



SAGE Cygnet Award Application

Name of Institution	DSTG
Date of Application	29/10/2025
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DSTG: SAGE Cygnet #4

Key Barrier: Fostering a more inclusive culture

Barrier type:

- Institution-wide Barrier ⁱ
- Sub-group specific Barrier ⁱ

Barrier description: DSTG identified the need to continue its work on achieving a more inclusive culture

DSTG has also submitted

- Cygnet #1 Flexible Work as an institutional-wide barrier
- Cygnet #2 Attraction of Mid-Career Women in STEM as a sub-group specific barrier
- Cygnet #3 Attraction of Early-Career Women in STEM as a sub-group specific barrier

Word limit and actual word count

Section	Word limit	Actual word count
Cygnet submission	2,500	4209
<i>Key barrier</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>Evidence of barrier</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>433</i>
<i>Progress</i>	<i>600</i>	<i>1062</i>
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>700</i>	<i>1616</i>
<i>Impacts</i>	<i>700</i>	<i>1001</i>
<i>Future Action Plan</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>12</i>

Acknowledgement of country

Defence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Lands throughout Australia. Defence recognises their continuing connection to traditional lands and waters and acknowledge they were the ones who paved the way as our very first Innovators, Scientists and Technologists. Defence would also like to pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.

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ACRONYMS

AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
APS	Australian Public Service
CALD	Culturally And Linguistically Diverse
CDS	Chief Defence Scientist
COD	Chief of Division
DECA	Defence Enterprise Collective Agreement
DGELP	Defence Graduate and Entry-level Programs
DISG	DTSG Inclusion Steering Group
DSTG	Defence Science Technology Group
FWA	Flexible Work Arrangements
GCSL	Graduate Certificate in Scientific Leadership
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, plus other diverse genders, sexes and sexualities
M	Men
R&I	Research and Innovation
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic and Time-bound
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
SES	Senior Executive Service bands
S&T	Science & Technology
T	Total
W	Women
WGEA	Workplace Gender Equity Agency
Z	Prefer Not to Say

1. KEY BARRIER

This Cygnet addresses the need for fostering a more inclusive culture at DSTG. Four sub-barriers contribute to this key barrier:

Sub-barrier 1: As a male dominated workplace, women experience a less inclusive environment than men.

Sub-barrier 2: Insufficient consideration of the extent to which key workplace policies and programs are inclusive of people from different genders and how they might affect people differently.

Sub-barrier 3: Limited access to and uptake of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA).

Sub-barrier 4: Inconsistent leadership support and accountability for Gender Equity.

2. EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

Thirteen data sources established a baseline and measured changes to fostering an inclusive culture (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of data sources used in the Cygnet application¹

Data Source	Date	Description
Workforce STEM demographics		Baseline data describing the gender profile of DSTG's STEM workforce by classification
	2016	n = 1,807 women = 294 (16%) men = 1,512 (84%) Z = 1
	2017	n = 1,771 women = 293 (17%) men = 1,477 (83%) Z = 1
	2018	n = 1,899 women = 330 (17%) men = 1,568 (83%) Z = 1
The Defence Flexible Work Campaign Pilot (FWCP) Survey	2019	Survey data from the DSTGs division (Land Division) on their participation (2018-2019) in the 'If Not, Why Not' campaign. This examined the use of flexible work and perceptions of organisational support for flexible work
		n = 121 responses (67% response) women = 45 (37%) men = 75 (62%) Z = 1 (1%)
Denison Culture Survey	2021	n = 1,646 (response 67%) women = 316 (19%) men = 1043 (64%) Z = 287 (17%)
	2025	n = 1,198 (response 51%) women = 272 (23%) men = 759 (63%)

¹ Analysis is limited to binary gender categories, as the number of non-binary responses was insufficient for reporting. Z denotes respondents who selected "Prefer not to say" in response to the gender question.

Data Source	Date	Description
		Z = 167 (14%)
DSTG APS Employee Census		Designed to understand employees views on, and experiences of FWA and Inclusion at DSTG
	2019	n = 1107 (response 48%) women = 273 (25%) men = 787 (71%) Z = 47 (4%)
	2021	n = 1146 (response 50%) women = 273 (24%) men = 819 (71%) Z = 54 (5%)
	2022	n = 1117 (response 52%) women = 276 (25%) men = 776 (69%) Z = 65 (6%)
	2023	n = 1423, response rate 60% women = 338 (24%) men = 973 (68%) Z = 112 (8%)
	2024	n = 1525, response rate 63% women = 386 (25%) men = 1027 (67%) Z = 112 (7%)
DSTG FWA Employee Census	2024	Designed to provide quantitative data on current FWA usage patterns by gender and qualitative feedback on manager attitudes to FWA
		n = 311 managers reported on team usage of FWA, representing n = 1,959 employees (response 77%) women = 548 (28%) men = 1,399 (71%) Z= 12 (1%)
AHRC Gender equity Review of DTSG Governance and Accountability	Nov 2024	The Australian Human Rights Commission reviewed DSTG's gender equity governance framework, data through semi-structured interviews with 10 stakeholders (n = 6 women and n = 4 men), including DISG members, SAGE workstream staff, and the Workforce Capability and Talent team
Review of Inclusion Ally Program	April 2024	Qualitative assessment (via semi-structured interviews) of the program by participants who had commenced or completed the requisite training.
		n = 14 (15% response) women = 6 (43%) men = 8 (57%)
STEM Cadet and R&I Graduate recruitment data	2018-2025	Baseline data describing the diversity profile and recruitment pipeline of DSTG STEM Cadet and R&I Graduate program participants
STEM Cadet and R&I Graduate Program participant online survey	Nov 2024	Quantitative review from past program participants on the attraction and recruitment of women into entry-level STEM disciplines, via DSTG's STEM Cadet and R&I Graduate Intake Programs
		Overall survey participants unknown*: n = 52 responses women = 20 (38.5%) men = 29 (55.7%) Z= 3 (5.8%) Indigenous n = 0

Data Source	Date	Description																																																												
		<p>CALD = 33 (Women= 11, Men= 19, Z= 3) LGBTIQ+ n = 10 (women = 5, men= 4, Z= 1) Disability n = 5 (women= 3, men=2) Neurodiverse n = 6 (women= 3, men = 3)</p> <p><i>*Response rate is unable to be calculated as the survey was an open invitation to current and past participants currently employed at DSTG</i></p>																																																												
		<p>STEM Cadet program participants: n = 18 responses (35%) women = 5 (28%) men = 12 (67%) Z = 1 (5%)</p> <p>Participant responses by year:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">2019*</th> <th colspan="4">2021</th> <th colspan="4">2022</th> <th colspan="4">2023</th> <th colspan="4">2024</th> </tr> <tr> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0</td><td>0</td><td>1</td><td>1</td> <td>0</td><td>2</td><td>0</td><td>2</td> <td>1</td><td>3</td><td>0</td><td>4</td> <td>3</td><td>4</td><td>0</td><td>7</td> <td>1</td><td>3</td><td>0</td><td>4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>*No respondents contributed to the survey from cohorts prior to 2019 nor in 2000</i></p>	2019*				2021				2022				2023				2024				W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	3	0	4	3	4	0	7	1	3	0	4
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		<p>R&I Graduate program participants: n = 34 responses (65%) women = 15 (45%) men = 17 (50%) Z = 2 (5%)</p> <p>Participant responses by year:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">2019*</th> <th colspan="4">2021</th> <th colspan="4">2022</th> <th colspan="4">2023</th> <th colspan="4">2024</th> </tr> <tr> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>1</td> <td>0</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>3</td> <td>5</td><td>8</td><td>0</td><td>13</td> <td>5</td><td>5</td><td>1</td><td>11</td> <td>4</td><td>2</td><td>0</td><td>6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>*No respondents contributed to the survey from cohorts prior to 2019 nor in 2000</i></p>	2019*				2021				2022				2023				2024				W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	3	5	8	0	13	5	5	1	11	4	2	0	6
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STEM Cadet & R&I Graduate Program Stakeholder interviews	Dec 2024	<p>Qualitative review of feedback from participants and stakeholders including DGELP, DSTG STEM Cadet and R&I Graduate program management team as well as supervisors, on attraction and recruitment of women into entry-level STEM disciplines, through DSTG's R&I Graduate and Cadet pathway programs</p> <p>Total n = 19 women = 12 (63%) men = 7 (37%)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">DGELP</th> <th colspan="4">DSTG Team</th> <th colspan="4">Participants</th> <th colspan="4">Supervisors</th> </tr> <tr> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> <th>W</th><th>M</th><th>Z</th><th>T</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>3</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>4</td> <td>1</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>2</td> <td>3</td><td>2</td><td>0</td><td>5</td> <td>5</td><td>3</td><td>0</td><td>8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	DGELP				DSTG Team				Participants				Supervisors				W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	W	M	Z	T	3	1	0	4	1	1	0	2	3	2	0	5	5	3	0	8												
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Sub-barrier 1: As a male dominated workplace, women experience a less inclusive environment than men

In the 2019 Athena Swan SAGE Bronze submission, DSTG described the underrepresentation of women in each Science and Technology (S&T) classification (Table 2).

