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Fact Sheet 1: Introduction to Harmony in the Workplace

Harmony in the Workplace is about working with Australian businesses and organisations to create a culturally diverse and inclusive workforce.

What you'll learn from the factsheets

The following series of factsheets will help leaders, managers, employees and trainers to:

- Discuss the cultural diversity in your organisation and maximise its value
- Encourage positive cultural diversity management
- Remove myths surrounding cultural diversity
- Discuss the legal parameters and frameworks that employers and staff must be aware of to create a harmonious and inclusive workplace culture.

The factsheets highlight open and hidden racial and religious discrimination that can affect the ability of an employee from a diverse background to gain employment and feel positive and connected in the

workplace. They also show how your organisation can benefit from Australia's culturally diverse workforce by making full use of the knowledge, experience and diverse skills that workers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds will bring.



Harmony in the Workplace is about promoting the benefits of an inclusive and culturally diverse Australian workforce.

Three core questions support each factsheet's content and, as an employer, should be considered in relation to your staff:

1. *How do you recognise cultural diversity and the diversity among your employees?*
2. *How do you talk about cultural diversity (if at all)?*
3. *How do you maximise the value of cultural diversity in your workplace and evaluate its effectiveness?*

3. *How do you maximise the value of cultural diversity in your workplace and evaluate its effectiveness?*

What is cultural diversity?

While there are many definitions of culture, most have the same core elements. 'Culture' describes a system of values and meanings shared by a group, which shape the behaviours expected in a particular situation and how behaviour is interpreted¹.

Groups with an identifiable culture can be large or small. While 'culture' generally refers to a large group of people, within a group there can be sub-cultures consisting of smaller groups with their own identities. Of course, unique cultures and sub-cultures can develop in any group sharing common characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, education and so on. Cultures of different groups often overlap and one person can have many different cultural influences.

Culture is therefore a relative and contextual concept². This is particularly true regarding assumptions made about culture and stereotypes, which are formed by a generalised view of culture.

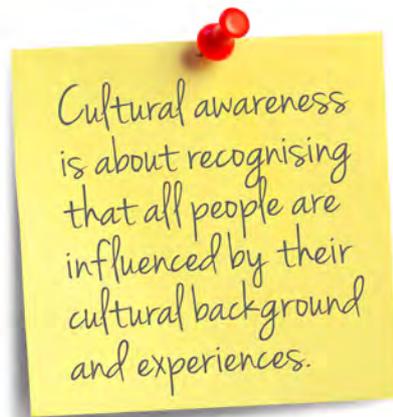
For the purposes of these factsheets, 'cultural diversity' refers to differences between cultures which are associated with race, ethnicity, national or geographical origin.

As mentioned, in the workplace, 'cultural diversity' or 'cultural identity' usually relate to ethnic or national background/origin. 'Culture' can also refer to organisational culture, which put simply means 'the way we do things here'. Again, ethnic/national culture and organisational culture overlap. Your challenge, as an employer, is to ensure that your organisational culture (and its sub-cultures) is inclusive of everyone, including CALD people.

Terms often used to discuss culture and cultural diversity in the workplace include:

- 'Ethnicity'
- 'Background'
- 'How one identifies themselves'
- 'Cultural heritage'
- 'Nationality'
- 'Country of birth/origin'

Language do's and don'ts regarding cultural diversity is covered in more detail in Factsheet 6: Becoming Confident and Competent in Talking about Workplace Diversity.



Making it work: cultural awareness in Australia

Being 'culturally aware' means recognising that everyone has a cultural background influencing and impacting how they interpret the world and perceive others around them. So, being culturally aware or 'culturally competent' doesn't mean being an expert on every culture or having an answer to every cultural question and issue. It means acknowledging that different perspectives and experiences exist as a result of everyone's different cultural background and life experiences, and that embracing this difference is the key to exploring cultural issues effectively and appropriately.

Being culturally aware and adaptable is everyone's responsibility. It's also in everyone's interest to gain an understanding of how Australian immigration mechanisms work and how they impact on a person's life experience. While some immigrants undergo a

relatively easy transition, many experience challenges in adjusting to life in a new country.

With these considerations in mind, our factsheets present an overview of the key themes and issues regarding cultural diversity in Australian workplaces, including tips and suggestions on how to enhance the benefits of cultural diversity in your organisation.

About the contributors

We would like to acknowledge the contributions made by participant organisations and the Harmony in the Workplace Project Steering Committee who provided substantive insights and guided the development of resources. The Project Steering Committee included:

- Mr Pino Migliorino (FECCA Chair) - *Project Steering Committee Chair*
- Professor Santina Bertone (Swinburne University of Technology)
- Ms Katriina Tahka (Diversity Council of Australia)
- Ms Sandra Jeffery (Multicultural and Settlement Policy Branch, DIAC)
- Dr Loucas Nicolaou (FECCA CEO)
- Ms Tanya von Ahlefeldt (FECCA Policy Officer) - *Project Coordinator and Lead Author.*

FECCA is grateful for the knowledge and guidance committed by the above people.

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- ¹ Peoples, J and Bailey, G. 2012. *Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, Ninth Edition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- ² Hong, Y, Benet-Martinez, V, Chiu C, and Morris, M. 2003. 'Boundaries of Cultural Influence: Constructive Activation as a Mechanism for Cultural Differences in Social Perception'. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 34(4): 453-464.



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Fact Sheet 2: The Australian Workforce (The Background)

Australia has enjoyed a sustained period of economic growth and productivity over the past decade, with its highly educated, competitive and diverse workforce.

This factsheet will help employers and their staff to explore the cultural diversity in their organisation to strengthen productivity, innovation and growth in Australian workplaces.

How diverse is Australia's workforce?

Australia's workforce is astoundingly diverse, comprising people of different cultural backgrounds, religions, ages, genders, abilities and lifestyles. In 2011, Australia had a population of 21.5 million people,

46% of which were either born overseas or had at least one overseas-born parent¹. This incredible diversity is reflected in Australia's workforce, with 13% of workers being born in non-English speaking (NES) countries

and 23% born overseas². So, we have a workforce with a vast range of individual experiences, capabilities and perspectives waiting to be used.

Embracing a multicultural workforce

Australia's workforce has been progressively shaped and enhanced by the contributions of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. In fact, population policy is now a key consideration in economic and employment policy in Australia³.

There's good reason for this. Within Australia's economic and commercial history, strong evidence points to the effectiveness of a culturally diverse

workforce. Australia's post-war immigration boom had a significant and positive impact on the economy and reshaped the nature of Australia's workforce by making use of new skills and expanding our commercial and business interests. Removing restrictive immigration policies in the 1970s further opened up Australia's economy and provided new opportunities and markets.

Today, with global financial challenges, increasing labour demands and market competitiveness, Australia's greatest opportunity is in making the best use of the skills and resources of our culturally diverse workforce to benefit employers and staff. Of course, one of our greatest challenges is to effectively manage and recognise cultural diversity to maximise its value and fully enjoy its benefits.

Australia's ageing population

Current demographic trends show the growing significance of Australia's ageing population to our future workforce. The Australian Bureau of Statistics projects that between 2011 and 2020, the number of people aged 50 years and over will increase by more than 22%⁴.

While Australians are remaining in the workforce for longer, low rates of population growth mean the number of younger workers entering the labour market is falling⁵. So, competition for skilled staff in all industries and sectors is likely to intensify, leading to future acute labour and skills shortages. The need to make the best use of immigrant workers' skills is critical.

