



Australian Transformation and Turnaround Association

DIVERSITY IN TRANSFORMATION

Advocating for Australian leadership to step up, have the courage to understand; and act



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Executive Summary

Transformation is permeating every facet of life and living, work and ways of working. Diversity itself is not immune to being disrupted.

Here at the Australian Transformation and Turnaround Transformation (AusTTa); our membership is inclusive of a rich reserve of talented researchers, practitioners and deeply experienced people and behaviour managers crossing industries from manufacturing, to social purpose to financial services.

The relationship between Diversity and Transformation is a focus for our association as we continue to study, monitor and critique, consult to and advise; practitioners, academics and workers regarding sustainable thinking.

At AusTTa we advocate for leaders to stop procrastinating. To cease wasting costly resources on actionless wordplay, and to get on with the job of thinking diversely.

We demand Australian leadership act courageously by innovating and transforming their thinking. We require Australian leadership to stop tinkering around the edges of this important topic and to stop opting for the lowest hanging fruit as an easy way out. We require Australian Boards and Executives to critically review themselves, their strategies, their plans and their methods; by adopting Diverse thinking to create sustainable outcomes.

This paper discusses our first round of research into this topic and proposes alternative views and ways of thinking about Diversity.

Results include: -

- How massaging Diversity into boxes and labels reduces overall effectiveness of planning and strategy
- The misdiagnosis of Diversity as a public relations opportunity
- The need for leadership, in the Diversity Conversation

Recommendations include

- Educating Australian Leadership about the inefficiency of relying on siloed approaches to Diversity
- A unique framework created by AusTTa to assist Australian Leadership with Diversity Planning.
- Recommended topics for more informed discussion and debate on the topic.

“Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.”

Malcolm Forbes



Method, Content and Contributors

In late 2017 AusTTa gathered together 12 incredible minds across multiple industries and specialties from within its membership to discuss the topic of Diversity in Transformation, whose purpose was to consider the appetite of both organisations and individuals to act, think and enable diversity, and to identify the barriers.

Facilitated by Director and Practising Member of AusTTa, Trish Nicklin, who has over 25 years of People Management and Executive leadership experience; the discussion was launched with an opening commentary by Diversity Expert, Heather Price CEO of Symmetra, a public speaker and expert on the topics of Diversity and Inclusion. Heather began the conversation by presenting her research on the behavioural and neurological aspects of Diversity. Stephen Rothgiesser, Managing Director of The Change Consulting Group, was a co contributor to the event, bringing to the conversation over 20 years of Consulting experience in Change and Transformation covering South Africa, Asia and Australian Markets. Stephen provided case studies for the group re personal implications of an organisation’s Diversity plans and programs to its people.

All of our guests, members and associates contributed actively to the conversation. Views expressed in this paper belong to AusTTa.

This was the first in a series of workshops and events to discuss and debate the topic of Diversity in Transformation and to continue to advocate for leaders to step up and take responsibility to minimise stress for individuals going through change.

Chapter 1

Diversity – Current State, what it means vs what it has become

Over the past decade, Diversity has become the ‘must have’ term for organisational strategic planning. Traditional methods of organisational planning segment Diversity into digestible portions, allowing for cherry-picking of the components such as Gender, Religion or Sexual orientation; harvesting these “low hanging fruit” items. The objective of this approach is for budgets to be managed, engagement rating boxes to be ticked and public relations opportunities to be exploited.

While these measures are admirable and have made significant progress within the segment they champion, cherry picking from the Diversity fruit-bowl is limiting. Downstream impacts are potentially exclusive and include marginalisation for fringe groups. This is a problem.

At AusTTa we believe that traditional organisational leadership has lost its way in dealing wholly with Diversity, and in doing so loses focus on genuine people and process centred sustainability and long-term productivity.

Chapter 1 Learnings

- Productivity across Diversity cannot be measured by the wholesale investment into one or two key segments at the expense of others within the organisation

Notes: It is important to note that AusTTa do not disparage the efforts of organisations and individuals to positively address certain sectors of Diversity which they choose to empower.

It is to point out that segmenting Diversity is not responding to the whole; and therefore, is diluting the success and potential of any Diversity strategy.

Chapter 2

Inclusion – the missing link

Our discussion concluded that to better understand Diversity; it must be considered as a complete whole. Labelling or segmenting Diversity into groups remains a useful preparatory tool to understand peak and fringe demographics, however the process does not end here.

Our view is that any process for segmenting Diversity must be unique to the role and definition of the organisation planning a transformation. Using flatpack or generalised and models for segmenting can limit or exclude groups of importance within your organisation.