Table 2. Representation of women for S&T roles by classification, 2016-2018

	2016			2017			2018		
	M	W	%W	M	W	%W	M	W	%W
Apprentice	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	4	0	0%
S&T1	7	0	0%	8	0	0%	6	0	0%
S&T2	26	2	7%	22	1	4%	19	1	5%
Cadet	10	5	33%	9	6	40%	25	10	29%
S&T3-4B	48	4	8%	50	4	7%	55	9	14%
S&T3-4A	509	137	21%	400	119	23%	351	101	22%
S&T5	430	93	18%	452	100	18%	456	116	20%
S&T6	416	51	11%	448	62	12%	442	57	11%
S&T7	147	16	10%	139	21	13%	140	20	13%
S&T8	50	2	4%	56	3	5%	58	2	3%
COD/SES	14	2	13%	14	2	13%	11	3	21%
TOTAL	1657	312	16%	1598	318	17%	1567	319	17%

Women's agreement scores to relevant statements in two culture survey tools, the Australian Public Service (APS) Employee Census 2019 (Table 3) and Denison Culture Survey 2021 (Table 4), show that women felt the culture within DSTG was less inclusive than their male counterparts.

Table 3. APS DSTG Employee Census Survey 2019 showing agreement percentages to statements

Survey Question	% Women	% Men
<i>My agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture</i>	71%	82%

Table 4. Denison Culture Survey 2021 employee response to Diversity & Inclusion Module showing agreement rates from zero to five to statements*

Survey Questions	Women	Men
Diversity & Inclusion overall	3.51	3.8
People with different backgrounds are treated with respect	3.81	4.1
People with different backgrounds are made to feel included & like they belong	3.7	3.99
Even subtle forms of discrimination are not tolerated	3.28	3.64
Our recruiting and hiring practices enhances our diversity	3.41	3.58
People with different backgrounds have fair & equal access to personal & professional development	3.72	4.03
People with different backgrounds have fair & equal opportunities for promotion	3.48	3.81
There is good support for learning about diversity	3.62	3.87
We can be proud of our diversity	3.43	3.73
Leaders and supervisors are committed to diversity & inclusion as top priorities	3.51	3.82
We do a good job of rewarding positive diversity efforts	3.12	3.41

*Scores are based on a five-point scale (0 = no agreement, 5 = total agreement), with higher scores indicating stronger agreement and more positive perceptions of inclusion

Sub-barrier 2: Insufficient consideration of the extent to which key workplace policies and programs are inclusive of people from different genders and how they might affect different people differently

Key workplace policies and programs had not been critically assessed with a gender lens, in particular:

- Policies that support carers and parents (parental leave, lactation & breastfeeding),
- Leave policies (cultural leave, public holiday substitution, family & domestic violence),

- Early-career STEM recruitment programs² with underrepresentation of women (STEM Cadet 29%, Research and Innovation (R&I) Graduate program 33% during 2018)
- Flagship Graduate Certificate in Scientific Leadership program, with underrepresentation of women (20% in 2018)

Sub-barrier 3: Access to and uptake of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA)

DSTG SAGE Cygnet Award application #1 detailed the following evidence based on findings from the 2019 Flexible Working Campaign Pilot:

- 40% of managers wanted more training and guidance on FWA and 29% reported not being familiar with FWA policies and procedures
- 50% of people working flexibly believed they did not have the same opportunities for promotion or personal development
- Qualitative feedback pointed to a lack of flexible work culture
- 60% of employees reported Information Communications and Technology (ICT) systems remained the biggest barrier to embedding FWA

Sub-barrier 4: Leadership support and accountability for Gender Equity

In its 2019 Bronze application, DSTG recognised that whilst gender equity was already a part of the governance and oversight of the Defence Leadership Team (DLT) there was a need to develop a specific organisational structure and leadership accountabilities to implement a broader diversity & Inclusion agenda as part of the SAGE Bronze Action Plan. This included the need to:

- Establish a DSTG Inclusion Steering Group to guide implementation of Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) actions, through quarterly meetings, reporting to the DLT
- Appoint Champions for all diversity groups in addition to Gender, including – Disability, LGBTI, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), Mental Health and, First Nations
- Assign DLT responsibility for leadership and advocacy of D&I within their work areas

3. PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)

Table 5 describes the activities implemented to foster a more inclusive culture at DSTG and which actions were identified in the Bronze Action Plan or occurred post-Bronze application. Action(s) relating to sub-barriers 2 and 3 are the content of previous DSTG Cygnets (#1 and #3) and as such only relevant details to assist understanding are share here.

Table 5. The relationship between the key barrier, sub-barriers and actions taken 2000-2025 to address them.

² Further details can be found in DSTG SAGE Cygnets #2 Attraction of Women in Mid-Career STEM Disciplines & Cygnet #3 Attraction of Women in Early-Career STEM Disciplines

Key Barrier:	Fostering an Inclusive Culture			
Sub-barriers	1. As a male dominated workplace, women experience a less inclusive environment than men	2. Insufficient consideration of the extent to which key workplace policies and programs are inclusive of people from different genders and how they might affect different people differently	3. Access to and uptake of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA)	4. Leadership support and accountability for Gender Equity
Activities	1.1 Inclusion Ally Program (part of Bronze Action Plan, implemented in 2022)	2.1 Develop inclusive Leave policies and policies that support carers and parents (Post-Bronze action implemented in 2021)	3.1 FWA campaigns – ‘If not, why not’ and ‘Leaving loudly’ (part of Bronze Action Plan, implemented in 2021)	4.1 Diversity & Inclusion Governance and Accountability (part of Bronze Action Plan, implemented in 2019)
		2.2 Gender representation targets for early career STEM recruitment programs (part of Bronze Action Plan, implemented in 2022)	3.2 Defence’s FWA policy, launched in 2023 with a bias towards working flexibly (Post-Bronze action implemented in 2023)	4.2 Inclusion guidance manuals for leaders (Post-Bronze action commenced in 2024)
		2.3 Applying gender targets to the Graduate Certificate in Scientific Leadership (GCSL) program (part of Bronze Action Plan, implemented in 2022)	3.3 Access to ICT tools to enable flexibility (Post-Bronze action implemented in 2021)	4.3 AHRC gender equity Governance and Accountability review (part of Bronze Action Plan, 2024-2025)

Sub-barrier 1: As a male dominated workplace, women experience a less inclusive environment than men

1.1 Inclusion Ally Program

DSTG Inclusion Ally Network comprises a group of DSTG employees, students, contractors and other embedded staff who advocate for diversity areas. DSTG Inclusion Allies are not necessarily experts in their highlighted areas of interest. They do, however, support DSTG’s commitment to building a diverse and inclusive workforce, promoting inclusion within their spheres, and providing a safe environment for people to raise discussions on diversity.

To become a DSTG Inclusion Ally, employees are required to:

- Attend a 90-minute inclusion awareness session, run by staff who have completed the ‘train-the-trainer’ Pride in Diversity course.
- Attend one of more of the focused Campus online training courses provided by Australia’s multicultural and multilingual broadcaster SBS.
- Agree for a photo and contact details to be included on the Inclusion Ally Network intranet page, along with their inclusion area or areas of interest.

We currently have 94 Inclusion allies, across all major DSTG sites, 41% males and 59% women, who have completed training in one or more diversity areas as described in Table 6.

Table 6. Diversity area(s) selected by inclusion allies³

Diversity Area	Number of Inclusion Allies
Age	17
CALD	37
Disability	29
Gender	39
Indigenous	36
LGBTI	65
Mental Health	5
Neurodiversity	7

Sub-barrier 2: Insufficient consideration of the extent to which key workplace policies and programs are inclusive of people from different genders and how they might affect different people differently

2.1 Inclusive Leave Policies

Being a model employer, the APS and Defence strive to set the standard for diversity and inclusion in terms of leave policies. As a result, a number of generous leave entitlements were adopted as policy during the 2024 APS enterprise bargaining process. These are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7. Policy improvements to support gender equity

Policy	Policy Improvements to Support Gender Equity
Leave Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 days of annual leave with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ additional day of Defence leave per calendar year ○ Christmas stand down period provided as an additional paid break during the Christmas/New Year period ○ opportunity to purchase additional leave ○ options for leave without pay • 18 days of personal/carers leave • 3 months long service leave for employees with over 10 years of eligible Government service, with an additional 9 calendar days of long service leave accrued each year after the initial 10 years.
Parental Leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary caregivers are entitled to 18 weeks paid leave – an additional 6 weeks parental leave granted as part of the Defence Enterprise Collective Agreement (DECA) 2024. • Secondary caregivers are entitled to 8 weeks paid leave. As part of the DECA, the paid leave entitlement for secondary caregivers increases incrementally each year until it reaches 18 weeks in 2027. • Employees do not need to meet a qualifying period to access Parental Leave. • Employees can access their Parental Leave flexibly to best suit family needs.

