

planning culturally

RESEARCH REPORT 5:

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) for urban planning & design - an environmental scan

*The planning profession should
reflect the diversity of the
communities that we serve.*

PLANNING INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA (PIA) NATIONAL GENDER EQUITY POLICY 2021

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Acknowledgement of Country

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Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

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Since the early 2000's one aspect of his consulting and research has focused on Cultural Literacy being essential for Planning Culturally. Richard believes that all urban planning decisions will have either a positive or negative impact on our increasingly culturally diverse communities. Therefore, he has prepared this Research Report to focus on the need for greater awareness of the importance of addressing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in urban planning and design. The report provides a review of current approaches to DEI policy at the built environment institute or association level. The desk-based research covers Australian and a selection of International planning and design organisations. www.richardbrecknock.com

Disclaimer: The environmental scan report is part of a series of occasional Research Reports located on www.planning-culturally.com and has been prepared by an independent researcher with no affiliations to any academic institutions and has not been peer reviewed. This is not intended to be an academic analysis of DEI in relation to urban planning and design, rather an overview of the current built environment response to DEI. The research was therefore limited to online searches, and the author has tried to ensure that the content reproduced in the report is publicly available and not confidential in any way. The author has made every effort to accurately attribute all quoted material and where possible to provide the URL of sites referenced.

Abstract

This environmental scan was conducted to understand the current context of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles and policies in the Urban Planning and Design sector. The research considered current best practices through academic and non-academic literature. A key finding was the emphasis on the need for the profession to reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. The research reviews DEI policies and practices across professional organizations in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK, and the USA, highlighting strategies for fostering inclusive environments, equitable resource distribution, and diverse representation in planning processes. The report also examines challenges to DEI, and provides insights into survey methodologies, educational impacts, and collaborative initiatives like New Zealand's Diversity Agenda and the UK's B.E. Inclusive Initiative.

By advocating for DEI, the report underscores its importance in creating just, resilient, and welcoming urban spaces for all. It also seeks to highlight the challenges for both industry organisations and individual practitioners in incorporating DEI principles in a membership environment and day to day interactions with clients and community members. The report also provides listings of relevant resources and links that will be of value and support for organizations and professionals who wish to implement DEI policies and principles effectively.

Acronyms

Organisations

Australia

AACA	Architecture Accreditation Council of Australia, Aust.
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics, Aust.
AHRI	Australian Human Resources Institute, Aust.
AIA	Australian Institute of Architects, Aust.
AILA	Australian Instituted of Landscape Architects, Aust.
DCA	Diversity Council Australia, Aust.
DFAT	Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Aust.
HPW	Department of Housing and Public Works, QLD, Aust.
NSCA	National Standard of Competency for Architects, Aust.
PIA	Planning Institute of Australian, Aust.
PM&C	Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, Aust.
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plans, Aust.
UDIA	Urban Development Institute of Australia, Aust.
UNSW	University of NSW, Aust.

Aotearoa New Zealand

NZIA	New Zealand Institute of Architects, NZ.
NZPI	New Zealand Planning Institute, NZ.
NZILA	New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, NZ.

Canada

CIP	Canadian Institute of Planning, Canada.
CSLA	Canadian Society of Landscape Architects, Canada.
LACF	Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation, Canada.
RAIC	Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, Canada.

UK

ARB	Architects Registration Board UK.
CIC	Construction Industry Council, UK.
IQL	Institute for Quality of Life, UK.
RBIA	Royal British Institute of Architects, UK
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute, UK

USA

AIA	American Institute of Architects, USA.
APA	American Planning Association, USA.
ASLA	American Society of Landscape Architects, USA.
BSA	Boston Society of Architects, USA.

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NAAB National Architectural Accreditation Board, USA.

NCARB National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, USA.

PAB Planning Accreditation Board, USA.

Other International

HEC Hautes Études Commerciales, France.

ILO International Labour Organization, Switzerland.

OHCHR UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland.

WEF World Economic Forum, Switzerland.

DEI Acronym variations

DEI Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, (Australia & USA)

DEIB Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging, (Canada & USA)

EDI Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, (Canada & UK)

EDIA Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility, (Canada)

JEDI Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, (Australia & USA)

The acronym DEI is widely understood as referring to the concept of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, however in some countries such as the UK and Canada the order of headings goes from DEI to EDI as in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. It is suggested that EDI puts the emphasis on Equity and acknowledges that not everyone starts from the same place, and that unique, tailored support may be needed to create fair outcomes.

Accessibility: The Canadian Planning Institute have added “Accessibility” creating EDIA. In an urban planning context including accessibility is about removing barriers such as racism, sexism, and ableism, aiming for equal opportunities and outcomes for marginalized groups by intentionally designing accessible systems, policies, and spaces.

Belonging: There are suggestions (Academy To Innovate HR) that it should be DEIB, that is to include belonging which they state: *is about fostering psychological safety in team situations, where every team member is comfortable expressing themselves without fear of judgment or retribution. Regardless of how long an employee has been in the company or team, they should feel welcome and needed and receive the same comradery and opportunities as anyone else.*

Justice: In Australia Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) is another emerging term in the DEI space, taking the focus a step further by incorporating justice. In this context, Justice is about correcting wrongdoings that have happened as well as seeking truth and Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the context of colonisation in Australia and across the Pacific, and its continued impacts on First Nations' People.

Throughout this report the term DEI will be used unless referring to a specific example from a country where they use one or other of the variations.

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1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

The moral and business case for diversity and inclusion is stronger than ever, with research proving the positive effect on employee wellbeing, creativity, and innovation; all these things lead to better design.

Ralph Johns, CEO Isthmus Group, NZ, *Landscape Architecture Aotearoa* (2021)

Ralph Johns states the business case for DEI is stronger than ever. This is especially true based on research with a human resources and business perspective.

However, diversity, equity and inclusion are not concepts limited to the business of companies and organisations, above all they are social and moral considerations both in the administration of planning and design organisations and vitally moral consideration in the practice of urban planning and design in the pursuit of creating just and culturally rich public realm outcomes.

Therefore, to capture how the application of diversity, equity, and inclusion, in this case referred to as DEI, is currently functioning in the urban planning and design sectors. This research explored how DEI is being discussed and reported online and in industry reports and policies. This Research Report has explored online content posted by urban planning and design membership organisations, as well as related educational and research institutes. The research goal was to gather information from a range of English-speaking countries with similar membership organisational structures across Urban Planning, Architecture and Landscape Architecture and provide an international overview of current thinking and discourse relating to DEI in policy and practice.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Research Report is to share the findings of a desk-based review of DEI issues with special focus on its role across the urban planning and design sector. Especially as a resource for organisations or businesses within the sector who may be considering development of DEI policies or commitment statements. The research explored a range of built environment associations, institutes and private practices in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada, UK and USA as these countries are English speaking and have comparable policy, governance and built environment planning and design institutes. The aim was to identify the national organisational and practice-based approaches to developing and implementing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategies or policies. In the Australian and Canadian context, the research also considered the acknowledgment of First Nations People and relevant reconciliation plans, likewise in Aotearoa New Zealand acknowledgment of Māori cultural rights.

WHAT IS DEI?

For this report, DEI in the context of urban planning and design, is a set of professional principles aimed at providing opportunities for all those working in the built environment professions and the community members who they work with. The key goal in this context is to achieve workplace and public place diversity, meaningful equity and inclusion and a sense of belonging. Therefore, diversity is about embracing the differences everyone brings to the table, whether those are someone's race, age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, or other aspects of social identity. While equity is focused on treating everyone fairly and providing equal opportunities, and inclusion is about respecting everyone's voice and creating a workplace culture in which people from all backgrounds feel encouraged to express their ideas and perspectives. In the urban planning and design context of this report, DEI can be seen as a crucial element in not only the administration of planning and design Institutes and private sector consultancies, but also how urban practitioners interact with the communities they engage with and how they plan and design urban environments for our increasingly diverse populations.

Indeed, if we take 'cultural diversity' as an example of DEI in practice, Diversity must address the many different cultural beliefs and practices that make up our contemporary multi-cultural cities, Equity in

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relation to diverse cultural groups addresses the various disadvantages and beliefs that can exist within a community, and the Inclusion challenges are for planners and designers creating environments where different cultural groups and individuals can feel safe welcome and part of the broader community.

Further to Planning Institute of Australia's (PIA) Gender Equity Policy statement that *The planning profession should reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve*, the research found that the UK's architectural profession lacks suitable diversity among its members. Taz Khatri (2024) proposes that Architecture in the UK is not representative of the society it is here to serve.

Here in Australia, there is currently a focus on developing Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies within the urban planning and design professions.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2025 population estimates show females at 50.38% and males 49.62%, also ABS estimated 4.5% of Australians 16 years and over are LGBTQI+. The ABS data also shows that the cultural diversity of Australia's contemporary society has evolved through migration where more than 30% of the population were born overseas and more than half the population have parents who were born overseas. In the context of Australia's rich diversity, the development of DEI policies and practices also need to be considered in the context of existing legal gender equality requirements such as the laws governing workplace diversity in Australia:

- *Employers with more than 100 employees are required to report annually on gender diversity in the workplace under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth). Specifically, an employer must prepare a written public report containing information relating to the employer and to gender equality indicators including:*
 - *gender composition of the workforce.*
 - *gender composition of its governing body.*
 - *equal remuneration between women and men.*
 - *availability and utility of employment terms, conditions and practices relating to flexible working arrangements for employees and to working arrangements supporting family or caring responsibilities; and*
 - *consultation with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace.*
- *Employers with 500 or more employees are required to have a policy or strategy in place that specifically supports gender equality, to comply with the additional compliance requirements set out in the Workplace Gender Equality (Minimum Standards) Instrument 2014 (Cth).*

Considering the Workplace Gender Equality Act exists the Australian HR Institute states that: *There is an ethical, legal, economic and labour market imperative to creating diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces in Australia. The pathway to realising this potential lies in leaders, managers and HR professionals working together to transform workplace culture through more deliberate interventions for the good of all Australian employees.*

Australian HR Institute (AHRI)

The State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Australian Workplaces

<https://www.ahri.com.au/wp-content/uploads/DEI-Report-2023.pdf>

The Report states that:

The ethical and business cases for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are well known across Australian workplaces. More recently, staff shortages, one of the most significant challenges facing Australian organisations in 2023 has emerged as another compelling reason for organisations to ensure their workplaces can attract, support and retain a diverse workforce.

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While much of the public debate is dedicated to the role that migration and skills can play in addressing staff shortages and other challenges; less attention is given to the impact that diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces can have in attracting and retaining staff.

The evidence from this 2023 AHRI survey suggests that although DEI is acknowledged as important to the success of organisations there is insufficient take up of DEI principles in Australian business. The survey found that organisations are active in promoting DEI principles focused on gender, followed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. There is less of a focus on people from culturally diverse backgrounds; people living with a physical or neurological disability; people who are gender diverse; or those people from low socio-economic backgrounds. The review also found that there was a need for greater focus on data collection to identify progress against targets and to find opportunities for improvements over time.

In the *Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Strategy 2024-2027* report the Australian Government reinforces the AHRI position re successful organisation embracing DEI, and states that:

Organisations with mature approaches to diversity – characterised by inclusive cultures that value different thought patterns, experiences, and abilities – are more effective at risk analysis, more creative and better at decision making. Individuals who work in inclusive teams are ten times more likely to express very high job satisfaction, and report being 4 times more likely to believe that their work positively influences their mental health. Staff in inclusive teams are 3 times less likely to leave their organisation.

www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/dfat-inclusion-equity-diversity-strategy-2024.pdf

RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON DEI PRINCIPLES

The following are a selection of international agencies that have referenced diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. Although they are not built environment organisations there is relevance in the high-level statements quoted below.

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/universal-declaration-cultural-diversity

At the global level it is worth reminding ourselves of the UN Declaration of Human Rights which underpin all the efforts to create effective policies relating to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The OHCHR highlight the following of relevance to DEI:

Article 2 - From cultural diversity to cultural pluralism

In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life.

Article 3 - Cultural diversity as a factor in development

Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual existence.

From a built environment perspective statements about harmonious interactions among people, sustaining public life, and diversity being at the root of development, resonate with the goals, and practices of urban planning, and design.

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UN Global Compact

<https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/dei>

Mounting the case for DEI the Global Compact' highlights the facts that:

One in six people worldwide experience discrimination in some form, with women and people with disabilities disproportionately affected. Inequality threatens long-term social and economic development, jeopardizes social cohesion, harms poverty reduction, and causes disparities in opportunities and outcomes, impeding economic efficiency. Promoting diversity, equity and inclusion throughout business operations is an important step in tackling inequality and eliminating discrimination worldwide.

Non-discrimination is rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights upon which international human rights principles are founded. Article 1 articulates the inalienable and inherent rights that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Article 2 provides that "no one shall be discriminated against in the enjoyment of the rights laid down in the Declaration on the grounds of "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or another opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or another status."

DEI in the workplace:

According to Principle 6 of the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact, discrimination in employment and occupation refers to any distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of placing certain individuals in a position of exclusion or disadvantage in the labour market or the workplace because of their race, colour, religion, sex, disability, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or any other attribute which bears no relation to the job to be performed.

The Global Compact' clearly articulates the Human Rights environment which urban planning and design professionals need to consider in preparing DEI policies or practices. It is acknowledged that achieving the Human Rights objectives at a practical on the ground level is not always easily implemented in some establishments. Therefore, consideration must be given to the practicalities of meeting the diverse needs of the workforce. This is a critical issue and one that the International Labour Organization addresses in the following guidance document.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

www.ilo.org

Promoting Equity - Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments: a practical guide

www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_norm/%40declaration/documents/publication/wcms_536630.pdf

The ILO has developed this practical guide document which focuses on the concept of Reasonable Adjustments. The Guide addresses an issue where instituting DEI practices will require changes to workspace or work-practices to accommodate diversity in the workforce. ILO suggest that adjustments or alternately described as 'accommodations' relate to the adaptations that are required in promoting Diversity and Inclusion at the workplace. For example, some workers may require a reasonable accommodation to access Equity of employment to place them on an equal footing with others, and to enable them to remain in employment.

The Guide addresses the need for what it calls "Workplace Adjustment":

While all workers should enjoy equal access to employment, some workers encounter barriers that may put them at a disadvantage. Such barriers can prevent them from accessing or remaining in employment and, if not addressed, can also deprive companies of a broader, more diverse pool of workers from which to recruit. The provision of reasonable accommodation plays a major role in addressing these barriers and thus contributes to greater workplace equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Effective measures are those that permit the worker to perform the essential functions of a specific job. In other words, it consists of those measures that remove or sufficiently mitigate the barriers that may be encountered by a worker, thereby enabling him/her to access, continue in and progress in employment. Different types of barriers will give rise to a need for different types of adjustments. These may arise from the physical environment (e.g. unsuitable workstations), workplace policies (e.g. the possibility of changing working hours) or attitudes (e.g. a stereotype that workers with caring responsibilities will not have a reliable attendance record).

The Guide also addresses and advised how to identify and resolve “Disproportionate Burdens” on a workplace:

The concepts of disproportionate burden and undue hardship convey the idea that employers can be expected to incur some expense or inconvenience when making accommodations, but that there will be a point at which these become excessive and unreasonable. Ultimately, this can only be assessed in reference to all the circumstances of each individual case.

Occasionally, requests for accommodation might have an inappropriate impact on other workers. This is a factor to consider in determining whether the accommodation sought might create a disproportionate burden. For example, an employer should not accommodate a request from a male worker who, citing religious reasons, does not want to be under the direct supervision of a female manager. Such a request would create inequality in the workplace on the basis of gender and might contravene national laws or policies aimed at ensuring gender equality at work.

