

Director's Comment



Welcome to the June edition of The Key. The first half of 2007 has proven a very busy but exciting time for the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEO).

In May, the government reaffirmed its commitment to developing a public sector workforce that is representative of the West Australian community at all levels of employment. This message and the Premier's expectation of CEOs is clearly spelt out in the [Premier's Circular](#) on the Equity and Diversity Plan for the Public Sector Workforce 2006-2009.

Since agencies identified and set quantifiable objectives under the Equity and Diversity Plan they have been working to develop the strategies required to achieve these outcomes. These strategies are integrated in EEO Management Plans that public authorities are required to implement under the Equal Opportunity Act. The OEEO has been busy evaluating plans already received from agencies and have been following up with agencies yet to submit them. The OEEO's main focus this quarter is to review those plans, provide feedback to agencies and offer any assistance they may require to improve the EEO plans they have developed.

One of the areas many agencies are integrating into EEO management plans is improved employment outcomes for people with a disability. In providing resources to assist in this process, my office prepared an [e-guide](#) version of *Accessing Abilities - Recruiting and retaining people with disabilities in the Western Australian public sector*. This guide, available from the OEEO website, identifies broad strategies and specific actions agencies can implement to attract and retain people with disabilities.

Another priority area in the Equity and Diversity Plan is improving the representation of women in senior management positions. Over the last three months, the OEEO has moved from planning to implementation of its Women in Senior Management Secondment Program. The pilot program has enabled six women from various agencies across the public sector to be seconded into a variety of positions in a 'skills exchange' program.

Secondments have occurred between the following agencies:

- Landgate
- Department of Agriculture and Food
- Fire and Emergency Services Authority of WA
- Main Roads
- WA Police
- Department of Housing and Works
- Tourism WA
- Zoo Parks Authority
- Department of Consumer and Employment Protection

The program aims to give participants experience in a field or agency that will broaden their skills and experience. Participating agencies undertake to support the participant and their development goals.



The program is supported by the CEO Diversity Forum and participating agencies have shown a strong commitment and desire to see it succeed. In particular, senior HR staff have been critical to the program's launch.

With six matches made there are still several participants currently liaising with other agencies to secure a placement. The OEEO is committed to ensuring these women are placed by the end of July.

The OEEO will be hosting a networking forum for all participants and agency representatives who have been closely linked to the program. The forum will give everyone a chance to discuss their experiences of the initial stages and provide input into the development of the professional support program that will run in conjunction with the program.

The OEEO extends a huge 'thank you' to all members of the CEO Diversity Forum and co-ordinating staff for their support and commitment in establishing this important pilot program.



Recruitment guide: Are you getting it right

In 2007 the Equal Opportunity Commission launched the ten step guide *Equal Opportunity – Are you getting it right?* that aims to ensure public and private organisations have the tools to develop excellent selection processes when recruiting staff. The right person for the job is the major focus of this recruitment tool.

More than 60 percent of complaints received by the Commission each year concern employment, and while most employers want to do the right thing, there's a clear lack of knowledge in the workplace about the Act.

Equal Opportunity – Are you getting it right? ensures compliance with Equal Opportunity legislation and helps organisations avoid common pitfalls by applying best practice. It also explains equal opportunity legislation and employment, directly targeting employers and the recruitment industry.

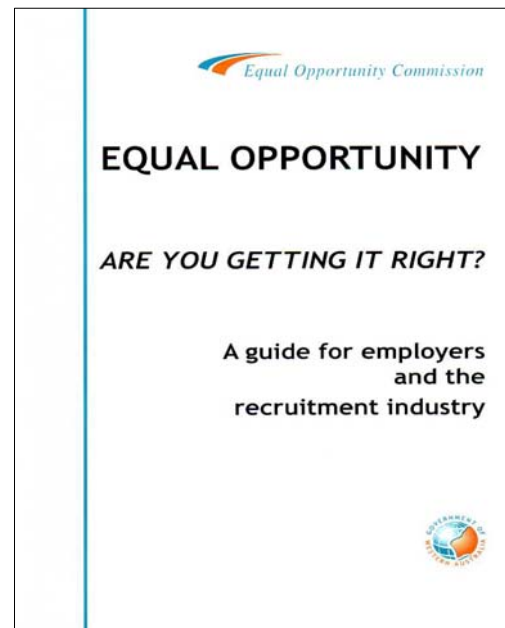
Applicants may not be able to demonstrate their true worth to an organisation if prejudices and assumptions about candidates distort the process. This guide will help potential employers minimise the risk of this happening.

