



Hi all,

Peter Rickards has asked me to put this issue of the newsletter together and I would like to tell you a little about myself.

I am 168 cm tall , blonde, blue-eyed ....

Sorry... more seriously...

I recently wrote an article for the October newsletter about the difficulties of getting a job as a mature age worker. Writing this article for the ADDE Newsletter was a great experience for me as it gave me the opportunity to express my frustrations and air my grievances. It was a great outlet for me and I hope it provided a connection for others who may have experienced the same feelings. I also hope it exposed to the readers the true nature of what people go through when job seeking; hopefully catching the interest of those in the employment field as well.

Up until the age of 50 I thought I was very employable as I have had very broad work/life experience but I have found that diversity in the workforce is more of an idea than a reality. In addition to experiencing barriers to my age I also believe I have been excluded from at least one position, which I was short-listed for, due to my hearing disability. I hope that a forum such as this newsletter will help to redress the balance of diversity and disability in the Australian workforce.

It is for this reason that I am keen to give the editorship a go.

Regards,  
Kathy Leitch, *ADDE newsletter editor*

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*The great thing about getting older is that You don't lose all the other ages you've been. (Madeleine L'Engle )*

## **BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL LEADS FROM THE FRONT**

ADDE believes diversity in the workplace can only be achieved by governments leading from the front. All levels of government should take note:

November '06. Brisbane City Council (BCC) presented with a Federal Government Mature Age Employer Champion Award for its commitment to supporting 'wise heads'. The award recognises employers who employ at least 20 per cent of staff aged 45 and over and who implement age-positive practices.

Lord Mayor Campbell Newman said BCC had won the award because of its 'Great Employer, Clever Workforce' strategy which includes flexible work practices, equity and diversity and learning and development.

Some of the programs in place to achieve this strategy include developing initiatives such as prevention of age-related illness and injury, retraining and career management and redesigning work environments to meet the needs of mature employees. Over 60? This is not a problem for BCC – they give you the option to stay on whether fulltime or a few hours a week. Mature age employees can use these flexible work arrangement policies to change their working patterns to suit their changing lifestyle needs. To ensure that the policy is implemented they equip managers with the skills and knowledge for managing the changing workforce.

We all know that by retaining mature workers we retain key knowledge and skills; BCC has shown that it is possible to implement positive strategies to create a workforce that truly reflects the makeup of the Australian community. We need more governments around Australia to take up the challenge and become champions of the mature age workforce.

## **AM I NOW ON THE UNEMPLOYED SCRAP HEAP?**

I never thought I'd be without fulltime work for 5 months. Over this time I have had 4 weeks temporary work in an office where I was the oldest staff member and was 15 years older than my boss (a 36 year old). It is the first time in my working life that 'agism' has become an issue.

Since losing my job mid September, I have applied for more than 90 positions and have been granted 7 interviews. These are all positions of which I am suitably qualified for, but it seems there are other candidates more qualified than me getting the jobs. Or is it that prospective employers see my work

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history spanning 30 years and are making judgements about my age in relation to my suitability for the job?

I am now starting to re-look at my resume. Should I delete the years that I gained my qualifications? I have only briefly mentioned other work I have done pre 1990 – perhaps I should not mention this at all even though it adds up to lots of work /life experience that would not be possible for a younger candidate to have.

I am not only looking at how to make my resume appear to be as positive as possible but am considering other ways to make me appear as attractive as possible to any future employer. If I am lucky enough to get an interview there are personal things I am finding myself considering such as – ‘Are my grey hairs too obvious?’ ‘Should I colour my hair – again?’ ‘ Should I apply more face makeup to hide the wrinkles?’ (A reflection of my growing lack of confidence.)

What about other physical issues? In December last year I was short-listed (out of approximately 200 applicants) for a position with the Commonwealth Government. Having spent a day writing up the job application and a day doing a battery of tests with the recruitment company, I was then asked to undergo medical tests. I thought this would not be a problem – I was fit, healthy with plenty of years of life left in me. I had to take 4 hours off my temporary job to attend (thus losing half a day’s pay) only to find that the hearing test results required me to go to a hearing specialist to get a second opinion and therefore taking another 4 hours off work (and losing another half day’s pay). The interesting thing was that the sight test was done with my glasses on but the hearing test was done with my hearing aid off. The very fact that I wear a hearing aid assumes that I have a hearing loss, just like I need to wear glasses due to sight impairment. After 12 weeks from when I first put in the job application (and many phone calls from me enquiring as to the progress of the application) and with all the built up anticipation, I heard back from the recruitment company at the end of January informing me that I did not get the job. Naturally I was disappointed and I asked why. They could not tell me. I asked if it had anything to do with my hearing tests? They could not tell me.