³ Allies can choose one or more diversity areas to support

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees receive their Paid Parental Leave entitlement in hours. This is to accommodate flexible access. • Employees can access their Parental Leave in blocks or for shorter periods including single and part-days. This can be at the same time as their partner or at a different time, giving parents more choice in managing their care-giving roles. • Employees must access their Paid Parental Leave entitlement within the Parental Leave period. Unused paid leave will lapse at the end of the Parental Leave period. • Defence safeguards the health of pregnant employees. In addition to counselling services, Defence supports employees who experience pregnancy loss providing one week of paid leave, plus 3 days or more of compassionate leave. Parents of a stillborn child are also eligible for Parental Leave as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ primary caregiver is entitled to 18 weeks' paid Parental Leave; ○ a secondary caregiver is entitled to two weeks' paid Parental Leave; ○ In addition, an employee is also entitled to bereavement leave (3 days paid leave or more) • Employees covered by the Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1973 (ML Act) must meet the absence and medical evidence requirements of that legislation. • Employees who are on paid or unpaid Parental Leave remain eligible for salary progression. • Defence will pay employer superannuation contributions for periods of paid leave that count as service. • Employees who are primary or secondary caregivers can access Parental Leave without pay and can access other accrued leave entitlements or any other eligible leave type. • Access up to ten 'Keeping in Touch' days. Offering the ability to return to work for short periods, and not lose access to the payments provided under the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme.
Flexible Work Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defence supports flexible working arrangements where they meet the needs of the employee and the work area. • Requests must be considered on a case-by-case basis and with a bias towards approving requests. • All Defence APS employees are entitled to request a flexible working arrangement, regardless of length of service or the circumstances relating to the request. • Managers cannot impose caps on the number of days groups of employees can be approved to work from home. • Discussions about changes to work arrangements are undertaken in the spirit of cooperation with a view to implementing mutually beneficial and workable arrangements consistent with the DECA 2024. • All requests, and responses to the request, must be in writing. The delegate must provide a written response to the initial request within 21 calendar days. • Where the initial proposed arrangement cannot be accommodated due to business requirements, both parties will discuss and consider flexible work alternatives that would fit the employee and business needs. Where alternative arrangements are agreed to, this must be documented in the agreed arrangement. • Employees and supervisors are mutually responsible for discussions and management of workloads and work hours.
Cultural leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miscellaneous leave of up to two days per annum may be granted to an employee, identified within the Defence personnel system as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, to participate in cultural activities during NAIDOC week. • Miscellaneous leave for special purposes – to observe a religious or culturally significant day or event outside of the prescribed NAIDOC week - of up to one day (or shift) at full pay on any occasion and up to two days (or shifts) per calendar year on a non-cumulative basis • Miscellaneous leave may be granted to enable an employee identified within the Defence personnel system as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, to

	<p>undertake ceremonial obligations. Miscellaneous leave to fulfil ceremonial obligations may be granted for up to five days per calendar year. The leave is unpaid and does not count as service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bereavement leave of two days at full pay on each occasion when a member of their immediate family or household dies. • Compassionate leave of two days at full pay on each occasion when a member of their immediate family or household contracts or develops a personal illness that poses a threat to their life.
Public Holiday Substitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An employee may request to take a day-off on an alternate day in substitution for working a public holiday. During the Christmas stand down period this can only be done if it is essential to meet operational requirements.
Lactation & Breastfeeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers and employees should discuss how they can accommodate the employee's individual lactation needs and make practical arrangements to meet those needs. Individual needs will vary between employees, including the frequency and time needed to express or perform associated activities. • Lactation breaks are breaks during an employee's working hours used for expressing breastmilk, breastfeeding, or performing other associated activities. • Employees are to be provided with reasonable paid time during work hours for lactation breaks. When considering reasonable time, this should include but is not limited to allow time for the following: to walk to the expressing room, set up equipment, express milk, transfer, and label then store milk, clean and pack up equipment and walk back to the employee's workspace. There is no requirement for leave to be used.
Family & Domestic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees may access paid Miscellaneous leave if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The employee is experiencing family and domestic violence. ○ The employee needs to do something to deal with the impact of the family and domestic violence. ○ It is impractical for the employee to do that thing outside the employee's work hours. • Reasons for accessing this this leave may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attending medical or counselling appointments. ○ Arranging for the safety of the employee or a close relative including moving into emergency accommodation or seeking more permanent safe housing. ○ Attending court hearings or mediation. ○ Attending police appointments. ○ Accessing legal or financial advice. ○ Organising alternative care and schooling arrangements for children. ○ Reasonable recovery periods. • Employees, including casuals are entitled to a minimum of 10 days paid leave for family and domestic violence purposes. The employee's immediate supervisor may approve up to ten days of paid miscellaneous leave on any one occasion. The SES Band 1/1 Star manager in the employee's line of supervision or alternatively an Executive Level 1 in HR Services may grant paid leave for longer periods. • Supervisors are to ensure that employees affected by family or domestic violence are well supported. Flexible working arrangements and leave to manage these situations is intended to be easy for employees to access. In the first instance and in crisis situations, specific detailed evidence of the requirement for leave is not required. Leave is to be granted on request.

2.2 Gender Equity Review of key recruitment program

To address the limited talent pool of STEM professionals, DSTG regularly conducts two bulk recruitment campaigns targeted at early-career levels. Since 2021, both programs have a 50% target

for women’s participation. Actions centred on attracting a more diverse candidate pool and mitigating unconscious bias from the recruitment process.

DSTG implemented significant change, documented in Cygnet #3, over the recruitment cycles for all programs by enhancing strategic direction, strengthening relationships and improving internal stakeholder’s understanding of the collective effort required across DSTG divisions to meet the gender target.

2.3 Gender Representation Targets – Scientific Leadership Training

The Graduate Certificate of Scientific Leadership (GCSL) is DSTG’s flagship leadership course which is conducted annually by the University of Melbourne Business School. GCSL is designed to support mid-career transitions for science, technology, research and business professionals (EL1/2, S&T 5-7) as they transition from specialised roles to collaborating and leading across internal and external boundaries. The program is designed for people who have, or will soon have, significant management and leadership responsibilities. Over the 12-month part time program participants undertake 300+ hours of learning and activities run by leading academics and experts in the fields of strategic thinking, knowledge management, managing people, team development and management, clients and customers, self-awareness and self-management and business skills. Participants undertake a variety of assessments including working as a small team to solve an authentic strategic workplace challenge. The application process consists of a nomination form, including supervisor and divisional support. In 2013 a 50 % women’s participation target was adopted to help address underrepresentation of women in STEM leadership roles.

Sub-barrier 3: Increasing access to and uptake of Flexible Working Arrangements

DSTG SAGE Cygnet Award application #1 described the key activities conducted to address this barrier and they are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8. Activities undertaken to enhance uptake and access to FWA

Activities	Description
3.1 FWA Campaigns - ‘If Not, Why Not’ - ‘Leaving Loudly’	- Implemented in 2021 to raise manager awareness of the benefits of FWA. - Raise awareness of work-life balance supported by senior leader’s role modelling FWA.
3.2 Access to ICT to enable FWA	- During the COVID work from home mandates, employees were provided with tools to enable remote working. This normalised remote working and shifted perceptions about where and when could be conducted.
3.3 FWA Policy	- As part of Defence’s commitment to progressing FWA, in June 2023 Defence released its updated policy on FWA. This not only reflects legislative changes to the Fair Work Act 2019, but went further, responding to employee and union consultation, to impose no caps on work from home days and a bias towards approving requests and rights to appeal refusal. The policy also outlined culturally sensitive initiatives such as granting request for leave to observe a religious or cultural event, at full pay and an ability for staff to take a day-off on an alternate day in substitution for working a public holiday. These changes are highlighted in Table 7.

Sub-barrier 4: Leadership support and accountability for Gender Equity

Defence Science and Technology Group | Cygnet Award Application #4: Fostering a More Inclusive Culture

4.1 Diversity and Inclusion Governance and Accountability

In July 2019 the inaugural DSTG Inclusion Steering Group meeting was convened, chaired by the Gender Champion and attended by the newly appointed Champions responsible for key minority groups (CALD, LGBTI, First Nations, Mental Health and Disability) along with other key stakeholders. In 2022, a Neurodiversity Champion was appointed to reflect DSTG's workforce profile. Meetings have been held quarterly and sponsored by the Chief Defence Scientist (CDS). DSTG's Gender Champion role is responsible for gender equity reform within the organisation, including delivering the SAGE Program. D&I Champions are part of the DSTG Leadership team, reporting directly to the (CDS) holding senior positions that help to drive organisational change. Champions are encouraged to be highly visible, engaged and supportive and held accountable through the Defence Performance Appraisal Process. This is achieved via their leadership role in their respective diversity working group and leading annual celebrations, such as International Women's Day. Champions are supported in their role by the DSTG Diversity & Inclusion Team.

4.2 Inclusion Manual

In 2024, Defence commenced a phased launch of its Inclusion Toolkit, designed to provide guidance for the administration, management and support for traditionally marginalised groups in defence. Currently two chapters (see Figure 1) have been developed, with more to follow (including LGBTQIA+, Gender Equity, Neurodiversity and CALD):

- The [Inclusion Guidance – Gender Diverse People](#) is the first of many practical actions that will form the Defence Inclusion Toolkit. This 25-page document outlines administration and management considerations for Gender Diverse people in the workplace, resources, along with a guide to conversations about gender diversity in the workplace such as addressing negatively and use of personal pronouns.
- The [Inclusion Guidance – People with Disability](#) is the latest guidance that will form the Defence Inclusion Toolkit. The guidance will provide enterprise-wide advice for commanders, managers and supervisors to remove barriers and support personnel with disability, limitation, restriction or impairment. This 40-page document outlines management and administration considerations for people with disability, training and accessibility guidelines.

