



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Roadmap:

An **all inclusive** approach to
governance and leadership
in Australian sport



READY

Section 1: Intersectionality

Learn about intersectionality as a vital framework for understanding social inequality.

Learn about Why intersectionality matters in sports organisations.

Gain insight into the interconnected systems of power that create relative disadvantage or privilege.

Learn about moving beyond diversity efforts to embrace intersectional inclusion, fostering environments that value and respect everyone's experiences.

Supporting core values of sports: Excellence + Belonging + Courage + Connection

INTRODUCING INTERSECTIONALITY

Why does intersectionality matter?

Intersectionality matters because it provides a nuanced understanding of human experiences and societal structures. While diversity acknowledges the existence of human differences, intersectionality delves deeper into the power dynamics that shape these differences. It's not just about recognising different identities; it's about comprehending how these identities intersect and interact within systems of power and privilege.

Inclusion, often emphasised in organisational settings, goes beyond mere representation. It involves actively creating strategies and cultures that prioritise equity, ensuring that no one is left behind. However, without intersectionality, our efforts toward inclusion may fall short.

Intersectionality helps us understand and address the hidden impacts of decision-making and policies on marginalised groups. It shines a light on the intersecting inequalities that exacerbate each other's effects on individuals' lives.

At its core, intersectionality supports our journey of inquiry. It encourages us to question existing processes and systems, prompting a critical examination of how power operates within our sports institutions. By considering the interacting social locations and power structures that shape people's experiences, intersectionality offers a new way of thinking about marginalising systems. It reframes our understanding, creating space for inquiry and engagement.

In practical terms, intersectionality is essential to equity. It helps us see beyond surface-level diversity initiatives and grasp the complex realities of marginalisation. By acknowledging the multiplicity of identities and their interconnectedness, we can develop more effective and sustainable strategies for creating inclusive environments where everyone's experiences are valued and respected.

Intersectionality is a tool for social change, enabling us to dismantle oppressive systems and build a more just and equitable sporting world.



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If leaders fundamentally understand belonging, they are more likely to make decisions through that lens regarding the how, not just the what. This takes an awareness and education piece around power and privilege that the person then takes into decisions.

Participant, National Appreciative Inquiry Engagement Process

INTRODUCING INTERSECTIONALITY

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality is an analytical framework essential for understanding the intricate dynamics of social inequality. It transcends simplistic notions of diversity, delving deep into the structural and systemic roots of oppression, marginalisation, power and privilege.

At its core, intersectionality elucidates how our various socially constructed identities intersect to shape our experiences and opportunities within society. It is not merely about individual identities but rather a critical tool for dissecting the complex interplay of power, privilege, and oppression. Intersectionality urges us to scrutinise how social categories are imbued with meaning, often privileging certain groups while marginalising others. By adopting a lens grounded in intersectionality, we prioritise a comprehensive analysis that unveils the underlying structures of inequality.

Understanding intersectionality poses challenges as it diverges from simplistic diversity paradigms. It requires active engagement in analysing how societal constructs impact individuals' representation, voice, and validation of lived experiences. Unlike identity politics, intersectionality focuses on dismantling systemic discrimination rather than exacerbating divisions based on characteristics. Additionally, it urges the need for alternative narratives to discern and address the multifaceted challenges faced by marginalised individuals and groups.

Intersectionality recognises:

- Complexity of identity – as individuals we are constantly navigating social contexts that influence our perceptions and treatment within society.
- Interconnected systems of power - social categories intersect within systems and structures of power, contributing to relative disadvantage or privilege.
- Structural inequalities - Inequities arise from the interplay of interconnected social categories and power dynamics, perpetuating systemic discrimination.

In the realm of sports, intersectionality offers a lens through which to understand and address issues of inequality. By acknowledging the simultaneous impact of various forms of discrimination, intersectionality guides us in identifying and developing inclusive strategies and organisational cultures. It prompts us to recognise that diversity alone does not ensure inclusivity and urges us to delve deeper into power dynamics to effect meaningful change.

To advance social justice, we must move beyond superficial diversity initiatives and embrace intersectional inclusion. This entails recognising the interconnectedness of different forms of inequality and actively working to dismantle structures that marginalise. By centring intersectionality in our analysis and action, we can foster environments that honour the complexity of individuals' experiences and strive towards equity for all.

