GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE 2025

Queensland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gender Diversity in the Workplace 2025 report highlights the continued momentum and strategic efforts driving gender equity at **Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ).** In 2024–2025, women have made notable progress, with increased representation in leadership roles, access to mentoring and development and enhanced flexible work arrangements.

Key highlights include:

- Women now represent **40% of Executive Leadership Team** roles - an **increase of 11% from last year.**
- The gender pay gap showed significant improvement, **shifting from 7.4% in 2023 to -14.6% in 2024** – reflecting the sustained efforts and targeted actions taken to achieve pay equity.
- Enhancements to flexible work options and parental leave policies supporting work-life balance for all staff and supporting women's participation in the workforce.
- A strategic commitment to gender equity – supported by targeted initiatives and our partnership with Work180 – has driven a significant improvement in our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) assessment score, **increasing from 44% in August 2024 to 62% in July 2025.**

This report outlines the actions undertaken by SLSQ to accelerate gender equity, such as leadership development opportunities for women and inclusive workplace policies. It also features stories from employees who have benefited from these initiatives.

Looking forward, gender equity remains a priority. Encouraging and supporting women across all levels of the organisation is essential to fostering inclusion, creating a sense of belonging and supporting long-term sustainable growth.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

"The SLSQ Gender Diversity in the Workplace report highlights both our progress and ongoing commitment to gender equity.

Over the past year, we have achieved meaningful change - from improving workplace flexibility and parental leave policies to strengthening leadership pathways and mentorship frameworks – we are creating a workplace where women thrive.

We're encouraged by this year's progress, including a significant improvement in our DEI score and gender pay gap, but we know real equity requires ongoing effort and collaboration.

Our focus remains: to build a culture where every woman can grow, lead and succeed.

Thank you to all our team members, partners and senior leaders who continue to shape SLSQ's inclusive future.

Janet Nicholson
General Manager People & Culture

"At Surf Life Saving Queensland, we believe that creating an equitable workplace goes beyond policies—it requires a culture that champions confidence and courage. Far too often, women hold back not because of capability, but because of self-doubt. My message is simple: back yourself. We are backing you.

We are committed to ensuring that every woman in our organisation feels supported to step up, speak out, and lead with purpose. Whether it's through visible role models, leadership development, or simply a workrkplace that believes in you—we're building the foundations to ensure belief isn't a barrier.

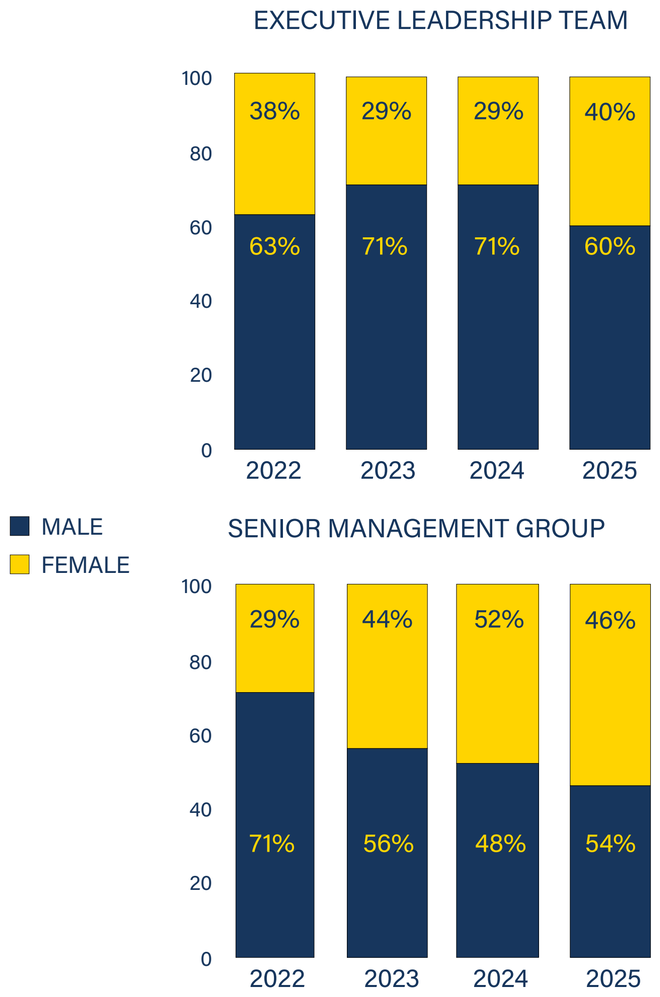
To the women of SLSQ: you belong in every room, at every table, and in every decision. And we will continue to create the space for you to thrive."

