ITCRA RESPONSE TO THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST OLDER AUSTRALIANS AND AUSTRALIANS WITH DISABILITY

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ITCRA
Information Technology
Contract & Recruitment
Association Ltd.

Submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability

By the Information Technology Contract and Recruitment Association Ltd

About the Information Technology Contract and Recruitment Association Ltd

ITCRA is the professional body for the ICT contracting and recruitment sector in Australia and New Zealand. ITCRA Members supply and/or manage white collar professionals on behalf of their clients for permanent and flexible roles, including contracting, across Australia and New Zealand as well as multiple international markets.

Opening Remarks

ITCRA has been promoting the importance of workforce diversity for several years, and has published papers on diversity in ICT on a number of diverse populations such as people with disability, gender in ICT, and Indigenous Australians (see Appendix 1). Several ITCRA Members have likewise been publicly showing an active interest in improving workplace diversity both within their own enterprises, and by encouraging diversity in their clients' workforces (see Appendix 2).

Research quoted in its papers by ITCRA has shown that the instinct to hire and work with people similar to those already present in a workplace is strong due to similarity of thought, background, and culture making connections and social capital 'easy'. Yet for enterprises to function optimally, there must be a diversity to bring cultural awareness, different experiences, and different perspectives to business challenges and opportunities. For this reason, ITCRA believes that equal opportunity, diversity, and the economic and strategic benefits that flow from it must be continually managed, because it is unlikely to be 'solved'. Such strategically-focussed diversity cannot be considered with a goal of, "set and forget"; it must be continually managed and the benefits promoted with each new influx of workers, from enterprise- to generational-level.

In updating our knowledge for this submissions, we found that some of the activities and research undertaken of late has been potentially controversial—the study of transsexuals in Japan who are identifying as disabled rather than LGBTI, and the US universities seeking to be able to identify student 'race' classifications at application stage are two notable examples[i]—which shows that the study of diversity remains vibrant. Importantly, the objectives in both these examples were to achieve improve opportunities and equality outcomes, rather than to discriminate.

This submission is concerned with the experiences, capabilities, opportunities, and needs of ITCRA's Membership, which is focused on recruiters of roles in professional white collar and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) enterprises. ITCRA accepts that its Members' needs and experiences are not necessarily generalizable to the entire labour market or industries.

The nature of the labour market is constrained at the enterprise level by limitations in knowledge and resources. It can be difficult to gain traction for various diversity initiatives. For this reason, it may be better managed as an overall target with each segment of diversity helping to form an overall 'Diversity Picture' rather than attempting to boost individual areas of diversity one at a time.

This submission is based on a survey of ITCRA Members, undertaken for this paper, on the nature of diversity in general, as well as on mature age and disability recruitment. The responses to the discussion paper questions are below, and appendices cover the background information that was used to inform the analysis.

Responses to Discussion Questions

"What policies, workplace practices, programs or incentives assist with increasing participation of people with disability? How adequate are these policies, practices, and incentives? What is the role of Government, peak business and employee groups, and individual employers?"

"Are there distinct challenges faced by different-sized businesses and organisations, sectors and industries in employing Australians with disability?"

Small businesses are a powerhouse of employment, yet the resources needed to understand diversity issues, engage with diverse workforces, and provide the time and resources to create support structures for diverse workforces—regardless of whether government assistance is available—still results in leadership in championing diverse employment being embraced by larger firms. For example, Manpower (2015) hosts an annual two-day Supplier Diversity Roundtable, which brings together over 160 diverse suppliers from around the world to strengthen relationships, network, and grow business. Larger businesses have the resources and experience to promote diversity excellence, but the flow of lessons learned to smaller enterprises is suboptimal.

To improve the adoption of diversity, discussions on diversity need to address its business case and its practicalities in a simple manner. Diversity improves an enterprise's productivity by introducing a range of viewpoints and better ability to adapt to various market needs; however, recent research suggests that it also lowers social capital, resulting in less cooperation, trust, and workplace satisfaction. While this social capital may make those within the enterprise feel they are performing better, it is not enough to result in actual productive improvements over diversity. Discussions about diversity need to address not just compliance issues, but also the

strategic benefits of diversity as a whole, while also addressing concerns about these impacts on social capital with practical, simple, and inexpensive examples (Dizikes, 2014). As an example of this, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) produced two Good Practice Guides on best practice in training outcomes, one for mature age and one for students with a disability or mental illness. These guides are simple, practical, evidence-based introductory guides to introduce the key concepts in these fields.