The Australian workforce in the Asian Century

The commercial and business opportunities presented to Australia in the context of the Asian Century are compelling. Three of Australia's five largest trading partners – China, Japan and the Republic of Korea – are in Asia and, together with their regional neighbours, account for almost half of Australia's total international



trade. It's estimated that over \$275 billion will be injected into Australia's economy by forging closer ties with our regional neighbours, among them the economic giants, China and India⁶.

Australia has already benefitted substantially from its trade and business ties with Asian partners. The challenge now, in the context of the Asian Century, is maintaining these vital economic links in a climate of increased global and regional competition. To nurture and maintain positive relations with their Asian counterparts, Australian businesses must

be innovative and ensure that the skills and resources inherent to our diverse workforce are fully used.

Attracting employees who understand how to do business in Asia and how to build relationships and work effectively in the new and challenging economic environment is an increasing priority for many businesses. So, too, is developing a workforce of employees with diverse cultural and language knowledge and skills, to secure future business and trade success within Asia and boost Australia's competitive edge in international markets.

Tips for managing a culturally diverse workforce

While the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce are known, the unique skills, knowledge and expertise that CALD workers bring are not yet sufficiently acknowledged, promoted or used in Australian workplaces. People of CALD backgrounds continue to face barriers when seeking employment, have limited recognition of overseas skills and qualifications,

and face discrimination, racism and intolerance. As an employer, adopting any of the effective diversity management strategies below will help to address these barriers and enable you to use and maximise the benefits of your diverse workforce:

- Implementing policies and practices to remove discrimination and workplace bullying
- Providing cross-cultural awareness training opportunities for all staff to enhance their knowledge and expertise, including language and communication skills
- Supporting the national 'Racism. It Stops With Me.' campaign delivering a clear message that your organisation doesn't tolerate racism in the workplace. For more information, please visit: www.itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au

References

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Census of Population and Housing*. 2011.

² Ibid.

³ Australian Government Productivity Commission (PC), 2006. *Economic Impacts of Migration and Population Growth*. Accessed 1 March 2013. Available at: http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/9438/migrationandpopulation.pdf

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011.

⁵ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2011. *Ageing & the Barriers to Mature Age Labour Force Participation in Australia*. Accessed 1 March 2013. Available at: <http://foi.deewr.gov.au/documents/ageing-and-barriers-labour-force-participation-australia>

⁶ Asialink, 2012. *Developing an Asia Capable Workforce*. Accessed 1 March 2013. Available at: http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/619793/Developing_an_Asia_Capable_Workforce.pdf



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Fact Sheet 3: What is Diversity in the Workplace?

Diversity is relevant to everyone, as each person is shaped by experiences and practices related to their cultural identity. So, talking about diversity is not something that concerns some and not others – it's everyone's business and impacts us all.

This factsheet discusses what diversity is and how it's relevant to your organisation and its employees.

What does cultural diversity mean for your organisation? How do you identify it?

Recognising cultural diversity in your workforce is the first step in creating a positive workplace culture that's inclusive and responsive to all employees' needs. Ignoring cultural diversity can lead to an exclusionary environment where employees feel unable or unwilling to talk freely about their views and opinions. This will affect your ability to encourage creativity and innovation.



Organisations need to recognise and accommodate the wide array of cultural factors that shape their workforce.

A successful organisation seeks to understand and build on cultural diversity for its own good and that of its employees.

To develop a positive workplace atmosphere that embraces cultural diversity you could collect information about your workforce to learn what your organisation's cultural diversity actually looks like. This can be done formally, via surveys, or informally through regular conversations and discussions to determine the following:

- Self-described ethnic or linguistic identity
- Age

- Gender
- Country of birth and length of time in Australia
- Training opportunities received or sought
- Employees' desire to learn about cultural groups and your organisation's diversity
- Experiences and types of discrimination and exclusion
- Job satisfaction – most and least favourite aspects of your organisation, their role, etc.
- Satisfaction with career progression and professional development opportunities
- Opinions on the inclusiveness of your workplace culture and whether they feel comfortable with cultural diversity and how it's reflected in the organisation.

By collecting this information you can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural diversity in your workplace and how to make best use of it. Your employees can also have the opportunity to share their culture with others in an inclusive working environment.

Be mindful of privacy...

It's not against Australian privacy laws to collect information about your employees' cultural and linguistic background, as long as they know why it's being collected and how it's going to be used and stored. You will risk violating privacy laws if you collect information without your employees' consent or if you use it in an unauthorized or inappropriate manner.

For more information about Australian privacy laws, please visit www.privacy.gov.au/law.

Recognising cultural diversity in the workplace

Some workers may have specific cultural needs or requirements that should be acknowledged so they feel comfortable, well supported and respected in their working environment. This will help to raise their productivity and motivation to fully engage with, and contribute to, your organisation. You can acknowledge the cultural diversity of your workforce in the following areas:

- **Clothing and dress** – some cultures wear specific items of clothing at all times, such as headscarves or turbans. Employees are entitled to wear religious dress at work unless it creates a safety hazard. If items of clothing cover the face, you can ask an employee to show their face for reasonable identification purposes.
- **Religious practices** – some religions require time during the workday for prayer or time off to observe religious events.
- **Social values** – perspectives on issues in society such as politics, sexual behaviour and orientation, work ethics, wealth and career ambitions vary between cultures.
- **Customs** – some cultures can or can't have specific foods and drinks or may have rules about how food is prepared.
- **Family obligations** – some cultures prioritise family commitments that may, at times, conflict with work commitments.
- **Non-verbal behaviour** – use of eye contact, facial expressions, hand gestures and how people interpret them vary between cultures.

Acknowledging how these factors shape the nature of your workforce is vital in building an inclusive work environment.

Blending cultural diversity within your activities

Successfully managing a culturally diverse workforce requires ongoing commitment. This shouldn't be limited to cultural competency training. A more comprehensive strategy should be developed to

encourage a culture of diversity across all areas and functions of your organisation. This could include:

- Internal policies, programs and systems that acknowledge and refer to cultural diversity
- Policies and structures dealing with workplace discrimination and racism
- Staff training, including cultural competency training
- Communications, such as newsletters and staff updates, reporting on cultural diversity in your organisation
- Events, celebrations, activities, staff development exercises and initiatives that acknowledge and celebrate cultural diversity.

A diversity strategy based on the above areas will help you to effectively manage a culturally diverse workforce.

A word of caution...

It's very important that information collected on cultural diversity in your organisation isn't used to stereotype staff. This may otherwise result in:

- Staff not wanting their ethnicity or cultural background to be highlighted and becoming unwilling to engage in discussion or activities around cultural diversity in your workplace
- Creating misleading assumptions about beliefs, customs and behaviours that are difficult to remove.

Most importantly, remember that gathering cultural knowledge is a good way to positively engage your employees and not a means to gauge or predict people's behaviour in your workplace.



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Fact Sheet 4: Recruiting, Progressing and Retaining a Culturally Diverse Workforce

Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce is the best way to maximise cultural diversity for the good of your organisation.

This factsheet shows you how to improve the recruitment process for prospective culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) employees, retain a diverse workforce and create opportunities for staff progression.

1. Identifying CALD community groups to target

Using statistics and demographic information will help you decide which groups you want to target. For instance, your workforce may need to be more representative of the CALD groups that it works most closely with now or would like to engage with in the future.

2. Ensuring that your workplace can support employees from diverse cultural backgrounds

This might include looking at the following:

- Asking whether your organisation reflects cultural diversity in its policies and procedures, code of conduct, mission and principles, to ensure that language is appropriate and content reflective of diversity principles.
- Consider developing your own 'principles of diversity' along the lines of the following statements:

"Cultural diversity is the accepted norm of this organisation and its workforce. Cultural diversity refers to language used, cultural background, race, ethnicity, national origin and religion. Cultural diversity encompasses all staff and their unique experiences and skills."

