

# Government initiatives for reimagining gender in emergency management

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Victoria has one of Australia's most diverse communities. By better reflecting this diversity, our workforce becomes more adept at empowering our community to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

This means we need greater gender and other diversity representation across all roles, including in leadership positions. Greater diversity in the workforce will give us access to different skills and experiences, improving capabilities across the board and to ultimately work with and keep communities safe.

Improving diversity in the workforce is a complex challenge, and there is no one single initiative or program that will bring about organisational or sector-wide culture change. For long-term change, we need a strategic approach that focuses on multiple interventions that address both cultural change and reducing the barriers to sector participation.

We need to address the recruitment barriers that impact on women, such as unconscious bias, and to ensure that inherent job requirements are evidence based. If agencies cannot agree on standard inherent job requirements for some key roles, it could indicate that these requirements may not all be actual requirements.

The focus cannot just be on recruiting more women and other diverse persons to the sector or organisations; we are also responsible for ensuring workplaces will be culturally safe.

To ensure women and other diverse community members advance in their careers, implementing flexible training models and accreditation programs that accurately reflect the modern requirements of key operational roles will be critical. In addition, support for career progression for this cohort (including formal and informal sponsorship, advocacy or mentoring) by current leaders will be vital.

The advancement of inclusion and diversity must continue to be a priority for the sector. Every initiative and program we implement helps to remove barriers to inclusion. Forums like the 2021 Gender Justice in Disaster: Inspiring Action conference help to continue the momentum, conversations and generate ideas for the future.