



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Citizenship

Workplace Diversity Strategy

2011–13



Workplace Diversity Strategy

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Recognising uniqueness,

promoting inclusion,

looking to the future.

Everyone matters.

Secretary's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's *Workplace Diversity Strategy 2011–13*.

The strategy continues our commitment to the broad range of people who make up our organisation. It is supported by an implementation plan that outlines how the aims will be achieved over the next three years.

Workplace diversity means respecting and valuing the differing skills and experiences we all bring to the workplace, as well as being aware of the additional challenges faced by some groups. The department recognises the diversity of our existing workforce—be it on the basis of gender, age, culture, religion, language or personal circumstances—and is committed to building on the richness of the perspectives, experience, knowledge and skills that this diversity brings to the organisation.

A diverse network of employees, truly reflective of the wider community it serves and represents, is better able to understand and meet the needs of our clients. By supporting diversity, we create a more positive work environment and increase our productivity.

This strategy aims to address barriers experienced by some people in gaining access to employment, development or promotional opportunities. Our workplace diversity documents acknowledge that innovative and flexible strategies are required if we are to attract, recruit, and retain the best people and remain competitive within the employment market as the workforce demographic evolves.

Over the next three years our priorities focus on Indigenous people as well as people with disability. As stated in our *Reconciliation Action Plan* and *Indigenous Employment Strategy*, we aim to boost Indigenous employee representation to 2.7 per cent of the total workforce by 2015, and to also to focus on increasing the representation of employees with disability.

I commend the *Workplace Diversity Strategy* to you. I ask that managers discuss with their teams what they can do to support the strategy in their daily work in order to foster an inclusive workplace culture that values diversity and promotes equity for all.



Andrew Metcalfe
Secretary



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The diversity of the people in the department is one of its greatest strengths. The department recognises and values the different attributes, life experiences, capabilities and skills that each employee brings to the organisation.

The Workplace Diversity Strategy 2011–13 recognises and seeks to enhance the capability of employees to better deliver on our key purpose of building Australia's future through the well-managed entry and settlement of people in Australia.

The strategy is informed by recommendations from the Management Advisory Committee Report on the *Employment of People with Disability in the Australian Public Service*,¹ best practice initiatives in Australian Public Service (APS) agencies, the guidance of national advocacy organisations, and results of the department's most recent staff survey.

Australian legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment decisions on the grounds of race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, age and disability. In addition, the *Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 1999* require all agency heads to put in place measures for helping to prevent direct and indirect discrimination and disadvantage in employment, consistent with Commonwealth laws.²

Purpose

The Workplace Diversity Strategy 2011–13 provides the department with guidance on ways of successfully managing diversity by creating an environment that values and uses the contributions of people with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. The strategy represents the department's response to identified areas of potential disadvantage for employees.

The Workplace Diversity Strategy aims to create a supportive, flexible, and fair workplace in which differences between employees are respected and viewed as an organisational asset. This document proposes measures for the department to ensure that the diverse contributions of our employees are best utilised to foster productive work practices.

What is workplace diversity?

Workplace diversity builds on the principles of equal employment opportunity to include inherent differences such as gender, age, ethnicity, race, cultural/linguistic background, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, intellectual and/or physical ability. Diversity also refers to other ways in which people are different, such as life experience, socio-economic or educational background, personality, marital status, religious beliefs and family responsibilities.

Managing workplace diversity involves recognising the value of individual differences in the workplace to realise the full potential of all employees and help the department achieve its business goals.

1. Key findings of the report are available at the APSC website at <http://www.apsc.gov.au/media/briggs300806.htm>

2. Employment decisions must comply with the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act 1986, the Workplace relations Act 1996 and other Australian laws.

Benefits of workplace diversity

Workplace diversity strategies help to build the department's relationship with the community, enhance the contribution of its employees and improve the quality of its programs, products and services.

Workplace diversity creates a more inclusive and supportive work environment, better team work and more effective client service delivery. It increases productivity, encourages greater creativity and different ways of thinking for improved decision making.

From a business perspective, the financial and business benefits for many large private sector organisations of investing in supporting diversity have been significant and have resulted in increased profits and productivity.³ The implementation of effective diversity strategies in the department will have the benefit of improving employee retention, enhancing productivity and reducing expenditure on recruitment processes.

