

WEHI response

In the years following the SAGE Athena Swan Bronze Award, WEHI made important gains in championing LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and fostering greater safety, equality and respect for trans and gender diverse staff and students.

To better demonstrate the outcomes and impact of WEHI's LGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts on trans and gender diverse staff and students, and to share our reflections on the gaps between our expected outcomes and impact, we have prepared the following information.

Objectives

This submission relies upon updated objectives to reflect the approach taken to increase trans and gender diverse staff and student inclusion at WEHI, since receipt of the Bronze Award in 2018:

1. Increase levels of inclusion and belonging expressed by trans and gender diverse staff and students, and cis-LGBQIA+ staff and students.
2. Increase level of understanding and support for trans and gender diverse staff and students within the WEHI community.
3. Increase leadership in promoting trans and gender diverse inclusion and safety within the medical research sector and broader Australian community.

Outcomes

Objective 1: Increase levels of inclusion and belonging expressed by trans and gender diverse staff and students, and cis-LGBQIA+ staff and students.

Activities and outputs under this objective:

- Procured expertise from Transgender Victoria.
- Developed Gender Affirmation policy and guidance. Launched in 2018 and updated in 2020.
- Established We-Pride in 2018, WEHI's staff-led network for LGBTQIA+ staff, students, and allies. We-Pride is now a high-functioning network that consistently meets on a bi-monthly basis to provide peer support, coordinate awareness-raising events, mark key dates of significance and provide feedback on relevant WEHI policies and initiatives.
- Introduced mechanisms for collecting data on staff and students who identify as trans and gender diverse.

Table 1: Target outcomes compared to actual outcomes.

Target outcome	Actual outcome
Increase in percentage of staff and students who indicate that they are trans and gender diverse in WEHI's Employee Engagement survey.	Questions about gender identity and sexual orientation were included in WEHI's 2022 Employee Engagement survey. As at May 2024, collection of this data is now managed through our Human Resources Information system, Workday, and integrates with our Employee Engagement survey. This gives us a reliable baseline to then measure change.
Increase in percentage of staff and students who indicate that they are trans and gender diverse in WEHI's Human Resources Information system, Workday. *Workday system introduced in 2020.	WEHI now has a baseline indication regarding the percentage of gender diverse staff and students: 0.5% of the community. However, the number of non-binary/gender diverse staff may be higher as records of gender for existing staff was transferred from the previous human resources system which only provided binary gender categories. There is a communications activity

	underway to encourage staff to update their gender and other diversity demographic information in Workday so we have a more complete picture of gender diversity at WEHI.
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Discussion

The introduction of mechanisms to collect data systematically and reliably on the number of trans and gender diverse staff and students has been impeded by several factors. Factors included:

- Changes to the Employee Engagement survey external provider / platform, and their having different standardised approaches to delivering such surveys and collecting demographic information.
- Changes to key, WEHI personnel with oversight and responsibility for delivering the Employee Engagement survey that meant that agreements and plans for collecting demographic data shifted over time.
- Limited functionality within the Human Resources Information system, Workday, to enable WEHI to implement a best practice approach to asking staff and students about their gender identity.

Given these factors, WEHI has not seen a linear, year upon year improvement in our data collection approach to trans and gender diverse identities.

As at May 2024, however, WEHI now collects information on gender identity, including whether staff or students identify as having a trans history – in line with best practice guidance. This information is now collected via Workday (due to an upgrade in the system) and is integrated into our Employee Engagement survey to enable analysis of the survey results by the demographic information we collect. New staff and students input their personal information into Workday upon commencement, and there is an ongoing strategy and campaign to encourage existing staff and students to update their Workday profile with this information.

This means that, moving forward, WEHI can measure change in relation to the number of staff and students indicating that they are trans and gender diverse, and to look at Employee Engagement survey results for this cohort (or the broader LGBTQIA+ cohort, should the number of respondents in the trans and gender diverse category be too small). This approach to data collection is now embedded within WEHI systems.

Note: There is a lack of quantitative data on the experiences of trans and gender diverse (and/or cis-LGBQIA+) staff and students due to this cohort being very small. The low numbers precludes a meaningful, reliable analysis of Employee Engagement survey responses for this cohort.

Objective 2: Increase level of understanding and support for trans and gender diverse staff and students within the WEHI community.

