

Managing workforce diversity and inclusion

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1.0 Glossary of terms

<i>Cultural safety</i>	Environments, relationships and systems that enable all employees to feel safe, valued and able to participate in and enable their culture, spiritual and belief systems, free from racism and discrimination (Department of Environment, 2019)
<i>Diversity</i>	The mix of people in a workplace in terms of their race, religion, gender, caring responsibilities, disability, and sexualities (Diversity Council Australia, 2025a)
<i>Employee voice</i>	The opportunity for employees to have a say about their work (Cooper et al., 2024)
<i>Inclusion</i>	Feeling respected, connected, being able to contribute, and have career progression at work (Diversity Council Australia, 2025b)
<i>Justice perceptions</i>	How much workers perceive the treatment from their organisation and management to be fair (Cooper et al., 2024)
<i>Psychosocial safety</i>	Being free from psychosocial risks (e.g., psychological demands, emotional demands, bullying and harassment) (Cooper et al., 2024)



2.0 Abstract

This project examined how the Australian meat industry can improve attraction, retention, inclusion and wellbeing for it's diverse workforce. Over 12 months, we conducted two reviews on diversity and inclusion practices in Australia and the meat industry, along with 25 stakeholder interviews exploring lived experiences.

The reviews showed that diverse and inclusive workplaces improve recruitment, engagement, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and reduced turnover intentions. Key barriers included industry image, work conditions, career development, cultural diversity, geographic location, workplace culture, and mental health. Supportive factors included retention frameworks, wellbeing initiatives, cultural competence and language programs, diversity and inclusion strategies, work design improvements, effective leadership and supervision, and targeted migrant support.

The interviews identified that the meat industry is culturally diverse and that representation by women, and workers with neurodiversity and disabilities are increasing. However, challenges remain, including limited part-time options, harassment, mixed support for career progression, language and cultural barriers, transport and accommodation issues, the work environment, and physical demands. Supportive factors were compassionate managers, networking and mentoring, adaptable training, buddy systems, diverse role models, and workplace flexibility.

This report provides practical recommendations for managers, workplace health and safety and HR professionals to identify areas for intervention in workplaces that can be readily implemented for diversity and inclusion improvement.



3.0 Executive summary

This project responds to attraction and retention priorities in the Australian meat processing industry, proposing that effective workplace inclusion practices are essential for improving workforce outcomes. It examines how meat processing employers can strengthen inclusive employment practices for their diverse workforces, including First Nations employees. The three key objectives of this project are to:

- 1) review existing published research on inclusive workforce practices that support psychosocial safety of diverse employees
- 2) gather data through stakeholder interviews across diverse groups about lived experiences of diversity and inclusion
- 3) develop evidence-based recommendations and practical roadmap to improve inclusion and retention

The literature reviews revealed that diverse and inclusive workplaces enhance recruitment, engagement, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and reduce turnover intentions. Seven key barriers impacted attraction, retention and inclusion: industry image, work conditions, limited career pathways, cultural and language barriers, geographic location, workplace culture, and mental health challenges. Supportive factors included retention frameworks, wellbeing programs, cultural competence and language initiatives, diversity and inclusion strategies, work design improvements, effective leadership and supervision, and targeted migrant support.

Interviews identified that the industry is culturally diverse, with growing representation of women and workers with disabilities and neurodiversity. However, diverse groups still face challenges with inclusion including a lack of part-time work, harassment, inconsistent support for career progression, language and cultural barriers, transport and accommodation issues, the work environment, and physical capabilities. Supportive factors were compassionate managers, networking and mentoring, adaptability of induction and training, buddy systems, diverse role models, and workplace flexibility.



Ten key recommendations produced by this project facilitate increased support for diversity and inclusion through:

Key Recommendations

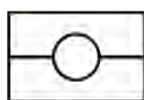
- 1 Induction programs developed and implemented to support diverse groups, including buddy systems and flexible training.
- 2 Integration of diversity and inclusion education into training and competencies for all workers.
- 3 Leadership development to support diverse workers in the industry.
- 4 Improved supervision and workplace communication – including listening and being interested in different diversities.
- 5 Improved talent fostering and career progression across diversities.
- 6 Role models to represent and support diverse workers in the industry.
- 7 Increased support for workplaces to manage changes with legislation, including the new psychosocial hazards legislation.
- 8 Increased participation in Respect at Work training.
- 9 Improved job design to create jobs suitable for part-time work and that incorporate more job rotation.
- 10 Normalised flexible work offered to both male and female workers.

Specific Recommendations for Diverse Groups



Women

Support for career progression professional development, networking, mentoring and sponsorship opportunities (e.g., Meat Business Women), and adequate toilet facilities.



First Nations

Compassionate leadership and part-time induction periods to support smooth transitions to work.



Migrant Workers

Practical support (e.g., for transport, accommodation and visa processing), multilingual training material, education on local systems (norms, finance, work and health systems), social integration (workplace events, community support), and English-language learning support.



Disability / Neurodiversity

Pre-employment screening focused on job placement rather than exclusion, support persons at inductions, identified roles with set tasks and accessible plant design (e.g., wheelchair access).



Sexual Diversity

Education provided to all workers, provision of accessible unisex bathrooms, ally networks and inclusive leadership.

Figure 1. Recommendations

This report will provide valuable information for managers, workplace health and safety and HR professionals to identify areas for intervention and improvement in workplaces. The recommendations will be able to be readily implemented for diversity and inclusion improvement.

4.0 Introduction

Workplace diversity refers to the mix of people in a workplace in terms of their race, religion, gender, caring responsibilities, disability, and sexualities (Diversity Council Australia, 2025a). Workers can have multiple identities across diverse groups. Workplaces that recognise, accept and value individual differences create positive working environments (Kapoor, 2011) and are more attractive to both diverse and non-diverse employees (Roberson, 2019, Triana et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is not just about hiring diverse employees but also managing and supporting them.

Workplaces that do not support workers may find that over time they lose motivation and quit (Kapoor, 2011). This brings in the importance of inclusion - workplace inclusion is about people from different diversities feeling respected, connected, being able to contribute, and to progress their career at work (Diversity Council Australia, 2025b). Diverse and inclusive workplaces are more productive, competitive, innovative and adaptive and more supportive of work-life-balance needs (Triana et al., 2021).

Increasing diversity in the industry will help alleviate labour shortages. The meat processing industry has faced continuing high turnover rates and skills shortages (Kanan and Putt, 2023, Shah, 2017). Turnover impacts on the ability of plants to operate and is accompanied by high costs. Calculated across the industry, turnover has an annual cost of over A\$30 million (Glass et al., 2022).

Some diversity is already evident in the meat industry with a multi-cultural workforce including local workers, migrants, and workers from Pacific Island countries through the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006, Cooney et al., 2010, Shah, 2017). For some processing plants, non-Australian and non-local employees may be as high as 50-70% of workers (Kanan and Putt, 2023). However, representation of some groups remains low.

Women only make up 28% of the meat processing workforce, with particular low representation in maintenance (2%), management (20%), and slaughter (21%) positions (SG Heilbron Pty Ltd, 2022). Women also only make up 11% of PALM scheme workers (Kanan and Putt, 2023). Workers who identify as First Nations also only comprise a small group of 2% of workers (SG Heilbron Pty Ltd, 2022). Representation of other groups, such as workers with disability, is unknown.

Research suggests that the workplace culture in meat processing can be unwelcoming (Bretherton, 2011), shaped by masculine norms (Bryant and Jaworski, 2012) and harassment (Cordery, 2006).

Specific challenges for migrant groups include a limited understanding of cultural differences among supervisors and co-workers leading to unintentional discrimination or exclusion (Bretherton, 2011), racist language (Kanan and Putt, 2023, Perkins, 2005), being reprimanded for not speaking English (Piller and Lising, 2014), limited opportunities to learn English (Piller and Lising, 2014), a lack of knowledge sharing between migrants and employers (Barrie et al., 2018, Kanan and Putt, 2023, Samad et al., 2018), inconsistent pay rates (Kanan and Putt, 2023), needing breaks for religious practices (Samad et al., 2018), a lack of ongoing training (Kanan and Putt, 2023), and transport barriers (Samad et al., 2018). Specific challenges for women and carers have been accessing childcare around the early and late shifts (Barrie et al., 2018, Norton and Rafferty, 2010).

