudes.

“[it has raised] I think the awareness in people's minds of the challenges that women researchers deal with in their career pathways...I think that having a better understanding of those challenges makes for a more supportive workplace for women.”

“[It is more common now] I mean, you know, in the organisation of it, somebody will say, hang on a minute before we finalise the invitation list to speakers, I've just noticed that 90% of them are white men. Can we rethink this?”

“I do think we will get there. I'd like it to be faster. And it would be good if we could resource it better. But we've got systems and processes, some good people, and a chain of leadership, which makes me hopeful.”

“What I would probably say is that we are recognising and it's becoming much more our daily language; gender, more so than we are diversity... So, I think culturally we're further ahead in understanding and putting initiatives in place to ensure a gender balance and we're at the beginning of that journey for diversity is what I would say.”

Baker Institute leaders felt there had been a comprehensive drive to improve the landscape in terms of gender equity and there has been a positive change in attitudes. They acknowledged however, that progress has been slow and attribute this to resourcing issues and sector-wide issues and not a lack of commitment. They also acknowledged culture change is an evolving journey and not a single destination.



5.2 Comments from the 2022 culture survey

We realise that the view of senior leadership is only one perspective and sought further information. Focus groups were conducted in 2023 but these were focused on flexible work arrangements and will be discussed in another Cygnet. We therefore examined the comments section in the 2022 culture survey to further evaluate the success of our initiatives and found variable results. Some staff stated they found the workplace culture to be inclusive while others felt that more could be done regarding the Baker Institute's culture.

“I have found the Baker to be inclusive of everyone, no matter their background or who they identify as. It is about their work and their work ethic that is important. I like to see people employed that can do the job, not employed because we need to even up numbers or try to look good in other people's eyes.”

“In my short time at the Baker, I have experienced the Institute to have a very welcoming and inclusive environment and also a very healthy culture to accommodate everyone's needs.”

“In my relatively short time here I do not think that the attitudes of those within Baker regarding indigenous knowledge/culture are anywhere near adequate yet. In addition, there are definitely

still some 'old school' staff members who have outdated (negative) views on young women and Indigenous peoples in a science/research/healthcare environment. On a more positive note, the rainbow lanyards were a really nice addition and appear to be received very well from what I saw and have also opened up additional conversations re: LGBTQI+ among colleagues.”

“I am surprised that there are so many initiatives that I was unaware of. I appreciate that the Baker is trying to acknowledge gender equity issues, however I don't feel like much has been put into action.”

“I don't think the GEDC communicates its initiatives widely enough. For example, I have not seen any communication about the panel pledge. We hear updates at the annual meeting late each year, but it would be great for the activities of the committee to be shared more widely. It seems like something that happens in the background, whereas efforts to improve gender equity and diversity should be considered in all aspects of the institute's activities, all of the time!”

Our impact data indicates movement in the right direction when it comes to more women and under-represented groups feeling they have opportunities to grow and succeed at the Baker Institute and we are pleased about that. However, this change is not evident to all, it is slower than expected for some, and there are members of staff who would like to see even more action undertaken. Whilst those driving the initiatives (senior leaders and the GEDC) can see a lot happening and generally feel optimistic about the culture change occurring, there appears to be some disconnect between this cohort and the wider staff base. Our impact data indicates a need to better engage with staff and demonstrate how an inclusive culture is valued systemically, by the leadership team and within all teams.



6. Further actions

The results of this Cygnet indicate that while improvements have been achieved in our workplace culture since the implementation of our Bronze award action plan, further work needs to be done to create a truly diverse and inclusive environment.

