

Fair Work Ombudsman Workplace Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2013-2016

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Australian Government

Fair Work
OMBUDSMAN

Introduction

The Australian Public Service (APS) is committed to supporting a culture of equity, inclusion and diversity and to ensuring that the public service workforce is representative of the broader Australian community it serves. Within the APS, diversity is recognised to represent many facets of difference in gender, age, language, ethnicity, cultural background, religious beliefs and family responsibilities as well as differences between individuals in life, work experience and personality.

In particular, the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) is committed to workplace diversity and inclusion through fostering a supportive, respectful and engaging environment for our employees and clients. FWO values the diverse backgrounds and experiences of our employees and the contribution they make to enhance our organisational culture and in ensuring that our programs and services are equitable, inclusive and accessible.

To indicate the need to continue to work on diversity and inclusion, trends in the APS employment of Indigenous Australians and for people with disability have been steadily declining from 2.7 to 2.1% and from 4.0 to 3.0% respectively, since 2002. Representation of people from a Non English Speaking Background (NESB) has increased slightly (4.5 to 5.1%). Specifically within FWO, our equity and diversity statistics for Indigenous Australians, people with a disability and NESB representation is 1.1%, 3.2% and 7.8% respectively (as at March 2013).

FWO has made considerable progress in the workplace diversity and inclusion space, specifically in our employment and participation rates and in our commitment to a flexible workplace. Key drivers that are contributing to our progress and our major achievements include the:

- creation of a Diversity Council, chaired by the Fair Work Ombudsman
- implementation of an annual Reconciliation Action Plan
- creation of various diversity and inclusion related staff networks and forums
- continued participation in the APSC Indigenous Pathways Programs
- successful implementation of the inaugural Diversity Action Plan
- development of a FWO Indigenous Employment Strategy and associated action plan
- being one of the first agencies to enact special measure provisions within the *Public Service Commissioners Directions 1999* that facilitated the ongoing engagement of an employee with disability, and
- achievement of gender parity at Senior Executive ranks as at December 2012.

FWO recognises the need to enhance the capability and diversity of our people within our agency and across the APS. We have preserved this commitment in our *Fair Work Ombudsman Strategic Plan 2012-2016* with our vision to 'work with Australians to educate, promote fairness and ensure justice in the workplace to achieve Fair Australian Workplaces'.

This strategy acknowledges the successes achieved to date, but recognises the need to address the continued decline of diversity and inclusion employment and participation rates across the APS. The strategy aims to build on our goal to have the most engaged staff in the APS and to be a model Australian workplace. Furthermore, it seeks to ensure FWO improves its service delivery to broader diversity and inclusion target groups within the Australian community.

Objective

The objective of this strategy is to provide a framework which sets out our workplace diversity and inclusion agenda and supports our goals of having an engaged workforce and being a model employer. The framework principally supports the key actions we aim to deliver to enhance the diversity of our people and the services we provide to the community. This strategy upholds:

- our *Fair Work Ombudsman Strategic Plan 2012-2016* and specifically our diversity vision, 'our people at work, as diverse as the Australian workforce we serve'
- a collaborative work environment wherein managers and staff work together in order to deliver on our goals
- our strategic change objective to have the most engaged staff in the APS
- the need to ensure our external client facing work acknowledges the diversity and inclusion requirements of the Australian workforce
- inclusive and flexible work practices in all areas of our business that better support key internal diversity groups, and
- the APS objective of seeking to reflect the diversity of the Australian community, at all levels of the workforce for agencies within the public sector.

Principles

This strategy and its related initiatives are supported by principles developed to reflect the key priorities of the FWO Diversity Council. The principles are as follows:

- **Value diversity and inclusion** - recognising and promoting the diversity of our workforce and creating an environment that values a diverse range of views, knowledge and experiences and uses this to maximise our service delivery capabilities.
- **Accessible opportunities** - creating employment and career development opportunities that are free from known barriers and that promote our commitment to sustainable and flexible careers for all employees.
- **Model Australian workplace** - foster and encourage a workplace that embraces diversity and inclusion to more accurately reflect the diversity of the broader Australian community and is recognised for outstanding service delivery to our clients.
- **Education** - providing continuous training and support to our employees to promote a better understanding of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. This in turn enhances our interaction with clients and improves our service delivery to our clients.

Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Focus Areas

To ensure we engage more broadly with diversity and inclusion, the following focus areas have been identified. The four focus areas recognise diversity and inclusion at all points of the employment life cycle, as well as specific engagement points with our external stakeholders. The focus areas are underpinned by key action items which are further outlined in the supporting FWO Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2013-2016 (Action Plan).

1. Equal Employment

We are committed to supporting, promoting and enhancing employment opportunities for all equal employment groups within FWO or who may be joining us in the future. Varied and innovative

approaches to recruitment and retention will be applied to employment opportunities to ensure that FWO maintains and enhances our diverse workforce. FWO will achieve this by:

- ensuring no unintended barriers exist that may discourage any Australian citizen from seeking employment opportunities
- developing a suite of targeted recruitment initiatives that increase opportunities amongst people underrepresented in the APS workforce
- ensuring diversity and inclusion employment strategies are incorporated into agency-wide business and workforce planning, and
- actively utilising employment pathways and available resources to address workplace diversity and inclusion representation gaps.

2. Engagement and Accessibility

We recognise the benefits of ensuring that we make ongoing improvements to our service delivery, including how we interact with our staff and the Australian community. FWO commits to increasing our communication and engagement levels with our clients and staff by providing wider access to our services and through promoting our diversity initiatives. FWO will achieve this by:

- making a commitment to ensure equity and fairness when dealing with our clients and colleagues
- continuously seeking out opportunities for feedback from our clients and community groups on all aspects of our service delivery
- raising awareness of our work through creating greater access to our services through such initiatives as adhering to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG) protocols and engaging directly with the community
- using a variety of communication mediums and platforms to engage with key external diversity groups, and
- promoting internal diversity initiatives more widely and encouraging wider participation in diversity initiatives.

3. Diversity and Inclusion Leaders

FWO strives to be recognised as a diversity and inclusion leader within the APS and is committed to driving and exemplifying an inclusive and flexible workplace where all employees are valued for their experiences and differences. We are committed to demonstrating to fellow APS agencies and private enterprises how employers should interact with their employees and clients; we will do this by being workplace diversity and inclusion leaders. FWO will achieve this by:

- appointing Senior Executive Service (SES) champions to key diversity groups who will then drive the relevant policy agenda that supports their cause
- providing a work environment that supports workplace flexibility to meet both business and individual needs
- ensuring the goals of this strategy are embedded in the day-to-day operations of each branch within the agency
- further promoting to external employers the need for diverse and inclusive workplaces and the economic benefits this brings, and

- supporting and maintaining open and transparent communication channels suited to all working Australians.

4. Valuing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

FWO values workplace diversity and inclusion and recognises its positive impact on employee morale and work output. By further valuing workplace diversity and inclusion, we will see benefits in our service delivery to internal and external clients, which in turn will further assist us to achieve our long term strategic goals. FWO will achieve this by:

- maintaining and promoting a register of bilingual employees across the agency who can communicate with and assist our culturally and linguistically diverse clients
- creating and maintaining internal networks and communities that support key diversity groups such as mature-aged workers, people with disability and GLBTI people
- making the best use of the diverse talents of our people in order to achieve results through robust workforce planning and talent management initiatives, and
- providing development opportunities for employees to enrich their knowledge on diversity and inclusion issues.

Stakeholders

All FWO employees are responsible for promoting and contributing to our diversity and inclusion agenda by supporting this strategy and its associated action plan. Particular groups of FWO employees play an integral role in delivering upon our focus areas and are identified as key stakeholders within this strategy:

Senior Executive Service (SES)

The SES will be key partners in promoting and supporting this strategy by recognising it as an important component in any workforce and business planning decision within their business groups. The SES will actively encourage the development of an open and collaborative culture that demonstrates our commitment to supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce, through including a diversity and inclusion pledge in annual performance agreements.

Diversity Council

The Diversity Council will play a critical role in promoting and supporting the strategy, including the objectives, activities and initiatives that stem from it. The Diversity Council will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the strategy and identify opportunities to improve the effectiveness or linkages with other initiatives across the agency.

Human Resources (HR)

The Diversity and Inclusion team, within HR, will have overall responsibility for coordinating the development and implementation of this strategy and the associated Action Plan. The Diversity team and the broader HR branch will promote and support the strategy in all relevant aspects of the work undertaken within the branch. HR will work with all branches and leaders across the agency and with the Diversity Council to develop, implement and support the initiatives relating to this strategy. HR will play a key role in supporting career aspirations and facilitating development opportunities within the agency for all employees from diverse backgrounds.

