

# Women in Manufacturing Strategy

Diversity, equity and inclusion

**TOOLKIT**



# Introduction

The manufacturing industry is experiencing substantial growth. The Queensland Government is committed to arming local businesses with the tools, skills and funding to ensure that local manufacturers are not only competitive but market leaders.

In Queensland, approximately 180,000 people are employed in the manufacturing industry. However, challenges such as skill shortages, a low unemployment rate and a projection of 280,000 workers needed in the four years to 2024-2025<sup>1</sup>, means the manufacturing industry must attract and retain a diverse workforce over the coming years to keep up with demand.

In what is arguably one of the tightest labour markets in our history, we're already seeing manufacturers across Queensland diversify their workforce. The Queensland Government is committed to supporting this.

To seize these opportunities, we need to support employers to do things differently. We need to support employers to:

- ✓ Reimagine the workforce.
- ✓ Rethink our recruitment practices and programs.
- ✓ Give greater value to diversity and inclusivity in the workplace.

Welcome to  
the journey  
of promoting  
diversity and  
inclusion!





## Women in manufacturing

To support diversity, equity and inclusion, the Women in Manufacturing (WIM) Strategy aims to attract women with a range of backgrounds, including First Nations women and people with different lived experiences such as disability, diverse sexuality, gender identity, and individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds.

## What is this toolkit For?

This Toolkit was developed so that you can promote diversity and inclusion throughout your daily work. It is a practical tool that explains why diversity and inclusion is so important to your business, and it also provides tips and facts that help you take diversity, equity and inclusion principles in consideration in your decision-making and behaviour.

## Why is diversity, equity and inclusion important to manufacturing?

The business case for diversity has been made for such a very long time. The ability to have people who think differently, come from different backgrounds, have diverse perspectives and have different lived experiences will lead to better outcomes for customers and the community.

Bringing diverse skills and experience to the table improves decision making and will enable your business to improve adaptability and resilience in an increasingly changing and interconnected world.

Embracing diversity creates an inclusive and positive work environment that lessens bias and discrimination, enhances businesses reputation and brand value, and attracts and retains talent leading to greater innovation and creativity in the workforce.

Whilst this Toolkit references strategies to support women in manufacturing, it is important to note that many of the strategies will produce benefits for all employees. Research shows that fostering a more gender diverse and inclusive workplace culture results in an uplift in staff reports of happiness, improves collaboration and drives innovation across the business.

## How do I use this toolkit?

Your facilitator is going to take you through the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Self Checklist on the next page.

The checklist is provided to help you assess the current gender diversity, equity and inclusion status of your business. Please keep in mind, this checklist is a sample of the baseline initiatives to create a more gender diverse workplace.

It is not exhaustive and the additional strategies that are explained in the duration of the session will further advance you in your diversity, equity and inclusion journey.

### Intersectionality

All of us identify with characteristics which overlap with our gender. For example, characteristics such as Generation Z, neuro diversity, Non English speaking background, and much more.

This overlapping of characteristics is referred to as intersectionality and influences the different needs to feel accepted and valued.

It is also noted that whilst the term “women” is used throughout the Toolkit, the reference is extended to include any individual who identifies as a woman.



## 1. Diversity, equity and inclusion self-checklist

You can use the outcomes of the survey to identify current gaps and opportunities for your business and motivate key decision makers to support gender diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.

Survey	No	In progress	Yes
Do you know how many women are in your organisation?			
Numbers and occupations of women:			
Have you done any training in gender diversity or inclusive leadership practices?			
Do you have dedicated programs and systems in place to increase the representation of women in leadership roles?			
Do you have any gender metrics in place to measure with diversity, equity and inclusion?			
Have company policies and processes been reviewed, edited or implemented to recognise the different needs and experiences of women in the workplace?			
Have you conducted any gender pay equity audit for all roles and levels in your workplace?			
Is there budget and dedicated resources in place to support diversity, equity and inclusion?			
Does company communication and marketing material (i.e., websites, newsletters, posters etc.) show gender diversity and inclusion?			
Do you publicly promote your commitment to gender diversity, equity and inclusion through sponsorships, partnerships, awards or programs?			





