

**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*



Marie Schroff, EEO Trust Trustee; Mark Dacombe, Kapiti Coast District Council, Alan Bollard, Reserve Bank; Trudie McNaughton, EEO Trust and Dave Stewart, EEO Trust Trustee at the AGM.

Transforming business through work/life balance

Transforming workplace culture through encouraging work/life balance was the theme of the EEO Trust's AGM and annual briefing at Parliament at the end of November. Closure of Wellington airport prevented the Minister of Labour, Hon Margaret Wilson, trustees of the EEO Trust and a number of speakers and guests from attending the event.

Winners and entrants from the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2002 discussed how they had turned around their organisations through supporting staff to maintain balance in their lives.

Previous Secretary of Treasury, Alan Bollard, who is now Governor of the Reserve Bank, discussed his time at Treasury and the transformation of Treasury's workplace culture.

Bollard says Treasury's work for government imposes particular constraints and demands on the organisation. "It's an exciting but hard organisation to work for, working under very demanding conditions, and this impacts on the workplace culture, as does the expertise and experience required of staff.

"Treasury is an intellectual organisation involved in developing practical solutions so it needs to employ people with the ability to move from the intellectual to the practical.

"It needs to be a risk averse organisation but that creates the danger of slipping into a very negative mind-set where all you see is the obstacles. This, of course, is not helpful, particularly when you're involved in getting the best outcomes from decisions which you advised against."

Bollard says the introduction of work/life initiatives was part of a much more broad ranging review of the work Treasury does and how it does it. Five years ago, high staff turnover was a particular problem and two reviews found that an overly aggressive atmosphere inadvertently excluded many staff members, especially women.

It was also found that predominantly economics related professional skills were valued and that the work culture valued "face-time" in the office. Bollard says the focus had to shift from face-time to outcomes.

Organisational changes included flattening Treasury's management structure to reduce the hierarchy. Bollard says managers were also coached on their role.

“Their focus has to be on the people they manage, not just doing the glamour work. We also made the work environment more open-plan which wasn’t particularly important from a practical point of view but had great symbolic significance.

Bollard says that running through the whole exercise was consideration of people’s needs outside work and a recognition that the workplace had to encourage a broader lifestyle.

“Treasury has become a more productive and creative organisation with a more diverse workforce and more stability. At the moment, stability amongst the management team is particularly important to allow for continuing incremental changes in workplace culture and attitudes.”

What is business success?

As joint founder and principal of a market research and consultancy firm employing 12 staff, Donella Parker has a more hands-on approach to work/life balance. Conversa Global Limited (previously R Cubed Global) was set up in 1996 by three people with a novel approach to business success. Parker says that in order to build a successful business, you need to look at your definitions of success and re-evaluate your business rules.

“One challenge is to broaden the definition of a successful business to define its success by its people, not its profit and loss account, without compromising the commercial objectives.”

She suggests throwing away many common rules or workplace myths including “Monday is a work day”, “The longer you work the more kudos you deserve”, and “Work is work and the rest is living”. However she says that regular, continuing education is critical, and the people around you must share the same vision.

Conversa Global Limited encourages business success and work/life balance amongst its staff by rewarding them purely on the basis of performance, insisting they take leave, and providing a generous training budget.

Retaining experienced staff

Methanex New Zealand which owns and operates two methanol manufacturing plants in North Taranaki faces very different challenges. It has 230 staff spread across four locations and needs to retain experienced and motivated employees.

Methanex workers were particularly interested in having flexible work options so in 2001 Methanex representatives visited entrants in the 2000 EEO Trust Work & Life Awards.

Director of human resources at Methanex, Jayne Francis says she was impressed with the fact that where organisations had introduced flexible work hours and leave options, the flexibility had not been abused.

Consequently, Methanex worked with employees and unions to introduce flexible work options for all staff as well as a range of other work/life initiatives. Francis said that as a result morale has increased, staff perform better with better balance in their lives and staff retention has improved. “There is no major financial cost to the company in being flexible.”

