



DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

Welcome to this May edition of 'The Key'.



I would like to thank everyone who worked towards achieving the diversity objectives in the government's first Equity and Diversity Plan – well done.

Good progress was made in many areas. One of the most important projects for 2006 is the development and implementation of a new Equity and Diversity Plan for the public sector workforce.

The new Plan will underpin OEEO activities over the next three years.

Once the plan is released the equity and diversity team will focus on working closely with government agencies to ensure that agency EEO plans are reviewed and updated.

Activities like our Diversity Forums and the consultancy work between government agencies and the OEEO are pivotal to continuing the progress that has been made in achieving a more diverse and equitable public sector workforce.

The OEEO held its first Diversity forum for 2006 in April. It proved a great success.

The forum focused on the theme of recruitment, retention and development of youth in the West Australian public sector.

Diversity forums continue to be an excellent way of getting people from different agencies together to discuss all the issues about diversity in the workplace and highlight some of the great initiatives agencies have developed along the way.

The continued success of the diversity forums has been very pleasing and more diversity forums will be scheduled for later in the year.

It has been a busy few months for the reporting team also and I am pleased to announce the implementation of a new online survey tool.

Early trials of the new online climate surveys have proven to be a great success. Many agencies are set to use the new online climate surveys for the first time this year.

The new technologies are set to make the reporting and evaluation process much easier for government agencies and make the collation and evaluation of data a much faster process for the reporting and evaluation team at the OEEO.



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The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEO) established an on-line survey capability and launched a new climate survey online.

The OEEO's reporting & evaluation team commissioned the development of the new online survey tools to make full use of the new technologies, which are now available.

Government agencies that have over 100 employees will now be able to complete climate surveys online. However, alternative arrangements can be made for those who do not have access to a personal computer.

There have been many advantages to introducing the online climate surveys.

Throughout the trial stages of the online surveys, it became evident that the distribution and collection of surveys was far more efficient than the paper based alternative.

The Internet has provided the perfect vehicle in which to cut down the time it takes for public authorities to participate in the survey process. The new climate surveys are proving more efficient and time saving for all involved in the process.

With the collation of data semi automated, it has made the publishing of reports a much faster process.

"It has really given us the opportunity to provide agencies with feedback from the climate surveys much faster than before," said Christopher Stansbury, Acting Director of the Evaluation and Reporting team.

"In the past, each individual survey had to be scanned into the computer and then the results analysed. This would mean that potentially thousands of surveys needed to be scanned each time. The technology, which the online surveys use now, does all the collating of data for you. We are now able to report back to government agencies in a matter of weeks, not months", Mr Stansbury said.

By having the ability to send all climate surveys by email, it provides not just a saving of time, but also a saving of money. The cost of paper and the cost of postage and handling have been removed.

The Department of Land Information were one of the first government agencies to trial the new online surveys. The entire process had been said to run smoothly.

The online climate surveys contain login passwords and user names. However, these login details are randomly generated and not used to identify the respondent in any way beyond distribution of passwords. It is simply a tool to ensure that all climate surveys that are distributed are accounted for.

One of the key features of the new system are that all the surveys are sent to the respective divisions within each agency automatically.

Before, it was frequently the responsibility of the human resources branch at each agency to sort out which climate survey had to be sent to which division within the agency if a divisional analysis was required.

Thanks to the help of online technologies this is a process that is done electronically and prior to distribution, saving precious time for human resources teams.

Over the next six months many more government agencies will participate for the first time in an online climate survey.

The technology also allows the office to develop special purpose survey tools to support other monitoring work.

The OEEO is very pleased with the success it has had with the new online climate surveys already. It is hoped that the success will continue in 2006 and make the reporting and evaluation process for agencies just that little bit easier.



Youth employment has been a major issue confronting the Western Australian Public Sector for a number of years.

The proportion of people under 25 in the public sector workforce dropped from 9% in 1995 to 3.5% in 2001. Youth employment objectives were introduced into the Equity and Diversity Plan for the public sector workforce 2001-2005 and through that period youth employment has increased to 5.7.

The third progress report on the Equity and Diversity Plan 2001-2005 showed that the Western Australian Public Sector had met its targets for youth employment, but was still below community levels of 12%.

With the media reporting on Western Australia's skills shortage and other trends suggesting a wave of retirements will crash over the sector in the next ten years, it is now more evident than ever that innovative strategies are needed to increase the numbers of youth entering the Western Australian Public Sector.

Both the public and private sectors have made changes to the way in which they go about recruiting young people.

Many public and private sector agencies now provide comprehensive graduate programs, which focus on training and mentoring graduates so that they are given the opportunity to learn new skills, which in turn assist in the development of their professional career.

Many universities have given employers from both sectors the opportunity to inform students of the

options available to them by providing information workshops.

Universities such as the University of Western Australia (UWA) host a number of information sessions throughout the year for private companies such as Macquarie Bank and Shell, as well as federal government departments such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to address students about graduate opportunities that are available once they have finished their university studies.

Some areas like Engineering are targeting students much earlier than their graduation year.