Thus, the aims of our project summarised in this report were to:

- 1) review the existing published research on inclusive workforce practices to support the inclusion and psychosocial safety of diverse employees

and specifically in the Australian meat processing industry:

- 2) review the existing publishing research on inclusive practices
- 3) evaluate the current state of diversity, inclusion, psychosocial safety, and cultural safety,
- 4) identify good practice to point to areas for intervention, and
- 5) identify areas for improvement and development, including providing a set of evidence-based recommendations and roadmap.

The report will provide valuable information for managers, workplace health and safety and HR professionals to identify areas for intervention and improvement in workplaces and recommendations that can be readily implemented for diversity and inclusion improvement.



5.0 Project objectives

Objectives



1

To identify evidence-based research literature, theory, and workplace best practices about increasing the attraction and inclusion and reducing turnover of a diverse workforce (**AIM 1**).



2

To identify inclusive workplace practices and issues in Australia, focused on the meat processing sector (**AIM 2**).



3

To examine the current state of diversity, inclusion, psychosocial safety, and cultural safety, in the Australian meat processing industry, including existing metrics, policies, practices, and strategies, and through the lived experiences of employees and leaders/managers regarding their felt inclusion and what this means for their turnover intentions and their wellbeing (**AIM 3**).



4

To identify, in the Australian meat processing industry, current good practice (such as effective management/leadership practices) to point to areas for intervention, and areas for improvement / development (**AIMS 4 and 5**).



5

To produce AMPC case studies, describing pertinent instances of this good practice (**AIM 4**).



6

To produce a Report providing the information identified and set of evidence-based recommendations to AMPC. This report will specifically include a outcomes-focused road map identifying recommended measures the industry should consider to facilitate the broader inclusion of diverse workers (**AIM 5**).

6.0 Methodology

To address the aims and objectives above, the project included four phases.

- 1) literature review 1
- 2) literature review 2
- 3) interviews with stakeholders, employees and managers, and
- 4) synthesis of evidence from the previous three phases

Figure 2 displays the four phases of the project methodology, which will now be explained further.

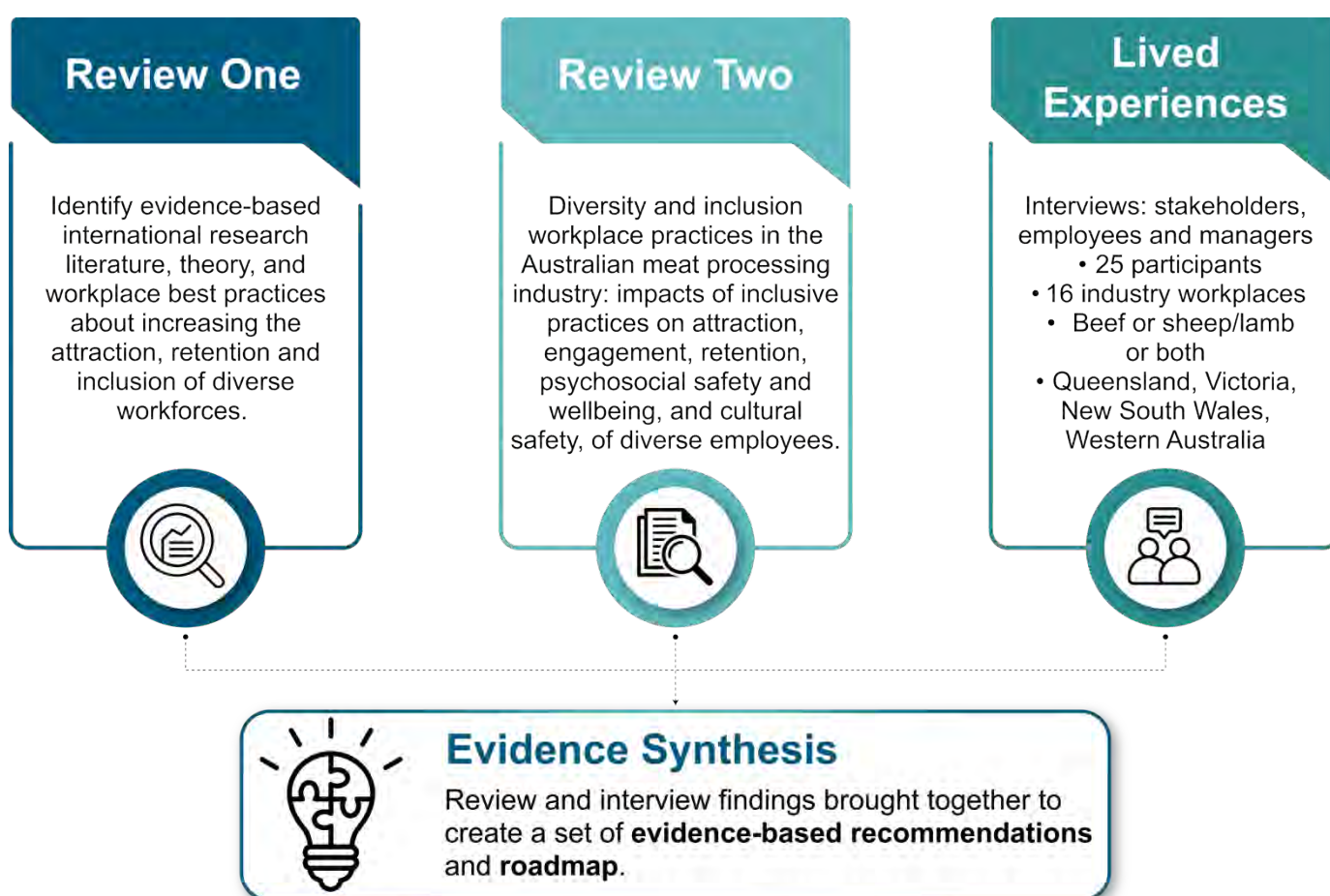


Figure 2. The project methodology

6.1 Review 1

The review aimed to identify evidence-based international research, theory, and workplace best practices that improve attraction, retention and inclusion of diverse workforces.

A systematic search was conducted across multiple databases. The platforms explored were Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. The search identified 1,337 documents. After removing duplicates, 1,325 unique records remained. Titles and abstracts were reviewed, excluding 1,212 papers. The remaining 132 studies were evaluated, with reasons for exclusion noted, resulting in seventy-six studies included in the review.

6.1 Review 2

This focused specifically on diversity and inclusion practices in the Australian meat processing industry, examining how inclusive practices influence attraction, engagement, retention, psychosocial safety and wellbeing, and cultural safety, of diverse employees.

Two searches were conducted. Eligible papers and reports had to be published between 2000 to 2024, be in English, and cover the Australian context, and be about or significantly include meat processing.

A systematic search of five scientific and academic databases was conducted: including Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, EBSCO Host, and Google Scholar, identified 4739 papers. These were uploaded into Covidence®, a web platform for systematic reviews. The titles and abstracts of 3331 papers were screened for relevance and 3085 papers were excluded. The full text of the remaining 232 papers were screened, and a further 217 were excluded, leaving 15 to be extracted.

A similar systematic review process as above was adopted for non-academic research (e.g., grey literature), identifying Government or organisational reports, and working papers. documents were determined to be added for extraction for this review.

6.2 Lived experiences of stakeholders, employees and managers (interviews)

Email invitations were sent to 137 contacts across 52 workplaces (beef or sheep/lamb or both) of various sizes from Queensland, NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, and 11 contacts at five external organisations (e.g., adult learning, employment agency, migrant support agencies) to invite participation into this part of the project. This data collection utilised a qualitative design, collecting long form responses from participants via interview or open-response questions to complete in their own time. Interviews were transcribed and responses synthesised and analysed according to which diverse group of workers were discussed.

The final sample comprised 25 participants of which 23 were employees in the meat industry (from 16 workplaces) who participated in online or telephone interviews (n = 20) or completed open-response questions in their own time (n = 3). An additional two external stakeholders were also interviewed. Participants were located in Queensland (n = 12, 52%), Victoria (n = 5, 22%), NSW (n = 5, 22%), or Western Australia (n = 1, 4%).

6.3 Evidence synthesis

Findings from the reviews and interviews were brought together to create a set of evidence-based recommendations and roadmap.

7.0 Results

7.1 Summary of findings from Literature Review 1: Attraction, Retention, and Inclusion of Diverse Employees

This review summarises (a) the relevant legislation and standards and (b) peer-reviewed research on organisational diversity and inclusion practices, their links to employee wellbeing, psychosocial and cultural safety, and implications for attraction and retention. It's purpose is to provide a practical, evidence-based, and consolidated resource for the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC) regarding the enablers and barriers to attracting and retaining workers, using a diversity and inclusion lens.