Recruitment consultancies are expected by their clients—employers—to be aware of employment issues and to find the best talent for their needs. ITCRA's survey asked respondents what they were doing internally to promote diversity, and found that the following major activities are occurring:
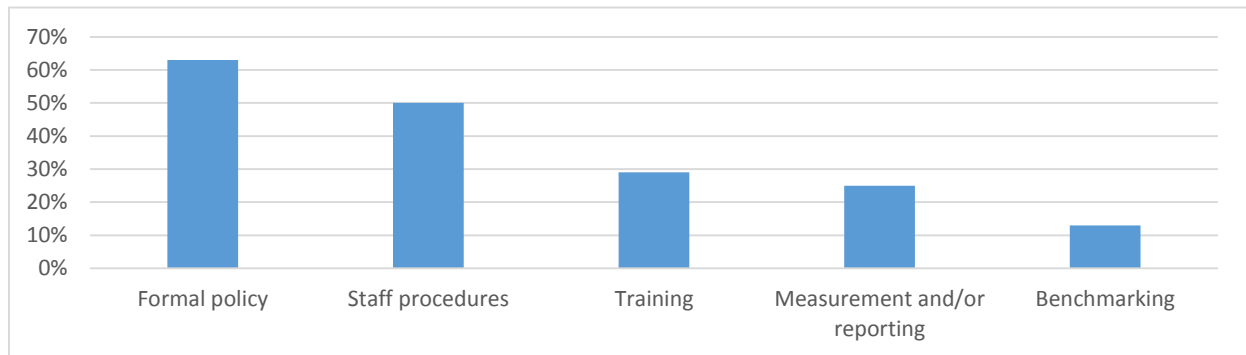

see Appendix 3 for full survey results.

Other activities reported included strategic alliances with companies that specialise in diversity, including diversity in the company values, and one respondent promotes diversity through its own not-for-profit charity. A theme running through the responses to the ITCRA survey was that the tripartite nature of the recruiter/client/candidate relationship meant that recruiters need to gain interest—applications—from candidates of diverse backgrounds for a role, and the potential for success of a diverse hire depends on the client being actively, or at least passively, interested in diversity. Of particular note is that the client's interest must extend to the whole workforce and is less likely to be successful if only the hiring manager or Human Resources department is interested in diversity. At the other end of the spectrum, some respondents noted that they may occasionally still get requests for particular types of candidates but that recruiters focus on "the best person for the job" regardless of irrelevant attributes.

What this shows is that employers, workers, and recruiters all have roles to play in improving the diversity of workforces, and that there is still work to be done but that work is shifting from focussing on establishing a safety net or compliance, to extending the knowledge of diversity lessons into the general workforce and into smaller enterprises.

"What other data or information is available on employment discrimination against Australians with disability?"

Respondents to the ITCRA survey were asked where they get information on diversity and discrimination issues, and they show that they access information from a number of sources:
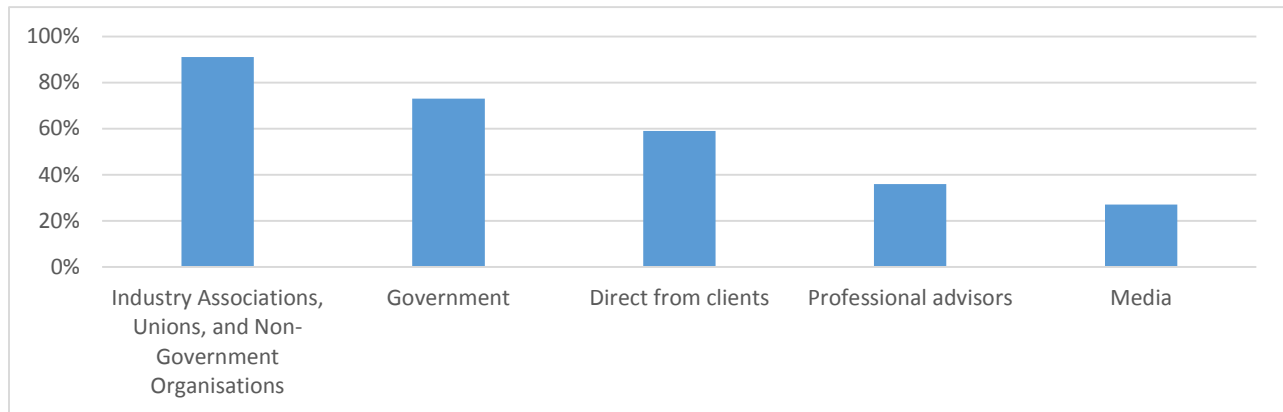
Measurement of diversity may be an issue for ICT recruiters, as more than half of respondents to ITCRA's survey do not track candidate diversity at all. It is difficult to benchmark achievements and success in a field such as equal opportunity where there is no mechanism to collect such data. Despite this, respondents to the ITCRA survey believe that applications from, shortlisting of, and hiring by clients of candidates of diverse background occur regularly, despite a general culture of not tracking diversity.