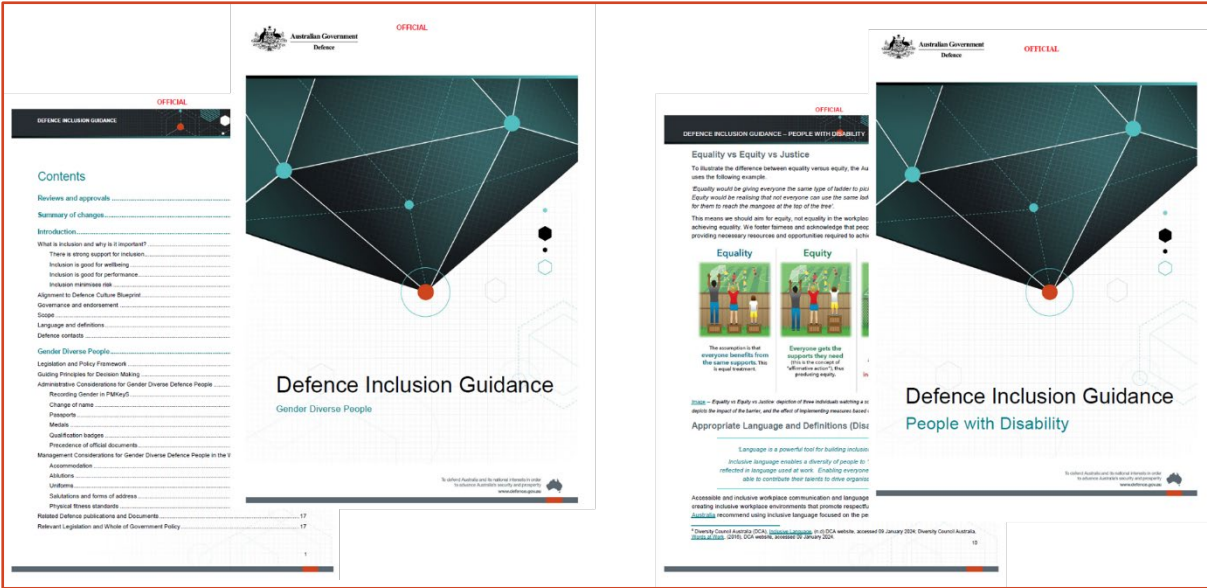


Figure 1. Images of Defence Inclusion Guidance Resources

4.3 AHRC Governance review

In 2024, DSTG partnered with the Australian Human Right Commission to conduct an independent review of the effectiveness of Gender Equity Governance and Accountability, further discussed in the following sections of this Cygnet.

Under-represented Groups and Intersectionality

Many of the actions described above were designed to not only create a more inclusive and positive environment for women but for other under-represented groups by applying an intersectional framework. Activities with a specific focus on other aspects of identity and diversity are noted in Table 9.

Table 9. Actions taken to improve diversity

<p>Inclusion Ally Network</p>	<p>As noted, allies choose which diversity areas they wish to support, and this extends with training beyond gender. Currently 26 % of allies support women plus at least one other diversity group.</p>
<p>Inclusive Leave Policies</p>	<p>Policies support a range of under-represented groups, not just women including CALD, First nations, disability and neurodiversity and carers.</p>
<p>Gender Representation Targets</p>	<p>Whilst representation targets focussed on women, they also embraced other aspects of identity as described below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSL (2025 cohort) - 48% women and 4% non-binary • STEM Cadets (2025 cohort) - 55% women comprising 30% LGBTIQ+ and 18% CALD • R&I Graduates (2025 cohort) - 44% women comprising 43% CALD.
<p>Defence Inclusion Manual</p>	<p>As noted, Inclusion Toolkit is designed to provide guidance for the administration, management and support for a broad range of traditionally marginalised groups in Defence.</p>

4. OUTCOMES

To assess progress toward addressing the key barrier of need to foster a more inclusive workplace, multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data were used to capture outcomes and impacts over time. These data sources provide a comprehensive view of how organisational initiatives, policy reforms, and leadership actions are shaping the lived experiences of employees across gender and other diversity identities.

Table 10 summarises the desired outcomes, associated indicators, and means of verification for each sub-barrier. Together, these measures offer evidence of cultural change across the organisation—ranging from improvements in perceptions of inclusivity and leadership support, to increased representation of women in recruitment and leadership development programs, and enhanced access to flexible work arrangements.

By triangulating evidence from employee surveys, policy assessments, and stakeholder interviews, DSTG can track not only structural and procedural outcomes but also shifts in attitudes and behaviours that reflect genuine progress toward gender equity and inclusion (reported on in the Impact section).

Table 10. Summary of desired outcomes, indicators and means of verification

Key Barrier: Institutional Culture	Goal: Foster a more inclusive culture		
Sub-barriers	Desired outcome and/or impact	Indicator	Means of verification
1. As a male dominated workplace, women experience a less inclusive environment than men	#1. Women and men report a more inclusive work environment, equally	Greater % of women and men, equally report inclusivity in their work group and agency	APS employee census (2020-2024) Denison culture survey 2021 Vs 2025) (Outcome/Impact)
2. Insufficient consideration of the extent to which key workplace policies and programs are inclusive of people from different genders and how they might affect different people differently	#2a. Defence Leave & Carer/Parent Support Policies meet or exceed the standards established by WGEA Employer of Choice criteria #2b. Key DSTG recruitment and leadership programs achieve 50% women representation	Key leave policies meet WGEA standards (Outcomes) Achieve 50% women representation targets for the DSTG early career recruitment programs and the Graduate Certificate in Scientific Leadership training.	Self- assessment to demonstrate key Defence policies meet WGEA standards (Outcomes) Recruitment and Representation data (Outcomes) Program participants stakeholder interviews (Impact)
3. Access to and uptake of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA)	#3. Employees report better work-life balance and FWA are not a barrier to career progression	Rates of access to FWA across gender, divisions and seniority Self-reported employee satisfaction with FWA	DSTG FWA Census (Outcome/Impact)

Key Barrier: Institutional Culture	Goal: Foster a more inclusive culture		
Sub-barriers	Desired outcome and/or impact	Indicator	Means of verification
		Self-reported perception of stigma associated with FWA Self-reported levels of access to ICT tools to enable FWA	
4. Leadership support and accountability for Gender Equity	#4. Employee's report broad leadership support for gender equity reform	Stakeholders report leaders are supportive and active in driving gender equity reform.	Stakeholder interviews (impact)

Sub-barrier 1. As a male dominated workplace, women experience a less inclusive environment than men

Sub-barrier 1 recognises that gender imbalance shapes differing experiences of inclusion within a male-dominated workplace. Addressing this imbalance through targeted inclusion initiatives is expected to narrow the perception gap between women and men, so that both report an equally inclusive environment.

Desired outcome #1; Women report a more inclusive work environment

Over the past six years, most employees have viewed DSTG as an inclusive workplace, though perceptions have not been static. Between 2019 and 2024, the overall trajectory suggests sustained commitment to inclusion, tempered by fluctuations that likely reflect both organisational change and broader social conditions.

Men have consistently reported higher levels of agreement than women regarding DSTG's inclusivity, a pattern common across many APS agencies and indicative of differing lived experiences of inclusion. While men's perceptions remained relatively high and stable, women's responses show greater sensitivity to organisational and contextual shifts.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) corresponded with a decline in the proportion of both women and men who felt that DSTG actively promoted an inclusive culture. This dip likely reflects the disruptive impacts of remote working and reduced opportunities for informal connection and visibility of inclusion practices, rather than a specific decline in DSTG's intent or effort.

From 2022 onward, women's perceptions of inclusivity improved incrementally each year, suggesting that targeted post-pandemic initiatives — such as hybrid work flexibility, leadership attention to inclusion, or renewed organisational communication — may have begun to positively influence their sense of belonging. In contrast, men's perceptions fluctuated during this period, perhaps reflecting less direct benefit from or engagement with the newer inclusion initiatives, or a recalibration of expectations as inclusion agendas evolved to centre more diverse experiences.

By 2024, the gender gap in perceptions of inclusivity had narrowed to its smallest point in six years (7 percentage points).

This convergence is an encouraging sign of cultural alignment and may indicate that recent strategies are resonating more broadly across the workforce. Continued focus on embedding inclusive leadership and addressing the differential experiences that underpin this gap will be important to sustain and deepen this positive trend.

Table 11. A comparison of men and women’s agreeance on DSTG as an inclusive workplace 2019-2024 (APS Employee Census Survey results)

Survey Question	Year	% Women	% Men	% Difference
<i>My agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture</i>	2019	71%	82%	-11%
	2020	76%	86%	-10%
	2021	69%	77%	-8%
	2022	67%	78%	-11%
	2023	70%	82%	-12%
	2024	73%	79%	-7%

Delving into inclusion measures from the APS Employee Census, which focus on employee perceptions of their supervisors, immediate work areas, and the broader organisational culture, reveals a pattern of steady improvement in perceived inclusivity for both women and men between 2021 and 2024 (Figures 2 and 3). The data show that the difference between women’s and men’s experiences of inclusion has narrowed across most indicators, suggesting that recent gender equity initiatives are contributing to a more consistent cultural experience across the workforce.

