



Office of the Commissioner for
Public Employment

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Willing & Able Strategy Progress Report

for the period December 2003-September 2004

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Northern Territory Government

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Executive Summary

This document reports the progress of the Willing and Able Strategy (the Strategy) against the main objectives for: recruitment, entry level training, facilities and infrastructure, employees who acquire a disability, developmental opportunities, input by people with disabilities, and review and evaluation. The aim of the Strategy in its first year is to put in place support mechanisms at a sector-wide level to enable agencies to implement the Strategy locally in the second year. Thus we summarise here first what has been achieved and second what is being planned for the near future under each objective.

On recruitment this report has shown how the Strategy Implementation Team has assessed the capacity of the NTPS to provide a supportive recruitment process for people with disabilities and identified this as currently being poor. The future engagement of a specialist disability recruitment service is recommended in order to provide a centralised recruitment service, pre-screening, advice to selection panels, on-site visits, co-ordinating support and providing statistics. This service is a necessary pre-condition of a trial of automatic interviews for people with disabilities who met essential selection criteria. A recruitment advertising statement is being developed by a sub-committee of the Implementation Team.

On entry level training the report describes how the Project Employment service for people with intellectual disabilities has been reviewed and suggests some changes. The review identified that the levy collected to fund Project Employment only funds the provision of a salary and not further on-costs. Given the extra costs of employing people in regional and remote areas this appears to be a significant disincentive to employing people with intellectual disabilities in a remote area. Funding of additional on-costs (FOILS, freight and accommodation allowances) for Project Employment participants from regional and remote areas out of the current levy is recommended. The review has also led to all new Project Employment participants now being offered a New Apprenticeship giving participants an outcome over and above the work placement previously offered. Work placements are reported to be a valuable experience for the participant with no cost to the agency. It is recommended that

these be more readily available within the NTPS and that a mechanism to ensure this occurs is to employ the special recruitment service discussed above.

Facilities and infrastructure have been reviewed and it is recommended that the NTPS introduce a supported wage system clause into relevant industrial instruments. This should be achieved in the current enterprise bargaining round provided the unions agree. Supported wage system clauses allow for people with disabilities to be paid on the basis of their productivity (i.e. the wage can be reduced proportionate to their ability to perform the total job) but maintains other conditions of employment.

Activity around supporting employees who acquire a disability is reported. The winning entry for the Equity and Diversity – Open Category Award from NT WorkSafe focussed on this area and is briefly described in the report. It should be noted that the specialist recruitment service could also assist employees in this category by providing a centralised service for redeployment and promotional positions.

Awareness raising and training activities have been integral to the success of the Strategy in its first year. They included the launch of the Strategy, training provided for CEOs and HR staff, and the use of the Equity and Diversity awards as a vehicle for showcasing disability initiatives. A special category will be added to the 2005 Equity and Diversity awards for implementing the Strategy.

The disability Action Network (dAN) for NTPS staff has been established in order to provide input by people with disabilities. dAN has assisted with the redefinition of disabilities for Personnel Integrated Payroll System (PIPS) entries.

The main activities to review and evaluate the Strategy have been to establish the Strategy Implementation Team, to begin to improve definitions of disability used in NTPS data collection, and to increase the amount of people entering disability (and other EEO) data in MyHR (the user name for PIPS). Overall the number of people identifying their disability status has improved leading to a reduction of almost 7% (from 64.1% to 57.5%) in persons whose status is unknown. Where agencies have implemented programs to improve self-reporting (at DPC, HACS, DIPE and DBIRD)

considerable improvement can be observed. In the best example Darwin Port Corporation decreased their % unknown from 62% to 5%.

In summary, as planned for the first year of the Strategy, the Implementation Team has begun to lay down a new central framework to support the employment of people with disabilities which will enable more agency-level initiatives.

1.0 Background

Within the Northern Territory almost 13% of the working age population have a disability¹ and the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is double that for people without a disability. The Northern Territory Government, as part of its commitment to achieving a workforce which is representative of the NT population, endorsed the Willing & Able Strategy in 2003. The Strategy is about good management focussed on people and is in accord with the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act* principles of merit and the Government's broader social justice agenda.

The Strategy was launched on 3 December 2003, the International Day of People with a Disability by Minister Stirling. The Strategy is being implemented by an Implementation Team, which is made up of representatives from NTPS agencies. The Team examines Strategy action items and makes recommendations to the Commissioner for Public Employment on how to proceed. The formation and work of the Team is detailed in part 9.1 of this report.

The aim of the Strategy in its first year is to put in place support mechanisms at a sector-wide level to enable agencies to implement the Strategy locally in the second year. Therefore, this report focuses on the work undertaken by the Implementation Team, with some additional information on specific initiatives by individual agencies. It is anticipated that next year, when activities are more focused at the agency level, the progress report will contain much more feedback from agencies on their progress in the implementation of the Strategy.

This document reports progress and/or activities to date under a), and planned activities under b), for each of the main objectives of the Strategy. These objectives are for: recruitment, entry level training, facilities and infrastructure, employees who acquire a disability, developmental opportunities, input by people with disabilities, and review and evaluation.

¹ Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics *Disability, Ageing and Carers Survey*, 1998, 12.9% of persons (14,300 people) aged 15-64 in the NT identify as having a disability.

2.0 REPORT FINDINGS

2.1 Recruitment processes (Strategy Objective 1)

The action undertaken in the first nine months of the implementation of the Strategy in the recruitment area has focussed on the following:-

- assessing the capacity of the NTPS to provide a supportive recruitment process for people with disabilities, within merit selection principles;
- examining the feasibility of allowing any person with a disability who meets the essential selection criteria to be automatically interviewed;
- reviewing training for selection panel members in relation to interviewing people with disabilities; and,
- inserting a statement in all recruitment advertising encouraging applications from people with disabilities.

2.1.1 Capacity to provide a supportive recruitment process

a) Findings

During the first six months of the implementation phase of the Strategy, it has become apparent that the NTPS would benefit substantially from the assistance of an organisation which has specialist knowledge of the disability area, particularly in relation to recruitment of employees with disabilities. The Willing & Able Implementation Team, which is responsible for managing the implementation of the Strategy, has considered the issues over the past few months and extensive enquiries have been made into approaches used by other jurisdictions in relation to their management of these issues. The information collected supports the view that without specialist assistance, the implementation of the Strategy will not progress as effectively as it otherwise might.

Consultations have taken place with both internal and external stakeholders with a view to assessing the viability of engaging a disability recruitment service for a trial period of 12 months. It is proposed that this be funded through a variation in the use of funds from the current levy on agencies which is collected to finance the OCPE/Project Employment placement scheme for people with intellectual disabilities.