Intersectionality recognises that individuals have multiple dimensions of identity, such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, and socioeconomic background, which intersect and create unique experiences and challenges based on context. It then calls upon leaders in organisations to address the power disparities that exist in order to realise a collective vision that truly embraces justice and equity for all.



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There's a very under-represented representation of First Nations people on all these peak bodies, sporting organisations. It's not enough to just do your cultural awareness training. Where are those First Nations voices?

Ricky Baldwin
CEO and Founder, Koorie Academy Basketball



INTRODUCING INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality differs to diversity.

It is important to understand the differences between these terms:

Diversity refers to all of the individual attributes and experiences that make us unique, including demographic diversity, cognitive diversity, background and lived experiences.

Equity is a process or adjustment, such as tailored support or distribution of resources, that considers an individual or group's unique needs to generate equal outcomes and provide fair access to opportunities.

Inclusion is about proactive and intentional behaviours that create safe and welcoming environments where people can fully contribute and feel a sense of wellbeing connection and belonging.

Intersectionality recognises that individuals have multiple dimensions of identity which intersect and create unique experiences and challenges. It then calls upon leaders in organisations to address the power disparities that exist towards a collective vision that truly embraces justice and equity for all.

While diversity, equity and inclusion are critical commitments for an organisation to thrive, intersectionality focuses on thinking and working in a way that is essential for understanding the intricate dynamics of social inequality. It urges us to delve into the structural and systemic roots of oppression, marginalisation, power and privilege.

What is NOT intersectionality?

Intersectionality is NOT the same as diversity, equity and inclusion.

Intersectionality is NOT about creating more identity characteristics
Intersectionality is not about adding up or broadening identity characteristics. It is about focusing on systems and structures that reinforce difference in a way that excludes and making changes that achieve equality for all.

Intersectionality is NOT about oppression Paralympics
Intersectionality is often misconstrued as identity politics on steroids or a means to vilify certain groups. It is not about adding up different kinds of inequality or engaging in 'oppression Paralympics'. Rather, it acknowledges the complexity of individuals' experiences and seeks to avoid replicating exclusive and oppressive power structures embedded in systems and structures and dismantling these.

Intersectionality is NOT about ignoring positionality
Reflecting on our own power, privilege and bias sits at the very heart of intersectionality. Asking questions about who has power, privilege and voice, who benefits from this and why these are critical to address. Most people experience both privilege and marginalisation depending on the setting. Our unconscious biases shape our thinking and behaviour, often resulting in the marginalisation of people who sit outside majority groups. A genuine approach to intersectionality demands that we begin with ourselves – critical reflection that acknowledges our own biases, positions of power and privilege and considering how we can make space for other voices.

INTRODUCING INTERSECTIONALITY

Summary:
The key tenants of
intersectionality to understand

Power Dynamics: Intersectionality is primarily a **tool for understanding power dynamics** and how they contribute to inequality rather than being solely about identity.

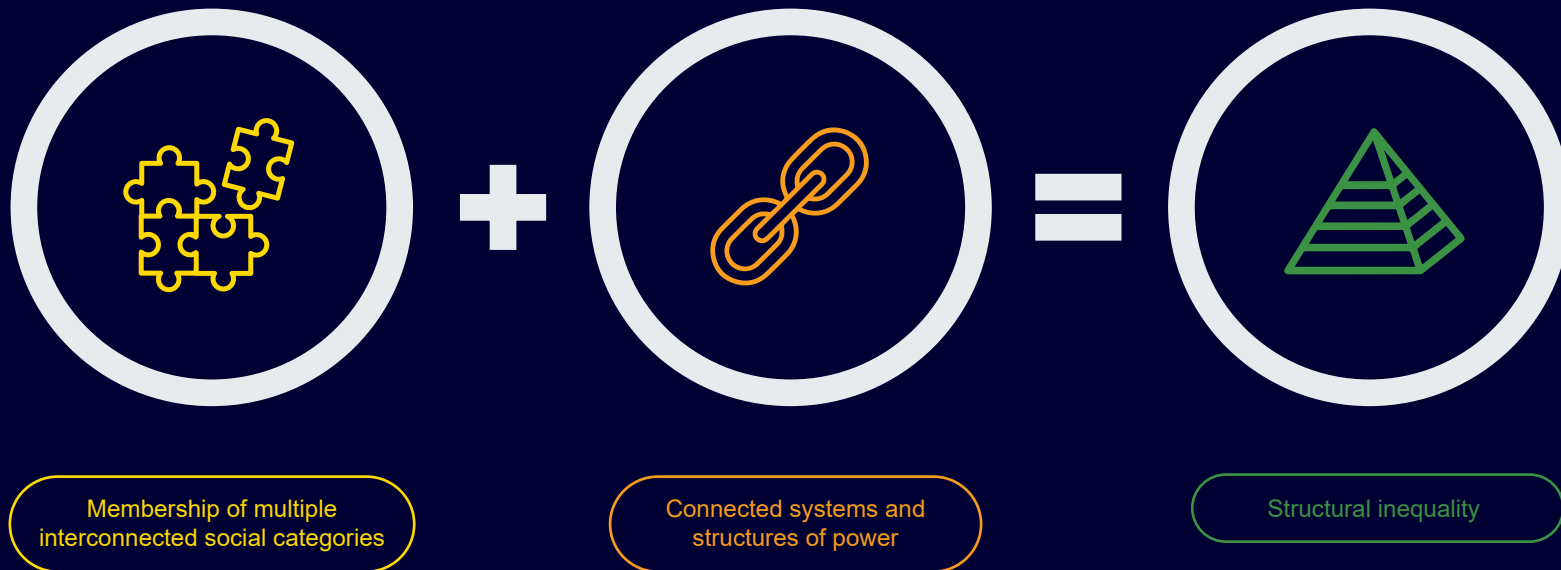
Analytic Framework: The concept of intersectionality is **an analytic framework or lens** for investigating how social identities are configured by power and oppression.

