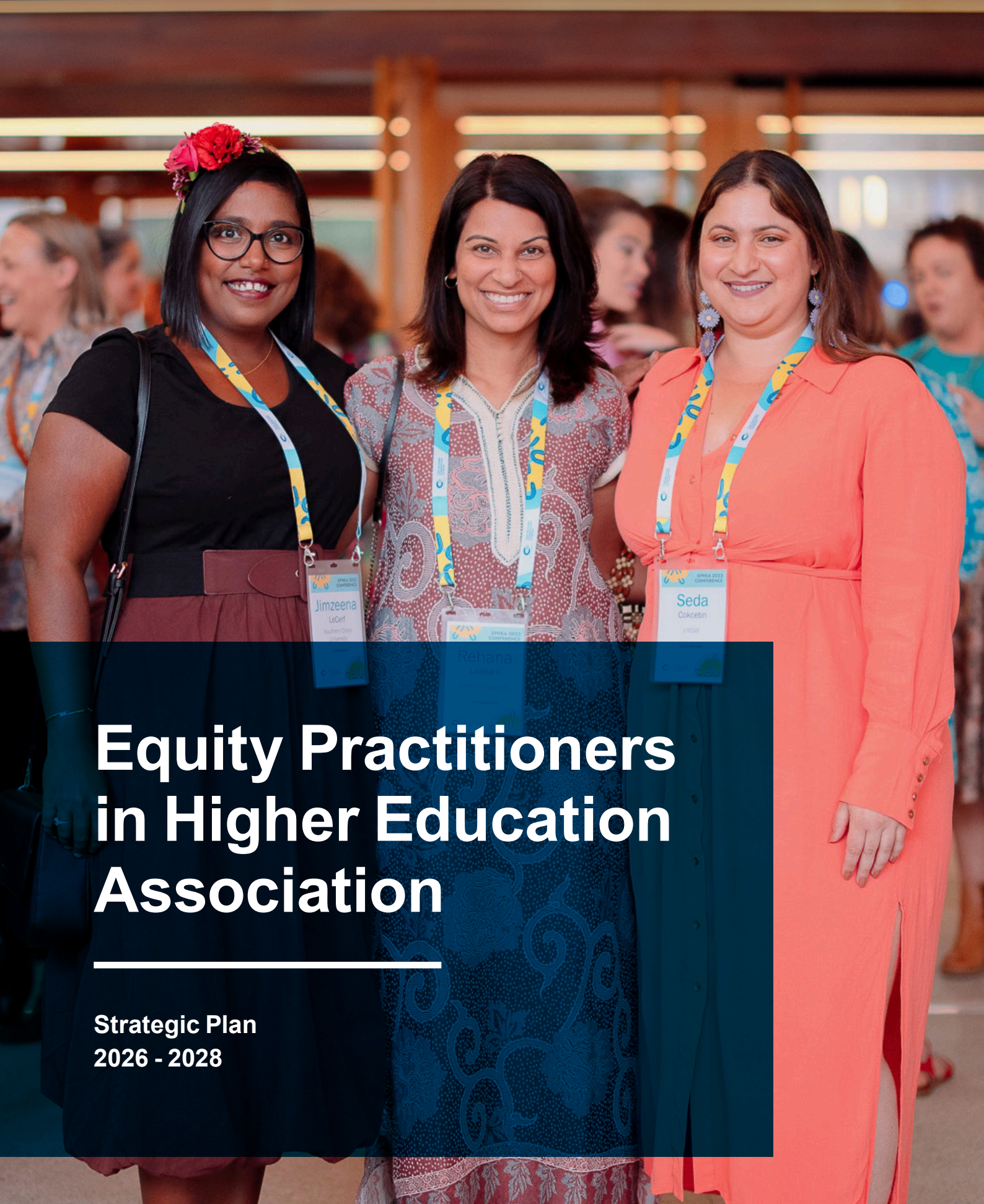




EQUITY PRACTITIONERS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION



Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Association

Strategic Plan
2026 - 2028



Who we are

EPHEA (Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Association) is the professional incorporated association for equity practitioners working in tertiary education across Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the Pacific region. Our members play an essential role in developing and implementing affirmative action programs for students and staff, managing organisational responsibilities under anti-discrimination legislation, promoting cultural change, and fostering environments where diversity is valued and respected.