## 2. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a journey



Remember, each business is unique and will be at a different stage on the journey towards gender diversity, equity and inclusion. Therefore, you are encouraged to take a moment after these sessions to reflect where your business currently is and work out what the priority areas are in relation to implementing new diversity, equity and inclusion strategies.

Your management team has a key role to play in this area, but everyone in your organisation has a role to play in changing the workplace culture.

The next section looks at some of the common barriers and challenges that may be preventing the attraction and retention of more women in the workplace.

## 3. Common barriers and challenges



Whilst each woman will have a unique experience in the workplace, there are several common barriers which are particularly relevant for women entering traditionally male-dominated workplaces.

### › Gender stereotypes

- ~ Perceptions about the roles of males and females influences the education and career choices of women and girls. This is evident in the lower numbers of girls entering traditionally male subject areas (for example, maths and science).

### › Gender bias

- ~ Some male-dominated industries are perceived to have biases against people who do not “fit the norm”. Perceptions like these hold women back from applying for jobs, nominating for leadership roles, and seeking career development.

### › Lack of role models

- ~ As manufacturing has a low rate of female participation, very few female role models exist to act as an example of how women could progress in the industry.

### › Workplace culture

- ~ Some male-dominated workplaces can be perceived as tough. This can lead to a reluctance

from some women to apply for roles in these industries.

### › An absence of organisational processes and policies

- ~ The absence of policies which support a safe workplace, such as a diversity, equity and inclusion policy, or a non-discrimination policy, could be perceived as unsupportive.

### › Structural issues

- ~ Some facilities and equipment are built to suit the average sized male and some women are at risk from using ill-fitting personal protective equipment.

### › Gender & sexual harassment

- ~ Both gender and sexual harassment of women is reported to occur more frequently in male-dominated industries.
- ~ The recent 2020 Respect@Work report by the Australian Human Rights Committee found that 33% of people in the workforce had experienced sexual harassment, with women more likely than men to have experienced workplace sexual harassment.

Let us now look at some practical strategies to go about attracting and retaining women in the workforce.



Before we move on to the next section, it would be good for the group to reflect upon these challenges and barriers and think about whether you have considered these in terms of your workplace.



## 4. Attracting women to manufacturing



Attraction strategies can help you to:

- › Build positive perceptions of your business and the broader industry.
- › Challenge gender stereotypes regarding “women’s work” and “men’s work”.
- › Demonstrate the variety of job roles available in your workplace.
- › Share the benefits of building a career in the manufacturing industry.

The below strategies can help you to increase the attraction of women to your workplace.

### Engagement that builds the pipeline

- › Connect with primary and secondary schools **to raise awareness of different careers available in the manufacturing industry.**
- › Offer **career information evenings** for teachers and parents and potential applicants, including the opportunity to meet with existing females working in the manufacturing industry.
- › **Partner with women’s community groups, clubs and networks** to offer sponsorships, communicate career opportunities and hold skill-days where women gain experiential skills.
- › **Engage with TAFEs, colleges and universities** to offer vocational employment, apprenticeship pathways, internships, industry mentoring, and scholarships.
- › Encourage existing employees in the manufacturing industry to **refer women to apply for job vacancies.** Offer bonuses and incentives to employees who refer successful candidates.

### Job advertisements

- › Develop **job advertisements that are appealing to both women and men.**
- › **Use diverse images of women completing a variety of roles.** In particular, use photos of women in non-traditional roles, such as engineering, trades and operators. Additionally, you’re encouraged to flip the perspective of “men’s roles” and show men undertaking

roles typically held by women (such as clerical and administration roles).