It is proposed to fund this new recruitment service using just over one quarter of the current levy funding.

b) Future action - Engagement of a specialist disability recruitment agency

The rationale for the engagement of specialist services for people with disabilities lies in the capacity for the specialised service to provide an integrated sector wide recruitment service. Full details of the required services are listed in Appendix 1 of this report. In brief, the role of the specialist service would be to:

- establish a register of people seeking employment;
- carry out pre-screening to ensure that applicants are job ready;
- provide advice and support to selection panels that are interviewing candidates;
- conduct on-site visits after commencement of each placement;
- co-ordinate incentives, supports and workplace modifications; and,
- provide reports on numbers of people placed both within and outside of the NTPS from the register of people seeking employment.

Disability support agencies from Darwin and Alice Springs have expressed their support for the engagement of a specialist disability recruitment co-ordination service in the NT. A frustration which has been regularly expressed by these organisations is the complexity of dealing with the various NTPS agencies, as there is no centralised point that they can contact. The engagement of a specialist disability recruitment co-ordination service would therefore address this problem and provide a central point of contact.

Within the NTPS, the Willing & Able Implementation Team (which represents the larger agencies within the NTPS) endorsed the proposal. It has also received support from representatives of other agencies not represented on the Team. In September 2004 all agencies were notified of the proposal to engage a specialised service along with the proposed funding arrangements. All agencies that responded (13) expressed support for the proposal.

Should Cabinet approve the use of a specialised recruitment agency the contract will go out to tender. There are existing agencies known to provide similar services around Australia but the market has yet to be tested.

It is proposed to fund the service through a variation in the allocation of the funding currently collected from agencies to support the OCPE/Project Employment placement scheme for people with intellectual disabilities. In the 2003-04 year \$321,000 was collected from agencies to cover the salaries of people employed through the scheme (there will be no increase in funding collected from agencies for this financial year). Three quarters of this is proposed to be used to fund current Project Employment participants and take on any new ones as participants move out of the scheme, the other quarter, as discussed above will be used for the specialised agency.

The expansion of the services offered through this agency levy (by using it to fund the specialised service) would be of benefit to the whole of the NTPS. Currently all agencies pay into the intellectual disability program, but only seven agencies have any participants in the scheme. This effectively means that the other agencies are receiving no direct benefit yet contribute financially to the scheme. The expansion of the service offered through the levy to trial the engagement of a specialist disability recruitment co-ordination service would mean that all agencies would receive a service for their levy payment.

Whilst there would be a reduction in the available funding for placements of people with intellectual disabilities, there would be no impact on current participants, all of whom would still be funded. It should also be noted that it is becoming more difficult to find sufficient participants to take part in the scheme and agencies are struggling to find suitable placements. This appears to be due to the narrow focus of the scheme (people with intellectual disabilities make up only 2% of the disability population) and also the numbers of areas open to new participants in the scheme have been reduced by placement into permanent employment of previous participants.

As the levy on agencies was originally approved by Cabinet, the proposed variation of the levy will also need to be presented to Cabinet for their endorsement with this progress report. Should Cabinet approval be given, the engagement of a specialist disability recruitment co-ordination service will be put out to tender.

2.1.2 Review of selection panel training

a) Findings

A key to appropriate recruitment processes is to ensure that selection panel members are aware of legislation and best practice in relation to selecting people who have disabilities. Implementation Team members have undertaken a review of the selection panel training which is currently offered within the NTPS and have found that it offers little guidance in the recruitment of people with disabilities.

b) Future action

The Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS) is responsible for the procurement of training services for short courses and will be putting together tender documentation for selection panel training, amongst other courses in October.

Members of the Willing & Able Implementation Team will be working with DCIS staff to ensure that the tender contains appropriate requirements for the inclusion of information about interviewing people with disabilities, including legal requirements under the federal Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the NT Anti Discrimination Act.

2.1.3 Recruitment advertising statement encouraging applications from people with a disability

a) Findings

The Team noted that current NTPS recruitment advertising does not have any statement about equal opportunity, disadvantaged groups or diversity.

b) Future action

Work is underway on developing appropriate wording for job advertisements to encourage people with disabilities to apply for employment within the NTPS. Given the NTPS commitment to becoming more reflective of the community as a whole, the work is focusing on an inclusive statement encouraging all sectors of the community to consider employment in the NTPS, not just people with disabilities. Discussions will take place with other stakeholders, including those involved in the Indigenous

Employment and Career Development Strategy to ensure the statement receives widespread support.

2.1.4 Trial of automatic interviews for people with a disability who met essential selection criteria

a) Findings

Action Item 1.5 of the Strategy required investigation of the feasibility of allowing any person with a disability who meets essential job selection criteria to be automatically interviewed.

The use of automatic interviews occurs in other jurisdictions, as well as overseas, and is considered to be a form of reasonable adjustment to the selection process. It allows a person with a disability the opportunity to discuss with the selection panel how they could undertake the duties of the post and what adjustments they may need.

The aim of this initiative is to ensure that people who have a disability which would affect their ability to undertake the duties of the post and who meet the essential selection criteria are offered an opportunity to attend an interview. Selection for appointment would still be on the basis of merit – only an interview would be guaranteed, not appointment to the position.

b) Future action

The use of automatic interviews will be trialled across the NTPS for a period of six months in early 2005. However, a number of systems need to be in place before the trial begins. These include the three systems listed below.

- The engagement of a specialist disability support agency to assist with the recruitment process across the NTPS (as discussed in Section 2.1.1). This is necessary to :
 - identify that the applicant has a disability which would entail an adjustment to the workplace or duties to allow them to undertake the role;
 - advise the panel that the person qualifies for an automatic interview if they meet the essential criteria; and
 - provide support to interview panels on how to conduct the interview.

- Publicity to clearly articulate the intent of the initiative. This would need to be customised to different stakeholder groups including NTPS agencies, disability support agencies and job applicants.
- A mechanism for agencies to report on how many people have been interviewed under this initiative and what the outcomes have been.

It is anticipated that the trial will take place from February to July 2005 and outcomes will be reported in the following progress report. An independent evaluation of the trial will also be undertaken to determine if it has been successful. Then a decision will be made as to whether automatic interviews for people with disabilities meeting essential criteria should become part of the normal recruitment process.

2.2 Entry Level Training (Strategy Objective 2)

Until the introduction of this Strategy the focus for employing people with disabilities in the NTPS has been the Project Employment/OCPE partnership on the employment of people with intellectual disabilities. This continues to be a major focus under the Strategy and hence is discussed in detail in this section. The need to provide a co-ordinated approach to providing work experience placements is also discussed.

2.2.1 Project Employment/OCPE placement scheme for people with intellectual disabilities

a) Findings

The program was developed in 1994 by the OCPE and endorsed by Cabinet. At that time it was called 'Project Employment for Intellectually Impaired People' (PEIIP). The program is a partnership with Project Employment, a federally funded agency, and aims to improve access to the workforce for people with learning disabilities.

