The case for accredited diversity management qualifications

Demonstrated need

To be successful in an increasingly globally competitive environment, modern corporations must develop workplace cultures which attract both the best workers and provide development and career path options for all potential employees. Given the relative labour shortages that exist in Australia, companies embracing and managing diversity will have the greatest chance of maintaining a sustainable, productive and efficient workforce through the strategic selection, training and management of disadvantaged and minority labour market groups.

Many global organisations understand that having a diversity and inclusion strategy is crucial to their commercial success and the conversation around diversity and Inclusion has progressed from a social welfare platform to one with a compelling business case.

However there is no professional qualification for those who wish to pursue careers as diversity specialists (either at executive or supervisory levels) and, in Australia at least, business still struggles to implement comprehensive diversity and inclusion programs in the workplace. Instead they focus on individual diversity pillars (such as gender, disability or indigenous background) based on funding or labour market programs rather than incorporating diversity management into career succession planning and corporate workforce development.

Moreover, candidates from diverse backgrounds searching for an organization cannot discern any difference on face value between one organization and another with regard to their inclusion practices.

In light of this, the climate has never been better to develop a formal, accredited qualification which will provide management with the skills and capability to identify, recruit and develop their workforce from the widest pool of available labour.

Since 1995 Diversity@Work, a division of Aegis Services Australia, has specialised in the promotion of diversity management to Australian business and has undertaken considerable research and commissioned reports which clearly demonstrate the need for the management of diversity and social inclusion as an essential part of triple bottom line management for sustainability. Key publications include:

- "The Manager of the 21st Century - a 2020 Vision", Boston Consulting Group, commissioned by Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) – *Attachment 1;*
- "Future Work Skills 2020" Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, California, USA – *Attachment 2;*

- "Making Diversity Work", Melbourne business school, University of Melbourne, The University of South Australia and Diversity@Work, funded from a grant by the Australian Research Council – *Attachment 3*;
- "Escan 2012", Environmental scan of emerging skills issues in the Business Services Sector prepared by Innovation and Business Skills Australia - *Attachment 4*;
- Human Rights and Anti-discrimination Bill 2012 – fact sheet, Attorney General's Department, Australian Government, 2012 – *Attachment 5*;
- The WGE Act 2012 at a Glance, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Australian Government, 2012 – Attachment 6;

Environmental scan

The research by Diversity@Work indicates that organisations which consciously implement strategies to create and maintain a high diversity workforce achieve significant improvement in organisational performance, reductions in employee turnover rates and tangible improvements in individual employee work performance and productivity (see charts in attachment 3). This is particularly relevant today as the Business Services Industry aims to develop and deploy superior management practices to increase innovation, productivity and workforce sustainability. Employers will be demanding a mix of skills from different disciplines and a stronger focus on generic, transferable skills. Skills in communication and relationship management (both internal and external) are expected to be particularly important as routine tasks move off shore and businesses seek to increase their client base by providing premium, customised services.

By building digital literacy employers can take advantage of new and emerging workplace design opportunities that will come with the National Broadband Network. There is increasing pressure to plan for and invest in workforce development especially with respect to innovative work practices. With growing competition for skilled labour, the business services industry and employers in general must consider how they can utilise technology to appeal to, recruit and provide skilling opportunities for the widest range of workers including an ever increasing proportion of the aforementioned members from diverse labour market groups.

Employers with leadership teams skilled in diversity management will generate organisational structures, workplace cultures and innovative working conditions which will be attractive to all Australians irrespective of disability, indigenous, gender, sexual orientation, cultural, language, age and generational differences.

This proposal responds to the challenges and opportunities described by IBSA in their Escan2012, particularly in relation to the following:

- The need for higher level skills particularly at the Certificate IV and Diploma level qualifications. Particularly strong growth has occurred in the Diploma of Management and the customer contact industry qualifications are also growing strongly – but with limited emphasis on diversity.

- Developing management and leadership skills in diversity at all levels in organisations

- The blurring of industry and occupational boundaries creating occupational and skills convergence including new and emerging opportunities for diversity groups

- The growth of social media and digital technology solutions to work facilitate flexibility and customisation of tasks providing a more level playing field in terms of productivity for members of diversity groups.

- With accredited qualifications, diversity specialists such as Diversity@Work can consult with SMEs or Corporations to identify and plan for workforce sustainability through diversity strategies, and

- Widening the recruitment pool by making learning opportunities available to all individuals irrespective of their disadvantage in the labour market.

Legislative and regulatory imperatives

In addition to standard ASIC and ASX reporting requirements, two significant legislative changes introduced in 2012 make it imperative that employers are fully aware of their obligations and employee rights with respect to gender equality and anti-discrimination.

   a. **Draft Human Rights and Anti-discrimination Act 2012**
   On 21 November 2012 the federal government announced that it will introduce clearer, simpler and stronger anti-discrimination laws by consolidating the wide range of existing legislation into one Act. The Act will consolidate five current anti-discrimination Acts (Sex, Race, Disability, Age discrimination and AHRC Acts) into a single piece of legislation. It will also include and enshrine elements of the Fair Work Australia Act. The attached fact sheet clearly indicates that there are new diversity groups that will be protected (sexual orientation and gender identity) and there will be increased protections for groups covered under current legislation. Compliance with the Act and the implementation of effective diversity management practices will be mandatory for larger organisations and best practice for all employers irrespective of size. Whilst the legislation is still under development the Australian Government is seeking to ensure the highest current standards are consistently applied and enforced across all areas of public life.

   a. **Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012**

   The Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 replaces the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999. From 2013-14, the Act will require all non-government companies

employing more than 100 employees to comply with increased reporting and disclosure regulations with respect to a wide range of Gender Equality Indicators (GEIs):

- Gender composition of the workforce
- Gender composition of governing bodies of relevant employers
- Equal remuneration between women and men
- Availability and utility of employment terms, conditions and practices relating to flexible working arrangements for employees and to working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities
- Consultation with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace
- Any other matters specified by the Minister in a legislative instrument.