Synonymity: Intersectionality is **not synonymous with diversity**, and it is incorrect to label a group of people as “intersectional”.

Interconnection: Intersectionality **examines the interconnections between different systems of marginalisation** and how they manifest in individuals’ lives.

Recognition: A **recognition of inequality of power is critical to Intersectionality**.

Diagram 1: Context for structural inequality



Everyone's identity is made up of different parts such as gender, ethnicity, abilities, class etc. These different aspects of who we are interact with each other and shape how we experience the world.

The different parts of our identity come together within larger systems in society. These systems, such as laws, workplace practices and cultural norms, can either give us advantages or create disadvantages based on our identity.

Inequality is not just about individual actions. It is built into the very structures of society. When different aspects of our identity interact with these systems of power, it can lead to ongoing discrimination and unfair treatment.

INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

The core interrelated constructs of intersectional analysis

The Roadmap approach is informed by the following core interrelated constructs of intersectional analysis. These constructs serve as foundational concepts that help explain the purpose of the Roadmap areas of inquiry and guide its application.

The core constructs inform one another and shape critical inquiry. Together with their Guiding Premises they:

- are fundamental to intersectionality, providing the language to describe intersectionality's potential for transformation.
- provide the tools for shaping inquiry

¹ Collins, P. H., Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory, Duke University Press, 2019



This type of work should be the tool through which all decisions are made, not a segmented commitment that is narrow or in a lane. Lots of DEI work pulls an organisation in different directions when there are mandates, such as RAP, Pride in Sport Index. It gets very siloed.

Participants, National Appreciative Inquiry Engagement Process

Diagram 2: Core constructs of intersectional analysis
(adapted from Collins, P. H., Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory)

Definitions of the core constructs are included in the Appendix

Understanding these core constructs is necessary to undertaking the first level of intersectional practice – Examine.

