

# CHARTER OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND OBJECTIVES OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Launch: 17 March 2017, Wakefield Gardens, Swinburne University of Technology



**MESSAGE FROM  
PROFESSOR LINDA KRISTJANSON  
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT**

I am delighted to launch Swinburne's first Charter of Cultural Diversity and Cultural Diversity Objectives.

The launch is a significant milestone for Swinburne, and the higher education sector more broadly, representing Swinburne's commitment to cultural diversity within its community and society at large.



## **OUR CULTURAL DIVERSITY STORY**

### **CULTURAL DIVERSITY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

Swinburne was the first university in Australia to appoint a Director, Multicultural Engagement. This was in recognition of the importance of cultural diversity to the overarching success and achievement of the university as a leading inclusive global university. It also sought to provide for its students and staff community who come from many cultural backgrounds and countries an enriching and fulfilling community and campus experience.

The Cultural Diversity Strategic Framework (CDSF) is intended to introduce a far-reaching, university-wide and sustainable approach and agenda for integrating cultural diversity values into all aspects of university life. Embedded in Swinburne's institutional values, traditions and heritage and Victoria's status as an international culturally diverse society, the CDSF seeks to rest on a set of Cultural Diversity principles and objectives (the Charter and Objectives), which provide the focus and impetus for the development of policies, programs and initiatives to translate the principles and objectives into practice in the second stage of the CDSF.

## **CHARTER OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY OBJECTIVES**

The Charter and Objectives are designed to reflect Swinburne's strategic commitment and focus on cultural diversity values.

The CDSF and the Charter and Objectives were developed by Swinburne over a period of more than ten months which included extensive consultations with members of its student and staff community and with external stakeholders from the community at large and the government.

The creation of the Charter and Objectives reaffirms Swinburne's dedication to cultural diversity, as a core value of strength based on the principles of inclusivity, respect and equality.

We understand that Swinburne is the first university in Australia to have committed to a Charter of Cultural Diversity.

### **LAUNCH OF THE CHARTER AND OBJECTIVES**

Swinburne's launch of the Charter of Cultural Diversity and Objectives of Cultural Diversity on 17 March 2017 is a special occasion for its staff, students, friends and supporters. The launch is also an event of great significance to the higher education sector more broadly and to Victoria.

Swinburne University's Charter of Cultural Diversity also reflects and reaffirms Victoria's approach to cultural diversity and community cohesion and subscribes to the stated "foundational values on which our success [as a community] has been built: equality, freedom and shared responsibility".

The Charter of Cultural Diversity reaffirms the values that underpin Victoria's multicultural success story, namely:

- one law for all;
- freedom to be yourself;
- discrimination is never acceptable; and,
- a fair go for all.

Swinburne's Charter of Cultural Diversity is supported and cherished by all who value and support Victoria and Australia's cultural diversity. The Charter is a statement of values that is not just for Swinburne's community only but for all Victorians and Australians who cherish our freedom and our diversity.

# CHARTER OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

## **PREAMBLE**

Located on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations, Swinburne acknowledges the rich cultural heritage of the First Nations People.

This Charter reaffirms and extends this acknowledgement and respect to the many cultures that make up Swinburne's diverse community. At Swinburne we believe that educational excellence is achieved by valuing and nurturing each individual within its community.

This Charter recognises the importance of cultural diversity and affirms Swinburne's commitment to the principles of inclusiveness, mutual respect, equality and social cohesion. It expresses the university's underlying and abiding appreciation of Australia's open, progressive, democratic and multicultural values and traditions.

Swinburne aims to create a vibrant intellectual and innovative community and workplace that enjoys the full advantage of the wide-ranging economic, educational and social benefits of cultural diversity.

This Charter expresses Swinburne's belief that cultural diversity is one of the priceless assets of humanity, which the university wishes to embrace and to nurture.

In this Charter and the accompanying Objectives, 'cultural diversity' means cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity.

This Charter does not create in any person any legal right or give rise to any civil cause of action.

# PRINCIPLES

## 1. Commitment to cultural diversity

Swinburne recognises, celebrates and values the cultural diversity of all members of its community and the benefits and richness that such diversity engenders.