- › Ensure **job adverts demonstrate a commitment to diversity through inclusive language.** Use terminology that does not denote a gender, for example “tradeswoman” or “tradesman” and instead opt for gender neutral language, such as “tradesperson”.
- › You can address the barrier of gender stereotypes and bias in your job advertisements by **emphasising the transferable skills required for the role.**
- › **Offer diverse points of contact for women seeking information** about the role. This might include offering the contact details of a woman and a man within the organisation who can answer questions.
- › **Communicate the job advertisement through channels targeted to women.** Look for websites, magazines or social media influencers who have a large audience of women. Consider the places where women regularly visit, such as fitness centres, health providers and retail centres.

### Organisational marketing and content

- › **Review your company website** to ensure it reflects a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and a supportive work environment for women.
- › Use website and branding material designed to **catch the attention of women and show diverse faces** (gender, ethnicity, age, etc.) of women working in non-traditional roles and include female and male voice-overs in any audio.
- › Language is used to demonstrate a supportive environment by ensuring **content is inclusive and non-gender specific** and is a genuine reflection of your workplace culture and employee experience. Consider how your content answers the question “why would I want to work here” and “what’s in it for me” from the perspectives of a woman.
- › Showcase **profiles and case studies of women currently working in non-traditional roles** in your business to demonstrate the different career pathways and provide role models to inspire other women.



## 5. Recruiting women to manufacturing

The behaviours and language displayed by the recruitment team will likely have a direct impact on how the potential candidate feels about the organisation, and industry more broadly.

Below are strategies you can implement to ensure your recruitment processes support women in the manufacturing industry.

### Expand the pool of potential candidates

- › **Look beyond the usual pools of candidates** and consider other areas to source job seekers, including migrant, refugee, mature-aged, First Nation women and women with disabilities.
- › **Explore related industries** and identify similar role types or shared skillsets to demonstrate the possibility of transitioning careers from another industry into the manufacturing industry.
- › **Re-engage women who have previously worked in manufacturing** to consider returning after extended leave or absences. Explore what would be required to enable them to return to the industry.
- › Demonstrate **career pathways from corporate roles into non-traditional roles**. Highlight the benefits of non-traditional roles.
- › **Offer training and development opportunities for women in the organisation** to expand their skills and capabilities. These may be formal training opportunities or consider holding informal skill-building sessions where existing employees in non-traditional roles run demonstrations and experiential workshops to build skills and knowledge.

### Unbiased, merit-based recruitment processes

- › Develop and communicate a **documented recruitment process** to all members of the recruitment team to ensure consistency across all stages of the process. From the experience of submitting a resume to the final offer.

- › Establish **recruitment gender metrics** to identify the number of women applying for roles and being made successful offers. Consider tracking the number of women at the various steps of the recruitment process to identify whether there are phases where women tend to exit, or whether one stage is more successful.
- › **Minimise bias in the recruitment process** to reduce potential for it to impact decision making. Ensure there are multiple people reviewing resumes, and try to remove identifying information (gender, age, ethnicity, pictures etc.) from applications.
- › Consider including **blind skill demonstration** into the recruitment process. This enables applicants to demonstrate their skills (i.e. technical skills, computer skills, hands-on skills, etc.) by undertaking challenges which mimic the skills required in the job.
- › Along with ensuring multiple people are involved in each decision-making phase of the recruitment process, it is important to ensure the **recruitment team is diverse**.
- › The **recruitment team should be well trained** on the requirements of conducting effective interviews, managing unconscious bias, interviewing skills and questioning techniques.
- › **Seek feedback from all women who participated** in the recruitment process, irrespective of whether they were successful or not. This provides insight into how women experience each stage of the recruitment process. Asking for feedback shows that you are committed to creating a good recruitment experience.
- › **Provide feedback to all unsuccessful candidates who request** it, on how they performed during the recruitment process. Include feedback on their strengths, areas for improvement and suggestions on how they can improve their application and interviews for future job applications whether with your company or another.

# Case study



## Belinda Watton is a trailblazer. She is dedicated to bringing out the best in her people and is passionate about creating diverse teams.

Belinda is the Executive General Manager of Yurika, a part of Energy Queensland.

