

### 3. What business and employers can do

Employers, businesses and the organisations that represent them, have a critical role to play in recruiting, retaining and training older people and people with disability. The Inquiry offers a suite of strategies based on research and evidence heard by the Inquiry about how employers can lift representation and ensure non-discriminatory recruitment, retention and training practices while maintaining and improving productivity. There is no single ‘one size fits all’ approach and the Inquiry acknowledges the broad range and diversity of large, medium and small businesses, industries and contexts. Some of the strategies may lend themselves more readily to larger employers however the Inquiry trusts that small and medium enterprises will find strategies that they can usefully adopt in their context. The Report includes many good practice examples which showcase these ideas and practices in action.

The Report also includes a chapter which presents recommendations for what peak bodies and professional associations can do to increase employment of older people and people with disability.

#### **Leadership commitment**

Leaders should commit to recruiting and retaining older people and people with disability and building inclusive workplace cultures by developing and communicating a strong statement of commitment to action by CEO and leadership. This needs to be supported by a coherent and systemic organisational business strategy which clearly links to business goals, articulates the business case and incorporates the following:

- setting voluntary targets for the recruitment and retention of older people and people with disability based on analysis of workforce and customer data
- developing and implementing practical strategies to achieve targets and articulating them into performance agreements and appraisals
- collecting baseline data to raise visibility of issues, tracking and reporting on progress regularly
- monitoring and accountability within the organisation and externally
- networking and employer–employer mentoring
- partnerships with expert or specialist organisations
- working with or encouraging the supply chain to recruit and retain older people and people with disability and adopt inclusive practices
- providing guidance to support disability disclosure in a non-threatening and non-discriminatory manner
- providing accessible ICT across all the organisation’s functions and access points
- making it easy to provide workplace adjustments
- facilitating and supporting employee networks to support diversity initiatives
- providing internship/traineeship/apprenticeship, mentoring programs.

#### **Ensure non-discriminatory recruitment and retention practices**

- Review attraction, recruitment and retention processes to ensure non-discriminatory practices, language and accessibility
- Where recruitment agencies are used, build organisational expectations about diversity, non-discriminatory practice and compliance with legal obligations into contracts

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- Ensure retention practices do not discriminate against older people and people with disability, for example, access to opportunities for promotion, training and professional development.

### **Build workplace flexibility**

- Ensure that flexible work practices are ‘mainstream’ by making job design and work environments flexible for all (rather than only on request or by exception), as far as the demands of the role allow.

### **Facilitate transitions**

- In situations in which preparations are being made for older staff to leave an employer for reasons other than voluntary retirement, support can be provided to facilitate their transition into other industries or occupations by providing timely, relevant skills training and identifying transferable skills.
- For carers, facilitate leave for caring responsibilities or entry back into work.

### **Provide targeted education and training in the workplace**

- Support older people and people with disability in the workplace with information about
  - » their rights and responsibilities, organisational policies, grievance mechanisms
  - » flexible leave options
  - » employee driven networks.
- Support managers and supervisors in creating and managing diverse teams and flexible workplaces by assisting with job redesign, building skills to manage employees flexibly, providing information for managers for example mental health guidelines, manager support and training on the nature and impact of discrimination.

### **Recommendations for peak bodies and professional associations**

To further support achieving significant change, the Inquiry recommends that peak bodies and professional associations consider the following:

- fostering networks and partnerships to share ideas and experience
- promoting champions and awards programs, showcasing good practice and positive stories
- developing partnerships with employment agencies, educational institutions, skills training programs, and social enterprises to build a skilled workforce
- bringing different industries together to develop strategies to transition people from declining industries to growth industries
- providing information and resources, for example, on how to provide more flexible workplaces, the availability of government-funded programs like the Restart wage subsidy and the Employment Assistance Fund
- consider developing industry or professional standards and accreditation systems for workforce diversity. Accreditation would be positioned and promoted as a valued asset by business which allows consumers to make an informed, reliable choice.