The key findings indicate:

- 1) Inclusion positively impacts employee recruitment and attraction, with a critical strategy being a recruiting process that effectively promotes and accommodates diversity in recruitment processes. This strategy can improve perceptions of workplace diversity, signalling inclusivity to potential candidates. Several elements can create such a recruitment system including diversity statements, diverse recruitment teams, community engagement, experiential learning, and cultural celebrations.
- 2) A positive diversity climate (where diversity in the workplace is openly supported - enhances engagement, satisfaction, well-being, and psychological/ psychosocial safety, reducing turnover intentions.
- 3) Personal, organisational, and environmental factors shape diversity and inclusion. Personal factors include knowledge, attitudes, and employee voice. Organisational factors include HR systems, diversity climate, supportive climate, justice perceptions, leadership, and leader-employee relationships. Employees are more likely to stay when their valued needs are met(Brough et al., 2022).
- 4) Having a positive diversity climate is typically associated with these wellbeing advantages:
 - enhanced positive worker attitudes, i.e., employee engagement, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being.
 - employees with key minority characteristics (gender, age, neurodiversity, disabilities, racial/indigenous) typically experiencing lower psychological stress and higher levels of job satisfaction, work engagement and well-being.
 - faith-friendly organisations reporting higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions among employees of all beliefs.
- 5) High levels of psychological safety and inclusion reassure employees that they will not face negative consequences for expressing diverse perspectives. A psychologically safe environment facilitates the exchange of information and encourages employees to share their expertise. Additionally, organisations with high leader racial diversity reported significantly higher psychological safety for minority and majority groups.

Interventions to manage diversity: The literature identifies several practical recommendations for enhancing organisational diversity management practices. These interventions and strategies can be categorised into three main categories:

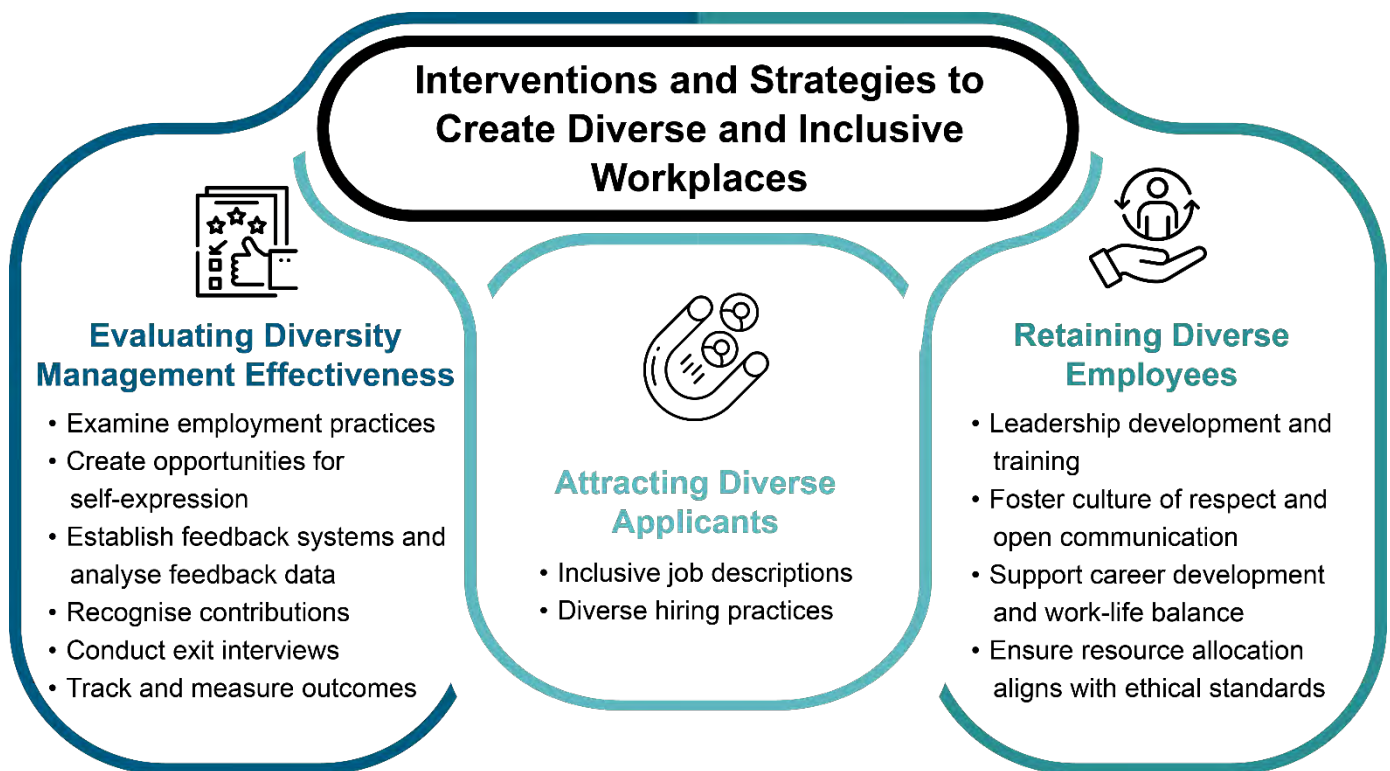


Figure 3. Main categories of interventions and strategies to create diverse and inclusive workplaces

Further detail from this review can be found here: <https://www.ampc.com.au/media/ccqjb0zy/final-wow-literature-review-2-ampc-milestone-4.pdf?ext=.pdf>

7.2 Summary of findings from Literature Review 2: Attraction, Retention, and Inclusion in the Australian Meat Processing Industry

This review focusses on the literature specific to the Australian meat processing industry. It identifies the studies and reports, from 1998 to 2024, found from searches of academic and grey literature about the Australian meat processing industry, plus one or more of the following factors: diversity, inclusion, attraction, engagement, retention, psychosocial safety, wellbeing, and cultural safety. It provides a chronological account of the literature, showing an evolution in the meat processing industry's employment practices, the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives, a growing emphasis on employee wellbeing and cultural safety, and the development of more holistic approaches to address the attraction, retention and engagement imperatives for the industry.

The key findings were:



Attraction, Retention and Inclusion of Diverse Industry Workforces

Impeding Factors	Enabling Factors
1. Industry Image and Perception 2. Challenging Working Conditions 3. Career Development and Skills 4. Cultural Diversity and Language 5. Geographic Location 6. Workplace Culture 7. Mental Health Challenges 	1. Comprehensive Integrated Retention Frameworks 2. Wellbeing Programs 3. Cultural Competence and Language Initiatives 4. Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives 5. Innovative Work Design 6. Leadership and Supervision 7. Targeted Support for Migrant Workers 



Industry Psychosocial Safety, Wellbeing, and Cultural Safety

Impeding Factors	Enabling Factors
1. High Pressure Work Environment 2. Job Insecurity 3. Inadequate Supervisory Practice 4. Limited Control over Work 5. Physical Demands of Work 6. Shift Work, Long Hours 7. Social Isolation 8. Limited Access to Health Support 9. Language Barriers 10. Lack of Cultural Awareness 11. Limited Cultural Support 12. Discrimination, Racism 	1. Strong Safety Climate 2. Effective Leadership 3. Job Design Interventions 4. Clear Communication 5. Wellbeing Programs 6. Mental Health Support 7. Social Support Networks 8. Work-Life Balance Initiatives 9. Cultural Competence Training 10. Multilingual Resources 11. Diverse Leadership 12. Community Integration Programs 

Figure 4. Impeding and enabling factors impacting industry workforce attraction, retention and inclusion, and psychosocial safety, wellbeing, and cultural safety

Further detail on this review can be found here: <https://www.ampc.com.au/media/v5klgw53/final-wow-literature-review-1-ampc-milestone-4.pdf>

7.3 Findings from data collected on manager and employee experiences of diversity and inclusion

7.3.1 Participant details

The final sample comprised 25 participants of which 23 were employees in the meat industry (from 16 workplaces) who participated in online or telephone interviews (n = 20) or completed open-response questions in their own time (n = 3). An additional two external stakeholders were also interviewed. Participants were located in Queensland (n = 12, 52%), Victoria (n = 5, 22%), NSW (n = 5, 22%), or Western Australia (n = 1, 4%). HR-related professionals, followed by senior management, were most willing to participate in this study.