A snapshot of diversity in the department

The department currently employs over 6,500 ongoing employees, who collectively have knowledge of a multitude of different languages, cultures and religions. Some 16.3 per cent⁴ of employees originate from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Employees who identify as having a disability represent 2.1 per cent of the department's workforce, while employees who identify as Indigenous Australians comprise 0.9 per cent.

Of the total workforce, 62 per cent are women. Forty two per cent of senior executive service positions⁵ are occupied by women. Significantly, more than a third of employees (36.4 per cent) are aged 45 and over are included in the APS mature-age worker category.

Statistics for diverse groups in the wider community reveal that approximately 22 per cent of people identify as having been born overseas, 20 per cent as having a disability, and 2.5 per cent as being Indigenous Australians.

The department will further develop strategies for the attraction and retention of a workforce that is representative of the broader community and is committed to implementing actions that will optimise opportunities for all Australians to actively participate in employment.

3. AMP's investment in work/life initiatives over five years yielded 400 per cent return through lower staff turnover and higher productivity. Lloyd's Bank TSB (UK) reported 2 millions pounds a year in savings by increasing maternity leave. On introducing work-life policies, the return rate from maternity leave climbed from 74 per cent to 85 per cent. Information supplied by Diversity Council of Australia, September 2010.

4. At June 2010 Non English Speaking employees represented 16.3 per cent of the workforce, compared with an APS-wide representation of 6 per cent.

5. Percentage at June 2010 as reported in the DIAC Workforce Report 2009-2010 p.19



*Armen
Karamanian*

“Youth allows the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to evolve and grow as an organisation...it allows new ideas and new concepts to be brought to the organisation and bring about understanding of a new generation ”

Armen Karamanian, IMA Boat Taskforce

Identified priorities

In meeting its obligations, the department has developed strategies to address the employment of the following groups:

- Indigenous Australians
- people with disability
- women
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- mature age workers and the inter-generational workforce

Indigenous Australians and people with disability have experienced downward trends in their representation across the APS. The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) has highlighted the need for agencies to focus on strategies to address these trends.

It is important to be aware that there will be employees who may identify with characteristics of more than one group. For example, there may be employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who also have a disability.

Strategies for addressing these circumstances are outlined in the Workplace Diversity Implementation Plan.

The department has designed the following strategies to address the needs of the identified priority groups.



*Dan
Applebee*

Increasing the recruitment and retention of Indigenous people

- Make the department an employer of choice for Indigenous people.
- Review departmental communication materials to reflect appropriate recognition of Indigenous employees.
- Promote Indigenous cultural understanding and respect to ensure Indigenous employees receive support when they start work at the department.⁶
- Promote developmental opportunities for Indigenous employees, with an emphasis on improving leadership capability.
- Encourage Indigenous employees to self-identify by prefacing EEO questions with the rationale for gathering this private information.⁷
- Establish an Indigenous contact officer role⁸ to promote Indigenous employment strategies and programs and provide a single contact point both internally and externally for the department.

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6. A recommendation of the 2009 Census Report (p.3) states: .."ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are available to staff and managers...supervisors and co-workers, both in the immediate work area and the whole agency, are able to work effectively and sensitively with Indigenous Australians."
 7. How it will be used, who will have access to it, and stress that it can assist in targeting advice, support, and monitor our progress in building a sustainable and diverse workforce.
 8. A single point of contact for staff regarding Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Strategies and APSC programs, to liaise with external agencies, to advise on best practice, influence corporate policies and consult with Indigenous Employee Network (IEN) on relevant issues.



*Richard
Hills*

Increasing the recruitment and retention of people with disability

- Make the department an employer of choice for people with disability.
- Ensure outsourced recruitment provider's assessment methods are accessible.
- Develop an innovative approach to opportunities for people with disability in the agency.
- Develop a disability action plan.
- Establish an employee consultative network that meets regularly with the department's disability champion.
- Establish a mentoring program.
- Provide disability awareness training for managers and others involved in recruitment processes as a priority.
- Promote mental health and wellbeing awareness through internal policy and education opportunities.⁹
- Accommodate reasonable workplace adjustments to ensure employees with disability optimise training and development options.
- Investigate options for a centralised fund for reasonable workplace adjustments and assistive technology for employees with disability.
- Create a disability access coordinator role.¹⁰

9. *Workers with Mental Illness: A practical guide for managers* Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010

10. A single point of contact for staff regarding recruitment and retention strategies and APSC programs, to liaise with external agencies, to advise on best practice, influence corporate policies and consult with Staff with disability Network.



