

Report on Activities

The following is a summary of key programs and activities undertaken in 2005-06.

Sector wide strategies

Progress report on the first Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce

The Western Australian public sector improved its equity in employment outcomes for all EEO and diversity groups during the *Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce 2001–2005 (EDP1)*. The final outcomes, and the proportion of the final objective achieved are shown in the table below:

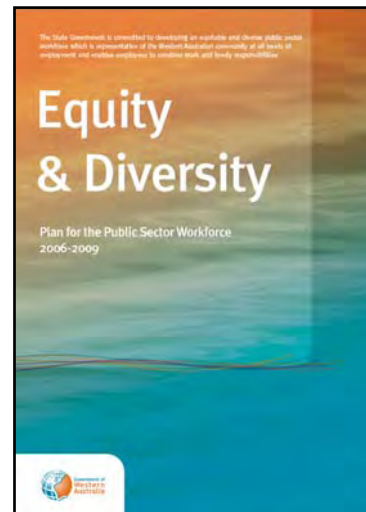
Achievement of Equity and Diversity Objectives in EDP1

Diversity Group	2001 Actual %	2005 Actual %	Change in % Points 2001 to 2005	EDP1 final objective %	% of EDP1 final objective achieved - based on 2005 actual
% People from culturally diverse backgrounds	4.3	8.0	+3.7	6.7	120%
% Women in Tier 1	12.3	23.1	+10.8	20.0	115%
% Youth	3.5	5.7	+2.2	5.5	104%
% Indigenous Australians	2.1	2.5	+0.4	2.9	86%
% Women in the SES	20.3	23.9	+3.6	30.0	80%
% Women in Tier 3	28.6	32.7	+4.1	45.0	73%
% Women in Tier 2	32.9	29.2	-3.7	41.0	71%
% People with disabilities	1.3	1.7	+0.4	3.6	47%

A new Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce

Following the release of the final progress report on the initial Equity and Diversity Plan in November 2005, the OEEO developed the *Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce 2006-2009*. The 2006-2009 plan provides prescribed targets for equity and diversity objectives in the representation and distribution of:

- Women;
- Women in Senior Management roles;
- Indigenous Australians;
- People from culturally diverse backgrounds;
- People with disabilities; and
- Youth.



The Plan outlines four critical factors for success in achieving equity and diversity objectives:

- The need for CEOs and senior management to “lead by example”;
- The importance of planning based on both diversity and business imperatives;
- The need to implement action strategies; and
- Ongoing performance management to ensure continuous improvement.

The Plan was released in June 2006 and sent to all agencies. The Premier wrote to the Chief Executive Officer of all public sector Agencies employing more than 100 staff seeking their support and assistance in achieving the objectives.

All agencies employing more than 50 staff have been asked to establish agency level objectives for 2007 and 2009 as an estimate of the contribution that their agencies will make to the achievement of the sector wide objectives.

Collection and analysis of agency based objectives will be reported in the first progress report of the *Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce 2006-2009*.

Diversity Group Strategies

Women in Senior Management

In 2006, the Office concluded a 'Consultations with Women' project. The objective of the project was to identify impediments to the career aspirations of women in the public sector and to develop strategies to counter those impediments.

The consultations sought to explore the issues confronting women at different stages of their career for women who were likely to aspire to senior management positions within the next five to ten years or who already held a management position. Three focus group discussions were scheduled for women employed at classification levels five and six; for women at classification levels seven and eight; and for women at classification level nine and above. The project involved conducting focus groups and interviewing more than 100 women.

Key findings

An overwhelming majority of women consulted (89 out of 104) saw their employment future, within the next five to ten years, with the public sector.

While a significant proportion of the women aspired to take on leadership and senior management roles, some needed to balance their role as a carer against their desire to make a positive impact on the public service and the community. The women were confronted with the difficulty of achieving the dual goals of emotional and intellectual self-fulfilment.

A major impediment identified by some women was the lack of support of managers and mentors. Many felt constrained by a male dominated culture that could be termed as 'militaristic', aggressive, competitive and which operated to the exclusion of women. Additional constraints were due to the stress of work and family commitments, a lack of career path opportunities and limited professional development opportunities.