Notably, women’s perceptions of inclusion have strengthened in several key areas. The most significant growth occurred in perceptions that the agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture (rising from 69% in 2021 to 73% in 2024), and that supervisors actively ensure everyone can be included in workplace activities (from 80% in 2021 to 81% in 2024). Importantly, by 2024 women reported slightly higher agreement than men that they have the same opportunities as anyone else of their ability or experience (62% compared to 59%), indicating gradual gains in perceived equity of opportunity.

Men’s views remained largely stable and generally more positive across the four-year period, with high levels of agreement—typically between 79 and 84%—on measures related to supervisor inclusion and workplace culture. However, while men’s scores on equal opportunities dipped slightly in 2024, women’s improved, closing the historical gap.

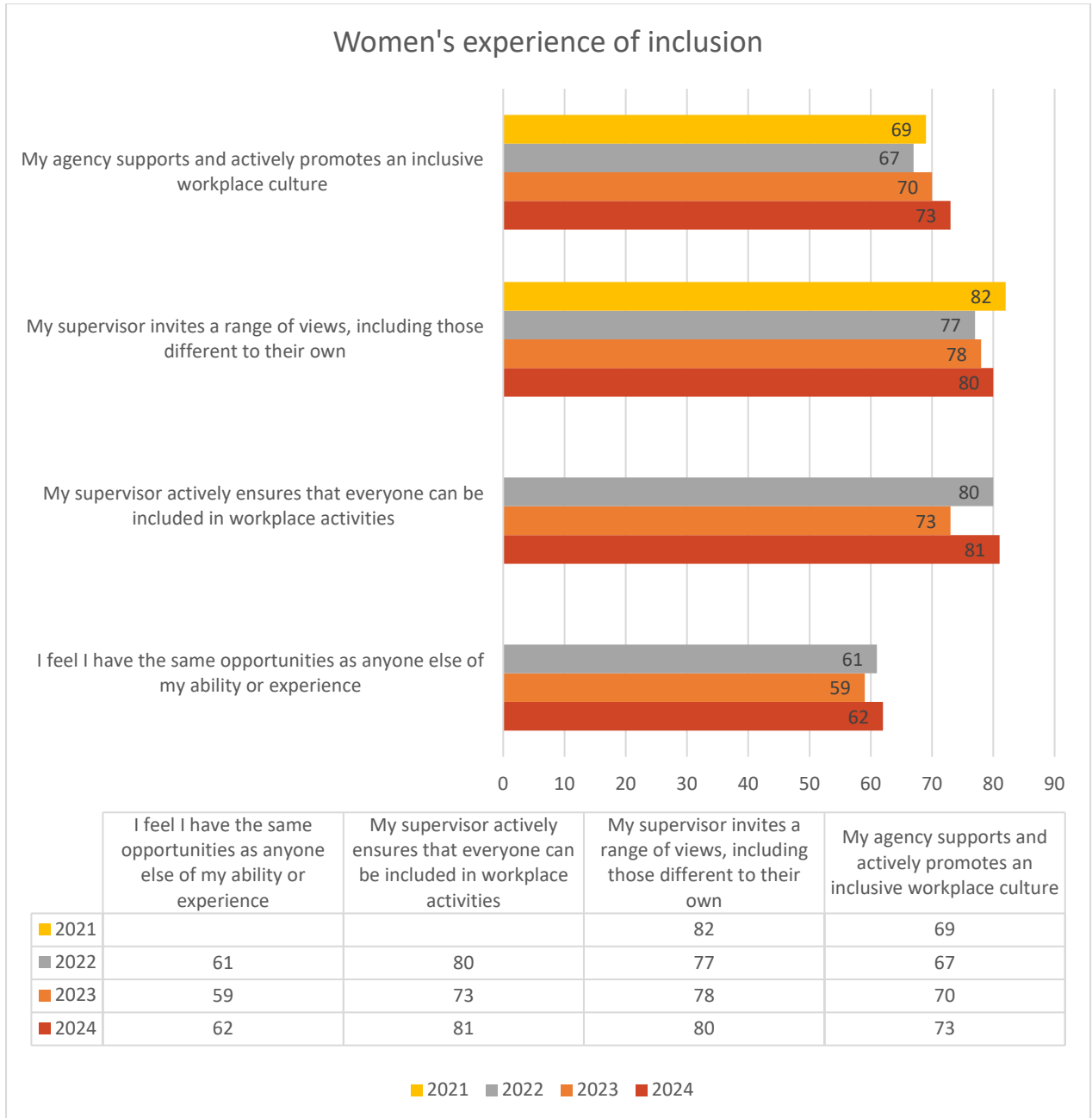


Figure 2. Women’s views on inclusion, expressed as percentages, from the DSTG APS Employee Census Survey 2021-2024

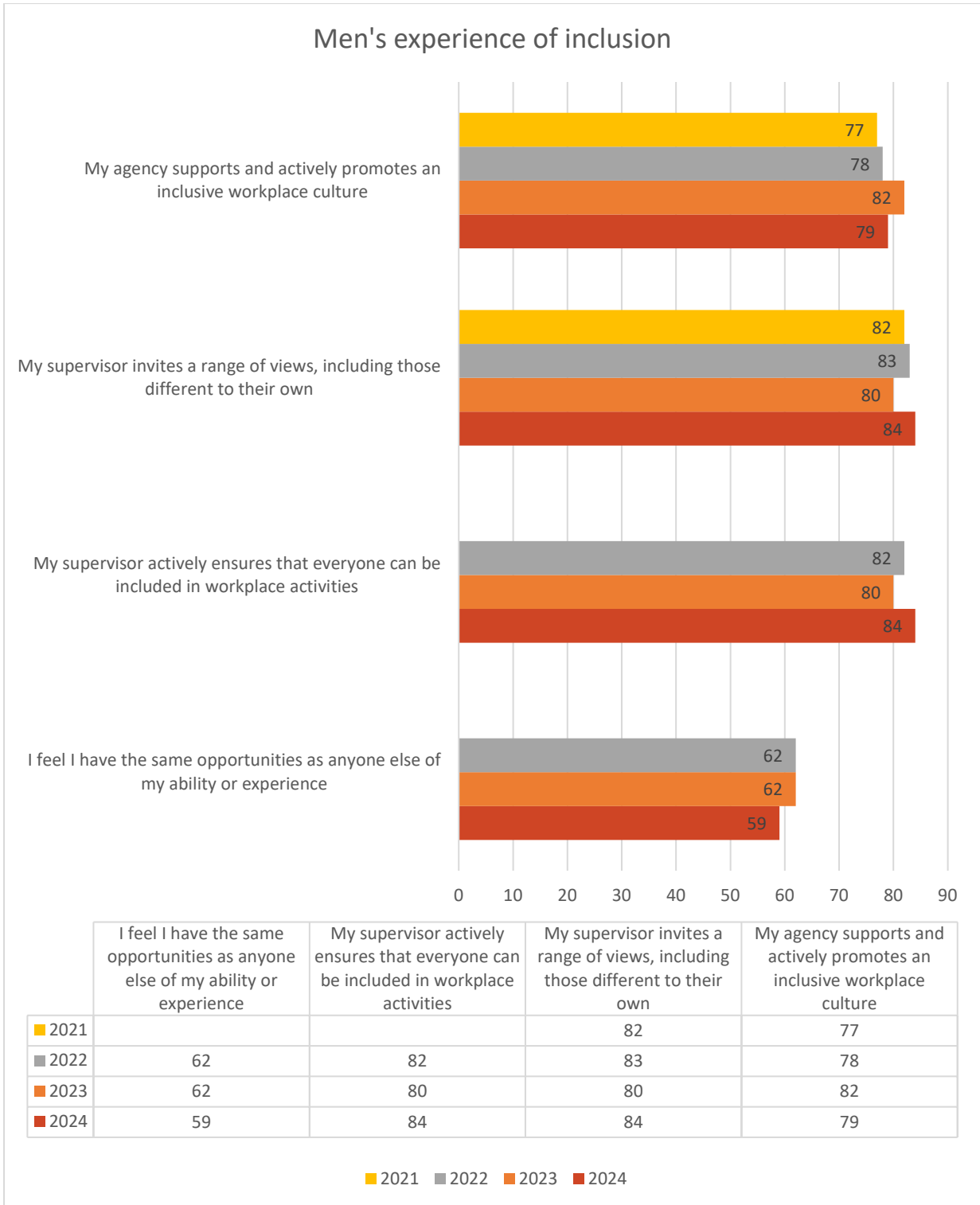


Figure 3. Men’s views on inclusion, expressed as percentages, from the DSTG APS Employee Census Survey 2021-2024

Turning to the Denison survey results (Table 12 and Figures 4 and 5), men’s overall Diversity & Inclusion scores remain higher than women’s, though the gap has narrowed (0.29 in 2021 vs 0.23 in 2025). Both genders reported improvements on nearly all measures since 2021 (with only one exception for women: “people with different backgrounds are treated with respect,” which declined slightly from 3.81 to 3.76). The strongest improvements for women were in areas tied to

recruitment, development, promotion, and recognition—signalling growing structural inclusion rather than just perceptual comfort. The smallest gender gaps are now in leadership commitment and recruitment diversity, while the largest persistent gap remains in equal opportunities for promotion and feeling respected.