While creating a mechanism where collection of diversity data would be beneficial may be a challenge, it would be useful. Such a concept has been suggested before in an ITCRA discussion paper, with the ideal of a Diversity Index, the concept being to benchmark an enterprise's diversity against the national population and other enterprises. If such a program were conducted anonymously by a third party, it may be more likely to be successful than if conducted directly by employers. Such a mechanism would most likely best standardised through the Australian Human Rights Commission or Australian Government.

"What lessons and leading practices can we learn from other countries to address employment discrimination and increase workforce participation of Australians with disability?"

Generally speaking, respondents to the ITCRA survey did not take information from overseas into account for their work, unless they already had an international presence such as through searching for candidates internationally. Of particular note is that candidates from overseas can have different attitudes and outlooks that help to question local attitudes. The other is that Australian legal and social systems for diversity are well-established, but one respondent nominated Europe and the UK as areas also with strong diversity legal and social systems in place. Other lessons from overseas may provide some useful insights into opportunities for Australia.

"The United States does not have a unified system for identifying people with disabilities, so the disabled have to frequently re-certify to gain access to services"

– Associate Professor Karen Nakamura, 2015

The *Americans with Disabilities Act* turned 25 this year. Martell (2015) argues that the *American Disabilities Act* is weak in terms of employment discrimination due to its circular definition of disability as something which affects a major life ability, with 'work' being a major life ability. However, recently in the United States, the Supreme Court accepted the argument from universities that diversity in the student body has sufficient educational benefit that universities are justified in using 'race' as a consideration in placements (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2015). In the United Kingdom, a recent legal action demonstrated that it is easy for employers to fail to take into account how their remuneration and bonus schemes may result in discrimination (Federation of International Employers, 2015).

Closer to Australia, New Zealand is proud of its programs to promote diversity such as, *Enabling Good Lives*, the *Disability Action Plan 2014-2018*, the *Independent Monitoring Mechanism*, and the *Think Differently* campaign (New Zealand Government, 2014). The more recent introduction of a pilot scheme—encouraging employment of people with disability in Christchurch—is a useful reminder that pilot schemes may assist as a limited-scope exploration of options to improve employment outcomes for diverse groups (New Zealand Government, 2015).

At the international level, the *International Labor Organization* launched the *ILO Global Business and Disability Network Charter* which was signed by the global ICT consulting firm, Accenture, the recruitment consultants Adecco Group as well as several multinational corporations.

These examples show that measuring or not measuring diversity classifications is itself not discriminatory but rather, what is done with the information. Programs that focus on diversity generally, and pilot programs, can enable controlled testing of opportunities to improve strategic diversity.

"How adequately do existing laws protect Australians with disability from employment discrimination? How effective are the legal remedies for Australians with disability who have experienced employment discrimination? How could existing laws be amended or supplemented?"

It appears to be that rather than increasing legal compliance, the regulatory 'floor' is well-established in Australia, and that it is education and support for workplace cultural shifts that will make the greatest improvement now. Survey respondents generally found that both workers and employers are somewhat satisfied with legal protections (Likert: 4-point scale), with workers slightly more satisfied (average: 3.26 out of 4) than employers

(average: 2.72 out of 4). A theme running through responses is that the legal system currently in place is adequate, and that focusing on cultural and educational improvements is now where further change can be achieved.

"What difficulties are there for employers in understanding and complying with legal obligations?"