Activities and outputs under this objective:

- Delivery of LGBTQIA+ awareness raising events, including a Transgender Day of Awareness seminar in 2018 and a Pronouns seminar in 2023.
- Increase in ‘Pride’ branding and visual markers for LGBTQIA+ inclusion, including changing the colours of WEHI’s luminarium to mark trans and gender diverse dates of significance, and the proliferation of WEHI branded progressive Pride Flag lanyards.
- Internal communications messaging to mark key dates of significance for the LGBTQIA+ community developed in partnership with We-Pride and given prominence on WEHI’s intranet.
- Annual participation in the Victorian Midsumma Pride March, with senior leaders in attendance.
- Delivery of LGBTQIA+ awareness and including learning for staff and students.

Table 2: Target outcomes compared to actual outcomes.

Target outcome	Actual outcome
Improved or maintained score to the organisational response to the Employee Engagement survey question: <i>I believe our institute is committed to ensuring all staff,</i>	Achieved, with an increase from 90% to 93% of staff responding positively to this question. 799 people responded to the survey in 2021, an overall response rate of 66% representing 56% women, 33% men with the

<i>students and visitors are treated with dignity and respect.</i>	<p>remaining percentage suppressed and prefer not to say. The overall survey response rate in 2016 was 79% but we have not retained the gender breakdown of the responders. NB. While WEHI has a reliable record of the 2016 response rate, we unfortunately do not have a record of the total number of survey respondents.</p> <p>*See detailed table of relevant Employee Engagement survey prompts and results below at Table 3.</p>
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Table 3: Relevant Employee Engagement survey prompts and results

Culture survey prompt	Score			Difference
	2016	2021	2022	
I believe our institute is committed to ensuring all staff, students and visitors are treated with dignity and respect.	90%	93%	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	+3%
In my work group, Lab I feel able to be myself at work (2016) I can be myself at WEHI without worrying about how I will be accepted (2021)	85%	79%	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	-6%
In my work group/Lab discrimination of any kind is not tolerated (2016) My manager/supervisor takes action to ensure the workplace is free from bullying discrimination and harassment (2021)	84%	72%	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	-8%
In my work group/Lab sex-based harassment is not tolerated (2016) WEHI gender and sex-based harassment is not tolerated (2021)	91%	87%	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	-4%
Our senior leaders support diversity and inclusion (2022) My manager/supervisor genuinely supports equality between genders (2022)	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	86%	N/A
At WEHI, people of all backgrounds are accepted for who they are (2022)	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	85%	N/A
People of all backgrounds have the same opportunities at WEHI (2022)	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	Did not use this prompt or an equivalent one*	77%	N/A

*Please see the discussion section below for an explanation on why survey prompts changed across each survey. This section directly addresses one of the SAGE Review Group’s requests for additional information.

Discussion

Comparing results between Employee Engagement surveys on staff and student sentiments regarding equality, inclusion, respect, and belonging has been impacted by the prompts used changing over time.

Evolution of the prompts used was driven by:

- Changes to the Employee Engagement survey external provider / platform, and their having different standardised models and measures that they use when delivering such surveys.
- Applying emerging best practice recommendations on how to effectively measure staff and student sentiments on equality, inclusion, respect and belonging.

The results available, presented in Table 3, compare favourably. Overall, the results indicate that staff and students feel WEHI supports diversity and inclusion and takes discrimination and harassment seriously.

However, the results indicate a decline in staff and students feeling discrimination and harassment is not tolerated WEHI. This has informed the identification of workplace behaviour as a key barrier for the institute to address and will be a future cygnet award. This has been a priority since 2021 and has led to the development of a new workplace behaviour framework following an extensive consultation process with key diversity groups including, WE-Pride. The new framework comprises of a standalone sexual misconduct policy, update acceptable workplace behaviour policy and procedure and a new Code of Conduct. This will be supported by bystander training and a new online learning module. WEHI will be submitting a future Cygnet Award report on the outcomes and impact of this work, and in doing so, will include the perspectives of LBBTQIA+ staff and students.

Given the limitations relating to quantitative data when assessing outcomes for this barrier, it is important to draw on the qualitative data collected through the consultation with the target group in concert with this data.

For subsequent Employee Engagement surveys, it is hoped that WEHI will receive survey responses from a large enough number of staff and students who identify as trans or gender diverse to be able to meaningfully review and report on their results, whilst upholding their privacy. WEHI will also look to review employee engagement survey results from the perspective of the broader staff and student cohort that identify as LGBTQIA+.