This recruitment guide has been broken down into ten easy steps to ensure best practice recruitment:

1. Starting out – have a policy in place
2. The job – job description, interview panel
3. The advertisement – communication channels, application form (selection criteria)
4. The short list – testing all applicants against the selection criteria only
5. The interview – ensuring candidates have the opportunity to perform at their best
6. The test – pre-employment tests only for skills relevant to the job
7. The reference checks – contacting referees after the interview stage and asking the same questions for all candidates
8. The selection – making a final decision after consulting with panel members on information relevant to the job
9. The job offer – letter to successful and non-successful applicants and offers of feedback

While not written for the public sector, the information is consistent with compliance obligations that effect public authorities. The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEO) views this resource as an excellent means for HR practitioners to improve selection processes within their agencies. This recruitment tool can assist agencies reach their OEEO objectives through the development of better recruitment practises.

Equal Opportunity – are you getting it right? is available online through the Equal Opportunity Commission at <http://www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au/pdf/recruitment.pdf>



Supported work teams: the DVD

As a new means to promote disability employment across the public sector, the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEEO) is producing a short documentary on the disability employment strategy 'Supported Work Teams'.

The strategy has been extremely successful in several public authorities, but knowledge of how the initiative works and its benefits have yet to filter through to public sector agencies.

The Supported Work Team strategy is just one initiative the OEEEO is promoting across the public sector. With disability employment numbers falling short of targets set by the West Australian Government in the *Equity and Diversity Plan 2006-2009 (EDP2)*, there has been a need to look at new ways to increase numbers of people with disabilities working in the public sector.

For many government agencies, it is difficult to imagine how a supported work team could operate in their organisation. There have also been concerns about increased workloads for managers if they have to supervise a supported work team and potential lost productivity due to employing people with high care support needs.

With the support of South Metropolitan Personnel (SMP), the mini-documentary shatters these myths by showcasing two government organisations already involved in the program. The City of Cockburn and the University of Western Australia (UWA) share their experiences and clearly demonstrate how supported work teams operate in different environments, how they are managed and the benefits of employing people with disabilities through this program. Members of supported work teams and team coordinators from SMP also provide their perspective on the program.

The OEEEO plans to release the documentary in August to demonstrate to agencies that employing people with disabilities is a viable employment strategy and the benefits of supported work teams can add to their organisation.



Getting to know the needs of your Indigenous staff

The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEEO) has been working closely with the Department of Child Protection (DCP) to develop an internal survey that focused on Indigenous cultural awareness within their organisation.

The cultural leave survey was originally an initiative of the Department for Community Development in partnership with the OEEEO to jointly develop with the talents of DCD staff. The first step in the development of the survey was the formulation of a reference group that included representatives from the Department of Education and Training (DET), Department of Community and Employment Protection (DOCEP), the Department of the Attorney General (DOTAG), Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), Department of Housing and Works (DHW).

Following development of the survey questions, the Evaluation and Reporting team at the OEEEO developed the survey as an online tool, available to agencies via personalised access PINs.

There are several key advantages to this survey:

- It can assess cultural climate factors including staff perceptions about the level of 'cultural security' experienced by Indigenous staff.
- Improved understanding of the level of involvement Indigenous staff have with their local communities.
- Understanding the knowledge and awareness Indigenous staff have about existing work life flexibility options and leave entitlements.

Survey of Cultural Obligations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff

DCP successfully deployed the online survey in March and April this year. The Director General wrote to all Aboriginal staff highlighting the commitment of the corporate executive to improving employment outcomes for Indigenous staff and encouraging their participation. A rich data set of responses, specific questions and 'comment boxes' was received as a result, and the OEEEO is currently in the process of assisting DCP analyse the data.

By continuing to work closely with the reference group, the OEEEO is keen to deploy the online cultural leave survey in other public sector agencies. Comments and enquiries can be directed to deope@oeeo.wa.gov.au.