

# Community Sector Secretaries

## Session three: Inclusion, accessibility and onboarding

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# Acknowledgement of Country

Kaylene Whiskey, *Dolly Flying to Iwantja*

2022, made on the lands of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara  
Yankunytjatjara peoples, South Australia  
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## Program approach

\* **Session 1:** Organisational compliance

\* **Session 2:** Keeping the board on track

\* **Session 3:** Supporting inclusion and accessibility

*How will you stay connected?*

# Today's resources

## Succession planning

[Board succession Part 1: Finding new board members](#)

[Board succession Part 2: Recruiting new board members](#)

[Board succession Part 3: Selecting the right board members](#)

[10 questions to ask about succession planning](#)

## Induction

[Developing an effective induction process](#)

[Induction Checklist](#)

[Board member Induction Policy](#)

[Tips on Board Manual Contents](#)

## Board diversity

[Board effectiveness](#)

[Board composition checklist](#)

[Why and how to achieve diversity on your board](#)

[Attracting diverse talent to the board](#)

[Youth on board](#)

[10 common mistakes in recruiting new board members](#)

[Watch Inclusive NFP governance Panel](#)

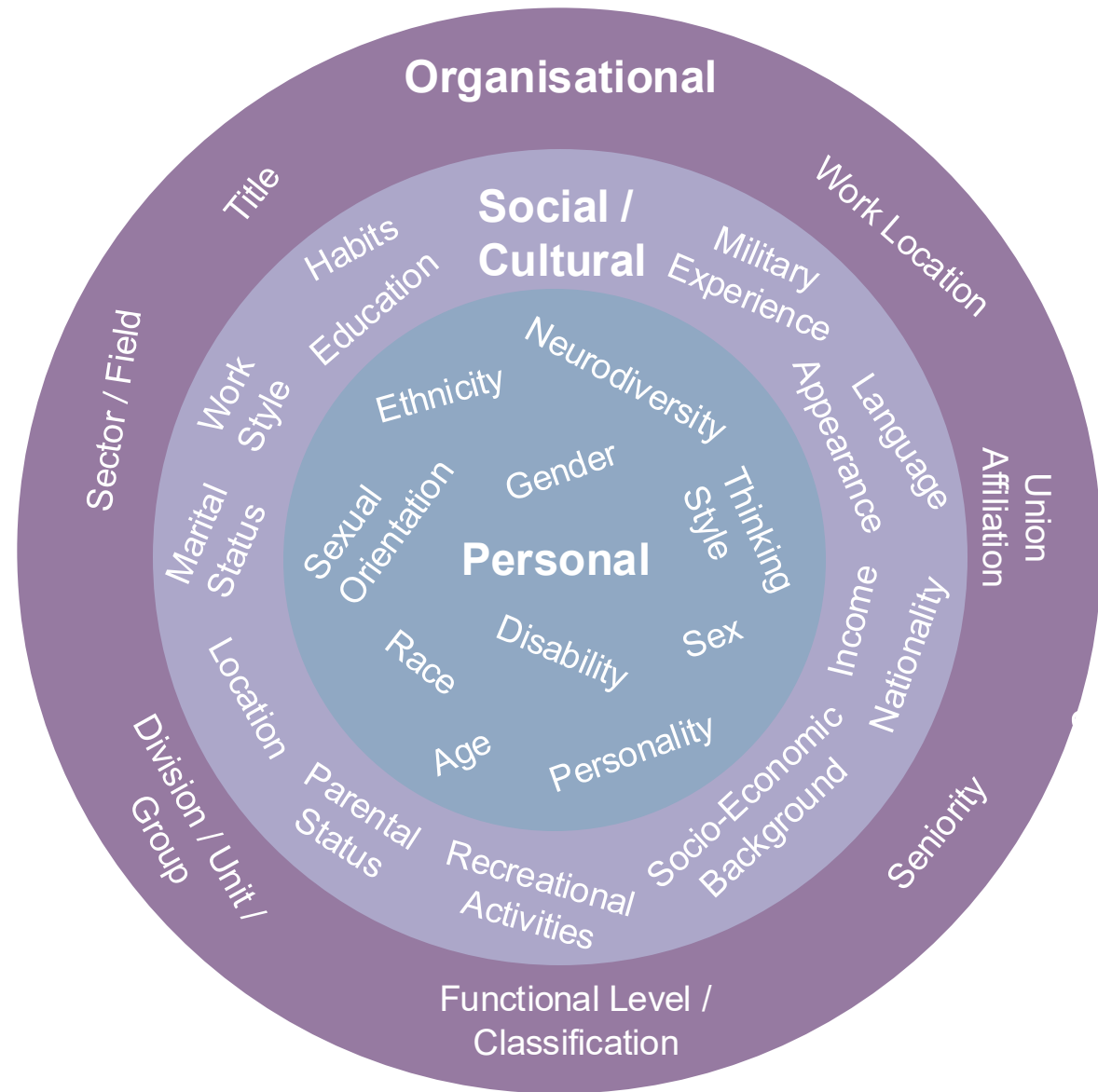
[Watch Ensuring Inclusivity: Understanding Australian Discrimination Law](#)