The research evidence suggests that DEI has become an important element of corporate governance, civic engagement and is highly relevant in the context of urban planning and design given the significant impact of the built environment on society. However, in 2025 the very notion of DEI is under attack, including from the US Administration!

DEI UNDER ATTACK

In recent years there has been criticism of DEI, especially in the USA which has become under significant attack from a range of factions including the US Administration.

In an article on CNN (2025) titled *What is DEI, and why is it dividing America?* by Nicquel Terry Ellis, looks at the origins and development of DEI in America and explores what the critics are saying about the current DEI debates in the US.

Ellis presents commentary from both sides of the DEI debate, first presenting some of the anti DEI positions such as the following quotes from critics Christopher Rufo and Ryan Williams:

“These are not neutral programs to increase demographic diversity; they are political programs that use taxpayer resources to advance a specific partisan orthodoxy,” outspoken DEI critic Christopher Rufo, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, wrote in a 2023 New York Times op-ed.

Indeed, the ideology behind DEI is “fundamentally anti-American,” said Ryan P. Williams, president of The Claremont Institute, a conservative think tank.

“The words that the acronym ‘DEI’ represent sound nice, but it is nothing more than affirmative action and racial preferences by a different name, a system that features racial headcounts and arbitrarily assigned roles of ‘oppressor’ and ‘oppressed’ groups in America,” Williams said in an emailed statement. “If we continue to do democracy this way, it will only end in acrimony, strife, resentment, and American collapse.”

The alternative view from some American business leaders includes suggestions that:

Companies turning their backs on strategies to promote diversity will limit equal opportunities for people who face disadvantages because of their skin color, the neighborhood they grew up in, the quality of schools they attended and other forces beyond their control, two Black pioneering

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business leaders – former Merck CEO Ken Frazier and former American Express CEO Ken Chenault –told CNN.

In 2025 the Trump administration seem to have narrowly defined DEI as representing “affirmative action,” or giving people a job based on race, gender, or disability rather than just competence, hence the derogatory “DEI Hire” slogan used by the President. President Trump’s Executive Order 13985 which addresses the administrations attack on DEI policies and practices states that: “*Americans deserve a government committed to serving every person with equal dignity and respect*”. It is difficult to align being “*committed to serving every person with equal dignity and respect*” with banning the concepts of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

A major challenge for the Australian private urban planning and design sector will arise when wishing to tender for US government planning, architectural or landscape projects. It is highly likely that tendering businesses will have to demonstrate that they do not have DEI policy and practices in place.

The law firm, King & Wood Mallesons, focuses on this issue in their 2025 discussion piece “*Is DEI really dead?*”.

www.kwm.com/au/en/insights/latest-thinking/is-dei-really-dead-what-now-and-what-next-for-australian-employers.html

The article suggests that:

The full implications of these executive orders for Australian businesses with US related companies in respect of their DEI programmes are not yet entirely clear. Private employers in the United States who do contract work with the federal government will now need to certify that they do not operate any DEI programs that violate federal anti-discrimination law. Another executive order tasks each relevant federal agency with developing a list of nine organisations (including corporations) to target for ‘civil compliance investigations,’ meaning that the federal government may be required to use its enforcement powers to pursue private-sector organisations engaging in allegedly unlawful DEI activities.

Quite how this will play out in terms of the planning and design industry Associations and Institutes developing DEI policies, remains to be seen.

The BBC, online news, recently reported that: *New US rules say countries with diversity policies are infringing human rights* www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx24200d7y9o

The report states that the State Department is taking an innovative approach to attacking DEI internationally, reporting that:

Countries enforcing race or gender diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies will now be at risk of the Trump administration deeming them as infringing on human rights.

The State Department is issuing the new rules to all US embassies and consulates involved in compiling its annual report on global human rights abuses.

The BBC further quotes:

State Department deputy spokesperson Tommy Pigott said the new instructions are intended to stop “new destructive ideologies [that] have given safe harbour to human rights violations”.

He said: “The Trump administration will not allow these human rights violations, such as the mutilation of children, laws that infringe on free speech, and racially discriminatory employment practices, to go unchecked.”

Uzra Zeya, a former senior State Department official who now runs the charity Human Rights First, said the Trump administration was “weaponising international human rights for domestic partisan ends. Attempting to label DEI as a human rights violation sets a new low in the Trump administration’s weaponization of international human rights,” she said.

Within this unpredictable political environment, it is also evident that there are a range of negative opinions regarding the value of implementing DEI principles in the workplace.

American Planning Association (APA)

<https://planning.org/publications/document/9323378/>

In the 2026 APA *Trend Report for Planners* the issue of the US Administrations negative approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is highlighted as a critical trend that planners in the US need to act on now, and under the heading, *Community Rights, Culture, and Safety at Risk* the report states that:

Federal actions affecting different levels of government and changing sentiments within society are reshaping community life in the U.S., threatening civil rights, targeting vulnerable groups, and weakening local culture, diversity, and safety. This directly impacts the work of planners, whose goal is to create safe and inclusive communities while encouraging participation in public engagement meetings.

There is no clarity as to how this trend will pan out in the future, however, the Trend Report suggests that *planners can play a role in creating safe and inclusive spaces. As anti-DEI sentiment grows, planners will need to protect opportunities for public expression and community gathering, ensuring that civic spaces remain accessible, welcoming, and reflective of the full diversity of the people they serve.*

Australian Human Rights Institute www.humanrights.unsw.edu.au

Explainer: What is DEI and why is it under attack?

Article by Jasmine Crittenden, Claudia Hayman, and Nabeela Rasheed

The article explores the background to President Trump's attack on DEI and his interpretation of the role of DEI in employment and society. The authors note that Trump proposes that:

"Hardworking Americans who deserve a shot at the American Dream should not be stigmatized, demeaned, or shut out of opportunities because of their race or sex."

Which at first reading would suggest that he is arguing for DEI in terms of giving people equal opportunities to be included in opportunities. However, they suggest that *President Trump is reversing the typical narrative around DEI which is intended to ensure a fair go for people of all backgrounds. The order claims "illegal DEI" efforts undermine "hard work, excellence, and individual achievement"*.

The article argues that: *DEI recognises that equality is located within the patterns of society and history, which have operated to privilege some and exclude others. When we don't all arrive at work on equal footing identical treatment may in practice entrench disadvantage.*

For these reasons, DEI initiatives aim to correct inequality and ensure fairness in workplace practices, including in recruitment, promotion and pay. But DEI involves more than crunching the numbers of wage gaps and quotas – it impacts the 'soft tissue' of the organisation, forming healthier workplace cultures and systems where workers are treated with dignity and experience psychosocial safety.

At the time of writing Australia has not been significantly impacted by President Trump's Executive Order 13985 other than those international corporations that have US and Australian businesses. Hopefully, the domestic environment will remain committed to supporting DEI initiatives in line with the Federal Governments 2024-2027 "Inclusion, Equity and Diversity strategy" vision of: *an inclusive workplace that projects and values diversity. We strive for workplaces that are safe, where staff feel respected and valued, and where everyone has equitable access to opportunities.*

The attacks or pushback against DEI is not only coming from the Trump Administration, although that is the highest profile and comprehensive impact across the American government and associated private sector.

CRITICS OF DEI

Critics of the DEI initiatives are focused on the productivity and financial benefits arising from diversity associated innovation and creativity, rather than DEI initiatives that focus on the integrated approach to creating a *fair, just, and innovative society*. (Siddique, 2025) This is an issue that both Siddique and Cordelia Fine explore.

Patriarchy Inc.: what we get wrong about gender equality and why men still win at work.

Cordelia Fine (2025), Atlantic Books Ltd, London

In her book *Patriarchy Inc*, Fine provides a review of both the positive and negative dimensions of the DEI debate. In introducing the subject Fine suggests that:

The main reason to value diversity, according to the contemporary DEI approach, is because it can create more competitive, profitable, high-performing, innovative businesses. Therefore, in order to foster these business benefits, we need to treat everyone fairly (the 'equality' or 'equity' part) and cultivate environments that ensure all employees feel welcome and able to make their business-enhancing contributions (the 'inclusion' part).

However Fine goes on to argue that:

The problem with the DEI approach is that it pivots away from what most of us believe is the most important reason for caring about the equality and inclusion of marginalized groups – that we want to create a fairer society. The DEI approach may well be successful at making a profit out of women's labour. It has failed to create workplaces that offer genuine gender equality for women (or men), because that was never the goal.

What diversity, equality, and inclusion are actually for: creating a more just society.

This article suggests that there is a critical need for the gathering of meaningful data and support from people qualified in data analytics to make sense of the collected data. The issue of DEI surveys is explored further in Part 6 of this Report.

Beneath the surface: Resistance to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in organizations

Seval Gündemir et al (2024)

Another dimension in the challenges faced in developing DEI principles and policies is the resistance to change within an organisation and or its membership. The article by Gündemir et al explore these issues and reference current thinking around how to address or overcome the resistance to achieve group support. One area of resistance highlighted in the article relates to how individuals perceive the impacts that DEI will have on their position within the organisation. These impacts can be as: *threatening, often associating outgroups' advancement through a zero-sum lens; seeing others' gains as their own loss*. Given the negative comments from individuals on social media there are people who perceive they have been overlooked or disadvantaged at work due to DEI practices in organisations. Whereas others from more disadvantaged groups praise the opportunities that DEI policies provide for equal opportunities regardless of gender or race etc.

Gündemir et al also explore reactions to approaches and terminology when considering DEI from a gender perspective, for example that resistance from males to statements such as: *"At [name company], we are proud to sponsor programs that provide women with the resources and support they need to succeed*. The recommendation is that statements should promote the benefits as benefits to all regardless of gender.

The Problem with DEI

<https://eric-sandosham.medium.com/the-problem-with-dei-cb81d1053543>

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

Eric Sandosham (2024)

Sandosham, writing in this blog from the perspective of practical experience within the international banking sector shares his personal concerns about the value of DEI as he suggests that there: *needs to be better defined in data-specific terms to enable us to accurately measure its progress objectively.*

Referring to a 2024 Harvard Business Review (HBR) article Sandosham quotes:

“Diversity efforts build workforces that reflect the communities they serve by giving everyone a fair chance to enter and rise through each level of our organisations. Equity efforts design organisational systems and processes that prevent discrimination and equip everyone with the resources they need to succeed. Inclusion efforts create working environments where everyone is treated respectfully and is valued for their unique contributions and backgrounds.” Sounds great, but how do you measure “fair chance”? How do you know what is “unique contribution” and whether they are “valued” for it?

And this is precisely the issue with DEI — it lacks practical definitions. Terms like ‘diversity,’ ‘equity,’ and ‘inclusion’ are what we call latent variables in data analytics. Latent variables are either hypothetical constructs or they are unobservable, and we need to identify or create proxies to be able to measure them. A classic latent variable is ‘satisfaction,’ and we proxy-measure it in part through the number of compliments received. So, DEI needs to be better defined in data-specific terms to enable us to properly measure its progress objectively.

Sandosham argues that a key weakness of DEI strategies is that organisations lack the ability to gather meaningful statistics to support their programmes as there are complex issues at play when trying to achieve a diversity ratio for example. He suggests that it is important to see if: *the ‘diversity ratio’ of employees remain constant throughout the seniority pipeline — e.g. if we are hiring 50% women into the workforce as fresh graduates, do we continue to have 50% women in middle management and senior management?*

DEI DEFENCE

The Dangers and Impact of the Pushback on DEI Programs

Rabia Siddique, (2025) <https://equalopportunitytraining.com.au/dei-pushback/>

In this article on the EEO Specialists website, Siddique presents an industry perspective as a “defence” of DEI against the various attacks and pushbacks that are currently circulating, and suggests that:

Instead of dismantling DEI programs, I recommend a focus on refining and improving these initiatives to ensure that they are effective and inclusive. An open dialogue about the challenges these programs face, and the nuances of their implementation can help create a more balanced approach to fostering diversity.

Rather than viewing DEI as a political tool or divisive force, it should be recognised as a necessary component of a fair, just, and innovative society.

In the end, the pushback against DEI initiatives is more than just a political stance – it’s a cultural battle that could determine the kind of society Australia will be in the future. If this trend continues unchecked, Australia risks reinforcing the very inequalities that these programs were designed to address.

Siddique suggests that the goal of DEI is not only to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive business and work environment but also: *to build diverse spaces where people from all backgrounds can thrive.* Which is a core principle of the Built Environment organisations that are the focus of this Research Project.

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www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jan/09/diversity-equity-inclusion-importance

In their 2025 Guardian article titled *In Defence of DEI* correspondents Wajahat Ali and Yusuf Zakir provide this counter to the attacks on DEI in the US.

In reality, DEI refers to three simple but important words: diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Diversity is an outcome. Equity is the path to get there. Inclusion ensures we travel that path together. Diversity represents varied identities and differences, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, and veteran status. That means white people, Black people, straight people, gay people, rich people, poor people and more. Equity is the allocation of resources and opportunities and the elimination of barriers to create a path towards equality. The concept of equity acknowledges that there is not a level playing field. Inclusion is creating an environment where everyone is welcome, respected, supported and valued. It is about bringing people together and creating safety and belonging. It is, by definition, the opposite of exclusion.

2. DEI DEFINITIONS

The introduction broadly outlined what DEI is in simple terms, the following section presents a small sample selection of examples of how the DEI term is currently being described in existing DEI policies.

Although often grouped together as DEI we need to remember that they are different concepts with their own respective relevance and importance. The difference between the terms is critically important for effective application in the urban planning and design context, as effective goals and strategies cannot be set for concepts not fully understood. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are different yet interconnected ideas and therefore the following definitions of each are from public and private sector sources and show the potential range of wording used. Indeed, key phrases are often found in all the examples, with minor variations.

DIVERSITY EXAMPLES

The following is a DEI definition from the South Australian Commission for Public Sector Employment. www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/966433/OCPSE-DEI-Strategy-2023-2026.pdf

It is a short but succinct example from a public sector agency, but it is easy to see how it could be applied to an urban planning and design membership organisation.

***Diversity** is about recognising, respecting, and valuing our differences. Diversity ensures the public sector is representative of the community we serve and brings a range of perspectives, experiences, and opportunities to our work.*

Other examples include.

- 1. Diversity** means recognising and valuing everyone's perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Equity acknowledges we do not all start from the same place, so privilege imbalances should be managed and corrected. Inclusion is about ensuring that every person feels respected and valued. Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan outlines actions to create a respectful workplace, ensuring everyone is treated with fairness and dignity. It aims to promote a workplace where everyone is able to feel like they belong, while being empowered to contribute fully to the workplace.*
- 2. Diversity** refers to the variety of differences among people, including age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, and more. It is important to acknowledge and value these differences as they offer unique perspectives and insights when collaborating in the workplace.*
- 3. Diversity** is the range of human differences and means that each individual is equally worthwhile. Not merely acknowledging the existence of differences, it celebrates these differences and recognizes the essential value of diversity in a system. Dimensions of diversity generally cover but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic class, physical or cognitive disability, religious or ethical values system, national origin, citizenship, political beliefs, and other ideologies.*

All four of the above Diversity quotes, acknowledge that diversity recognises, celebrates, and values the different perspectives that diverse people bring to the organisation or workplace. While they all refer to differences among the human population examples 2 and 3 specifically listing different human characteristics and behaviours, there is no mention that diversity is a quantifiable factor that organisations can aim to achieve specific representation or balance of groups across their workforce.