Zoe Bickerstaffe
General Manager Marketing & Membership

GENDER COMPOSITION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Women and gender diverse people make up 36% of SLSQ's workforce. The organisation has made significant progress in promoting gender representation and advancing women into senior leadership roles. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of women holding senior management and decision-making positions, reflecting a broader commitment to gender equity in our organisation.

Targeted initiatives, mentorship programs, and inclusive policies have played a key role in creating a more equitable environment, fostering growth and providing opportunities for women at all levels.



WGEA GENDER PAY GAP

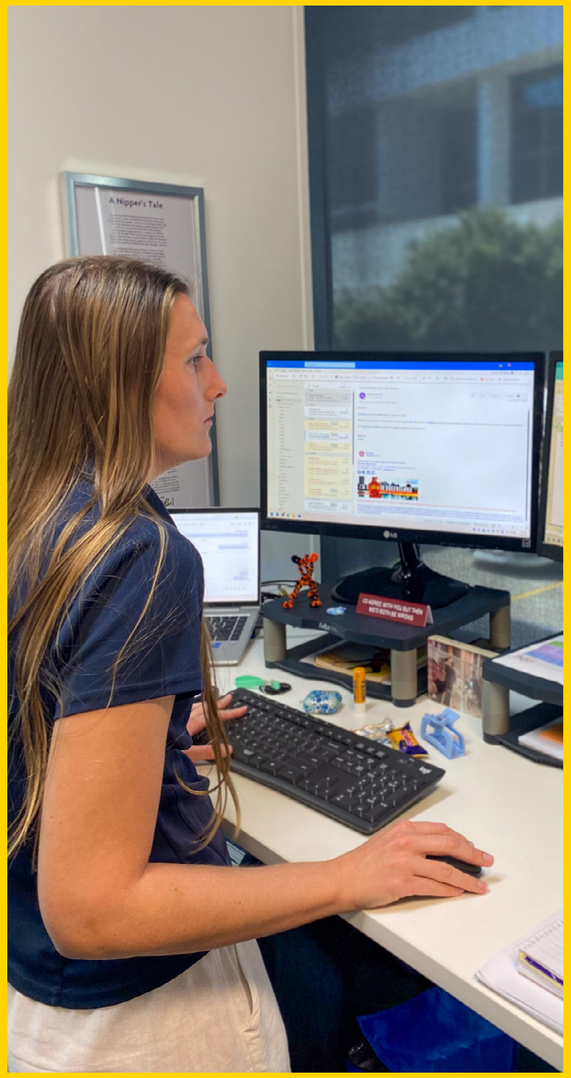
The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Gender Pay Gap refers to the difference in average earnings between women and men across Australia's workforce, as reported by the WGEA. It measures the overall disparity in pay, not just unequal pay for equal work, and reflects broader structural issues such as part-time work patterns, and leadership representation. The WGEA collects and publishes data from Australian employers to track and address these inequalities, aiming to promote transparency and drive progress toward gender pay equity.