So, here I am pondering my future. Have I been discriminated against because of my age and/or hearing impairment? I have now decided to take this further by seeking advice and will let you know how I go.

In these days of equal opportunity in the workforce it seems that there are less than open methods being used to ‘cull’ supposedly less than desirable applicants from the job seeking ranks. And yes, the ‘mature age blues’ are setting in.

Bye for now, K

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## **VCAT DECISION OPPORTUNITY FOR COMPANIES TO LEAD FROM THE FRONT IN MATURE AGE EMPLOYMENT**

A Melbourne company, Elite Customer Solutions, has received permission to target job seekers aged 45 and older. In the first ruling of its kind in Victoria, VCAT (Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal) granted Elite certain exemptions from the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act.

By targeting older applicants in their job advertisements, Elite hopes to draw prospective employees from a wider talent pool, thus creating more diversity in their workforce. Its general manager, Bev Excell, believes that older workers can bring life skills that younger staff do not yet have and can also fill skill shortages. Elite consulted with Swinburne University's Centre for Business, Work and the Ageing to help it manage staffing matters and learnt that mature age workers commit to work over an extended period which should help to address the high turnover rate they are currently experiencing.

What sort of recruitment strategies will they include? Their job advertisements will be placed in more traditional locations such as newspapers (including local). They will have a contact phone number (not just an email address) and will ensure the look and wording of the advertisement does not cause older workers to self select out of the process if they don't think they fit a perceived company culture. They will streamline their processes so that older applicants are not daunted by the sophistication of resumes and interview techniques, which can be so overwhelming. For further information about Elite go to [www.elitecs.com.au](http://www.elitecs.com.au) or call 9669 5295.

*Source: The Age Newspaper, 'The Ladder' column, November, 2006*

**Can/does your company or organisation follow in this company's footsteps?** We would love to hear what you are doing to diversify your workplace. Email the editor [kathy\\_leitch@hotmail.com](mailto:kathy_leitch@hotmail.com)

## **EXTRACTS FROM STEPHEN GIANNI'S CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP**

My name is Stephen Gianni and I'm the Director of leadership Plus, a community organization that promotes people with disabilities as leaders. In October and November last 2006 I was fortunate to travel overseas on a Churchill Fellowship to investigate leadership and disability in Europe. I've made my report on what I experienced into a series of shorter articles

In the course of the Fellowship, three countries were visited (United Kingdom, Ireland and Germany). This article looks at the U.K.

The opportunities that nations and their Governments, businesses and communities can gain by ensuring that diversity is promoted in all levels of society are slowly being uncovered and developed. This thinking and practice

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is also prevalent in the development of leaders and leadership. The inclusion of people with disabilities in any and all leadership development seems to be strongly supported in all of the countries visited. All do it in slightly different ways, but all are looking for the connection between, on the one hand, social, political and business development, and on the other, how to promote that development in an inclusive and creative way.

## **LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS**

The two drivers observed in the area of leadership and business were:

- 1) That the make-up of any business (or in fact any organisation) should reflect the market that the business operates in and the community in which it sits.
- 2) This should occur in all levels of the business and when it occurs in leadership it provides the business with a competitive advantage.

There were many examples of how these drivers were supported by specific initiatives relating directly to people with disabilities.

The Leadership Recruitment program at SCOPE UK takes tertiary graduates from a wide cross section of academic backgrounds and after an exhaustive process offers the best of them to UK businesses. They are for all intents and purposes, trainees. They undertake real work in teams and divisions of businesses in all business sectors.

The recruits are mostly young and have a variety of disabilities. The current group of trainees at Lehman Brothers investment bank explained that the leadership component was about two things. Firstly, they were taking the lead in breaking down barriers for people with disabilities who were employees of the bank and, secondly, they were showing other people with disabilities outside the bank, what was possible.

The Leadership Recruitment program is a profit-making venture of SCOPE and needs to build from around 30 recruits to 85 before it can be considered to be not only sustainable but also able to support other SCOPE initiatives. The participating businesses pay SCOPE a lump sum for a six-month period with an option of another six months. The trainees are paid a wage and are supported by SCOPE during the traineeship. At the end of the 6 or 12 months the business decides to whom they will offer a permanent position. Lehman Brothers for example offered 80% of its trainees last year a permanent full time role.

This program has been developed and is successful because of the realisation by business that they need the best recruits possible and that they need to come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including disability. The diversity model and having the best recruits possible, be they disabled, women, black and/or minority ethnic groups, was crucial to the businesses visited. These businesses included, Lehman Brothers Bank, Barclays Bank,

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Ed Excel, Disability Matters and the Employers' Forum on Disability (A peak employer's body).