Australia's experience of workers with disability being less likely to be in work and more likely to work part-time is reflected in New Zealand's experience (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015; Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Severity, durability, and employment restriction are three aspects that can affect employability. Particularly in an often project-driven industry such as Information and Communication Technologies, an employer's understanding of, and cultural awareness of disability are important: with workers moving on one project and then another, with deadlines and pressure to complete work quickly, addressing the practicalities of strategic diversity with an employer or direct supervisor who needs a role filled 'now' is too late—by that time, they should be aware of the issues. As ICT projects in particular can require long hours to meet deadlines, before projects are closed and new roles are opened, this culture can be of particular challenge to people with disability if they must negotiate accommodations with every new employer or supervisor. However, not all ICT roles are structured in that way, but it happens enough that it forms a particular challenge for ICT (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

ITCRA survey respondents have reported that complying with obligations is generally not difficult; however there still are on occasion, clients who wish to hire particular 'types' of people and the client must then be dissuaded from such attitudes. ITCRA Members state this as putting forward the best person for the job regardless of any individual's accommodation needs. This makes sense as ITCRA's discussion papers on diversity promoted the concept that all people need some level of accommodation, just that some are more common accommodations than others—for example, the dimensions of chairs are designed around average human heights. The difficulties are no longer primarily in compliance-based 'stick' approaches but rather with the 'carrot': diversity needs to shift from being seen as part of Corporate Social Responsibility, into being an innovation, a productivity driver, and profit-generation booster at the enterprise level, and both strategic and macroeconomic at the national level.

ICT recruiters cannot be 'crusaders' focusing on social change, but they can—and do—focus on delivering the best outcomes for their clients in terms of workers who are productive. To do so, they are challenging stereotypes and poor decision-making when they encounter them. For larger firms, creating resources and initiatives to drive these messages is not only easy, it is already being done. For micro-firms and small-to-medium firms, this is not achievable on their own and must rely on what is available from their information sources. The role of Industry and Professional Associations is to help with brokering that information and guidance.

"What are the distinct challenges faced by certain groups of people with disability (e.g. women, ATSI peoples, peoples from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, or LGBTI people) in relation to employment discrimination?"

Distinct challenges are not just felt by people from specific categories of diversity, but also the challenges of diversity are felt differently by different industries and sectors. A full fifty percent of respondents to ITCRA's survey do not focus on individual at-risk populations but either focus on multiple groups or on diversity in general. Of the 14 percent that focus on one specific Australian Human Rights Commission category, most focus on sex discrimination. This is not surprising considering the major push that Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) roles have been given in this field. 36 percent do not have a focus on diversity at all.

While ITCRA's respondents find that many ICT employers consider ICT a 'young' industry and thus are reticent to hire mature age workers, the experience of the local government sector is quite different, with a profile of workers that is older than the average. The peak body, Local Government Managers Australia has produced a Mature Age Workforce Resource 2015 book to assist with that particular issue. In certain circumstances, addressing a specific issue such as this is essential; however it is ITCRA's position that an overall program focusing on diversity, and its financial and competitive advantage, is more likely to gain popular 'traction' and penetration into a market that sometimes sees diversity more as an expensive social 'good' than a profit-generating business 'must' (Ham, 2015).

> *"Among other results, the economists found that shifting from an all-male or all-female office to one split evenly along gender lines could increase revenue by roughly 41 percent"*
>
> *– Dizikes, 2014*

With diversity so often painted as a corporate social good, and discussions tending to limit this down to one particular segment of the diverse population or another, it is astonishing to think how uncommonly we hear of the dollar-value potential being missed out by those without a diverse workforce—to put it bluntly, if failure to have a diverse workforce can cost as much as 41 percent in lost revenues, not having diversity in the workforce is an expensive luxury no business can afford (Dizikes, 2014). This philosophy is mirrored by the new *ILO Global Business & Disability Network Charter*. It was launched on 28th October 2015 with its simple message, "Employing persons with disability is not just a good moral cause; it is also good for business".

The lesson from universities is that diversity is essential to educational excellence: students learn about the world and humanity most effectively from each other because of the challenges to each other's assumptions. Not allowing for mechanisms to measure and monitor diversity does not in itself improve diversity because the approach fails to allow for a holistic review of individual merit and contribution to an overall diversity balance

(Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2015). This lesson can be translated into the corporate world: colleagues learn about their different markets and cultures most effectively from each other because assumptions made in the workplace can be challenged immediately.

The *Assistive Technologies Hackathon 2015* raised an interesting point that 'design is a conversation', particularly when accommodations are needed. Yet for business, the narrative is seldom about the conversation but about compliance. Karen Nakamura, Associate Professor of Anthropology and East Asian Studies raises an interesting perspective. Going to Yale University with a plan to focus on gay and lesbian issues in Japan, she switched to deaf politics and found similarities in the sense that there is a political identity in belonging to a diverse group, and a shared experience in generally not having family or support that shares that experience. Professor Nakamura's most recent project is exploring transsexuality in Japan where the local community has identified with people with disability rather than the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) community which gives it a very different political feel to a country such as Australia. This is useful to note, in terms of how diversity is a cultural or social classification and differences in how these are perceived affects how these are addressed (Martell, 2015).