At its inception in 1994, there was no time limit on the period of an individual's employment through the scheme. This led to a situation where the program stagnated as participants did not move on and consequently there were very limited opportunities for new participants.

The program was reviewed in June 2001 and new participants in the program are now employed on contract for a maximum period of two years only. During this time, individualised training and support is provided to equip participants with skills to move into permanent work. Staff from Project Employment provide a support worker to assist the participant in skills acquisition and support for as long as is necessary.

Agencies are encouraged to place participants in permanent positions at the expiration of the two-year period. However if this is not possible, on successful completion of their contracts, participants are awarded a certificate of achievement.

The majority of those participants on the scheme prior to 2001 have secured full time employment with their host agencies and today only five of the participants on the scheme were with the program prior to the review.

Funding for the scheme is provided by way of an annual levy on NT Government agencies. For the current financial year a total of \$321,000 was levied. Agencies employing participants receive a refund of the salary component of participant's employment costs. On costs are paid by the host agency. Employment can be on a full time or part time basis and is at the A01, T1, Ph1 or Ph2 grades and is governed by Determination 18 of 1994.

In the financial year 2003/04 the program provided employment for eighteen (18) people across eight agencies, with opportunities for other agencies and people with disabilities to participate in the program.

Review of the program

As part of the Strategy, this project has been reviewed again, to assess equity of funding across the Territory, assess the feasibility of offering traineeships to participants and modernise the language used in relation to the scheme.

In the last three years Project Employment, the federally funded agency which is a partner in this placement scheme, has expanded its services into remote areas of the Territory. Subsequently two participants from remote locations have taken part in the placement scheme. The original levy agreement allows funding only for the salary component of participants' wages, with on-costs being met by the host agency. However, in the case of remote employees, this means that the host agency may be liable for significant additional costs associated with employing remote employees, such as airfares, freight on house goods and so on. This has effectively meant that the costs of employing a participant in a remote area could be significantly higher for the host agency than employing someone to do the same job in the urban areas. This has been a disincentive to employ people under the scheme in remote areas.

Additional costs for rural and remote employees

An examination of the additional costs of employing a person in a remote area has been conducted and the impact of these additional costs on the overall funding available for placements has been calculated. The average number of hours worked by a participant on the scheme is 20 hours per week. Given that some of the additional costs are calculated on a pro-rata basis, the estimated additional cost to the levy would be, in the most likely scenario - for Nhulunbuy, \$1,942 per participant per annum. This is assuming that the participant claims entitlements including twice

yearly airfares and associated accommodation allowances but does not claim entitlements for dependents. Further costing details are contained in Appendix 2.

b) Future action

There is adequate funding available through the levy to support the reimbursement of remote locality entitlements to participants. A recommendation will be made to Cabinet to allow this variation to the use of levy funding. This change can be accommodated in addition to the proposed variation in the levy funding usage to engage a specialist recruitment agency as discussed in paragraph 2.1.1 of this report.

Feasibility of offering New Apprenticeships to scheme participants

Two issues which have been identified in the scheme are

- the lack of employment outcomes, other than a work experience placement, for participants who do not secure ongoing employment; and,
- possible limited business outcomes for the host agency which employs a participant.

A possible solution to this issue is the development of the scheme to offer New Apprenticeships (or what used to be called traineeships and apprenticeships) to participants who are able to complete them. This would give participants a training/skills outcome and enable agencies to align the training offered to business outcomes. Not all participants on the scheme, due to the nature of their disabilities, are able to complete a New Apprenticeship. However, for some it should be a valid option.

All new participants in the scheme are now offered the opportunity, where they, the host agency, and Project Employment agree, to participate in a New Apprenticeship. The first participant to undertake a New Apprenticeship commenced training in January 2004 and is progressing well. For those participants who undertake New Apprenticeships, longer timeframes for completion of work experience and coursework will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis as necessary. Where appropriate, federal government funding through the Disabled New Apprentices Wage Subsidy Scheme (DNAWS) will be applied for.

Modernisation of language used in the scheme

Whilst appropriate at the inception of the scheme in 1994, the title Project Employment for Intellectually Impaired People is no longer accurate or appropriate. The scheme has consequently been renamed the 'Project Employment/OPCE placement scheme for people with intellectual disabilities'. A new Determination reflecting the name change and change in emphasis of the scheme to a training rather than employment program will be undertaken in the next few months. This Determination, for example, will include New Apprentice wage rates.

2.2.2 Work experience placements

a) Findings

During the implementation of the Strategy a relatively large number of people with disabilities and their supporting employment placement agencies have contacted OCPE in an effort to find work. During discussions with these individuals, it has become apparent that for a large proportion of them, they are unable to compete in open employment as they lack the necessary work experience and references to gain employment. This is particularly the case for people who have acquired a disability during their working lives and who subsequently need to re-train in a new field.

When a person is injured or acquires a disability they often receive support from a rehabilitation or disability placement service. There are a number of different organisations across the Territory that offer this service. Many run work experience placement programs for their clients. During a work experience placement the employer provides instruction and work experience for an agreed period of time, normally between 4 and 8 weeks. During this time the person on work experience continues to receive Centrelink payments. There is no cost to employers, because they are providing a training opportunity. The participant is covered for worker's compensation by the Commonwealth Government or by the participating insurer if the client is under Workers Compensation.

Participation in a work training arrangement offers the opportunity for an employer to assess the participant's suitability for a specific job and the opportunity for the participant to acquire work skills in the open workforce.

At the end of the work experience placement, the participant is in a much stronger position to compete for employment on the basis of merit selection. If appropriate, this could be followed by a period of short term paid employment to further increase skills and increase the employees' chance of gaining employment in a merit selection process.

b) Future action

Within the NTPS, a co-ordinated approach to work experience placements would be a valuable stepping stone for people with disabilities who need increase their work experience prior to merit selection interviews. It would also simplify the process for those agencies that wish to broaden their potential selection pool through offering work experience placements. This is one aspect of the proposal to engage a specialist disability recruitment service outlined earlier in this report.

2.3 Facilities and infrastructure (Strategy Objective 3)

Under this objective, the key area examined was a variation to conditions of employment within the NTPS to allow for the use of the federal Supported Wage System (the System).

2.3.1 Introduction of Supported Wage System into the NTPS

a) Findings

The Willing & Able Implementation Team considered the issues surrounding the introduction of the System into the NTPS and identified the following facts and issues.

Most people who have a disability and participate in the open workforce do so at full award rates of pay. However, there are some people who are unable to obtain and/or maintain employment at full award or agreement rates due to the effects of a disability on their workplace productivity.

