Recruit Smarter
Best Practice Guidelines
for Inclusive Recruitment

Objectives and strategy

A key advantage of Recruit Smarter was access to a wealth of corporate knowledge and experience in recruitment through the initiative's 46 partner organisations.

Recognising this opportunity, Recruit Smarter harnessed these resources to collaboratively envision and develop a set of aspirational and forward-looking guidelines on best practice for inclusive recruitment.

Implementation

Four multi-sector working groups were assembled, staffed by human resources representatives and professionals from participating organisations, and chaired by a nominated 'champion' organisation. Each working group focused on a different stage of the recruitment life cycle, ranging from advertising; application; selection and interview processes; and onboarding and induction of new staff.

Working group members were provided with the latest research on their group's area of focus by Recruit Smarter researchers. The working groups then met four times each over 12 months to consider the research, and to synthesise it with their own individual, organisational and sector-level expertise and knowledge. The outcomes of this process formed a set of practically-focused guidelines for proposed best practice for inclusive recruitment.

At the conclusion of the working group meetings, the draft guidelines were released for targeted consultation and feedback. Where applicable, the submissions and feedback from this process were reviewed and incorporated into the guidelines. The final guidelines from this component of Recruit Smarter can be found overleaf.

Preface to the guidelines

The Recruit Smarter Best Practice Guidelines for Inclusive Recruitment aim to capture a range of key themes, issues and practical considerations that employers, workplaces and industries can take into consideration to make their recruitment practices and working environments more inclusive and diversity-friendly.

The guidelines are aspirational and forward looking but are not a 'one size fits all' solution to solving workplace diversity and inclusion issues. In many cases the principle behind a guideline may need to be adapted to suit individual working environments, sectors or organisations. In other cases it is acknowledged that the guidelines may not be applicable, but may spark further productive dialogue on the issue of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Owing to their collaboratively designed nature, the guidelines are not intended to represent the views or voice of any one sector or organisation. Instead, they are the product of a collective voice across organisations and sectors highlighting the importance and benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Acknowledgements

DPC and CEL wish to acknowledge the following organisations and their representatives who contributed to the development of the guidelines:

- Australia Post
- Ambulance Victoria
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- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Department of Justice and Regulation
- Department of Treasury and Finance
- Environment Protection Authority
- Hall and Wilcox LLP
- HAYS Specialist Recruitment
- Hoban Recruitment
- PwC
- Recruitment & Consulting Services Association of Australia & New Zealand
- SEEK
- Transport Accident Commission
- Transurban
- United Energy and Multinet Gas
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- Victoria Police
- Victorian Public Sector Commission
- VicRoads
- Westpac
- WorkSafe

Special thanks

DPC and CEL wish to thank the following organisations for championing, hosting and facilitating the multi-sector working groups in addition to contributing to the development of the guidelines:

- Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) Leading Thinkers Initiative
- Emergency Management Victoria
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
  - Given the Chance Program
- Department of Premier and Cabinet Victoria
  - People and Culture

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No.	Guideline	Guideline details	Proposed actions, changes, examples or case studies

1. Strategic Guidelines to Support Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

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1.1	**Start at the top**	• Support for diversity and inclusion must start with the most senior executives in an organisation and be a focus of organisational prioritisation and leadership accountability. • For governments and political bodies, leadership on and commitment to diversity and inclusion should be recognised as a mutual concern and priority for all political persuasions.	• Diversity and inclusion should be a standing item of executive leadership meetings. This can provide an opportunity for ongoing reporting and accountability on the status of organisational diversity, and the progress of strategies to support it. • On commencing leadership duties, a compulsory action could be an audit of organisational diversity and inclusiveness, including human resources systems and processes, to identify areas of merit, concern or improvement. • Inclusive leadership training could be a condition of commencement for incoming and rising leaders. • The inclusive leadership training would comprise components that: ✓ provide strategic level understanding of the economic and social benefits of diversity and inclusion at both a macro and microeconomic level; and ✓ the macro and microeconomic costs and broader socioeconomic impact of exclusion.