Refer to the detailed WGEA report here: ***Employer Data Explorer | WGEA Gender Equality Data***

SLSQ'S COMMITMENT TO BRIDGING THE GAP

Surf Life Saving Queensland is committed to bridging the gender pay gap through the development of a comprehensive DEI Strategy and a dedicated Gender Equity Plan. These plans are designed to address systemic barriers, promote fair representation across all levels of the organisation.

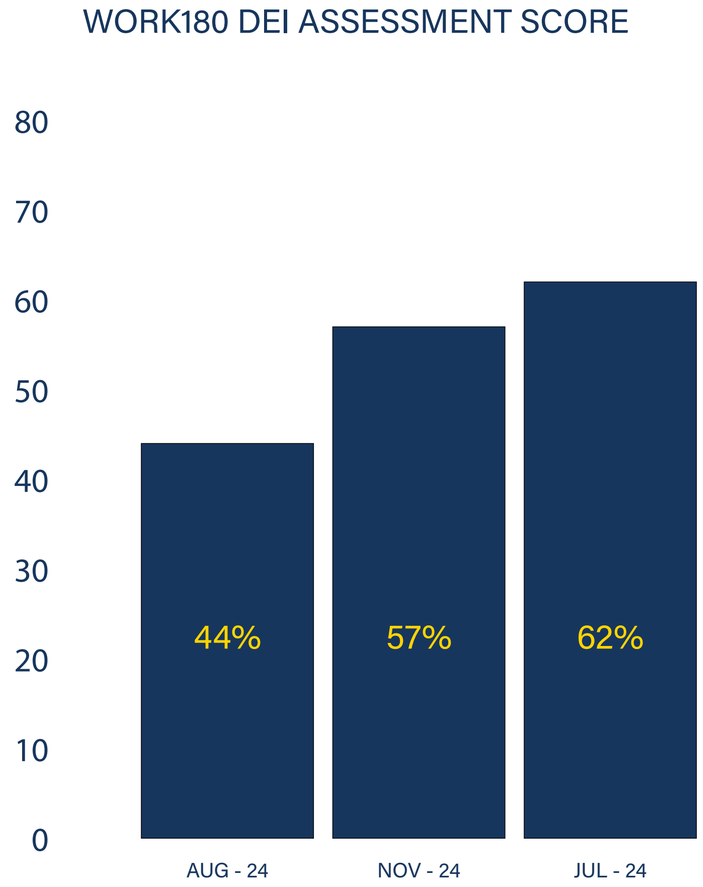
By embedding gender equity into our policies, practices, and culture, SLSQ aims to create an environment where all employees can thrive and contribute meaningfully. This commitment reflects a broader vision of sustainability, innovation, and social responsibility.



WORK 180
ASSESSMENT RESULTS

As part of the Australian Sport Commission (ASC) Women Leaders in Sport (WLIS) Executive Program and through our partnership with Work180, SLSQ's DEI assessment scores have shown marked improvement over the last 12 months, reflecting the positive impact of sustainable actions to creating an inclusive workplace. This initiative resulted in a 15% improvement in our organisation's score — increasing from 46% in August 2024 to 61% in June 2025.

Key areas of progress included increased gender representation in leadership roles, enhanced flexible work policies, and the implementation of targeted initiatives to support women in all aspects of employment.



GENERAL
DEI OVERVIEW

Through a staged DEI Maturity Model—focusing on compliance, behavioural change, and long-term sustainability—SLSQ is implementing actions to address gender equity, support LGBTQIA+ individuals, increase accessibility for people with disability, and engage First Nations and culturally diverse communities. Key initiatives include leadership training, policy reviews, inclusive recruitment, pay equity analysis, and the development of targeted initiatives and resources.