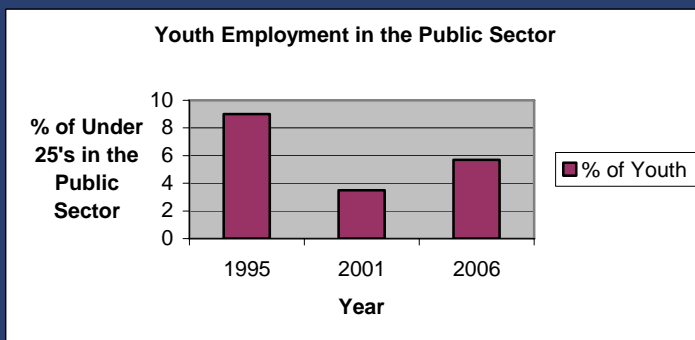
This has been a very positive move by both sectors to offer a proper graduate program.

In addition to these agencies the WA public sector is also competing against high profile international organisations for the attention of young talent.

In 2002, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) published a discussion paper on youth employment in the public sector.

<http://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/psmd/pubs/wac/youngones/index.html>

The discussion paper was based on research conducted on a group of people who were already employed in the public service as well as those looking for work, or currently studying at vocational or tertiary institutions.



Results highlighted that one of the major problems the West Australian public sector was having, was getting the message out to potential candidates. The private sector appeared to be more successful in promoting their graduate programs.

It is apparent that university students were getting greater access to information on graduate career options than those who studied at vocational institutions.

However, respondents to the research found that finding information on graduate opportunities in the public sector was much harder.

Since that time access to information has improved significantly. Currently, the Western Australian Government website provides comprehensive information on opportunities for university graduates and people seeking traineeships.

<http://jobs.wa.gov.au/graduate>

The Public Sector Management Division (PSMD) of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is strongly committed to providing a platform for other agencies to promote their graduate and traineeship programs aimed at youth.

Through PSMD, the Western Australian Public Sector has had a significant presence at university careers fairs. The aim of this has been to inform graduates of their career options once leaving university. Some agencies also regularly 'pitch' to graduates. This may be one way for the WA public sector to promote graduate opportunities.

The PSMD is working towards building closer relationships with universities (and their careers centres), TAFE's and other institutions including professional associations to build a stronger image of the public service.

Tertiary and vocational institutions usually have the services available to provide students with course and career advice.

All four public universities in Western Australia offer a range of online resources for graduates, ranging from information on career advisors to information on different agencies and their graduate programs.

One of the most impressive initiatives that has been developed by UWA is a mentoring program, which helps graduates in the transition from university to the workplace and establish relationships between industry, the university and students. Information about this program is provided online.

The PSMD has the responsibility to promote the public sector as a desirable employment option. However, it is the responsibility for agencies to assess what strategies they want to use in recruiting graduates.

Examples of comprehensive strategies developed by agencies are the graduate programs at Main Roads and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI). These were profiled at the last Diversity Forum in March.

Main Roads highlighted just how vigorously it promotes its graduate programs at universities, TAFE colleges, industry publications, career Expo's, community events and career nights.

The effort displayed by Main Roads in promoting their graduate programs has been exemplar for other agencies. It is this approach that PSMD are assisting other agencies to adopt.

The discussion paper in 2002 on youth employment highlighted other key areas, which were of concern.

The DPC's discussion paper showed that graduates who did join the public service, as part of a graduate program did not stay in the public sector for long.

Compared to the private sector, the public sector was having difficulty retaining graduates once the graduate programs had finished.

The DPI developed a strategy to prevent this problem by being able to create a graduate program that included regular job rotations so that graduates could experience different areas of the government agency they worked for. This has allowed graduates to apply their skills in different areas, while at the same time learning about how different areas operate.

As part of the program, the DPI includes personal and professional development as part of their graduate program to ensure all graduates are equipped with the skills to become future managers. The department has

ensured that employment opportunities are guaranteed for graduates on completion of the graduate program.

In the past, graduates had said the reason for leaving the public sector was that the private sector was able to offer a more permanent full-time position once the initial graduate program was completed. The DPI is just one example where permanent positions have been offered to prevent graduates from switching to the private sector.

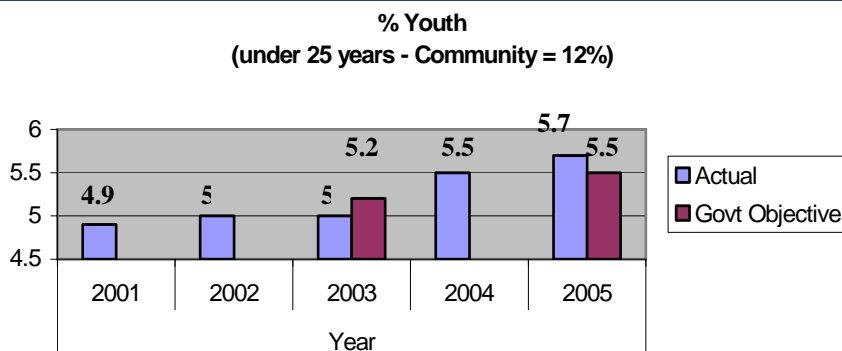
The 2002 research had showed that for young graduates, job security was very important once the graduate program had finished.

For some graduates, the public sector was a starting point in their careers. They believed that the public sector would give them great experience before switching over to the private sector.

Information, which was collated through climate surveys conducted by the OEEO, showed that job flexibility was good in the public sector. The PSMD has done considerable work on promoting work-life balance, flexible-working conditions, and improving the image of public sector in order to attract young talented people.

The strategies developed by the PSMD are proving that youth employment numbers and retention rates are improving.

The OEEO is looking forward to even greater improvements in the future.



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