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1.2	**Embed a commitment to workplace diversity and inclusion in organisational values statements and strategic plans**	• Embed a public-facing commitment to workplace diversity and inclusion in employer, organisational, and sector values statements and strategic plans. • Embed an employee-level commitment to supporting workplace diversity and inclusion in position descriptions, employment agreements and employee value statements.	• Executive leadership could champion an annual workforce diversity and inclusion survey. This survey could be used to: ✓ evaluate and track workplace awareness and understanding of diversity and inclusion; ✓ evaluate how effectively diversity and inclusion messaging and strategies are being embedded; and ✓ identify areas of merit, misunderstanding and specific barriers. • Ideally, workforce diversity and inclusion surveys and assessments should be undertaken annually to measure progress and areas for improvement, and as a matter of entry and handover procedures to new leadership. • All other factors considered, this commitment could be extended as a preference of procurement and supply chain engagement.
1.3	**Communicate the socioeconomic benefits of workplace diversity and inclusion clearly**	• Use a range of communications tools and channels to provide easily comprehensible evidence on the socioeconomic benefits of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.	• Showcase the evidence demonstrating the tangible positive effects that diversity and inclusion have on workplace innovation and creativity, firm resilience and economic productivity, as well as the positive flow-on effects on individual and workplace wellbeing, and community cohesion and resilience.

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1.4	**Ensure diversity in the workplace is valued, invested in, and has a voice**	• Foster opportunities for self-representation of diversity in the workplace, and in invest in developing diverse talent.	• Embed reasonable workplace flexibility to accommodate diversity and corresponding needs (eg. prayer spaces). • Elevate multilingualism cross-cultural understanding and relevant lived experience as valued business skills and factors of merit. • Work collaboratively with staff to make information available on the communities represented in the workplace, and the area in which the organisation is located or operates. See also **Guideline 1.5**. • Employ a range of communications channels and approaches to give diversity in the workplace a voice without needing to rely on, or single out individuals. • Encourage and support celebration of diverse identity, including cultural, religious or other significant events and practices in the workplace. • Encourage respectful curiosity and dialogue to support mutual understanding of differences. • **Case Study:** Airline crew often have the languages they can communicate in noted on their name tags. Where applicable, similar approaches could be implemented in workplaces to endorse and support linguistic capability and diversity. • **Case Study:** The Victorian Government's *Deadly Questions* campaign gives the community an anonymous and judgement-free virtual platform to ask Aboriginal Victorians questions about their culture, customs and history.

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1.5	**Foster mutually beneficial engagement with local communities**	• Look locally to develop and build talent and leadership pools.	• Maintaining strong engagement between community, peak and representative bodies, and local industries and businesses should continue to be a priority. • For businesses, consider designating development opportunities for local talent. This can help build and develop talent pools that are mutually beneficial for the organisation and the community. • **Case Study:** Brotherhood of St Laurence and Jesuit Social Services have long-standing and highly effective cross-sector collaboration programs that focus on employment for priority cohorts. • **Case Study:** Victorian community health organisation CoHealth offer specially trained bicultural workers who can support and facilitate community and stakeholder engagement.
1.6	**Include a diversity awareness component in relevant qualifications and training**	• Make diversity awareness, and cognitive bias training mandatory curriculum components for human resources, management and business qualifications. Include these components in continuous learning and development for leaders, management and human resources professionals.	• This training should ideally include components on: ✓ heuristics in judgement and decision-making, and other cognitive biases; ✓ the socioeconomic costs of exclusion; ✓ the financial, economic and social benefits of inclusive recruitment and diversity in the workplace at both a macro and microeconomic level. • This training could also include case studies of lived experiences by diverse persons, and an experiential component replicating a range of barriers or challenges that diverse persons can face in the workplace, such as unfamiliarity with a culture, or a lack of understanding of other forms of diversity, such as disability status or gender identity. • For new employees, this training should be a priority. This is noting that finding time to undertake this becomes harder the longer a person is embedded in a role.