Equity practitioners are disruptors and change agents. We challenge systemic and institutional barriers that prevent staff and students from thriving. We bring professional expertise, lived experience, and cultural knowledges to our work. We recognise and value these diverse knowledges, skills, and cultures, and we work collaboratively within and across institutions to create transformative, long-lasting change.

Equity, diversity and inclusion is not the sole responsibility of equity practitioners. We advocate and collaborate across vocational education providers and universities to embed systemic change and ensure shared accountability.

EPHEA is run by a committed volunteer Executive Committee composed of equity practitioners from across Australia and New Zealand. The committee is guided by the EPHEA Constitution.

Our values and commitments

Reconciliation and recognition

As an organisation in Australasia, we recognise Indigenous and First Nations peoples. We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia. We recognise Māori as tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand and the country's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi). We commit to relationships of partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and with Māori, consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and with Te Tiriti obligations.

Collaboration and partnership

We value and recognise the expertise of equity practitioners across the sector and acknowledge that we can achieve more together than on our own. We acknowledge the experience and expertise that exist outside of our institutions, through collaborating and partnering with the communities we are trying to serve.

Social justice, equity, fairness, inclusion and safety

We are committed to creating tertiary education organisations where diverse communities of staff and students can thrive. We built respectful relationships, embed anti-racism, accessibility and intersectionality across EPHEA activities, and work to disrupt power dynamics that oppress underrepresented groups in higher education.

A strengths-based and evidence-based approach

We want to empower people to achieve their employment and education goals from a place of strength and self-determination. We value lived experience as expertise, and pair practitioner knowledge with robust data and research.

Sustainability and recognition

We have a common sense of purpose and identity; we have a long standing reputation and endurance within the sector continually empowering our members over time. We advocate for stable, long-term equity practitioner roles and celebrate practitioner contributions across the sector.



Our context

EPHEA has shared values and commitments that balance national and regional distinctiveness with trans-Tasman collaboration. The Australian, New Zealand and Pacific higher education landscapes have unique contexts that influence students and staff in navigating tertiary education systems.

Australia

The introduction of the Australian Universities Accord has seen significant reform in Australia's higher education system. This includes structural reforms such as the establishment of an Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), a Managed Growth Funding System, and demand-driven Needs-based Funding. This presents a significant opportunity to reimagine the purpose and the role of tertiary education institutions and their role in society.

Aotearoa New Zealand

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is foundational in shaping partnership and accountability across tertiary education. National strategies prioritise Māori and Pacific success, inclusion of disabled learners, and culturally safe environments for rainbow and ethnic communities. Institutions also hold responsibility for advancing equity for staff through recruitment, progression and wellbeing. These drivers create an opportunity to position tertiary education as Te Tiriti-honouring and equity-led for both staff and students.

Pacific Islands

There is increasing focus in the Pacific Islands to improve their tertiary education development to increase access, participation and retention of their communities in higher education.



Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan aims to be bold, in advocating for a tertiary education system that is equitable and meets the needs of student and staff populations. It also aims to position equity practitioners as experts in their institutions and as change agents to guide their institutions in shifting their structures in ways that are more inclusive and celebrates our diverse student and staff cohorts.

EPHEA's plan is both practical and visionary: practical in providing resources, training, and recognition to support members' daily work, and visionary in championing systemic change, embedding equity at the core of higher education excellence.

