



# DuluxGroup: Investing in Inclusive Leadership

*How DuluxGroup is ensuring its leaders continue building an inclusive culture from factory floor to office*

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## INTRODUCTION

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DuluxGroup was established in Australia over a century ago and over the past decade, the company has matched its commitment to manufacturing excellence with a strong focus on creating safe and diverse workplaces.

In 2016, DuluxGroup's DEI journey was focused on increasing gender balance in leadership roles. In the past ten years, the percentage of women in its top 200 leadership roles has more than doubled.

The past four years has seen the focus move from increasing diversity in leadership positions to ensuring that workplace environments support each person to be their best self at work. This is where a focus on inclusive leadership came into play. DuluxGroup has been reframing the role of leadership to be inseparable from inclusion, and this prompted the question: How does DuluxGroup best support leaders to fully embody inclusive leadership each and every day?

A smart question to ask given what we know about the power of inclusive leadership to drive business success, primarily by fostering a culture of diversity, respect, and belonging.



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## THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

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Diverse teams led by inclusive leaders are known to make more informed and balanced decisions, leveraging a broader range of experiences and viewpoints. This not only improves decision-making processes but also contributes to stronger financial outcomes. Organisations with diverse teams consistently outperform their competitors!<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, inclusivity boosts employee engagement and retention, as workers feel respected and supported, resulting in higher morale and loyalty, which in turn enhances overall performance.

When you add a stronger company reputation and greater ability to attract and retain both top talent and customers, the business case for making inclusion a defining leadership quality is undeniable.

This is where NAWO's Inclusion Habits for Operations Leaders program comes into the picture, designed specifically for and with companies in operations. DuluxGroup selected this program to support their operations leaders, choosing a team of 22 individuals from multiple divisions and locations to participate.

**“NAWO's program was a natural progression for DuluxGroup. The module format and focus on habit-building align seamlessly with our leadership programs. It's not just a one-day training; it's about transforming behaviours and mindsets. We selected a diverse team of leaders because we see immense value when individuals from various parts of the business collaborate. This program is a powerful avenue for bringing small cohorts of leaders together to learn and grow.”**

**BROOKE WESTPHALEN, HEAD OF ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT, DULUXGROUP**

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## INCLUSION HABITS FOR OPERATIONS LEADERS

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Developed in collaboration with Emberin and NAWO's member organisations, Inclusion Habits for Operations Leaders is uniquely designed to build inclusive leadership capabilities and improve business outcomes.

The program is delivered over ten weeks with three key components:

**LEARN** Each day participants complete 10-15 minutes of app-based learning centred around the six habits of inclusive leadership (see image below). Material is focused on explaining each habit in a way that showcases its practical applications for leaders.

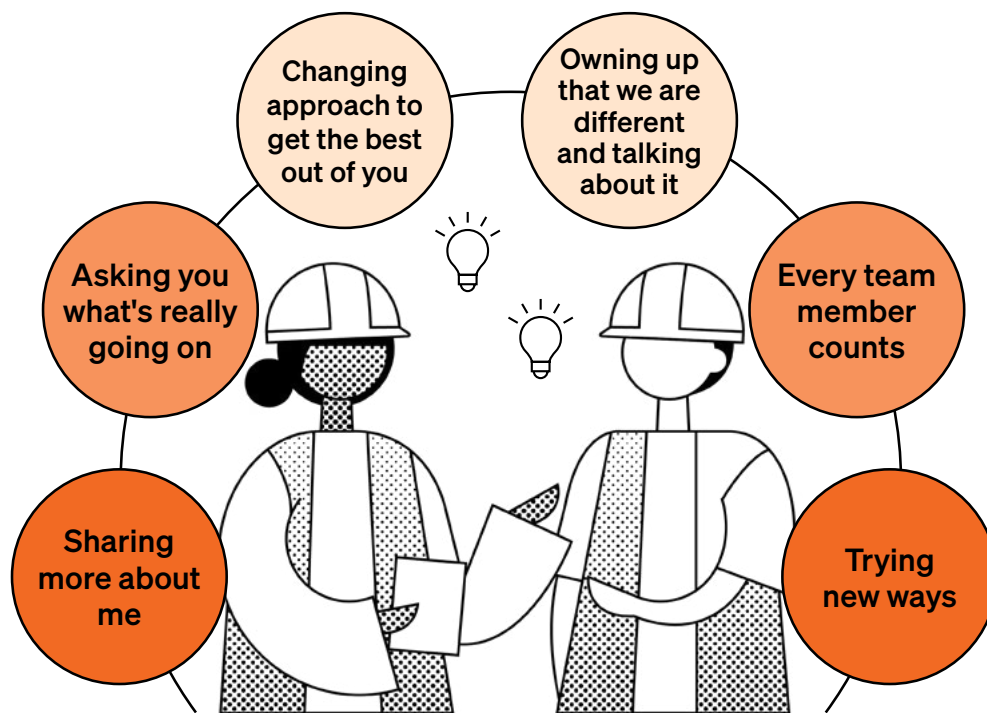
**DISCUSS** Participants gather in a number of interactive webinars to share and reflect on their experience across the duration of the program. Between sessions, they are allocated a 'journey group', headed by an Inclusion Coach who answers questions and provides motivation. Inclusion Coaches are leaders who have previously completed the program or senior members of the NAWO team.