The Supported Wage System allows people in such circumstances to choose to access a process of productivity-based wage assessment and related workplace-specific assistance in order to access appropriate jobs in the open workforce. For example, an eligible person who elects to participate in the System may be independently assessed as having a productivity level of 70 per cent, compared to the productivity of co-workers who are performing the same (or similar) duties and are receiving a full award wage. In such circumstances, the eligible worker and the employer can agree to an ongoing employment relationship whereby the rate of pay will be at 70 per cent of the full award rate.

The System has been developed in close consultation with employer, trade union and disability peak bodies, and with employment agencies specialising in services for people with disabilities.

To access the Supported Wage System, the relevant award or certified agreement must contain a clause allowing pro-rata wages. Within the NTPS, none of the awards or agreements has this clause at present. System participants have the same conditions of employment as their co-workers who receive a full award wage. The assessed percentage of productivity applies to the wage rate only. All other

employment conditions - such as the length of annual and long service leave and access to training apply according to the appropriate award or enterprise agreement, although payment of such conditions is at the pro-rata award wage rate.

The System can only be considered with the agreement of the employee. It is open only to new employees or to current employees whose jobs are in jeopardy because of a disability which leads to reduced productivity.

A model Supported Wage System clause would have to be inserted into all of the relevant awards or agreements. This process would be undertaken in consultation with relevant unions. Given that the System was devised in consultation with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), this should not be problematic.

The purpose of the System as a mechanism for creating job opportunities for people with disabilities and the voluntary nature of the scheme would need to be carefully marketed to ensure that its purpose is understood both within the NTPS and the wider community.

A number of awards in the NT use this clause including the General Clerks' Award. It is used extensively by HPA (Handicapped Persons Association) in its employment of people with disabilities.

Research into the use of SWS in other jurisdictions proved problematic as most Public Sector jurisdictions are covered by separate awards or agreements for each agency (and in many cases more than one award or agreement per agency). Research through the Commissioner for Public Employment offices in each State and Territory elicited the following information.

- **NSW** – do not use the System, full wages only.
- **Queensland** – decision to use the System at discretion of agencies. No ‘in principle’ objections expressed.
- **SA** – uses the System.
- **Tasmania** – uses the System.
- **Victoria** – Office of Public Employment has no specific knowledge of the System.
- **WA** – currently reviewing approach to disability issues – no specific information about the System available.
- **ACT** – no information available.

Discussions with Project Employment and the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service indicated that both organisations strongly support the use System as an aid to some people with a disability whose productivity is not on a par with employees with a disability being able to secure employment. It will be of particular use for some participants in the OCPE/Project Employment partnership scheme and may prove the deciding factor in agency's decision as to whether they are able to offer permanent employment to some participants.

b) Future action

The Commissioner for Public Employment accepted the Team's recommendation that the Supported Wage System be adopted. A proposal to include a clause in the new NTPS General Certified Agreement which is under negotiation is currently being discussed with unions. It is anticipated that this clause will be inserted allowing for the use of the System within the NTPS in the next few months.

2.4 Employees who acquire a disability (Strategy Objective 4)

a) Findings

Employees who acquire a disability while in employment with the NTPS are normally dealt with through the workers compensation system which thus involves TIO as the Territory Government insurer and the services they use for rehabilitation. The main service is from the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) Australia.

A briefing session for members of the Implementation Team was held by CRS Australia, one of the largest rehabilitation providers in the Northern Territory. Information on the services that they offer for people who acquire a disability whilst in employment, as well as assistance for employers who employ a person with a disability was circulated to all committee members.

An example of pro-active agency policy in relation to the rehabilitating people who acquire a disability was provided by the NT WorkSafe division of the Department of Employment, Education and Training at the 2004 Commissioner's Awards for Equity and Diversity. The entry won the Open Category of the Awards and will be featured in full in the 2004 'Valuing an Inclusive Workplace' book, which will be launched in February 2005. An outline of the initiative is shown below.

Case study – NT WorkSafe Return to Work Program
(modified from 2004 Commissioner's Awards for Equity and Diversity nomination)

The NT WorkSafe Return to Work initiative is all about valuing the diversity of employees and recognising the range of skills they have to offer. Testament to our effectiveness as an organisation is the number of satisfied clients who have passed through our doors; the sick and/or injured workers whom, given the dignity and purpose to do so, have found their niche, and are making worthwhile contributions as valued employees in new careers. In a workforce of 37 full time staff, NT WorkSafe currently supports five people on Return to Work programs. This represents 13.5 % of our workforce – a high percentage for any agency.

Examples of modifications which have allowed people to contribute more effectively to the workplace include providing

- modified mobile phones and headphones for particular staff members who have hearing impairments;
- a naturally lit, closed off office facing the esplanade was provided for a person who has a severe reaction to fluorescent lighting; and
- work station location, setup and special office chairs were provided for people with particular occupational overuse needs.

b) Future action

Should the proposal for the engagement of a specialist disability recruitment agency proceed, people within the NTPS who have, or have acquired, a disability will be able to register with the agency and use their services in the pursuit of transfer or promotion positions.

Reporting on agency outcomes in relation to people who acquire a disability whilst in NTPS employment has not been requested from agencies during this reporting period, but will be provided in the next progress report.

2.5 Awareness raising and training (Strategy Objective 5)

a) Activities

A range of activities have been undertaken to assist in raising awareness of the Strategy.

- Copies of the Strategy have been widely distributed across the NTPS, including to all schools in the NT. The Strategy is also available on CD and on the OCPE internet site. Distribution to other jurisdictions has elicited a number of enquiries and positive feedback. Much of the work on awareness-raising for employees will depend on whether a specialist disability recruitment co-ordination service is engaged, and as was discussed earlier, work is underway on the tender for training for selection panels.
- The launch of the Strategy already described in the first section of this report was accompanied by training for government CEOs in the form of a presentation and briefing by interstate keynote speaker, Suzanne Colbert, the CEO of Employers Making a Difference, a network of Australian employers committed to employing people with disabilities.
- As part of the launch, profile posters of people in the NTPS who have a disability were prepared. The aim of these was to allow people with a disability to provide a personal message to their colleagues and friends and to personalise the issue of disability.
- On the afternoon of the launch of the Strategy, fifteen HR professionals from across the NTPS attended a disability awareness training session 'Opening the Door for People with a Disability' which was also run by Suzanne Colbert. Each participant received comprehensive reference materials including information on general disability awareness and statistics, interview techniques and specific information on the impact and management of different types of disability.
- The Commissioner's Awards for Equity and Diversity is an annual event that highlights successful programs within NT Government (NTG) agencies aimed at achieving an equitable and diverse public sector that is representative of the Northern Territory community at all levels of employment and enables employees to combine work, life and family responsibilities.

Of the 19 entries received in the 2004 Commissioner's Awards for Equity and Diversity, two entries that received recognition related to initiatives for people with disabilities. These were the 'NT WorkSafe Return to Work Program', which was the winner of the Open Category and the 'Royal Darwin Hospital Linen Services Training and Workplace Support' entry which won a commendation in the same category.

Both entries demonstrated innovation and commitment to the employment of people with disabilities within the NTPS and will be publicised as examples of how people with disabilities can be integrated into the workforce and an asset to business.

b) Future activity

To continue the focus on disabilities in the workplace, the Special Category of the 2005 Equity and Diversity Awards will be on the implementation of the Willing & Able Strategy.

2.6 Developmental opportunities (Strategy Objective 6)

This objective focuses on providing appropriate developmental opportunities to employees with disabilities. This includes access to performance management, training and development opportunities, acting opportunities and leadership courses. The Team has been concentrating on other parts of the Strategy setting up centralised frameworks to ensure recruitment and entry to the NTPS. Thus the OCPE review of leadership courses to ensure they are accessible has not yet occurred and no reporting on this issue has been required from agencies during the period of time covered by this progress report. Reporting on this objective will take place in the next progress report.

2.7 Input by people with disabilities (Strategy objective 7)

a) Activities

In any strategy aimed at improving the representation of a particular group, it is important that the people targeted have the opportunity to have input into the strategies adopted and have an avenue to voice their views about their employment. To this end OCPE has convened a network for people with disabilities who work in the NTPS.

The first meeting of a group of interested employees with disabilities from the NTPS took place in July 2004. The aim of the group is to establish a self directing network of people with disabilities who set their own agenda and are provided with logistical and administrative support by the OCPE. The network has named itself the disAbility Action Network and has the following main objectives:

- to be an active advocacy group for people with disabilities across the NTPS;
- to support and mentor its members and other staff with disabilities;
- to influence change in attitudes to people with disabilities; and
- to raise awareness of disability issues within the NTPS.

The network has provided advice to the Willing & Able Implementation team in relation to changes to the codes used to record types of disabilities on the NTPS payroll system. This coding is discussed in the following section on evaluation.

b) Future activities

To achieve the objectives listed above the network is currently focussing on organising awareness raising events to celebrate the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3rd December 2004.

2.8 Review and evaluation (Strategy Objective 8)

The primary objectives of this section of the Strategy were to establish a mechanism to monitor and assist in the implementation of the Strategy, and to improve data collection in relation to people with disabilities employed in the NTPS.

2.8.1 Implementation Team

a) Activities

To this end an Implementation Team was established in January 2004 to lead and oversee the implementation of the Strategy. Recommendations from the Team are forwarded to the Commissioner for Public Employment for appropriate action. The Team is made up of representatives from the following agencies:

- Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs
- Department of Corporate and Information Services
- Department of Employment, Education and Training
- Department of Health and Community Services
- Department of Infrastructure, Planning & Environment
- Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (Chair)
- Police, Fire and Emergency Services

A representative of the Anti-Discrimination Commission is an advisory member of the team.

A meeting was held at this time also with smaller agency representatives where it was agreed to keep them informed of the Team's progress in implementing the Strategy through:

- the circulation of minutes and agendas for all meetings;
- an open invitation to smaller agencies to attend meetings if they have an interest in an agenda item; and ,
- quarterly briefing sessions for smaller agencies.

2.8.2 Disability Data Definitions

a) Findings

A key to assessing the impact of the Strategy is analysing whether there has been an increase in the number of people with disabilities employed in the NTPS. This becomes complex because, as with all EEO groups, entry of EEO data onto PIPS is not mandatory; employees must choose to disclose their status. To do so employees must consider themselves to have a disability, and then feel comfortable with providing that identification to their employer.

As is the case with the Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy, under-reporting of EEO data has been identified as a major barrier to the effective measurement of progress in relation to the implementation of this Strategy.

When a person identifies that they have a disability on the NTPS payroll system (PIPS) they are asked to identify the type of disability which they have. The definitions in use at the time the Strategy's launch were outdated and difficult to interpret, as can be seen from the table below.

Definitions of disability in use at time of Strategy launch
Hearing
Seeing
Learning
Communicating
Movement Activities
Moving Around
Daily Life Activities
Care of Necessities and Domestic Activities
Interpersonal Behaviours
Dealing with particular circumstances
Has limitations but chooses not to identify them
No disability
Information withheld

Investigations by the Willing & Able Implementation Team have shown that these are based on outdated Australian Bureau of Statistics definitions. Discussions with people with disabilities from the NTPS through the disAbility Action Network and others have shown that they are considered to be confusing and irrelevant in the work context. Enquiries to other jurisdictions, the private sector and overseas has shown, as

stated in the Willing & Able Strategy, that there is no agreed definition of disability and that each employer or organisation creates their own definitions to suit their particular needs and circumstances.

The Team is now close to identifying a new set of disability definitions for use within the NTPS, having taken into account feedback from various groups. The basis for the new codes will be that they:

- focus on the impact of the disability in the workplace, rather than concentrate on naming disabilities,
- limit the numbers of definitions be limited to around 10 to 12 so as to minimise confusion for users, and
- include an 'other' disability definition to allow for any disabilities which may not be included on the list.

b) Future activity

Details of the new codes will be reported in the next progress report. It is anticipated that a set of up to date, easy to use codes should increase the numbers of employees who are willing to identify as having a disability.

2.8.3 Disclosing Disability – EEO Data

a) Findings

In June 2003, 64% of employees had not provided information on their disability status. In order for reporting to become an accurate reflection of actual changes within the NTPS workforce, the baseline percentages of people providing their EEO details, including disability information must be dramatically improved. A number of agencies have been working on this aspect of their workforce management over the last 12 months.

Overall, the numbers of people identifying their disability status has increased, leading to a reduction in the employees whose status is unknown by almost 7% (from 64% in June '03 to 57.5% in August '04). This is despite the fact that the number of staff being paid in the two comparator periods had increased by 5%. Whilst the unknown percentage is still very high, the movement is in the right direction.

More importantly, people are electing to disclose their disability status. Whilst 1300 additional people have identified their disability status, there has only been 5 more people who have chosen to refuse give their disability status (see table 1 below). As

can be seen from this table there has been a 41% increase in the number of people identifying as having a disability. It is thought that this increase is mainly attributable to an increase in reporting, rather than any real increase in the numbers of people with disabilities employed in the sector.

	Yes	No	Refused	Unknown	Total
Jun-03	207	4074	1269	9931	15481
Aug-04	292	5325	1274	9333	16224
Change	85	1251	5	-598	743
% change	41%	31%	0%	-6%	5%

Source: Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, September 2004

Contact: laura.rowan@nt.gov.au Tel. 899 94151

Agency programs to encourage self identification

A number of agencies have implemented strategies to improve the accuracy of their EEO data. These include DBIRD, Darwin Port Corporation, DIPE and HACS. Their strategies are summarised below with longer reports from DIPE and HACS attached as Appendix 3.

