



Discussion Paper

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

National Inquiry into Employment and Disability

Interim Report

**Submission of
The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association**

September 2005

The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association

The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association Ltd ('RCSA') is the peak body of the employment services industry in Australia and New Zealand.

Formed in 1996 the RCSA boasts a national membership of 3,000, all of which are drawn from a diverse range of organisations and individuals including small owner-operator businesses, listed and non-listed Australian companies and Australia's large multinational corporations.

Members of the RCSA provide an extensive range of employment services including on-hired employee services ('labour hire employees'), contracting services ("including labour hire independent contractors'), recruitment services, *Job Network* services and consulting services.

The RCSA maintains its head office in Melbourne and six Secretariats located in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and New Zealand. The current Chief Executive Officer of the RCSA is Mrs Julie Mills and the current President is Mr John Plummer (Executive Director Chandler Macleod Group).

The RCSA is instrumental in setting standards in the employment services industry. Such standards are set and maintained in relation to individual and corporate member professional development, education, training, industry compliance, industry performance and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable and effective legislative and regulatory regimes relevant to the industry.

The RCSA Australia/New Zealand boasts a very effective member committee structure that review and contribute to the establishment of professional conduct and equitable outcomes for corporate members, individual members, employees of corporate members (direct and on-hired) and independent contractors.

Committees include the Australia/New Zealand Workplace Relations Committee, Australia/New Zealand Workers Compensation and Occupational Health and Safety Committee, Australia New Zealand Insurance Committee, Australia New Zealand Education and Training Committee and the Australia New Zealand Taxation Committee. This committee structure, which is supported by State based committees provides the RCSA with an unparalleled capacity to respond to discussions of this nature in a manner that is accurate, effective and insightful.

The RCSA is proud of its dedicated service to, and representation of recruitment service and on-hired employee service providers in Australia and boasts the greatest understanding of these employment services.

Introduction

The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association (RCSA) is an organisation committed to the fair and accurate representation of on-hired employee and contracting services within Australia and New Zealand. Increasingly recruitment and on hired employee service providers play a significant role in establishing the employment relationship for organisations, and at times act as an information and best practice conduit for clients and potential employees. The recruitment industry is ideally placed in order to challenge discriminatory practices and examine opportunities for growth and engagement with respect to employment and disability. The RCSA seeks to have a positive impact on the access all people have to employment and the importance it places on an individual's dignity and wellbeing. We remain committed to presenting the services of our members in a light that highlights the progressive and responsive approach taken in response to an increasingly tight and demanding labour market. With this in mind RCSA welcomes the Interim Report released by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

The primary interest of RCSA in responding to this interim report is in relation to examining some of the issues contained in the Interim Recommendations 25- Reporting Scheme for Employers and Recommendation 27- Recruitment Agencies. It is in relation to these two recommendations that greater clarity and detail is necessary so that substantive and genuine initiatives take place to enhance the participation and employment rates for people with disability.

RCSA supports the Commission's endeavours to examine and respond to disability within employment and seeks to ensure equal opportunity legislation is more widely disseminated and actively engaged within the recruitment and on-hire sector. We believe our ongoing capacity to respond to labour market change in a timely and effective manner is important to reflect on in the ability of persons with disability to continue to enter the labour market and have sustainable and positive experiences within the industry sector.

RCSA seeks more detail on how recommendations 25 and 27 would operate in practice and is limited in its capacity to respond to such recommendations as a result.

Submission in Response to Interim Recommendations 25 and 27:

1. Interim Recommendation 25: Reporting Scheme for Employers

The inquiry recommends consideration of a mandatory reporting scheme regarding employment of people with disability.

2. Interim Recommendation 27: Recruitment Agencies

The inquiry recommends that employers ensure that they use recruitment agencies that have policies and practices designed to encourage hiring of people with disability.

RCSA does not support the mandatory reporting scheme of employment for people with disability as the most suitable way to progress the interests of candidates with disabilities within the employment services sector. RCSA believe that in a sector already stretched with compliance activities with limited resources, it would have detrimental effects that would be antagonistic to the aims and intentions of the national inquiry. Whilst the sector recognises the strengths of diversity in the workplace and lowering the risk of discrimination in employment, mandatory reporting requirements may become tokenistic and not result in any meaningful changes in attitudes or perceptions in the medium to long-term.

Furthermore, RCSA does not believe the most effective way to promote a genuine and sustainable commitment to best practice in disability employment and recruitment is to impose further administrative obligations upon recruiters.

In contrast the RCSA would prefer to look at ways to positively engage disabled persons in the recruitment and on-hire sector and propose the promotion of embedded "disability" officers within member firms providing employment services of any kind. This could occur pursuant to a work placement or experience program allowing individuals to actively view the other side of the employment equation. Some advantages of this direct interaction are:

- Social inclusion within a workplace results in increased occupational and social acceptance and an improved understanding of some of the barriers disabled person face when pursuing employment.

- An inclusive culture results in respect, acceptance and a sense of value for the work contribution and the value of diversity in all workplaces.
- Facilitates improved managerial capacity to deal with a range of issues surrounding marketing of persons with disability and debunking some of the misconceptions that may arise in client discussions.
- Broader acknowledgement of the progressive attitudes of some on-hired employee service providers and the ability to market themselves as an employer of choice.
- The recruitment industry has the capacity to influence clients and client attitudes and values and seeks to become a conduit of information on best practice recruitment and employment.

The RCSA recently held a workforce symposium in Sydney to address issues relating to improving workforce participation. One of the focus groups of the symposium addressed issues relating to participation and diversity in the workplace. Outcomes that RCSA will be continuing to focus on include the following:

- Promote education of clients by recruitment service providers
- Establish a diversity charter for the recruitment industry
- Establish a repository of available information on diversity best practice
- Influence the make up of selection panels by incorporating diversity into recruitment panels.

RCSA remains keen and willing to further participate in ongoing discussion and joint initiatives to establish sustainable approaches to disability in employment and recruitment and welcomes a further opportunity to discuss our ongoing initiatives.

Moreover, to further address the actions raised at the RCSA Symposium the RCSA, as part of its quarterly survey program to its 3000 plus Membership has asked that

Members have been invited to report on the numbers of direct hire and on-hire employees they currently have engaged in their workforces.

This research to be submitted by the end of October will assist in developing actions from the Symposium in an effective way.