Table 12. A comparison of men and women’s agreeance scores* on DSTG as an inclusive workplace 2021 vs 2025 (Denison Survey tool – Diversity and Inclusion measures)

Survey Questions	Women		Men	
	2021	2025	2021	2025
Diversity & Inclusion overall	3.51	3.59	3.8	3.82
People with different backgrounds are treated with respect	3.81	3.76	4.1	4.11
People with different backgrounds are made to feel included & like they belong	3.7	3.7	3.99	4.03
Even subtle forms of discrimination are not tolerated	3.28	3.31	3.64	3.68
Our recruiting and hiring practices enhances our diversity	3.41	3.56	3.58	3.7
People with different backgrounds have fair & equal access to personal & professional development	3.72	3.8	4.03	4.03
People with different backgrounds have fair & equal opportunities for promotion	3.48	3.6	3.81	3.75
There is good support for learning about diversity	3.62	3.64	3.87	3.85
We can be proud of our diversity	3.43	3.64	3.73	3.84
Leaders and supervisors are committed to diversity & inclusion as top priorities	3.51	3.55	3.82	3.82
We do a good job of rewarding positive diversity efforts	3.12	3.3	3.41	3.44

**Scores are based on a five-point scale (0 = no agreement, 5 = total agreement), with higher scores indicating stronger agreement and more positive perceptions of inclusion.*

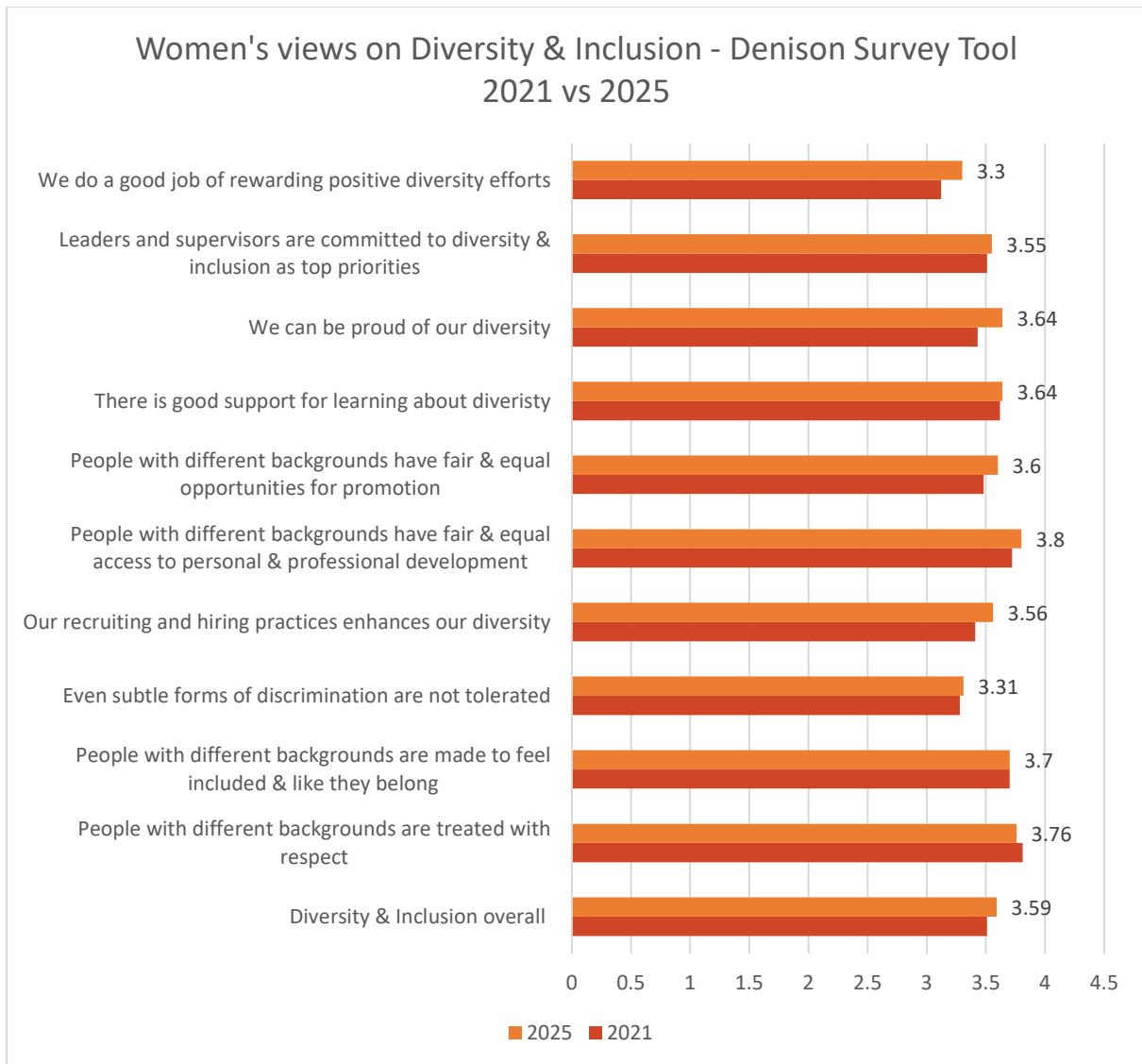


Figure 4. Women's agreement scores out of five on inclusion, from the Denison Survey 2021 vs 2025

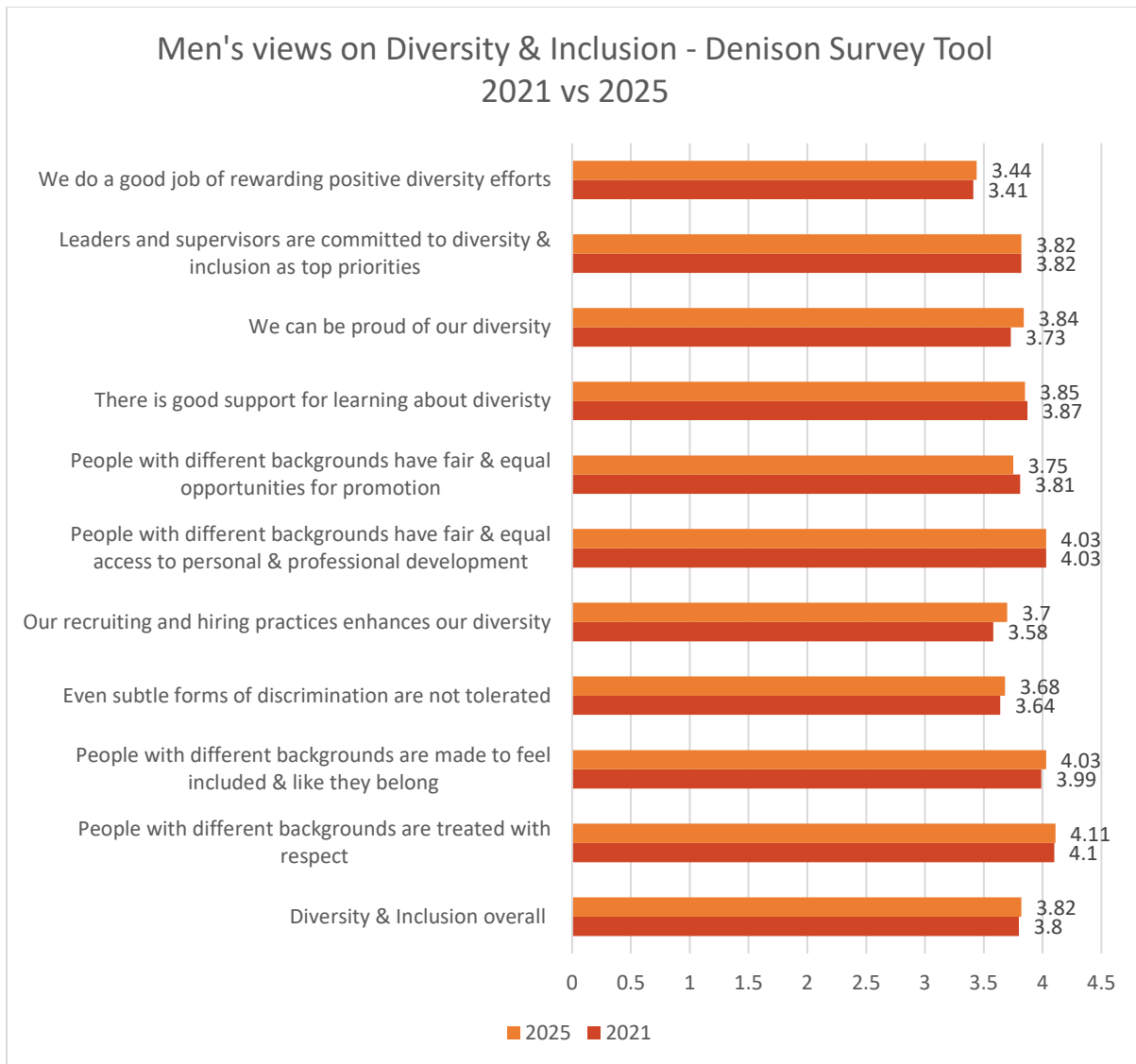


Figure 5. Men's agreement scores out of five on inclusion, from the Denison Survey 2021 vs 2025

In 2024, a review of the Inclusion Ally Program was conducted, drawing feedback from 14 stakeholders. Participants described their motivation to join the Ally Network as a desire to promote a positive workplace culture, recognise diversity and inclusion, and provide support to colleagues.