Table 1. Demographic and Work Characteristics of Sample

Demographics (n=25)	Average (range) or N (%)
Age (years)	Average = 44 years (range = 24 to 60+ years)
Women	17 (68%)
Mixed or non-white Australian ethnicities	8 (32%)
Job Role	
<i>Senior management</i>	7 (28%)
<i>HR-related</i>	8 (32%)
<i>Other professional</i>	7 (28%)
<i>Floor worker</i>	1 (4%)
<i>Other</i>	2 (8%)
Time in industry (years)	Average = 14 years (range = 3 months to 50+ years)
Permanent employment, yes	24 (96%)
Temporary working visa, yes	1 (4%)
Shift or weekend work, yes	8 (32%)
Work hours	Average = 44 hours (range = 8 to 80 hours)
Sexual orientation diversity, yes	1 (4%)
Disability, yes	0 (0%)
Neurodiverse	
Yes	0 (0%)
<i>Unsure</i>	1 (4%)

7.3.2 Current state of diversity and inclusion in the meat industry

Many participants reported that ongoing labour shortages mean the industry is generally open to a wide range of applicants. Whether this was actualised in practice depended on the size and type of work in the abattoir and how accommodating the workplace could be as is described further below.

7.3.2.1 Diversity and inclusion for women

Female representation in meat processing and challenges and supports for recruitment

Women's participation in the industry varies by workplace, with lower representation in facilities that have physically demanding roles, whereas larger operations had a greater proportion of women working on the site floor (e.g., >25%) due to the greater variety of jobs such as boning and packing.

A perceived barrier was that women would not like some roles (e.g., "Slaughterman") and would not be offered these roles, rather than women getting to decide for themselves. It took confidence and strong motivation from female workers to break down the stereotype that some roles were only for men as well as vocal support from male workers too.

Another perceived barrier to some women entering and staying in the meat industry was the lack of part-time work or job sharing, and the shift patterns and long work hours (e.g., 12-hour days). Part-time work was reported as difficult to implement by a few workplaces and does not appear to be widely adopted in this industry. Part-time work was perceived as hardest to implement on the floor, with it being perceived as near impossible for the first stages of the processing. Some workplaces did offer part-time work for later stages of processing. Whether part-time work was available for other roles such as administration depended on the specific workplace.

Representation of women in supervisor, manager and executive positions was also reported as a needed improvement as was representation of women in engineering roles (a current Australia-wide issue).

Challenges and supports for the inclusion of women

A few workplaces reported they were now more inclusive and respectful of female workers compared to past workplace cultures that were quite toxic towards women. Common past problems were primarily *"traditional type harassment attitude issues"* both from senior workers and/or other workers. Encouragingly, at one workplace other workers were becoming more confident about speaking up against these occurrences.

However, it was still perceived as being stigmatising if a woman made a complaint herself and harassment and inappropriate relationships were still reported (in some cases this caused the harassed worker to quit or consider quitting).

There was also low uptake and low organisational support of workshops around the Respect at Work legislation that aims to address these issues. Many workplaces did not perceive there to be a significant issue.

There were also intersectional issues where some workers from other countries have difficulties taking instructions from women, or where women from other countries may be taken advantage of.

Another challenge reported by a participant was the need to conform to male behaviour to fit in.

As more women joined the workforce, this participant was able to engage in more natural conversation with other workers rather than having to put on a tough approach.

Career progression in the meat industry was also perceived as a greater challenge for female workers, compared to men. It is unclear whether female workers were being offered the same opportunities as their male colleagues. Female leaders in this industry also reported experience more criticism compared to male leaders.

The provision of sufficient professional development for female staff was also identified as being problematic. There was a perception that opportunities and recognition for female staff may lead them to be poached by other workplaces in the meat industry. In addition, some abattoirs still do not have sufficient numbers of toilets for female workers. This had led to female workers at these sites having to queue for the toilet and change rooms, likely impacting on productivity (as has been found in previous research (Lee et al., 2025)). Supportive factors include networking opportunities (eg., *Meat Business Women* group and their annual conference), as this allowed women to meet other women in person, and to facilitate connections within and across different organisations within this industry. There was also appreciation for activities like International Women's Day to bring the female staff together. Noting though that male workers may still complain about not being able to participate. Having women in HR roles were also perceived as beneficial for inclusion and workplace culture, as women were perceived as having more empathy and be able to connect with workers over sensitive issues. Parental leave policies and workplace flexibility, which available at some worksites, were also identified as supportive practices.

7.3.2.2 Cultural diversity and inclusion

Pacific Island representation and challenges and supports for recruitment

With the introduction of the PALM (Pacific Australia Labour Mobility) scheme, many workplaces were very culturally diverse. The PALM scheme enables Australian businesses to hire workers from Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste (Kanan and Putt, 2023). Pacific Island workers predominantly came from Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, and Kiribati. Barriers to engaging Pacific Island workers were HR skills needed to oversee and administrate the scheme and the government changes to the scheme which meant longer mobilisation timelines.

Transport barriers were another issue and were primarily addressed by asking employees about their needs, identifying carpool options, and organising workplace-funded buses.

Pacific Island challenges and supports for inclusion

PALM scheme workers faced challenges when working in Australia, including being unfamiliar with Australian workplace systems, early start times, health requirements and varying levels of mechanical or computer literacy

Cultural differences between Pacific communities influenced social integration, accommodation stability and communication comfort.

Sports were identified as a useful way to encourage inclusion. Some workplaces made efforts to make PALM scheme workers feel welcome including taking them to rugby games, using rugby game tickets as rewards, and connecting them with local sporting clubs. In one workplace, some workers were headhunted by local clubs or played socially after work. BBQs were also used to facilitate cross-cultural connections. The PALM scheme workers usually have a support person available to assist them and have access to religious support outside the workplace. Additional supporting factors were physical health support and free healthcare, and opportunities to participate in choirs, singing at work, and other events.

There was mandatory cultural diversity training available to understand the different cultures in the Pacific Islands.

Migrant representation and challenges and support for recruitment

Other culturally diverse workers included migrants, backpackers and visa holders from the Philippines, Vietnam, China, Thailand, India, Brazil, Burma, Iraq, Iran, South Africa, Malaysia and Croatia. Short visa durations and sudden departures contributed to turnover.

Housing, having a “soft landing”, and seeing the company being well equipped for supporting visa processing were important for retention.

Migrant challenges and supports for inclusion

Language barriers affected workplace communication and inclusion. Many workplaces had workers who could translate for other workers, but this was not an adequate long-term solution. In some cases, workers were discouraged from developing their English skills.

This reflected a fear of the workplace that workers would leave if they developed this skill or a potential lack of foresight into the usefulness of English for future promotion opportunities.

As noted above, many workplaces regularly held BBQs and Hangis to support social gatherings among the diverse employees. However, a noted challenge was the long work hours of processing plants making it hard to identify a time that enabled most employees to attend these events. Showing interest in other cultures’ foods and cultural events was important. There was a belief that there needed to be cultural training in the different cultures for other migrant workers outside the PALM scheme as well.

Other implemented strategies to foster inclusion were:

- Stats boards of different countries/cultures, encouraging workers to add details on their hometowns
- A world map with representation of where all workers were from
- Flags on the walls representing every country
- Celebrating cultural days/weeks – e.g., Diwali, Chinese New Year
- Access to prayer facilities
- Choir and/or letting staff sing at work events
- Basketball and competitions at work

There were also inclusion strategies outside the workplace:

- Church communities
- Multicultural community events

First Nations representation and challenges and supports for recruitment

The proportion of self-identifying First Nations employees varied by specific workplace. This variation primarily depended on workplace location and percentage of First Nations in nearby communities. For example, in 2021 only 8% of First Nations people lived in Victoria compared to 34% and 29% in NSW and

Queensland respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). Various recruitment strategies have been trialled to engage greater numbers of First Nations employees in this industry. Common practices include:

- Recruitment through high schools. Though it was noted that this was not always successful possibly due to stressors in home life for these workers.
- Collaborating with local police as a recruitment pathway.
- Utilising Indigenous engagement workers at TAFE to better support First Nations youth to be work ready.
- Utilising an agency to have First Nations workers come in who did not have other employment opportunities. These workers were supported by the agency to settle in in their new homes. However, this funding was subsequently stopped.
- Engaging a footballer to talk to First Nations youth and bring them to the abattoir. However, these workers did not like the job, and preferred outdoor work to factory-type work.
- Boys from the Bush program. This was not particularly successful as the workers were away from their community and felt homesick and if the workers had the opportunity to go back to their community in holidays they often would not return to work again.

Another participant noted there has been successful First Nations programs to facilitate First Nations workers joining the meat industry, e.g., the STEPS program and a purpose-built abattoir at Cherbourg. However, the Cherbourg abattoir experienced difficulties recruiting workers and was ultimately shut down. It was perceived that First Nations workers had opportunities to train and work in multiple industries (e.g., hospitality, construction) and these may be preferred over working in the abattoir.