From the urban planning and design perspective, The American Planning Association (APA) tells us that in planning practice:

True diversity is not created simply by increasing the numbers of individuals from underrepresented populations in an organization, but by empowering those individuals to reach their full potential.

(More & Better: Increasing Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Planning, 2019)

EQUITY EXAMPLES

The following is a DEI definition from the South Australian Commission for Public Sector Employment.
www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/966433/OCPS-DEI-Strategy-2023-2026.pdf

Equity recognises each person has different circumstances and acknowledges different approaches are necessary. Equity requires public sector agencies address structural barriers and inequalities that may exist in the workforce and takes a proactive approach to promoting fairness and justice.

Other examples include:

1. **Equity** recognises that each person has different circumstances, that historically, some groups of people have experienced discrimination and that reaching equal outcomes will not be achieved by treating everyone the same. Equity and reaching equal outcomes require the allocation of resources and opportunities according to circumstance and need.
2. **Equity** addresses the fair treatment and distribution of resources, opportunities, and respect for all employees. It recognises that not all individuals have the same starting point or access to resources and aims to ensure that everyone has what they need to succeed. This involves considering the specific needs of employees, such as accommodating disabilities or supporting career growth for those from underrepresented backgrounds.
3. **Equity** is the equal distribution of a system's benefits and burdens regardless of its members' differences. In other words, equity would be a reality in which an individual or groups are no more or less likely to experience a system's benefits or burdens just because of their differences, creating an environment where everyone can succeed and thrive. In our not yet perfect world, a commitment to equity requires the will and action of a system to redistribute opportunities and power.

Equity v Equality

The following quotes are provided to clarify the similar but different terminology.

Equity recognises that some people face adverse conditions and circumstances making it more challenging with the same effort to achieve the same goals. Equity advocates for those who may have been historically disadvantaged, making it difficult for them to be successful. Taking into account historical and other outside factors in determining what is fair.

Equality is about ensuring that each individual is given an equal opportunity and is treated in a fair manner. Furthermore, equality believes that no one should have poorer opportunities because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that historically certain groups of people with protected characteristics such as disability, race, sex, and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination.

The Equity v Equality is an important discussion and is at times a subtle variation between the need for some individual different treatment and allocation of resources, as opposed to ensuring equal treatment and access to available resources. In Canada and the UK, they place Equity before Diversity as it is considered the most crucial factor in achieving Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive outcomes in the workplace.

From the urban planning and design perspective, APA tells us that in planning practice:

Equity is different from diversity. Diversity invites others in, but equity modifies practices to support inclusion and flourishing. This is why the distinction between diversity and equity is so important. Diversity is largely numbers driven. It is easier to gauge and apply metrics to. Equity, on the other hand, is largely values driven. The fact that inequities exist and are pervasive through various communities is understood. However, it is harder for people to decipher what is equitable because those definitions are based on social, emotional, physical, and psychological values; as a result, needs and solutions are much more difficult to determine. As it is easier to take aim at issues with clear-cut, tangible solutions, diversity becomes the lower-hanging fruit, while equity is neglected.

INCLUSION EXAMPLES

The following is a DEI definition from the South Australian Commission for Public Sector Employment. www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/966433/OCPSE-DEI-Strategy-2023-2026.pdf

***Inclusion** is about creating a workplace culture where people feel and are respected, valued, trusted and safe to contribute the diversity of their lived experiences. Inclusion ensures the public sector is a welcoming and supportive environment for all employees and stakeholders, regardless of their background or identity.*

Other examples include:

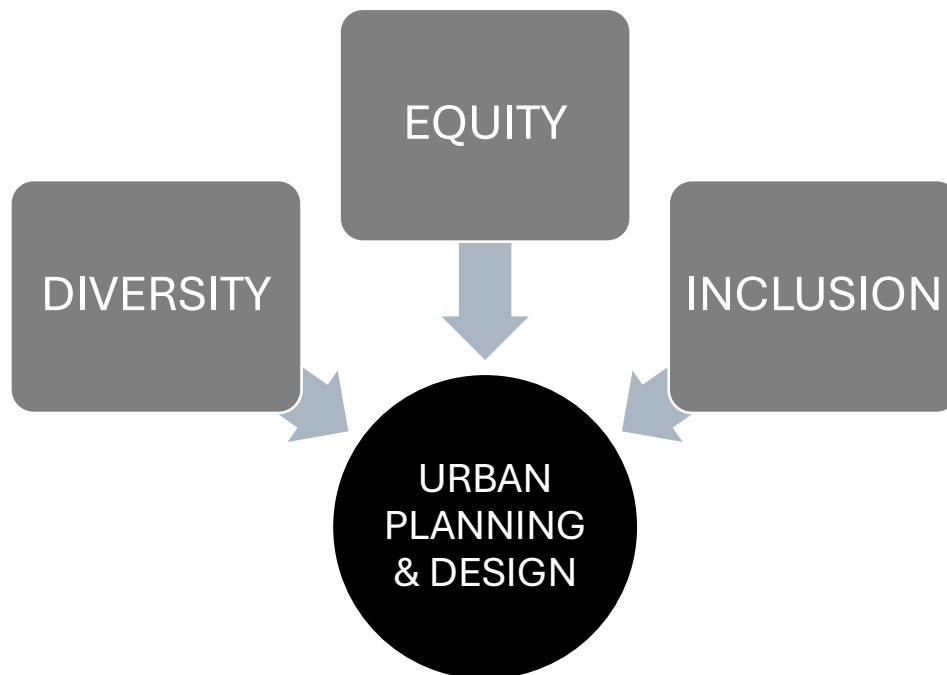
- 1. Inclusion** is relational, it is about the experience of individuals and groups in the workplace. A person's feeling of inclusion at work is related to their personal characteristics, their own behaviour and that of others and the environment they are in. Full inclusion happens when individuals experience a balance between belonging with others at work - feeling they are part of the whole enterprise – as well as being seen, understood, and valued as an individual, with a unique identity, skills, and experience.*
- 2. Inclusion** is the process of ensuring that every employee feels valued, included, and has the opportunity to contribute to their full potential. This involves fostering an environment where diverse perspectives are welcomed and heard, which ultimately leads to better teamwork and decision-making. Inclusive workplaces have a positive impact on employee well-being, retention, and overall satisfaction.*
- 3. Inclusion** is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. An inclusive system promotes and sustains a sense of belonging. It values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its members. An inclusive system also recognizes that agreement might not always be the end result, but that dialogue and understanding are part of the larger process that allows for inclusivity to be achieved.*

Inclusion can be confused with integration, meaning the physical presence of individuals or groups into a larger society or organisation, while maintaining their distinct cultural or social identities. This could look like specialised classes or segregated group activities away from the main group in a workplace. Inclusion, on the other hand, as stated in the examples above, sees each person as unique and involves creating an environment that is welcoming and supportive of all individuals, regardless of their perceived differences.

From the urban planning and design perspective, APA tells us that in planning practice:

Inclusion is about experiences and how those experiences contribute to a person's ability to fully be involved. For example, a group of people can be invited to attend the same discussion session, but power dynamics can emerge on the basis of language, occupation, level of education, race, and socioeconomic status that preclude individuals with the least power from being truly involved.

3. DEI in URBAN PLANNING & DESIGN



It is worth stating once again that while we are using DEI as shorthand for the three headings, they each have special means and relationships to the built environment and the processes of planning and design. Therefore, this section considers how the individual diversity, equity, and inclusion factors feed into the context of urban planning and design.

Understanding Diversity in Urban Planning & Design

Of the three DEI terms, diversity is a quantifiable and measurable concept relating to population characteristics in our increasingly diverse and complex societies. Understanding diversity can be informed internally in an organisation by membership details or externally through sector data collected via census or individual surveys. The research found that the Australian Institute of Architects, the American Planning Association, and the Canadian Institute of Planning had for example, initially undertaken membership DEI surveys to inform their policy development. In addition, the Diversity Agenda in New Zealand have been surveying their program partners annually to track the progress withing the architectural and engineering sectors.

Diversity may include demographic data such as ethnicity, ancestry, faith, age, and or personal characteristics such as physical and mental capability, gender, and sexual orientation, among other measurable diverse factors. An expanded perspective of what constitutes diversity can be found in the "Diversity Wheel," from Johns Hopkins University which can be viewed or downloaded as a PDF at: www.researchgate.net/figure/Diversity-Wheel-as-used-at-Johns-Hopkins-University-12_fig1_320178286

Applying Diversity agendas in Built Environment organisations can include achieving a balanced/representational diversity across the membership and on governing boards and working committees etc. DEI policies can include a set of goals and targets and provide a mechanism for the reviewing of outcomes, e.g. the Diversity Agenda's annual Insight's Reports. In the UK, Robbie Turner, director of inclusion and diversity at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) suggests that "*We have a significant underrepresentation of women across the profession and a significant overrepresentation of white people.*" According to Turner, only 31% of architects in the UK are women, 2% are Black, and architects with disabilities represent only 1% of architects in the UK (compared to a general population of 21%).

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Incorporating diversity in Urban Planning & Design practices means not only applying DEI to community engagement processes but also designing and creating spaces where everyone feels welcome, safe, and can participate fully. For example, designing parks and public areas that cater to multiple age groups simultaneously, encouraging interaction between children, adults, and seniors through varied play equipment, seating options, and activity zones. Planning for a mix of housing types and tenures to accommodate different household sizes, incomes, and life stages, fostering socially diverse and resilient neighbourhoods. Creating a transport system that is both efficient and fair, must provide a diversity of transport options to serve diverse demands. All travellers need to be able to choose the best option for each trip that aligns with their viable mobility circumstances.

In parallel with approaching urban planning and design from a DEI policy perspective it is important to acknowledge the importance of Planning Culturally which requires planning and design practitioners gaining Cultural Literacy skills to engage with and appreciate the variations in the behaviours and values of diverse communities. (further information regarding Cultural Literacy can be found on www.planning-culturally.com/urban-practices)

Understanding Equity in Urban Planning & Design

Unlike diversity, equity is not captured as a quantitative measure in a survey, rather as a qualitative measure it requires appropriate interviewing or survey techniques such as responses to open-ended questions or ratings using a Likert scale.

As Equity is behavioural concept it requires the individual or organisation to make a commitment to the practice of behaving within codes and values. This is especially true of building teams and collaborative practice where professionals need to feel respected and valued.

Applying Equity in organisations requires the organisation to acknowledge that different approaches are necessary and the commitment to address structural barriers and inequalities that may exist in the organisation or across the membership structure and take a proactive approach to promoting fairness and justice.

Applying Equity through Cultural and Social Planning practices in urban planning and design involves practitioners ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunity, and engagement for all people while striving to find and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. In urban planning, equity means ensuring that all community members, regardless of their socio-economic status, race, gender, age, ability, or other characteristics, have equal access to resources opportunities, and their opinions are valued.

Of considerable importance is ensuring equity is a carefully considered factor in transport and infrastructure planning. The ability of all citizens accessing public transport despite their social status of physical and mental capabilities must be factored into the condition of the public realm and the design of the various transport infrastructure. This is of significance regarding the equitable and safe transit environment for women, LGBTQI+ persons, people with disabilities and young people accessing the city's night time economy. An example of equity in transport planning can be seen in Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy (Metro Vancouver 2021) which talks about all citizens sharing the benefits of the city, the Strategy explicitly states that each of its five goals applies to everybody.

Understanding Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

Inclusion is also a behavioural practice together with equity and involves actively involving membership in organisational processes in meaningful ways. Applying Inclusion in the organisation ensures the membership feel the Institute is a welcoming and supportive environment for all, regardless of their background or identity.

Applying Inclusion in urban planning involves meaningful engagement with diverse groups in the planning and decision-making processes. For example, in Australia the concept of "Yarning Circles" for engagement with First Nations Peoples has been gaining acceptance as a culturally safe environment in which to have meaningful dialogue. Inclusion means creating urban environments, civic infrastructure, and public spaces where all individuals feel welcome and valued, and their voices are

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heard and considered in shaping the urban landscape. For example, in terms of civic infrastructure, public libraries are often referred to by the community as welcoming and inclusive places.

Once again transport planning is an example of inclusive strategies, for example the 2024 *Hamburg Charter for Inclusive and Just Mobility* features strategies for “Inclusivity in Transport”, including the following:

- *Ensuring the needs of underrepresented voices in decision-making such as women, the elderly, and children, as well as people with disabilities in planning and providing mobility infrastructure and services through participatory processes.*
- *Acknowledging gender disparities, addressing the underrepresentation of women in the transport sector, and supporting and encouraging their active participation in decision-making roles, as planners and workers.*
- *Working towards eliminating gender-based and minority group-based violence and harassment and providing appropriate mobility options for women including the acknowledgement of their role as care workers to enhance their economic and social participation.*

https://hamburg-charter.transformative-mobility.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Hamburg-Charter-for-Inclusive-and-Just-Mobility_FINAL_TO_SHARE.pdf

Diversity and Inclusion as a Critical Factors in the Urban Revitalization Efforts – Community and Individuals Perspective

<https://doaj.org/article/102b67cd65ec4a9e8b86fd74c7efd2b7>

By: Elwira Gross-Golacka, (2023)

In the 2023 article Gross-Golacka reminds us that in the “UN Sustainable Development Goals” there are specific goals that support inclusive initiatives, these are:

Goals 10 and 16 deal directly with inclusion: the first involves reducing inequality within and between countries, with an emphasis on inclusion, equal opportunity, and better representation. The issue of inclusion is also a key principle in several other goals. In particular, the goals for education (Goal 4) and urban development (Goal 11) are intended to be inclusive, as are those for economic growth (Goal 8) and industrialization (Goal 9). Goal 5 focuses on a multidimensional form of social inclusion with regard to gender equality. The main idea adopted reads: "By 2030, ensure universal access to green and public places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, especially for women and children, the elderly and people with disabilities."

With these goals in mind Gross-Golacka suggests that: *inclusive services and planning should be an important pillar in building the cities of the future.*

Strategies for Planning & Designing with Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

From a planning and design practice perspective DEI principles should be applied across the various project aspects, including but not limited to the following:

1. Community Engagement and Participation

Engaging with the community by applying DEI principles is fundamental to understanding their needs and aspirations. DEI urban planning involves:

- **Diversity:** Providing a range of opportunities for all community members to take part in the planning process. This can include public meetings, workshops, surveys, and digital platforms.
- **Equity:** Providing clear, accessible information about planning processes and decisions in appropriate languages and communication methods relevant to community needs.
- **Inclusion:** Ensuring that marginalized groups are represented in the decision-making processes

2. Community Access to Resources and Services

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Urban development should ensure that resources and services are distributed fairly across the city. This includes:

- Diversity: Developing housing policies that offer a range of affordable options for all cultural groups and income levels.
- Equity: Designing non-discriminatory, efficient, accessible, and affordable transport options that meet the needs of the diverse community.
- Inclusion: Ensuring all community members regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, and ability have access to parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities.

3. Inclusive Design and Infrastructure

Designing urban spaces that are accessible and welcoming to everyone involves:

- Diversity: Implementing DEI design principles that make spaces usable by people of all ages and abilities.
- Equity: Acknowledging and incorporating the cultural beliefs and practices of diverse communities into urban designs.
- Inclusion: Creating safe, well-lit, and comfortable environments for all, particularly for vulnerable populations.

In the practical application of diversity, equity and inclusion when planning and designing the public realm it is important to appreciate that diverse publics need diverse solutions, especially in relation to questions of ensuring equitable urban outcomes.