DBIRD EEO Data

In 2004, a number of e-mails were distributed throughout DBIRD, which asked employees to access and update all personal details particularly EEO.

Members of staff were advised that the data is voluntary and for statistical purposes only, however, in completing the details, it would enable the Department to provide improved services to employees, such as better alignment of training programs and strategies. Employees who previously had not accessed MyHR to change personal details etc, were surprised at how easy it was update their current information.

When members of the HR team speak with employees regarding personal particulars, the officers take the time to walk-through MyHR facilities with staff. Furthermore, these facilities are also mentioned at various management and staff meetings and forums.

Department of Health and Community Services - EEO Project Report Summary

The aim of the project was to identify the number of staff within the DHCS workforce that recognise themselves as falling into one of the main categories within EEO. It will also assist DHCS in the development of specific programs and future initiatives aimed at ensuring equity in employment. This will provide baseline data in order to assist with strategic planning in relation to EEO within the DHCS workforce

All staff received a letter from CEO requesting they access MyHR and update all of their personal details, including EEO data. To accommodate requirements of all staff, including those with no access to MyHR, the following information was distributed:

- CEO Letter of request
- Equal Employment Opportunities – Information pamphlet
- MyHR access information
- The EEO survey
- Return envelope.

After the letter was sent, two reminder emails were sent as well as a reminder in the fortnightly bulletin from the CEO. Where staff didn't have access to MyHR, they were able to manually complete the survey form and return to HR&WD by mail. The data was then entered for them.

Darwin Port Corporation

DPC first started the process in August 2003 with a memo issued by the CEO to all staff encouraging them to complete their EEO details. Each manager of a business unit then regularly followed up with staff. Staff members were told that if they were having problems entering data they could get assistance even to the point of being able to get someone else to assist them. Only three staff members were shown as not responding to EEO questions by the beginning of October 2004. These appear to be new staff.

DPC noted the following faults or issues with MyHR.

- 1) If staff started and did not complete the data entry right up to the point where the system said "Thank you, the record has no been updated" then the system treated it as a "no" response.
- 2) The first question encourages staff to say no. The question is "Have EEO details been provided?" response choices are Yes, No or Not Volunteered. Some staff clicked 'no' because at that stage they had not entered their details.
- 3) The next series of questions in myHR provides a range of options including the option to enter 'Information Withheld'. It is understood by DPC that if a person answers 'Yes' to the first question on providing EEO details, goes on to complete the remaining questions but chooses this option in any of the responses then the system treats the overall response as a 'No'.

DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

Census Day - Equal Employment Opportunity Update

On the 30th July 2004 the department held a Census Day to encourage everyone to update their (EEO) details using the MyHR system. To ensure that people knew what to do on the day a variety of communication techniques were used, including:

- An E-mail to all staff was sent from the Chief Executive (CE) explaining Census Day and why it is important for people to update their details.
- Key message on the home page was used in the week leading up to Census Day so that all people were reminded when they logged on each day that Census Day was approaching with the heading changing every day; *5 days to go, 4 days to go... 1 day to go, Today is Census day – click here to update your details.*
- A story in the fortnightly CE's newsletter titled 'Gearing up for Census Day'.
- Posters were placed in lifts and notice boards.
- Formal communication channels used throughout the department such as the Executive Information Co-ordinators and Executive Offices from each of the divisions were used to remind staff in their areas about Census Day.
- 38 Census Day Facilitators spread throughout the Territory were used to walk around and help people update their details.
- The NTG Phone Listing was used to identify all of the Department's different locations and a quick call was made to distinguish if staff had access to a computer, whether they shared a computer as well as how computer literate staff would be. If staff did have concerns with using the MyHR system hard copies were faxed out or if in Darwin personal visits to the site were made to get them to fill in the hard copies.
- On the day an E-mail was sent to all staff explaining that today is Census Day, how to update their details and who to ring if they had any problems.

DIPE also identified some problems with MyHR similar to that experienced by Darwin Port Corporation (see Appendix 3 for the full report).

The effects of these efforts are shown in Table 2 below. While overall in the NTPS there was an decrease of 6% in 'unknown' data on disability between June 2003 and August 2004, amongst these four agencies unknown data decreased by 56% for Darwin Port Corporation, by 16% for Business, Industry and Resource Development, 22% for Infrastructure Planning and Environment and 17% for Health and Community Services.

Table 2 - Disability data on PIPS
Comparison of unknown data, June 03 to August 04
Table of Agencies by Number of People with a Disability

Agency	Jun-03			Aug-04			% change
	Unknown	Total	% unknown	Unknown	Total	% unknown	
Aboriginal Areas	23	26	88%	23	26	88%	0%
Auditor General	2	4	50%	3	5	60%	10%
Community DSCA	392	603	65%	446	686	65%	0%
Chief Minister	134	277	48%	158	295	54%	5%
Darwin Port Corp.	32	52	62%	3	55	5%	-56%
DBIRD	476	637	75%	367	623	59%	-16%
DCIS	186	732	25%	254	730	35%	9%
DEET	2173	4151	52%	2243	4085	55%	3%
DIPE	858	1356	63%	602	1466	41%	-22%
HACS	3424	4216	81%	2895	4531	64%	-17%
Justice	448	871	51%	458	910	50%	-1%
Land Dev Corp	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	1	4	25%	<i>n/a</i>
Leg Assembly	84	106	79%	74	99	75%	-4%
NT Electoral Comsn	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	0	3	0%	<i>n/a</i>
OCPE	8	51	16%	8	48	17%	1%
Ombudsman	13	18	72%	12	20	60%	-12%
Police, Fire & Emerg	945	1361	69%	1076	1543	70%	0%
Power & Water	520	667	78%	495	699	71%	-7%
TDZ	4	5	80%	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Tourist Commission	74	108	69%	83	135	61%	-7%
Treasury	135	240	56%	132	261	51%	-6%
TOTAL	9931	15481	64.1%	9333	16224	57.5%	6.6%

Source: Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, September 2004

b) Future activity

The Implementation Team will investigate the problems identified with MyHR and report on these in the next Progress Report.

3.0 Summary

This document reports the progress of the Willing and Able Strategy against the main objectives for: recruitment, entry level training, facilities and infrastructure, employees who acquire a disability, developmental opportunities, input by people with disabilities, and review and evaluation.

On recruitment, (see Section 2.1) this report has shown how the Strategy Implementation Team has assessed the capacity of the NTPS to provide a supportive recruitment process for people with disabilities and seen this as currently poor. The engagement of a specialist disability recruitment service is recommended in order to provide a centralised recruitment service, pre-screening, advice to selection panels, on-site visits, co-ordinating support and providing statistics. This service is a necessary pre-condition of a trial of automatic interviews for people with disabilities who met essential selection criteria. A recruitment advertising statement is being developed by a sub-committee of the Implementation Team.