"All staff benefit from developing their understanding of different cultures and perspectives, and their capacities for intercultural sensitivity and adaptation, to enable them to live and work as professionals in a diverse and increasingly globalised society."

3. Employing a workplace diversity champion, whose role would involve:

- Defining how diversity can enhance your organisation's business performance
- Promoting the importance of cultural diversity through ongoing advocacy, engagement and encouragement
- Actively promoting the benefits of diversity, both for your organisation and its employees
- Understanding the workplace diversity needs of staff
- Helping and encouraging all staff to be aware of workplace diversity issues
- Advocating the inclusion of equity and diversity issues on strategic planning agendas
- Helping to integrate workplace diversity issues in human resource policies and practices
- Developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating your workplace diversity program
- Monitoring your compliance with relevant laws and regulations, particularly around discrimination
- Keeping cultural diversity matters on the agenda by informing senior executives about

diversity issues and the effectiveness of your organisation's workplace diversity program.

4. Providing cultural competency training

This should bring all employees up to speed on your organisation's policies, procedures and expectations regarding cultural diversity.

5. Communicating and connecting with people and organisations in the CALD sector

This may involve consulting state and territory bodies, such as Ethnic Communities' Councils (ECC), Multicultural Communities' Councils (MCC), Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) or other organisations providing services to CALD Australians. This will help you learn more about multiculturalism in Australia, the cultural diversity of Australia's workforce, challenges facing people



Job applications should be simple and clearly worded to encourage a diverse pool of applicants

from CALD backgrounds (particularly regarding employment), and strategies to address and respond to the above factors via a multicultural action plan or similar document.

6. Developing job descriptions reflecting and emphasising the need for cultural competence requirements

It's important that job descriptions are not overly complex. They should use appropriate selection criteria to encourage a diverse pool of applicants and demonstrate your commitment to cultural diversity and principles of access and equity, as relevant to CALD employees.

7. Effectively promoting and advertising available positions to attract the best applicants

Developing a broad communication and distribution network is the most effective way to attract a broad pool of applicants when recruiting. This involves

appealing to all possible communication channels, beyond the mainstream. Creating a contact, email or mailing list that includes ethno-specific and multicultural organisations will enable you to tap into a huge pool of strong candidates that may otherwise be overlooked. For more details on ethno-specific services, please visit the FECCA website at www.fecca.org.au.

8. Taking a culturally-competent approach to interviewing

As the front-line in recruiting new staff, your interview panel can greatly influence the face of your future workforce. To ensure that your organisation recruits the best person for the job, panel members must be on board with principles of cultural diversity and non-discrimination, reflecting these during interviews with potential new staff.

When choosing your interview panel, consider the following:

- Ensure the selection panel reflects the diversity of your organisation's clients and the community in which it operates.
- Ensure selection panel members are aware of, and preferably have trained in, culturally-competent recruitment and selection processes. They must be mindful of their roles and responsibilities in selecting new staff in line with your cultural diversity principles and policies.
- Be aware of how easily miscommunication can occur in an inter-cultural employment interview and how this may cause an interviewer to misjudge the capabilities and experience of a candidate.

During job interviews in Australia, focus is often placed not so much on actual job competency, but whether a candidate has the verbal and interactive skills to effectively engage with, and meet the expectations of, the panel. So, by being mindful of cultural differences and that cultural interpretations of what an interview will be like may vary among participants, you're more likely to select the best person for the job.

It's also important for interview questions to reflect your organisation's commitment to cultural diversity. You can ensure this by:

- Developing a question set that, as well as determining suitability for the role, identifies a candidate's understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity principles
- Identifying the cultural backgrounds of potential staff
- Providing practical tools for the interview process, such as translating and interpreting services, if necessary and appropriate
- Explaining key terms such as 'evidence' and 'criteria' so the candidate understands how these will be used and interpreted (remembering that the word 'criteria' might not be familiar to some applicants)
- Ensuring interview questions effectively identify, or give candidates an opportunity

to comfortably discuss, previous work history. Prior recognition of a migrant's non-Australian work experience is still a major hurdle to CALD employment.

Also, if employees are offered a position based on their diversity skills

(for example, if they speak a particular language), the essential selection criteria needs to include an exemption.

Tips for retaining a diverse, dynamic and innovative workforce

The following tips can help you retain your workforce, benefitting both your organisation and its employees:

- **Making employees feel comfortable by developing and using an induction program.** This will give staff a clear understanding of your organisation, its policies and principles

(including its commitment to cultural diversity), and core functions.

- **Providing training and professional development opportunities.** Cultural competency training is a good starting point, but it's also important to provide other opportunities for staff to up-skill and be able to further contribute to your organisation. Training also opens up future career progression opportunities, which is a positive incentive for staff retention.
- **Ensuring open communication channels.** Workplaces that are too hierarchical and inflexible, with outdated practices and management styles, discourage two-way communication and can alienate staff. Opening communication channels makes staff feel secure in the knowledge that their opinions are valued and any questions or concerns they have will be listened and responded to.

Tips for creating an inclusive working environment

- Learning about and supporting cultural and religious customs.
- Celebrating cultural and religious dates, where appropriate (see [DIAC's Calendar of Cultural and Religious Dates](#)).
- Allowing staff to receive time off to celebrate cultural and religious dates.
- Providing a quiet place for prayer or meditation.
- Networking with multicultural and community organisations to develop and implement best practice models to effectively embrace and respond to cultural diversity.



A word of caution...

Many job seekers from CALD backgrounds are disadvantaged in recruitment processes as a result of overt or explicit racial prejudice and bias. This often appears as discrimination based on an applicant's name.

A recent study from the Australian National University¹ found that job applicants with 'non-Anglo' sounding names had to submit more resumes to be offered an interview. For example, someone with a Chinese-sounding name typically needs to submit 68 per cent more applications than a person with an Anglo-sounding name to land an interview. Those with a Middle Eastern-sounding name must submit 64 per cent more applications, an Indigenous person 35 per cent more and an Italian person 12 per cent more².

To avoid workplace discrimination, it's very important to be aware of the discrimination that can occur based on an applicant's name or perceived cultural background. To overcome this, you could use an anonymous shortlisting process, where candidates are more likely to be shortlisted based on skills, qualifications or experiences, rather than missing out because of their cultural identity and name.

References

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² Australian National University (ANU). 2009. 'Minorities find it harder to get jobs'. Accessed 7 June 2013. Available at: <http://news.anu.edu.au/2009/06/17/minorities-find-it-harder-to-get-jobs/>



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Fact Sheet 5: Workplace Discrimination and Legal Frameworks

Embracing cultural diversity and nurturing a fair and inclusive workplace culture is positive for your organisation and its employees, and is also the most effective way to avoid workplace discrimination and unlawful behaviour.

Lawsuits are expensive and, beyond the immediate financial costs, they reduce staff productivity, wellbeing and morale. They also create reputational and brand damage. So it's vital that employers and staff are acutely aware of the legal parameters concerning workplace discrimination and that proactive strategies are used to avoid workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination.



Promoting and openly embracing cultural diversity is the best way to avoid workplace discrimination and unlawful behaviour.

What is workplace discrimination?

Under Federal and State legislation, unlawful discrimination occurs when someone, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group as a result of:

- Race, nationality or ethnic origin
- Gender, pregnancy or marital status
- Age
- Disability
- Religion
- Trade union activity
- Any other characteristic specified under anti-discrimination or human rights legislation.

Workplace discrimination can occur:

- During the recruitment process

- When determining employment contract terms, conditions and benefits
- During professional development and training opportunities, particularly who receives opportunities and what is offered
- During employee selection for transfer, promotion, retrenchment or dismissal
- When assessing performance and making pay decisions.