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2. Practical Guidelines for Inclusive Recruitment Processes

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2.1	Use evidence-based approaches to ensure bias-free construction of language and imagery in advertising	• A range of training, applications, and systems are available on the market that employers can access to de-bias their advertisements.	• **Example:** SEEK's *Laws of Attraction* suite of research and advertisement construction tools,[1a] and Textio,[2] a writing platform to construct unbiased job advertisements.
2.2	Consider including diversity as a factor of merit for recruitment purposes	• This can help to overcome barriers to entry for under-represented cohorts into employment and positions of leadership.	• Such a consideration should be made with all other relevant factors and points of merit taken into account. • **Case Study:** A strategic priority for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia is employing staff who reflect their diverse consumer base, recognising the importance to the Bank of supporting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Diverse staff also bring with them valuable cross-cultural and linguistic skills, as well as an understanding of their community's needs as customers of the bank.
2.3	Consider alternative approaches to job applications and assessment for suitability	• Not all roles benefit from a written job application process. • Practical, hands-on approaches that engage the skills and competencies required in the role may widen the pool of talent employers can choose from.	• Approaches include gamification and work simulation-based exercises that are aimed at maximising a fair go for a broad range of cohorts, especially where written application processes are not an ideal approach.[3]

1: SEEK, *Laws of Attraction*, 2017; https://insightsresources.seek.com.au/lawsofattraction.
2: Textio, Inc. 2018 www.textio.com.
3: Deloitte Australia, *Play to Win: How gamification can give companies an edge in innovation and strategy execution,* 2017; http://blog.deloitte.com.au/play-to-win-how-gamification-can-give-companies-an-edge-in-innovation-and-strategy-execution/.

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2.4	**Where a written application is determined as the best approach, ensure the process is efficient, logical, relevant, and short**	• Job seekers consistently report that vague selection criteria and a lack of clarity around role responsibilities in position descriptions are a deterrent.[1]	• Employers could consider providing applicants with guidelines and examples of expected response format and content as part of any position description documents. • **Case Study:** Australian research indicates that advertisements with more than five selection criteria deters applicants, particularly females.[2a] • **Case Study:** Young jobseekers report not knowing where to begin to construct an application that effectively sells their skills and potential. [2b]
2.5	**Review the need for formal qualifications, and encourage jobseekers to construct their applications from a 'whole of person' perspective**[3]	• Employers may benefit from hiring applicants from diverse backgrounds and life experiences who can bring new and innovative ways of thinking to roles and workplaces.	• Not all roles require formal qualifications to be undertaken successfully. Where applicable, review the essentiality of formal qualifications. • Taking a 'whole of person' approach can give jobseekers who are new to the market an opportunity to leverage other skillsets and experiences to get a foot in the door.
2.6	**Take steps to minimise bias in the application process**	• Remove information from applications that is not relevant to an applicant's competency to undertake the role, such as the applicant's name, age and other personal details. • Assemble a balanced interview panel that is reflective of diversity in the community and includes an independent panel member. • Ensure recruitment and selection panellists understand how unconscious bias can influence their decision making.	• A range of commercial providers offer de-biasing systems and capabilities for employers as part of their services, including SEEK[4] and Applied.[5] • The level and content of redaction may vary depending on legal and organisational requirements. • Provide recruitment panellists with training on unconscious bias, and the benefits of diversity in the workplace. • Approaches may include: ✓ formal training on diversity awareness and the impact of bias on decision-making; ✓ information provided to hiring staff as part of any interview 'pack' (where applicable).