## 2. Equality

Swinburne supports the rights and entitlements of all its members from diverse backgrounds to mutual respect, equality and understanding free from any discrimination, biases or prejudices.

## 3. Right to express heritage

Swinburne supports the rights and entitlements of all its members to promote, preserve and express their racial and cultural heritage and identity, religion, traditions and languages within the university and in the context of Australia's shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities.

## 4. Right to participate

Swinburne supports the rights and entitlements of all its members from diverse backgrounds to access opportunities that it offers, to achieve advancement, and to participate in and to contribute fully to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the university.

## 5. Access to services

Swinburne affirms the rights and entitlements of all its members, to access services provided by the university, which shall be delivered on the basis of equality and fair treatment of all its members.

## 6. Promoting understanding and mutuality

Swinburne is committed to promoting unity, understanding and harmony among its culturally diverse community and to fostering a culture of understanding, acceptance, appreciation and respect within its diverse communities.

## 7. Commitment to shared values

Swinburne recognises that respect and support for cultural diversity are best achieved through shared and common commitment by its members to the dignity of the human person, to Australia's laws, values, aspirations, duties and traditions, and to the duties, responsibilities and obligations associated with responsible citizenship.

## 8. Benefits of cultural diversity

Swinburne recognises that cultural diversity is an asset and an invaluable resource of the university. It seeks to promote the social, cultural, educational and economic benefits of such diversity for the benefit, enjoyment and enrichment of the university and all its members, its partners and the general community.

## 9. Commitment to cross-cultural partnerships

Swinburne will continue to develop, strengthen and maintain cross-cultural partnerships and relationships with all relevant individuals, organisations and community groups in order to collaborate with, promote and enhance the opportunities and benefits associated with cultural diversity, both within Australia and internationally.

## 10. Commitment to a whole-of-university approach

Swinburne further recognises that the university's commitment to cultural diversity should be reflected in a whole-of-university approach to policy development, implementation and evaluation.

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY OBJECTIVES

## APPROACH

The Cultural Diversity Objectives outlined in this document give effect to the principles set out in the Charter of Cultural Diversity and are in line with Swinburne's overarching vision and strategies for the future.

This document outlines the general principles set out in the Charter and proceeds to translate these principles into specific objectives which provide the university with academic and organisational direction and focus for both the short and longer terms.

## OBJECTIVES

- Culture and Capability
- Teaching and Learning
- Research and Development
- Engagement
- International Collaboration

While the objectives have been grouped under five main categories, they should be seen as closely integrated and mutually reinforcing.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### **Support for Indigenous Peoples**

As a key plank of its commitment to cultural diversity, Swinburne reaffirms its acknowledgement of and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, community members and partners, and its ongoing commitment to the objectives expressed in the university's Reconciliation Action Plan.

### **Place cultural diversity at the centre of university life**

a. Swinburne will create an environment in which students, staff, alumni, the wider community and current and prospective partner organisations will come to appreciate and benefit from the university's commitment to the principles enunciated in the Cultural Diversity Charter.

b. The university will express its distinctive identity by creating a welcoming community of staff, students and partners that demonstrates its embrace of cultural diversity and which values and celebrates the diversity of the university community.

c. The university will seek to communicate, consistently express and demonstrate its commitment and adherence to its cultural diversity objectives, policies and programs. It will seek to celebrate the cultural background and skills of its staff and students.

### **Promote cultural diversity synergy**

a. Swinburne will develop and coordinate mutually reinforcing programs, initiatives and strategies in order to embed cultural diversity principles in its learning and teaching, research and development, operations, social and cultural life, public engagement and relationships with partners both at home and abroad.

b. The task of integrating cultural diversity principles and objectives will be the subject of regular monitoring and oversight, and periodic reports by the Director, Multicultural Engagement to the Executive Team.