Not having a driver's licence and a lack of accessible public transport in regional Australia were two specific barriers to employment for worksites in these regions. It was important to discuss transport with potential employees as workers may not identify their needs upfront. Working in a cold environment could also be confronting for some workers.

Offering an induction period (soft landing) with part-time work was considered to provide a more supportive environment and to encourage higher retention of First Nations workers.

First Nations challenges and supports for inclusion

A challenge reported was the retention of First Nations workers. In some cases, this led to an unhelpful stereotype of workers not being stable employees.

While there were cultural changes for the better in regional communities, First Nations employees still faced challenges with obtaining accommodation. Compassionate leadership was felt to facilitate initial and ongoing employment. It was also important to ensure that First Nations employees understood their access to leave. Cultural awareness around First Nations needs to have time off work and connect with ground/country was also important to facilitate in managers. Having people in more senior roles who were First Nations was also beneficial for looking after and supporting new employees.

7.3.2.3 Neurodiversity and inclusion

Neurodiversity representation and challenges and supports for recruitment

The participants were very interested in supporting neurodiverse workers. There was a belief that the industry is suited to neurodiverse workers due to the stable work, repetitious tasks, task-oriented focus and set hours. However, there was also recognition that this structure could be difficult for some neurodiverse workers. Other concerns were the ability for workers with neurodiversity to cope with the pace, noise and smell of processing environments and the ability to fully adhere to safety requirements. Some participants reported not actively thinking about which workers were neurodiverse, or that they had neurodiverse workers in the past but were not aware of neurodiverse workers currently.

Currently, workers with neurodiversity were recruited through standard pathways. In some cases, it was not clear which workers were neurodiverse. One workplace was exploring specific approaches to recruit neurodiverse workers. This included collaborating with a recruitment agency that would be able to identify roles that workers would most likely succeed in and to provide them with ongoing support in their role.

Other workplaces had offered work experience for people with neurodiversity, however, there were challenges with finding suitable tasks, the speed of the production line, and the noisy environment.

At least one abattoir had a worker with neurodiversity, and the worker's enthusiasm for work and their work ethic was viewed positively. This worker had set tasks rather than job rotations. Workers with neurodiversity were also evident in other parts of the organisations (besides the abattoir).

Neurodiversity challenges and supports for inclusion

A potential challenge for workers with neurodiversity is how/whether to disclose. Workers with neurodiversity were recruited through standard pathways and only when there was a problem at work would the condition be declared. This led to a more reactive approach to supporting workers with neurodiversity.

Due to WorkCover advice around support for mental health, there was increased interest in evaluating whether policies and procedures were supportive of workers with neurodiversity. Adaptions made to suit different learning requirements due to cultural diversity were perceived to also be helpful for neurodiversity. For example, different learning styles and learning paces.

7.3.2.4 Disability diversity and inclusion

Disability representation and challenges and supports for recruitment

Whether workplaces could accommodate workers with physical disabilities were mixed. Smaller workplaces reported having less flexibility to take on workers with disabilities, but larger workplaces had more roles and more opportunities. One workplace had workers who were hearing impaired, which was not perceived to be a problem as the workers had physical capability. The environment was also very loud with the need for ear protection, so this impacted all workers' ability to hear, with workers having to rely on using sight to see what was going on. Conversely in another workplace, a hearing impairment was more of an issue as the workplace used more warning bells and sirens. Other physical disabilities mentioned and accommodated were visual impairment and loss of limb.

Whether workplaces took on workers with disabilities also related to the pre-employment screening. In one workplace, the screening was conducted to identify physical risks but did not preclude anyone with a disability from employment. Every job had an associated task analysis, so applicants could be found a suitable role based on their physical capability. Noting that this would have limitations if the applicant's

requirements were so specific that there were very few tasks that person could do. In another workplace, the screening was very physical based – e.g., needing to push 20 kgs, which limited opportunities for some applicants.

One workplace reported that they had previously conducted programs for workers with disabilities but were not doing so currently. Another workplace had been approached by employment agencies to support disabled workers but did not actively recruit through the employment agency.

Supports for disability inclusion

Long-term staff with disabilities (e.g., hearing impairments) were able to support new staff coming in with the same impairments. Inductions were accommodated to include lots of images to support workers who do not speak English which also supported other impairments. Workplace buddy schemes were adopted to physically demonstrate tasks on the floor. A support person was also allowed to attend workers' induction sessions to support them and ensure clear understanding of the induction materials.

7.3.2.5 Sexual diversity and inclusion

This was discussed in two interviews and two surveys. The industry included workers who were gay or transgender. In one workplace, unisex bathrooms were available for transgender workers. In another workplace, being LGBTQI was not perceived to be an issue. However, other participants noted more variable inclusion practices:

7.3.3 Instances of best practice for increasing attraction and inclusion and reducing turnover of a diverse workforce

Figure 5 summarises instances of best practice for a diverse workforce, which will now be explained in further detail.



Figure 5. Best practice for a diverse workforce

7.3.3.1 Supportive management

Supportive managers who listened to workers and asked questions were perceived as an important aspect of inclusion across workplaces. Specifically, key practices were showing interest in the different backgrounds of workers, asking questions and making time for conversations, being willing to take the time to do some research into understanding different workers cultures, having compassion and not jumping to conclusions about behaviours.

7.3.3.2 Opportunities for worker flexibility

Some workplaces included employment policies that enabled some degree of worker flexibility for all workers. Such a provision assists to normalise these policies. For example, one workplace had parental leave available for all workers (male and female). Similarly, flexible work hours were also seen as useful to ease workers from all types of backgrounds into work, particularly if they had not worked in a factory or processing environment before. Being flexible and accommodating to a workers' unexpected short-term needs where possible, was also utilised in at least one workplace.

For spouses/partners who work at the same site, managing their work shifts to enable one parent to work the early shift, and another to work the late shift was very useful for parents with childcare responsibilities. Shorter shifts either during school hours or after school were also used to retain or attract workers with childcare responsibilities.

7.3.3.3 Untraditional recruitment methods

Across many workplaces, adopting untraditional recruitment strategies enabled a larger pool of potential workers to be reached. For example, recruitment via Facebook, word-of-mouth connections through community organisations, and through Intercollegiate Meat Judging competitions. Also, attendance at industry-related events to promote a positive workplace image was noted to be important.

7.3.3.4 Cultural awareness training

Cultural awareness training was utilised in some workplaces and was reported to improve understanding of differences across different cultural groups of employees. The training facilitated discussions of strategies with managers and supervisors on how to best support new employees, pre-empting issues rather than being reactive to them.

7.3.3.4 Opportunities for career development

Across workplaces, it was noted as important to show workers that there were opportunities for growth either in the workplace or the industry generally. This was relevant in any size of workplace as it meant that smaller workplaces could still be attractive to workers if they knew that there would be support for long-term career growth. Being a supportive workplace was also seen as beneficial even if employees left as they would be able to talk positively about their previous workplace to other workers.

7.3.3.6 Workplace learning culture

In one workplace, it was perceived as highly important to change the previous workplace culture where workers were not willing to support and train new workers. Existing workers would see the new workers as trying to steal their jobs and the new workers would leave as they did not receive any support in their role. Instead, over time, a culture was built where workers were enthusiastic about training and training others.

7.3.3.7 Pre-employment screening

In one workplace, the adoption of comprehensive pre-employment screening encouraged diverse workers to be placed into job roles most appropriate for them. This screening was different from the more widely used pre-employment screening which focuses predominantly on a worker's physical strength.

7.3.4 Areas for future improvement and development

Key areas for improvement identified from this data collection were related to:

Key Areas for Improvement

Women



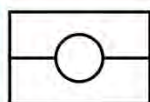
- Continued support for women to develop confidence to progress in the industry
- Acknowledging skills that women may have (e.g., HR) but not limiting women to those roles

Multicultural Workers



- How to better support international workers both at work and to integrate into the community
- What workplaces can do to increase community support for migrants
- How to better encourage managers and staff to be interested in and understand different cultures
- How to communicate better regardless of cultural differences and language barriers
- Having instructions, training, occupational health and safety and bullying/harassment policies available in all languages produced by an overarching body (rather than individual workplaces)
- Providing more support for workers to learn English
- Having digitised notice boards that can present information in different languages

First Nations



- Developing compassionate and understanding leadership of First Nations worker needs
- Actively asking questions to facilitate meeting employment expectations, e.g., do you have access to transport to get to work?