Ref	Rationale	Action and Outputs	Timeframe	Responsibility	Accountability	Success indicators
1	While some intersectionality data is collected via our culture survey (e.g. ethnicity) and in our new HR software program called Employment Hero, other data is not (e.g. disability). We want to identify people at disadvantage so we can increase awareness and better support them in the workplace. Additionally, we do not have the appropriate statistical tools or expertise to investigate multifactorial systemic discrimination and disadvantage.	Include additional identity categories in the culture survey and in Employment Hero to capture information (e.g. sexual orientation, disability) and obtain statistical expertise in analysing survey results using an intersectionality lens.	2024–2025	Gender Equity and Diversity Committee (GEDC) and HR	GEDC Co-Chairs and HR Manager	2024 culture survey and Employment Hero include additional identity categories and analyses of intersectionality are conducted to identify those most at a disadvantage in terms of attraction, retention, and development.
2	Our most recent culture survey data suggests that the concept of intersectionality is not well understood across the organisation with only 39% of staff saying that they know what intersectionality means.	Conduct awareness-raising exercises across the Institute which explores the concept of intersectionality.	2024–2025	GEDC	GEDC Co-Chairs/Director	2026 culture survey indicates increased awareness of intersectionality.
3	Despite many and varied activities being put in place, some staff remain unaware of the commitment to gender equity and diversity by the organisation, its leadership and the Gender Equity and Diversity Committee.	Develop a more comprehensive communications strategy based on a manager-led approach to ensure widespread awareness of actions and achievements around gender equity and diversity.	2024–2025	GEDC, managers and communications team	Head, Public Affairs	Improved awareness of the activities and outcomes being undertaken across the Institute around gender equity, diversity and inclusion as measured by the culture survey.

Ref	Rationale	Action and Outputs	Timeframe	Responsibility	Accountability	Success indicators
4	Staff are more likely to listen to their direct managers. Managers have an important role to play in updating their staff about Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) issues, rights, and responsibilities.	Set a KPI for managers to ensure that GEDI rights and responsibilities such as parental leave and workplace flexibility are part of their regular team communications.	2024–2025	HR team	HR Manager/Director	KPI has been set and adherence has been attested to with demonstrated examples in their performance appraisal.
5	We need to ensure there is a greater and sustained focus on GEDI metrics to ensure we implement data-driven initiatives and can work towards improvements.	Ensure GEDI metrics are regularly discussed (at least quarterly) by the two most senior committees, IMC and MRT.	2024–2025	GEDC and Director's Office	IMC and MRT Chairs	Agendas/minutes reflect that metrics are regularly promoted and discussed by senior staff, not just initiatives presented at staff forums.
6	Change starts from the top and modelling helps instil an inclusive culture.	Director's pledge to the board and communicated to staff about improving the metrics in our next culture survey by 2026.	2024–2025	Board secretary/ Director's Office	Director	Pledge is initiated and communicated, and metrics analysed and reported on in 2026 to the Board and staff.
7	Our culture survey results suggest that more could be done to improve cultural understandings and confidence regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Continue to conduct further face-to-face cultural awareness training for Baker Institute managers and staff to create a culturally respectful and safe workplace. Our RAP Sub-committee is looking to develop, implement and	2024–2025 2024–2025	GEDC and HR GEDC and RAP Sub-committee	HR Manager GEDC, IMC and MRT Chairs and Director	Cultural awareness sessions conducted, and a higher proportion of staff (25%) have participated. Ensure the strategy is written and implemented.

Ref	Rationale	Action and Outputs	Timeframe	Responsibility	Accountability	Success indicators
		<p>communicate a cultural learning strategy.</p> <p>We are also considering using the <i>Share our Pride</i> online training offered through Reconciliation Australia as part of onboarding or as a key competency for staff.</p>				<p>We can then test ongoing staff engagement.</p>
8	<p>Although younger staff are more likely to embrace the Institute's goals relating to gender equity and diversity, there remain pockets of resistance or 'old school' thought regarding gender equity and diversity.</p>	<p>Investigate and implement measures that achieve greater buy-in by those who feel some resistance to improving gender equity and diversity through initiatives such as more visible male champions of change.</p>	2024–2025	GEDC and managers	Director	<p>Innovative measures implemented and improvements seen in initiatives such as the Panel Pledge.</p>