[Passcode: Festival2024!]

[Harvard Implicit Bias Test](#)

# The diversity wheel

*Adapted from Marilyn Loden*



# What is inclusion?

*Inclusion in governance means ensuring that all **board members, stakeholders** and **community** voices, regardless of **background, ability, identity** or **experience**, have **equitable access** to **information** and **decision-making**, feel they **belong**, and **share** in the organisation's **purpose and outcomes***



*Diversity Council Australia, Inclusion Model, Sydney, DCA, 2025*

# Why?

- It is the right thing to do!
- Stronger decision-making and problem-solving
- Different perspectives and experiences
- Increased innovation and creativity
- Stronger organisational performance
- Reflects the community
- Attracting and retaining talent
- Equity, inclusion and ethics
- Representation and visibility



# The secretary's role in fostering inclusion

Through **communication**, **organisation**, and **record-keeping**, the secretary can:

- **Model** inclusive and respectful behaviour
- Identify and **remove** barriers to participation
- Ensure information and processes are **accessible**
- **Advocate** for continuous improvement and equity in governance





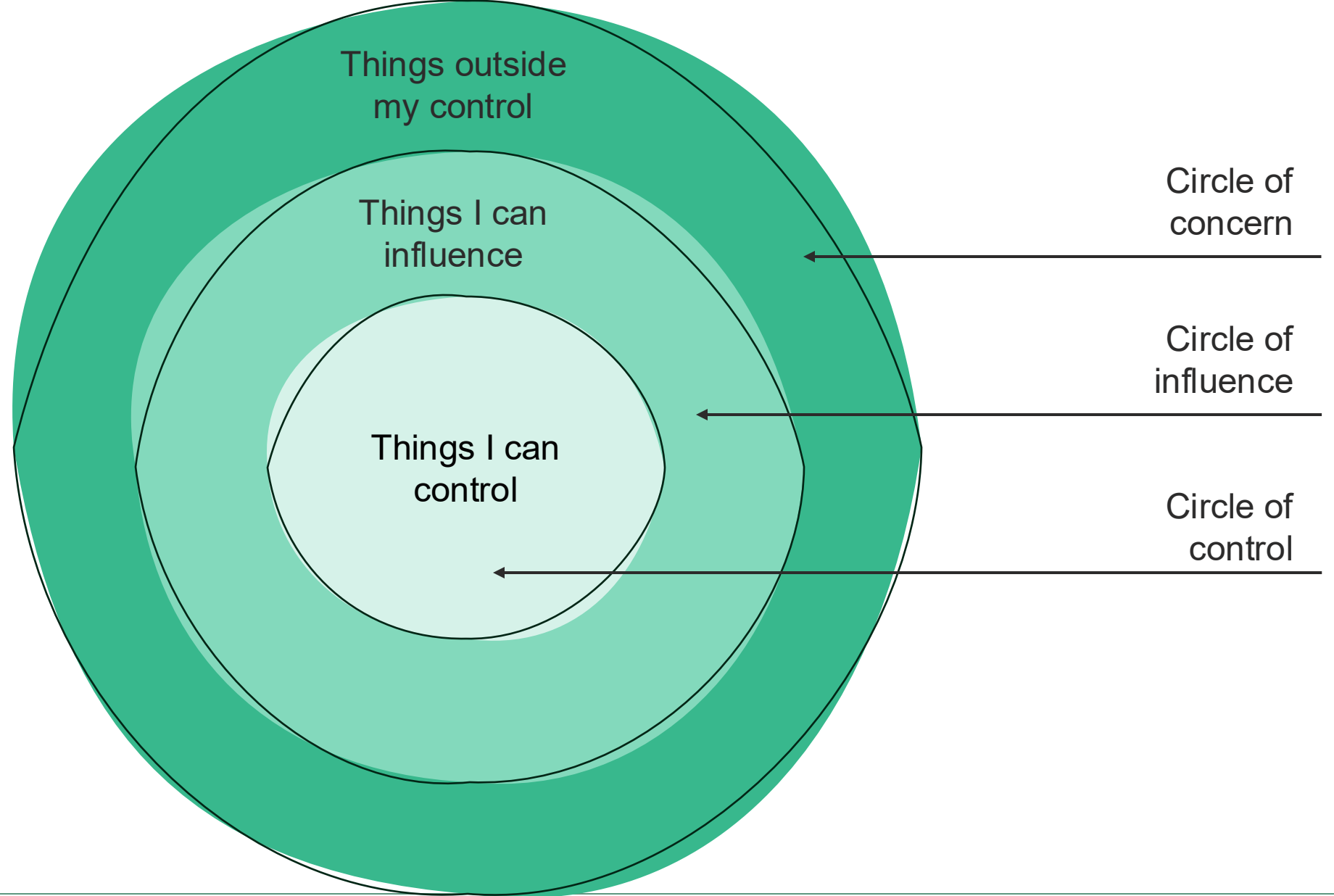
## Breakout

1. How well does your board reflect the community you serve?
2. What inclusive practices are you/your board currently engaging in?
3. What are the biggest barriers your board faces around accessibility and inclusion?

**Questions to ask yourself:**

What can I do?

What is within my control or influence?



## Looking inwards: inclusive foundations

Review internal policies  
and procedures to  
embed inclusion and  
accessibility

Use clear, jargon-free  
language in all  
communication

Ensure venues and  
technology meet  
access needs

Share meeting papers  
early and in  
accessible formats

Support a safe,  
respectful culture and  
raise concerns if  
needed

Keep accurate,  
respectful records that  
reflect all contributions

*Gather feedback and suggest improvements*

## Looking outwards: embedding inclusion in board practice

Ensure documents  
and communications  
are accessible and  
inclusive

Advocate for fair  
and inclusive  
recruitment of board  
members

Embed inclusion and  
equity goals in the  
strategic plan

Include community  
voices or lived  
experience in  
decision-making

Encourage  
consultation with  
diverse community  
groups

Apply inclusive  
policies and procedures  
in governance and  
community  
engagement