Upskilling for empowerment

Another entrant in the awards was ACI Glass Packaging which has taken a different approach to work/life balance.

Human resources manager, Bruce Woodcock, says he’d love to be able to offer flexible hours and childcare to staff but the focus has been on empowering workers. “You’ve got to be realistic. This is a hard-nosed industrial environment and you just can’t do some things.

“In the past we did a lot of things which created a very paternalistic attitude. About five years ago we decided we wanted people to shape their own lives.

“What we’ve done is try to empower our people by training them in literacy, numeracy and other skills so they can take ownership of their lives.”

ACI Glass Packaging worked in partnership with the New Zealand Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union to lift employee

involvement in the business with particular emphasis on technical glass industry skills acquisition.

As a result absenteeism has been reduced, injury rates are down and quality output has increased. The focus is now on improving employee health and wellness with the recent completion of an on-site fitness centre.

Gaining the benefits of diversity

Chief executive of Kapiti Coast District Council, Mark Dacombe, says one of the council’s priorities is to have a more diverse workforce. “Our organisation doesn’t currently represent the community we’re working in. I want to look at our recruitment practices and systems to find out why not.

“We’re there to provide services to the community and advocate for them and we can’t effectively do that unless we have a diverse workforce.”

He says diversity can also result in a job being done more effectively. “A diverse team is much less likely to have a blinkered view of the world. It will be more creative in what it does and how it does it.”

The council employs 174 staff and its work/life initiatives include flexible work practices, generous leave provisions, support for breastfeeding at work and a free school holiday programme.

Mark said that encouraging work/life balance results in a more productive workplace and cites his 25 years’ experience in local bodies to back up his view.

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How workplaces support breastfeeding

It is well known that breastfeeding is good for babies and their mothers, and some employers are discovering that providing support to mothers who wish to breastfeed can be good for the workplace as well.



Researchers say that supporting women who wish to breastfeed when they return to work results in:

- improved employee relationships, loyalty, commitment and morale
- increased productivity
- higher return to work rates, and more rapid return to work
- higher retention rates, ensuring skills, knowledge, abilities and experience are retained, and the costs of recruitment are reduced
- reduced absenteeism (due to improved maternal and child health)
- improved reputation/image for the employer, which can also improve customer loyalty, public goodwill and higher profitability/value.

For example, an independent study into a programme to support breastfeeding by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power showed that the programme achieved a return of \$3.50-\$5 for each \$1 it cost. Another US study in 1995 found one-day absences from work were over twice as common amongst bottle-feeding as breastfeeding mothers.

Closer to home, an Australian study of 101 working mothers found that three-quarters of one-day maternal absences from work due to sick babies were for bottle-fed babies.

In this year's Diversity Survey, the EEO Trust asked workplaces about the support they provide for employees who wish to breastfeed. Eighteen percent of respondents provide an on-site breastfeeding area while 12.5% provide facilities for expressing and/or storing milk. The 320 members of the EEO Employers Group were more than twice as likely to provide these facilities as non-members.

It is relatively easy and inexpensive for employers to provide adequate facilities for breastfeeding and/or expression and storage of breastmilk. All that is needed is:

- a clean, private, lockable room,
- a power point and
- a table and comfortable chair.

Facilities don't need to be clinically clean or sterile but ideally the room should have a sink and running water to clean breastpump equipment.

Mothers will generally need to express or breastfeed twice in an eight-hour working day, which can take around 20-30 minutes each time. The mother will usually need to store expressed milk in the workplace fridge.

Positive attitudes are also critical. Even if a workplace has all the facilities, if managers and staff aren't supportive of breastfeeding at work, it is unlikely that mothers will attempt it.

Organisations should develop a policy supporting breastfeeding at work, provide the facilities, and encourage managers and staff to understand the benefits of breastfeeding.

The December issue of the *EEO Trust Work & Life Bulletin* thoroughly explores issues around employment and breastfeeding. For subscription details contact the EEO Trust.

EEO Trust Diversity Index 2002 launched

Trustee of the EEO Trust, Marie Schroff, launched the EEO Trust's annual Diversity Index at the EEO Trust AGM and annual briefing last month in place of the Minister of Labour.