Objective 3: Increase leadership in promoting trans and gender diverse inclusion and safety within the medical research sector and broader Australian community.

Activities and outputs under this objective:

- Gender identity language lens applied to WEHI's Communications Style Guide and Gender Equity in Speakers policy.
- Published public statements in support of issues impacting trans and gender diverse people via WEHI's social media accounts.
- Acted as an auspice organisation for Queers in Science since 2019.
- Increased 'Pride' branding and messaging via WEHI's social media accounts to mark LGBTQIA+ dates of significance.

WEHI does not have quantitative data available to demonstrate the outcomes regarding the implementation of activities designed to meet this objective. However, it is fair to state that, prior to commencing efforts to promote trans and gender diverse inclusion in 2018, WEHI did not demonstrate public leadership in this area. Hence, there has indeed been a significant, deliberate increase in WEHI's leadership toward promotion trans and gender diverse inclusion and safety within the sector and broader Australian community.

Impact

In October 2022, WEHI engaged the services of a gender diverse consultant with expertise in LGBTQIA+ inclusion to undertake a series of focus groups and interviews with trans and gender diverse and cis-LGBTQIA+ staff and students, and senior leaders.

One focus group was held for LGBTQIA+ employees and students, including trans and gender diverse people. There were 7 people in attendance. One on one interviews were held with the Executive members (Director, Deputy Director, Chief People Officer, and Chief Operating Officer), the Diversity and Inclusion Manager at the

time, and a former Co-chair of WE-Pride. Interviews were also offered to any trans and gender diverse employees or students who wished to participate but none were forthcoming.

In preparation for the interviews and focus groups, the consultant created a set of Discussion Guides, which were referred to throughout the conversations. The guides enquired about the interviewee’s awareness of policies and activities, as well as their views on the impacts of WEHI’s inclusion work. Additionally, a review of all policies and documents relevant to this Cygnet award was undertaken.

Table 4 summaries the impact and examples of qualitative data collected in focus groups.

Table 4: Assessing impact of WEHI initiatives to address trans and gender diverse inclusion as a key barrier.

Initiative	Impact	Data
Improved mechanisms for collecting data on staff and students who identify as trans and gender diverse.	Trans and gender diverse staff and students feel positive about accurately being able to identify their gender identity and pronouns within WEHI’s Human Resources Information system.	<i>“Changing the system around pronouns has been something really important and something that we had our minds on when setting up our new HR hire system. It’s really good that people are able to ensure that their gender is recorded appropriately now.”</i> LGBTQIA+ focus group participant
Establishment of We-Pride, WEHI’s staff-led network for LGBTQIA+ staff and students	We-Pride has been key to helping LGBTQIA+ staff and students feel safe, comfortable, and part of a community.	<i>“Being part of We-Pride has made me feel very comfortable... it’s been very empowering...”</i> LGBTQIA+ focus group participant <i>“As a queer person, finding other queer people is amazing and fosters a sense of belonging.”</i> LGBTQIA+ focus group participant
Inclusive cultures: creating a safe and respectful work environment	LGBTQIA+ staff and students feel supported by the WEHI community, including senior leadership and believe that the commitment to inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community was authentic.	<i>“This is what WEHI is like... they’re so willing to listen and take onboard ideas from people who have an understanding of these things. They do their due diligence of course but there’s a real authenticity where the institute wants to help and wants to be inclusive.”</i> LGBTQIA+ focus group participant <i>“[The We-Pride Trans and Non-Binary Pride Seminar] was a day I was as proud as ever to be part of the WEHI community... there were 30 queer people, trans people, in the room, but the room was packed [with allies].”</i> LGBTQIA+ focus group participant <i>“From my perspective, I feel safer, I feel more welcome [as a result of WEHI’s LGBTQIA+ initiatives].”</i> LGBTQIA+ focus group participant
Engagement and awareness building on LGBTQIA+ inclusion with leaders	LGBTQIA+ staff and students see leaders take responsibility to demonstrate and modelling support for LGBTQIA+ inclusion.	<i>“[a]lways seeing [leader name] and the higher ups at the march on the Sunday has always had a positive impact on me – like the leaders of the institute take it seriously.”</i> LGBTQIA+ focus group participant <i>“Some of those senior leaders... their lives have definitely been changed by this work. I think it’s probably been some of the proudest stuff they’ve been involved in.”</i> Leader interviewee <i>“I think things have changed since then [seminar]. These seminars are like therapy...”</i>