On entry level training (see Section 2.2.) the report recommends funding of additional on-costs (FOILS, freight and accommodation allowances) for Project Employment participants from remote and rural areas out of the current levy. As a result of the latest review of the program new Project Employment participants are now offered a traineeship giving participants an outcome over and above the work placement previously offered. 18 participants are currently employed in the NTPS, one as an apprentice. Work placements are reported to be a valuable experience for the participant with no cost to the agency. It is recommended that these be made more available within the NTPS and that part of the Strategy necessary to ensure this occurs is to employ the special recruitment service discussed above.

On facilities and infrastructure (see Section 2.3) the Team has recommended that the NTPS introduce a supported wage system clause into relevant industrial instruments. This should be achieved in the current enterprise bargaining round provided the unions agree. Supported wage system clauses allow for people with disabilities to be paid on the basis of their productivity (i.e. the wage can be reduced proportionate to their ability to perform the total job) but maintain other conditions of employment.

Activity around supporting employees who acquire a disability is reported (see Section 2.4). The winning entry for the Equity and Diversity – Open Category Award from NT WorkSafe involved this area and is briefly described. It is noted that the specialist recruitment service could also assist employees in this category by providing a centralised service for redeployment and promotional positions.

Awareness raising and training activities (see Section 2.5) have begun with the launch of the Strategy, training provided for CEOs and HR staff, and including disability initiatives in the Equity and Diversity awards. A special category will be added to the 2005 award for implementing the Willing and Able Strategy.

Agency reports on developmental opportunities (see Section 2.6) will be given in the next progress report. Action has been centred on a whole of government level for the first year of the Strategy putting in the framework centrally for more initiatives to occur at the agency level.

The disability Action Network (dAN) for NTPS staff has been established in order to provide input to the Strategy by people with disabilities (see Section 2.7). dAN has assisted with modifying the codes used to classify disabilities within PIPS.

In order to meet the objective of review and evaluation (see Section 2.8) the Strategy Implementation Team has been established. Also the Team has been working to improve definitions of disability used in PIPS and to increase the amount of people entering disability (and other EEO) data in MyHR. Where agencies have implemented EEO data programs (in DPC, HACCS, DIPE and DBIRD) some considerable improvement can be observed.

In summary the Team has begun to lay down a new central framework to support the employment of people with disabilities which will enable more agency-level initiatives.

Acronyms

ADA	Anti Discrimination Act (Northern Territory)
CDSCA	Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs
CPE	Commissioner for Public Employment
CRS	Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service
dAN	disAbility Action Network
DBIRD	Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development
DCIS	Department of Corporate and Information Services
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DIPE	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment
EMaD	Employers Making A Difference
HACS	Department of Health and Community Services
HPA	Handicapped Persons Association
NTPS	Northern Territory Public Sector
OCPE	Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment
PE	Project Employment
PFES	Police Fire and Emergency Services
PIPS	Personnel Integrated Payroll System
PSEMA	Public Sector Employment and Management Act
SWS	Supported Wage System
TDZ	Trade Development Zone

Appendix 1 Services to be sought under tender to assist with implementation of the Willing & Able Strategy

The following services will be sought under the tender. The services are listed under relevant Willing & Able Strategy objectives.

1. Recruitment processes encourage participation by, and accommodate the needs of, people with disabilities.

The development of a recruitment process for people with a disability through:

- pre-screening of applicants and registering them on an employment register;
- liaising with Disability Employment Services and advocacy bodies to source potential applicants;
- providing a written profile to selection panels, including details of applicants to appropriate vocations;
- providing a support service and training as necessary in conjunction with OCPE to public sector selection panel members, including the provision of telephone advice on specific issues arising in relation to interviewing people with disabilities; and
- conducting on-site visits with each placement of a person with a disability after their commencement.

2. To provide access to entry level employment and training positions for people with disabilities is provided.

- Coordination of work placements and training for people with disabilities.
- Assist OCPE & DCIS to ensure equity of access for people with a disability into new apprenticeships, traineeships and graduate positions.

3. Ensure access to facilities and infrastructure, with reasonable adjustments being made as necessary.

- Coordination of incentives, supports and workplace modifications for people with a disability employed in the NTPS.

4. *Support employees who acquire a disability whilst employed in the sector and make every reasonable effort to enable them to remain within the NTPS.*
 - Provision of advice to on support available from specialist disability agencies; and
 - Assistance with identification of modifications required to enable the employee to fulfil the range of duties of their job.

5. *Employees in the NTPS are aware of and understand the issues surrounding disability and disability awareness is incorporated into the sector-wide approach to equality.*
 - Promotion of success stories about placements within the NTPS to raise awareness of promote people with a disability who obtain employment in the sector.

8. *Effective mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the success of this Strategy are established.*
 - Provision of monthly reports on the number of people with a disability placed into employment, the types of positions, and person's disability, modifications required and duration of the position.
 - Provision of information on numbers of people with a disability on the register placed into private sector vacancies.

Appendix 2 Creating equity for Regional and Remote Project Employment/OCPE participants

Annual costs - additional costs for remote participants	
	If in Nhulunbuy
(based on an average of 20 hours/week/participant)	
Freight allowance	801.00
FOIL airfare	723.98
Accommodation allowance	417.38
Total	1942.36

Notes

We are assuming participants are unlikely to have dependants and will not be entitled to free housing. If these assumptions are not true the Northern Territory Allowance would also apply as well as housing expenses. FOIL and accommodation allowances would also increase for dependants.

Freight allowances are payable at \$17.80/week to a maximum of 45 weeks in Nhulunbuy (and Yirrkala). See By Law 44

http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/public_sector/bylaws/five/allowance.shtml

Fares out from isolated locations are granted according to location category. Staff located at Nhulunbuy are entitled to two fares a year, in other more remote locations three fares are given. An economy air fare is paid. The fares above may be an overestimate as they are 'fully flexible' (Qantas) and full fare (Air North). See By-Law 43 http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/public_sector/bylaws/five/fares.shtml

Accommodation allowances are given in conjunction with FOILS see Determination 1/2004 http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/public_sector/determinations/2004_01.pdf. These are given to a maximum of three nights per FOIL. Thus the maximum entitlement to FOIL accommodation allowance would be 9 nights. The current rate is \$87.50/night.

Appendix 3 Improving EEO data – detailed reports from HACS and DIPE

Department of Health and Community Services

EEO Project Report Summary

Aim:

Identify the number of staff within the DHCS workforce that recognise themselves as falling into one of the main categories within EEO. It will also assist DHCS in the development of specific programs and future initiatives aimed at ensuring equity in employment.