EPHEA 2022 CONFERENCE

STRENGTH THROUGH ADVERSITY

The future of Higher Education
equity, diversity and inclusion

27-30 NOVEMBER
Ngunnawal Country



Our mission

By 2028, EPHEA will be a respected and influential peak body that balances national distinctiveness with trans-Tasman collaboration. EPHEA will be an organisation that not only advocates effectively for equity and inclusion, but also nurtures and recognises practitioners, embeds Indigenous and underrepresented voices, and sustains a vibrant, connected community.

We will champion equity, inclusion, and diversity in higher education by:

1. Continuing to equip and sustain equity practitioners as experts and leaders in equity within their institutions;
2. Championing systemic change through our collective resources, ensuring that equity is positioned at the forefront of institutional practice and national higher education policy;
3. Working collaboratively and developing partnerships that empower action and change across the tertiary education sector; and
4. Elevating the visibility and impact of the work of equity practitioners across the sector.

Our goals



Goal 1: Build Capacity and Wellbeing of Equity Practitioners

Continue to equip and sustain practitioners as experts and leaders in equity within their institutions.

In order to achieve this goal EPHEA will:

- 1.1** Develop an Introduction to Equity qualification to onboard new Equity Practitioners to the sector.
- 1.2** Convene an annual calendar of online and face-to-face professional development activities that are supported through state-based and country based networking opportunities.
- 1.3** Convene a bi-annual conference to contribute to the knowledge, research and practice of student and staff equity in higher education.
- 1.4** Continue with professional grants for EPHEA members to attend conferences and contribute to national conversations on staff and student equity.
- 1.5** Develop initiatives to support the wellbeing of equity practitioners, including opportunities for peer support and strategies to manage workload and resilience in equity roles.
- 1.6** Create and share practical resources on key equity topics (such as guidelines, toolkits and case studies) to strengthen practitioner knowledge and support consistent practice across the sector.

Our goals



Goal 2: Champion Systemic Change and Advocacy

To champion systemic change through our collective resources, ensuring that equity is positioned at the forefront of institutional practice and national higher education policy.

In order to achieve this goal EPHEA will:

- 2.1 Be positioned as the 'voice' and thought leader in national conversations around staff and student equity and provide opportunities for equity practitioners across the sector to contribute to the conversation.
- 2.2 Develop a Public Advocacy Framework to guide EPHEA's external voice.
- 2.3 Make regular submissions and recommendations on policy and best practice, drawing on key research, practitioner experience and institutional data sets.
- 2.4 Produce a bi-annual State of Equity in Higher Education report to benchmark progress and influence public debate.
- 2.5 Undertake advisory roles on relevant boards, national grants and key research projects that impact equity in higher education.

Our goals



Goal 3: Strengthen Collaboration and Partnership

To work collaboratively and develop partnerships that empower action and change across the tertiary education sector.

In order to achieve this goal EPHEA will:

- 3.1** Increase the connectedness between relevant organisations to influence public policy. These will include but are not limited to; Universities Australia; Workplace Gender Equity Agency (WGEA); Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES); SAGE (Science in Australia Gender Equity); World Access to Higher Education Network (WAHEN); ATEND (Australian Tertiary Network on Disability) and ADCET (Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training).
- 3.2** Commit to authentic partnerships with Indigenous and underrepresented communities and representative peak bodies.
- 3.3** Launch an EPHEA online member portal with resources, recordings, and case studies that empower change.
- 3.4** Develop an Aotearoa New Zealand action plan for EPHEA that reflects New Zealand's distinct identity within a trans-Tasman framework, embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Our goals



Goal 4: Recognise and Celebrate Practitioner Contributions

To elevate the visibility and impact of equity practitioner work across the sector.

In order to achieve this goal EPHEA will:

- 4.1 Continue to undertake peer-based recognition initiatives, including the continuation of the Champions of Change, Lifetime Members Award and Early Career Practitioner Award.
- 4.2 Work collaboratively with Engagement Australia to sponsor an Equity Award to recognise best practice across the sector and provide pathways and support to international award programs.
- 4.3 Showcase outstanding practice of equity practitioners through our communications channels.



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ephea.org