# Psychological safety

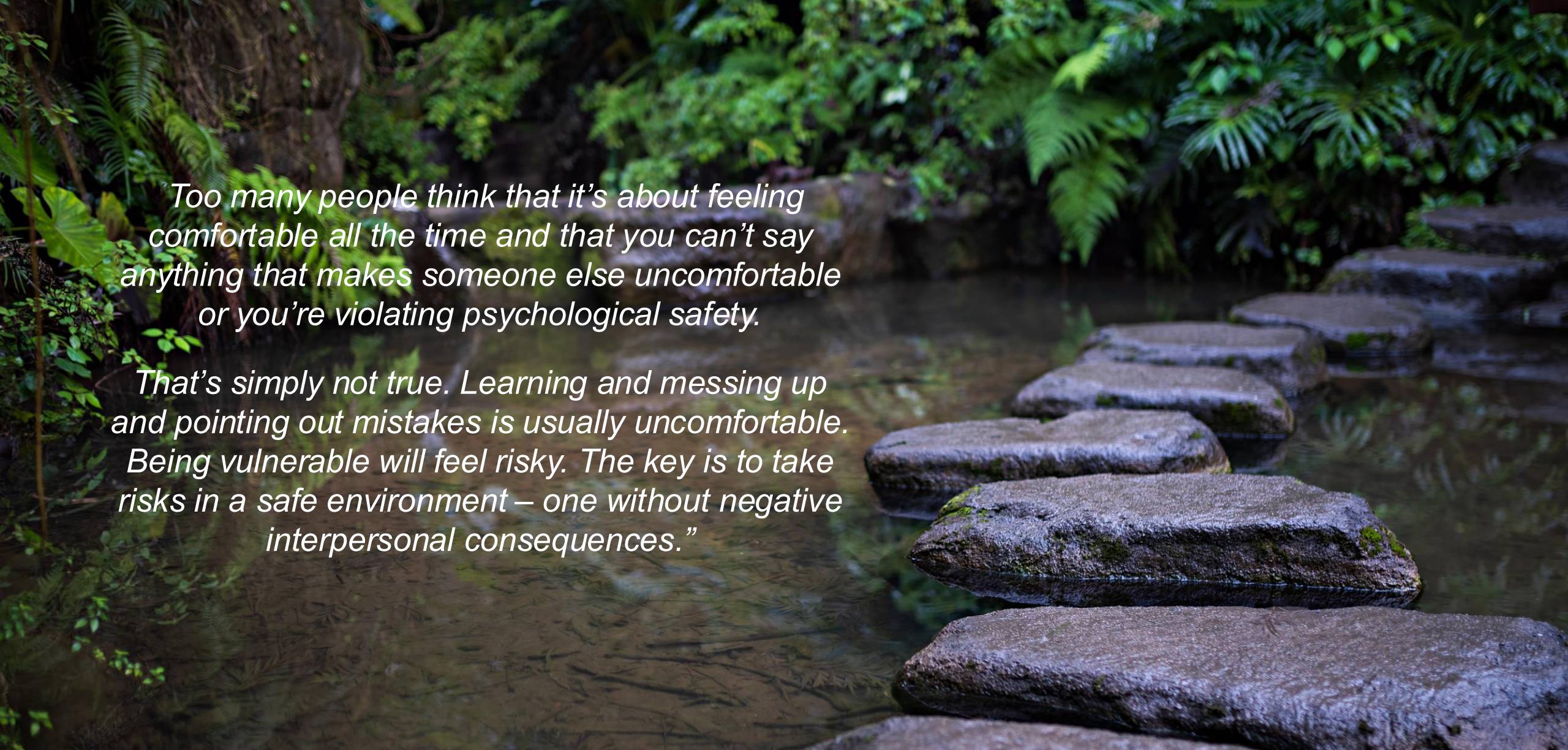
*“The belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.”*

Dr Amy Edmonson

## Indicators of psychological safety

- If you make a mistake on this team, it is not held against you.
- Members of this team can bring up problems and tough issues.
- People on this team sometimes accept others for being different.
- It is safe to take a risk on this team.
- It isn't difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
- No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
- Working with this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised.