The following examples demonstrate implicit and explicit workplace discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity:

- Recruiting staff solely on their ethnicity.
- Knowingly or subconsciously selecting candidates that don't appear to be from a culturally or linguistically diverse (CALD) background.
- Declaring a job applicant unsuccessful on the basis that "they won't fit in".
- Making assumptions about certain ethnic groups having or lacking particular skills.
- Failing to deal with alleged cases of racial discrimination in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Failing to award CALD employees with promotions and career progression opportunities, despite meeting all performance expectations.
- Having a workplace culture that makes CALD employees feel uncomfortable or excluded.
- Encouraging or endorsing jokes based on race.
- Earmarking CALD employees for early departure in a redundancy exercise.
- Dismissing or indiscriminately targeting a worker due to his/her English speaking abilities.

For more information, visit the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) website:
<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/>.

Who deals with workplace discrimination?

Australian legislation dealing with workplace discrimination and harassment includes:

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act (1986)
- Racial Discrimination Act (1975)
- Sex Discrimination Act (1984)
- Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
- Age Discrimination Act (2004).



Ultimately, everyone is responsible for behaving lawfully and appropriately to avoid engaging in, or contributing, to workplace discrimination.

As an employer, you can be held liable for the actions of your workers, so you need to protect your staff from discrimination and sexual harassment and vilification. This is called 'vicarious liability' and means that if a complaint is made against a worker in an organisation, both the worker and the employer can be held liable.

Tips to avoid workplace discrimination

Avoiding discrimination is everyone's responsibility. The following tips for employers and staff will help you to embrace cultural diversity and avoid workplace discrimination:

- Implementing a workplace anti-discrimination policy, ensuring staff are well aware of their rights and responsibilities. If workplace discrimination occurs, having an anti-discrimination policy clearly shows that bullying, harassment or racism are not

tolerated by the organisation and its employees. Examples of specific policies may include an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan, a Multicultural Action Plan or an Anti-Racism Policy. (For information on how to access examples of these documents see *Factsheet 10: Where to From Here?*).

- Establishing a complaints system or set of procedures to respond to workplace discrimination in a timely and appropriate fashion. Also ensuring staff are aware of external complaints mechanisms available.
- Engaging in activities, training and discussions that create a positive and inclusive working environment to avoid cases of workplace discrimination. Prevention is the best cure.
- Supporting the national 'Racism. It Stops With Me.' campaign to send a clear message that your organisation doesn't tolerate racism in the workplace. For more information, please visit www.itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au.

How to Report Workplace Discrimination

If an employee believes he/she has been the subject of workplace or racial discrimination, they should contact the Fair Work Ombudsman to discuss the situation and seek help in making an unlawful workplace discrimination complaint.

For further details, please visit www.fairwork.gov.au or the call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94.

The Australian Human Rights Commission can also investigate and resolve complaints of workplace discrimination, harassment and bullying based on a person's race, including colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, immigrant status and racial hatred.

More information about making a complaint is available at www.humanrights.gov.au or by calling 1300 656 419 or (02) 9284 9888.



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Fact Sheet 6: **Becoming Confident and Competent in Talking about Workplace Diversity**

Developing a confident and culturally competent workforce that encourages open discussions about diversity may seem daunting.

Just remember that diversity is inherent in all organisations, given the different experiences and backgrounds of employees. So, while discussing diversity won't necessarily be a 'new' concept for your employees, they may need encouragement to know

that it's acceptable to talk about it at work. Also, most employees, when encouraged correctly, will eagerly embrace the full benefits of a workplace that supports and promotes their diversity, so won't need too much convincing to make talking openly about it the norm.



It's very important not to adopt a 'colour blind' approach where we deny difference and pretend it doesn't exist.

The strategies presented in this factsheet will help you to develop a confident and competent attitude towards embracing cultural diversity.

Talking about diversity

For a long time, it's been standard practice for most workplaces to encourage staff to always treat everyone 'equally' or the 'same' or risk engaging in potentially discriminatory behavior. This doesn't often happen. (Please see Factsheet 3 on discriminatory behavior). Staff often lack opportunities to openly talk about diversity in the workplace, forcing them to be cautious rather than openly embrace the diversity that distinguishes and benefits them and their colleagues.

It's extremely important to explain to your staff that it's not discriminatory to talk to people about their cultural identity and background. On the contrary, most people enjoy telling you about their ancestry and the experiences and perspectives they have as a result of their background.

Avoiding a 'colour blind' approach

When talking about diversity, it's very important not to adopt a 'colour blind' approach where we deny difference and pretend it doesn't exist. This assumes that 'if individuals and institutions don't even notice race, they can't be accused of acting in a biased or discriminatory way'. Research shows that colour blind policies don't work. Instead they help to perpetuate the status quo, without bringing positive change for an organisation and its employees. After all, we're all different and demonstrate this in many ways through gender, education, disability, marital status, parenthood status, sexuality, language and culture. Talking openly about this diversity is the first step in creating a positive and inclusive workplace that benefits your organisation and its employees.

Senior managers must lead by example, encouraging conversations about cultural diversity and showing their ease in talking about it. Managers are the ultimate mentors for staff: employees look to them and other leaders to set the example of how to act in a professional environment. Supervisors also set the standard for staff members and must always behave in a way that shows how they embrace cultural differences. For example, they could share stories about their background and identity, helping others to

open up and share their own stories. Of course, this can only be done in an environment that values and truly celebrates diversity.

Getting the conversation going

You can use the themes below as a guide to help you start discussions about cultural diversity in your workplace. They go beyond the standard and objective

questions usually asked about culture, regarding language and country of birth. Keep in mind that speaking informally (without placing the spotlight on one person) is usually the most effective way to put people at ease and encourage comfortable and relaxed discussions.



Speaking informally is often the best way to have discussions about cultural diversity.

Basic themes/conversation openers:

- Food
- Languages
- Family, partners and children
- Hobbies/leisure time spent away from work
- Clothing and dress styles
- Travel.

More complex themes:

- Perceptions of individual/community
- Perceptions of time – how important/influential time is as a guide and how deadlines are perceived
- Personal space and how this is understood in an office environment
- Perceptions of public versus private (inappropriate behaviour for a public (work) space)
- Understandings regarding hierarchy and respect
- Approaches to learning – asking questions, researching, group discussions, etc.
- Sense of humour – what's funny, what's offensive
- Conversational approach – talking openly, keeping opinions private and how respect relates to this
- Career aspirations and expectations.

Celebrating Harmony Day - Everyone Belongs

Each year, on 21 March Australia's cultural diversity is celebrated, recognising both the traditional owners of this land and those who have come to Australia from the world over. Harmony Day coincides with the United Nations' *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*.

Many organisations around Australia celebrate Harmony Day by organising a morning or afternoon tea and inviting employees to share in preparing and enjoying cultural meals. This is a great way for employees to become aware of their organisation's cultural diversity and learn more about their colleagues and team members.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) formally coordinates Harmony Day celebrations each year and provides free Harmony Day promotional material to individuals and organisations who register events online.

For more details and ideas for celebrating Harmony Day in your workplace, please visit: www.harmony.gov.au.

HARMONY DAY

Developing and maintaining a confident and culturally competent workforce

Once you have a greater understanding of your employees and their cultural background, you'll have the confidence to talk openly about this diversity. It will benefit your organisation, by enabling you to take full advantage of diversity (see Factsheets 8 and 9), and your employees by removing cultural myths and stereotypes (See Factsheet 7) and encouraging a harmonious and inclusive workplace.

