

A close-up photograph of a biodegradable seedling tray filled with dark soil. Several small green seedlings with two leaves are growing out of the soil. The tray is placed on a light-colored wooden surface.

Joan Kirner emerging leaders program

Gender Inclusion in Leadership: Strengthening Representation

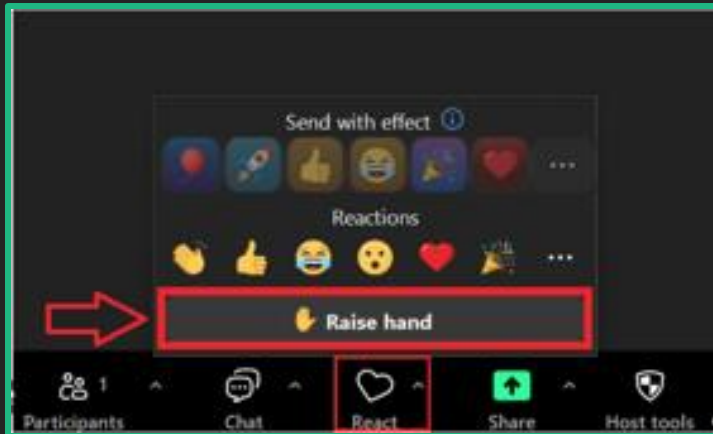
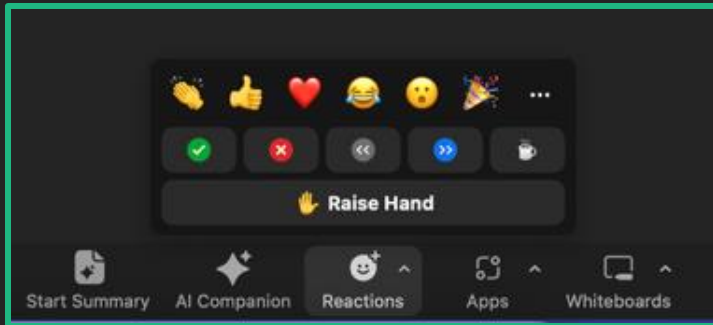


Join the chat...

*Your name,
organisation, land/
country you're
joining from*

Acknowledgement of Country

Housekeeping



- Joining the conversation:

 *Raise hand*

 *Chat*

 *Mute*

- Slides and recording will be shared
- Please don't use AI to summarise or record this session

Your facilitator



Kate James

- Bachelor of Arts, Master of Laws (Juris Doctor)
- Trained mediator
- Experience working with community organisations as a solicitor, consultant and private investigator

Today's webinar

Purpose

To explore practical strategies to strengthen gender representation

Learning outcomes

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Differentiate between gender representation, diversity, inclusion and bias
- Identify the key structural and cultural barriers that limit gender representation
- Apply a practical tool to support gender equity within your own team
- Commit to one small, practical action to promote gender inclusion

What is gender representation?

In the chat...

In 1-5 words, what comes to mind when you hear “gender representation?”

- **More than headcount**
- **Representation is about...**
 - Who has a voice
 - Who shapes decisions
 - Who is seen as a leader

Definitions

Gender diversity

The mix of genders within a group or organisation – not just which genders are represented, but in what **proportion**.

Gender diversity

The presence and voice of all genders across roles and levels of decision-making – reflecting the gender profile of the community we serve.

Gender inclusion

Whether all genders can contribute, be heard, and thrive. Inclusion is the **experience**.

Gender bias

Unconscious shortcuts that shape who we hire, promote, listen to, and believe – usually favouring the dominant group.

Diversity layers



Gender is one piece of a bigger picture:

Personal: Who we are

- e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, neurotype

Social/Cultural: Where we come from

- e.g. family, community, faith, education, language, caring responsibilities, lived experience