An additional danger for leaders conducting this process is an assumption of completion. It is essential to continuously consider rising sentiment due to external as well as internal factors, such as the emergence of social networks (for example #MeToo, #TimesUp) into an unforeseen scalable movement at speed. The success of any transformation is at risk if plans have been scoped and locked down excluding potential and new scenarios.

A suggested solution to creating bespoke process is when in design phase to leave a segment open to promote consideration of change, and then as a checking measure to reflect on the organisations model at every board meeting.

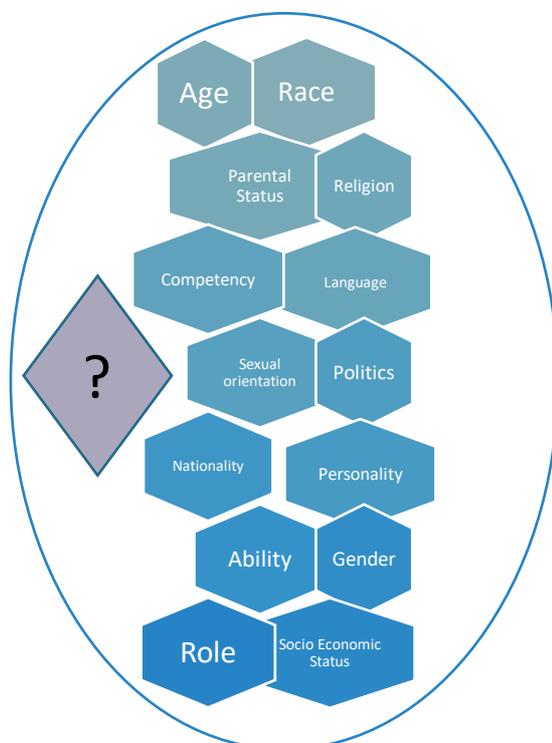


Fig 1 AusTTa inclusive model for Diversity

Chapter 2 Learnings

- The very definition of Diversity requires inclusion as leverage for the conversation to begin.
- Once Inclusion is considered along with Diversity – referred to by AusTTa as “Diverse Thinking” then any focus on individual segments is complimentary to the strategy as opposed to defining the strategy. This is an essential point.
- With diverse thinking all the segments are equally included and therefore will benefit.
- An organisation’s Diversity model should be unique to the organisation and reviewed often.
- Diversity Models should be flexible and adaptive to capture swift changes in sentiment and the rise of new and unexpected segments.

Chapter 3

Diversity Outcomes at the individual level

To become more inclusive leaders in diversity, our group debated those traits which are required to navigate the way forward in terms of planning for a Transformation. The group also discussed the downstream impacts of poor or segmented Diversity planning; such as mental illness, anxiety, burnout and stress.

Agreement was reached on the value of Mindfulness, Human Centred Design and Inclusive Thinking as being essential to the success of any Diversity program. As were psychological safety and having an equal voice for all, plus courageous leadership that goes beyond the ego of the self.

Tools need to be created, and democratic approaches made when we undertake our diverse thinking; and overall education improved for self-awareness and bias cognisance for leadership teams and executives at the helm of Transformation and reform.

The roles of compassion, vulnerability and empathy is underplayed in broader diversity impact planning and more work can be done by those in power to better inform themselves of the consequences of past and present corporate mindset.

Chapter 3 Learnings

- Inclusion of Diverse Thinking in the Boardroom and across Senior Leadership is essential to more sustainable outcomes for the people impacted by Transformation.
- Diverse Boards and Senior Leadership Teams with common goals and problems produce innovative solutions.

Chapter 4

The role of Diversity in Transformation Planning and Productivity

As qualified, peer reviewed Transformation Professionals, AusTTa advocates for Diverse Thinking as a priority in Transformation Diagnosis, Assessment, Strategy, Planning and Implementation.

To be a success in transforming a business model, a culture, a process, an industry or an ethos; then the impact analysis to and for the people at the core of the transformation is and equivalent priority.

Diverse Thinking at the outset of any Transformation will enable the segments of the organisations Diversity model to trigger collectively without alienating or prioritising one over another and will, we believe; lead to more sustainable results, minimising the stress of transformation and disruption.

The AusTTa Diversity Preparation Framework

AusTTa present the below framework for use by organisations and transformation professionals in planning for Diverse Thinking in Transformation.