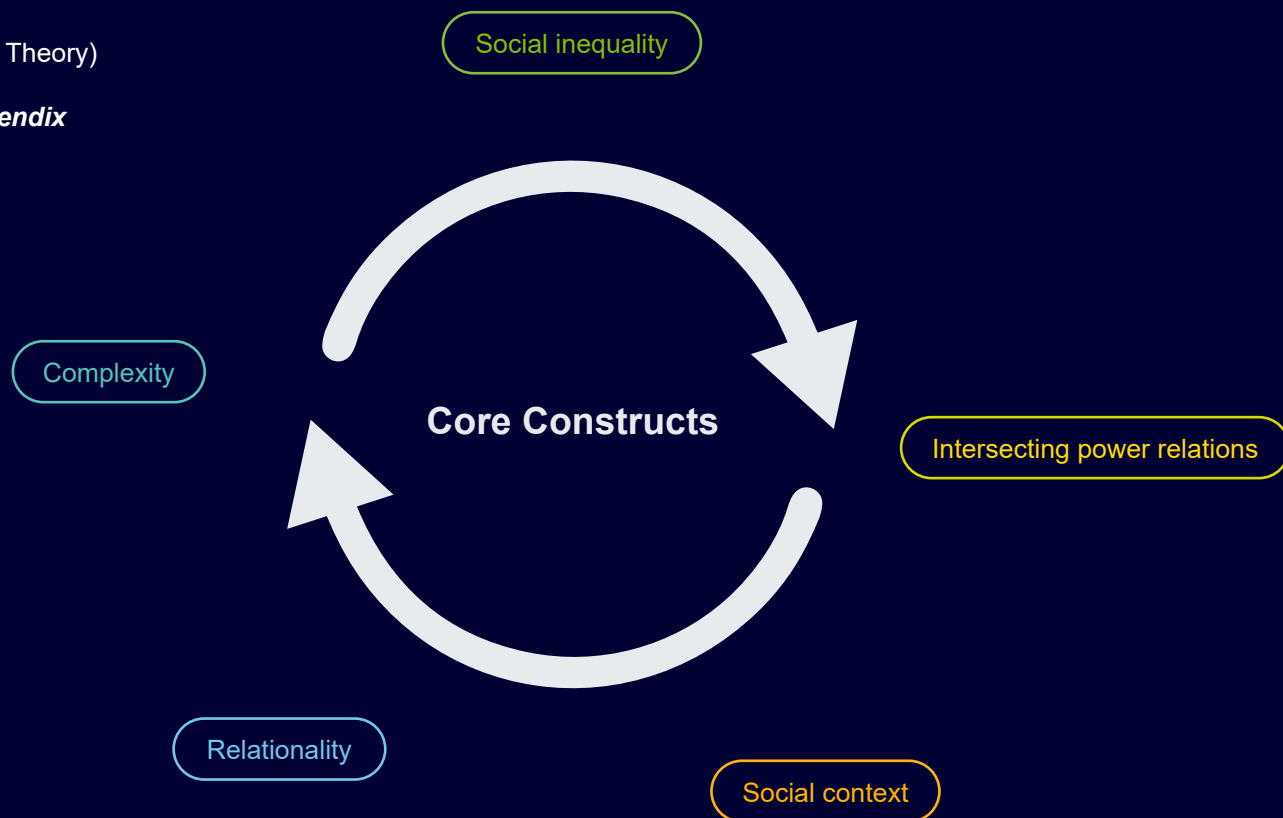
Guiding Premises

Race, class and gender as systems of power are interdependent.

Intersecting power relations produce complex social inequalities.

Intersecting power relations shape individual and group experiences.

Solving social problems requires intersectional analyses.



🔍 INTERSECTIONALITY IN PRACTICE

Examine, Evolve, Elevate



This lack of representation fosters an intimidating atmosphere, making it difficult for people to envision themselves in the sport landscape. It's not about verbalising inclusivity; it's about living it, showcasing diverse faces and voices that reflect the multitude of identities in our society.

Participant, National Appreciative Inquiry Engagement Process

The Roadmap is designed on the core premise of Intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and practice – it reflects the relationality between knowing and doing as interconnected.

There are 3 levels of intersectional practice – **Examine, Evolve, Elevate**. These move us from inquiry (knowing) to praxis (doing). Inquiry and Praxis are essential to intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and contribute to creating solutions to important issues identified in the nationwide appreciative inquiry engagement process. By embracing intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and practice, sports organisations can foster inclusivity, equity, and innovation, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness and impact within their communities.

It is important to recognise that there is no standard checklist of actions for sporting organisations to complete that would make them inclusive. ***Operationalising intersectionality is dynamic and evolving, not a static endeavour.*** Inequality produces patterns of complex inequities that reinforce power structures and disparities in organisations that are often related to the political, historical, and cultural inequities of the surrounding society. As such, intersectionality in action requires inquiry and praxis across a number of power domains. Systems change can only be sustainable when our inquiry includes all layers of power.