SCOPE is also in the process of developing a leadership-mentoring program and leadership internships similar to those undertaken currently at Leadership Plus.

Organisations such as Disability Matters and the Employers Forum on Disability offer a range of programs and information tailored to specific businesses. The Employers' Forum is sustained through support from a range of businesses and offers them the opportunity to learn more about disability. Disability Matters is a consultancy that has worked with a cross section of businesses and statutory authorities to develop the leadership capacities of people with disabilities. They design complex programs with components that cover personal development, mentoring and useful leadership styles and traits. Disability Matters is owned and run by Stephen Duckworth.

The Employers' Forum on Disability is led by Susan Scott-Parker. Amongst other things the Forum developed a concept known as "Dining with a Difference". This is a choreographed dinner with two or three people with disabilities that shows their leadership capacities. James Partridge from Changing Faces is a proponent of the Dining with a Difference concept.

The Barclay Bank has a strong commitment to people with disabilities throughout the bank and in its leadership. Together with women and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, people with disabilities are considered to be the main targets of the bank's inclusion and diversity policy. Along with Dianne Wright who heads up the Access and Equity area of the bank, Disability Matters has developed specific accelerator programs for the Bank.

## **LEADERSHIP AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

The expectation amongst people with disabilities who contributed to this Churchill Fellowship is that the public sector or civil service, as it is sometimes referred to, will show leadership with respect to the inclusion of people with disabilities in all of its levels, including how it leads both internally and externally.

The Cabinet Office in the UK houses the Civil Service Diversity project. It focuses on the leadership and diversity capacity of the Civil Service.

This work came out of the Cabinet Office Diversity Plan. It is designed to change the levels of leadership representation of diverse population groups in the one million strong civil services. The leadership group is around 3,000 in the senior executive service. There are about 20 permanent departmental secretaries.

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Because of the small number of people in the senior executive service there is not much “churn” or turnover, so there needs to be a focus on diversity recruitment from both the internal and external pools of talent. The internal people will be promoted through the National School of Government at Sunningdale who are becoming more and more strategic in their work, for example outsourcing and managing the work as opposed to delivering all of it themselves.

The diversity rationale is based on the development of three arguments:

- A moral case,
- A legislative case,
- A business case.

The key success factor for diversity lies in changing the culture of the civil service. The best way to change a culture is to have more and more people from the diversity groups in and active towards the top.

The model they have been using has just undergone a review. The new model will have a stronger focus on targeting those with the greatest potential to develop as leaders. These potential leaders will undergo an arduous assessment process, and receive a mentor from within the Civil Service but external to the department they currently work in. Each participant receives a personal development budget, currently at the level of 7,000 pounds.

One of the difficulties confronting the diversity program is how to encourage those civil servants to come forward based on their disability. The issue of merit over diversity is also important. However, contemporary leadership theories, for example emergent leadership and transformational leadership, are based on an understanding of vulnerability. Women, BAME and people with disabilities could make better leaders. If this message can be transmitted, people from these groups will allow and encourage their nomination as leadership candidates not in spite of their disadvantage but because of it.

The model as outlined above is delivered currently by a community organisation, Disability Partnerships. Their leadership programs are directed by Chloe Franks. They began delivering programs in leadership based on broad groups of people with disabilities and not just those in the civil service. However, their lack of viability and desire for ongoing secure funding pushed them into a partnership with the Cabinet Office and now they only deliver leadership programs to the civil service.

Some departments within the civil service have decided to focus on disability specifically and an outstanding example is in the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). The Department of Probation and Parole decided that they needed to target BAME and disability with respect to leadership development. They employed a consultant to develop the program and to deliver it. These consultants subcontracted the disability component to Disability Matters. The program is a series of workshops over two years. They deliver the program to both managers with a disability and BAME managers

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offering separate components when necessary. About half of the program is delivered to the whole group and the other half to the separated groups.

Sally Rance is a senior manager in one of the largest and most busy NOMS offices in London. She considers that the program has been of enormous benefit to her. Of the 16 people taking part in the program, four have disabilities.

The civil service in the UK has a network of people with disabilities who work within it. The Chair is Paul Zickel. They attempt to find solutions to disability related issues that arise specifically in the civil service. Their work is undertaken in addition to their actual civil service roles. They have developed a survey tool for the civil service to use in gaining an understanding of the numbers and functions of people with disability working within it.

All Government agencies must develop a disability equality duty by December 2006. This is a tool under the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity legislation amendment that requires all Government funded agencies to show how they will make their organisations and services accessible to people with disabilities. The Disability Rights Commission has developed a template against which each of the agencies can measure their duties. The DRC intends to make leadership one of the criteria against which a duty will be measured.