> *"We believe in the dignity of all people and their right to respect and equality of opportunity. We value the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution that diversity brings to our community. Our aspiration is for Cambridge and the wider region to be safe, welcoming and inclusive."*
>
> *– The Equality Pledge, University of Cambridge, 2015*

ITCRA Recommendations

In recognition that:

- The categories that are used to define diversity are fluid and socially-constructed, based on concepts such as group identity and specific needs for accommodation;
- Comfort with 'diversity' requires learning diversity issues and concepts, and experience with diverse people from an early age through university into the workforce has the best chance of improving outcomes;
- Diverse workforces have the potential for increased innovation, profitability and success, but require leadership skills to manage the 'creative conflict' and manage the challenges to 'social capital' that results when a workforce is not all of a similar mind and background;
- Attitudes and information about diversity flows between recruiters and their clients with both being able to influence the diversity base of a workforce; and
- The audience for improving diversity awareness is not just decision-makers but the whole workforce at enterprise level, and labour market at national level.

ITCRA proposes that:

- Individual categories of diversity are presented as belonging to a holistic 'diversity matrix', where the goal for employers is to benefit from a diverse workforce rather than making limited accommodations for specific individuals from various 'groups';
- Accommodation and encouragement of benchmarking 'diversity' in workforces so that enterprises can have a strategically-designed, diverse workforce after appropriate precautions are in place to ensure it does not become an excuse to unfairly discriminate;
- Easy-to-understand and use resources are produced and provided for Small-to-Medium Enterprises which outline the dollar-value benefit of diversity as a workforce strategy, so that there is a 'carrot' approach to support well-established compliance requirements; and
- Accommodations for workers that are provided via grants or allowances are packaged and transferable to the worker, rather than needing to be applied for by each individual employer of that person.

Appendices

Appendix 1: ITCRA Discussion Papers

Revisiting Mature Age Workers, ITCRA Research Paper, March 2014

ICT and Indigenous Opportunity: the barriers of myths and otherness, ITCRA Research Paper, November 2013

Disability and ICT: Re-think the Equation and Review the Opportunity, ITCRA Research Paper, October 2011

Women in ICT: Discrimination Starts with a Stereotype, ITCRA Research Paper, April 2011

Mature Age Workers in ICT: Foundations, Effects and Approaches to Ageism – ITCRA Research Paper, January 2011

Appendix 2: ITCRA Members with Public Diversity Statements

At the commencement of ITCRA's submission preparation process, its Members' websites were reviewed for specific information on hiring mature age workers, workers with disability, and general diversity statements. The following is the list of Members whose websites had that specific information in easily-accessible, public spaces:

- **Ajilon**: Diversity council, diversity and inclusion project
- **Ambition**: Appoints Diana Hewitson as Head of Gender Diversity; London office has a Head of Diversity
- **Aurec**: EEO and Anti-Discrimination
- **Ambit**: Gender Diversity Initiatives
- **ChanderMacleod**: Age Diversity whitepaper
- **Experis**: General research
- **Greythorn**: Section on diversity
- **Hays**: General news
- **Jenny Barbour**: Links to VIC ICT for Women and Women in ICT
- **Manpower**: General news
- **Marks Siattin**: CSR, diversity and equality
- **M&T**: Diversity and privacy
- **PCA**: CSR
- **Peoplebank**: Diversity
- **Skilled**: Indigenous
- **Speller**: CSR
- **Talent**: Blog posts
- **Talent2**: Diversity whitepaper

Appendix 3: ITCRA Inquiry Submission Member Survey Results

Introduction and Method

ITCRA developed a survey for its Members to respond to the questions in the Australian Human Rights Discussion Paper. The survey was produced electronically on PeoplePulse, an online survey system. Potential respondents comprise ITCRA Members who have elected to receive electronic communications from ITCRA. Survey invitations were sent on Friday 13th November 2015, with three further reminders before survey being nominally closed on Friday 27th November 2015.

Analysis of the survey results were undertaken by reviewing the overview of responses; individual responses; and drilling down into the responses to identify any patterns or distinctive approaches based on demographic data. It was found that the patterns present were to be expected in terms of business size with larger more capable to do more, but that there were no remarkable patterns. On this basis, only the overview is presented below.

