

Item 3.3

Reaffirming our Support for the Values of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

In 2018, Council unanimously adopted A City for All, our Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan 2018-2028, following extensive research and consultation. At its core is a vision of Sydney as an inclusive and equitable city that offers all people opportunities to realise their full potential and enjoy a great quality of life.

This commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is now increasingly under attack following the inauguration of Donald Trump as 47th president of the United States of America.

In the first days of his second presidency, President Trump signed several Executive Orders and memoranda to end all United States federal government diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility programs and policies, describing them as "dangerous, demeaning, and immoral" and "corrosive, and pernicious". All positions related to these programs and policies are planned to be terminated.

Executive Orders dating from the 1960s presidency of Lyndon Johnson have been revoked including those which aimed to:

- end discrimination in employment
- promote equal opportunities in employment
- advance equity and opportunity for Native Americans, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders and Black Americans
- prevent and combat discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation
- advance equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex individuals.

Even before these disappointing actions, several US corporations were winding back their own commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion, while others have done so since. They include multi-national corporations operating in Australia such as Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Meta (Facebook), McDonald's, Harley-Davidson and Accenture. The global and local impact of such actions remains uncertain.

President Trump's actions have emboldened sections of the media, some business leaders and others to call for similar policies to be adopted in Australia. The Leader of the Opposition has talked about dismissing 36,000 public servants, those whose work relates to diversity, equity and inclusion being primary targets. Some are urging him to go much further, adding to the climate of uncertainty and creating anxiety.

City action

In the face of this, we cannot stay silent. We must reaffirm our own commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and protect and continue the work which embodies this commitment.

Importantly, this work is guided by the expert community-based advice of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Inclusion (Disability) and Multicultural Advisory Panels.

Detailed information about this work can be found in the City's [Midpoint Review of A City for All](#), published on the City's website. Examples of progress noted in the review include:

- Since 2004, the City has steadily improved accessibility to our libraries, town halls and community facilities by creating step free entries, installing lifts and upgrading toilets and other amenities. More than 90% of our facilities are now accessible.
- The City has been a refugee 'Welcome Zone' since 2005. We work with the Asylum Seekers Centre, the Refugee Council of Australia, Settlement Services International and others to make refugees and asylum seekers feel welcome.
- The City supports the #RacismNotWelcome campaign and in 2022 installed street signs to support the campaign, including at Circular Quay, Sydney Town Hall, Chinatown and Central Station.
- In 2023, the City became a member of the Zero Barriers project helping businesses to improve access and inclusion to boost business and improve customer diversity.
- We also provide a range of programs to build more positive attitudes towards people with disability including Auslan Storytime to promote deaf culture, and The Big Feels Club which aims to reduce stigma around mental illness.
- In 2024, we increased the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at the City to 3% and spent \$1.97 million with Indigenous businesses helping us achieve 2 key targets of our current Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.

A recent [report](#) into social cohesion published by the Scanlon Institute shows that the City is trending higher than the national average in the areas of 'social inclusion and justice' and 'acceptance and rejection' which looks at attitudes to immigrant diversity, support for minorities, and experiences of discrimination.

As an organisation, the City is recognised as an inclusive employer by the Diversity Council of Australia and is accredited as a disability confident recruiter by the Australian Network on Disability.

Since 2004, the number of women employed by the City has grown substantially from 29% to 43.2% of the total workforce, and 51% of our leadership roles are held by women. We have a base salary gender pay gap of 3.8% in favour of women, meaning more women are employed in higher paying jobs across the organisation. This is significantly better than the national average which is 22% in favour of men.

The City has also received awards for our achievements. The 2019 Australian HR Award for Best Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Program recognised the City's longstanding work to provide equal opportunity for women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the LGBTIQ+ community, people with disability and refugees.

The Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Award for Excellence 2023, from Urban Development Institute of Australia and MYBOS management systems recognised how well diversity and inclusion has been embedded in the organisation.

Also in 2023, our work in establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, City Pride, City Women, Disability, Diverse City and Young Professionals employee support networks was recognised with the City receiving the Local Government NSW Diversity and Inclusion Award.

Next steps

The City continually seeks to improve and there is still more to do. The Midpoint Review identifies several areas where the City must refresh its focus over the next 5 years. This includes developing a holistic approach to being a socially responsible organisation through our procurement, employment, workplace supports, engagement practices, accessible communication and collaboration.

In May 2023, Council requested the Chief Executive Officer to develop an overarching anti-racism framework or charter that addresses structural, interpersonal (everyday bias), intersectionality and institutional racism and discrimination in the workplace and across our city. This work is underway.

Our current Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan is due to finish on 30 June 2025 and we're now developing our seventh plan. To create a more inclusive and accessible city, last year, the City invited people with disability and other relevant stakeholders to provide feedback to inform that work. The new draft plan will be reported to Council later this year.

It is vital that this work continues and is not derailed by forces wanting to copy the Trump administration's dismantling of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. In doing so, we send a strong message to the community and City staff that we will remain steadfast in our commitment to recognising diversity and advancing equity and inclusion.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council reaffirm the City's commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the continued implementation of policies and strategies that embody this commitment;
- (B) Council note that this is an ongoing commitment to change and iterative improvement;
- (C) Council note that the City is currently developing a new Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2025-2029, which will be reported to Council mid-2025;
- (D) Council note that the City is currently developing an Anti-racism Framework that addresses structural, interpersonal (everyday bias), intersectionality and institutional racism and discrimination in the workplace and across our city; and
- (E) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to provide Council with an update on progress with the development of the Anti-racism Framework including engagement activities and other key project milestones.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor