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Australian Human Rights Commission-Business and Human Rights Work

This document highlights the Commission’s National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination, the development of tools and guidance for Australian employees. It also details the annual dialogue on business and human rights.

NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

In 2016, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) undertook a National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability.¹ The Inquiry examined practices and attitudes within businesses and laws that deny or diminish equal participation within Australian workplaces.

The Inquiry report detailed a range of good practice strategies based on research and evidence obtained through consultations on how employers can ensure non-discriminatory recruitment, retention and training for older people and people with disability.

Strategies were categorised into: leadership commitment towards recruitment, training and retaining of older people and people with disability, recruitment processes, building workplace flexibility, facilitating transitions, secondments, skills building opportunities,

provision of targeted education and training for older people and people with disability and establishing strong networks with peak bodies and professional associations to ensure professional standards for workplace diversity.



Photo: AHRC

The Inquiry process involved 120 consultations in over 20 locations around Australia (including capital cities, regional, rural and remote areas) with the participation of 1,175 individuals. In each location at least three consultations were held with: older people, peak organisations and key

¹ Australian Human Rights Commission (2016), Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability.

https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/WTW_2016_Full_Report_AHRC_ac.pdf

stakeholders including business and people with disabilities.

The approach targeted growth sectors in the Australian economy including health care and social assistance, accommodation, food, retail, finance and insurance sectors as well as a focus on small and medium businesses.

The AHRC also made recommendations on laws that should be made or amended, and actions that should be taken to address employment discrimination against older Australians and Australians with disabilities.

ONLINE RESOURCES, TOOLS AND GUIDANCE FOR AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYERS

The AHRC maintains an online portal with resources, tools and guidance for Australian employers to help prevent discrimination and promote respect for human rights in Australian workplaces.²

The tools and materials provide guidance on:

- ✓ What to include in a workplace discrimination and harassment policy
- ✓ What the terms bullying, harassment and discrimination mean
- ✓ Anti-discrimination laws that apply to workplaces and how the law applies to employees based on age, sex, pregnancy, family responsibilities, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and other characteristics
- ✓ Liability for discrimination or harassment occurring in the workplace

- ✓ What to do if an employee makes a complaint of discrimination or harassment

The AHRC also maintains an enquiry and information service for Australian employers. The National Information Service (NIS) provides information and referrals for individuals, organisations and employers about a range of human rights and discrimination issues.³

NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In partnership with the UN Global Compact Network Australia, the AHRC leads an annual dialogue on business and human rights. This event is Australia's annual multi-stakeholder forum aimed at driving the business and human rights agenda forward.

As an independent institution, the AHRC plays an important role in bringing civil society, State and non-State actors together to promote and protect human rights in the context of business operations and activities.

Since 2014, the Dialogue has consistently seen substantial engagement from business, investors, government, civil society and academia. The Dialogue supports knowledge sharing between stakeholder groups to further Australian businesses' capacity to respect and promote human rights in their business operations and activities.

² Australian Human Rights Commission (n.d.), Employers. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/employers>

³ Australian Human Rights Commission (n.d.), Complaints: Contact the National Information Service.

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/complaints/contact-national-information-service>

Given the recent developments in establishing Modern Slavery legislation in Australia, the focus of the 2018 Dialogue was on addressing modern slavery in supply chains, and the importance of situating this work within a broader human rights framework.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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