Confirmation bias

Handout

Confirmation bias refers to our tendency to:

- more readily believe information that supports – or confirms – our existing worldviews, beliefs and values, and
- exclude information that might contradict previously held assumptions.

Psychologists and educators have looked at techniques and practices that can:

- overcome unconscious bias;
- reaffirm and invite individuals and groups to be active participants in their own lives as decoders, micro-investigators and 'debunkers'; and
- challenge the ways we see and read the world through years of ingrained habits and practices.

These approaches strengthen literacy on methods for managing and producing information as well as understanding how information is made (learning about 'how we know'). Drawing on our core values and beliefs, such as dignity, fairness and human rights, are central to this.

Diversity and inclusion consultant Felicity Menzies of Culture Plus Consulting says:

> "When we are motivated to be fair and unprejudiced because of either a strong internalised belief that it is morally correct to treat others fairly or because of strong social norms and legal restrictions against expressed prejudice and discrimination, we can engage controlled mental processes to override biased reflexive responses."

Addressing unconscious bias

1. Increase opportunities for **contact with a diverse range of people**.
2. Learn from people who are **open minded and tolerant**.
3. Surround yourself with **open-minded media**.
4. **Model standards** by setting an example — avoid stereotypical images and examples. These can be used within your group or outside of it to celebrate or acknowledge achievements of individuals from underrepresented or stereotyped groups.