She has also led Energy Queensland's Registered Training Organisation, which in addition to skilling the broader technical workforce, trains over 450 apprentices, including 96 female apprentices. Belinda has passionately driven the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Under Belinda's leadership, the female apprentice rate has increased from just 10 percent in 2017, to 30 percent in 2021. The company also has a retention rate for female apprentices of 90 percent, compared to the State-wide average of 55 percent.

"As I was contemplating the target back in 2017, I began to investigate our traditional recruitment methods.

With on-line numerical testing playing a significant part in the recruitment process, shortlisting was taken from those with the highest test scores. Selecting applicants based on a maths standard was flawed with many more men who had tracked along the traditional science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) pathways outperforming the women. Not because the men are cognitively better at these subjects, but because the maths gap grows over time as women are discouraged and track away from STEM subjects.

After realising that there was unconscious bias embedded in the process, we re-set the maths threshold to pass/fail

and included a broader set of questions to test logic and reasoning. We didn't lower the threshold for success though but reset our approach, ensuring diverse candidates weren't lost in the process.

For people to give their best, they need to be able to thrive and it is up to us as employers to create that environment.

Yurika is part of Energy Queensland – the largest, wholly government-owned electricity company in Australia. Through our rapidly growing national footprint, their teams work across all areas of energy, connectivity, and sustainability delivering projects of any size or scope.

Their vast power industry experience draws upon over 100 years of experience in generation, transmission, and distribution power systems across Queensland. With demonstrated and longstanding industry experience, we leverage the expertise of our people to present a proven track record.

*L to R: Amy Hinde Distribution Linesperson Apprentice, Energy Queensland. Belinda Watton, Acting Executive General Manager, Yurika at Energy Queensland. Maddison Gross, Mechanical Fitter Apprentice, at Energy Queensland*



## 6. Retaining women in manufacturing



Once women are recruited into your business, their experience of your workplace culture and practices will greatly influence their decision to stay or exit.

Below are strategies you can take to retain women in your workplace.

### Creating a culture of inclusion

- › **CEOs and senior leaders should be visibly seen to endorse and promote** the value of diversity and inclusion in your workplace.
- › All leaders should undertake **inclusive leadership training** to support their capacity to create teams and cultures that value respect, eliminate or minimise unconscious bias, encourage diverse perspectives and manage constructive conflict.
- › Leaders are given **support for communicating the diversity, equity and inclusion strategy** to their work teams and have the skills to constructively handle any opposing views.
- › **Think about developing diversity, equity and inclusion councils and committees** to support an organisation in establishing and delivering the diversity, equity and inclusion strategy. They are made up of diverse employees who want to encourage more women into manufacturing and any other diversity, equity and inclusion strategies identified by the organisation (i.e. age, ethnicity, migrant status, etc.).

- › Conduct **employee surveys** to understand the experience of diverse workers in your workplace. For example, “Do you feel safe communicating your concerns at work?”, “Do you think our company celebrates diverse people and ideas?”.
- › Conduct **focus groups with women within the workplace** to understand the details of their experience and collectively identify ways to improve any roadblocks or challenges.
- › **Exit interviews** could be conducted to understand the employees’ experience throughout their employment.
- › **Engage with and support families** in the workplace to demonstrate your commitment and recognition of the various responsibilities in your employee’s lives. Some examples include holding site visits, family days, policies and facilities that support childcare, and company newsletters which showcase family friendly content.

### Organisational policies & processes

There are many different policies and processes which you can implement to support women in your workplace. Below is a selection of policies you might want to consider.

- › **Implementing equal employment opportunity, anti-harassment, and non-discrimination policies** will aim to ensure all employees are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.



- › **Flexible work policies** will outline your commitment to providing options of flexible work arrangements to employees (where practicable).
- › **Parental leave policies** will outline any unpaid parental leave, government-funded parental leave pay and employer-funded paid parental leave available to your employees.
- › **Pay equity audits** can be conducted on both fixed and variable pay, at all levels and roles of an organisation.
- › **Keep-in-touch processes** can be implemented to support employees who take long periods of leave (e.g. parental leave, sick leave, long service leave) to remain in contact with the business.
- › Create an induction process that includes a **buddy system** for all new starters and any employees transitioning back into the workplace after extended leave.
- › **Employee assistance programs** provide employees and their families with support to navigate professional and personal challenges that are impacting their work performance.
- › Provide **accessible information on support services** outside of the organisation, including the Apprenticeships and Traineeships Information Line, Domestic Violence Helplines, Kids Helpline, Lifeline, #LetsProtectRespect.

