

Athena Swan Steering Group position statement on advancing equity, diversity and inclusion

Embedding equity and furthering inclusion in higher education and research are critical to embracing diversity shaped by identity, lived experience and ways of thinking, all of which are essential to innovation, excellence and fair outcomes for all.

Acknowledgement of Country

Monash University recognises that its Australian campuses are located on the unceded lands of the people of the Kulin Nations, and pays its respects to their Elders past and present. Monash is committed to fostering a society that recognises, respects and includes Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledge. The University will contribute to the creation of this society by working with and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and knowledge, as well as Indigenous peoples of other places where Monash has a campus or major presence.

Our Commitment

As members of the Monash University Athena Swan Steering Group, we are strongly committed to embedding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across all aspects of university life. EDI is fundamental to who we are and underpins how we teach, study, research, work and lead - driving innovation, excellence and fair outcomes for all members of our community.

This position statement, grounded in the lived/living experiences and feedback of our communities, affirms our shared responsibility to foster a culture that actively upholds and advances rights, inclusion and equity for all. We value the richness that diverse perspectives, lived experiences and identities bring to our university. We believe inclusive environments foster creativity, deepen learning and strengthen collaboration, leading to better outputs.

We see this reflected in the quality and breadth of our research, the relevance and impact of our teaching and the wellbeing and success of our students and staff across all campuses. We note the potential that the knowledge produced in universities, through our research, teaching and collaborative public engagement, has in driving social change in communities and cultures outside the university.

We make this statement amid growing global resistance to EDI principles, when clarity, leadership and steadfast values are more crucial than ever. We recognise that systemic and structural inequalities persist within society and our institutions, and we remain committed to addressing them, guided by principles of social justice, respect for human rights and the inherent dignity of every individual. This commitment is firmly embedded in Monash's strategic priorities and reflected across our frameworks, policies, and action plans.

Our Institutional Foundation

Monash University has a proud history of championing EDI, grounded in activism, innovation and social justice. This legacy underpins our institutional strategy, Impact 2030, where Inclusion is a core pillar and is operationalised in the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2022–2030, which brings these goals to life. The University's objectives focus on building a diverse staff and student community; preventing discrimination and harm; fostering connection and belonging; and, leading respectful informed dialogue grounded in academic freedom.

Why Now: Current Challenges

Efforts to advance EDI are facing significant headwinds globally, marked by increasing political and legal resistance. In several countries, legal and political developments have led to the dismantling or deprioritisation of EDI programs and the erosion of institutional commitments, which once seemed secure. These setbacks threaten undoing decades of progress, with serious implications for equity, workforce wellbeing, institutional integrity and the rights of marginalised and underrepresented groups.

The ripple effects of these global trends extend to Australia's academic and research communities. For instance, some international funding bodies are reducing or redirecting support for programs that incorporate EDI principles, or introducing travel participation restrictions linked to diversity-related policies. This in turn affects research and education opportunities, as well as outputs and impact with implications for the University's overall success.

While Australia has not experienced the same level of legal rollback, the global context generates uncertainty and concern within the sector. Signs of retreat have been emerging locally. Some individuals and groups seek to undermine EDI efforts, through mockery, trivialisation of this vital work or active resistance, which creates barriers to cultivating an inclusive and respectful culture.

This growing opposition fosters anxiety, uncertainty and a climate of negativity that is felt widely across our community and threatens to stall essential EDI initiatives. The hard-earned gains we have achieved cannot be allowed to erode, nor can the necessary investment in EDI be withdrawn.

Position Statement

We remain committed to making Monash a place where EDI are not just principles but daily practice. As a community, we are actively working to identify and dismantle systemic and structural barriers that limit full participation and belonging.

Our position is clear: EDI must not be diluted, deprioritised or under-resourced.

Monash's achievement of the **Silver Athena SWAN Award (2025)** reflects our standing as a national leader in EDI within the Group of Eight universities and beyond. This recognition demonstrates our commitment to honesty, transparency and accountability driven by data, informed by lived experience and aligned with our institutional values.

We are grateful for the strong backing of senior leadership and relevant committees, whose support ensures EDI principles are embedded in our policies, decision-making and culture. We will continue working in close partnership with senior leaders, faculties, departments and committees to advance our shared goals.

We pledge to:

- Foster inclusive and respectful environments where diverse perspectives and experiences are recognised, respected, valued and integrated into our work.
- Engage with those most affected to help transform and improve structures, systems and culture.
- Continue to lead EDI initiatives with integrity and purpose
- Prioritise the voices and lived and living experiences of underrepresented and marginalised groups in shaping our direction and fostering a culture where all staff and students feel valued, respected and able to thrive.
- Centre EDI principles in our core business - in policies, leadership, decision-making and resource and funding allocation.
- Hold ourselves accountable through transparent goals, data-informed actions and open communication.
- Champion EDI in our spheres of influence by highlighting its value and importance to help ensure long-term resourcing sustainability.