Arijit Sen, in a paper, titled *Making Sense of the Architectural Production of 'Others': Architectural Design and Multiculturalism* (2010) remind us that psychologist, and architect, Amos Rapoport cautions:

... that cultural responsiveness is not "universal architecture," a one-size fits all norm or the erasure of all difference that has been the product of the modern movement in architecture and planning. According to Rapoport, "responsive environments are those which can be manipulated as culture changes, i.e. open ended, flexible and adaptive environments."

Universal Design/Architecture

<https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design>

Universal Design, which was developed in 1997 by Ron Mace, founder of the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University, proposes that design should benefit every user. That is, to design environments that work for everyone in terms of accessibility and inclusion.

Universal design is a design thinking process that promotes human rights and embraces the concept of inclusion for all. A universal design approach considers the diverse needs and abilities of people throughout the design process. Universal design is non-stigmatising, efficient and sustainable.

<https://universaldesignaustralia.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Universal-Design-position-statement-Generic-Final-Sept-2021.pdf>

Universal design in architecture claims that when applied it creates urban environments usable by all, regardless of age, ability, or background, without needing special adaptations. It also claims to be focusing on inclusivity, equity, and independence by making spaces inherently welcoming and functional for diverse users and therefore improving quality of life for everyone. However, Universal Design can be seen as more closely aligned with Equality than Equity, as highlighted in the previous Definitions section:

Equality is about ensuring that each individual is given an equal opportunity and is treated in a fair manner.

Whereas:

Equity recognises that some people face adverse conditions and circumstances making it more challenging with the same effort to achieve the same goals.

Delivering DEI principles in Urban Planning & Design

The practical application of DEI principles in urban planning and design requires commitments from both professional planners and designers and either the public or private sector client group. In the Australian public sector agencies such as the Queensland Government's, Department of Housing and Public Works (HPW) have a DEI policy to inform the Departments workplace practices.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan 2025-2028

https://www.housing.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/67486/diversity-equity-inclusion-plan.pdf

The Plan's introduction states that:

Embracing diversity means recognising and valuing everyone's perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Equity acknowledges we do not all start from the same place, so privilege imbalances should be managed and corrected. Inclusion is about ensuring that every person feels respected and valued. Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan outlines actions to create a respectful workplace, ensuring everyone is treated with fairness and dignity. It aims to promote a workplace where everyone is able to feel like they belong, while being empowered to contribute fully to the workplace. Through this plan, we are committed to capability building, reassessing our recruitment practices, and nurturing a culture that values and celebrates differences to build a workplace that considers our staff's lived experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. This will ensure our current and future workforce is reflective of the broader Queensland community and the people we serve, so ultimately, we can create an environment where innovative and out-of-the-box ideas can flourish.

If we are to accept the challenge in the HPW DEI Plan that; *Embracing diversity means recognising and valuing everyone's perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences* the planning and design sector must ensure that the very best community engagement techniques are applied to gather in depth knowledge of the make up of the local population and the diversity of perspectives and needs. Techniques such as "cultural mapping" and "listening and learning circles" have proved successful in many projects.

In addition to the urban planning and design sector addressing LGBTQI+, gender equity, the needs of culturally diverse community members (see www.planning-culturally.com) and people with physical disabilities we also need to highlighted and address the spatial and experiential requirements of neurodiverse members of our communities. There is an increasing discourse around the needs of creating public spaces and buildings that provide a diversity of sensory experiences and are equitable and inclusive to the diversity of neurodivergent community members.

The following are some examples of approaches to this discourse:

World Economic Forum (WEF)

How neurodiversity can shape sustainable urban planning — and benefit us all (2024)

www.weforum.org/stories/2024/04/neurodiversity-sustainable-urban-planning/

The articles outline the context of this discussion:

Many cities prioritize aesthetics over accessibility, creating environments that exclude a significant portion of the population. This impacts quality of life and, critically, hinders participation in sustainable practices. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Neurodiversity is the idea that brains work in all sorts of ways. There's no single "correct" way to think, learn or act, and these differences shouldn't be seen as deficits. Neurodiverse people have unique strengths and talents but experience the world differently and struggle in some ways when navigating neurotypical city designs.

Cities can be challenging for neurodiverse people due to sensory overload, unclear navigation, and social exclusion. Experiences vary by age, gender, and neurological condition. Inaccessible

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public transport and unpredictable environments exacerbate anxiety and limit access to city life for neurodivergent individuals.

Further research into the needs of neurodiversity in relation to the built environment found that in the UK the planning sector have been active in exploring the impacts of urban planning, for example the following examples from Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Institute's 2025 Young Planners' Conference.

Neurodiversity: What is the planning profession's role?

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/new-from-the-rtpi/neurodiversity-what-is-the-planning-profession-s-role/>

by: Atefeh Motamedi (2022)

Motamedi writes that in the context of EDI:

Given that around 15% of the total population is neurodiverse, there is a compelling case for re-balancing urban resources and improving accessibility and standards for inclusion of neurodiversity.

And

But to create more inclusive built environments, we should look at neurodiversity through the lens of strategic planning from the outset of plan-making, policy development, and decision-taking. It is important to recognise that 'do nothing' scenarios and poor design often cause harm and will have to be retrofitted at a later stage.

Under the Equality Act 2010, local planning authorities are required to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic, such as 'disabilities', which can include some forms of neurodiversity, and those who do not.

However, there is still a huge gap in awareness and areas to tackle that needs to be addressed. To be truly robust, local plans should go far enough in their baseline evidence documents and policy wording to be neuro inclusive. Where necessary, local planning authorities should introduce additional planning policies, local design guides and design codes that promote 'designing for the mind.'

Inclusive planning and design require the participation of all cohorts of society. Proactive and early engagement informed by the lived experiences of neurodivergent individuals is required to identify and understand the nature and scale of the impacts that planning can have on neurodiverse people and mitigate the adverse impacts before they become a barrier to enjoying a happy and healthy life.

RTPI Young Planners' Conference 2025

Designing for neurodiversity – Why it matters and how to do it.

<https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/08/28/designing-neurodiversity-why-it-matters-and-how-to-do-it>

By: Annie Gingell (2025)

Gingell writes that:

Around 15-20 per cent of the population is thought to be neurodivergent, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other cognitive or sensory differences.

Yet most of our built environment is still designed around neurotypical expectations. That means environments are often noisy, unpredictable, difficult to navigate or overwhelming; all of which can significantly affect mental health and limit participation in community life.

A *Designing for Neurodiversity* toolkit has been produced by the Neurodiversity in Planning network. [Participation and Engagement Toolkit](#)

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The same principles that reduce barriers for neurodivergent people such as clarity, flexibility, comfort, and choice make places easier, safer, and more enjoyable for everyone. Neuroinclusive design is simply better, more thoughtful, more human-centred design. (Gingell 2025)

The following table summarises the potential contribution that DEI can make when applied in an urban planning and design context at the workplace and membership level, also applied to planners and designers engaging with communities, and the potential outcomes from built environment projects.

APPLICATION OF DEI PRINCIPLES IN URBAN PLANNING & DESIGN			
	DIVERSITY	EQUITY	INCLUSION
DEI PRINCIPLES WORKPLACE & MEMBERSHIP	Redressing the gender balance in the professions to reflect population and bringing more diversity of world views & experiences.	Addressing social inequities & biases in the professions to encourage more graduates and members.	Making the professions inclusive for a wider range of people to become involved in the institute activities.
DEI PRACTICES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	More meaningful engagement with a wider diversity of community members.	Considering issues from the perspective of people's experience of social & physical disadvantage.	Creating, inclusive, safe and welcoming environments in which to engage with community members.
DEI PRACTICES BUILT ENVIRONMENT OUTCOMES	Delivering place-based outcomes that reflect the diverse cultural and social mix of the local population.	Seek to deliver urban outcomes that do not perpetuate patterns of disadvantage and inequality.	Plan & design places that are inclusive of all genders, cultures, ages and abilities.

Although through the report the term Urban Planning and Design has been used to as an overall term for urban planners, architects, landscape architects and urban designers should be noted that each of these sectors will have different issues in the application of DEI principles in their professional practices.

For example, the urban planner is applying the principles to master planning, land use planning, and statutory planning, while architects, landscape architects and urban designers are working directly with the design and implementation of places requiring meaningful client or community engagement.

The reality is that those professionals involved in the design and creation of public realm projects will need to consider diversity, equity and inclusion at the forefront of their community interaction to deliver culturally rich, unique and just public places.

4. PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS: DEI POLICIES

This desk-based DEI research reviewed Australian, Aotearoa New Zealand, Canadian, UK, and US built environment membership associations and or institutes, as there are parallels in the planning, architectural and landscape architectural sectors in terms of the industry structures and membership organisations in these countries.

This Research Report provides the findings of the desk-based literature search, of built environment sources such as planning, architectural, landscape architectural and associated professional institutes etc. The following section is based on recording URLs and selected quotations from DEI policy examples from institutes across the researched countries. The aim was to provide a snapshot of where the various institutes are at currently in terms of developing DEI policies, rather than an in-depth analysis of policy content.

In relation to urban planning and design, DEI principles and practices can be considered from both the perspective of a membership organisation and its values and principles applied in its management and from the perspective of the membership applying DEI principles and values in their urban planning and design practice.

NOTE: For each country reviewed, initial research looked at the National context, such as the existence of government DEI Policies or associated statements of commitments to the principles. Also, relevant built environment organisations such as national advocacy groups etc, supporting DEI principles have been reviewed and summarised in the National Context section to help give a sense of the existing cultural climate within which the industry membership organisations are operating.

4.1 AUSTRALIA

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Australian Government websites indicate that here is committed to concepts of DEI and supported by policies and strategies including the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (PM&C) with the stated vision of:

enhancing the diversity of our workforce whilst embedding a culture of inclusion – a goal that is central to living our organisational values.

Relevant Documents include:

- PM&C Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2023–26 - www.pmc.gov.au/careers/inclusion-and-diversity
- Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) - <https://www.dfat.gov.au/careers/dfat-aps-careers/diversity-and-inclusion>
- Dept. Home Affairs - www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/careers/working-with-us/workplace-diversity
- Australian Public Services Commission - www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/diversity-and-inclusion

From a Federal government perspective, a policy of significance to the planning and design sector is the DEI strategy of The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy 2025–28

www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-strategy-2025-28.pdf

The strategy outlines the Departments commitment to creating a workplace where everyone feel they belong and are safe, valued, and empowered to succeed. It has been built on the 4 pillars of inclusion outlined by the Diversity Council Australia.

The Strategy is supported by a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy Roadmap 2025-26.

www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/dei-roadmap-2025-56.pdf

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

In addition to the Federal Government's DEI policies there is a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in recognition of the challenges facing the First Nations People, especially in relation to urban planning and design, the Government states that its Reconciliation Action Plan is more than just a strategic document, it's a roadmap for tangible action.

Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025–2028

[www.aph.gov.au/About Parliament/Publications/Reconciliation Action Plan](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Publications/Reconciliation_Action_Plan)

Diversity Council Australia (DCA)

www.dca.org.au

The Diversity Council Australia is an independent not-for-profit peak body for diversity and inclusion advocacy and support services to public and private sector organisation developing DEI policies and strategies.

This next section provides examples of online policies and position statements from organisational policies from built environment organisation in Australia.

AUSTRALIAN PLANNING & DESIGN ORGANISATIONS

Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)

PIA state that:

The planning profession should reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve.

A review of the PIA website relating to diversity, equity and inclusion provided the following relevant documents.

2018 Interim Diversity & Inclusion Statement

www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/About/Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20Statement.pdf

2021 National Gender Equity Policy

www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/About/GV05%20Gender%20Equity%20Policy%201-Page.pdf

Building on the 2021 policy PIA have developed the:

2024 Gender Equity Action Plan

www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/About/GV05-P1%20Gender%20Equity%20Action%20Plan.pdf

As of 2025 PIA does not have a final DEI policy to formalise the *2018 Interim Diversity & Inclusion Statement*, however late 2025 PIA formed a DEI membership working group to start the process of developing a draft of a DEI Plan for review in 2026.

Australian Institute of Architects (AIA)

AIA state that:

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

We want architectural practices to be more representative of the communities they serve, and to be inclusive of different ways to live, work and learn.

AIA have a range of relevant initiatives such as follows.

Diversity and Inclusion in the Architectural Profession

www.architecture.com.au/advocacy-news/diversity-equity

AIA DEI survey 2023

www.architecture.com.au/wp-content/uploads/DI-Survey-Rpt-2023.pdf

The survey was distributed to members of the Australian Institute of Architects via email for online completion, from 1 – 28 May 2023. 1,673 respondents completed the survey and provided their feedback, who were both members and non-members of the Institute. The response from members represented 12% of total national AIA membership.

For full details of the survey findings visit: www.architecture.com.au/wp-content/uploads/DI-Survey-Rpt-2023.pdf

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA)

The institute states that:

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) is taking a leadership role to ensure the landscape architecture profession is as inclusive, diverse, and equitable as it can possibly be.

Relevant content from the AILA website include:

TRANSITION TO DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

<https://www.aila.org.au/Web/Web/Values/Gender-Equity-Working-Group.aspx?hkey=541db475-587a-4d4f-98da-1ea8530688d2>

Additional AILA content on issues associated with their DIA progress can be found at:

AILA Gender Equity: Next Steps Summary Report 2025

www.aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/_AILA/Resource%20library/AILA%20Gender%20Equity-Next%20Steps%20Summary%20Report%202025.pdf

And

Census Report 2001–2021 An Overview of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Australian Landscape Architecture Profession

www.aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/_AILA/Reports/2001-2021%20AILA%20Census%20Report.pdf

The AILA 2025 DEI Policy can be found at:

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Policy 2025

www.aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/_AILA/Governance/Policies/DEI%20Policy.pdf

Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA)

We believe that UDIA SA and its members should reflect the diverse composition of the communities in which we operate.

Relevant Documents include:

UDIA SA

UDIA Diversity and Inclusion Statement

www.udiasa.com.au/policy-advocacy/diversity-inclusion

UDIA WA Division

UDIA Diversity Toolkit

www.udiaawa.com.au/members/udia-wa-diversity-toolkit/

Part 3: Summary & Observations - Australia

Within a positive national DEI environment, the review of Australian planning, architectural and landscape architectural Institutes found strong industry support for DEI principles, with AIA and AILA having existing Policies, and PIA being in the process of developing a draft Policy for review in early 2026.

In addition to the three planning and design Institutes the UDIA and its state chapters also have their Diversity & Inclusion statement plus in Western Australia the local chapter website includes the Diversity Toolkit which is available to assist its members to develop their own independent Policies.

In the Australian context all the above Institutes have strong recognition of First Nations People and their ongoing relationship to Country, through Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP)

4.2 INTERNATIONAL

4.2.1 AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Aotearoa New Zealand is officially a bicultural country underpinned by The Treaty of Waitangi which established a unique bicultural framework, recognizing the Indigenous Māori and European (Pākehā) peoples. Today the country also has a strong multicultural population, especially peoples from the Pacific Islands and Asia.

The NZ Government has a stated public commitment to DEI strategies including the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (DPMC).

The DPMC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan 2024/25

www.dPMC.govt.nz/publications/dPMC-diversity-inclusion-equity-plan-2024-25

The research also found that the following Departments publish DEI policy statements.