## Inclusive work practices

- › **Safe work practices ensure the working environment is safe for all employees.** This may include reviewing any Standard Operating Procedures for performing tasks, eliminating or restricting manual handling and lifting where possible, ensuring adequate lighting around the workplace and security measures are taken.
- › **Audit all tooling, machines and equipment** to ensure its suitability for employees of various sizes.
- › Ensure **women have access to a range of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** that is specially designed to fit their body shape. Most PPE marketed for women is simply a smaller size of men's clothing and does not factor in the different shape and structure of a woman's body. There are a number of local companies that specialise in women's PPE.
- › **Amenities and facilities are available to all women in the workplace.** Ensure there are clean toilets with soap, running water and suitable menstrual disposal units. Provide secure change facilities and private spaces with chairs and fridges to support any breastfeeding employees.





## 7. Career development for women in manufacturing

The next step is to support the advancement of skills and progression of women into positions of authority and influence.

The below strategies can increase the representation of women in your workplace, and most notably in non-traditional, leadership and management positions.

- › Ensure your **career development processes are transparent and rigorously reviewed** to confirm they are based on merit and objective measures of performance.
- › The individuals involved in career development discussions should be **diverse representatives from across your business**. This may include multiple operational leaders and Human Resource team members. This team should also be diverse in their characteristics and include women from both operational roles and support functions (i.e. Human Resources).
- › **Train those involved in career development processes and decisions** on the impact that unconscious bias and stereotyping has on decisions regarding training, development and promotional opportunities for employees.
- › Implement transparent career development processes that allow a **review of how many women are participating in different career advancement initiatives**, including training and development, secondments and promotions.
- › Formal **sponsorship and mentoring programs** can be held within your business and provide encouragement and endorsement to women to participate in these programs outside of your workplace.
- › Offer **pragmatic leadership programs that provide skills** required to become an effective leader. Consider accessibility when determining the time and location of delivering these programs (i.e. in work hours, or outside of work hours).
- › **Provide time and resources for women to build their networks** and participate in industry events, programs or conferences to expand their relationships across the industry.

## Where to next?

This Toolkit may represent the beginning of the journey for some of you, but for others, maybe you have policies and procedures that are embedded within your organisation already. The following tips will guide you in your journey, regardless of where you are on the continuum.