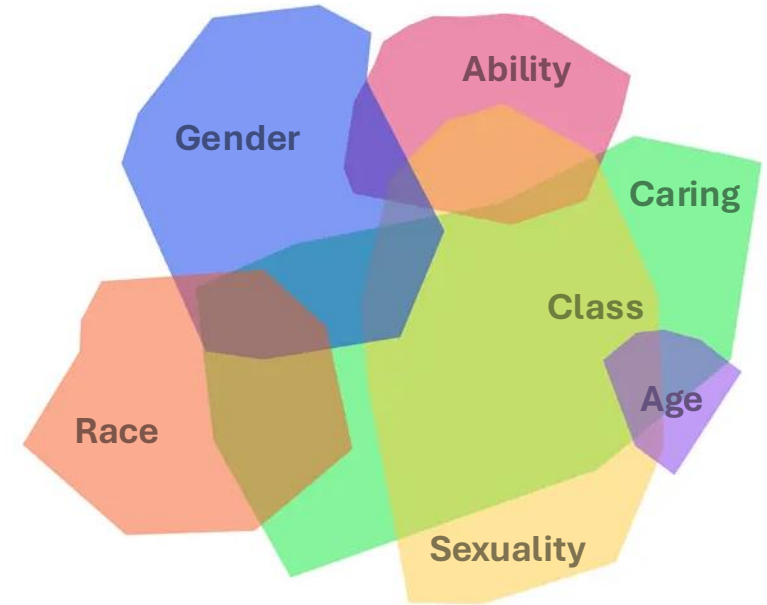
Organisational: The systems we work within

- e.g. role, level, function, tenure – and the systems and norms that shape who gets to lead

Intersectionality: Layered, overlapping

"If I respond to surveys, there's a decent chance that my gender won't be listed as an option and therefore that I'm virtually compelled to misgender myself, quit the survey, or raise the issue and worry that I'm going to be perceived as one of "those people".

It's hard to be represented or feel included when your identity isn't even an option"



*Source: Adapted from Yen Eriksen's
"Visual metaphors for explaining intersectionality"*

Why it matters: Australia in numbers

~33%

**of APS Secretary-level
roles are held by women**

APSC State of the Service 2023

~8%

**gender pay gap remains
across the Australian
Public Service**

WGEA Data Explorer 2024

<1%

**of senior leaders are
recorded as gender-diverse,
reflecting gaps in how we
collect and report data**

VPSC State of the Sector 2022

13th

**Australia's rank for global
gender parity, held back by
economic & political
empowerment**

WEF Global Gender Gap Index 2024

The 40:40:20 standard

THE STANDARD*

≥40% WOMEN

≥40% MEN

≤20% ANY GENDER

WHAT'S CHANGED, AND WHAT HASN'T (YET)

AICD set 30% target for ASX 200 boards in 2015

Achieved in 2022, now sitting around 36%

Targets work, when paired with reporting

Public accountability drives change

CEO and Chair roles did not move

Boards diversified faster than executive teams

Targets do not guarantee inclusion

Targets can open the door, culture decides who stays

** Adopted by the federal government for Commonwealth board appointments
Increasingly used as a benchmark across Australian organisations*

What's getting in the way?

Conscious Bias

- Opinions and preferences we're aware of.
- Easier to challenge, because we can name them.

Sounds like

"I just don't think they're ready for that role"

Unconscious Bias

- Judgements we're unaware of making, shaped by who we've grown up around, what we've seen rewarded, and what 'a leader' looks like in our heads

Shows up as...

- *A gut feeling.*
- *A 'fit' call.*
- *The candidate you found yourself rooting for without quite knowing why.*

Unconscious biases: Four to look out for

Affinity bias

Warming faster to people who remind us of ourselves: same school, same accent, same life shape...

"They'd be a great culture fit" (= they're like me)

Availability bias

Making decisions based on immediate, memorable, or recent information...

"We had a non-binary person in the team once and it created a lot of awkwardness. I'm not sure we're ready for that again"

Confirmation bias

Noticing the evidence that backs our existing view and quietly discounting what doesn't.