## OBJECTIVES

### Culture and Capability

#### 1. Harness Swinburne's cultural diversity assets and skills

- a. Swinburne will strengthen existing policies, plans, programs and strategies and develop new innovative and practical ones designed to value and nurture the academic expertise, practical experience, language skills and cultural knowledge of all segments of the university's culturally diverse community.
- b. Swinburne's commitment to cultural diversity principles and objectives will be reflected, wherever practicable, in its staff recruitment, employment and professional development and programs by integrating cultural diversity principles and objectives into key areas of the university's and human resources operations, plans, programs and mission. It will seek to meaningfully and effectively increase the proportion of staff from a culturally diverse background within its workforce.

#### 2. Develop innovative cultural diversity capacities

- a. Swinburne will seek to apply innovative strategies, policies, programs and practices that build on Swinburne's traditions and achievements to enhance its cultural diversity capacities in teaching, learning, research engagement and in its operation and administration.
- b. Strategic and operational plans of the university shall reflect and be inclusive of linguistic, cultural, racial and religious diversity and seek to promote diversity in cultural knowledge and competence, proficiency in languages and cultural understanding among its staff and students.
- c. Decision making bodies – including academic, administrative and corporate teams and committees which are engaged in the design, delivery and implementation of the university's strategies and programs – should reflect, wherever possible, a membership which possesses high levels of cultural diversity competence and proficiency in languages other than English.
- d. Academic and professional staff, particularly those who interact and work with students from a culturally diverse background, should, where practicable, be encouraged to undertake professional development programs specifically developed to enhance cross-cultural competence and skills.

## OBJECTIVES (continued)



### Teaching and Learning

#### **3. Make cultural diversity integral to delivering a world-class education in a globalised world**

a. Swinburne's commitment to providing a world-class education for domestic and international students will be supported by culturally diverse, competent and capable academic and professional staff. They will provide a diverse, inclusive and creative study and work environment which is supportive of all staff and students and which recognises and is supportive of the different cultural backgrounds of staff and students.

b. The university will encourage and support the creative contribution and inclusive participation of students and staff from all diverse background in the development and teaching of the university's academic courses, including teaching and learning methods and programs.

c. The university will aim to structure and promote professional development, learning opportunities, student advancement and engagement strategies and programs consistent with its commitment to cultural diversity principles and outcomes.

d. Academic programs and planning generally will aim to achieve:

- high levels of satisfaction by both domestic and international students with particular attention to students of non-English speaking backgrounds
- high levels of interaction between domestic and international students through programs such as joint assignments, mentoring schemes and participation in university forums, events and club activities
- increasing the number of international student enrolments, including students from the Asia-Pacific region.

#### **4. Develop a vibrant culturally diverse environment within the university**

a. Swinburne will promote, maintain and expand effective working relationships between staff and students of diverse cultural backgrounds to promote sharing of cultural knowledge, understanding and experiences across the university.

b. The university will promote cultural activities which celebrate the diversity of its staff and students and are designed to share cultural knowledge, understanding and experiences.

c. Curriculum development will seek to introduce cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication themes and resources into existing courses and subjects. Consideration will be given to strengthening and expanding academic course units specifically devoted to the study of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

## **5. Enhance Swinburne's reputation as an institution where teaching and learning equip students for life and careers in a globalised world**

- a. Swinburne will promote strategies, plans and programs which strongly emphasise culturally diverse design and delivery approaches in its academic curricula, its teaching methodologies, and its assessment programs in order to equip its students to pursue professional careers and to operate effectively and productively in a highly diverse cultural and global environment.
- b. Swinburne's teaching and learning activities and curricula will seek to create an open, diverse and inclusive approach that value contributions from its culturally diverse staff and students in ways that enrich both teaching and learning for its staff and students.
- c. Undergraduate and especially postgraduate students will be further encouraged to undertake overseas student mobility programs, and to participate in and enjoy greater opportunities to complete degrees jointly offered by Swinburne and international partner institutions.
- d. International and domestic students from culturally diverse backgrounds will have greater opportunity to participate in structured initiatives and programs to share their cultural knowledge and, where appropriate, language skills in ways that will help enrich and improve teaching and learning and cross-cultural competence and capability within the university community.