*How would your team respond?*

A stone path leads through a lush green forest. The path is made of large, flat, grey stones, some of which are partially submerged in a shallow stream of water. The surrounding vegetation is dense and vibrant green, with various types of ferns and leafy plants. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

*Too many people think that it's about feeling comfortable all the time and that you can't say anything that makes someone else uncomfortable or you're violating psychological safety.*

*That's simply not true. Learning and messing up and pointing out mistakes is usually uncomfortable. Being vulnerable will feel risky. The key is to take risks in a safe environment – one without negative interpersonal consequences.”*

# Supporting psychological safety

- Actively invite input
- Show appreciation and humility
- Create warmth and informality
- Model constructive behaviour
- Ask before advocating
- Provide training and resources
- Reward challenges to the status quo
- Use humour and enthusiasm
- Give targeted and specific praise



**Break!**



# Inclusive recruitment, induction and succession planning

Review board effectiveness

Review the board composition

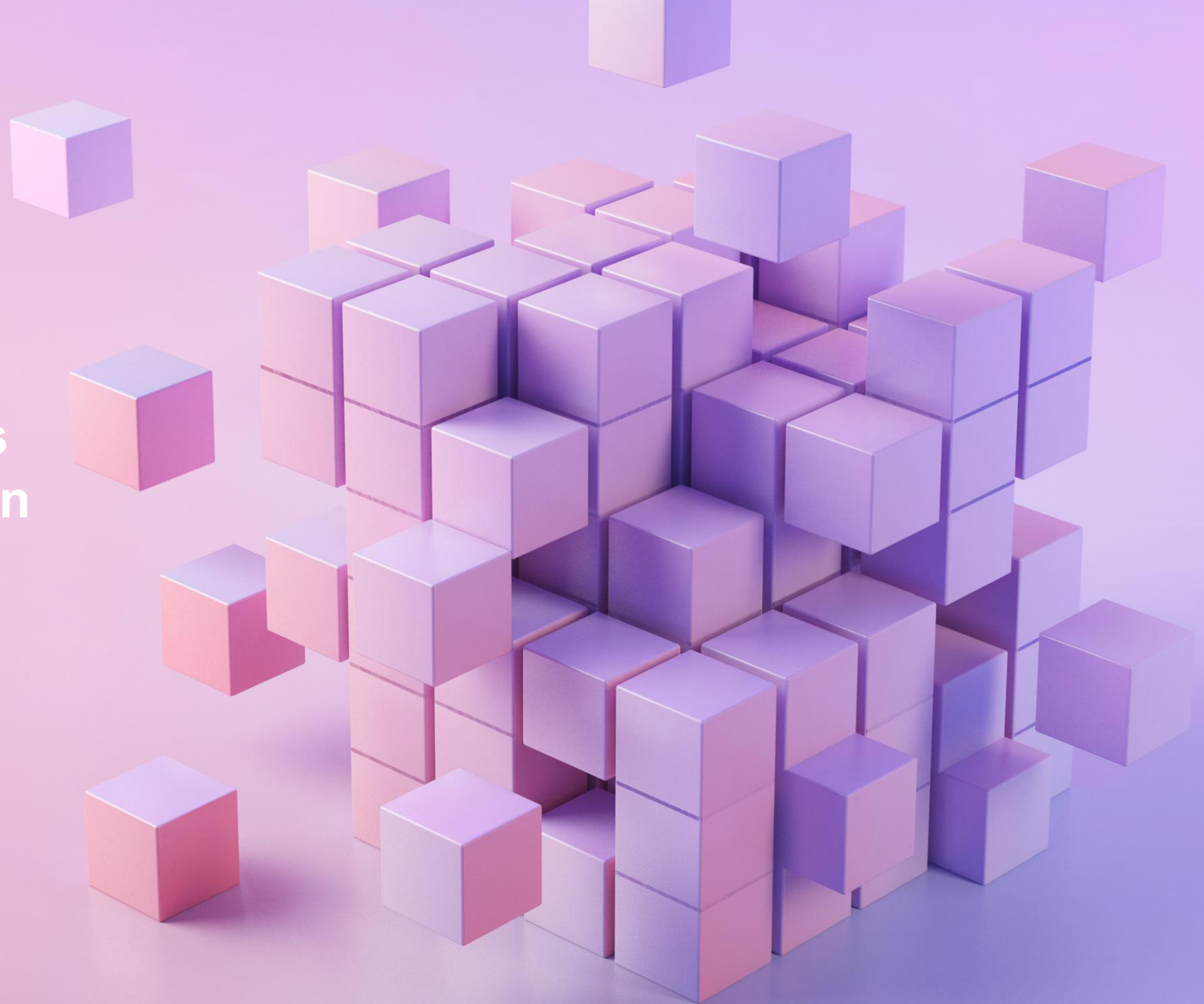
Identify diversity gaps

Recruit for diversity

Design inclusive induction and mentoring

Ongoing support and mentoring

**What is  
unconscious  
bias? How can  
it impact  
boards?**



# Examples of unconscious bias



## Confirmation bias

The tendency to search for information that confirms our preconceptions



## Attribution substitution

Using a simple attribute to make a complex judgment



## Affinity bias

The tendency to favour people with similarities to ourself



## Illusory correlation bias

Believing a relationship exists between two subjects, when in fact no relationship exists



## Availability heuristic

Being influenced by things that come to mind easily



## Intuition bias

The tendency to make decisions based on gut feelings rather than evidence or rational thinking

# Breakout: Building an inclusive board culture

- What role can the secretary play in creating a psychologically safe board?