Stakeholders identified three overarching areas for improvement: enhancing communication about the program, increasing its visibility and presence across the organisation, and strengthening training and onboarding processes. Given that Allies currently represent fewer than 4% of the workforce and the program remains in its early stages, its broader cultural outcomes and impact are unlikely to be fully realised yet.

Overall, employee perceptions of inclusion remain positive, though improvements over the past five years have been modest. Women continue to rate DSTG as less inclusive than men; however, this gap has narrowed, indicating gradual progress toward a more equitable and inclusive culture.

Sub-barrier 2: Insufficient consideration of the extent to which key workplace policies and programs are inclusive of people from different genders and how they might affect different people differently

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Sub-barrier 2 identifies that organisational policies and programs have not always considered how they affect people of different genders. By systematically reviewing and redesigning policies such as leave, carer support, and leadership development through a gender-responsive lens, DSTG can ensure equitable access and outcomes. Meeting or exceeding WGEA standards and achieving balanced gender representation in recruitment and leadership pathways will demonstrate structural reform and the embedding of inclusion into core organisational systems.

Desired outcome #2a. Defence Leave & Carer/Parent Support Policies meet or exceed the standards established by WGEA Employer of Choice criteria⁴

Table 13 describes how Defence leave and carer/parent support policies are best practice as self-assessed against the Workplace Gender Equity Agency Employer of Choice citation criteria.

Table 13. Self- assessment of Defence's leave policies compared to WGEA Employer of Choice criteria

Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation must have:	Defence Provides
Universal employer-funded paid parental leave or employer-funded paid parental leave for primary carers	Yes
The amount of leave available for the prescribed care arrangement is equally available to all eligible employees (primary and secondary carers), regardless of gender	Yes
Duration of at least 8 weeks	Yes (18 weeks provided)
Amount paid is in addition to the government-funded parental leave pay scheme and at replacement pay	Yes
Superannuation is paid on replacement pay	Yes
There is no qualifying period to access 8 weeks of employer-funded paid parental leave	Yes
If more than 8 weeks employer-funded paid parental leave is offered, the remainder is available once the employee's probationary period ends or after 6 months, whichever is shorter	n/a – No probationary period required
Is available to all permanent employees and, if applicable, partners in Partnership structures	Yes
Is available under any circumstances where there is a new baby (birth, adoption, surrogacy, stillbirth)	Yes
There is no requirement to repay any portion under any circumstances	Yes
There is flexibility in how this leave can be taken.	Yes
Mainstreaming FWA	
A range of flexible working arrangements beyond working from home and varying start and finish times	Yes
Explicit manager accountabilities for approvals and review, including a process for appeals	Yes
Outlines the metrics included and collected for applications and approvals	Yes
Inclusion of management and policy requirements and expectations in manager induction training or equivalent	Yes
How flexible working is included in your recruitment process and procedures and the provision of the policy to all new employees, at offer?	Yes – in jobs ads and the policy is provided during on-boarding

⁴ Workplace Gender Equity Citation, December 2024

Desired outcome #2b. Key DSTG recruitment and leadership programs achieve 50% women representation in key recruitment programs and scientific leadership training

As detailed in Cygnet #3—attraction of early career women in STEM—DSTG’s evidence-based and iterative approach across the 2024 and 2025 recruitment cycles has had demonstrable impact, most notably:

- 28% relative increase in representation of women in STEM Cadet role offers (43% in 2024 vs 55% in 2025), Table 14
- 33% relative increase in representation of women in R&I Graduate role offers (33% in 2024 vs 44% in 2025), Table 15

DSTG achieved its 50% gender equity target for the 2025 STEM Cadetship Program and reached a commendable 44% female representation in the R&I Graduate Program. While overall numbers remain small, the data indicate meaningful progress in attracting and appointing early-career women to STEM pathways.

Table 14. STEM Cadet recruitment pipeline comparing gender outcomes 2018, 2024 and 2025

STEM Cadet Program	# Applicants		Total	% applicants		#Women Shortlisted		Total	% Women Shortlisted		#Women successful		Total	% Women successful	
	W	M		W	M	W	M		W	M	W	M		W	M
	2018	42	125	167	25%	75%	13	27	40	32.5%	67.5%	8	20	28	29%
2024	84	174	258	33%	67%	21	59	80	26%	74%	9	12	21	43%	47%
2025	126	244	370	35%	65%	30	30	60	50%	50%	6	5	11	55%	45%

Table 15. R&I Graduate recruitment pipeline comparing gender outcomes 2018, 2024 and 2025

R&I Graduate Program	# Applicants		Total	% applicants		#Women Shortlisted		Total	% Women Shortlisted		#Women successful		Total	% Women successful	
	W	M		W	M	W	M		W	M	W	M		W	M
	2018	57	115	172	33%	67%	22	69	91	24%	76%	4	8	12	33%
2024	65	174	239	27%	73%	28	92	120	23%	77%	10	20	30	33%	77%
2025	85	244	329	26%	74%	30	30	60	50%	50%	4	5	9	44%	56%

Representation of women in DSTG’s flagship leadership program, GCSL, has dramatically improved since 2018, exceed the desired 50% target in 2025, as outlined in Figure 6.

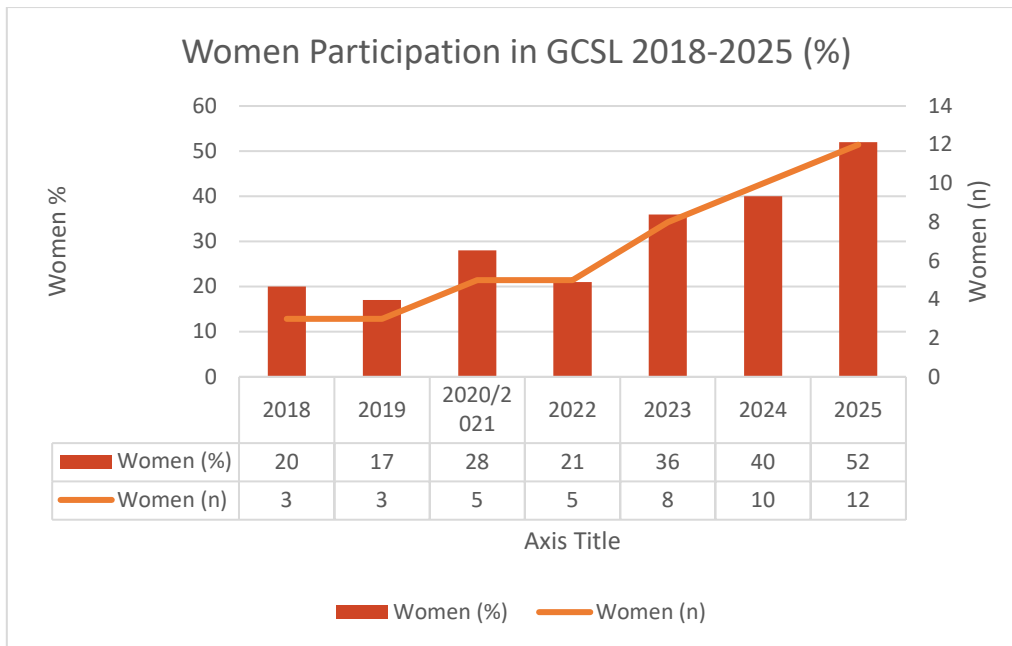


Figure 6. Women's participation in GCSL 2018-2025

Sub-barrier 3. Access to and uptake of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA)

Sub-barrier 3 highlights how inconsistent access to, or stigma around, flexible working arrangements can limit participation and career progression. Strengthening leadership endorsement, normalising flexible options, and improving access to enabling technologies are expected to enhance both satisfaction and equity. Increased uptake across genders and levels, alongside positive employee feedback, will evidence cultural change where flexible work is viewed as a valued and legitimate way of working.

Desired outcome #3. Employees report better work-life balance and FWA is no longer a barrier to career progression

Key findings from Cygnet #1- FWA demonstrated,

- Strong positive employee sentiment towards access and support for FWA (Table 16).
- Utilisation of FWA was strong with 77% of managers and employees accessing some form of FWA- mostly flexible work hours/location.
- However, uptake of part time and job share arrangements was limited in part due to the stigma thought to negatively impact career progression.
- Key drivers of change were, access to ICT resources to enable flexible working through COVID (2021), and 2023 APS FWA Policy and its 'bias towards working flexibly'.
- Women reported greater utilisation of FWA (81%) compared to men (71%) - a gap we'd like to see narrowed.
- Managers were less likely to utilise FWA (31%) compared to non-managers (69%) which impedes our aspirations to embed FWA and realise its full benefits.
- The nature of some roles (where essential workplace tools are only available on site) are challenging to perform flexibly and this is perceived as unfair. The opportunity exists to challenge some of these assumptions to investigate different ways flexibility could be achieved.

