# How FrontierSI is building an inclusive culture from the bottom up

June 2020

**FrontierSI** strives to remain at the forefront of innovation and understands that to do so requires the attraction and retention of a diverse team of talented people within its workplace. However, as a partner-based not-for-profit without the resources of a large corporate, FrontierSI has had to be strategic and resourceful to improve diversity and inclusion within its workplace.

A big focus has been to position the organisation as an employer of choice. FrontierSI was an early adopter of flexible working arrangements. Well before COVID 19 made working from home the new norm, FrontierSI offered flexible, part time roles and the ability for staff to work from home and balance work with other commitments. Take up of flexible working arrangements

has been strong, with 30 per cent of FrontierSI employees working part time. It's also helped with attracting and retaining staff, men and women, who have parental or other caring commitments.

FrontierSI has made changes to its recruitment practices, trialling the use of software in recruitment ads and position descriptions to make the language more gender neutral, as well as piloting an anonymous CV assessment process where candidate gender and names are removed.

These recruitment changes have seen an increase in the diversity of applicants in roles where there had historically been gender imbalance. FrontierSI is also starting to see improvements in gender

balance in traditionally male dominated technical and senior roles, with more than one third of all STEM positions in the organisation now held by women. This is having profound effects on how the organisation operates.

FrontierSI was formed in 2018 following 16 years of operations as the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Spatial Information. In forming its foundational board, FrontierSI has set the goal of 50/50 gender parity across the whole organisation, which they have achieved, headed up by Board Chair Dr Gillian Sparkes who is also Victoria's Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. "It is a privilege to Chair the Board of this organisation. As a social enterprise, the FrontierSI team really acknowledge and understand the importance of an inclusive and diverse workplace to ensure everyone can thrive, feel empowered and do their best work for and with our partners and collaborators. Equality and diversity are in our DNA and a critical ingredient for our innovation agenda."

> "Equality and diversity are in our DNA and a critical ingredient for our innovation agenda."
>
> - Dr. Gillian Sparkes

Whilst FrontierSI is young, having transitioned from one of Australia's most successful CRC's in 2018, they're already realising the gains in workplace culture and productivity that a diverse and inclusive environment creates.

> "We will continue to improve ourselves and walk the talk as a champion of diversity and inclusion across the spatial industry."
>
> - Dr. Graeme Kernich

"At FrontierSI we strive to be an innovative and inclusive organisation that attracts and retains the best people," says Dr Graeme Kernich, FrontierSI's CEO. "We believe in our values – collaboration, future focus, agility, integrity and communication. These were collectively defined by our whole team and reflect our nature and what we bring to the spatial industry, our partners and collaborators. We will continue to improve ourselves and walk the talk as a champion of diversity and inclusion across the spatial industry." ■

*In February 2020 the Co-Convenors of the Spatial and Surveying Diversity Leadership Network issued a call to the spatial sector to showcase leaders in our sector who are investing in opening doors, challenging bias, and creating workplace cultures that foster a sense of belonging and inclusion. This case study is a direct outcome of that call. For more on Diversity & Inclusion in the Spatial sector visit the 2026 Agenda – Diversity & Inclusion webpage or connect at diversity@2026agenda.com*