- Public Service Commission - *Diversity, equity, and inclusion plan 2024 and 2025*
www.publicservice.govt.nz/publications/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-plan-2024-and-2025-2-year
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT) - *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy • 2018 – 2028*
www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/who-we-are/diversity-and-inclusion
- Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE) *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan 2024-25*
www.mbie.govt.nz/about/who-we-are/corporate-publications/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-plan/mbie-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-plan-2024-2025

The Diversity Agenda

A review of New Zealand built environment institutes found little evidence of DEI policies on the institute websites. It did identify the Diversity Agenda ([About us - The Diversity Agenda](#)) that is a collaborative initiative between Engineering New Zealand, the Institute of Architects and the Association of Consulting and Engineering.

The Diversity Agenda website states that:

the business case for Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is stronger than ever, particularly in industries like architecture and engineering consulting.

Diversity Accord

<https://diversityagenda.org/accord/>

Diversity Agenda Insights 2025

Each year since 2021 Diversity Agenda has published an Insights Report outlining the results of the annual survey. In the introduction to the 2025 Insights Report Chair of The Diversity Agenda, Josie Fitzgerald stated that:

Globally, the conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has shifted, making progress more complex. In contrast, this year has been about holding the line here in Aotearoa, keeping DEI at the forefront, even as many organisations focused on simply staying afloat. That's something we can be proud of.

Data Collection -Insights Reports

The 2025 annual Insights Report provides data on the survey findings from the current year against the reports since 2021.

This next section provides examples of position statements and of quotes from organisational policies from built environment organisation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

NEW ZEALAND PLANNING & DESIGN ORGANISATIONS

New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI)

<https://planning.org.nz/>

A search of the NZPI website found no evidence of a specific DEI policy. NZPI have advised that they are seeking to collaborate with an external provider to support the Institute through the process of developing a DEI policy. They are also intending to use the process to develop resources to support their membership develop internal policies for their practices, many of which they appreciate are small scale or sole traders without the resources to develop their own policies.

At this stage, the Institute has prepared a Position Paper in “The Role of The Planner” relating to diversity, integrity, equity, and fairness.

2004 NZPI Position Paper

https://planning.org.nz/Attachment?Action=Download&Attachment_id=1000963

New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA)

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

<https://www.nzia.co.nz/>

The Institute is a Diversity Accord member and undertaking the DEI development process as part of the accord.

In addition to adopting DEI principles through the Diversity Agenda, NZIA have engaged with Māori design professionals to develop Design Principles as a response to the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol. These principles enable Māori values to be incorporated into future design process.

New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects - Tuia Pito Ora (NZILA)

<https://www.nzila.co.nz/>

[www.nzila.co.nz/media/uploads/2024_07/2024Constitution Board Adopted 25 June 2024 Formatted.pdf](https://www.nzila.co.nz/media/uploads/2024_07/2024Constitution_Board_Adopted_25_June_2024_Formatted.pdf)

The Institute does not have a specific DEI policy but its Introduction to the 2024 Constitution includes commitments on recognising Māori customs and practices as an integral part of Māori culture and way of life and respecting the Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (Treaty of Waitangi)

Part 4: Summary & Observations – Aotearoa New Zealand

The research found that Diversity Agenda is a pivotal point in advocating and data gathering for the built environment sector in New Zealand with its ongoing commitment to data gathering on a national basis.

In terms of the individual Institutes, the NZIA have signed up to the Diversity Accord, NZPI are in the process of developing a DEI policy and the NZILA have focused on supporting Māori customs and practices. Should also be noted that the NZIA and NZPI have commitment statements to Māori culture and the Treaty of Waitangi.

4.2.2 CANADA

National Context:

The Canadian Government is committed to DEI principles and has a DEI Policy from 2022.

www.canada.ca/en/security-intelligence-service/corporate/publications/csis-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-strategy-2022.html

The DEI Policy exists in a national cultural environment that addresses Indigenous Peoples cultures, Multiculturalism and Bilingualism.

Indigenous Peoples and Communities

www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303

The Canadian Constitution recognizes 3 groups of Indigenous Peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act

www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/about-multiculturalism-anti-racism/about-act.html

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act, enacted in 1988, affirms the policy of the Canadian government to recognize and promote the multicultural heritage of Canadian society.

Official Languages Act (OLA)

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/o-3.01/>

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

The Act proscribes both English and French are the official languages and have equality of status in the work of federal government institutions.

Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)

<https://ccdi.ca/en>

The CCDI is advocating for DEI values through education, training, and resources such as policy toolkits, etc.

NOTE: The research shows that in Canada the order of headings goes from DEI to EDI as in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The Canadian Planning Institute have added "Accessibility" creating EDIA.

CANADIAN PLANNING & DESIGN ORGANISATIONS

DEI in the Canadian Planning and design sector.

This next section provides examples of position statements and of quotes from organisational policies from built environment organisation in Canada.

Canadian Construction Association (CCA)

www.cca-acc.com/about-us/policy-statements/#workforce

The Canadian Construction Association (CCA) states that it is:

committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for all our employees, volunteers, Member, and partners. We believe this ongoing commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), is essential to the long-term success of our association and will inspire the industry to make similar commitments, benefiting all Canadians.

Canadian Institute of Planning (CIP)

<https://www.cip-icu.ca/>

In the CIP Strategic planning documents Canada's cultural diversity has been highlighted a critical issue for the Institute to address both in its administration and membership activities but also as key to delivering best practice urban outcomes.

Relevant Documents include:

Strategic Plan (2022-2027)

www.cip-icu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Strategic-Plan_ENGLISH_Updated.pdf

The Strategic Plan addresses both the issue of Reconciliation and EDI.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility: How Planners Can Be Part of a Brighter Future

<https://www.cip-icu.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion-accessibility/>

Canadian Institute of Planning- 2024 EDI Insight Survey Report

https://www.cip-icu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-Equity-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Insight-Survey-Report-ENGLISH-V6_compressed.pdf

Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC)

<https://raic.org/>

Under the heading:

Taking Action against Systemic Racism

<https://raic.org/news/taking-action-against-systemic-racism>

The Institute makes the following statement:

As a profession, we must be committed to our values which include equality and diversity. The RAIC stands against racism and commits to working towards a strategy that ensures the RAIC is anti-racist and anti-oppressive.

Relevant Documents.

2025-2027 Strategic Plan

https://raic.org/sites/raic.org/files/raic_strategic_plan_web.pdf

In the RAIC 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, the RAIC committed to engaging in reconciliation as one of their five key values. To the RAIC, reconciliation means building, rebuilding, and strengthening our relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Continuing the path to reconciliation, in collaboration with the RAIC Truth and Reconciliation Task Force, and the Indigenous Task Force, the RAIC has created resources that offers a variety of different opportunities for you to learn more about truth and reconciliation.

Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA)

We believe that inclusion is a priority of utmost importance not only to society as a whole but to the profession of landscape architecture.

Relevant Documents

CSLA Statement on Inequality and Injustice

<https://www.csla-aapc.ca/mission-areas/csla-statement-inequality-and-injustice>

CSLA Statement on Reconciliation and the Profession of Landscape Architecture

www.csla-aapc.ca/sites/csla-aapc.ca/files/EN%20CSLA%20Statement%20on%20Reconciliation%20.pdf

Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation (LACF)

<https://lacf.ca/>

LACF condemns racism, bigotry, and oppression in all its forms. We encourage our members and donors to contribute in any way they can to eradicate systemic racism.

Statement on Racial Inequality and Injustice

<https://lacf.ca/about-lacf/lacf-statement-racial-inequality-and-injustice>

Part 4: Summary & Observations – Canada

In Canada, the National Government has an EDI Policy position and the national planning, architectural and landscape architectural Institutes all the Institutes have EDI statements of commitment and Indigenous Reconciliation statements.

4.4.3 UK

In the UK, as in Canada, they reverse DEI to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The UK parliament is supportive of EDI and has an:

Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2023-2027.

www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/commons/house-of-commons-commission/hoc-diversity-inclusion-strategy/

The UK Government and the various Departments have relevant Inclusive and Diversity statements and Policy Papers that outline their aims and goals for diversity and inclusion within their sectors.

In terms of the built environment professions addressing EDI principles and practices there is an interesting whole of sector initiative in the UK, called the 'B.E. Inclusive Initiative,' which is similar in some areas to the Diversity Agenda in NZ

B.E. Inclusive Initiative

<https://www.rics.org/about-rics/responsible-business/diversity-and-inclusion/be-inclusive-initiative>

The B.E. Inclusive initiative is a collaborative effort of six professional bodies in the built environment sector to drive diversity, equity, and inclusion.

B.E. Inclusive: Memorandum of Understanding, Creating a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive built environment sector.

The following parties, namely,

- *Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists*
- *Chartered Institute of Building*
- *Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors*
- *Institution of Civil Engineers*
- *Landscape Institute*
- *Royal Institute of British Architects*
- *Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors*
- *Royal Town Planning Institute*

All the above have agreed to cooperate with the purpose of creating a built environment sector that is as diverse as the communities it represents; that acts inclusively, treats everyone fairly and provides a culture that delivers the best outcomes for the diverse societies in which and for whom our collective memberships work. Signatories recognise the potential of our combined membership to affect a meaningful and tangible improvement in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) standards across the built environment.

Action Plan 2022

www.rics.org/about-rics/responsible-business/diversity-and-inclusion/be-inclusive-initiative

The 2022 Action Plan outlines the following Objectives:

- Objective 1 - Data Actions: Standardising member data collection
- Objective 2 - Pipeline Actions: Understanding the transition from education into employment.
- Objective 3 - Standards Actions: Raising the sector's standards of EDI knowledge, behaviours and practice.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

This next section provides examples of position statements and of quotes from organisational policies from built environment organisation in the UK.

UK PLANNING & DESIGN ORGANISATIONS

Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

www.rtpi.org.uk/site-pages/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-policy/

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy state that:

At the RTPI equity, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of our values and objectives. Promoting equity, diversity and inclusion within the planning profession is one of 'The Four Pillars' of our Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2030. RTPI believes these values should apply universally within the RTPI.

RTPI also have a Dignity at Work Policy

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/site-pages/dignity-at-work-policy-and-procedure/>

The purpose of the Dignity at Work policy is to ensure that we maintain a culture in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect and can fulfil their true potential.

Royal British Institute of Architecture (RBIA)

Representing our communities.

www.riba.org/about-us/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/

We're working to ensure that the architecture sector and the wider construction industry is representative of the communities and societies we serve.

RBIA Inclusive Design Overlay.2020

www.riba.org/work/insights-and-resources/inclusive-design-overlay-to-riba-plan-of-work/

Architects Registration Board (ARB)

Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

<https://arb.org.uk/about-arb/equality-diversity/>

The RBA Register of Architects provides the only complete and authoritative source of information about all architects qualified to work in the UK. The Board uses data it holds in the Register of Architects and other sources to analyse the profession. Its findings show that the architects' profession does not reflect the makeup of society, as women are underrepresented, and white people are overrepresented on the Register.

The ARB have developed an EDI Policy to inform its organisation and registration processes and sets four goals, the first two of which are focused on their remit and powers, and the second two of which describe a future vision for the profession that believe would deliver better outcomes for the public.

Landscape Institute (LI)

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

<https://landscapeinstitute.org/>

Although the LI participates in the B.E. Inclusive Initiative, there appears to be no specific reference to addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion issues through policy on their website. The Institute does recognise that there are diversity issues within the profession and lists it among the organisation's challenges.

Why EDI matters to the LI

<https://landscapeinstitute.org/about/equity-diversity-inclusion/>

The influence of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is fundamental to every organisation. Now more than ever, it is crucial to strengthen our commitment to EDI. At the LI, we are proud to champion these values, helping our members explore innovative ways to drive EDI throughout the industry.

The LI Corporate Strategy 2025-2030

States that:

...a diverse and inclusive professional membership is central to delivering approaches that will enhance landscapes, achieve our charitable objectives, and drive the future of the sector. Building and growing a trusted community of landscape professionals requires us to ensure that the profession is open to all, and reflective of the communities that we serve.

Construction Industry Council (CIC)

www.cic.org.uk

The CIC website states that: *Achieving diversity, equality and inclusion within the construction industry will help ensure that everyone can share the benefits of - and contribute to - a prosperous sector. It is perhaps the only way to ensure that the built environment caters for a variety of needs.*

To achieve real change in the DEI within the construction industry CIC have established a DEI committee.

CIC Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee

The aim of CIC's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee is to provide a collaborative and strategic forum and platform for members of all construction and built environment disciplines and professional bodies to identify and promote a genuine commitment and a consistent approach to EDI in the construction and built environment sector.

CIC also publish Essential Principles Guides, including a 2018 guide for accessible and inclusive built environments.

www.cic.org.uk/search?q=Essential+Principles+Guide

The Construction Industry Council (CIC) has published a second Essential Principles Guide for Creating an Accessible and Inclusive Environment which aims to support, guide and motivate clients, developers, and contractors to achieve exacting standards of access and inclusion in all their projects.

Part 4: Summary & Observations – UK

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

In the UK there is the B.E. Inclusive Initiative which, has similarities to the NZ Diversity Agenda, but on an expanded scale beyond the planning and design sectors. The Initiative's stated goal is to achieve *meaningful and tangible improvement in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) standards across the built environment*.

The Landscape Institute, the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Royal Town Planning Institute have all made a commitment to the B.E. Inclusive Initiative Action Plan.

4.2.4 USA

National Context

President Trump's Executive Order 13985 which addresses the administrations attack on DEI policies and practices states that:

The Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), assisted by the Attorney General and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), shall coordinate the termination of all discriminatory programs, including illegal DEI and "diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility" (DEIA) mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities in the Federal Government, under whatever name they appear.

This Executive order is likely to have an impact on those universities with urban planning and design courses that receive Federal funding.

Also, there is likely a major challenge for the American private sector which will arise when seeking to tender for US government planning, architectural or landscape projects, as the Administration has proposed that tendering businesses will have to demonstrate that they do not have DEI policy and practices in place.

At this stage it is not clear if this attack on DEI will impact industry membership institutes etc which are not reliant on government funding. I will however have an impact on those members who undertake federal government projects.

The following findings from the online research show that DEI policies have been adopted across the US built environment membership organisations as of their current 2025 websites.

This next section provides examples of position statements and of quotes from organisational policies from built environment organisation in the US.

US PLANNING & DESIGN ORGANISATIONS

American Planning Association (APA)

<https://www.planning.org/>

Relevant Documents Include:

Planning for Equity Policy Guide

www.planning.org/publications/document/9178541/

The APA policy guide states that it:

Identifies policy recommendations for planners to advocate for policies that support equity in all aspects of planning at local, state, and federal levels. The Planning for Equity Policy Guide

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

provides specific, actionable policy guidance through an equity lens on cross-cutting topics and areas of planning.

More and Better: Increasing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Planning

www.planning.org/publications/document/9176238/

2026 Trend Report for Planners

<https://planning.org/publications/document/9323378/>

The 2026 Trend Report states that:

Federal actions affecting different levels of government and changing sentiments within society are reshaping community life in the U.S., threatening civil rights, targeting vulnerable groups, and weakening local culture, diversity, and safety.

IN the section titled *THE TRENDS WE NEED TO ACT ON NOW* the report identifies several planning areas that are being seriously impacted by the US Administrations attack on DEI principles, these are:

- Community Rights, Culture, and Safety at Risk
- Corporations drop their DEI efforts.
- Immigrants are staying in for fear of deportation.
- LGBTQI+ under attack

The Trend Report also states that:

The consequences for planners of reduced federal engagement in multilateral urban platforms such as UN-Habitat are yet unclear, but this shift will likely make the role of other governmental bodies, non-profit organizations, and private entities more important in continued cooperation and knowledge exchange.

American Institute of Architects (AIA)

www.aia.org/design-excellence/equity-diversity-inclusion

The AIA EDI policy states that:

As part of a global community, AIA is building a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion to build a better future for everyone. We're moving justice and equity decisively from aspiration to action.