- How might unconscious bias show up on a board, and what can the secretary do to help address it?



# Creating a healthy induction process

1: Get in contact

2: Create or update a board manual

3: Introductions to board and staff

4: Outline roles and responsibilities

5: Comprehensive, open-ended briefing

6: Provide a site tour

7: Mutual learning exchange

8: Ongoing feedback and improvement



# What are the principles of an inclusive induction?

- **Personalised:** Recognise individual needs and preferences
- **Accessible:** Provide information in clear, usable formats
- **Welcoming:** Create psychological safety and belonging
- **Collaborative:** Two-way learning process
- **Continuous:** Improve based on feedback

# Inclusive beginnings

From first contact through to introductions, ensure every step is **inclusive** and **flexible**.

Consider:

- Individual needs
- Accessible communication options
- Board culture and behaviour
- Clear expectations
- The board's roles and responsibilities





# Board pack contents

## Background information

- A bit about the background/history of the organisation

## Official documents

- Object/purpose
- Strategic plan
- Relevant policies (conflict of interest, confidentiality, etc)
- Copy of any insurance policies (for board members or for the organisation)
- Current year's budget
- Most recent annual report and auditor's report.

## The board

- Information about current board members (names, contact details and a short biography)
- A meeting schedule and a calendar of upcoming events
- Any board reviews, reports or evaluations
- A list of the board's current sub-committees, including terms of reference and details of chairs and members
- If there are several sub-committees, a chart showing how they fit together

## Staff

- Organisational chart

## Responsibilities

- Board members have a range of legal and ethical responsibilities, and it can be very useful to include some information about these in your board manual

# Creating an inclusive board pack

- Include a statement on diversity and inclusion
- Provide accessible versions of key documents
- Add bios, pronouns, and contact details
- Explain accessibility features of meetings and venues