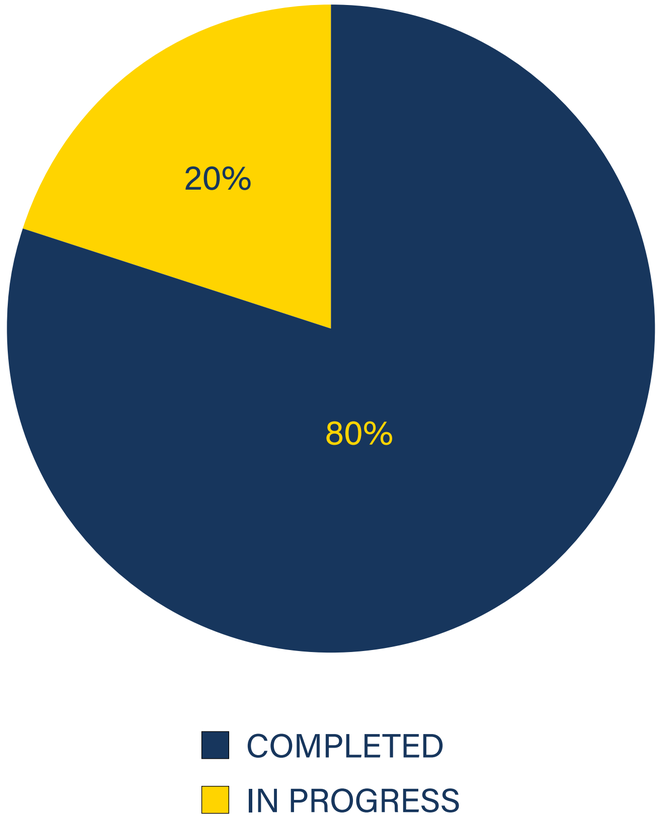
The strategy is underpinned by ongoing staff engagement, clear accountability, and a commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring inclusion becomes an integral part of its culture and operations.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY ACTION PLAN

Since the endorsement of the Organisational Capability Action Plan 2024-2027, substantial progress has been achieved in integrating inclusion best practice into our workforce strategies. Key initiatives implemented include the introduction of mentoring and development opportunities, the refinement of recruitment practices to mitigate bias and attract diverse talent, and the rollout of targeted training, resources, and workshops to build awareness and capability across all levels of the organisation.

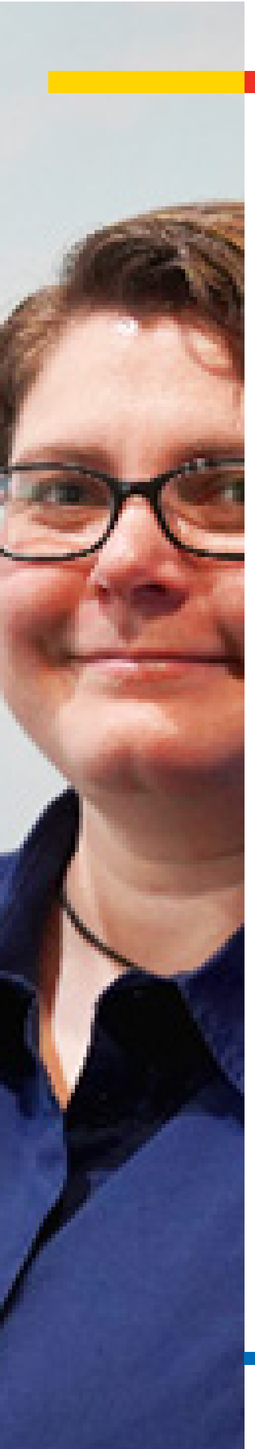
In addition, workforce planning and reporting now include measures that enhance transparency and promote greater accountability across the organisation.These efforts are contributing to an inclusive culture and strengthening our organisational capability through greater diversity.