The roadmap provides guidance around the structural, cultural and interpersonal domains of power to ***Examine, Evolve and Elevate.***

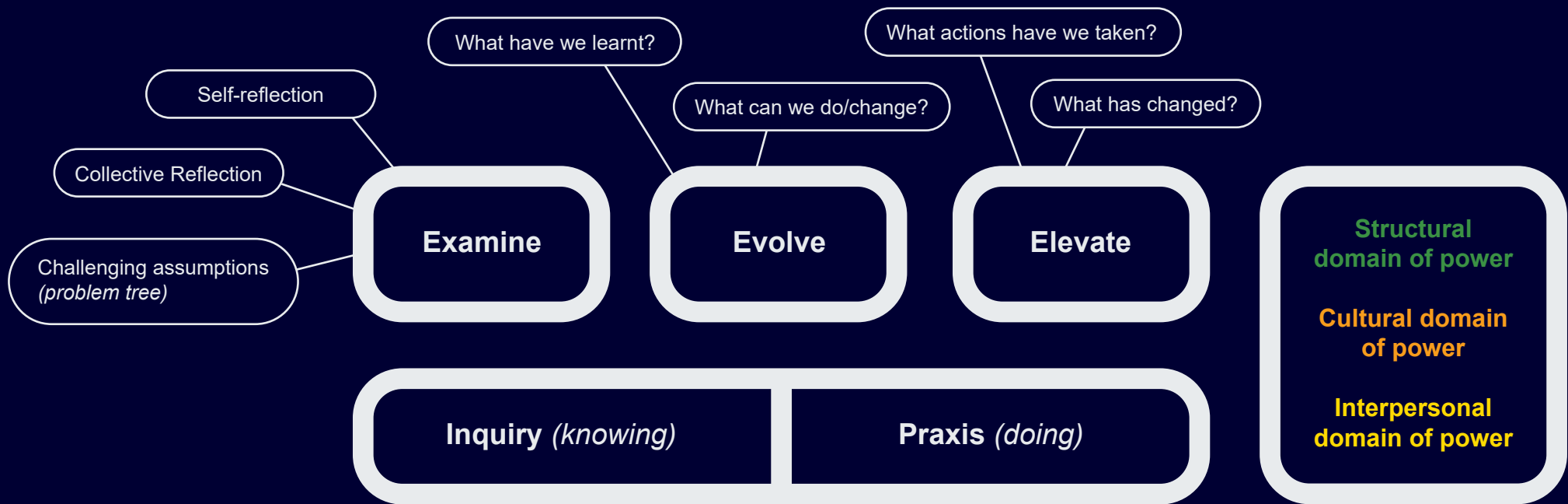


Diagram 3: Three levels of intersectional practice

INTERSECTIONALITY IN PRACTICE

Examine, Evolve, Elevate

The **structural domain of power** refers to fundamental structures of sporting organisations.

The **cultural domain of power** emphasises the increasing significance of the idea of culture in the organisation of power relations within sporting organisations.

The **interpersonal domain of power** refers to how individuals experience the convergence of structural and cultural power within sporting organisations. Such power shapes intersecting identities that in turn organise social interactions. Intersectionality recognises that perceived group membership within sports can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific ways we experience bias.

By acknowledging the complexity of identity, sports organisations can address bias more nuancedly and inclusively, ensuring that all are valued, respected and included.