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<sup>1</sup>A 2020 McKinsey & Company analysis of 1,000 US firms showed companies with more gender diversity within their leadership teams were 25% more likely to have higher profits than their peers who did not. The report also showed companies with the most ethnic and cultural diversity achieved 36% higher profitability than companies with a less diverse C-suite. In 2022, McKinsey & Company reported that companies with robust DEI programmes were better able to respond to challenges, win top talent and meet the needs of different customer bases.

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**EXPERIMENT** Throughout the program, participants put their newfound learning into action by exploring real-life, industry-based scenarios and resources that bring the concepts of inclusion and equity to life. Being able to engage in these ‘experiments’ whilst participating as a part of a company team allows participants to try out new behaviours in a supportive environment and create lasting habits.



## Six Habits of Inclusive Leadership

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### BUILDING LIFE-LONG INCLUSION HABITS

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Habit-building is strongly emphasised throughout the program, and leaders are challenged from the get-go to embed new ways of interacting in their day-to-day behaviours. As Lachlan Taylor, Site Manager at Cabot’s and Dulux Protective Coatings shares:

**“The habits have allowed me to recognise the opportunity in interactions with people. That’s been big for me. I felt like I understood what inclusiveness means, but I didn’t really stop and think about being inclusive as a leader and how that’s connected to diversity, ideas and steering away from groupthink.”**

A key part of building inclusive leadership capability comes when leaders understand how daily habits around inclusion translate into business outcomes. The course is designed to foster insights around how inclusive leadership creates an environment where individuals can thrive, and this in turn drives organisational success.

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**“During the coaching, I had a bit of a light bulb moment that being inclusive leads to diversity. I think we all understand the importance of diversity as a leader, but we weren't trying to be diverse, we were trying to be inclusive - and then the inclusiveness brings on the diversity.”**

● LACHLAN TAYLOR

NAWO's program is designed to increase this understanding with daily lessons that encourage reflection, covering topics like unconscious bias and decision making, speaking up in the workplace and the importance of relationship building.

**“I've really reflected on my upbringing and my thoughts and values. I felt I was an inclusive leader, but as I got more into the program, I got tested on that point and it encouraged me to ask myself if I really was as inclusive as I thought I was. After talking to people and getting feedback, I was able to consider when I might need to reset my style and how I interact with people.”**

● NEIL DUGGAN, OPERATIONS MANAGER, DULUX ACRATEX

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## EXPERIMENTING WITH PERSONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS

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Throughout the program, participants are asked to conduct at least five 'experiments' – finding ways to apply the six inclusion habits in their day-to-day work. This practical part of the program allows leaders to try out new ways of leading whilst they are being supported as a group.

Impressively, DuluxGroup participants conducted 110 experiments, with almost all reporting incredibly positive results such as:

- Enhanced communication and relationships,
- Improved team participation, and
- Increased safety (including psychological safety) and wellness.

This link between inclusion habits, culture and business outcomes is powerful and something we see repeatedly when leaders complete the program, as two DuluxGroup participants shared:



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“One of the experiments we did was based around getting to know people. I made an effort to spend at least 30 minutes with four people on a site visit when normally I would have sat in meetings. I found that when people see that I'm taking interest in them and the things they go through, it builds credibility and people believe you. So then when you go up and say, ‘we've got this safety concern’ or ‘we've got to do this change management exercise’ there's a belief in you and what you're asking.”

● ANDREW HOLMES, OPERATIONS MANAGER, CABOT'S, FOSROC AND DULUX PROTECTIVE COATINGS

“In an operational environment, very few people are fluent in PowerPoint. It's one of the least effective ways to communicate. But for economies of scale, that's how most big organisations default. We spoke with people about how these messages actually land. I never really appreciated that there's a lot of people in the team now with English as their second language, and that messages don't come across well via PowerPoint. They generally land later when they have a debrief with a trusted colleague who's better in English - that's when things really get communicated. Understanding that these informal coaching sessions are how critical messages are landing on the floor led us to ask, ‘how do we better support that channel?’. It's something we're now focused on.”