Boston Society of Architects (BSA/AIA)

www.architects.org

BSA Equity in Practice Resource Guide (2020)

https://bsa-prod.nyc3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/uploads/BSA_EquityInPractice_ResourceGuide.pdf

The BSA Equity in Practice Resource Guide was created by the BSA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Knowledge Community. The purpose of the guide is to serve as a condensed version of the AIA Guides to Equitable Practice—an entry point for members and member firms looking to tackle big issues around EDI in the profession.

American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

<https://www.asla.org/dei.aspx>

Fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) is committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture within our profession, where membership, leadership, staff, partners, volunteers, and other supporters can connect, learn, and grow.

Part 4: Summary & Observations – USA

Despite the US administrations ban on DEI in government funded organisations and projects the American built environment member associations such as the American Planning Association, American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), and the American Institute of Architects, all currently have DEI policies or are developing one.

Only time will tell is these Institutes will be able to continue their commitment to DEI principles in the future.

DEI POLICY STATUS TABLE

The following table lists the current DEI policy status of the nation planning, architectural and landscape architectural institutes in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, UK, and USA.

STATUS TABLE OF PLANNING & DESIGN MEMBERSHIP ORGANISATIONS					
COUNTRY	DEI/EDI POLICY STATUS				
	INSTITUTE	ACRONYM	POLICY	DRAFT	RAP
AUSTRALIA					
	PIA	DEI		Y	Y
	AIA	DEI	Y		Y
	AILA	DEI	Y		Y
AOTEAROA NZ					
	NZPI	DEI		Y	Y
	NZAI	DEI	Y		Y
	NZILA	N/A		Y	Y
CANADA					
	CIP	EDIA	Y		Y
	RAIC	EDI		Y	Y
	LACF	EDI		Y	Y
UNITED KINGDOM					
	RTPI	EDI	Y		
	RBIA	EDI	Y		
	LI	EDI	Y		
USA					
	APA	DEI	Y		
	AIA	DEI	Y		
	ASLA	DEI		Y	

The above summary shows that the urban planning and design membership institutes from the counties researched have either existing policies or are in the process of developing policies or strategies of relevance to DEI. In addition, all the institutes in countries addressing reconciliation with First Nations Peoples have made appropriate commitments.

NOTE: For simplicity.

1. The heading DRAFT also included Institutes where the development of policy is in progress or there is a current statement of commitment in principle.
2. The heading RAP uses the Australian acronym for Reconciliation Action Plan to include reconciliation in NZ with Māori and Canadian Institutes reconciliation with their First Nations People.

5. DEI PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

Putting DEI into Practice

The previous section has investigated the state of play in terms of Planning and Design sector commitment to DEI or EDI principles and policies. Once the policy is formulated there is a need to develop a plan to engage the leadership, staff, and membership in the process of embedding the principles through action plans, strategies, goals, and targets.

To assist organisations and businesses that have chosen to make a commitment to DEI principles the French business school Hautes Études Commerciales in Paris (HEC Paris) has developed what it calls “CADENCE” which is a program approach to implementing and consolidating DEI principles into organisational practice. There are seven steps in that make up the HEC CADENCE approach, they are:

- *Compliance, which serves as your foundational anchor for meeting legal or industry requirements.*
- *Alignment, to ensure leaders and employees row in the same direction.*
- *Deployment, spreads DEI initiatives organization-wide, rather than leaving them siloed.*
- *Evaluation sets the measurable milestones, so you're not adrift but steering toward real outcomes.*
- *Normalization, weaving DEI into daily operations so it becomes second nature.*
- *Catalyzing, encourages innovation and inclusive practices, and,*
- *Endgame is where DEI is more than a program - it's a source of long-term resilience and performance.*

Urban Planning and Design practice-based DEI.

The previous section has focused on DEI for the organisational requirements of professional industry membership bodies across the urban planning and design sector. The focus has been on establishing a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace and interaction with the membership.

This next section will move from the high-level policy environment to application of DEI principles in urban planning and design practices, both from the needs of applying DEI within the management of the workplace and applying the principles within the practice's community interaction and project-based planning and design.

We encourage diversity not just because it's the right thing to do, but because diversity is the key to creativity, innovation, and quality of thought.

Benjamin Pollack, Chief Executive Officer, Urbis, Australia

The online review of Australian Planning, Architectural and Landscape practices found that most of the large-scale national practices had either a DEI policy, a framework, or at least a commitment statement. The DEI policies etc on the websites of the major companies are primarily focused on workplace issues such as but not limited to: Supporting Gender Equality and Inclusion, Reducing the Gender Pay Gap, Supporting Flexible Work, Supporting Working Parents, Practicing Inclusive Leadership and Embedding Respect in the Workplace.

Those medium and smaller scale business reviewed were more likely to have a statement of commitment to the principles of DEI, which is not surprising as the sector has many medium small-scale practices, including sole practitioners. Indeed, a diversity, equity, and inclusion statement of commitment to the principles within a small to medium practice, if seen to be practiced by the owner or directors may be sufficient to embed the principles into the workplace culture and external engagements.

It makes sense for the various membership organisation to provide DEI resources such as model statements of commitment and or policy templates of relevance to the different segments of their membership.

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An example of an in-house multilayered approach to DEI can be found on the website for American firm, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill highlight their focus on both workplace actions and project delivery actions.

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM).

www.som.com/culture/diversity-equity-inclusion/

SOM is a major multidisciplinary US firm, with offices in Australia, whose practices include Architecture, Design, Planning and Engineering, as such they have significant resources to facilitate a high level of commitment to their DEI Policy. Their website includes a link to their 2024 DEI Report which highlights their approach to both internal workplace DEI in the form of an Equity Action Committee and their approach to applying DEI to their project work in the form of an Equity Action Committee.

Annual DEI Report 2024

www.som.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2024_DEI_FINAL_INTERNAL-1737152285.pdf

The Equity Action Committee is focused on effecting change within SOM's operations and culture.
GOALS

- *Encourage a continuous, open, firmwide dialogue to help promote inclusion in our workplace.*
- *Provide an accessible resource for professional development to build skills and enable greater effectiveness in our roles, job satisfaction, and engagement.*
- *Provide support to help to “unlock” the true potential of professionals while also benefiting from creating connections and the sharing of knowledge.*
- *The Equity Design Lab seeks to cultivate and expand opportunities to make an impact through our project work and in our communities.*

The DEI Report also highlights what they refer to as the Equity Toolkit that SOM's teams use at the inception of a project to evaluate their design approach in the context of their stated core values.

Equity Toolkit

- *Sensitivity How will we ensure an equitable design process, and who at SOM will oversee these efforts?*
- *Access How will the project welcome the community once it is built?*
- *Safety How will the project make people feel safe/protect the community?*
- *Authenticity How will the project reflect the spirit, cultural integrity, and beauty of the community?*
- *Inclusion How will we engage the community during the design process to help define project values?*
- *Advocacy How will the project advocate for the disenfranchised and underinvested?*
- *Health + Wellbeing How will the project promote better life outcomes for the community?*
- *Prosperity How will the project uplift the community economically?*

Clearly this level of DEI commitment is the result of a significant corporate commitment, however the general principles could and should be applied at any level of urban planning and design.

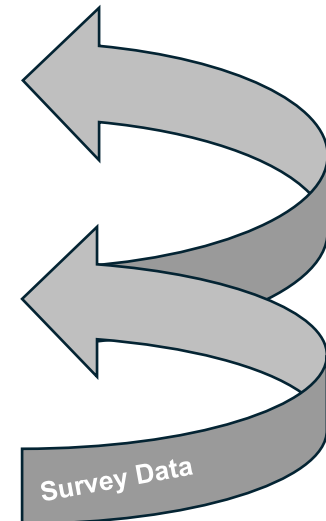
Part 5: Summary & Observations

As stated, this research found that the website search of planning, architectural and landscape architectural practices would suggest that only the large, national practices have formal DEI policies. This finding relates to the requirements of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act* for businesses employing over 100 people. Ideally the Membership Institutes could provide resources and assistance to their members in smaller practices with templates or specific DEI Professional Development workshops. The approach taken by SOM, detailed above, provides a useful example of a two-pronged approach, which being for an inhouse *Equity Action Committee* covering practice management and the *Equity Design Lab* focused on delivering DEI principles in their consulting work.

6. DEI SURVEY APPROACHES

The research explored the adoption of DEI policies and principles and the gathering of quantitative and qualitative survey data at each of the sectors as it relates to urban planning and design from these three perspectives:

- 1. Built Environment Sector:** In some countries (e.g. NZ and UK) sector wide collaborative bodies have been established to gather DEI data that can provide a longitudinal sector profile based on the findings reported by individual Institutes across the sector. Such data is vital in policy development and political advocacy work for the sector.
- 2. Built Environment Professional Bodies:** Internationally many sector bodies have DEI, or related policies that inform professional behaviours and values and undertake membership surveys to build industry profiles to fully understand the makeup of their membership, to track changes and progress, and to feed into sector wide data collecting.
- 3. Built Environment Consulting Practices:** Individual practices, mainly large-scale employers, the research found are developing inhouse DEI policies (Also Reconciliation Action Plans 'RAP' in the Australian context) that set out a code of behaviour and practice values as well as gathering employee data that feeds into their professional bodies data gathering.



The research found examples of DEI surveys of the existing situation within an organisation or industry sector being undertaken as a first step in developing a DEI policy platform. Such surveys would only gather quantitative data to inform the organisation of current DEI conditions, especially relating to diversity. However as quantitative data focuses on numerical and measurable data it will not provide insights into the firsthand experiences of staff or members. Therefore, quantitative data should be used to gather the perceptions and experiences of the survey subjects.

The following section provides some selected quotes and or outline of methodology relating to these surveys. The full survey reports can be accessed via the listed URLs.

DEI SURVEY EXAMPLES

AUSTRALIAN EXAMPLE 1: AIA - DEI survey 2023

www.architecture.com.au/wp-content/uploads/DI-Survey-Rpt-2023.pdf

Survey Overview The survey was commissioned by the Australian Institute of Architects to the company Survey Matters. The survey was distributed to members of the Australian Institute of Architects via email for online completion, from 1 – 28 May 2023.

The national survey was divided into three sections:

- Part 1: Demographics/Diversity data questions
- Part 2: Inclusion data questions
- Part 3: Open-ended comments Invitation to participate in Focus Groups

The data was analysed against five subcategories to gain a "Snapshot of the Profession." These headings are:

1. Workforce Profile
2. Membership Profile
3. Experience

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4. Income
5. International Experience

Under the section titled “Practicing Inclusion” the survey asked qualitative questions regarding the following:

1. Workplace versus profession inclusivity
2. Inclusivity of architectural profession
3. Workplace assessment of inclusivity
4. Inclusive experiences at work

In summing up the comments received, the report states that:

There is a perception that the profession is becoming more inclusive over time. There are however calls for broader cultural awareness programs that go beyond surface-level initiatives, with some respondents concerned that efforts could appear tokenistic. A minority questioned the profession's focus on diversity and inclusion, believing there are more pressing issues to address and feeling that efforts could be divisive, misguided, or counterproductive, and as an alternative, advocated for a more merit-based approach rather than one focused on identity. Respondents also underscored the need for values to be embedded into everyday practices.

AUSTRALIAN EXAMPLE 2: ALIA - Census Report 2001–2021 An Overview of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Australian Landscape Architecture Profession

[www.aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/ AILA/Reports/2001-2021%20AILA%20Census%20Report.pdf](http://www.aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/AILA/Reports/2001-2021%20AILA%20Census%20Report.pdf)

This report is part of an ongoing quantitative review of the landscape architectural profession first reported in 2018.

The 2025 Next Steps report *From Gender Equity to Diversity Equity and Inclusion* addresses quantitative data gathered in the Census in relation to the following policy areas under the heading of:

Supporting the Profession

1. Part Time Work
2. Tackling Long Hours Cultures
3. Small Business Owners
4. Career Progression
5. Addressing the Gender Pay Gap
6. Connecting Women & Governance

Each policy area reports on the Current Status and Recommendations for DEI - Next Steps.

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND EXAMPLE: The Diversity Agenda – Accord Survey

<https://diversityagenda.org/toolkit/collecting-data/>

The annual Insights Reports provide data on the survey findings from the current year against the reports since 2021. Report headings include:

Key gender balance issues such as:

1. *Women In The Workforce,*
2. *Women In Leadership,*
3. *Gender Balance Of Employees With Less Than 2 Years Experience,*
4. *Retention,*
5. *The Pay Gap.*

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Cultural and Social diversity inclusion such as:

1. Māori,
2. Asian,
3. MELAA (Middle East,
4. Latin America and Africa,
5. LGBTQIA+,
6. Disability, and
7. Neurodiversity people's participation in the Engineering and Architectural professions.

In conclusion the 2025 Accord Survey Insights Report states that:

As we look ahead, our 2026–2030 strategy builds on the solid foundation we've laid over the last three years. It reflects the progress we've made, the lessons we've learned, the realities of the changing world we work in, and the focus remains clear: keeping DEI work authentic, practical, meaningful, and embedded into the way we do business as an industry.

CANADIAN EXAMPLE: CIP - 2024 Equity, Diversity and Inclusive (EDI) Insight Survey Report

https://www.cip-icu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-Equity-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Insight-Survey-Report-ENGLISH-V6_compressed.pdf

The CIP EDI Insight Survey seeks opinions on the current state of EDI in the organization through an online tool which included both Quantitative and Qualitative questions.

The quantitative survey questions to gather data on the diversity of the CIP membership included the following:

1. Age,
2. Gender,
3. Identity,
4. Planning Experience,
5. Employment Level, and
6. Annual income.

CIP applied the following qualitative criteria to their Inclusion Scan:

1. Belonging,
2. Fairness,
3. Support,
4. Voice, and
5. Leadership Commitment,

A Key finding of the survey was that:

The majority of survey respondents expressed support for EDI efforts at CIP and signalled a desire for continuous and accessible educational opportunities.

USA EXAMPLE: APA – 2020 - Diversity Climate Survey— Moving from Aspiration to Action: Reorienting Planners Values Towards Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (Jackson, A. et al. (2020)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342083341_Diversity_Climate_Survey-Moving_from_Aspiration_to_Action_Reorienting_Planners_Values_Towards_Equity_Diversity_and_Inclusion

In 2020 the Schools of Planning Planners of Color Interest Group (ACSP-POCIG) and the American Planning Association (APA) undertook a nationwide web-based survey of urban planning practitioners and in-depth interviews regarding Diversity and Inclusion. This study seeks to understand the perceptions of practicing planners around issues of diversity and inclusion in their workplaces and the communities they serve.

Key findings:

Participants reported that planning organizations and agencies are implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives, but these have yet to be institutionalized. Interviewees offered suggestions to promote greater diversity within APA, their workplaces, and planning educational institutions. The study concludes that it is more important than ever to center diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency within our planning organizations, workplaces and planning educational institutions to send a message regarding the value of diversity within the field of urban planning.

Part 6: Summary & Observations

The various Institute DEI surveys show a commitment to collecting both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to this sector. Longitudinal studies such as being undertaken by the NZ Diversity Agenda provide valuable year on year data of changes in the professions and is analysed and published as an annual Insight Report.

As referenced in the reports introduction, Eric Sandosham argues that a key weakness of DEI strategies is that organisations lack the ability to gather meaningful statistics to support their programmes. He proposes that DEI policy development needs to be better defined diversity, equity, and inclusion in data-specific terms to enable us to accurately measure its progress objectively. Therefore, it is important to gather meaningful data and engage data analysts to make sense of the collected data.