The following strategies will help you to build confidence around cultural diversity:

- Celebrating and encouraging cultural events such as Harmony Day (visit the DIAC website for more information). Informal interactions between staff at

these events encourages discussion about cultural diversity and people's backgrounds, making it easier for them to talk about it at work on a daily basis.

- Organising cultural competency training for staff to ensure everyone is 'on the same page' about your organisation's expectations about diversity and how staff must be committed to ensuring it is the accepted and practised norm.
- Developing staff capacity and skills in conflict management, explaining the difference between resolving and eliminating conflict, and offering strategies to avoid situations where resolution is needed.
- Having regular formal and informal staff discussions to identify and address issues before they escalate or significantly damage the employees involved and your organisation. Offering communication skills training to increase confidence in this area is also a good solution.

Language: do's and don'ts

The table on the following page will help you to use appropriate language when talking about cultural diversity.

As a general rule, workplaces should ban any reference to racial slurs or terms that have derogatory and discriminatory connotations. This sort of language is not only unacceptable, but also puts a workplace at risk of dealing with accusations and receiving penalties resulting from racial vilification.

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¹Mikulak, A. 2012. 'Colour Blind' Policies Could Make Diversity Harder to Achieve'. Accessed 7 June 2013. Available at: <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/color-blind-policies-could-make-diversity-harder-to-achieve.html>

Term	Explanation	Use or Avoid?
'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD)	There's been an increasing trend to use CALD as a descriptor for individuals or groups of individuals who come from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.	This is broadly accepted as appropriate vocabulary and is used in Government policy and documents. Remember that the 'diverse' in CALD assumes a point of difference, which can be divisive. So, if it's used to describe a person, they would come from a 'CALD background'. The term could also be used to describe a workforce or organisation that's culturally and linguistically diverse.
'Migrant'/'Immigrant'	These terms are used to describe people who have come to Australia from English-speaking countries (e.g. England, Canada, New Zealand) and non-English-speaking countries (e.g. China, Italy, India).	Appropriate, but provided it's used in the correct context – in reference to someone who has gone through the process of migration and has immigrated to Australia from another country.
'Ethnic'	This typically refers to a person or group's 'ethnicity' or 'ethnic background', which may be misconceived as being the same as their country of origin or cultural background.	Not recommended. It's an illogical term with negative and potentially discriminatory connotations (referring to someone as an 'ethnic' is not acceptable, given its assumptions and stereotypes, and connotations between the term and other racial slurs such as 'wog', 'chink' and other discriminatory labels). It's also incorrect to use when referring to people who have immigrated to Australia, as all Australians have their own ethnicity (see Factsheet 7: Common Myths and Misperceptions About Cultural Diversity).
Country of origin identifier - 'Italian', 'Chinese', etc.	Description based on a person's perceived or actual country of origin.	Be careful when using a country of origin descriptor as it may be imprecise and not reflect how a person sees his/her ethnicity. It's more imprecise when referring to a person who is a second-generation immigrant who was born in Australia, but identifies with a particular cultural background. Its preferred use is, as demonstrated, by designating background as an adjective – e.g. "person/employee from an Italian background" or "Italian Australian".
'Multicultural'	A term describing a variety of cultures that shape a person or group (e.g. a 'multicultural organisation' that has a culturally diverse workforce).	This is far more inclusive and relevant to use when describing a group (i.e. a workplace or organisation) or a group of workers from a diverse background. The term shouldn't be used to describe a person – e.g. "he is multicultural".
'Ethnicity' or 'ancestry'	This refers to a person's cultural background, including nationality, language, religion, heritage etc.	Be careful when using these terms, as they may be imprecise and not reflect how a person sees his/her ethnicity or ancestry. They're more appropriate for self-identification purposes, provided they're clearly understood.



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Fact Sheet 7: Myths and Misperceptions about Cultural Diversity

Multiculturalism, with some peaks and troughs, has been a part of Australian life and national policy for decades. Despite this, misconceptions and stereotypes around cultural diversity still occur within the community and in workplaces.

To minimise the risk posed by such myths and stereotypes, this 'myth-busting' factsheet names and debunks many examples faced by consultants, educators and researchers in Australian workplaces. It aims to:

- Lay these myths/stereotypes open for scrutiny
- Provide alternative viewpoints
- Empower people to combat myths/stereotypes
- Minimise potentially harmful consequences, for example to people's jobs and careers
- Promote an environment where employees can thrive and achieve their best.

So it's very useful information for managers, supervisors, employees, educators and government officials.

good reasons to ensure their influence is neutralised and limited.

By distorting and simplifying reality, stereotypes are unhelpful in addressing daily situations when managing cultural diversity at work. They can also be very harmful to your workers' wellbeing.

Five types of myths uncovered and explained

The myths and stereotypes we address here are not necessarily exhaustive. Many are linked and overlap. Several are rooted in historical events (such as past immigration patterns) that have now changed. Others stem from embedded attitudes, which may be taken as given or unchallenged. Yet others reflect a simple understanding of structural factors (such as merit-based selection processes).

So, for easy reference and understanding, the myths are grouped under five topic areas:

- Language and culture
- Education and skills
- Immigrants and gender
- Attitudes
- Structural.

Similar myths have been grouped together, where possible, to allow for easy interpretation.

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Factsheet 7



Why it's important to debunk the myths

The prevalence of myths and stereotypes around racial and cultural difference is well recognised and documented¹. They've been discussed for many years, both in Australia and overseas. While stereotypes don't automatically lead to racism and prejudice, there are

Topic 1: Language and Culture

Myth 1: Aussies don't have a culture

All Australian citizens are 'Aussies'. However, when people refer to 'Aussies' they commonly mean the majority group of Anglo-Celtic Australians who migrated from the British Isles and who have lived in Australia for two or more generations. The myth suggests that these Aussies lack an identifiable culture. By contrast, other immigrant groups from Europe, Asia, Africa etc. are seen to have stronger 'cultures'. The

oldest cultures in Australia are indigenous cultures, but these are often overlooked.

It doesn't take much to debunk this myth. Think of Edna Everage, pavlova, fish and chips, Australian Rules football, the summer barbecue, drinks after work, the Eureka flag and Waltzing Matilda. The

commitment of most Australians to a 'fair go for all' and egalitarianism are also relevant. The majority Aussie culture is handed down through schools, via the media and within the family and neighbourhood. With it comes a way of speaking – the broad Aussie accent and unique 'lingo' satirised so well in Nino Culotto's 'They're a Weird Mob'². These clear and strong markers of the majority Australian culture are often taken for granted. To recent immigrants and refugees, working or seeking work in Australia, this culture may seem quite different and alien.

Myth 2: Many immigrants have trouble 'fitting in' to the workplace

The way this myth is expressed assumes there is a dominant culture in the workplace that immigrants may not be comfortable with. If this is the case, it may be time to analyse and question that culture. If it excludes some, reasonable adjustments can be made to make a culture more inclusive. For example, allowing Muslims time for prayers, paying attention to catering at social events and recognising cultural and religious obligations of employees, as well as ensuring the language used in policies is inclusive.

Myth 3: Most immigrants come from under-privileged backgrounds

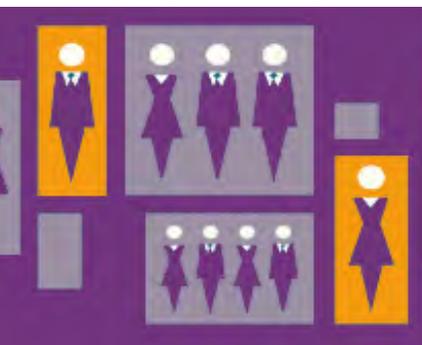
This myth may stem from Australia's past policy of admitting low skilled workers from less affluent regions. However, the majority of recent immigrants to Australia are highly skilled. Their countries of origin may be less developed, but personal economic backgrounds vary significantly. Immigrants today tend to have more sophisticated economic reasons for emigrating (such as study abroad, international transfers or professional development). Others give non-economic reasons for emigrating such as health, lifestyle, adventure, to escape war and conflict, and to live free of religious and political discrimination. In qualitative research, immigrants often say they emigrated to give their children a better education and opportunities even though they were economically comfortable.