1: JobGetter, 2017 Australian Job Seeker Report, 2017, p. 11; https://my.jobgetter.com/job-seeker-survey/.
2: SEEK, *Laws of Attraction*, 2017; https://insightsresources.seek.com.au/lawsofattraction.
3: This guideline needs to be balanced with the likelihood of such an approach opening the application to a range of details that can lead to bias and managed accordingly (See Guideline 2.6).
4: SEEK, Appendix 4E and Statutory Accounts, Report to the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) under Listing Rule 4.3A, 4.5, p. 13; https://wcsecure.weblink.com.au/pdf/SEK/01884210.pdf.
5: Be Applied Ltd 2018; https://www.beapplied.com/.

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2.7	**Give interview candidate the best chance to showcase themselves**	• Providing candidates with supporting information to prepare for their interview can reduce nerves, increase confidence and maximise their capacity to sell themselves.	• Consider providing candidates with a copy of the questions prior to the interview to assist them to respond effectively. • Alternatively, interview candidates could be provided with a response matrix at the point of invitation that outlines how they should respond to interview questions, and the circumstances where they will be prompted for more information by the panel. • The response matrix could support applicants to map their skills, capabilities and experience against the selection criteria, responsibilities and behaviours of the role.
2.8	**Score candidates independently**	• Candidate assessment and scoring should be completed independently by each panel member.	• Discussion about candidates should only occur once all scores have been tallied and submitted to prevent panel members influencing each other's ratings of applicants. • To provide a more balanced picture of suitability, weight should be given to candidate applications as a whole and not just their performance in the interview. This is noting that applicants perform differently in interviews and may be affected by nerves and other factors.
2.9	**Provide candidates who are unsuccessful at the interview stage with feedback**	• Job seekers consistently report that not receiving any feedback on their application is one of the most frustrating and discouraging aspects of looking for work.[1a] A lack of feedback also deters applicants from re-applying to organisations.[1b]	• Applicants who are interviewed should be given feedback on their application as a compulsory step of the selection process. • Feedback can take the form of brief, standardised points on how the candidate performed, and where they could improve. • Where volume of applications is an issue, unsuccessful applicants could be given a response detailing common reasons for unsuccessful applications that can guide applicants to review their own submission.

1: JobGetter, 2017 Australian Job Seeker Report, 2017, pp. 7-11; https://my.jobgetter.com/job-seeker-survey/.

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2.10	**Showcase and demonstrate a diversity-friendly environment**	• Showcase the organisation's values, codes of behaviour, and commitment to supporting diversity in the workplace to new employees.	• Where appropriate, identify and promote diversity champions who can support new employees from diverse backgrounds. • Support and encourage the development of chartered 'employee resource groups' for diverse employees within workplaces and sectors. • Provide employees with safe, 'judgement free' spaces and opportunities where they can raise questions or concerns frankly, and seek advice and information about issues relating to diversity in the workplace that they are uncertain about. See also **Guideline 1.4.**
2.11	**Make onboarding processes systematic, structured and consistent**	• Develop a clearly structured induction plan and allow sufficient time for it to be completed before the successful candidate's commences substantial duties.	• This can be facilitated by an IT-based system but cannot be replaced by it.[1] • Job seekers report that opportunities for 'meet-and-greets' with new co-workers and having administrative essentials ready at role commencement make a lasting impression on their perception of the organisation, and sense of belonging.
2.12	**Make mentoring and buddying a standard part of staff induction and development**	• Develop internal and external buddying and mentoring arrangements to support placement and transition of staff into the organisation.	• This is particularly critical for new staff from diverse backgrounds who may not be familiar with sector-specific or organisational workplace culture and unwritten rules. • A distinction should be made between the terms 'buddy' and 'mentor', and the different roles they play in supporting staff. • A 'buddy' is an internal colleague who can provide advice and support around workplace practices, procedures, and values, behaviours and culture. • A 'mentor' is separate to a line manager and is defined as an external support provider who can provide advice and guidance around career and personal development goals, industry and the jobs market. • For diverse employees, a mentor may also be someone who is familiar with the challenges and benefits that diversity in the workplace brings, and who can provide advice and guidance on how to navigate them.

1: For example, InductPro; www.inductpro.com.au; or Enboarder; https://enboarder.com.