For example, the Diversity Agenda annual Accord Insights Report for 2025 includes not only data on women in the workforce but supporting data on women in leadership positions and the gender trends of people entering into and being retained in the industry, therefore, providing a nuanced perspective on gender in the NZ built environment sector.

Josie FitzGerald, Chair of The Diversity Agenda stated in the 2025 report that:

Across all reporting areas of diversity, we're seeing a richer, more complete picture of our industry. More firms are collecting and reporting data they hadn't in the past, and more individuals are feeling safe to share their identities at work.

It also needs to be acknowledged that there are ethical considerations to be addressed in terms of collecting quantitative and qualitative personal data that provides the fine grain insights into an organisation's members or workforce. For example, how to provide a safe and anonymous mechanism for individuals to identify as a person with a non-physical disability, to acknowledge sexual orientations or express their feeling unsafe and not welcome in the workplace. While for large organisations it is possible to organise anonymous online survey platforms, for medium and small-scale workplaces it would be almost impossible to retain anonymity, therefore some flexibility and sensitivity will be required in any data gathering exercise.

The collection and use of DEI data, particularly in a form where staff are identifiable, is potentially sensitive and risky from an employment and data protection perspective. The collection of DEI data should be voluntary, and importantly organisations and business should consider carefully what data they want to collect, why, and how they want to use that data.

7. DEI & EDUCATION

INDUSTRY ACCREDITATION

In Australia tertiary education providers of Architectural and Urban Planning courses are required to achieve accreditation through the appropriate professional industry accreditation authority, such as:

PIA POLICY FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF AUSTRALIAN PLANNING QUALIFICATIONS (2020)
www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/BecomeAPlanner/PIA-Accreditation-Policy.pdf

The PIA accreditation requirements do not make direct reference to DEI principles but include the following professional and ethical requirements and performance indicators:

Professional and Ethical Planning Practice

Competency - Planners should be able to work in a variety of professional environments, meeting high standards of conduct and ethical behaviour relevant to a variety of circumstances. Planners need to be able to act competently and responsibly in complex situations and in a professional and ethical manner, while understanding, promoting and actively working in the public interest.

Performance Indicators

1. *Knowledge of unique and special position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and Indigenous peoples, their rights and interests, knowledge, culture and traditions, and the appropriate protocols of respect and recognition for engaging with them on matters affecting their rights and interests.*
2. *Knowledge of the diversity of populations served, including the cultures of ethnic groups in Australia, other groups with special needs, including children and older people, and a capacity to engage meaningfully with diverse groups.*
3. *Knowledge of the development of planners' roles over time and in various contexts including the challenges and requirements of contemporary circumstances.*

AND

6. *Capacity to make appropriate choices in ethically ambiguous situations based on knowledge of social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects of planning.*

Architecture Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA)

<https://aaca.org.au/about-us/>

The Architecture Accreditation Council of Australia sets out the review process through which all architecture university programs in Australia are assessed against the accreditation standard.

<https://aaca.org.au/https-aaca-org-au-wp-content-uploads-accredited-architecture-qualifications-pdf/>

National Standards of Competency for Architects (NSCA)

<https://aaca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021-NSCA.pdf>

The National Standard of Competency for Architects identifies the skills, knowledge and capabilities required for the general practice of architecture in Australia and under the heading Professional Capabilities is the following statement which includes reference to diversity, equity and inclusion:

Professionalism encompasses the capacity to understand and enact the role and responsibilities of architects within evolving architectural, social, cultural, ethical, legal, technical, and business contexts. This includes understanding community values and obligations around equity, diversity,

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accessibility, and inclusion, embedding these within the provision of architectural services, and understanding how they impact Country, colleagues, clients, stakeholders, and broader communities. At its core, this capability involves maintaining and developing professional competency over the course of a career in architecture.

The document suggests that Professionalism requires knowledge of how to support and promote accessible, fair, and ethical business practices in healthy workplaces that are inclusive, safe, and respectful. It also postulates that professional architectural practice requires cultural awareness to enable the integration of First Nations Peoples relationship to Country.

ALIA ACCREDITATION POLICY

https://aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/_AILA/Governance/Policies/AILA%20Accreditation%20Policy.pdf

The AILA website states that the Institute provides: *a thorough and rigorous accreditation of Australia's Landscape Architecture courses. Students at these universities can feel confident they'll receive a well-respected qualification, and an education that prepares them now and into the future.*

A review of the 2015 Accreditation Policy document found no specific reference to DEI as such. There are references to gender equality and acknowledgment of the ALIA Gender Equality Committee. As this is a policy last revised in 2022, and it has not been updated to include ALIA's 2025 *Diversity Equity and Inclusion Policy*.

International DEI in Urban Planning and Design Education

International examples of urban planning and design educational institutions referencing DEI in their courses include the following.

The Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) (USA) 2024

www.urbanplanningdegree.com

Under the heading: *Resources for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Urban Planning*, the PBA states:

What is diversity, equity, and inclusion, and why is it vital to urban planning? Also referred to as DE&I, diversity, equity, and inclusion have become a trendy buzz phrase used by businesses, organizations, and institutions. It is much more than a buzz phrase, however. In urban planning, DE&I involves a conscious, intentional approach to create significant diversity, fostering equity for underrepresented groups, and fashioning accessible, inclusive environments for all. By using the tools and skills of planning and incorporating the ideals of DE&I, urban planners can strive to produce a more just, equitable society.

DE&I in urban planning may refer to establishing more diversity, equity, and inclusion within the planning profession itself, as well as incorporating the ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion when planning spaces within the United States. There are many underrepresented groups and minorities to be considered when considering DE&I.

The American Planning Association (APA), the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB), the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), and the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) have all expressed a commitment to equality and justice. The ACSP created the first ever report on diversity in 1990. In this report, two-thirds of minority and female faculty in planning schools reported experiencing discrimination in their departments. In the ACSP/APA 2020 Diversity Climate Survey, the majority of planners responding reported never experiencing discrimination in the workplace. For those who did experience discrimination, gender discrimination was the most common type.

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The Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) revised its accreditation standards in 2017, retaining just one standard relating to DE&I that says it all:

Equity, Diversity and Social Justice: key issues in equity, diversity and social justice that emphasize planners' role in expanding choice and opportunity for all persons, plan for needs of disadvantage, reduce inequalities through critical examination of past and current systems and disparities, and promote racial and economic integration.

The Institute for Quality of Life (IQL), London, England

www.institute-ql.com/

The Institute for Quality of Life is a global think tank dedicated to advancing the principles of sustainable development, with a focus on balancing the needs of present and future generations. Our mission is to support cities, businesses, communities, and other organisations in improving quality of life for their stakeholders through rigorous research, the sharing of best practices, and fostering international collaboration.

The Institute run a DEI course "Building Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Cities" online and in person. [www.institute-ql.com/Courses/Diverse Equitable and Inclusive Cities/](http://www.institute-ql.com/Courses/Diverse_Equitable_and_Inclusive_Cities/)

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this course is to equip participants with the knowledge and tools necessary to design and implement policies that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in urban environments. Aimed at professionals in public administration, urban planning, and community development, this course explores the critical role that inclusive urban design and equitable governance play in creating cities that serve all residents, regardless of background, identity, or socio-economic status. Participants will gain insights into best practices for integrating DEI principles into urban planning, public services, housing, mobility, and social infrastructure.

Urban Planning Degree.com, USA

<https://urbanplanningdegree.com/resources-for-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-urban-planning/>

Resources for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Urban Planning

DE&I in urban planning may refer to establishing more diversity, equity, and inclusion within the planning profession itself, as well as incorporating the ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion when planning spaces within the United States. There are many underrepresented groups and minorities to be considered when considering DE&I. The American Planning Association (APA), the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB), the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), and the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) have all expressed a commitment to equality and justice. The ACSP created the first ever report on diversity in [1990](#). In this report, two-thirds of minority and female faculty in planning schools reported experiencing discrimination in their departments. In the ACSP/APA [2020 Diversity Climate Survey](#), the majority of planners responding reported never experiencing discrimination in the workplace. For those who did experience discrimination, gender discrimination was the most common type.

NOTE: This website provides links to an extensive range of resources relevant to DEI and urban planning and design from an American perspective.

DEI attacks and Educational Impacts

In addition to the potential impacts on planning, architectural and landscape firms working for the US government there are significant impacts being felt across the US educational system, with universities, relying on government funding being forced to withdraw DEI principles from their course material.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Urban Planning & Design

Diana Budds, (2024) in *The Architect's Newspaper* (USA)

Robbed of Discourse, Professors share how anti-DEI legislation is impacting college architecture education across the country

www.archpaper.com/2024/10/anti-dei-legislation-impacting-college-architecture-education/

Budds states that:

The culture wars have a new target: diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, policies, and positions. These initiatives, which rose in popularity after the killing of George Floyd in 2020, typically support people who are underrepresented in universities based on their race, ethnicity, gender identity and/or expression, abilities, and economic background.

For the architecture profession, these new laws are arriving just as the field is finally welcoming more women and people of color. Put simply, “people don’t like upsetting the status quo,” said Germane Barnes, an architect, and the director of the Master’s in Architecture program at the University of Miami, a private college in Florida.

Equity and inclusion are part of the National Architecture Accrediting Board’s requirements, which means that architecture schools will have to incorporate these elements into their curriculums in order to meet their obligations. However, just how in-depth educators go might depend on the culture of the institution.

Kwesi Daniels, head of the department of architecture at Tuskegee University in Alabama. Suggests that The real travesty is that students even those at the predominantly white institutions, “are going to be robbed of the opportunity to know the contributions of all Americans. They’re going to be robbed of the opportunity to engage in discourse.”

National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB)

www.naab.org/who-we-are/about-naab

The US NAAB’s is an impartial organization to facilitate quality assurance in support of architecture programs that prepare students for professional licensure, and maintained an accreditation system that enhances the value, relevance, and effectiveness of the profession of architecture.

In response to the Trump administration’s attack on the concepts of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion NAAB has taken action to remove the use of DEI language in Architectural Education, see below.

Announcement: Stay on NAAB Conditions with DEI-related language

www.naab.org/blogs/naab/2025/09/18/stay-on-naab-conditions-with-dei-related-language

In light of policy changes at the state and federal level, earlier this summer NAAB facilitated conversations with our accredited programs to explore potential concerns with their ability to meet NAAB Conditions focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). In response to this input, we are considering potential revisions to those Conditions. We recognize that the process for proposing revisions to the Conditions will take time to ensure that we receive and incorporate feedback from our stakeholders through the process of public comment.

In the interim, and in support of programs faced with challenges in their respective states, NAAB will “stay” requirements in the Conditions that reference diversity, equity, and inclusion, which means we will temporarily pause these provisions in the Conditions. This includes relevant provisions of the following Conditions. The pause will be in effect if and until proposed changes to the Conditions take place.

The anti-DEI agenda: navigating the impact of Trump’s second term on diversity, equity, and inclusion (2025)

www.researchgate.net/publication/389778231_The_anti-DEI_agenda_navigating_the_impact_of_Trump's_second_term_on_diversity_equity_and_inclusion/link/67d975fb7d56ad0a0f068b24/download?tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIn19

(Preparation of this article is supported in part by Queen's University, University of Queensland, Queen Mary University of London, University of Cape Town, Toronto Metropolitan University, and Copenhagen Business School.)

This article prepared by academics from Australia, UK, South Africa, Canada, and Denmark aims to *critically analyse and critique the impact of President Donald Trump's second term on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the United States of America and beyond. It aims to document the policy changes enacted under Trump, explore the resulting consequences for various sectors (government, higher education, and private sectors) and assess the broader implications for social justice and global conversations around equity. The article also serves as a call to action, urging continued advocacy and resistance against the rollback of DEI progress.*

The conclusion states that:

Fostering inclusive classroom environments Regardless of external political pressures, we need to ensure that our teaching practices remain inclusive by designing curricula that reflect diverse perspectives and encourage critical thinking about equity and justice. We can encourage discussions about how DEI initiatives benefit everyone and offer workshops on the importance of DEI to help broaden the understanding on campus. We need to support marginalized groups – we can amplify the voices of those most affected by anti-DEI policies in research and teaching and support students and colleagues from marginalized groups to help them navigate the obstacles posed by the anti-DEI climate.

Part 7: Summary & Observations

Without doubt if DEI principles are to be embedded in urban planning and design practice, they need to be part of the formal education of planners, architects, and Landscape architects. Therefore, it is critical that the various industry Accreditation Bodies ensure that university courses include issues of diversity equality and inclusion in their syllabus.

The research found that while there are some DEI concepts being considered in the universities that deliver Urban Planning and Design courses, this is clearly a key area for future research. Especially in aligning the University delivery with the various Institutes accreditation requirements.

In addition to formal tertiary education for planning and design students there is a critical role to be provided by the various Institutes through their ongoing training of their membership such as required Professional Development (PD) programs which most Institutes require members to achieve PD points as a condition of membership. In addition, many of the Institutes reviewed have formal mentoring schemes. These formal or indeed, informal mentoring relationships with youth or emerging planners and designers from various backgrounds can help boost diversity and foster inclusion. Mentors must be careful not to perpetuate old perceptions about the profession rather focus on discussing opportunities for diverse, equitable and inclusive urban planning and design in our contemporary world.

8. FINAL OBSERVATIONS & COMMENTS

The research found that DEI is not without its critics, especially from the perspective of effective business and financial gains also from the perspective of the Culture Wars and Political Pushback.

Critics argue that the contemporary corporate DEI approach prioritises business benefits, such as increased competitiveness, profitability, and innovation, over the fundamental goal of creating a fairer society. This focus on financial outcomes may undermine genuine efforts to achieve equality and inclusion for marginalized groups.

Critics also argue that DEI initiatives are increasingly becoming political tools or divisive forces, rather than as mechanisms for fostering fairness and innovation. For example, the Trump Administrations ban on DEI. This pushback risks reinforcing existing inequalities and undermining the broader societal goals of DEI. These criticisms highlight the tension between the best practice goals of DEI in relation to urban planning and design, the practical challenges of implementation, and the political and ideological resistance to such initiatives.

Despite these criticisms the research has identified a significant commitment, in the Urban Planning and Design sector, across the countries reviewed including the US, to apply DEI practices in their professional Institutes and in their urban development projects to deliver more equitable and inclusive places and infrastructure.

DEI POLICY ENVIRONMENT

This section provides some observations on the different approaches to developing DEI policies across the identified built environment professional organisations.

National Context

At a national level, the governments of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the UK are all supportive of the DEI or EDI agenda, with the USA as the only country reviewed to back out of support for DEI. It would appear the USA position is based on a narrow understanding of the DEI initiative as simply a form of “affirmative action.” It is worth noting that in the context of this research the professional bodies in the USA are currently still including DEI policies on their websites. The research found however, that there has been an impact on the universities training future planners and designers as these institutions rely on funding from the Federal Government and are therefore subject to the administration's DEI ban.

A positive finding was the existence of sector wide initiatives such as the NZ Diversity Agenda and the UK B.E. Initiative that are undertaking longitudinal data collection and providing support for Institutes developing DEI policies. For example, organisations such as NZIA in New Zealand and the RIBA, LI, and the RTPI in the UK are working in partnership with their respective sector wide bodies on DEI policy development. There are clearly benefits to the whole planning and design sector when the individual institutes work collaboratively to gather supporting data and policy initiatives.