With approximately 80% of the Plan already implemented, we have made significant strides in improving our organisational practices.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Introduction of the first ever **DEI Organisational Capability Plan**
- Review of current practices and policies to ensure systemic change
- Staff Employee resource groups and focus groups
- **14.60% WGEA** gender pay gap score in 2024
- **15% improvement in SLSQ's DEI** assessment score in 10 months
- Workforce capability led by leadership through staff training and workshops including the 'Leaders Unleashed program' with Performastery Leadership Facilitation for women leaders
- Improvement in Flexible working policies
- Implementation of Inclusive hiring practices



STORIES FROM STAFF

Tori Stevens *- System Analyst*

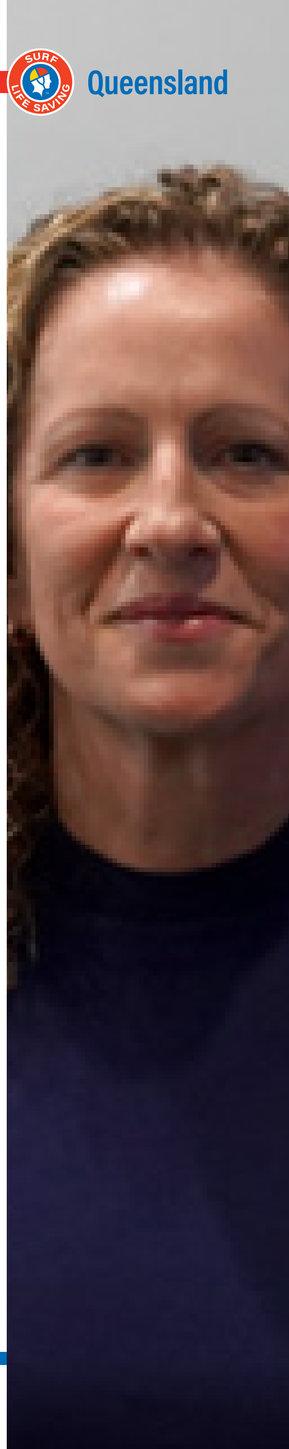
As a Systems Analyst in SLSQ's Education team, Tori is a problem solver at heart—supporting staff, trainers, and members throughout their education and training journeys. From managing system support and delivering training to streamlining workflows across divisions, they thrive on collaboration and continuous improvement. Their involvement in SLSQ's Inclusion Employee Resource Group provides opportunities to connect with colleagues across the organisation, raise ideas and feedback, and contribute to a culture that is safe, inclusive, and supportive for all. Tori takes great pride in SLSQ's strong sense of community and mutual respect—where every voice is heard, and everyone is encouraged to bring their whole self to work. They have been inspired by the organisation's growing commitment to supporting women and gender diversity through leadership programs, mentorship, and professional development. Tori's participation in the recent 'Leaders Unleashed program' for women and gender diverse staff, has strengthened their leadership skills and confidence while providing valuable opportunities to learn from others across the organisation. Beyond their role, Tori is passionate about creativity, storytelling, and advocating for respect and inclusion, particularly for LGBTQIA+ communities. Above all, they believe in the power of connection—creating spaces where everyone feels seen, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Laura Bowart *- Head of Education*

Since joining SLSQ as Head of Education six months ago, Laura has guided a dynamic team of 18 staff across commercial training, member education, and learning and development. The division manages a wide range of qualifications, develops both e-learning and face-to-face content, and ensures the seamless integration of SLSQ's learning management systems to maintain accurate member records and training data.

As part of the Senior Management Group, Laura represents the frontline of education, bringing forward both opportunities and challenges while ensuring compliance with the regulatory framework governing SLSQ's Registered Training Organisation. Her view of leadership is guiding and supporting staff, creating an environment where people feel safe to share ideas, grow, and perform at their best. Laura prioritises staff wellbeing and flexibility, monitoring workloads and ensuring time in lieu is taken when required.

With more than 25 years in education, Laura believes a flexible work environment is a key feature of SLSQ's staff offering, enabling teams to work in ways that best support organisational outcomes while maintaining efficiency and timeliness. This approach supports a safe, inclusive, and productive environment where all staff can contribute fully and continue to grow. Laura also highlights the value of mentorship in building capability, encouraging staff to seek guidance from experienced leaders to develop skills, gain insights, and grow the next generation of SLSQ leaders.