Myth 4: Aussies can't pronounce long names

Long names can occur in any culture. This myth refers to unfamiliar names that many Australians may not have heard, such as those from South Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Fortunately, we become used to names once we've heard or seen them a number of times. Southern European names used to be thought exotic and unfamiliar, but most Australians now cope quite well with them. The danger is that resistance to new or longer names can cause caution in employing people from unfamiliar backgrounds. A significant and well-respected body of research documents the prevalence of discrimination in job recruitment on the basis of names (see Fact Sheet 5, Workplace Discrimination and Legal Frameworks). Debunking this myth will be important in addressing discrimination in this area.

Myth 5: Most immigrants have English language problems

Skilled immigrants to Australia must meet a high level of English language proficiency before they can enter the country. So, this myth probably refers to earlier immigration policies that allowed less fluent English speakers to enter. The perception of English language problems often rests on issues other than proficiency – such as accent, idiom and style of speaking. So, people are really referring to the way that English is spoken rather than the actual level of proficiency. This links back to culture and the ability to understand and



embrace cultural diversity and, with it, different styles of expression. The more open we are to diversity, the easier it is to communicate.

Topic 2: Education and Skills

Myth 6: Qualifications gained overseas are generally inferior

State and Territory Overseas Qualifications Units (OQUs) provide a free assessment service to permanent residents for overseas qualifications, except in NSW where it's provided by NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition). Trades Recognition Australia also offers assessments of equivalence in trade qualifications. So it's NOT valid to assume that qualifications earned overseas are not comparable to Australian qualifications, as, in many cases, they are. If you incorrectly make this assumption, you'll potentially miss out on valuable skills that may be required in the workplace.

Myth 7: The majority of immigrants are unskilled

Again, this perception may be based on an outdated understanding of the Australian immigration program, which now strongly favours skilled immigrant entry. The intake of less skilled immigrants occurred in post-war years when they were needed to fill lower skilled jobs in industries such as manufacturing, transport and infrastructure.

Myth 8: Overseas experience is not relevant in Australia

This depends on the occupation. Some areas, such as law and accounting, have a higher demand for local knowledge than others, due to legislation and regulations. However, some content is transferrable in these occupations and in others, such as IT and nursing, there may be few major differences. As highly skilled workers, immigrants could readily adapt to local conditions by taking bridging courses or undertaking professional development on the job. Professional accreditation standards are a separate matter. For example, in medicine immigrants must meet the standards set by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) by successfully completing AMC exams.

Topic 3: Immigrants and Gender

Myth 9: We need to fix the gender problem first

This argument implies that, as women make up half the population and have not achieved equal employment or parity of outcomes with men, limited resources should be used to support them. This is a myth for many reasons. First, the equity issue is an ongoing one and unlikely to be solved in one lifetime. Fixing the gender problem first may lead to unacceptable delays in recognising the other diversity issues in the workforce, resulting in disharmony,



inequality, poorer health outcomes and lower economic efficiency. Also, gender and culture are not separate categories. Many women in Australia come from culturally diverse immigrant or refugee backgrounds. Diversity characteristics – such as age, disability, gender, sexuality and culture – overlap and co-exist in a person's life experience. So it's impossible to separate gender from other forms of diversity. Lastly, diversity is good for business and the workplace (see Factsheets 2, 8 and 9), so addressing the gender issue first will only lead to partial benefits. To gain maximum benefits, it's important to embrace all forms of diversity. Given Australia's unique multicultural mix, cultural diversity must be an integral part of this strategy.

Myth 10: Immigrant women are quiet and submissive

Myth 11: Immigrant women aren't interested in careers or professional development/training

Research into immigrant women and training has shown this is definitely a myth². If these statements were true, where did all the strong female leaders from immigrant women's source countries come

from? Think of Benazir Bhutto, Aung San Suu Kyi, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (President of Argentina), Corazon Aquino and many others. In Australia, immigrant women have risen to prominence within trade unions, community and government sectors (local and state politics in particular). Irrespective of cultural backgrounds, inflexible workplaces and strong gender-biased work systems can present barriers to women's career progression, particularly with the dual family-work responsibilities held by most.

Topic 4: Attitudes

Myth 12: We're all multicultural so we can't be racist

Multiculturalism is a demographic reality in Australia. It's also a set of institutions and policies designed by the state to manage diversity in the community³. Policies and related legislation – such as the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 – were created to address problems such as racism, which persists despite demographic realities. Research shows that one in five workers in Australia may have experienced race-based discrimination⁴, and that leadership levels of Australian businesses don't reflect the cultural diversity of the wider population or workforce.

Myth 13: If it's not broke, why fix it?

This statement implies immigrants are fully integrated into Australian workplaces and experience the same opportunities and outcomes as their Australian-born colleagues. Many research studies indicate otherwise. Employment challenges faced by immigrants include "poor recognition of overseas gained qualifications and experience; over qualification for their jobs; high rates of unemployment in the early settlement years...blocked career paths and under-representation in public sector employment"^{5, 6}.

Myth 14: Immigrants get big government handouts

Actually, the reality is the reverse. Most immigrants are not eligible to receive government financial support in the first two years of their arrival. While refugees and humanitarian entrants receive government assistance, it's

targeted to help overcome challenges faced on arrival including low English skills and experience of torture and trauma.

Myth 15: Cultural diversity is too hard – too many cultures and languages

Our cultural and linguistic diversity are some of our national strengths. Rather than seeing them as 'too hard', they should be celebrated. There are multiple languages spoken in the population, so for any given area or need, it's usually possible to define the top languages spoken by an audience and translate where necessary. Cultures may vary, but immigrant and refugees' cross-cultural challenges are often similar. Learning about other cultures will strengthen our national resources and help us succeed globally.

Myth 16: Customers won't accept visibly different employees

Australian anti-discrimination legislation prohibits racially or culturally motivated discrimination across a range of public settings, such as education, housing, employment and services. All organisations should avoid accepting real or perceived preferences that may breach these laws. In some cases, an organisation can seek exemptions from the anti-discrimination agency in its state or territory.

Myth 17: Immigrants are happy to do any job

Skilled immigrants come to Australia hoping to practise and build on their trade, specialisation or profession. So it's very demoralising for them to be forced to work for extended periods in an occupation well below their accredited level of skill. Considerable research in Australia shows that immigrants who are overqualified for their jobs are generally not happy. This can result in skill shortages, wasted productivity, health problems, absenteeism and job dissatisfaction^{7, 8, 9, 10, 11}.

Topic 5: Structural

Myth 18: Treating everyone equally will result in fair outcomes

Myth 19: Special treatment for immigrants is divisive

Myth 20: Immigrants are too small a minority to warrant additional programs

Ordinarily, people join a workplace with varying skill sets, opportunities, family circumstances and personal characteristics, which can lead to differential treatment by society. So, some people need additional or targeted support to maximise their potential in the workplace.



If all workers were treated the same, most workplaces would be supporting unequal opportunities and outcomes – for example, between men and women, immigrants and Australian-born, disabled and non-disabled, older and younger workers. Effective diversity strategies see difference as both a strength and a challenge needing planned responses for an optimal outcome. This must be explained to employees so they understand why targeted programs are used for some workers. Immigrants make up one quarter of the workforce, so they are a substantial minority group.