The Diversity Index contains comprehensive, up-to-date information on a wide range of diversity and EEO issues including New Zealand's changing population, diversity indicators in leadership positions, international comparisons and the performance of New Zealand employers. It is researched by Janice Burns of Top Drawer Consultants.



New EEO Commissioner

In January 2003 Professor Judy McGregor will take up her newly appointed post as the first Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission. This new position was created following the recommendation of the Ministerial Advisory Group on EEO.



Professor McGregor will take responsibility for providing advice and leadership on matters relating to EEO, including leading the development of guidelines and voluntary codes of practice to promote best practice in EEO. Pay equity is one of the issues particularly included in her brief.

At present Professor McGregor is Head of the Department of Communications and Journalism at Massey University, Wellington. She has led research on issues surrounding the employment of older workers and has worked as a journalist and editor for several major New Zealand newspapers.



EEO Trust News

Three trustees join the board

The EEO Trust is a unique public/private sector partnership which works with the government, employers and many others to communicate the benefits of EEO and diversity.

Three new board members recently joined the EEO Trust board, one from the private sector and two as government appointments. They are Leah South, Head of Human Resources at AMP Financial Services (NZ), Belinda Clark, Secretary for Justice, and Jo Brosnahan, CEO of Auckland Regional Council.

Leah South has held senior positions within AMP Finances for the last three years with prime responsibility for developing HR strategies that maximize the diversity of the employment relationship for both AMP and its employees. This role has given her valuable insight into staffing, recruitment and general employment relationship issues across both corporate and small business sectors, and required an active involvement in advice and education within the small business sector.

Belinda Clark has held her Justice role for the past 18 months, and her other key management positions include General Manager for ACC and Director of the Office of Treaty Settlements. This considerable public sector experience and the fact that she has represented New Zealand as a delegate at UN meetings on women and human rights will be a real asset to the EEO Trust.

Jo Brosnahan has been Chief Executive Officer of Auckland Regional Council since 1996. She has considerable experience in the local government and transport sectors, and spent a year at Duke University, North Carolina, as a Harkness Fellow researching leaders of excellence. Jo brings a broad regional perspective, business skills and a wealth of leadership experience to the EEO Trust.

www.eeotrust.org.nz

Employers of Choice Action Track - a new tool on the web

A new tool is being developed to help employers move towards becoming employers of choice. Many employers would like to know more about diversity and EEO, and action their commitment to becoming employers of choice, but may not know quite how to go about it. This tool is designed for them.

Employers of Choice Action Track is an interactive tool which will lead users through a series of questions about their workplace to identify priority issues. They can then take a journey through each of the issues they identified, with the help of on-line resources, useful information and suggestions. When users reach the end of the Action Track they can print off a customised action plan and toolkit to help make real changes in their workplaces. People can use the Action Track as many times as they like, and access all previous journeys, which will be stored in their personal file.

The Employers of Choice Action-track will go live on the EEO Trust website early next year. Keep an eye on our site at www.eeotrust.org.nz for news of the launch of this new resource.

EEO Snippets

“Every one out of four women [in the US] earns more than her husband. Women control about 80% of household spending and, using their own resources, make up 47% of investors. Women buy 81% of all products and services, buy 75% of all over-the counter medications, make 81% of retail purchases, and buy 82% of groceries. Women account for 80% of household spending. Eighty percent of the cheques written in the US are signed by women. Forty percent of all business travelers are women.”

This information comes from the July issue of *Fast Company* magazine and is to be found on a new page on the EEO Trust website. This new feature is the Snippets page, at www.eeotrust.org.nz/information (click on *Snippets* in the right hand menu).

Snippets contains useful and interesting information gleaned from the 100 or so publications added to the EEO Trust's referral library each month. New snippets will be added to the website each month so visit regularly to keep up to date.



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

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New EEO Trust address

Please update your records with the new EEO Trust street address of
Level 5, 56 Cawley Street, Ellerslie, Auckland.