The Office has been working with a sub-group of the CEO Diversity Forum to develop proposals to improve the representation of women in senior management. The Forum has been looking to developing new initiatives and strengthening existing public sector initiatives. This is expected to be a high priority for 2006-2007.

People with Disabilities

In 2004-2005, the OEEO sought to address the under-representation of people with disabilities in the public sector workforce. The launch of *Accessing Abilities* was supported by information sessions and a mini trade show, which showcased employment support agencies to CEOs and human resource professionals.

In 2005-06 the Office developed an additional Resource Sheet to provide information about the use of Supported Work Teams in public employment

and commenced a revision of the *Accessing Abilities* publication as an electronic resource to be hosted on the OEEO Website.

The strategies promoted in the *Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce 2006-2009* that support people with disabilities include:

- Establish ongoing partnerships with disability employment agencies to ensure that people with disabilities are included in applicant pools;
- Use the People with Disabilities entry-level recruitment program as run by the Public Sector Management Division of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet;
- Use the training package *You Can Make a Difference to Customer Relations* as developed by the Disability Services Commission to raise staff awareness about disabilities; and
- Implement a supported work-team arrangement to provide ongoing administrative or service support functions.

Indigenous Australians

Workshops

Workshop sessions were developed based on the CD-ROM, *Insights: Strategies for Success—an interactive management workshop and resource*.

The Office customised the Indigenous workforce strategy workshop for delivery to the Department of Justice (now Department of Corrective Services and the Department of the Attorney General). These Departments are using the Insights resource package to form an integral element of their training and professional development programs and cultural awareness activities.

Research

The CEO Diversity Forum has explored a range of issues related to cultural leave and the attraction and retention of indigenous staff. A working group, under the aegis of the OEEO, will be surveying participating agencies in 2006-07 on the use of cultural leave prior to developing culturally sensitive policies.

Promotion of key strategies

The strategies promoted in the *Equity and Diversity Plan for Public Sector Workforce 2006-2009* that support Indigenous employment strategies include:

- Educate Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff on cultural values and its impact on workplace practices and relationships;
- Engage Indigenous communities in decision-making and embrace cultural protocols including recognition of, and welcome to country;
- Ensure access to professional development programs and career progression pathways to Indigenous people; and

- Promote flexible employment practices to enable Indigenous employees to accommodate cultural and lore obligations and to provide support systems that are culturally sensitive.

People from culturally diverse backgrounds

This diversity category covers a wide range of groups facing differing levels of employment disadvantage in the community and in public employment. The Office has three main goals in regard to the promotion of improved outcomes for people from culturally diverse backgrounds. These goals, and actions taken to achieve them in 2005-2006, were as follows:

Awareness

Improving awareness about barriers faced by people from culturally diverse background through a Diversity Practitioners Forum involving a presentation by the executive director of the Office of Multicultural Interests and a presentation of personal stories by culturally and linguistically diverse employees from a range of agencies.

Improved workforce data

Requiring agencies to collect more detailed information about their workforce through the use of a template survey. The survey was developed in 2004-05 and the Office has continued to promote its use by agencies.

Strategic partnerships

The Office is a program partner in the Substantive Equality initiative of Government run through the Equal Opportunity Commission.

In addition to these activities, the Office has promoted key strategies through the *Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce 2006-2009*. These were:

- Work to ensure an absence of discrimination in policies and in the workplace culture
- Run face-to-face information sessions about the type of people you are trying to recruit and actively seek diversity in your applicant pools
- Ensure that selection processes do not put candidates with English as a second language at an unreasonable competitive disadvantage, particularly where multilingual skills are relevant to the role and/or generally beneficial to the organisation.

Youth

The Office has promoted youth employment through a Diversity Practitioners Forum that was conducted in conjunction with the Department of Premier and the Cabinet. The forum showcased graduate programs operating within the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Main Roads and provided an overview of Graduate programs and youth employment within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The strategies promoted in the *Equity and Diversity Plan for Public Sector Workforce 2006-2009* that support youth employment strategies include:

- Evaluating prospective workers to assess those factors that may limit an agency's ability to attract younger workers;
- Emphasising workplace flexibility in recruitment campaigns;
- Highlighting opportunities for advancement within an organization; and
- Providing greater opportunities for cadetships or graduate programs that offer a pathway to substantive employment.