Myth 21: Some organisations benefit more from diversity than others

This suggests cultural diversity affects some industries or occupations more than others. However, most markets in Australia are both global and multicultural. Even locally sourced services cater to culturally diverse clients and the Australian labour force is inherently diverse in many regional areas and urban centres. So, if your workforce is culturally homogenous, it may be time to question why and change this.

Myth 22: Collecting data on employees' culture/ birthplaces is too difficult

Unlike many countries, there is no legal requirement in Australia for organisations to collect data on the birthplace or cultural heritage of employees. Privacy issues are often given as a reason why such sensitive employee data can't be collected. This has been solved overseas, in countries such as the United Kingdom, by using data collection approaches that combine information to protect confidentiality. Collecting this data allows employers and policy agencies to audit and improve the level of cultural diversity in the workforce. It also enables organisations to, over time, check the impact of strategic initiatives, such as cultural diversity management programs.

Myth 23: All selection decisions are based on merit

Although selection and recruitment systems may appear to be fair and reasonable on the surface, in practice they may restrict or exclude members of disadvantaged groups. The notion of 'merit' itself is not culturally or gender neutral. Also, legitimate selection processes such as key performance indicators may be unknown by people from some countries where they're not used. Members of selection panels may be unconsciously applying culturally-biased assumptions in their practices.

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Fact Sheet 8: Maximising the Value of Cultural Diversity

Australia has enjoyed unprecedented economic growth and prosperity in the past decade, yet in the context of increasing competition and global financial challenges, there's no guarantee that our future growth potential will be fully realised. In anticipating these challenges, we could respond to skills shortages and constrained growth by making full use of our diverse workforce to meet Australia's future skills, knowledge and broader economic needs.

This factsheet encourages discussion and action on how to maximise the value of our culturally diverse workforce to benefit your business and its staff.

Benefits of cultural diversity for employees

Despite the known benefits of cultural diversity for Australian productivity and economic growth, attitudes towards our culturally diverse workforce are often based on misconceptions and assumptions about immigration's long-term social impact¹.

These fears are largely unfounded. Australia's experience shows that immigrants and refugees are highly-motivated and eager to participate in Australian economic life and in the broader community through employment. As a step in the settlement process, employment allows immigrants to productively contribute to Australian society, establish knowledge of, and experience in, the Australian workforce and workplace culture, and improve their language and communication skills.



Immigrants and refugees are generally eager to participate in Australian economic life and the broader community through employment.

On arrival in Australia, most immigrants and refugees recognise opportunities to fulfill their employment goals and work hard to make a positive contribution

to their organisation. So, organisations that encourage and maximise the potential of their culturally diverse workforce create sustainable employment opportunities, supporting refugees and immigrants and all culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) employees to contribute to long-term success.

The benefits for workers born in Australia are equally great. Engaging with colleagues from CALD backgrounds provides better opportunities for skill acquisition and knowledge and information exchange through cross-cultural interaction. Working in a culturally diverse environment also creates cultural competency through direct personal interactions. In turn, this benefits an organisation's dealings with external and international customers and stakeholders.

Building cultural connections

Having the right skills and capabilities will be central to business success in the Asian Century. This was evident in an Australian Industry Group survey of over 380 businesses that gauged leaders' opinions on factors supporting business success in Asia. It found that senior leaders who have cultural training, speak an Asian language or have lived and worked in Asia for more than three months were more likely to maximise business performance and exceed expectations with clients and stakeholders².

Benefits of maximising cultural diversity for organisations and employers

The benefits of a culturally diverse workforce for businesses and employers are extensive, including:

- **Avoiding discrimination.** Recognising and embracing diversity in the workplace can limit the likelihood of legal action from alleged discrimination, which can be costly – in terms of financing proceedings, severely impacting staff

productivity and morale, and tarnishing your organisation's reputation.

- **Developing and maintaining a positive public image.** Offering services and products to diverse communities allows new markets to be targeted, and an organisation to become a leader in its field. This can translate into positive media attention and brand differentiation.
- **Creating a healthy and inclusive work environment.** Effective diversity management creates an inclusive, supportive and harmonious work environment that demonstrates respect for employees and their contributions.
- **Promoting innovation, creativity and problem solving.** Cultural diversity encourages innovation and creativity among team members who are encouraged to contribute a variety of perspectives from different backgrounds. Contributions of CALD workers can also enhance productivity, by drawing on a variety of experiences to overcome issues and challenges.
- **Reducing costs.** Benefitting from the talents of a culturally diverse workforce reduces employee turnover. Managing and maximising diversity in your workplace will help you make the most of the skills on offer.
- **Supporting your local community and economy.** You can demonstrate your organisation's commitment to the local economy by employing people from different backgrounds, including cultural backgrounds, from within your local community.
- **Expanding to new markets.** A culturally diverse workforce has expert knowledge of the communities it represents and can help your organisation expand beyond traditional markets and customers, promoting itself in a culturally appropriate way.
- **Filling job vacancies.** Recruiting a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce can help avoid labour shortages by creating a larger pool of candidates from which to draw.

Maximising cultural diversity in your organisation

The following strategies will help to encourage and promote cultural diversity in your organisation to maximise its full benefits:

- Implementing policies and practices that recognise and respect cultural diversity among employees, such as:
 - An Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan
 - A Multicultural Action Plan
 - An Anti-Racism Policy.

(For information on accessing examples of these documents, see *Factsheet 10 - Where to from here?*)
- Ensuring staff awareness of legal frameworks around racial discrimination, workplace bullying and harassment through regular training.

Become an organisational supporter of the national **'Racism. It Stops With Me.'** campaign to send a clear message that racism is not tolerated in your workplace. For more details on the campaign and sign-up information, visit: www.itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au.

- Encouraging open discussion about cultural diversity in the workplace, challenging underlying assumptions that may frame attitudes and opinions.
- Developing and implementing cultural competency and diversity training to inform and encourage cross-cultural discussion.
- Making use of international connections by developing work placement and exchange programs.
- Encouraging industry-specific research and training around cultural diversity to increase awareness of its opportunities and challenges.

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Fact Sheet 9: Cultural Diversity and Market Development

An area often forgotten when considering workplace diversity is its potential value in developing both domestic and international markets, and in stimulating innovation.

This factsheet explores the opportunities that workplace diversity can provide in this area and looks at key issues in relation to productive diversity.

In all cases, an understanding of the habits, customs and values of a culture leads to the adaption of marketing strategies in much the same way as occurs in international markets. This includes: design and features of the core product or service, packaging design and colours, promotion and advertising media and themes, prices and payment methods, distribution channels and organisational design. It's not simply about price and marketing message, it's about the value and quality of the service or product and the support provided to customers. "Quality of demand is more important than the quantity."¹

A diverse marketplace

Consideration of cultural diversity in marketing environments mainly focuses on international trade and business, where business success relies on appreciating domestic culture, language and country-specific business practices. To have the linguistic and cultural skills to work across borders, companies need to recruit or contract-in these skill sets. While being practised in international markets, it isn't being transferred to the domestic market, which is, by definition, multicultural. Fact Sheet 1 shows how Australia has extraordinary linguistic and cultural diversity. The impact of this in a marketing sense is that any notion of an existing mass market needs to be questioned.

In fact, a lot of current marketing theory and practice now focuses on niche markets^{2,3}. These may be defined by specific demographic groups such as a 'grey' market

(people aged over 55), 'pink' market (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual) or by lifestyle choices such as the 'green market' (environmentally aware and ecologically motivated).