1. **Conduct a data review** – collect data on the number of women within the business. What roles are they in? How many women have applied for jobs vacancies? What number are successfully employed? What is the rate of turnover in women compared to men? What is the gender pay gap across the business?
2. **Establish senior leader team (SLT) endorsement** – identify how committed senior leaders in the business are towards gender diversity, equity and inclusion. Present the business case and discuss the relevant benefits to appeal to their priorities. Once endorsement is achieved, identify one or two SLT members to be involved in the diversity, equity and inclusion council.
3. **Establish diversity, equity and inclusion council** – bring together a group of diverse people from various areas of the business to form the diversity, equity and inclusion council. Ensure the council is clear on its purpose. You may wish to provide training to the committee members to help them perform this role effectively.
4. **Develop diversity, equity and inclusion strategy and action plan** – the diversity, equity and inclusion council establish the priority areas of focus for the organisation and creates the diversity, equity and inclusion strategy and subsequent action plan. It is recommended the action plan includes 12 months, 2-year and 3-year time horizons. The strategy and action plan are presented to the SLT for final approval.
5. **Communicate the diversity, equity and inclusion strategy to the organisation** – create a communications plan for promoting the diversity, equity and inclusion strategy to the broader business. For example, promotion in newsletters, CEO messages, websites, intranet, posters, toolboxes, etc.
6. **Review processes/policies** – review all existing policies and processes that relate to the experience of people within the organisation. Identify and rectify barriers for women and any situations where bias or stereotypes may influence decisions.
7. **Train and develop leaders** – support leaders to understand the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and be able to answer questions or challenges which may arise. Provide training on inclusive leadership and unconscious bias.
8. **Establish reporting** – identify how diversity, equity and inclusion strategy and action plans will be measured. What metrics will be captured? How regularly are they reported upon? Who is responsible for reporting? Where and with whom will the report results be shared?
9. **Consider using the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Gender Equality Diagnostic Tool**  
This tool helps employers understand whether they are:
  - ~ Meeting the **minimum requirements** for compliance.
  - ~ **Active** in beginning the conversations and communicating your commitment to gender equality.
  - ~ **Strategically** integrating gender equality into business practices and priorities.
  - ~ **Leading practice** and sharing your experience and successes in addressing gender equality in your organisation amongst your networks, partners and customers.[https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019\\_WGEA\\_GE\\_Diagnostic\\_Tool.pdf](https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019_WGEA_GE_Diagnostic_Tool.pdf)
10. **Obtain feedback and adjust** – obtain feedback on the success and challenges of the diversity, equity and inclusion action plans. Obtain quantitative (metrics, etc.) and qualitative (employee surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.) information. Use this data to review the success of initiatives, make adjustments and refocus on new priority areas.

## Further reading

Australian Human Rights Commission (2013). Women in Male-Dominated Industries: A Toolkit of Strategies. Retrieved on 19/04/2023 from [WIMDI Toolkit 2013.pdf \(humanrights.gov.au\)](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/wimdi-toolkit-2013.pdf)

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Catalyst (2021) Women in Male-Dominated Industries and Occupations. Retrieved on 18/04/2023 from [Women in Male-Dominated Industries and Occupations \(Quick Take\) | Catalyst](#)

Diversity Council Australia (2022). Diversity Council Australia announces 2022-2023 Inclusive Employers – Committed and Taking Action. Retrieved on 21/05/2023 from [Diversity Council Australia announces 2022-2023 Inclusive Employers – Committed and taking action. | Diversity Council Australia \(dca.org.au\)](#)

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Foley, Oxenbridge, Cooper & Baird (2020). 'I'll never be one of the boys': Gender harassment of women working as pilots and automotive tradespeople, 29(5), 1676-1691

Laplonge, D (2014). So You Think You're Tough? Getting Serious about Gender in Mining. Sydney, Factive.

Hunt, V., Layton, D. & Prince, S. (2015). Why diversity matters. Retrieved on 21/05/2023 from [why diversity matters.pdf \(mckinsey.com\)](#)

Qian & Fan (2018). Men and Women at Work: Occupational Gender Composition and Affective Well-Being in the United States. Journal of Happiness Studies, 20, 2077–2099

*Diversity Council of Australia (DCA), Inclusive Employers Index* – organisations must demonstrate they are active and committed to inclusion by achieving results that exceed the National Index Benchmark on at least five out of six of the following measures: (i) Awareness; (ii) Engagement; (iii) Inclusive Organisational Climate; (iv) Inclusive Leadership; (v) Inclusive Team; (vi) Exclusion. If eligible organisations can display the time-dated DCA Inclusive Employer logo.

*Work180 Endorsement* – Available to companies truly committed to the careers of women. Their endorsement is a sought after seal of approval for job seekers and enables endorsed companies to advertise Job Vacancies directly to women on their job search site.

*Male Champions of Change* – Join this coalition of men of power and influence stepping up beside women leaders to lead accountability for creating change on gender equality issues in their organisations and communities.

*ISO 45003:2021 Psychological Health and Safety at Work* – businesses can receive training on the first global standard for managing psychological health and safety at work. By undertaking this training you will learn how to recognise psychosocial hazards and take action to manage these whilst improving overall employee well-being.



**Queensland**  
Government

Department of Regional Development,  
Manufacturing and Water