*Leanne
Blackley*

Provide flexibility for supporting employees to balance work and life responsibilities

- Make the department an employer of choice for both men and women.
- Help employees to maintain their work and life balance and responsibilities while developing or maintaining a career.
- Implement a 'keep-in-touch' program for employees on parental leave.¹¹
- Ensure the workplace is a safe, inclusive environment where individuals who wish to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity do not feel inhibited or at risk.
- Recognise and support personal commitments and responsibilities.
- Ensure employees are aware of options to help them balance work and personal responsibilities.
- Create a supportive mentoring program to develop leadership capability in women and encourage women to access networking and development opportunities.
- Undertake research to identify unique obstacles and challenges faced by the labour market and in the workplace.¹²

11. *Tips for business - attract, engage, retain*, a report by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) , 2008, p.25

12. Review of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999, available at The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs website, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/women/pubs/general/equal_opp_review/Pages/p2.aspx



*Fatma
El-Shearif*

Increasing the recruitment and retention of employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

- Maintain the department's status of employer of choice for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.¹³
- Establish an employee consultative network.
- Promote development opportunities with an emphasis on improving leadership capacity.
- Recognise, value and leverage the cultural and linguistic diversity of our workforce.
- Maximise the potential of employees who mirror our client base.
- Survey these employees to identify any emerging needs.

13. At June 2010 Non English Speaking staff represented 16.3 per cent of the workforce, compared with an APS-wide representation of 6 per cent.



*Greg
Phillipson*

Recognising and supporting the needs of an inter-generational workforce

- Make the department an employer of choice for mature-age workers.
- Promote an organisation-wide culture that supports the abilities of all employees regardless of age.¹⁴
- Introduce programs to facilitate professional development for mature-age workers, facilitate information sharing and maintain corporate knowledge.
- Devise and provide education programs for supervisors on the prevention of age discrimination and cross-generational age management.
- Educate those in supervisory roles to harness the potential of all employees, regardless of age.
- Make the department an employer of choice for younger employees.
- Survey individuals within these groups to further identify their requirements.

Delivery of the strategic initiatives

The Workplace Diversity Strategy aims to build a relationship between the organisation and its employees by supporting an inclusive environment which looks beyond perceived differences.

To ensure that diversity principles are embedded in the departmental culture, all employees, particularly managers, will be encouraged to consider and incorporate workplace diversity principles into work practices at all times. This is an important step for ensuring a workplace free from discrimination and harassment that recognises and integrates the complementary differences of our employees.

14. *The Evolving Workplace: The Seven Key Drivers of Mature-aged Workers*, 20:20 SERIES, Hudson, July 2006.

Key stakeholders

All departmental employees and business areas are responsible for the success of this strategy and the implementation plan, including:

- Workforce Design and Strategy Section for coordinating the development and implementation of the initiatives and reporting annually on their delivery.
- People Strategy and Services Division for working with Workforce Design and Strategy Section to provide support in implementing negotiated initiatives.
- People and Values Committee to steer the education and leadership agenda for identified groups and promulgate inclusivity across the department.
- Learning and Development Branch for supporting and helping with the delivery of mentoring and education initiatives.
- Indigenous Employee Network for continuing to provide recommendations to the department regarding the implementation and continuous improvement of these strategies.
- Employees in the disability network for providing strategic feedback to the organisation on strategies and their implementation and continuous improvement.
- State directors, and global managers for encouraging managers to participate in programs when appropriate, and facilitating access to development opportunities for those who require it.
- Financial Strategy and Services Division for further advising on the centralised funding initiative.
- Disability and Indigenous champions for helping to promote the initiatives to the Senior Executive Service and ensure these initiatives are resourced appropriately.
- HR practitioners in state, territory and national offices for implementing initiatives within each office.
- Managers across the department for becoming familiar with and supporting the initiatives that underpin the strategy.
- Employees for seeking access to opportunities and services offered.

Measurement of success

The Workplace Diversity Strategy will be introduced through measures outlined in the workplace diversity implementation plan. Progress will be assessed against milestones contained in the plan and reported to the People and Values Committee and the Executive Committee on a bi-annual basis.