



news

Ngā Rongo Pānui a te Rōpū Tiaki
Whakaōrite Whiwhinga Mahi

The Newsletter of the Equal
Employment Opportunities Trust

May 2003

No. 29

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES TRUST

Helping workplaces achieve
success through diversity

MISSION STATEMENT

*'The purpose of the
Equal Employment
Opportunities Trust is to
promote to New Zealand
employers the
implementation of EEO
principles in the
workplace as a means
of improving their
effectiveness, efficiency
and competitiveness
through the successful
management of diversity*

Employers of Choice Action Track – a new online workshop

A new online tool to help workplaces make real progress on EEO and diversity practices has just been launched by the EEO Trust. The unique and free Employers of Choice Action Track is designed to help employees and employers move from identifying the particular issues and challenges of their workplace to putting in place practical solutions that will make a real difference.

To work through the Employers of Choice Action Track, you are asked to select, from the following list of issues, those which are most important for your workplace:

- Health, safety and wellness in the workplace
- Attracting and keeping the best people
- Workplace atmosphere and behaviour
- Organisational challenges and opportunities
- Working with specific groups of people
- Work hours and locations
- Becoming an employer of choice

You then choose the particular issue you want to work through in that session. However, you can come back to any of the other issues or select new issues to work through.

A series of interactive pages follows, leading you through the questions "where are we now?" "where do we want to be?" "how do we get there?" and "how will we know when we have got there?" Along the way a number of specific tasks are suggested, such as gathering information on the topic in question. You can record whether tasks are completed, in progress or still to do.

The answers you give form the basis of your personalised Action Plan which is presented to you at the end of each Action Track. A wide range of additional material such as benchmarking tools, worksheets, case studies and checklists to help you with the tasks or provide background information are provided as you progress along the Track. You can just look through these or add the details to your Action Plan.

Your Action Plan is a record of your current situation and the key to further progress. It is a blueprint for further action and can be used to:

- prioritise your goals and tasks
- set clear timelines for achieving change
- identify who is responsible for completing each task
- gather support across your organisation particularly at senior levels, and
- dialogue with other New Zealand employers.

Solving a workplace problem

Both employers and employees can use the Employers of Choice Action Track to

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Action Track

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Action Track

benefit their workplaces. For example, if you were a line manager faced with a directive to reduce training costs you could use the Employers of Choice Action Track like this:

1. Having given it some thought you realise that the cost of training is high because experienced staff are leaving, taking their skills and expertise with them.
2. You get on the Employers of Choice Action Track and work through the Action Track on *Employee Turnover*. This Action Track suggests you gather data on your workplace profile and turnover, and provides worksheets and benchmarking tools to help you. Through doing this you see that it is mostly employees over 55 who are leaving.
3. Through putting in place exit interviews it becomes clear that these employees are leaving because they would like to work fewer hours and have more flexibility.
4. Now you work through the Action Track on *Managing flexible working hours or locations* to gather more information on this specific problem and explore some of the options. Using the

information presented and what you gather on your own workplace, you compile a good case for introducing a range of gradual retirement options to help older workers lighten their load, and schemes to allow older workers to mentor younger ones, and are able to persuade senior management to introduce these schemes.

Or perhaps you're an employee who is aware of bullying in your workplace.

By working through the Action Track on *Harassment and Bullying* you could get the information and ideas you need to help convince management to take the issue seriously.

For example, you would find that that workplace harassment and bullying increases staff turnover and results in poor productivity and that New Zealand employers are liable for it and have paid up to \$100,000 for a single case.

Although the Employers of Choice Action Track is free, it is a very comprehensive tool and takes time to complete. Set aside a couple of hours to explore an issue and log-on at www.eeotrust.org.nz/actiontrack

Older workers facing retirement – their choice

About a third of older workers would still go to work on Monday even if they won Lotto this weekend according to new research into the employment of older workers and their thoughts about retirement.

The study by EEO Commissioner Dr Judy McGregor and Lance Gray of Massey University has shown that for older workers facing retirement, money is one factor in deciding when to retire but it is not the only one.