## **Research and Development**

### **6. Enhance Swinburne's international research profile**

- a. Swinburne will strengthen and extend research policies, programs and strategies that take full advantage of its cultural diversity resources, expertise, skills and networks. This approach will support the university's commitment to developing a reputation for world-class research and in particular to enhancing its capacity for innovative and mutually beneficial international research collaboration in a globalised world.
- b. The university will, through its research plans and initiatives, develop research strategies, research training, supervision and assessment programs and practices that reflect and support its culturally diverse environment and which recognise the benefits and advantages to research from such an environment.

### **7. Establish Swinburne as a leading university in science, technology and innovation**

- a. By valuing and nurturing cultural diversity and by developing its capacity for cross-cultural and transnational understanding and engagement, Swinburne will be better placed to attract highly qualified research staff, post-doctoral fellows and PhD students engaged in cutting-edge research excellence in science, technology and innovation, where it already has recognised strengths. This will enhance Swinburne's ability to develop international partnerships conducive to innovative research and development in these fields.
- b. Swinburne's enhanced international research profile and capability, underpinned by an inclusive and progressive culturally diverse environment, is critical in establishing Swinburne as a world-class university in science, technology and innovation.

## OBJECTIVES (continued)



### Engagement

#### **8. Position Swinburne as a pre-eminent centre of cross-cultural understanding and engagement**

a. Swinburne will translate the principles outlined in the Charter into strategies, policies, programs and activities designed to place the university at the forefront and cutting-edge of cross-cultural dialogue, education, operational practices and engagement both within the university and in partnership with industry and community sectors, at the local, national and international levels.

b. Swinburne will adopt and implement innovative programs and strategies that will enhance and advance cultural diversity as a practical, positive and dynamic force in the life of the university. It will develop media and communications strategies to promote Swinburne's cultural diversity strategies and strengths, the Charter, the Objectives, and programs and initiatives which it initiates under its Cultural Diversity Strategic Framework.

#### **9. Strengthen Swinburne's engagement with industry and community**

a. As an institution that embraces and nurtures the strengths of cultural diversity values and knowledge, Swinburne will seek to make this innovative aspect of learning, teaching and research a key feature of existing and new partnerships with government, business organisations and the community. This will promote increased collaborative, educational and research programs and initiatives in areas such as student placements, public engagement activities, scholarship, and philanthropic and research partnerships.

b. The university will foster partnerships and collaboration with government departments and business organisations to design and implement research and teaching programs that take advantage of the opportunities presented by its cultural diversity strategies and initiatives, particularly in the fields of science and technology, innovation, research and education.

c. The university will also actively engage and collaborate with culturally diverse and religious community organisations to facilitate research and public education programs, cross-cultural dialogues and discussions, community-based initiatives and forums, and inter-faith activities that seek to create positive and lasting social impact on communities.

## International Collaboration

### 10. Strengthen Swinburne's international collaboration and partnerships

- a. Swinburne's commitment to its cultural diversity values and strategies will provide it with an effective platform from which to develop relevant international relationships and strategic alliances with universities, research centres and institutions, business organisations and government and intergovernmental agencies in order to facilitate academic and research collaboration.
- b. Swinburne will seek to play a leading role as a world-class university to advance collaboration on research partnerships and outcomes, student and staff exchanges, public engagement activities and in promoting cultural inclusion and understanding, social harmony and inter-cultural and inter-faith exchanges and dialogue.

### 11. Strengthen Swinburne's support for international students and alumni

- a. Swinburne will seek to enhance engagement with its existing networks of international students and alumni to capitalise on the university's global engagement and outreach and to build on benefits and opportunities for the university that can be derived from its extensive culturally diverse and international networks.
- b. The university will strengthen programs and activities that seek to integrate and transition international students into the university's culture and campus life, and to assist them to more effectively take advantage of the potential and opportunities that the university offers. International students will be encouraged and supported to:
  - actively contribute, participate and invest in the life, growth and future of the university as a world-class university
  - maintain a continuing association with the university through continuing education, personal and professional networking, connection and interaction, and philanthropic engagement facilitated by the university's alumni network and international engagement.



## CONTACT US

For further enquiries, feedback or suggestions please contact the Multicultural Engagement Department on: [askME@swin.edu.au](mailto:askME@swin.edu.au)

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