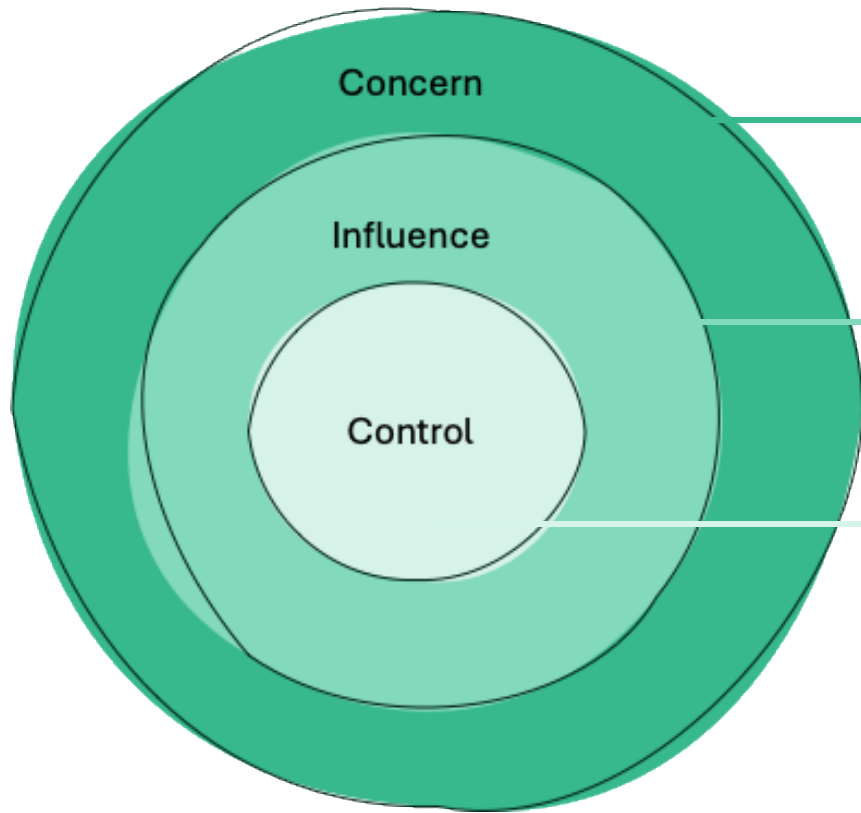
"She keeps stepping back from the big moments - it just confirms this probably isn't her level"

Attribution bias

The tendency to explain people's successes and failures differently depending on who they are

"He missed the deadline... he's been under a lot of pressure lately" vs. "She missed the deadline... I'm starting to wonder if she can handle the workload"

Review: Covey's circles

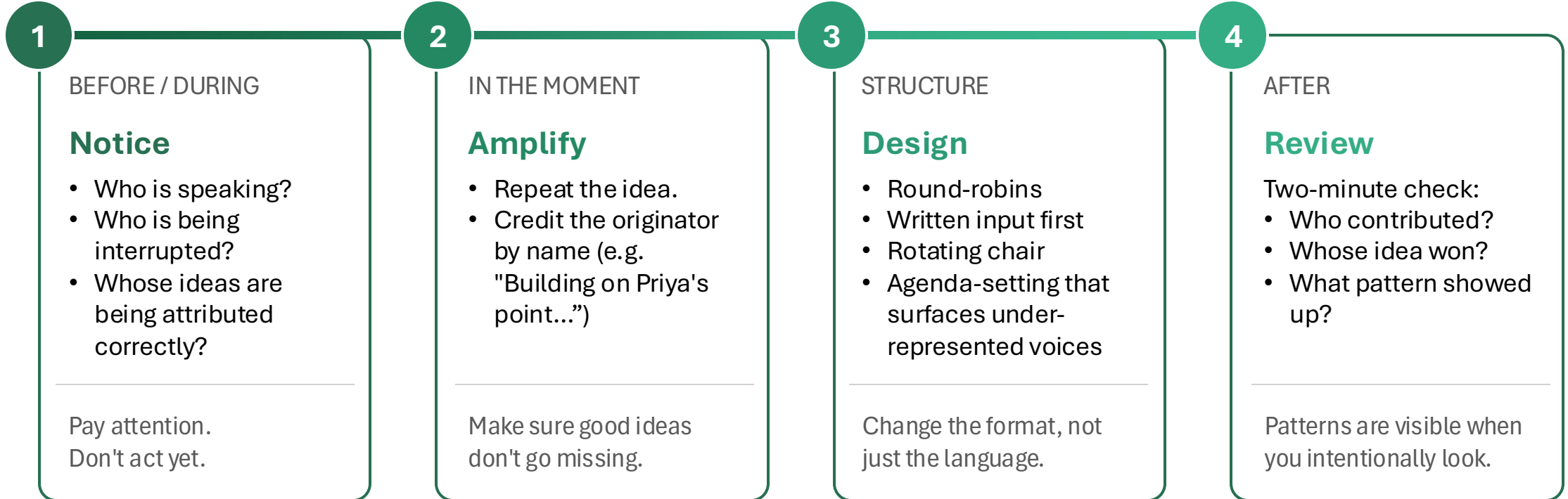


e.g. national gender gap, historic structural inequality, government-wide policy.

e.g. recruitment, promotion and retention pipelines, peer team norms, cultural conversations.

e.g. who you sponsor and amplify, how you run meetings, who gets credit, airtime and stretch work in your team.