Choosing when to retire

About 100 workers aged 50 and over, working in the meat industry and in clothing manufacturing, were interviewed for the study. Most of them strongly support free choice about retirement. While many have thought about retirement, significant numbers are contemplating full-time employment beyond the age of 65. The study shows that these workers greatly value having the choice to determine when they will retire.

"We asked older workers about winning Lotto to see how much of a factor finance was in the decision to stay in the labour force or exit from work," Dr

McGregor said. "We were surprised by their answers which showed that retirement intentions are complex and varied and that many older workers value work for its socialisation and the self esteem that it engenders."

Dr McGregor says older meat workers had very clear ideas about retirement. "One-third were going to simply stop work at 65 years and attend to leisure activities and family, supported by government superannuation. Surprisingly, 25 percent indicated they would continue working while they were still healthy, with at least four workers interviewed already over the age of 65."

The study included interviews with 94 workers across three meat and pelt processing plants with additional interviewees in a knitting mill so as to include older women workers. The study was facilitated by Meat Union Aotearoa and meat industry representatives.

Older workers valued

The researchers were interested to find that none of the interviewees complained of being pressured because of their age.

An ageing population: the facts and figures

By the year 2050 it is estimated that:

- more than 25% (1.18 million) of the population will be over the age of 65
- one in four of us will be elderly and half of all New Zealanders will be over 45
- there will be at least 60% more elderly than children

Over the last century the elderly's share of New Zealand's population increased three-fold, from 4% in 1901 to over 12% in 1999.

"In fact we were left with the impression that the employers in these four businesses appreciated their older employees and were struggling to recruit capable younger staff to replace the skills leaving," said Dr McGregor. "Employers though, did express concerns at the lack of control they now had over their older workers with the removal of compulsory retirement, suggesting it forced older workers to plan more carefully for their retirement."

Health and financial concerns

The study found that working in these industries had an impact on the health of many older workers, with 20 percent of the interviewees presenting with quite obvious injuries. "This generally hastens the end of paid employment and severely restricts the quality of any retirement," said Dr McGregor.

"Finance preyed upon the minds of interviewees with most of them clearly aware that they could never save enough to support themselves in their retirement without government superannuation. A combination of benefit stand-downs and less off-season work created extra anxiety for some workers."

Comment welcome on Government's review of paid parental leave

When the Government introduced taxpayer-funded paid parental leave (PPL) in November 2001, it advised that the eligibility criteria and other aspects of the scheme would be reviewed in July 2003.

The EEO Trust is assisting the Department of Labour with this review by collecting feedback from employers and other contacts.

We invite your feedback on the following list of questions or on any other issues that you think are relevant. Some of these questions are aimed at employers but others seek feedback from anyone with an interest in PPL. You can find out more about the scheme by visiting the Department of Labour website www.ers.dol.govt.nz

Please send your comments to us by 30 June 2003 at admin@eootrust.org.nz or PPL Questions, EEO Trust, PO Box 12929, Penrose, Auckland or to janet.hector@ers.dol.govt.nz or Janet Hector, Employment Relations Service, Department of Labour, PO Box 3705, Wellington.

The current scheme covers about two-thirds of working mothers who have babies. The rest don't meet the eligibility criteria, either because they don't work enough hours a week, haven't worked for a year for one employer or are

Dr McGregor said the interviews showed that workers' thinking about retirement was influenced by a combination of individual, organisational and government policy influences. "At the individual level, people were very concerned about retaining their health with many respondents consciously looking to keep their bodies in reasonable shape to the finish-line of 65 years.

"Their economic security depends upon their ability to keep earning and have as little financial exposure at retirement age as possible.

"Government policy such as removing compulsory retirement and raising the age for government superannuation to 65 years has had the most recent impact. Interviewees have embraced the choice they now have in determining when they will leave the workforce."