Disabilities and Neurodiversity



- How to design plants to be more supportive of disabilities – for example making plants accessible for wheelchair users (e.g., fewer stairs), and accessible for workers with hearing impairments (e.g., less reliance on sound alarms/warnings rather than visual alarms).
- Developing compassionate and understanding leadership of neurodiversity and different skills

Other Industry Changes



- How to incorporate more part-time roles into the industry
- How to better promote the industry
- How to incorporate more job rotation, so that workers are not always doing the same (physically taxing) job but instead have some job variations and learn new skills
- How to increase participation in Respect at Work training
- How to increase support for workplaces to manage changes with work, health and safety legislation, including the new psychosocial hazards legislation
- How to better build an employment pipeline, identifying employees who are suitable for long-term retention and promotion
- How to foster talent and show how to progress in the industry, across diversities
- How to best utilise role models to represent and support diverse workers in the industry

Figure 6. Key areas for improvement and development

8.0 Discussion

This project has identified the current state of diversity and inclusion for women, workers from different cultures, neurodiverse and disabled workers and workers with sexual diversity. Instances of best practice and areas for improvement and development were identified. Interpretation of the results in conjunction with literature review and other research findings are described below. Recommendations of how meat processing businesses and other industry stakeholders can improve their levels of employee diversity and inclusion are also described below.

8.1 Diversity and inclusion for women

The proportion of women working in the industry varied by workplace. It seemed that larger workplaces were more accommodating of women than smaller workplaces. Within workplaces, the proportion of women in senior leadership roles was still low. Women would often work in HR roles, but not other senior roles. This is consistent with other AMPC research (SG Heilbron Pty Ltd, 2022) which found that women make up 28% of employees in the Australian industry, and having low representation in management and slaughter positions (only 20-21%) and very low representation in maintenance positions (2%) compared to administration (45%) and boning or packaging (33-34%).

Barriers to women joining the industry were perceived to be that women would not like or not be physically capable for some roles, the lack of part-time work or job sharing, and the shift patterns and long work hours (i.e., 12-hour days). This is consistent with other research in the meat industry which has found that women want flexible work and to be able to find childcare that fits with work (Barrie et al., 2018, Phillips, 2022). However, previous AMPC research has identified that directly employed part-time roles only constitute 4% of positions (SG Heilbron Pty Ltd, 2022). Previous research in the meat industry has shown that job sharing, flexible and part-time shifts are possible (Norton and Rafferty, 2010). This includes “mums” shifts from 9am-3pm and “kids” shifts from 4pm until midnight (Norton and Rafferty, 2010). These shifts provided extra labour and allowed deployment of workers to areas that needed additional workers (Norton and Rafferty, 2010). Norton and Rafferty also found that some sites did not know how to allow for shorter shifts or to be able to divide longer shifts into short shifts.

Supportive factors for women joining the industry were the perceptions that they were good at particular roles such as packing, cleaning and HR. Women were also seen as beneficial to workplace culture and to break down perceptions that those who work in the industry must be tough. This kind of culture is also prevalent in the construction and mining industries where “toughness” must be displayed and help-seeking and emotions need to be suppressed (Ghanbaripour et al., 2023, Norberg and Fältholm, 2018).

Ongoing challenges for women in the industry related to instances of harassment and stigma when reporting issues. Being a migrant and a woman was seen as particularly challenging in this respect. Unfortunately, there was also still low engagement of some workplaces in educational sessions on these issues. Worker education to address attitudes and organisational intolerance of harassment are ways to reduce rates of harassment in workplaces (Hobbs et al., 2021).

Another challenge was opportunity for career progression and professional development for female staff. This is common for women in meat processing (Jacques, 2015) and other industries such as agriculture and construction (Zhang et al., 2024, Lopez-Escobar et al., 2024), where women are assumed to not want more senior positions because of child rearing and using a social identity lens – that male managers are more likely to promote people they see as similar to themselves or where workers see male managers as

more prototypical (Hogg et al., 2012). Another issue were instances of limited toilet facilities for women, a factor that can impact on worker productivity (Lee et al., 2025).

A supporting factor was male allies who were vocal and supportive of women trying more traditional roles and for reporting instances of harassment. Other supports were events which brought women together and organisations such as *Meat Business Women* which facilitated networking and mentoring opportunities. Social networks are essential for women to progress in industry (Sildeman and Vennström, 2023, Zhang et al., 2021).

Key insights:

As such it is recommended that there be:

- 1) more roles that can be completed part-time or with family friendly hours,
- 2) organisation wide support for education to address attitudes around harassment,
- 3) support for women to have career progression and professional development,
- 4) support for women to have social networks, networking and mentoring opportunities, and
- 5) adequate bathroom facilities for women.

8.2 Diversity and inclusion for migrant and PALM workers

Migrant and PALM workers were common across workplaces. Industry data shows that visa workers make up 13% of employees (SG Heilbron Pty Ltd, 2022). PALM scheme workers are in addition to this and accounted for more than 8000 workers in meat processing in 2023 (Kanan and Putt, 2023). PALM scheme workers are most commonly from Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji and Samoa (Kanan and Putt, 2023). Migrants in this study were also permanent residents. Permanent migrants to Australia are most likely to come from India, China, England, the Philippines, South Africa and Vietnam (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021b).

Barriers to migrant workers joining the industry were transport, accommodation and administration issues. Many workplaces were proactive in these issues organising transport and accommodation options and being well equipped with HR to support the PALM scheme and visa processing.

PALM workers faced adjustment challenges related to unfamiliar Australian rules and customs, budgeting, maintaining family connections and adapting to workplace expectations. Many needed support with mechanical or computer skills consistent with issues reported in previous PALM research (Kanan and Putt, 2023). This support includes liaison officers and community organisations (Kanan and Putt, 2023), and through adapting on the job teaching processes although there is also opportunity for improving this support.

Both PALM and migrant workers benefited from workplaces acknowledging cultural differences. For example – norms around language varied. While there was mandatory cultural diversity training for the PALM scheme, participants felt that this could be extended to other migrant groups as well. Note most successful migration schemes do include cultural and/or job training conducted locally before workers migrate to Australia (Gai et al., 2021).

Another consideration was that PALM and migrant workers did not always naturally mingle with other cultural groups. This would mean that more common migrant groups would have a social network at work, but smaller migrant groups would have less support at work. BBQs were perceived as very useful to facilitate these cross-cultural connections. However, a challenge was the long work hours of processing plants (e.g., 20-24 hours/day) making it hard to identify a time that suited most employees. Other implemented strategies were statistics boards of different countries, encouraging workers to add details on their hometowns, a world map with details of where all workers are from, and flags on walls representing every country of employees. These strategies may be feasible first steps to show inclusion and diversity at the workplace across shift workers if not all can attend BBQs or other events. Other supportive factors were the use of sport and choir to engage employees and to support them mingling outside of work. These activities allow connection across cultural identities, but it is also important to consider activities for workers who are interested in other pursuits.

Language was another challenge. Many workplaces had workers who could translate for other workers but this was not a long-term solution. In some cases, workers were discouraged from developing their English skills. This reflected a fear of the workplace that workers would leave if they developed this skill or a lack of foresight into the usefulness of English for future promotion opportunities and career development. Consistent with the findings in this study, previous research has found that many migrant workers with limited English learn better by watching and doing and having practical on the job training (Norton and Rafferty, 2010). However, this practical training is more helpful for entry level training and a lack of English language is still a significant barrier to higher-level training which requires more classroom-based learning and written assessment (Shah, 2017), thus highlighting the need for English language learning support.

Key insights:

Thus, it is recommended that workplaces:

- 1) support migrant workers transport needs and queries,
- 2) be equipped to support accommodation and visa processing requirements,
- 3) provide training and education both before workers come to Australia and ongoing during their stay on local practices, finance, work systems and the health system,
- 4) provide cultural awareness training for other staff and managers on a diverse range of nationalities,
- 5) provide a range of social events to give workers a chance to mingle across diverse groups,
- 6) provide opportunities for workers to discuss and represent their hometowns at work, and
- 7) provide opportunities for workers to learn English.

8.3 Diversity and inclusion for First Nations

Previous AMPC research has identified that First Nations employees make up 2% of meat processing employees (SG Heilbron Pty Ltd, 2022). This research found that the proportion of self-identifying First Nations employees varied by workplace, depending on location and supportive practices at that workplace. Transport was a key barrier to employment, particularly in regional areas where there was a

lack of public transport. First Nations workers were less likely to have support to obtain their driver's licence and to have access to a car. First Nations employees may be less likely to speak up about their needs and thus it was important for managers to pre-emptively instigate discussions of potential issues with First Nations employees.