STORIES FROM STAFF

Rutu Desai *- Communications and Marketing Executive*

As a Communications and Marketing Executive, Rutu helps share stories, campaigns, and key messages that highlight the incredible work of members and communities. On the Employee Resource Group (ERG), Rutu contributes ideas, listen to colleagues, and supports initiatives that foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for women across the organisation. She feels most included and valued when her input is genuinely considered, whether in team projects, campaign planning, or ERG discussions. Being trusted to lead initiatives and seeing the positive impact of her work on staff and members reinforces that her contributions matter. Key career highlights include playing a role in campaigns that showcase surf lifesaving volunteers, supporting large-scale events and launches, and learning alongside passionate colleagues and experienced leaders.

Rutu has built resilience through adaptability, problem-solving, clear communication, and seeking support from colleagues while balancing self-care with professional commitments. Beyond her professional role, she volunteers as a patrol observer, demonstrating that surf lifesaving has a place for everyone. This experience reinforces an important message about inclusion: diverse skills and contributions are all valuable, and everyone has the opportunity to make a difference.

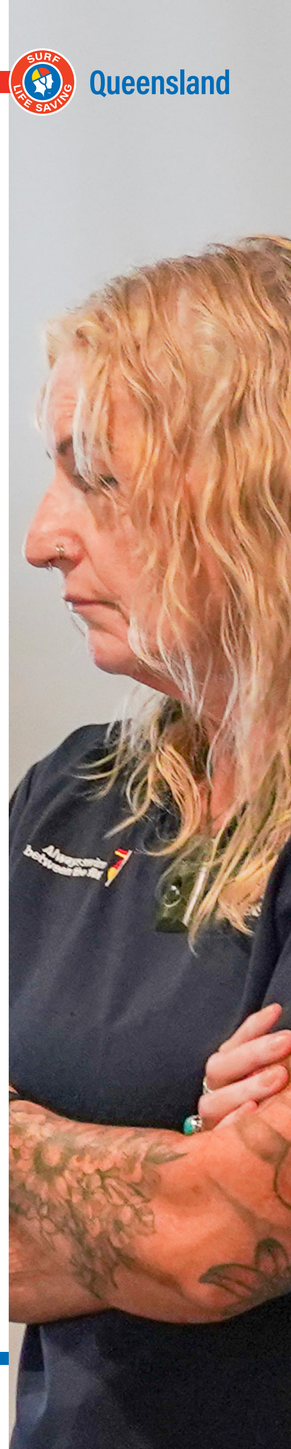
Kate Wake *- State Operations Communication Centre Supervisor*

As Operations Centre Supervisor at Surf Life Saving Queensland, Kate manages and oversees a team of staff, ensuring communications are conducted in line with established policies and procedures. She provides coaching and feedback to her team while overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Surf Operations Command Centre (SOCC).

Kate's extensive background with Queensland Ambulance Service, including roles as Emergency Medical Dispatcher and Acting Operations Centre Supervisor, has equipped them with critical skills in leadership, decision-making, and communication under pressure. This experience is complemented by formal qualifications, including a Certificate III and IV in Ambulance Communications, and first aid and CPR certifications. Kate is passionate about building pathways for future operators, including advocating for additional training such as Radio Operator certification.

Kate believes that inclusive leadership and SLSQ's focus on gender equity have enabled more women to step into operational roles, from Surfcom operators to UAV pilots and Duty Officers. Moving the dial further requires visible female leadership in high-pressure operational roles, targeted upskilling pathways, active recruitment into technical positions, and breaking down cultural outdated and self-perception barriers.

What makes Kate most proud of her team is seeing them work collaboratively, achieve shared goals and bring energy and positivity to the workplace demonstrating the strength of supportive, inclusive leadership.



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