● NEIL DUGGAN, OPERATIONS MANAGER, DULUX ACRATEX

Kathryn Murphy, Technical Manager Dulux Powders, Industrial and Automotive Coatings, also shared with us how her team has implemented a change based on one of the inclusion habits:

“We have a monthly team meeting and aim to go around the table and hear what individuals are working on, but it was always at the end of the meeting and of course, things get cramped - it meant that only half the team got a chance to speak and often the same people were missing out on their opportunity to contribute. With a new understanding around inclusiveness, we're now doing this session in the middle of the meeting, so everyone gets an opportunity to speak regardless of whether they're working on a flashy project or something more BAU. Everyone on the team is now coming prepared to talk, knowing that they'll get that chance to contribute.”

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## **BUILDING INCLUSIVENESS AS A CORE LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY**

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As the above examples show, DuluxGroup leaders had the opportunity to try out their new learnings whilst participating in the program and experienced the outcomes in real-time. This approach ensures tangible results for participants and increases impact for companies that enrol numerous leaders in one cohort, as the following DuluxGroup results demonstrate.

Since the start of the program, DuluxGroup participants reported a significant increase in having a ‘strong’ or ‘very strong’ understanding of the link between inclusion and business outcomes, *increasing to 93% of participants by the end of the 10 weeks.*

There was also a significant improvement in individual capability to address exclusion and create inclusive

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workplaces with *twice as many DuluxGroup leaders now strongly agreeing they are able to speak up about inclusion issues at work*. Results also showed a significant increase to *74% of participants who now feel 'very' or 'extremely comfortable' to speak up about non-inclusive policies or procedures*.

Leaders also reported a *20% increase* in how well they understood the connection between bias and decision making, and a significant increase in both the perceived capability to make change (possessing the skills and abilities), and capacity to do so in their workplace (the degree to which they feel their employer would support them in using these skills). Overall, there was a significant change in how people understand the link between the importance of inclusion, how it can positively impact business outcomes and how it can affect decision-making for a business.



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## LEADERS FOR A MORE DIVERSE FUTURE

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DuluxGroup now has a larger cohort of leaders who can go out into the business and be role models and spokespeople for why inclusion matters. They have invested in developing leaders who can confidently take action to drive inclusion for the benefit of employees and to positively impact business performance.

**“The six habits and experiments are such a great way of getting people to practice new behaviours. We’ve continued to do six-weekly check-ins to deep dive into different diversity topics and share ways in which they have continued to step into their role as Inclusive Leaders. Some participants have even formed smaller groups to continue sharing and supporting each other. We now have people asking when we are going to run the program again.”**

● BROOKE WESTPHALEN

**“This particular course is more important than others. It will challenge everything you thought you knew about yourself and your perception of your treatment of others.”**

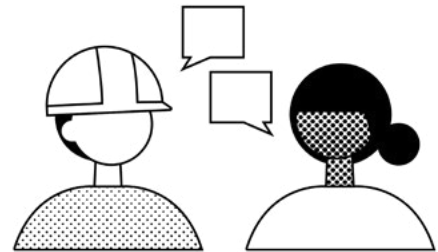
● LACHLAN TAYLOR, SITE MANAGER AT CABOT AND PROTECTIVE COATINGS

## ADVICE FOR LEADERS PLANNING TO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM

Personal advice from three DuluxGroup leaders for anyone interested in participating in Inclusion Habits for Operations Leaders:

**“If I'd give any advice, it would be don't try and understand the program from day one. We all do lots of different management courses, but this is not just another theoretical program. If you get a couple of wins out of it through the experiment processes, then it's got a lot of value.**

**It's not just a ten-week online course and then you go back to your old ways. I've been doing this for a long time and I'm 60 years old and it gave me a different way of thinking - so go in with an open mind.”**



● ANDREW HOLMES, OPERATIONS MANAGER CABOT'S, FOSROC AND DULUX PROTECTIVE COATINGS



**“I think simply having an open mind to it and being open to looking at your own leadership style and assuming that there is always some improvement to make. Leadership is always evolving, and one style doesn't fit all. You need to have a few things in your kit bag to understand how you approach circumstances, situations and personality types. And this is what this is – a tool to back you up.”**

● KATHRYN MURPHY, TECHNICAL MANAGER, DULUX INDUSTRIAL AND REFINISH, DULUX POWDER COATINGS.

**“My two cents worth is to have an open mind. At the end of the day, you can do the course and just click the button and play it for a couple of minutes and off you go on your day and not take any impact from it. It's really good material, but if you're not open to paying attention to it and bringing it into your day-to-day, do your experiments and follow it through, then you don't gain from it. These are valuable learnings that you can take not just across work life, but personal life as well.”**



● ANNA MULLIGAN, OPERATIONS MANAGER DULUX POWDER COATINGS



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*We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations people of Australia and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn, work and connect.*

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