# Building connection with new board members

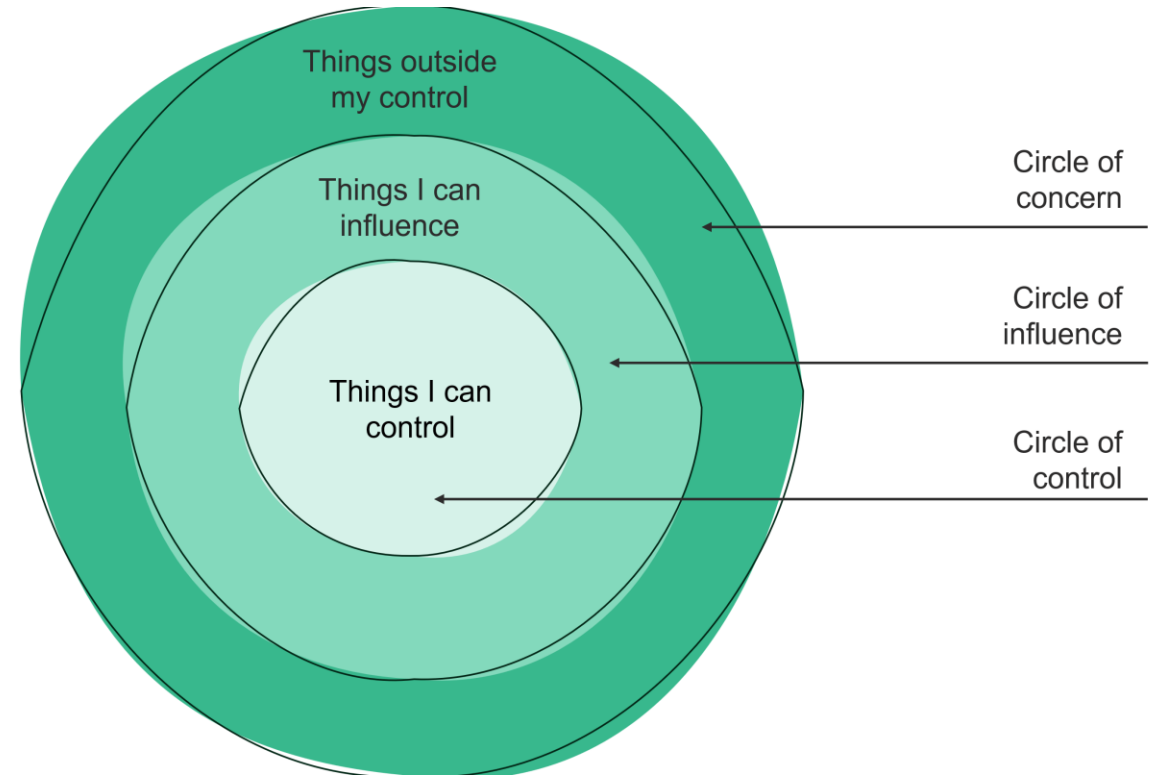
- Support new board members to feel part of the team
- Provide a briefing on current issues and recent decisions
- Offer a tour and/or overview of programs
- Create opportunities for socialising and connection
- Make it a two-way learning exchange