The multicultural market is also emerging as a key niche segment, represented by new arrivals needing to establish themselves in Australia, as well as increasingly visible and growing ethnic specific markets, such as the large Chinese Australian market and growing Indian subcontinent market.

Using workplace diversity for domestic multicultural markets

Workplace diversity can be used to understand and connect with ethnic-specific market segments. This can quite often be the difference between maintaining or failing to sustain a successful business. So, culturally diverse staff should be consulted or involved in planning and marketing exercises as they can contribute to:

- Understanding the needs, wants and preferences of growing ethnic-specific markets, which has, for instance enabled alcohol sellers to target the Chinese market for premium brands for red wine and cognac, and car sellers such as Ferrari to target the second generation Italian Australian market
- Being aware of days of cultural significance or community celebrations such as Lunar New Year (Vietnamese, Chinese, Laotian and Cambodian), Diwali Festival (Indian), Orthodox Easter (Greek, Macedonian, Serbians and Russian) which may create a time specific need for gifts, food products or entertainment
- Providing insight into the travel patterns of specific groups such as the Southern Europeans traveling for the Northern Summer, those from Islamic faith attending the Haj and the Chinese who return to Asia for the Lunar New Year.

As the population increasingly becomes diverse, culturally diverse staff will carry the market intelligence that makes a difference to many businesses.

Businesses who have the capacity to meet the needs of domestic diversity will have more success when they extend their products and services to overseas markets. Understanding the needs and values of their culturally diverse customers at home will create profits both at home and in exports.⁴

There's also the service delivery capacity that bilingual and bicultural staff can provide. It's commonplace for banks, utilities and other retail organisations to staff their Chinatown operations with people who speak Asian languages. Yet, too many companies are unaware of the linguistic and cultural skills of their staff, so fail to get them involved in:

- Marketing and client engagement
- Directing service delivery in office-based and telephone environments
- Collecting client feedback on services and product use
- Supporting other staff in cross-cultural client interactions.

Understanding and benefitting from international markets

Using domestic cultural diversity is a key component in scoping and engaging with overseas markets. The productive aspects of this include:

- Using the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) staff to identify and seek overseas markets. One well known example is Gateway Pharmaceuticals who used the information from bilingual counter staff in Sydney's South West to identify market opportunities for manufacturing and distributing pharmaceuticals in Vietnam
- Linking with Bilateral Chambers of Commerce to develop partnered approaches to opening

overseas markets, involving their bilingual staff to strengthen these relationships

- International companies using readily available bilingual skills in cities such as Sydney to develop regional hubs on the Eastern Seaboard and inbound call centres for Asia Pacific operations
- Using the knowledge of recently arrived bilingual workers in market testing and product refinement before introducing to overseas markets.

Innovation

While international literature has shown the value of workplace diversity in driving and achieving innovation, there is very little Australian research in this area. Recent research from the Migration Council of Australia shows that workplace diversity, especially the skills brought by temporary workers on 457 visas, has been beneficial in training Australian workers in skill sets where we have deficits⁵. Diversity and workplace innovation needs attention, especially as the Australian economy moves away from resources towards innovation as a long-term strategy.

Acknowledgement

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FECCA

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harmony in the workplace

delivering
the diversity
dividend

Fact Sheet 10: Where to From Here?

The benefits of encouraging a culturally diverse workforce are clear, but where to from here? This factsheet explores further avenues for creating a more culturally diverse and inclusive workforce.

Where to go for information and advice

The following organisations provide useful information and resources to maximise the cultural diversity in your workplace:

- **Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)** - <http://www.immi.gov.au/>

Here, you'll find information on cultural and religious dates and events, translating and interpreting services, government policies and procedures around access and equity (for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds) and information about visas, immigration and citizenship.

- **Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)** - <http://www.fecca.org.au/>

This is the peak, national body representing Australians from CALD backgrounds. FECCA's role is to advocate, lobby and promote issues on behalf of voters to government, business and the broader community. Its website provides important information about issues in the multicultural sector, contact details for relevant organisations, and media releases and resources on various issues concerning people of CALD backgrounds.

- **Diversity Council of Australia (DCA)** - <http://www.dca.org.au/>

This is an independent, not-for-profit workplace diversity adviser to business in Australia. In partnership with its members, DCA's mission is to lead debate on diversity, develop and promote the

latest diversity research, thinking and practice, and to deliver innovative diversity practice resources and services to allow its members to achieve business improvement. DCA members have access to a range of free or discounted services to support and enhance their diversity, inclusion capabilities and external profile.

- **Ethnic Communities' Councils (ECC) and Multicultural Communities' Councils (MCC)**

Further details available at <http://www.fecca.org.au/aboutus/fecca-members-and-associated-councils>

These promote the principles of multiculturalism through ongoing advocacy, education and community development work across Australia. The state and territory-based organisations have information and resources relevant to their local communities on issues impacting CALD Australians.

- **Local councils**

Further details available at <http://australia.gov.au/services/service-task/contact/contact-my-local-council>

Local councils provide demographic and issue-specific information relevant to communities throughout Australia. Local government websites are an excellent source of information regarding community activities and events (including cultural and religious dates), and provide useful material and resources. Most local councils produce publically available resources, such as cultural diversity action plans, which can be used as a reference point for organisations looking to develop their own resources.

- **Academic resources and contacts**

As well as providing excellent examples of organisational resources (including multicultural policies and action plans), universities and academics provide valuable literature on cultural diversity in Australia. Organisations seeking advice, information, data and statistics on cultural diversity and its impact on their workplace should consider approaching universities for new and emerging research.

- **Migrant Resource Centres (MRC)**

Contact details available at http://www.nembc.org.au/info_pages_nembc.php/pages_id/241

These centres provide information and resources to support the effective settlement and participation of migrants and refugee entrants across Australia. They provide useful information for organisations trying to engage with their local communities and tailor their services for migrants and refugees accordingly. They also provide resources for organisations as a reference point to help them maximise the cultural diversity of their workforce.

Useful tools and services

The following tools and tips will help your organisation to explore and maximise cultural diversity:

- Organise cultural competence training for your staff including:
 - Working with professional interpreters
 - Communicating effectively across culture
 - Providing culturally responsive services
 - Diversity leadership.

For further information on training opportunities in your region, contact your state or territory's Ethnic Communities' Council or Multicultural Community Council (details can be found on FECCA's website – www.fecca.org.au).

Translating and Interpretive Services

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National is a service provided by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for people who don't speak or have difficulty speaking English and for English speakers who need to communicate with them.

TIS National is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It provides immediate telephone interpreting services, pre-booked telephone interpreting and on-site interpreting.

For more information please visit http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating/about-tis.htm.

Ten key questions to consider regarding your organisation's cultural diversity

The following questions will assist your organisation to determine how effectively it embraces and maximises cultural diversity.

1. Is cultural diversity embedded in your organisation's philosophy, mission statement, policies and key objectives?
2. Are CALD staff employed throughout your organisation?
3. Do staff receive comprehensive training for cultural competence?
4. Are cultural diversity and ethno-specific resources readily available to your employees?
5. Have you carried out a cultural self-assessment? If so, have you implemented strategies where further improvement was identified?
6. Does your organisation appreciate and understand the cultural profile of the local community?
7. Are employees encouraged to be flexible in their approach to work, and are efforts taken to seek information on specific cultural behaviours or understandings so that interactions with staff, clients and partners are sensitive to cultural differences?
8. Do senior management actively promote the benefits of cultural diversity?
9. If you deliver essential services, do you provide adequate support for translating and interpreting?
10. Do you offer incentives or rewards for workplace initiatives that actively embrace and promote cultural diversity?

Courtesy of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV)