Number of respondents

- 112 ITCRA Members received emailed invitations to participate in the survey
- 49 respondents visited the survey site (44% of invitees)
- 30 respondents commenced the survey (27% of invitees)
- 21 respondents completed the survey (19% of invitees)

Respondent Demographics

Locations of services: in each State or Territory, the percentage of respondents which are operating in

- 63% Australian Capital Territory
- 83% New South Wales
- 10% Northern Territory
- 73% Queensland
- 47% South Australia
- 10% Tasmania
- 87% Victoria
- 37% Western Australia

Nature of Operations: in each type, the percentage who selected "YES" who offer services as

- 33% Internal recruitment teams

- 72% Contractor management services
- 97% Permanent placement services
- 97% Contracting services
- 33% RPO
- 24% MSP services
- 62% Payroll management services
- 67% Consulting services
- 70% Professional services
- 10% Outplacement/career transition services

Company Structure: the percentage of respondents who identify as each type of structure

- 24% Publicly listed company
- 59% Proprietary company
- 7% Single Director company

Other structures (under 5% each) are Company limited by guarantee; Trustee; and privately owned by a shareholding Board.

Number of direct Full-Time Equivalent employees: the percentage of respondents who identified the following groups

- 13% Up to 5 employees
- 37% 6 to 20
- 17% 21 to 50
- 7% 51 to 100
- 27% More than 100 employees

Number of workers currently supplied to clients as contractors or on-hired workers

- 31% currently supply up to 50 workers
- 14% 51 to 100
- 14% 101 to 200
- 17% 201 to 500
- 7% 501 to 1,000
- 17% currently supply more than 1,000 workers

Business Description: the percentage that would describe their business as

- 38% Multinational
- 28% National
- 34% Niche

Encountering and Promoting Diversity

The following questions asked respondents to consider the activity of recruitment & selection and the regularity with which diverse backgrounds are a factor in the process. Respondents were asked, even if the firm does not formally track candidates of diverse backgrounds, to provide an estimation if possible.

Does your organisation track diversity of candidates?

- 25% Always
- 21% Sometimes
- 54% Never

How often does your consultancy receive applications for ICT positions from candidates of diverse backgrounds?

- 62% Always
- 21% Sometimes
- 10% Rarely
- 7% Never
- 0% Unknown

How often does your consultancy shortlist candidates of diverse backgrounds into ICT positions with clients?

- 73% Routinely
- 13% Sometimes
- 7% Rarely
- 3% Never
- 3% Unknown

How often do clients hire candidates of diverse backgrounds from your organisation into ICT positions?

- 66% Routinely
- 21% Sometimes
- 7% Rarely
- 3% Never
- 3% Unknown

What activities does your enterprise undertake to encourage recruitment of talent from diverse populations?

(Multiples permitted)

- 63% Formal policy
- 50% Staff procedures
- 13% Benchmarking
- 29% Training
- 0% Incentives programs
- 4% Awards
- 25% Measurement and/or reporting

Other: working with companies that specialize in candidates from diverse populations; EEO policy; diversity in staff; including diversity in company Values; active community involvement

Does your enterprise focus on any particular at-risk section(s) of the workforce in placement activities?

(If focusing on more than one, respondents were directed to select 'Multiple/All')

- 4% Age discrimination
- 0% Disability
- 0% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- 0% Asylum seekers and refugees
- 11% Sex discrimination
- 0% Race
- 0% LGBTI
- 50% Multiple/All
- 36% None

Challenges of Diversity

For this section, respondents were asked to nominate in free text, "he specific challenges your enterprise has, specifically in terms of hiring candidates from diverse backgrounds into positions with clients…" Four stages were asked: assignment (i.e. receiving the brief), advertising, interviewing, and shortlisting. The challenges nominated were not specific or listed multiple times by the respondent, so the answers presented have been cleaned and de-duplicated as appropriate without changing the core meaning of the responses.

Assignment Stage/Generally:

- We check to see if the client has a diversity policy and if they have any diversification specifics they wish us to source for consideration.
- Unconscious bias.
- Lack of awareness of the need for gender diversity.
- It's always the same - availability and identification of resources in the Female demographic.
- That the skills required for the job are available in diverse candidate groups.
- It's all about what the client wants, at every step. We are agnostic at every step. As our own workforce demonstrates.
- We still get clients who will try to specify what they want, or rather don't want as far as gender, race, religion and age. This presents challenges as we will not entertain this concept and will always put forward applicants based on merit.
- Mostly dependent on client policy and processes.
- None, from our side provided there is adequate provision for hiring candidates from diverse backgrounds with our clients. The majority of our contractors will be working on-site with a client who may be operating different policies or none at all.
- Relevant skill set and industry background.
- There is an overwhelming volume of candidates in the IT field that are from diverse backgrounds, many clients are requesting specific diversity requirements at the assignment stage which is a challenge for the recruitment consultant to respond too while ensuring that the clients requirements are met, but still respecting best practice with regards to diversity of candidates.