*Seek feedback to keep improving the induction experience*

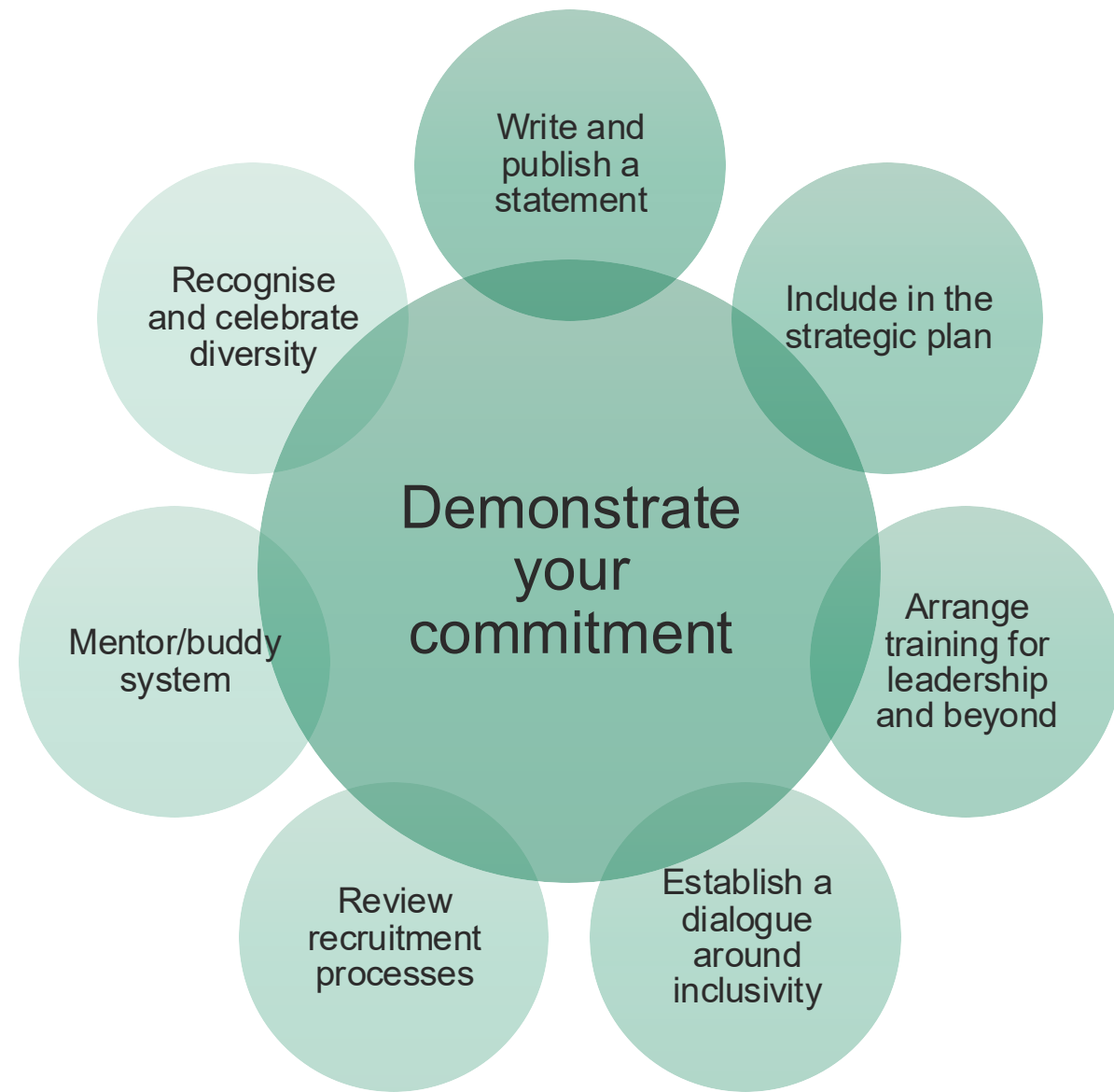


# Breakout

1. What can you do to advocate for more inclusive governance?
2. How can you influence culture, not just compliance?
3. What actions can you take to address the barriers your board faces around accessibility and inclusion?



# What can boards do to be more inclusive?



# Building an inclusive and accessible board

## Step 1: Lay the groundwork

- Review your policies, structure and practices with an inclusivity lens to make sure nothing unintentionally limits participation or diversity.
- Consider establishing a committee with a clear commitment to equity and inclusion
- Link diversity and inclusion to strategy and set goals for gender and other underrepresented groups

## Step 2: Recruit with intention

- Assess existing skills, experience and diversity
- Actively succession plan
- Expand your recruitment pool
- Clearly define roles and expectations
- Follow your governance requirements while also providing members with clear information on nominees and the value they bring to the board

## Step 3: Create pathways for participation

- Offer flexible meeting times, hybrid options
- Remove barriers to involvement, regardless of their circumstances
- Provide training and mentoring

## Step 4: Welcome and support

- Provide a warm, inclusive induction
- Pair new members with a mentor who understands inclusive leadership
- Offer training and leadership opportunities to support progression into senior roles

## Step 5: Build a culture that retains talent

- Foster a respectful, inclusive culture where every voice is valued
- Promote psychological safety
- Actively identify and address instances of bias or exclusion
- Seek feedback and check in regularly to learn how you can keep improving

# Reflect and share

- What have you learned?
- What will you apply?
- What do next steps look like?



# What next?

Set up a Community of Practice

[Take your governance skills to the next level with the Diploma of Governance](#)

[Extend your leadership skills with our Leading for Transformation course](#)

[Consider tailored training for your board to increase your collective skills](#)

[Attend one of ICDA's upcoming training sessions](#)

[Find more information about all aspects of governance in ICDA's help sheets](#)

[Join the Not-for-profit Happy Hour Facebook Group](#)

# Feedback



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2026secretaries>