These increases the need for company executives, management, HR professionals and supervisors to maintain comprehensive and current understanding the Australian legislative framework and develop specific skills in implementing sound diversity management strategies in compliance with regulation to minimise potential exposure to litigation.

Industry recognition of diversity champions,

Emphasis on effective diversity management and recognition of business best practice is becoming more mainstream for CEO's, HR professionals, line management and supervisors. The Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) presents annual Diversity Awards recognising diversity champions at CEO and HR executive levels as well the following specific awards related to diversity initiatives in employment.

- Inclusive workplace of the Year Award
- Sir Ken Robinson Award for Workforce flexibility (New for 2013)
- Age Diversity in the Workplace Award
- Cross Cultural Management Award
- Excellence in Disability Employment
- Gender Equity in the Workplace
- Indigenous Employment Award
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Inclusion (LGBTI – New for 2013)
- AHRI "R U OK? Day" Workplace Award

Overview of Proposed Qualifications and Skill Sets

Job Roles

Diversity@Work believes that there are three major job Roles which would be enhanced by the introduction of accredited diversity management qualifications and skillsets.

Job Role	Proposed Qualification
1. **Chief Diversity Officer or Corporate Diversity Manager** - A senior executive driving diversity is an essential element of change management in workplace culture. This role would almost be equivalent to the Chief Financial Officer or Chief Operating Officer and take responsibility for the strategic development and implementation of a Company's diversity engagement including workforce and workplace management policies.	• **Diploma of Diversity Management** with strategic and/or corporate planning emphasis. The qualification would contain specified skill sets with competencies which could be electives in Advanced Diploma or Graduate Diploma of Management. Key competencies in this qualification would focus on leadership, strategy development, cultural change management and legislative compliance.
2. **Division or Section Managers** in charge of implementing policies, procedures and initiatives to harmonise their workplace and measure evaluate and report on diversity outcomes. Also applicable to graduate HR professionals commencing employment.	• **Diploma of Diversity Management** with emphasis on the role of middle managers as custodians of a diverse workplace and role models in appropriate behaviour. Policy implementation, individual performance, outcomes reporting and diversity awareness and management in the workplace would be key competencies.
3. **Team Leaders and Supervisors** of large work teams which generally attract a wide range of diversity groups at entry level (e.g. Customer service operator teams at large call centres)	• **Certificate IV in Diversity Management** with focus on model behaviours, coaching and the development of efficient and effective teams responsive to the requirements of different diversity groups. The Certificate IV would also have identified skill sets (such as diversity awareness in the workplace) which could be a recognised adjunct for supervisors who have already obtained a Certificate Iv in frontline management.

Proposed Competencies

Below is a table of proposed competency elements which would be essential to a diversity management qualification.

Diversity management competency element	Diploma Level	Cert IV Level	Skill Set cluster
1. Leadership and Diversity	✓	✓	
2. Workforce Planning for social inclusion	✓		
3. Developing a diversity inclusion strategy	✓		
4. Developing a business case for diversity and inclusion	✓		
5. Workforce development strategies for a diverse workplace	✓		
6. Creating/maintaining a workplace culture for diversity	✓	✓	
7. Digital literacy enabling flexible workplace practices	✓	✓	
8. Measuring and evaluating diversity outcomes	✓	✓	
9. Maximising team capacity & capability in a diverse workplace		✓	
10. Managing performance/productivity in a diverse workplace	✓	✓	
11. Australian legislation and corporate compliance	✓		
12. Human rights and employer workplace responsibilities	✓	✓	
13. Workplace policies and procedures for diversity management	✓	✓	
14. Understanding and addressing bias	✓	✓	

15. Management and awareness of global, national and workplace demographics for each of the following diversity groups:
   a. Mature workers
   b. Age diversity (Generational)
   c. Cross Cultural awareness
   d. Disability Employment
   e. Gender Equity
   f. Indigenous Employment
   g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Inclusion (LGBTI)
	(management focus)
	
	✓
		Awareness focus)
		
		✓
			Single skill set

16. Management and awareness of personal, sociological and workplace inclusion issues associated with each of the following diversity groups:	(management focus)	(Awareness focus)	Single skill set
a. Mature workers			
b. Age diversity (Generational)	✓	✓	
c. Cross Cultural awareness			
d. Disability Employment			
e. Gender Equity			
f. Indigenous Employment			
g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Inclusion (LGBTI)			

Conclusion

Given the pending anti-discrimination legislation and the growing impetus in the recognition of management skills in diversity and social inclusion in the workplace, Diversity@Work recommends that the development and accreditation of the Diploma and Certificate IV in Diversity Management under the Business Services Package should be placed as a high priority with a view to achieving endorsement prior to the end of 2013.

Diversity@work, supported by the resources of Aegis Services Australia has both the expertise and qualified personnel to work with IBSA to flesh out the descriptors , the required skills and knowledge attributes and performance criteria for each competency unit. Aegis Services Australia would also be willing to participate as a corporate member on an IBSA industry advisory panel for diversity qualifications in the contact centre industry.

Further information and project follow up

Ms Andrea O'Bryan, Vice President Diversity@Work, Aegis Services Australia will liaise with IBSA and appropriate consultants with respect to the development of diversity qualifications. Ms O'Bryan can be contacted on mobile 0418 345 488 and email Andrea@Divesityatwork.com.au should you require any clarification regarding this proposal.

Yours sincerely

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