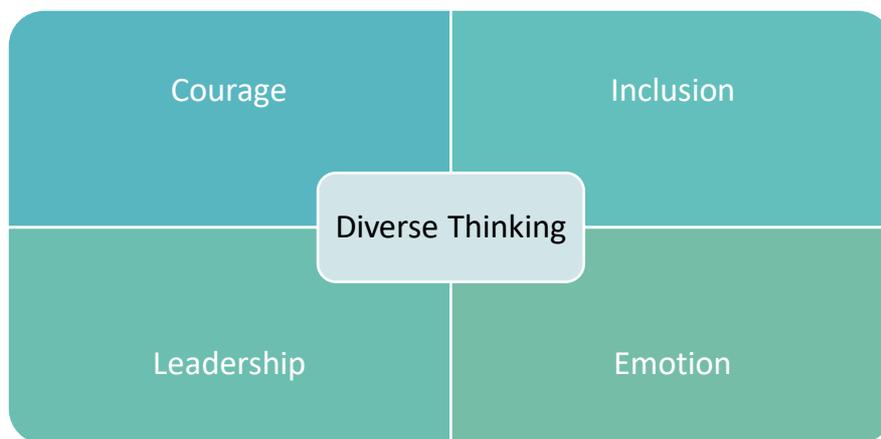


Fig 2 AusTTa Framework for Diverse Thinking in Transformation

Before you begin your Diversity Strategy

Courage – Acting and behaving ‘inclusive’ requires self-awareness and maturity. Be courageous. Champion Curiosity. Crisis helps us reform, use it. Collaborate and exploit the diversity that a group of strangers brought together with one common goal can achieve.

Inclusion – Identify what practices exclude others in your organisation. Question each. Remove them all. Rebuild with a view that any exclusivity must be thoroughly defensible, easily explained and championed by those it excludes. Make it easy to include and hard to exclude.

Emotion - Be vulnerable. Be Compassionate. Be Empathetic. Question yourselves -How do we stay as present as we can, how do we remain authentic. Aim to be easy to trust, easy to work with and most importantly SAFE to be with.

Leadership – Commit to a success that looks further than your tenure. Give others permission to act. Consider the psychological safety of those in your care as a priority. Create environments for rational conversation, irrational debate and critical thinking. Find the barriers and remove them. Question Status Quo.

Chapter 4 Learnings

- Using the AusTTa Diverse Thinking framework as a tool in Transformational Management enables critical thinking across four key behaviours-
 1. the Courage to act,
 2. an Inclusive Mindset,
 3. the power of Emotional Assessment and
 4. Ethical Leadership.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

- Diversity + Inclusive thinking = 'Diverse Thinking'.
- Diverse Thinking is inclusive of all known labels and segments of Diversity.
- Cherry Picking is redundant and ineffective, bordering on exclusive.
- Adopting a mindset of Diverse Thinking powers all segments of Diversity.
- Diverse Thinking is the responsibility of the whole of the organisation and the accountability of the Board, the Executive and the Leadership teams.
- Diverse Thinking is a strategic plan and an outcome.
- The AusTTa Diversity preparation framework is useful for preparing for and implementing Diverse Thinking in Transformation.

Topics for continued discussion and debate

- Testing and analysis of segmented Diversity models.
- Testing and analysis of the AusTTa Diverse Thinking in Transformation Framework.
- Process, Governance and Compliance – barriers to transformation and Diverse Thinking, in defence of the status quo.
- Exclusion as an independent subject.
- Responsibilities of past leadership for current mental health crisis.
- Company Values vs Diverse Thinking.

AusTTa wishes to thank our guests, members and associates who attended the evening and for their thoughtful insights and contributions to the conversation. Your input has been integral to the development of this thought leadership paper and to the creation of the AusTTa Framework and Diversity Model.

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About the Australian Transformation and Turnaround Association

The association brings together innovative problem solvers who are working on the frontline of innovation, change, strategy, planning, transformation and turnaround management - the people who make day-to-day decisions that shape the future of organisations in Australia and help new ones grow.

It aims to:

- Improve understanding of experienced transformation and turnaround skills.
- Promote understanding of transformation techniques at an individual, organisation and community level.
- Assist organisations to restructure successfully.
- Minimise the distress caused by digital disruption.
- Return under-performing organisations to sustainable viability and accelerated growth.
- Maximise the opportunities resulting from organisational transformation.
- Support dynamic growth in emerging organisations based on new technology and/or new business models.
- Reduce risk and accelerate growth for emerging organisations.

Join the group to learn, share ideas, information and network with like-minded people. Or contact us if you would like help to grow and future-proof your organisation.