Initiative	Impact	Data
		<p><i>you do it and you don't think it changes anything but six months later you realise what it did for you..."</i> Leader interviewee</p> <p><i>"I felt like we had come so far as an organisation. To be able to have you know, to have 30% of our staff show up in a room, and then probably, I don't know, another hundred online, you know, I felt like we'd progressed as an organisation."</i> Leader interviewee</p>
<p>WEHI public communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements of support on issues impacting the trans and gender diverse community; • inclusion of trans and gender diverse people in messaging about gender equality. 	<p>WEHI's public messaging on trans and gender diverse inclusion has had a positive impact on the LGBTQIA+ community.</p>	<p><i>"WEHI have been quite brave and bold in using its voice in that advocacy space around marriage equality and that opened the door to public statements around the Religious Discrimination Bill as well and how that discourse was very harmful for trans kids. We were able to put out a really great statement in collaboration with the Burnet Institute ...that's important for us to use our voice as one of the leading [medical research institutes]."</i> Leader interviewee</p> <p><i>"It's important for us to use our voice as one of the leading [medical research] institutes."</i> Leader interviewee</p>
<p>Auspice for Queers in Science</p>	<p>WEHI has effectively and meaningfully supported LGBTQIA+led efforts to promote LGBTQIA+ inclusion within the STEM sector.</p>	<p><i>"I really don't think Queers in Science would exist to this scale without [WEHI's funding]."</i> Queers in Science interviewee</p> <p>It was reported that QIS Trans and Gender Diverse people in STEM panel event, was made possible through WEHI's financial and in-kind contributions and WEHI also had a large role in helping QIS secure funding for their first paid employee, which they shared will <i>"help them advance to... the next level."</i> Queers in Science interviewee</p>

Discussion

The qualitative data gathered to measure the impact of WEHI's trans and gender diverse inclusive initiatives, together with the outcomes of key activities, demonstrate that WEHI has increased the inclusion and sense of belonging experienced by trans and gender diverse, and cis-LGBTQIA+ staff and students.

Staff and students can now confidently and accurately share information about their gender identity, pronouns, and whether they have a trans history through WEHI's Human Resources Information system. Trans and gender diverse staff and students report feeling a sense of belonging through connection with peers via the We-Pride network, regularly lead and/or actively participate in events and campaigns to mark LGBTQIA+ dates of significance, and witness their colleagues and leaders show support for the LGBTQIA+ community through joining events and undertaking learning. There is now access to, and uptake of Gender Affirmation leave and support. Moreover, trans and gender diverse staff and students can see that their presence is valued at WEHI through the public-facing statements and messaging in support of the LGBTQIA+ community and contribution to the STEM sector via funding and in-kind support for Queers in Science.

While raising the profile of trans and gender diverse people in the workplace is critical to fostering inclusion, it can also bring about unintended negative impacts. For example, heightened visibility may lead to increased scrutiny or discrimination from colleagues who hold biased beliefs and do not have an understanding or respect for gender diversity. Well intended efforts can also inadvertently place additional pressure on trans and gender diverse staff to

educate others or serve as spokespersons for their communities. This is why WEHI recognises that trans and gender diverse inclusion efforts must be accompanied by efforts to monitor and mitigate these risks, for example, via continuing a strong working relationship with We-Pride and viewing the implementation of our Acceptable Workplace Behaviour Framework. We-Pride continues to be the most effective mechanism for enabling WEHI to gain insight into the lived experience and impact of its LGBTQIA+ initiatives. No focus group or interview participants, and/or members of We-Pride raised concerns about unintended consequences of initiatives on trans and gender diverse, or cis-LGBTQIA+ staff and students. However, this is something that WEHI will continue to monitor via fostering the strong, supportive and responsive relationship with We-Pride.

The new Acceptable Workplace Behaviour Framework launched in mid-2023 includes a suite of policies and Code of Conduct designed to encourage and support staff experiencing unacceptable behaviour to share information, disclose and/or report this so that it can be addressed. As WEHI monitors the impact resulting from the implementation of the framework, deliberate attention will be applied to understand any LGBTQIA+ staff and student experiences of unacceptable behaviour.