



Office of Equal  
Employment Opportunity  
Government of Western Australia

Western Australian Public Sector

# Employees from culturally diverse backgrounds



***Showing the way!***

OEEO

## Supporting the Government's commitment

### The Charter of Multiculturalism

The *Western Australian Charter of Multiculturalism* recognises that the people of Western Australia are of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and promotes their participation in democratic governance within an inclusive society (see [http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi\\_charter.asp](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_charter.asp)).

The objectives of Government under the Charter are to:

- Facilitate the inclusion and empowerment of members of all communities as full and equal members of the Australian community, enjoying the rights and duties of a shared citizenship
- Encourage a sense of Australian identity and belonging as citizens, within a multicultural society
- Ensure that all individuals and minority groups, recognising the unique status of Aboriginal peoples, receive equal and appropriate treatment and protection under the law
- Enable the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures and backgrounds from which members of the Western Australian community are drawn
- Remove all barriers to equal participation in, and enjoyment of, all aspects of society – social, political, cultural and economic
- Foster the recognition of the achievements of, and contributions to, the Western Australian community of all individuals regardless of their origins, perceived 'race', culture, religion and nationality

In the area of public employment, commitment to the Charter is evidenced through quantifiable employment objectives set in the *Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce 2006-2009*. Through this Plan, agencies establish their own employment targets and develop strategies to support the achievement of these targets in Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plans.

### The Policy Framework for Substantive Equality

Substantive equality recognises that the same application of rules to groups that experience systemic disadvantage can have unequal results. If a public authority only caters to the dominant, majority group, then people who are different may miss out on essential services. Hence, it is necessary to treat people differently because people have different needs.

The State Government Policy Framework for Substantive Equality outlines a process of continuous improvement through which agencies can progress towards achieving substantive equality and meeting their obligations under the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (see <http://www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au/pdf/framework.pdf>). The employment of people from culturally and linguistically diverse groups is one of the ways that public authorities can improve their capacity to achieve substantive equality in service provision to the Western Australian community.

## Diversity in the Public Sector

For the purposes of workforce planning, cultural diversity in the public sector is defined by the number of people born overseas from non-English speaking countries.

% of Workforce	2002	2007	6-year change
People from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds	4.8%	7.9%	+3.1%

Over the last six years, the number of employees from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds (CDB) has increased from 4.8% to 7.9%. Overall however, the sector is below the Government's objective of 10.5% for 2007 (13% by 2009). More needs to be done to improve the rate of participation for people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

## Steps to improving workforce participation by people from culturally diverse backgrounds

### Step 1: Know your clients

- Survey your clients to assess their cultural and linguistic needs
- Tap into stakeholder groups, advocacy bodies or run customer focus groups
- Make use of cultural information prepared by the Office of Multicultural Interests including:
  - Community profiles prepared in conjunction with the Australian Bureau of Statistics [http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi\\_profiles.asp](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_profiles.asp)
  - Culture and religion guidelines for service providers [http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi\\_guidelines.asp](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_guidelines.asp)
  - Multi-cultural communities on-line portal <http://www.multicultural.online.wa.gov.au/>

### Step 2: Know your employees

In 2005, a change was made to the definition of cultural diversity which allows agencies to better identify the composition of their workforce. People from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds are those people born in countries other than the Main English Speaking (MES) countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the United States of America.

- From 1 July 2008, all public sector agencies are required to have diversity information for all employees attached to anonymous individual employee records
- It is recommended that you survey your workforce on a regular basis (eg every two or three years)
- You can get more accurate statistics on the cultural diversity of your agency by using the Diversity Questionnaire, which is available from [www.oeeo.wa.gov.au/documents/diversity/diversityquestionnaire.doc](http://www.oeeo.wa.gov.au/documents/diversity/diversityquestionnaire.doc)
- Better data collection and reporting helps you determine how well you are meeting your equity and diversity targets and where priorities might be set in terms of specific cultural groups

### **Step 3: Promote cross-cultural competencies**

- Identify the spoken languages and cultural skills of your employees
- Incorporate cross-cultural training as part of induction training for CDB and non-CDB staff
- Introduce flexible work arrangements to cater to the religious and cultural needs of your employees
- Celebrate cultural diversity with your employees and your community
- Support personal and professional learning of staff who wish to learn a language other than English in return for support, induction and mentoring of staff who speak that language as a first language

### **Step 4: Target cultural diversity in recruitment**

- Advertise to attract applicants that reflect the diversity of your client base. Consider using the following text in your advertisements:

*We are seeking to increase the diversity of our workforce to better meet the differing needs of our customers and to improve equal opportunity for our employees. Multilingual Australians are encouraged to apply.*

- Use plain and simple language in the job advertisement
- Use alternative media and the community networks listed in Step 1 to attract a diverse range of applicants
- Use appropriate types of communication and use language services where appropriate to support candidates through the recruitment process
- Avoid abstract interview questions
- Ensure selection panels have good cross-cultural awareness and skills
- Use an informal questioning style

### **Government can show the way in attaining a culturally diverse workforce and the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity can help you do it**

For more details on strategies to ensure a culturally diverse workplace, visit the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity website at [www.oeeo.wa.gov.au/publications/guides/cultural.htm](http://www.oeeo.wa.gov.au/publications/guides/cultural.htm).

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