Advertising Stage:

- We can tailor our ads to meet specific needs where requested to.
- Our own unconscious bias in writing advertisements.
- Attracting enough female candidates.
- None as far as we could identify. All candidates are considered based on the merits of their experience.

- When candidates are responding to advertisements, often candidates that are from a diverse background do not have English as their first language and therefore their CVs and applications in general are not necessarily as strong as candidates that are from an English speaking background, when their skills and qualifications may be just as good – if not better. When filtering through a large volume of applications this can be a challenge.

Interview Stage:

- We will seek to ensure each candidate gets a fair and balanced assessment.
- Unconscious bias is our questioning and a tendency to see ICT as a very male occupation.
- None as far as we would be concerned. However, we as an organisation have not yet embraced formal training so coaching our staff to consider diversity would overcome challenges of lack of knowledge.
- Organisational culture is often assessed at the interview stage of the recruitment process. Candidates from a diverse background are often viewed as not as good a cultural fit from other candidates, which can be a challenge.

Shortlisting Stage:

- We will seek to meet client specific requirements on a shortlist mix of candidates.
- Clients not willing to necessarily hire on merit.
- We do not positively or negatively discriminate and always put forward shortlists to clients based on skills, experience, cultural alignment and career aspirations it is then up to our clients to either accept or reject these applicants. Client acceptance is generally where our efforts can come unstuck; however, this appears to be becoming less regular.
- Mostly dependent on client policy and processes.
- Convincing clients to interview candidates.
- Shortlisting would largely depend where we would be placing a candidate. Depending upon the diversity we would need to consider could definitely effect our shortlisting.

What are the major specific challenges that the ICT industry faces in hiring and retaining people who are…

Mature age?

- Legacy systems often require more mature people as they have the skills. Often you have to sell the benefits of engaging a more mature person instead of someone younger to counter the false impression that IT is a young person's industry. Maturity normally brings pluses and minuses to bear and the client should be made aware of both for their consideration.

- They build long and deep experience in a specialist skill set which become irrelevant as new technology overtakes old. Soft skills are less well developed because of working in technical space for so long. This makes transition to new role extra hard and usually requires a drop in status, which is very hard to swallow.
- New software and use of technology tend to be better supported in younger generations.
- Clients acting in a discriminatory fashion - albeit often with an unknown bias.
- Don't see any challenges in the contract market specifically as skills are the number one criteria most often.
- Many of the newer technologies and methodologies have evolved in the last 5+ years. For many candidates this means that they require constant upskilling in new technologies and we find that in many roles that there are younger people doing this regularly, than there are mature age. Thus, the pool of mature age candidates is smaller to choose from.
- Client bias.
- Lack of contemporary knowledge in IT.
- A willingness by clients to engage them is the biggest barrier but beyond that, keeping their skills and experience relevant is also challenging and more so in technical roles versus more functional roles.
- Mostly dependent on client policy and processes.
- Clients prefer and see more value in paying recruiters fees for candidates at the younger end of the spectrum, even though younger candidates only tend to stay with employers for around two years.
- In the digital space it is even harder as mature candidates are automatically viewed as not being "digital natives".
- Client attitudes.
- I think the culture of an organisation could be a challenge for mature age hires.
- Discrimination of experience.

Disability?

- Often overcoming any personal bias against disabled candidates through ensuring the work-site is adequate for their needs and they have the skills, capacity and availability to do the job well.
- Depends on the disability: a physical disability—no disadvantages; a mental disability—could be difficult given the complexity of IT.
- Disability has not been an issue as long as the candidate has the skills and is able to perform the role and deliver the outcomes.
- Acceptance by clients though admittedly, we do not get many applicants in the ICT space from people with disabilities.
- Mostly dependent on client policy and processes.

- Client attitudes.
- Being able to provide adequate facilities and environments where costs can be a factor or client environments out of our control.
- Ability to do the job.

Diversity in general?