Inclusive meetings: 4 steps



Sources:

- *Obama-era amplification practice*
- *Diversity Council of Australia: Inclusive Meetings*

Myths & reframes

Myth

“All our appointments are merit-based”

Reframe

Targets don't replace merit – they expose the myth that the current system is neutral, and level the field for everyone

Myth

“We're already pretty good compared to others”

Reframe

It's not about being ahead of others. The real question is whether we've built a system where gender doesn't predict outcomes.

Myth

"They need more experience first"

Reframe

Research shows men are routinely promoted on potential, while women are promoted on past performance. Let's make potential the standard for everyone.

Myth

"There just weren't many candidates."

Reframe

The pipeline reflects where we look, not who's out there. Research shows qualified candidates exist across all genders. Let's design systems that find them.

Research sources:

- McKinsey Women in the Workplace 2025
- WGEA Gender Strategy Toolkit

Inner voice

"I don't have the right experience yet"

"I don't want to be the difficult one"

"I'm not comfortable putting myself forward"

"I don't meet all the criteria, so I won't apply"

"I got here because they needed someone like me, not because I earned it"

Small actions. Big impact.

“

I started repeating quieter colleagues' ideas in our team meeting and crediting them by name. Within a month, two people who'd barely spoken were running their own agenda items.

”

MANAGER – COMMUNITY HEALTH

“

I asked one question on every shortlist: 'who's not on this list, and why?' I'm not the hiring manager. I just kept asking. Three rounds in, the lists started looking different.

”

TEAM LEADER – STATE GOVERNMENT

“

I started a two-minute review at the end of every meeting: 'who didn't get airtime today?' It felt awkward for two weeks. Then it just became how we do meetings.

”

PROJECT LEAD - NFP

You don't need permission. You don't need a title. You need **one small thing**, done **consistently**.

Activity: One thing in the next 2 weeks

1

Notice

Who's speaking? Who is being interrupted?
Whose ideas are being attributed correctly?

2

Amplify

Repeat the idea, credit the originator by name
(e.g. "Building on Priya's point...")

3

Design

Round-robins, written input first, rotating chair,
agenda-setting to surfaces under-represented voices

4

Review

Two-minute check: Who contributed? Whose idea
won? What pattern showed up?

Where in your team's meetings does
representation already quietly break down?

Notice, Amplify, Design, Review...

Which one feels most useful?

**What is the one thing you'll do
differently in the next two weeks,
and how will you know you did it?**

Commitment

In the chat...
“In the next two weeks, I will...”

Resources

Links

- APSC [State of the Service 2023-2024](#)
- WGEA [Data Explorer 2024](#)
- WGEA [Gender Strategy Toolkit](#)
- VPSC [State of the Sector 2022](#)
- WEF [Global Gender Gap Index 2024](#)
- Champions of Change Coalition [40:40:20 standard](#)
- Obama-era amplification practice – [Big Think article](#)
- Diversity Council of Australia: [Inclusive meetings](#)
- McKinsey [Women in the Workplace 2025](#)

Help sheets and articles from ICDA

- <https://communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/finding-a-community-board-thats-right-for-you>
- <https://communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/why-boards-need-more-women>
- <https://communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/networking-and-mentoring-how-it-can-help-you-in-your-board-role>
- <https://communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/how-the-victorian-womens-register-works-and-why-you-should-be-on-it>
- <https://communitydirectors.com.au/articles/where-are-the-women>
- <https://communitydirectors.com.au/check-lists/questions-to-ask-yourself-before>

Share your thoughts



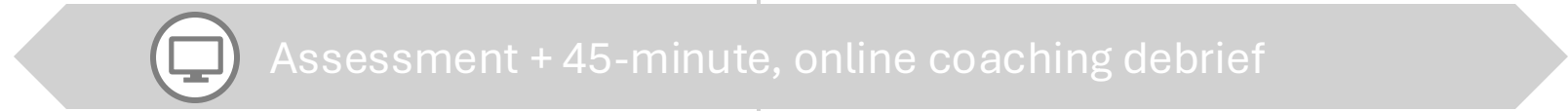
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2025JK-webinar>

Next week: Overcoming barriers to sustainable workplace transformation

5 x full-day workshops
(3 in-person, 2 online)



Leadership strengths assessment



4 x 1-hour webinars



Mentoring circle
(60-minutes, online)



Graduation
(2-hours, in person)