Another challenge was the cold work environment and getting use to work for the first time. Offering an induction period where part-time work would be allowed initially was thought to be a way to provide a more supportive environment to retain First Nations workers. Another barrier to employment was that some First Nations employees may just want to work elsewhere, such as preferring outdoor work or hospitality or construction work, this may make some active recruitment strategies seem unsuccessful when it is really a lack of person-job fit.

Ongoing challenges were reported with perceived stressors in the home life of workers and being away from community, managers seeing First Nations workers as not being stable employees, a lack of employee understanding around leave entitlements and challenges obtaining accommodation. It was felt that compassionate leadership was essential for facilitating initial and ongoing employment for First Nations employees. Noting that compassionate leadership should still be paired with wise and effective leadership (Harris and Jones, 2023). Having First Nations manager role models were also useful for support and visibility. This is also reflected in the literature, with having First Nations employees in management positions associated with more First Nations employment in Australian businesses (Eva et al., 2025).

Key insights:

Thus, it is recommended that:

- 1) managers pre-emptively discuss any transport or other barriers to support a smooth transition to work,
- 2) managers take a compassionate approach to understand ongoing barriers to employment and to enable identification of strategies to support workers,
- 3) workplaces offer an induction period of part-time work to support work transitions, and
- 4) workplaces identify First Nation worker role models to support new First Nation workers and to show career progression is possible.

8.4 Diversity and inclusion for disability and neurodiversity

Reports of physical disabilities at workplaces varied. Reported disabilities included hearing impairment, visual impairment, and loss of limb. Hearing impairments appeared to be the most supported disability but even so were not supported at every workplace. Challenges were the need to hear warning bells and sirens and to still be physically capable in the job. Supportive factors were pre-employment screening designed to find all applicants a job (where possible), allowing support persons in induction sessions, workplace buddy schemes and long-term staff with similar disabilities to support new workers with the same impairments. Supportive factors identified in the literature are adaptations to the physical environment, seeking disabled employees' views on policy development and workspace design, disability training, flexible work, and collaboration with trade unions (Sang et al., 2021).

The proportion of workers with neurodiversity was not always clear in each workplace, some had disclosed whereas others had not. Overall, workplaces were quite receptive to employing neurodiverse workers and one was collaborating with a recruitment agency to do so. However, perceived challenges for neurodiverse workers were the pace, noise and smell of processing environments. Workplaces also faced the challenge of supporting neurodiverse workers, when the worker themselves had not disclosed, leading to more reactive support. Workers face benefits but also potential negative consequences when disclosing, depending on the organisational environment (Von Schrader et al., 2014). Thus, it is important to create workplace environments that are supportive of neurodiversity without requiring disclosure (Lindsay et al., 2021). These findings are consistent with the literature noting consideration of both environmental and social challenges for workers with neurodiversity (Krzeminska et al., 2019). Supportive factors in the interviews were perceived as having set tasks and being flexible and adaptive with style and pace of learning. Supportive factors identified in the literature include inclusive leadership, training for managers and staff, and flexible work (Branicki et al., 2024, Hutson and Hutson, 2023, Iqbal et al., 2025).

Key insights:

Thus, it is recommended that workplaces:

- 1) conduct pre-employment screening designed to find all applicants a job,
- 2) allow support persons in induction sessions,
- 3) be flexible and adaptive with style and pace of learning and working hours,
- 4) have buddy systems to support workers,
- 5) have long-term staff with disabilities as role models and to inform on policy and work design,
- 6) have jobs with set tasks that may be suitable for neurodiversity or disability, and
- 7) consider physical changes to workspaces to support people with physical disabilities and neurodiversity.

8.5 Diversity and inclusion for sexual diversity

The meat industry includes workers who are gay and transgender. Inclusion appeared to be variable and may be dependent on how much the worker conforms with other norms at the workplace and a willingness to work hard. Even within sexual diversity there are different diverse groups who may experience inclusion differently. More common groups such as gay and lesbian workers may feel more inclusion if they identify other workers in the workplace with the same identity (Donaghy and Perales, 2024). Other groups such as transgender workers may feel more alienation (Donaghy and Perales, 2024). However, at least one workplace supported transgender workers with unisex bathrooms. It is recommended to provide all workers with education around different sexual diversities and to also provide accessible unisex bathrooms for workers. Other supportive factors identified in the literature include ally networks of non-LGBTQI employees to show visible support (Perales, 2022) and inclusive leadership to identify and prevent discrimination (Arenas et al., 2017).

9.0 Conclusions

Workforce management in the Australian meat processing industry is an evolving landscape. This project identified that the meat industry is currently culturally diverse and that diversity for women, neurodiversity, and disabilities is increasing. Challenges for women were the physical capabilities needed for many roles, the lack of part-time work, shift patterns, long work hours, harassment, and issues with career progression. Challenges for culturally diverse workers were transport, accommodation, administration issues, acclimatising to cultural and work differences, and language barriers. Many of these challenges have been persistent over the past two decades. Challenges for neurodiverse workers were the pace, noise and smell of processing environments and whether to disclose. Challenges for workers with disability were the physical capabilities needed for many roles and hearing warning bells and sirens. Challenges for workers with sexual diversity were needing to fit in with other norms at the workplace to be included. Supportive factors were also identified including compassionate managers, events/organisations that facilitate networking and mentoring opportunities, adaptability of inductions and learning to support diverse workers, buddy systems, diverse role models, and workplace flexibility.



10.0 Recommendations

Based on the reviews, stakeholder-identified recommendations, and discussion synthesis, we have generated a series of recommendations for further consideration. These project recommendations are summarised here:



Key Recommendations

1

Induction programs developed and implemented to support diverse groups, including buddy systems and flexible training.

2

Integration of **diversity and inclusion education** into training and competencies for all workers.

3

Leadership development to support diverse workers in the industry.

4

Improved **supervision and workplace communication** – including listening and being interested in different diversities.

5

Improved **talent fostering** and **career progression** across diversities.

6

Role models to represent and support diverse workers in the industry.

7

Increased **support for workplaces** to manage changes with legislation, including the new psychosocial hazards legislation.

8

Increased participation in **Respect at Work training**.

9

Improved **job design** to create jobs suitable for part-time work and that incorporate more job rotation.

10

Normalised **flexible work** offered to both male and female workers.



Specific Recommendations for Diverse Groups



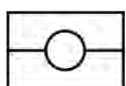
Women

11. More identified roles that can be completed part-time or with family friendly hours
12. Organisation-wide support for education to address attitudes around harassment
13. Support for women to develop confidence and have career progression and professional development
14. Industry-wide support of Meat Business Women and other social networking, mentoring and sponsorship opportunities
15. Provision of adequate toilet facilities for women



Migrant Workers

16. Cultural competency – with the integration of cultural awareness into competency frameworks, leadership development programs and training for staff and managers
17. Transport, accommodation and visa processing support for workers
18. Industry-wide development of multilingual material for training delivery and materials so burden is not on individual workplaces
19. Training and education both before workers come to Australia and ongoing during their stay on local practices, finance, work systems and the health system
20. Provision of a range of social events to give workers a chance to mingle across diverse groups
21. Opportunities for workers to discuss and represent their hometowns and cultures at work
22. Opportunities for workers to learn English at work or time off work, including collaboration with migrant support groups to facilitate this
23. Translator champions to motivate workers to learn English
24. Support from workplaces to ensure community support for migrants



First Nations

25. Compassionate leadership by managers to understand ongoing barriers to employment and to enable identification of strategies to support workers
26. Induction periods of part-time work to support smooth transitions to work
27. First Nations role models to support new First Nation workers and to show career progression is possible



Disability / Neurodiversity

28. Physical and mental health pre-employment screening designed to find all applicants a job and to best place new employees to different parts of the organisation
29. Allowance for support persons in induction sessions
30. Flexible and adaptive training and learning
31. Buddy systems to support workers
32. Long-term staff with disabilities as role models and to inform on policy and work design
33. Identified roles with set tasks that may be suitable for neurodiversity or disability
34. Plant design to be more supportive of disabilities, for example making plants accessible for wheelchair users (e.g., fewer stairs), and accessible for workers with hearing impairment (e.g., less reliance on sound alarms/warnings rather than visual alarms)
35. Inclusive leadership of neurodiversity and disability