Working with Public Authorities

EEO Management Plans

Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plans are required under Part IX of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* and provide the principal means of monitoring agency programs. CEOs must develop and implement an Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan and provide relevant statistics to the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment each year.

The Office has developed an on-line tool to assist in preparing Management Plans and to ensure that agencies meet their requirements under the Act. The ePlan was released in July 2006. The on-line tool provides the facility to:

- Use exemplar strategies and initiatives;
- Establish strategies that are tailored for the specific agency;
- Attach relevant policies and companion documents to a plan; and
- Submit a plan for review or comment by a consultant at the OEEO.

Consultancy Services

A significant proportion of OEEO resources are directed towards consultancy services. Consultants support agencies in their efforts to meet performance objectives set out in the *Equity and Diversity Plan*. Consultants are allocated clients on a portfolio basis to assist in streamlining enquiries and to provide a single point of contact. The OEEO works closely with agencies to develop diversity and recruitment programs. The portfolio management structure allows each OEEO consultant to:

- Understand the needs of individual agencies within their portfolio areas;
- Understand the business challenges of an agency;
- Develop and maintain collaborative working relationships with managers responsible for implementing equity and diversity initiatives within their agency;
- Highlight best practice to all public sector agencies; and

- Establish an effective dialogue with managers in identifying and managing diversity issues in their organisation.

The OEEO provides information on current trends in equity and diversity strategies. The following list highlights the range of consultancy services provided by the Office:

- Assisting in the development of public authority EEO Management Plans;
- Advising on the design and implementation of strategies to address the equity and diversity needs of the organisation;
- Assisting with developing quantifiable indicators for measuring equity and diversity outcomes; and
- Providing information on diversity management and leadership practices.

Diversity Practitioner Forums

The past reporting year has seen a significant increase in the popularity of OEEO Diversity Forums. These events focus on providing diversity practitioners with planning and practical support for their role. More than 290 people (up from 180 in 2004-05) attended the four Diversity Forums run during the year, an increase of approximately 20% in attendance at each forum. The Forums have resulted in enhanced knowledge sharing and skills transfer.

Feedback from participants indicated that the forums were highly relevant to the diversity needs of their organisations with an overall average of 88% agreeing that the content was relevant or that the Forum increased their understanding of the issues raised. The breakdown for each Forum is provided in the table below. The office will continue to coordinate and promote these Forums in the coming year.

Forum Feedback Summary

Forum Subject	Month/Year	Attendance	% agreeing that content was relevant/increased understanding of issues
Women in Senior Management	August 2005	60	72% (n=29)
Culturally Diverse Backgrounds	November 2005	71	95% (n=30)
Youth	March 2006	80	91% (n=17)
Equity & Diversity Plan 2006-2009	June 2006	80	95% (n=33)

Cross Government Initiatives

The Director contributed to a range of across-Government initiatives and reforms. Key contributions were made in 2005-06 in the following areas:

- Developing the Framework for Substantive Equality;
- Providing advice to the Office of Shared Services on selection processes, Human Resources Management Information Systems and complaints handling;
- Developing and implementing on-line recruitment policies and procedures;
- Member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women in Local government;
- Member of the Women in Leadership Reference Group for the Department of Education and Training; and
- Providing input on new legislation and legislative amendments.

Improved On-line Communications

As a small entity the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEO) relies heavily on its website to support information dissemination and consulting activities to public authorities.

The Office has been involved in a two-year program to improve on-line systems, content and infrastructure. This work has involved:

- Since its inception the subscriber list to has grown to more than 500 people. The tool used for administering these bulletins allows for analysis of what articles are read, which in turn has allowed for ongoing customisation of the bulletin to ensure broad interest.
- Developing a new Office of Equal Employment Opportunity website with greatly improved information architecture and upgraded resource pages. The new site provides improved access to a comprehensive range of guides and resources.
- Establishing the 'EEO_Share' email network which encourages cross sector problem solving and information sharing. Agencies can post questions to EEO_Share and receive responses from subscribers all over the sector.
- Establishment of a new bulletin 'Diversity Bizz' that provides subscribers with examples of good practice and articles of interest on employment diversity from all over the world.