



Diversity Field Officer Service

Australian Federation of Disability Organisations

Deakin University



What is the Diversity Field Officer Service?

- The **Diversity Field Officer Service** is a proof of concept focused on building 'disability confidence' and 'disability inclusion' in businesses
- The concept is an **employment engagement strategy** for small to medium businesses (<100 employees) to increase opportunities for employment of people with disability by linking Diversity Field Officers with local businesses
- Evidence based model – design, implementation and evaluation
- Literature review identified need to:
 - Understand genuine rather than perceived needs
 - Acknowledge business case is not enough
 - Provide ongoing support



Lead and our supporters

- Developed by the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, in partnership with Deakin University
- Involvement of 18 local, state and national organisations including Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, National Disability Insurance Agency, WorksafeVictoria and Geelong Community Foundation
- In-kind support from
 - Industry and employer bodies (Chamber, G21 Geelong Region Alliance, Committee for Geelong)
 - Employment support providers (Disability Employment Services, Enabled Employment and other recruiters)
 - Stakeholders who align with our work (GROW, GRLEN etc)



Why is this needed?

- There has been no significant improvement in the national labour force participation rate for people with disability (PWD) over more than the last decade despite economic growth overall
- This is in spite of the fact that Australia, along with other developed countries, is also facing a shrinking labour market due to population ageing and lower fertility rates (Mor Barak, 2014)



Why is this needed?

- The major barrier to equity in employment for people with disability is negative attitudes or a lack of awareness or confidence towards employment of PWD, rather than a lack of ability or potential (Murfitt 2006, HREOC 2005)
- Economic modelling by Deloitte and Access Economics in 2011 suggests that closing the gap between the labour market participation rates for people with and without disability by one third (10 points) would result in a cumulative \$43 billion increase in Australia's GDP over the next decade in real dollar terms
- It is clear that current strategies are not working and that a new approach, which successfully engages both business and PWD who want to work, is needed



Why Geelong?

- Geelong chosen due to:
 - Changing workforce demography of the region
 - Victorian trial site for the NDIS which is principally focused on increasing social and economic participation
 - Project endeavours to build the capacity of Geelong businesses, however has broader applications:
 - With NDIA, Worksafe, and TAC and other stakeholders
 - Potential centre of excellence in disability and injury
 - Establish connections and peer support for businesses to access
 - Great local support (e.g. Geelong Chamber)



What are Businesses getting?

- Diversity Field Officers are identifying businesses open to exploring and tapping into a diversified workforce
- One to one assistance to become more confident to:
 - retain employees who may acquire a disability (or may already have a disability that is not visible or disclosed) so that skilled talent is not lost
 - tap into a broader talent pool when making the next recruitment decision
 - become more welcoming of the 1 in 5 Australians who have a disability who are customers, stakeholders, referrals, word of mouth or family, friends or colleagues - who all form a potentially untapped market



What are businesses getting?

Five consistent elements

- A personal, tailored business review
- Increase capability within the leadership for sustainable change
- A disability friendly check covering unconscious bias, communications, workplace culture, policy, procedures, etc
- Customised road map – recommendations
- Establish the right connections and resources for each business



What are businesses getting?

One piece of puzzle

Customised, flexible and responsive

- Linking to, rather than duplicating existing services
- Recruitment support, rather than job matching
- Building confidence by growing awareness
- Intensive support, with support available for up to 12 months to September 2016
- Available to up to 50 businesses



Interim project outcomes

- **>95% of businesses have committed to two or more recommendations related to the employment of people with disability**
- **86% have or are open to amended wording on PDs and advertisements to be more inclusive of PWD and reasonable adjustments**
- **90% actively considering adjustments to interview processes**



Interim project outcomes

- **Almost half are actively** considering job carving/job-redesign, work experience, internships, graduate recruitment, apprenticeships, and volunteering for people with disability as a business benefit, with some specific opportunities identified
- **And over half are actively reviewing changes** to improve the experience of their customers