Table 16. Trends in DSTG employee perceptions of FWA, APS Employee Census 2021- 2024

Employee Experience of FWA	Gender	2021	2022	2023	2024
% satisfaction with non-monetary conditions (eg FWA, leave)	M	86%	84%	85%	85%
	W	91%	88%	83%	88%
% Confidence flexibility will be supported	M	92%	89%	86%	89%
	W	89%	85%	84%	87%
% Confidence FWA request will be given due consideration	M	92%	90%	91%	90%
	W	89%	90%	89%	92%

While DSTG’s FWA policies are recognised as best practice standards (see Table 13), feedback discussed in the Impact section reveals pockets of manager resistance to FWA and persistent stigma associated with part time work.

5. IMPACTS

Desired impact #1. Women report a more inclusive work environment

Results from the 2025 Denison Culture Survey (demographics outlined in Table 1) indicate that Diversity and Inclusion has become one of DSTG’s defining cultural strengths, consistently ranked by highly by both women and men. As shown in Table 17, women and men referenced Diversity and Inclusion as a core strength, with both groups identifying clear improvement over the last three years. These data suggest a shared perception that inclusivity is now embedded in DSTG’s everyday culture rather than confined to policy statements or individual champions.

Analysis of the qualitative feedback⁵ provides deeper insight into this shift. Women’s reflections emphasise increased acceptance of diversity in all forms—gender, age, cultural background, and ways of working—and describe an environment where differences are respected and seen as integral to learning, creativity, and innovation.

Men’s reflections⁵ highlight similar progress, noting a more open culture, improved awareness of neurodiversity and age inclusion, and stronger collaboration across diverse teams. Some also observed a cultural broadening from traditional defence paradigms toward a research environment enriched by varied experiences and perspectives.

Together, these perceptions point to measurable cultural evolution. The convergence between women’s and men’s views, combined with the frequency of unprompted references to diversity as a cultural strength, indicates that DSTG’s efforts to foster inclusion are visible, credible, and increasingly experienced equitably across genders. While continued attention to sustaining this momentum is required, the data demonstrate tangible progress toward the desired impact: a workplace where both women and men report a shared sense of inclusion and belonging.

⁵ In accordance with the approved ethics protocol, indicative participant quotes are not reported in order to protect participant privacy

Future action will focus on improving allyship and evolving policy and practice to further support women and minority groups to drive systemic change.

Table 17. Frequency with which women and men referenced Diversity & Inclusion as a cultural strength and how it has matured over the last three years (Denison Culture Survey 2025)

Open ended questions	Women (n=188 responses)		Men (n=536 responses)	
	n	%	n	%
When you think broadly, about the whole of DSTG, what are its cultural strengths?	25	13%	53	10%
What are the ways culture has changed over the last three years?	15	8%	32	6%

Desired impact #2a. Defence Leave & Carer/Parent Support Policies meet or exceed the standards established by WGEA Employer of Choice criteria

AND

Desired impact #2b. Key DSTG recruitment and leadership programs achieve 50% women representation in key recruitment programs and scientific leadership training

The desired outcomes under this sub-barrier focus on ensuring that key Defence policies and programs actively promote gender equity and inclusion in both design and implementation. Progress is reflected in Defence's commitment to aligning its Leave and Carer/Parent Support Policies with the standards established by the WGEA Employer of Choice criteria, alongside measurable gender balance targets in DSTG's early-career recruitment and scientific leadership programs.

Qualitative evidence from the 2025 Denison Cultural Survey suggests growing employee recognition that these initiatives are contributing to a more inclusive culture. Comments from both women and men highlight transparency in organisational policies, visible diversity in recruitment streams, and strong practices around diversity, equity and inclusion⁵. These perceptions indicate that policy reforms and leadership programs are not only meeting formal standards but are also increasingly experienced by staff as enablers of inclusion and professional growth.

While further quantitative data will strengthen assessment of impact, current evidence points to positive cultural reinforcement: policies and programs designed with gender equity in mind are being noticed, valued, and linked by staff to DSTG's broader progress towards an inclusive institutional culture.

Desired impact #3. Employees report better work-life balance and FWA are not a barrier to career progression

The desired outcome for sub-barrier 3 is that employees experience improved work-life balance and that flexible working arrangements are normalised as enablers—not barriers—to career progression.

⁵ In accordance with the approved ethics protocol, indicative participant quotes are not reported in order to protect participant privacy

Building on findings from Cygnet #1 (FWA), where 96 percent of managers recognised the benefits of flexibility, there is consistent evidence that flexible work is now embedded as a valued part of DSTG’s organisational culture (Table 18).

Table 18. An employee quote on the benefits of FWA

“Allows staff to be the most productive and tailored to the needs of individuals so that each individual can perform at their best. It enables Defence, as an employer, to offer high degree flexibility to meet workplace priorities as well as helping staff achieve work outcomes while meeting the needs of a busy life”

- Non-Binary Manager

Employee reflections captured through the 2025 Denison Culture Survey⁵ reinforce this shift. Women described how flexible and hybrid working practices have made balancing parenting and professional responsibilities easier and enhanced their well-being and job satisfaction. Men similarly identified flexibility as a defining strength of DSTG’s culture, closely associated with teamwork and innovation.

These perceptions suggest that flexible work has evolved from an individual benefit to an organisational norm that supports performance, inclusion, and retention. Positive sentiment across gender and role levels indicates meaningful cultural change: flexibility is now widely perceived as contributing to both individual productivity and organisational effectiveness. This reflects sustained progress toward the goal of a workplace where flexible work is valued, accessible, and career-enhancing.

Desired impact #4. Employee’s report broad leadership support for gender equity reform

An independent review by the Australian Human Rights Commission examined DSTG’s gender equity governance framework and progress through semi-structured interviews⁵ with ten stakeholders, including members of the Defence Inclusion Steering Group (DISG), SAGE workstream staff, and the Workforce Capability and Talent team. The review aimed to understand leadership roles, governance effectiveness, and the extent of support for equity initiatives across the organisation.

Findings indicated that leadership commitment to gender equity is evident but unevenly distributed. While many senior leaders were described as visible champions of change, others were perceived as less engaged or unclear about their responsibilities. The Diversity Champion role, in particular, was viewed as inconsistently enacted—highly effective in some areas where Champions were active and accessible, but less so where capacity, authority, or clarity of purpose were limited.

Stakeholders noted that the DISG currently operates mainly as an information-sharing forum rather than a body driving decision-making or accountability. However, the presence of senior leaders on the DISG provides an important foundation for influencing organisational change. The review found

⁵ In accordance with the approved ethics protocol, indicative participant quotes are not reported in order to protect participant privacy

that overall leadership support for gender equity is strong, yet deeper engagement from middle management remains essential to sustain momentum and embed reforms.

Interviewees also observed that much of DSTG's gender equity work is still driven by women and minoritised staff volunteering beyond their core roles. Achieving long-term cultural change will therefore require resourcing equity initiatives adequately, broadening participation, and ensuring visible endorsement from all management levels. Clearer communication about progress against the SAGE Action Plan and stronger accountability mechanisms were identified as key enablers of continued improvement (see Further Action A2 and A3 in Table 19).

6. FURTHER ACTION

To this end, we have developed SMART actions described in Table 19.

Table 19. Future actions

Action name or reference	Rationale/evidence	Actions & outputs (description)	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired outcomes, targets or success indicators
Inclusive Culture A1	Overall DSTG has an inclusive culture, however women report this less than men.	<p>Implement the recommendations of the 2024 review of the Inclusion Ally Program</p> <p>Raise manager and employee awareness of the policies and resources to support women and under-represented groups.</p>	Jan 2026- Dec 2026	Workforce Capability & Talent/Defence People Group	Executive Director Workforce Capability & Talent	<p>Overall increase in inclusion allies who complete requisite training ensuring representation across DSTG Sites.</p> <p>Allies report they are having a positive impact on culture.</p> <p>Managers' report a good understanding of the policies and practices that exist to support women and under-represented groups.</p> <p>Women and under-represented groups experience greater</p>

						levels of inclusion as reported in the 2026 APS Employee Census results.
Inclusive Culture A2	Employees are often not aware of the gender equity aims of programs and initiatives.	Gender Champion to share with the workforce, the gender equity aims of DSTG current programs and initiatives to drive gender equity reform. Develop a Gender Equity communications plan.	Oct 2025 - ongoing	Workforce Capability & Talent	Executive Director Workforce Capability & Talent	The workforce report clear understanding of the gender equity aims of programs and initiatives and are as a result there is less resistance.
Inclusive Culture A3	While leaders in DSTG were generally viewed as supportive of gender equity reform, ongoing implementation depends on active and visible advocacy from all leaders	Leaders advocate for gender equity by communicating consistently, participating in key events, and modelling inclusive values and behaviours	Oct 2025 - ongoing	Workforce Capability & Talent	Gender Champion	Conduct a baseline measure of the proportion of the Senior Leadership Team who include a Gender Equity or related objective in their 2025-2026 Performance Appraisal Process (PFADS).

						<p>Conduct an assessment of the training required by leaders to build their understanding and empathy of Gender Equity.</p> <p>Male middle managers are visible in their support of Gender Equity by participating in DSTG's International Women's Day event in 2026.</p>
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