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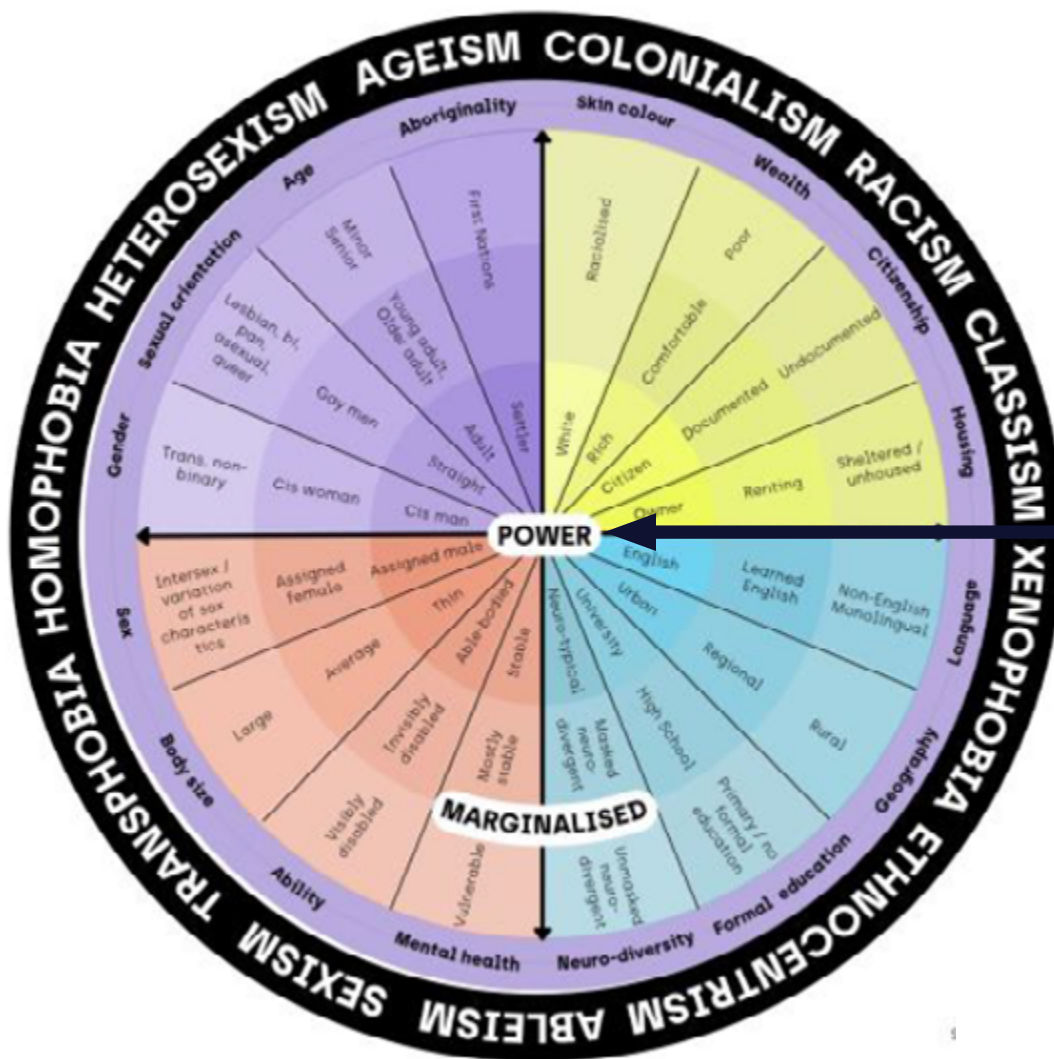


Diagram 4: The privilege wheel: [Intersectional AOD Practice Guide July 2024](#)

The majority of individuals in leadership roles in Australian sport peak bodies sit inside the middle ring (closest to power).

A SYSTEMS APPROACH

Intersectionality recognises that people are shaped by simultaneous membership of multiple interconnected social categories. The interaction between multiple social categories occurs within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g. rules, policies). A recognition of inequality of power is key to intersectionality.

Structural inequalities, reflected as relative disadvantage and privilege, result from interconnected social categories, power relations and contexts.

Systemic change can be understood as changing the conditions holding a particular situation in place. The systems iceberg conceptualises this understanding and shows that only day-to-day events are visible on the surface, but the conditions that shape them are hidden below the surface.

In the case of the iceberg, these conditions are expressed as patterns, structures and paradigms. All the elements are interconnected and shape each other.

As diagram 5 shows, systems are shaped by powerful hidden conditions, and systems change demands that we pay attention to these. This Roadmap adopts three key conditions of change to guide intersectionality in practice and achieve sustainable shifts in progressing Excellence + Belonging + Courage + Connection

- Systems change advances equity by shifting the conditions that hold a problem in place.
- To fully embrace systems change, leaders should be prepared to see how their own ways of thinking and acting must change as well.

Shifts in system conditions are more likely to be sustained when working at all three levels of change: explicit, semi-explicit, and implicit.