FWO Employee Networks

FWO has a range of employee networks that play a key role within the agency in our promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives. Such networks include: Harassment and Diversity Contact Officer Network, Flexibility Contact Officer Network, Disability Interest Group, Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group, GLBTI Employee Network, Women's Forum, Agency Consultative Forum, Mature-Aged Employee Network and the Mental Health Working Group.

Strategy and Action Plan Implementation

To effectively implement the key focus areas outlined within this strategy and to ensure the actions in the Action Plan are achieved, the following implementation outcomes have been identified.

Assessment of the existing internal and external environment

To ensure that the focus areas and all Action Plan initiatives are meaningful for FWO and the broader Australian community that we serve, an assessment of the current internal and external climate has been undertaken. The assessment included a review of existing diversity and inclusion employment and retention programs and commitments; analysis of internal and external diversity and inclusion employee data; consultation with relevant diversity and inclusion subject matter experts; and a review of various APS Workplace Diversity and Inclusion strategies, including the State of the Service Report.

Implementation

The supporting Action Plan outlines the initiatives that will be implemented to meet the principles, objectives and focus areas outlined within this strategy. The supporting Action Plan recognises our existing programs, initiatives, achievements and documents and any new initiatives that will support the focus areas of this strategy.

- FWO Diversity Action Plan 2013 - 2016
- FWO Diversity Council Terms of Reference
- FWO Enterprise Agreement 2011 - 2014
- FWO Indigenous Employment Strategy 2012 – 2016
- FWO Reconciliation Action Plan
- FWO Strategic Plan 2012 - 2016

Review and Reporting of the Action Plan

The initiatives supporting this strategy outlined in the Action Plan will be reviewed and reported on annually. This report will be provided to the Executive Director, HR and the Diversity Council. The report will be discussed at the last Diversity Council meeting of each calendar year. This review will focus on the implementation of the initiatives, the short-term results and any adjustments required to the Action Plan to improve its effectiveness.

Evaluation and Review of the Strategy

The overall success of the strategy and Action Plan will be evaluated and reviewed in the last quarter of 2015 in line with the review of our *FWO Strategic Plan 2012-2016*. The evaluation of the strategy will include:

- a qualitative assessment of the success of the initiatives implemented to support the focus areas of this strategy

- an assessment of service delivery to targeted diversity and inclusion client groups, and
- a quantitative assessment of the impact this strategy has had in positively affecting the number of employees voluntarily identifying in diversity and inclusion groups being employed and retained by FWO.

The outcome of this evaluation and review will guide the development of the replacement strategy and action plan.

Glossary

| Term | Definition |
|------------------------------|--|
| APS | Australian Public Service. An Executive arm of the Commonwealth (Federal) Government that exercises authority on behalf of the Government (Parliament), providing the support the Government needs to undertake its roles and responsibilities on behalf of the Australian people. |
| FWO | Fair Work Ombudsman. An APS agency that promotes harmonious, productive and cooperative workplace relations and ensure compliance with Commonwealth workplace laws. |
| APSC | Australian Public Service Commission. A central Australian Government agency whose vision is to lead and shape a unified, high-performing APS. |
| NESB | Non English Speaking Background. A person whose first language was one other than English. |
| Senior Executive Service | Forms the senior leadership group of the APS. |
| Diversity Council | A group of elected and management employees who introduce policies and sponsor initiatives to build and maintain sustainable diversity outcomes across FWO. |
| Bilingual | A person who communicate (listening, speaking, writing or signing) in more than one language. |
| Mature Age | A person over the age of 55. |
| GLBTI | A Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender or Intersex person. |
| RAP | Reconciliation Action Plan. A business plan that publicly formalises an organisation's contribution to reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians by identifying clear actions with realistic targets. |
| Indigenous Australians | The original inhabitants of the Australian continent and nearby islands. |
| Indigenous Pathways Programs | A suite of recruitment initiatives run by the APSC that include specialised 'whole of APS' graduate, trainee and cadet bulk recruitment exercises conducted on an annual basis. |
| Disability | A physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental condition or some combination of these that affects the standard of living of an individual for a period of six months or more. |
| Equal Employment Groups | A group that have been impacted in the past or continue to be disadvantaged or discriminated against in employment (e.g women, Indigenous Australians, racial groups, people with disability). |