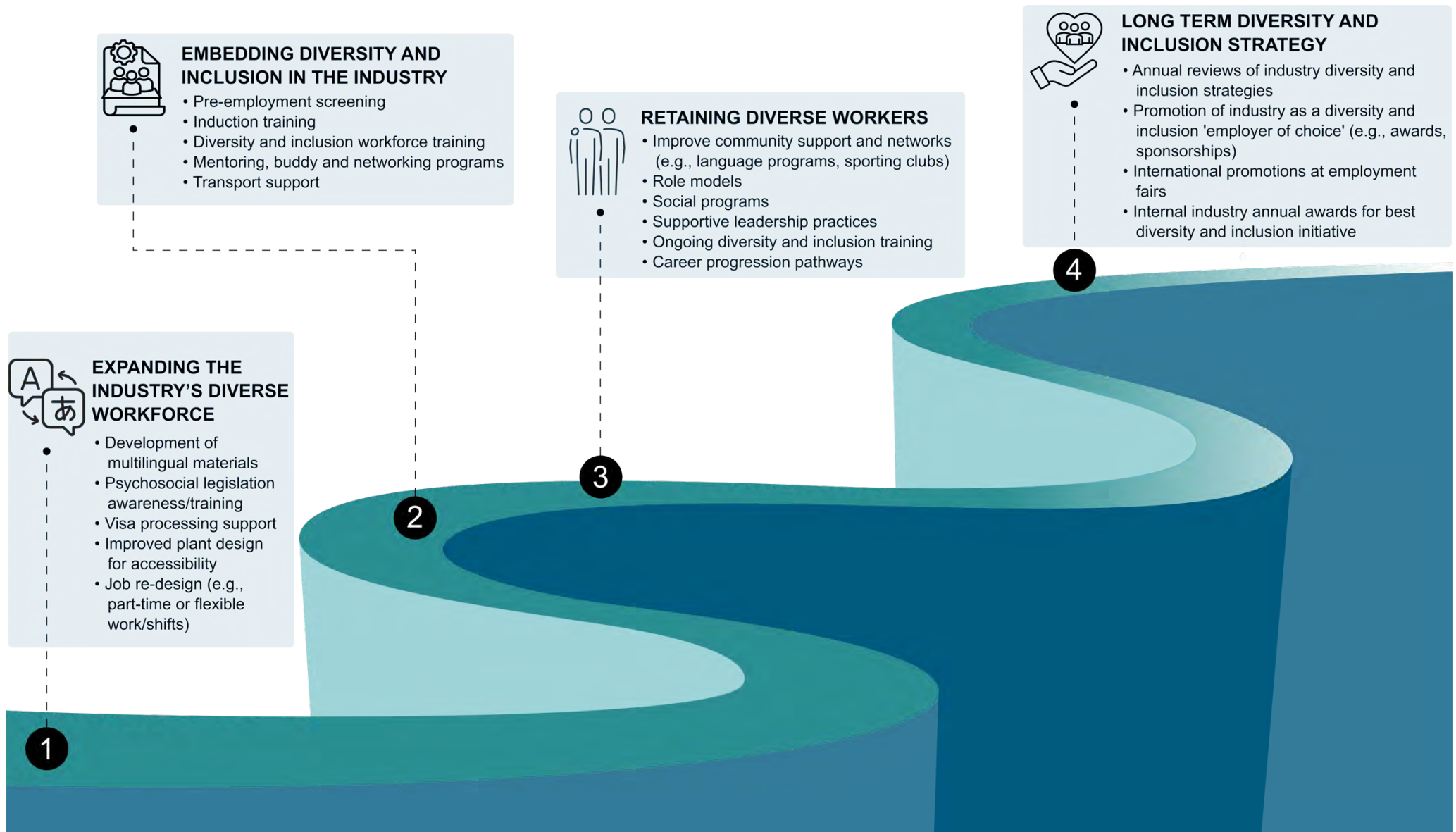


Sexual Diversity

36. Education provided to workers
37. Provision of accessible unisex bathrooms
38. Ally networks
39. Inclusive leadership

Figure 7. Key recommendations and specific recommendations for diverse groups

11.0 Roadmap



12.0 Project outputs

- 1) Project planning reports (Milestone 1 and 2)
- 2) Review plan report (Milestone 3)
- 3) Review 1 (Milestone 4)
- 4) Review 2 (Milestone 4)
- 5) Presentation of review findings at *Meat Business Women* conference, 15th May 2025
- 6) Data collection and analysis update (Milestone 5)
- 7) Interim draft report of employee and manager experiences (Milestone 6)
- 8) Case studies
- 9) Final report
- 10) First Nations report
- 11) Presentation of findings to AMPC
- 12) Two planned publications on review and qualitative findings



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14.0 Appendices: Case Studies



Recognition of Diversity

General Work Practices: Case Study Examples



Workplace Celebrations or Recognition of Important Days

Many workplaces took time to celebrate International Women's Day, Are you Ok Day, Harmony Day and other cultural days.



Halal Practices

A couple of workplaces accommodated for Halal slaughter meat.



Muslim Prayer Rooms

A couple of workplaces had prayer rooms available.



Initial and Ongoing Education

One workplace recognised the challenges faced by migrant employees and provided education to international employees before they came to Australia. This education included on shopping and budgeting, the dangers of cash in hand work, and transportation. One workplace had inductions that included information on the multicultural workforce and how it is embraced, sexual harassment and equal opportunity. They also had toolbox talks to address any issues that arose.



Support of Workers' Diverse Needs

Workplaces also supported workers with government and visa paperwork and by allowing support persons to attend inductions.



Worldwide Flags

A couple of workplaces displayed flags for each country represented at that workplace in visible locations at the workplace.



Events to Bring Workers Together

General Work Practices: Case Study Examples

Workplace BBQs and Fun Days

Workers from different cultures often stuck to their own cultural groups. Many workplaces put on BBQs as an opportunity for different groups to mingle and get to know each other outside of work. One workplace also had a family fun day where partners could be invited along.



Workplace Competitions

One workplace had installed a basketball court at the workplace to encourage workplace competitions. Another workplace had touch footy days at work.

Choir

One workplace had a choir for PALM workers to participate in.



Sharing with One Another

General Work Practices: Case Study Examples

Sharing Facts and Stories

A couple of workplaces encouraged their workers to share stories and facts about their home countries on notice boards and/or with supervisors.



Worker Profiles

One workplace sought a profile of each worker before they started work to know what they did previously to best match them on their existing skills.



Worker Rewards

General Work Practices: Case Study Examples



Sport-related Rewards

One workplace used tickets to rugby games and meeting players as a way to make new employees feel welcome and to reward employees.



Employee of the Month Rewards

A couple of workplaces had employee of the month rewards available to all workers. In one workplace, staff could nominate each other for rewards.



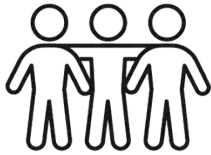
Engagement with the Community

General Work Practices: Case Study Examples



Community Cultural Events

One workplace collaborated with local council to run multicultural and Christmas carnivals. Staff could perform at the carnivals, and different cultures were represented at the Christmas carnival.



Community Engagement

Some workplaces used cultural leaders and community groups to recruit and identify potential workers. Workplaces also supported local sports clubs.



Workplace Injury Prevention and Management

Specific Work Practices: Case Study Example

One medium-sized workplace had a company called **Work Healthy Australia** come to the workplace two days a week. **Work Healthy Australia** would do pre-employment screen of potential workers' physical and mental health.

The point of this screening was not to preclude workers but instead to:

- 1) best place the worker in a job that suited their capabilities, and
- 2) place the worker in a job that would not aggravate any pre-existing injuries or illnesses or mental health triggers.

All jobs had a task analysis completed for them to assist matching with worker capabilities.

Existing employees could also access free **Work Healthy Australia** 20-minute appointments during their work hours. This could be to seek assistance with a physical injury at work or at home, just feeling a bit sore or for a psychosocial mental health booking. Employees did not need to inform their employer what the issue was for.

The workplace allowed workers 30 minutes to come off the line and to get cleaned up to attend these appointments. The workplace had received positive feedback about these appointments, particularly from Pacific Islanders who had limited access to treatment and health education in their home countries. The service created a perception that the workplace cared about their employees.



Australian Rural Leadership Program

Specific Work Practices: Case Study Example

One participant spoke very highly of the **Australian rural leadership program**.

This program took in a variety of diverse leaders from mining, fisheries, agriculture and health and was reported as a safe place to talk about problems relevant to Australia and rural, remote and regional areas.

The program was useful for teaching how to have hard conversations and how to get comfortable in discomfort to enact workplace change.

The program also incorporated First Nations teachings.