Interim project outcomes

- **Four in five are looking at measures to retain and improve conditions for current staff**, such as Employment Assistance Programs, mental health and wellbeing initiatives
- **Three in four are investigating disability awareness training** for leadership and staff
- **Genuine business interest (over 90%)** for the formation of a peer-network to share and support one another



Interim project outcomes

- Overall, the **brokering of a trusted relationship** i.e. **having a person to turn to** with disability-related questions and the **prior experience** of the Diversity Field Officers of **working in small business and industry**, have all emerged as critical
- Our preliminary research, consistent with the literature review, has indicated that **building confidence requires direct support, trust, and time**



Specific Outcomes Victoria Strachan

- As at end July 2016 working with the set target of 50 businesses including:
- Diversitat Training, MACS Aged Care, Geelong Cats, Harwood Andrews, Meredith Dairy, EMC Group, Repco Geelong, SC Technology, Tribal Campus, Derbyshire Homes, Avalon Airport
- Diverse industries – sport & recreation, not for profit, professional services, manufacturing, IT, hospitality & tourism, retail, construction, education & training, health & aged care, animal health, transport, government, real estate



Interim project outcomes

Customised Road Map Recommendations

- Training – disability, unconscious bias, mental health training
- Welcoming language – job adverts, website, social media, word of mouth
- Disclosure & workplace adjustments – “what to do, where to go”
- Recruitment – interviewing tips, work experience, internships, job carving, guaranteed interview, open employment
- Physical accessibility checklist
- Websites, event accessibility, training accessibility



Case Examples

Recruitment

Aged care facility - difficulty recruiting skilled catering staff

- Added disability friendly and encouraging wording to advertisement
- Received an application from a person with autism
- Referred manager to JobAccess resources 'How to interview person with autism'
- Applicant received interview experience
- Manager built confidence to interview person with autism



Case Examples

Guaranteed Interview Approach

Inspired by St John of God Health Care's approach to employment

- Inclusion of wording – if person with disability meets the inherent requirements of the role, one person with disability will be interviewed
- Arranged for 8 businesses to meet Neal Murphy in Geelong to unpack the approach – bringing our businesses together
- Businesses very keen to learn more



Case Examples

Job Carving Role

Food Production business

- Number of repetitive tasks in production line
- Preparation of PD with key tasks
- DFO working with business and DES to fill two roles
- DES provided 5 candidates for each role
- Business to commence interviewing in August
- Role of 'trusted navigator' important



Case Examples

Work Experience

Vet Clinic

- Attended disability awareness training arranged by DFO
- History of work experience
- Introduced to local 'Ticket to Work' program – work experience for students with disability
- Future SBAT opportunities
- Facilitated by DFO – finding local solution and resources



Case Examples

Graduates and Seasonal Internships

Legal Firm

- 26 roles for Law students
- HR manager understanding that PWD exist at all levels of industry – ‘entry level to CEO’ – and wanting to promote
- Addition of encouraging wording on adverts letting students with disability know of Guaranteed Interview Approach
- Released to Deakin, Monash, La Trobe Uni networks



Case Examples

Building Positive Workplace Culture

- Education about disability and unconscious bias – self check lists and exercises
- Resources for disability, mental health, unconscious bias training
- Educating staff to dispel myths and build trust – staff meetings, intranet etc
- Health & wellbeing surveys – providing examples and input for wording



Emerging Peer Support

In May 2016 we hosted our first peer support breakfast for 50 people

Examples of collaboration:

- Sharing of Diversity policy document by a major recreation organisation to several participating businesses
- A law firm sharing experience with a software company to establish an internship program
- Two businesses sharing information on employee assistance programs
- Managers talking peer-to-peer about personal experiences of managing diverse staff



Conclusion

- Employer engagement literature finalised and distributed to key stakeholders
- Action research methodology undertaken including baseline, regular measures and evaluation of engagement and confidence
- Full evaluation report
 - Employer Tool Kit
 - Final research report and publication of project outcomes
 - Inform the Australian Government's Disability Employment Services review (current and ongoing)
 - Potential rollout in other jurisdictions



Where to find us

- Website www.diversityfieldofficer.com.au
- Facebook www.facebook.com/diversityfieldofficer

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