- Often it is physically sourcing enough diversity-specific individuals to meet requested client policy quota requirements.
- Society is becoming more accepting of diversity in general but still slow to adopt when talking about work.
- Mining sector has 14%; many attempts to chance since 1998; no net increase.
- The key challenge for the ICT industry is building the pipeline of females coming through the education sector and into the workforce.
- Preconceived ideas and judgements prove to be the biggest obstacles that we encounter.
- Employers have a tendency to put the responsibility of hiring diversity with recruitment agencies, rather than having effective hiring policies, hiring manager training, hiring manager KPI's themselves.
- Lack of training and education in this area. It is a hot topic in some organisations and barely recognised in others.
- Discrimination.

What lessons and leading practices has your enterprise implemented from knowledge gained from overseas ICT and white collar professional recruiters (whether in-house or competitors?)

- Not much, primarily because it does not feature highly for the majority of our clients, and therefore our research has not been extensive.
- Diversity makes good business sense.
- We operate an inclusive policy for LGBT, race, gender, disability, age or religion. We do not discriminate to any section of the community. We promote equal employment opportunities.
- As a business that employs and sponsors recruitment professionals from O/S directly into our business we do have the advantage of having everyday interactions with such people. The biggest take out from having these people around is that they bring with them no prejudices and no bias toward any particular group with our communities and judge everyone on merit. A lesson we can all learn.
- We have implement several corporate polices within our organisation to manage and promote equal employment opportunities and behaviours. Moreover, diversity is one of our core values.
- Depending on whether the candidates has come from overseas there can be a lot to learn. Europe and the UK have a lot of legislation and practices in place whereas other regions have nothing to learn from.

Australia is more advanced.

What are your sources for information, advice, and support for dealing with diverse workforces in your recruitment practices?

(Multiples permitted)

- 73% Government
- 91% Industry associations, unions, and Non-Government Organisations
- 59% Direct from clients
- 27% Media
- 36% Professional advisors

Equal Opportunity Legislation

How satisfied is your enterprise with the ability of existing legislation to address and remedy employment discrimination…?

In terms of workers?

- 38% Very satisfied
- 48% Somewhat satisfied
- 0% Somewhat dissatisfied
- 5% Very dissatisfied
- 10% Not Applicable

In terms of clients?

- 19% Very satisfied
- 48% Somewhat satisfied
- 14% Somewhat dissatisfied
- 5% Very dissatisfied
- 14% Not Applicable

How could existing legislation be amended or supplanted to work better at addressing and remedying employment discrimination?

- I'm not sure but there seems to be any number of ways around the current legislation. I'm not convinced that legislation is the answer and believe that education is more likely where the solution presents.
- For me employers need to take more responsibility and see the benefits themselves, rather than this being a legislative thing.
- I don't think legislation needs to be look at. I think training and education on the topic should be more widely available for smaller business in particular.

What difficulties are there for ICT and white collar professional recruiters in understanding and complying with equal opportunity-based legal obligations?

- ICT is a highly specialised skill set. The imposition of legal obligations is fine providing they do not hinder or impose unreasonable requirements on such an important industry for Australia's future prosperity and productivity, particularly where we already have a limited candidate pool to select from.
- Complexity.
- Recruiters are directed by their clients and are paid to deliver to their needs and wants.
- I wouldn't think there would be too many issues at all. The legislation supports treating people equally and I'm not sure how that could be perceived as difficult.
- Training and ongoing reinforcement.
- None. We should all understand. It's our job to make this a matter of importance. There are resources and agencies available to help with advice but more training would he useful.
- Education.

Challenges of Diversity in ICT Recruitment

What are the distinct challenges faced as an ICT and white collar professional recruiter in placing candidates of multiple diversities into roles with clients?

- Finding such candidates in the first place - from our experience they are very few, excepting the circa 15% of the industry that are females.
- Skills of candidates and in the ACT they need to be Australian Citizens for government work.
- Language / culture / stereotype discrimination.
- The major challenge comes in the form of the clients' acceptance of applicants based on merit. Often we see that the hiring manager themselves may not necessarily have an issue with such hires but are often worried about how they will be perceived by peers and more senior people within their organisations, should they engage multiple diversities into a team or business area.

- Lack of understanding and improved attitude and openness when hiring. Provided the candidate can do the work and there are no obvious physical obstacles.

General comments on this issue

- To date, this has not been a very significant issue for our specialist industry.
- I am convinced that these challenges will not be overcome through legislating and continuing to refine legislation. The resistance is in built in people and will only be overcome through education and early intervention.

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[i] ITCRA has included these for their value in discussion but is not specifically recommending particular actions.