Purpose:

To provide baseline data in order to assist with strategic planning in relation to EEO within the DHCS workforce

Methodology:

All staff received a letter from CEO requesting they access MyHR and update all of their personal details, including EEO data. To accommodate requirements of all staff, including those with no access to MyHR, the following information was distributed:

- CEO Letter of request
- Equal Employment Opportunities – Information pamphlet
- MyHR access information
- The EEO survey
- Return envelope.

After the letter was sent, two reminder emails were sent as well as a reminder in the fortnightly bulletin from the CEO.

Where staff didn't have access to MyHR, they were able to manually complete the survey form and return to HR&WD by mail. The data was then entered in by HR&WD.

The final report was run at the end of February 2004.

This methodology was selected due to

Time required – 15 mins for individuals to complete survey

Cost – No additional financial outlay required as staff currently have access to MyHR.

Resources – using existing resources.

Validity – the project was only a request for the information so an optimistic expectation of 80% response was based on it being a cultural change for staff.

Outcome:

In total, 1,063 survey responses were received by mail. Of these, 205 were not able to be processed onto PIPS, due to forms being unidentified, for casual staff, or were returned indicating the employee was on Maternity/LSL/Misc Leave or no longer worked for the department.

Data collected for permanent employees shows the increases in all categories:

	Previous	Current	Change	
			Number	Percentage
Staff who have acknowledged EEO.	1401	2292	891	+64%
Staff identified as ATSI	112	179	67	+60%
Staff identified with ESL	52	192	140	+269%
People with disabilities	9	81	72	+800%

Data collected for casual or unidentified employees in all categories:

	Current
Staff identified as ATSI	12
Staff identified with ESL	24
People with disabilities	9

This has provided some baseline data for Strategy development specifically related to AECDS and the Willing and Able Project.

Over the remainder of 2004, maintenance and monitoring processes will be implemented to ensure the consistency of data entry on commencement forms, and report will be run to monitor the changes in this data.

Feedback provided by employees has been distributed to relevant areas and will be considered and actioned.

DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

Census Day - Equal Employment Opportunity Update

Background

Previously Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) details were only on record for 12% of departmental people¹. The department currently has 1445 people in approximately 90 locations across the Territory. EEO data is used to help Government departments support broader Northern Territory Government strategies such as Indigenous Employment, Indigenous Career Development, Economic Development Strategy and Workforce Planning. It also helps departments address the needs of its workforce and to plan for the future.

On the 30th July 2004 the department held a Census Day to encourage everyone to update their (EEO) details using the MyHR system.

Results

Preliminary results have shown that Census Day was a success as almost double the amount of people (368 to 721) updated EEO details on Census Day. The number of people identifying themselves as indigenous increased by 50%, the number of people who identified as having spoken more than one language at home increased by 33% and the number of people identifying themselves as having a disability increased by 68%. This does not include hard copy reports that can only be added onto the MyHR system once a problem regarding languages spoken at home is rectified. There are approximately 75 hard copies to add onto the system.

The table below summaries findings following Census Day:

	Pre Census Day 30/4/04	After Census Day 30/7/04	% Change
Results (not including hard copies)			
Number of DIPE people ¹	1416	1445	⬆ 2%
Answered all questions	370	721	⬆ 95%
Answered some questions	647	963	⬆ 49%
Didn't answer	652	397	⬇ 39%
Didn't want to answer or supply details	117	85	⬇ 27%
Identified themselves as indigenous	36	54	⬆ 50%
Acknowledged speaking a language other than English at home	42	56	⬆ 33%
Identified as having a disability	25	42	⬆ 68%

Unfortunately 242 people wanted to supply details but were unable to answer all questions. 182 didn't answer the disability question, 48 didn't answer the language spoken at home question and 17 didn't answer the indigenous question. Feedback from the facilitators suggested that people found the disability question confusing or hard to answer. According to DCIS, reports do not count these people as having updated their EEO details unless all questions are answered in full.

Making it Easier

While Census Day was a success, a few things could make it easier for people to update their details using the MyHR system and for details to be recorded successfully:

1. Having data not recorded in reports unless ALL questions answered is unfortunate as there were 242 people who wanted to enter their details (by saying yes to the first question) but were unable to provide all information. This means that data reported is not a true reflection of the department's make up.
2. People were getting a 'language prompt' and the system was making an incorrect assumption that if you spoke two languages at home when you were a child that you spoke two languages now. The system would not accept people's responses and a prompt asking them to include the other language kept appearing. It was because of this incorrect prompt that we decided to have hard copies as back up.
3. The disability coding was very vague and was not clear to people as to what to answer. As mentioned previously 182 people had problems answering this question.
4. Generally the questions are badly worded and confusing. For example the very first question asks if your EEO details have been provided to which you have to answer yes if you want to add your details. Numerous phone calls were received with people asking what to do in this case.

Spreading the word

To ensure that people knew what to do on the day a variety of communication techniques were used, including:

- An E-mail to all staff was sent from the Chief Executive (CE) explaining Census Day and why it is important for people to update their details.
- Key message on the home page was used in the week leading up to Census Day so that all people were reminded when they logged on each day that Census Day was approaching with the heading changing every day; *5 days to go, 4 days to go... 1 day to go, Today is Census day – click here to update your details.*
- A story in the fortnightly CE's newsletter titled 'Gearing up for Census Day'.
- Posters were placed in lifts and notice boards.
- Formal communication channels used throughout the department such as the Executive Information Co-ordinators (similar to Personal Assistants) and the Executive Offices from each of the divisions were used to remind staff in their areas about Census Day.
- 38 Census Day Facilitators spread throughout the Territory were used to walk around and help people update their details. Choosing the right people was essential and was probably the major factor contributing to the success of the day. Facilitators needed to be well liked and confident enough to approach all people including difficult Senior Managers. Feedback provided showed that some facilitators made the process enjoyable for staff. One facilitator bribed the staff on her floor with a huge jar of sweets.
- The NTG Phone Listing was used to identify all of the Department's different locations and a quick call was made to distinguish if staff had access to a computer, whether they shared a computer as well as how computer literate staff would be. If staff did have concerns with using the MyHR system hard copies were faxed out or if in Darwin personal visits to the site were made to get them to fill in the hard copies. This included staff who had to share a

computer such as Drillers in Winnellie, Gardeners at the Botanical Gardens or Rangers in National Parks.

- On the day an E-mail was sent to all staff explaining that today is Census Day, how to update their details and who to ring if they had any problems. The E-mail was specifically kept very brief so staff would read and action straight away.

Still to do

Although the department has almost doubled EEO records of its people, more work still needs to be done. Once the MyHR system is fixed the hard copies can be entered onto the system. The next step is to determine which areas haven't updated their details and these can then be tackled separately. This could include using HR personnel to take hard copies of the questionnaires when visiting units on other business.