Policy Development: Membership Organisations

Across all five countries reviewed there is a wide range of stages on the road to fully resolved DEI policy documents, in some cases there are statements of intent, draft documents and existing documents under review for further development.

In terms of defining diversity, equity and inclusion there are a range of definitional statements but also some commonalities for example, diversity is generally acknowledged to mean people's different background experiences and world views; equity is recognised as the equitable distribution of resources in response to individual circumstances; and Inclusion relates to creating workplaces and physical environments where people feel welcomed, valued and safe.

The research has primarily focused on gathering information on DEI policies developed by professional urban planning and design membership institutes, and how these organisations address DEI principles and practices within the organisation and its dealings with members, through boards, committees and professional development activities.

Policy Development: Planning and Design Practices

The planning and design organisations represent their members who may be employed by public sector authorities, private sector consultancies, or as sole practitioners, it is important that these policies have the potential to positively influence the day-to-day operations of its members. In the professional practices reviewed there was little evidence of DEI policies per-se, although most had appropriate workplace frameworks or statements relating to gender equity and non-discriminatory behaviour. The membership institutes could address this issue by providing DEI templates appropriate to the scale of practices in their sectors.

Even without developing a formal DEI policy for the practice, small to medium practices can implement a range of initiatives that can advance DEI principles in their workplace and in their planning and design activities, they include but are not limited to:

1. Implementing Internal DEI Programs: Practices can develop and implement their own DEI programs to ensure that all employees have access to opportunities for growth and advancement.
2. Foster Inclusive Leadership: Encourage the practice leadership to prioritise DEI in their decision-making processes and to create an inclusive culture where all employees feel valued and respected.
3. Celebrate Diversity: Recognize and celebrate the cultural diversity within the practice and within the communities they interact with.
4. Provide Training and Development: Offer training programs that focus on DEI principles and best practices to employ in their project work. These programs can help employees understand the importance of diversity and how to create an inclusive engagement with clients and communities.

In the Australian planning and design sector there is a commitment to addressing the needs of First Nations People both through reconciliation action plans and statements acknowledging relationship to Country. There is also a focus on improving training and employment opportunities for First Nations People within the industry alongside programs to educate non-Aboriginal practitioners in the cultural sensitivities of working on Country. For example, the PIA has established a "Planning with Country Knowledge Circle" and a "Planning with Country" category in its annual Awards program. Likewise, the AILA has a goal of *establishing protocols to achieve effective, meaningful, and productive communication with local Traditional Custodians about landscape, urban design and infrastructure projects and research*. At a State Government level, the NSW Government's Architect's office has published the *Connecting with Country* framework to inform planners and designers of appropriate practices when working with or on Country.

<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-10/connecting-with-country.pdf>

DEI SURVEY OBJECTIVES

In the Introduction Eric Sandosham postulated that one of the "Problems with DEI" is the lack of sound data collection and analysis. The research found that there is evidence of data gathering by Urban Planning and Design Institutes in the study areas, although it is beyond this current research to establish if the standard of data gathering and analysis would meet the rigor proposed by Sandosham.

The following observations relate to the different survey approaches required to address the data needs for a whole of Industry sector survey, an Institute membership survey, and a survey suitable for Private Practices.

Industry Sector Surveys (urban planning and design sector)

To gain a whole of sector overview of commitments to DEI policies and practices it is necessary to gather quantitative data which can be done via Institute membership details, membership surveys and or national government census data. Such an overview can be achieved by collecting data from the industry's professional bodies and large planning and design companies; however, the overview would lack the fine grain of data from the small to medium sized businesses and lack the qualitative feedback from individual practitioners.

Industry Sector examples from the research, include but not limited to:

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- The New Zealand Diversity Agenda is an example of collecting data across an industry sector as it collects data from over fifty planning and design professionals across the engineering and architectural services sector. The data is collected from the professional bodies and their memberships. This includes quantitative data on gender, LGBTQI+, and ethnic diversity, workforce qualifications, retention rates, pay gap information, workforce participation by people with disabilities and neurodivergent individuals.

To gather the quantitative and qualitative data the participating institutes gather surveys from their membership and submit it to the Diversity Agenda who compile and collate the data for inclusion in the annual Insights Report. Having undertaken the survey for five years the Insights Report is able to provide a whole of sector perspective on the industry's DEI progress.

- The American Planning Institute and the Schools of Planning, Planners Color Interest Group conducted a nationwide web-based survey of urban planning practitioners and in-depth interviews with APA membership around DEI topics. The goal was to understand the perceptions of practicing planners around issues of diversity and inclusion in their workplaces and the communities they serve. The 2019 online survey received over 3,000 responses and a total of 104 planners were interviewed.
- The UK B.E. Initiative has a Diversity Monitoring Data Questionnaire for the Built Environment. The questionnaire has been developed in a partnership between the six membership organisations. Therefore, creating a standardised data collection questionnaire across the six organisations on behalf of the built environment sector helps to ensuring the built environment is more representative of the society it serves. This will help the partners institutes to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive sector. The B.E. Initiative acknowledges that as the area of EDI data collection continues to evolve, the survey categories, definitions and questions in their current form may need to be adjusted and additional areas of diversity might need to be included in future surveys.

Institute Membership Surveys

All planning and design Institutes will, through their membership records, have quantitative data relating to the diversity of existing members, which will form the basis for building a more detailed sector profile upon which to build a DEI platform. Gathering finer grain data from members via a one off or annual survey which will assist in identifying weaknesses and trends across DEI principles.

- The planning and design institutes already collect a range of quantitative data as part of their membership detail. Gaps in the range of data currently collected from membership could be expanded with member's permission.
- The Australian Institute of Architects DEI Survey includes a *Snapshot of the Profession* section which includes detailed quantitative data gather focused on membership profiles such as gender, ethnicity, and employment experience. In terms of the gender balance within the architectural profession the respondents to the survey showed that 69% of females were employed full-time compared to 78% of males who were employed full-time. The survey found that 38% of respondents were born outside of Australia and only 1% of respondents identified as Aboriginal.
- The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects DEI uses quantitative statistical data from the Censuses to gather data relating to the Landscape Architectural profession over and above current membership data. A key finding from the 2021 census shows that: *Women are making up 47% of the profession in 2021. Despite this, the high number of women working part-time reduces their overall contribution. This underscores the importance of looking beyond headline numbers to understand the full context.*

Private Practice Surveys

It is important to acknowledge that gathering detailed data from planning and design professionals working in private practice will likely be a challenge, given the range of professional practices involved in the sector, especially as some of the questions may involve privacy issues which can present a challenge in small to medium businesses where confidentiality may be difficult. It is however important to gather responses to Qualitative and open-ended questions to understand individual DEI experiences in the workplace.

- The Australian Institute of Architects DEI Survey includes a Practicing Inclusion section which includes qualitative data focused on workplace practices.

- The Canadian Planning Institute gather quantitative data to provide insights into their members' experiences of inclusion and belonging within the planning profession. The survey not only gathered demographic data but included qualitative and open-ended questions to gather perceptual responses to DEI in workplace practices.
- An internet search of 20 Australian Architectural, Landscape Architectural and Urban Planning practices found that all websites had an acknowledgement to First Nations People and or a Reconciliation Action Plan. Only the large national/international companies had a DEI Policy or equivalent, for example a Gender Equality Framework or Inclusive Workplace Statement. Smaller practices, ten employees or less, had no website DEI type content.

ADVANCING DEI IN URBAN PLANNING & DESIGN

It is hoped that although this research was limited to a desk-based review of the urban planning and design sectors across the five countries, this overview has provided valuable insights into the status of DEI principles as it relates to the built environment planning and design professions. The research highlighted a range of issues beyond the scope of the current report that require future more detailed and qualitative research and industry activities such as but not limited to the following:

1. Countering the attacks on DEI

DEI is under attack in some quarters especially when narrowly defined as an instrument of political and economic control, such as "affirmative action" in employment or as an instrument to increase the bottom line. It is important that industry leaders acknowledge these issues and state the case for DEI in the context of urban planning and design. To counter these attacks, it is critical that we reaffirm that in the urban planning and design context the DEI goal is that diversity, equality, and inclusion are actually; essential ingredients in creating a more just society, and an equitable and inclusive urban environment to meet the community's diverse ways of life.

2. Built Environment DEI Resources

As has been identified by this initial research the majority of Urban Planning and Design Institutes reviewed either have or are in the process of developing DEI policies of commitment statements, the next phase for the sector is to provide support for the institute members to develop Practice level commitments to integrate DEI principles into their planning and design services. This may take the form of ongoing professional workshops, forums, and conference papers to raise the issues and benefits of DEI with their members. The research found evidence that some large-scale consulting practices have developed DEI policies and implementation frameworks but was not able to identify such activity across the wider industry sector. This highlights a significant role for membership organisation in developing DEI resources such as a range of Policy Templates and practical DEI Toolkits on behalf of their members.

3. Integrate DEI into Planning & Design Education

The professions are making a commitment to DEI in their policies and therefore need university graduates to be fully conversant with the principles and practice opportunities to be gained by applying DEI in urban planning and design. An initial step might be for the Institutes to collaborate with the Universities delivering professional qualifications in line with industry accreditation to develop a set of DEI criteria guidelines to incorporate in course material. Likewise, the membership institutes could include DEI professional development training as a requirement in their Continuing Professional Development requirements.

4. Demonstrating the importance & Benefits of DEI in Urban Planning & Design

In the Introduction of this Research Report, started with this statement from New Zealand landscape architect Ralph Johns:

The moral and business case for diversity and inclusion is stronger than ever, with research proving the positive effect on employee wellbeing, creativity, and innovation; all these things lead to better design.

The research would suggest that there is support by the Urban Planning and Design sector for DEI principles, especially at the Institute level. However, there appears to be a need for more advocacy and promotion of the benefits of DEI from a practical project-based perspective. Therefore, further research

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of case studies that analyse the impacts that DEI principles can contribute to real life urban development such as delivering socially just, equitable and inclusive urban environments.

In conclusion it is important to acknowledge that DEI is more than good business practice it is as the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) state:

... an ethical responsibility to work for the public good, and CIP believes that we must be genuinely representative of the society in which we work. This includes recognizing, addressing, and advocating for broader diversity at all levels of the profession, in the private, not-for-profit, and public sectors. CIP also recognizes the urgency to confront and address systemic racism and discrimination in our governance systems, practices, and policies.

Finally let us keep in mind that the design of the city plays a critical role in our health, sustainability, and prosperity for all. To achieve these goals in the future will require more and better from us; more ideas, more effort, more diversity, more equity, more inclusion, and better ways of working together.

9 RELEVANT LINKS

LINKS TO RELEVANT BUILT ENVIRONMENT ORGANISATIONS.

The following provides a list of URLs included in the Report's discussions and or sites of relevance discovers during the research phase but not included in the body of the Report which may be of value for further research.

AACA (Aust) Architecture Accreditation Council of Australia

<https://aaca.org.au/about-us/>

AIA (Aus) Diversity and Inclusion in the Architectural Profession

www.architecture.com.au/advocacy-news/diversity-equity

AIA (USA) Equity Diversity & Inclusion policy

www.aia.org/design-excellence/equity-diversity-inclusion

AILA (Aus) Transition To Diversity Equity And Inclusion Committee

www.aila.org.au/Web/Web/Values/Gender-Equity-Working-Group.aspx?hkey=541db475-587a-4d4f-98da-1ea8530688d2

AILA (Aus) Gender Equity: Next Steps Summary Report 2025

www.aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/_AILA/Resource%20library/AILA%20Gender%20Equity-Next%20Steps%20Summary%20Report%202025.pdf

AILA (Aus) Census Report 2001–2021 An Overview of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Australian Landscape Architecture Profession

www.aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/_AILA/Reports/2001-2021%20AILA%20Census%20Report.pdf

AILA (Aus) Diversity Equity and Inclusion Policy 2025

www.aila.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/_AILA/Governance/Policies/DEI%20Policy.pdf

APA (USA) 2019 Planning for Equity Policy Guide

www.planning.org/publications/document/9178541/

APA (USA) 2019 More and Better: Increasing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Planning

www.planning.org/publications/document/9176238/

ARB (UK) Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

<https://arb.org.uk/about-arb/equality-diversity/>

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ASLA (USA) Fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment.

www.asla.org/dei.aspx

CIP (Canada) Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility: How Planners Can Be Part of a Brighter Future

www.cip-icu.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion-accessibility/

CIP 2024 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Insight Survey

www.cip-icu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-Equity-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Insight-Survey-Report-ENGLISH-V6_compressed.pdf

CSLA (Canada) Statement on Inequality and Injustice

www.csla-aapc.ca/mission-areas/csla-statement-inequality-and-injustice

LACF (Canada) Statement on Racial Inequality and Injustice

<https://lacf.ca/about-lacf/lacf-statement-racial-inequality-and-injustice>

Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

www.law.nyu.edu/centers/belonging

NCARB (USA) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts

<https://www.ncarb.org/about/corporate-social-responsibility/EDI-efforts#:~:text=Home-.Diversity%2C%20Equity%2C%20and%20Inclusion%20Efforts,work%20as%20a%20regulatory%20organization.>

NZIA (NZ) 2025 Diversity Agenda

<https://diversityagenda.org/accord/>

NZILA (NZ)

www.nzila.co.nz/

NZPI (NZ)

<https://planning.org.nz/>

PAB (USA) 2024 Resources for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Urban Planning

www.urbanplanningdegree.com

PIA (Aus) 2018 Interim Diversity & Inclusion Statement

www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/About/Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20Statement.pdf

PIA (Aus) 2021 National Gender Equity Policy

www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/About/GV05%20Gender%20Equity%20Policy%201-Page.pdf

PIA (Aus) 2024 Gender Equity Action Plan

www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/About/GV05-P1%20Gender%20Equity%20Action%20Plan.pdf

RBIA (UK) 2024 Representing our communities.

www.riba.org/about-us/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/

RTPI (UK) 2020 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

www.rtpi.org.uk/site-pages/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-policy/

UDIA SA Diversity and Inclusion Statement

www.udiasa.com.au/policy-advocacy/diversity-inclusion

UDIA WA Diversity Toolkit

www.udiawa.com.au/members/udia-wa-diversity-toolkit/)

LINKS TO OTHER RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS

Australian HR Institute 2023 State Of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Australian Workplaces
www.ahri.com.au/wp-content/uploads/DEI-Report-2023.pdf

Diversity Agenda, New Zealand
<https://diversityagenda.org/>

Diversity Australia 2024 Understanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) in the Workplace
www.diversityaustralia.com.au/diversity-equity-inclusion-in-the-workplace-a-strategic-approach-for-business-success/

Diversity Council Australia
www.dca.org.au

International Labour Organisation (ILO), Switzerland.
www.ilo.org

Institute for Quality of Life, UK.
[www.institute-ql.com/Courses/Diverse Equitable and Inclusive Cities/](http://www.institute-ql.com/Courses/Diverse_Equitable_and_Inclusive_Cities/)

NSW Government *Connecting with Country* framework.
<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-10/connecting-with-country.pdf>

South Australian Commission for Public Sector Employment:
www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/966433/OCPSE-DEI-Strategy-2023-2026.pdf

Queensland Government, Department of Housing and Public Works (HPW)
www.housing.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/67486/diversity-equity-inclusion-plan.pdf

United Nations Global Compact
<https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/dei>

World Economic Forum: Shaping an inclusive global economy by scaling impactful corporate DEI initiatives.
www.weforum.org/impact/shaping-an-inclusive-global-economy-by-scaling-impactful-corporate-dei-initiatives/

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A Review of options for cultural impact evaluation and mitigation

Research Report 4: 2025

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