The Employment of the Older Worker research has recently been launched by the Minister of Labour Hon. Margaret Wilson. In addition to the transition research, the Human Rights Commission has analysed age-related complaints in employment and will release findings showing the extent and nature of reporting of age discrimination by older workers over a decade.



Justina Murray, with daughter Orla, on parental leave from the EEO Trust.

self-employed. These women will still qualify for the Parental Tax Credit if they are on low incomes.

Eligible parents are entitled to 12 weeks parental leave at a maximum payment of \$325 gross per week. Payment can be shared between eligible partners, including those in same sex relationships.

Employer's experiences with PPL

1. How many of your employees have taken PPL?
2. What benefits and costs do you see in the PPL scheme?

Possible changes to existing PPL scheme

3. What, if any, additional groups should be eligible

for parental leave?

4. What, if any, changes should be made to the way payments to employees are determined and how long they are paid for?
5. What are the implications for employers and employees of any changes you have suggested?



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Staff developments at the EEO Trust

In the past few months there have been exciting staff developments at the EEO Trust. Responding to the increasing demand from workplaces for quality EEO input, a new Executive Advisor role has been created. The position has been ably filled by Philippa Reed, who will work closely with member organisations on diversity and work/life initiatives and promote the role of the EEO Trust in the business community. Before joining us here Philippa was Executive Director with Executive Programmes at the University of Auckland Business School, having previously worked with KPMG for a number of years.

Also joining us this year is Frederick Tan, originally from Singapore. Fred is responsible for accounts and office administration, reception, database management and general office duties.

The main point of contact for EEO Employers Group members and potential members is now Joanna Nua. Jo has been with us for more than a year already in an administration and accounts role and is now looking forward to building relationships with EEO Employers Group members.



Philippa Reed



Frederick Tan



Joanna Nua

EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2003

For the sixth year running the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards will again honour New Zealand workplaces who are outstanding in the field of work life balance. As employers increasingly recognise work/life balance as an important factor in improving the performance and wellbeing of employees, this chance to celebrate those who are making real progress is not to be missed.

Tickets are now on sale for the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2003 ceremony and dinner. We have asked the Prime Minister Hon Helen Clark to present the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards again this year and the entries look likely to be as competitive and varied as ever.

The ceremony and dinner is being held at the Carlton Hotel, Auckland on Thursday 4 September. We provide free childcare so bring yourself, your children, your colleagues and your clients.

To order tickets, complete the enclosed Invitation or contact the EEO Trust at admin@eootrust.org.nz or 09 525 3023.

EEO on the web: www.eootrust.org.nz

The EEO website is constantly monitored and updated with the latest news, events and information on EEO and diversity. Lately we have improved our links page to now include links to over 120 sites in 17 categories ranging from Flexible Working and Teleworking sites, Work, Life and Family, Health and Wellness and Employment Relations organisations. New Zealand sites are easily identifiable with a fern icon. Go to www.eootrust.org.nz/information/links.shtml.

Employers who are serious about their commitment to being an employer of choice join the EEO Employers Group. The many benefits of becoming a member include license to use the EEO Employers Group logo in advertising, free issues of regular EEO Trust publications, and profile through copy, advertising and other promotional material. Becoming a member of the EEO Employers Group is now even easier on the website. Just go to www.eootrust.org.nz/employers/memb_join.shtml and fill in the form.

Also new on the site this year is the publication *Working with Māori: a beginner's guide for employers*, previously available for \$25 and now free to download. Just go to www.eootrust.org.nz/information/pdfs/workingwithmaori.pdf. This publication was funded by the Government's EEO Contestable Fund. A new set of guidelines for employers on breastfeeding in the workplace is now available on the EEO Diversity Information pages at www.eootrust.org.nz/information/index.shtml. The guidelines are part of a larger report, *Developing Breastfeeding-friendly workplaces in New Zealand*, details of which, along with *Breastfeeding-friendly Childcare*, have been added to the EEO Trust referral database. Both these reports were funded by the EEO Contestable Fund.

If you would like information about the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust services or resources, please contact:

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