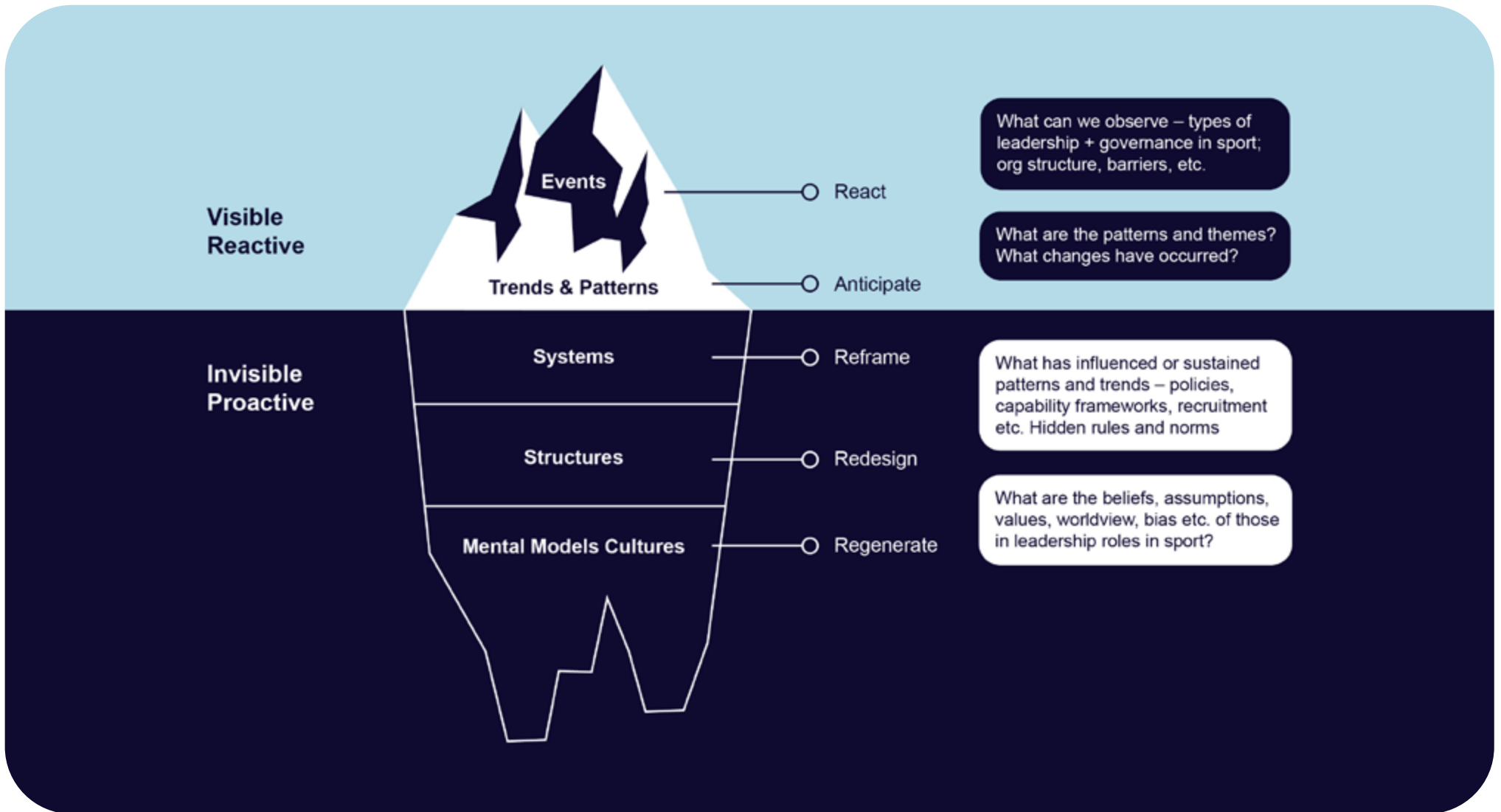


Diagram 5: Systems Thinking – Iceberg Model

KEY AREAS OF EXAMINATION

Key areas of organisational leaderships and governance readiness the Roadmap will examine

Organisational Values

How does an intersectional approach to leadership and governance fit your organisational values, mission and strategic objectives?

Organisational policies and systems

What existing policies and systems relate to diversity, equity and inclusion, and intersectional practice?

Training and capacity building

What training is currently available to build capacity and knowledge around topics like intersectionality, cultural knowledge and understanding, diversity and inclusion, implicit bias, trauma-informed practice, active allyship, and systems change?

Leadership and Governance

How do leaders and/or Governing bodies provide an authorising environment and promote the value of incorporating an intersectional lens into the role of Leadership and Governance within sports organisations?

Resource Allocation

How does the organisation allocate resources to support the work of diversity, equity and inclusion across all levels of the organisation?

Stakeholder engagement

How will diverse stakeholders (e.g., existing staff, people with intersectional lived experience, community groups) be involved?

Commitment and Accountability

How will you stay committed to an intersectional approach and hold yourself accountable for this work?

Review and support

What systems are in place to evaluate and review outcomes for implementing this roadmap?



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The risk of not doing the intersectionality framework and continuing to do what we do is we're just going to continue to deliver the same programs, which will get the same outcomes, and then nothing will necessarily change in the sector.

Ayden Shaw
General Manager, Disability Sports Australia



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