

# CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

## KEY POINTS

- According to the 2011 Census, 75% of the population identified with an ancestry other than Australian
- Approximately 43% of Australians have at least one parent that was born overseas
- 30% of Australians were born overseas, with major countries of birth being England, New Zealand and China
- About 8.5% of Australians were born in non English speaking countries

*"Diversity is the one true thing that we all have in common. Celebrate it every day," Anonymous*

What does the modern Australian workplace look like? It's likely that your colleagues come from all across the world: some of them will speak languages other than English; some will wear religious dress; and others will bring delicious, if different, treats for lunch or to the company morning tea.

Diversity makes for a more interesting and vibrant workplace. Embracing and celebrating differences among your team mates can lead to new and exciting discoveries:

- A favourite new cuisine
- Varied and engaging approaches to leadership
- Unique styles of music
- Innovative approaches to problem solving

## THE WORKPLACE DIVERSITY CHALLENGE

Cultural diversity at work can sometimes lead to 'barriers' across:

- Understanding and interpreting verbal and non-verbal communication
- Respecting different approaches to personal space
- Accepting varied dress codes or styles of clothing
- Respecting choices around the consumption of food and alcohol

These barriers can come from established attitudes and deeply held values and whether these opinions can be judged as 'right' or 'wrong' isn't the key point. What is important in the workplace is to celebrate this diversity, to minimise the perception of barriers and to instead work towards acceptance of diversity.

## HOW CAN WE CELEBRATE DIVERSITY IN OUR WORKPLACE?

Your workplace is already diverse, which is a great reason for a celebration! You can check the Harmony Day website to find out the date for this year's event, but you can celebrate diversity all year by hosting events with some of these activities:

- Wearing national costumes: ask staff members to come to work dressed in clothing/ costumes that reflect their backgrounds
- Food and drink: everybody loves trying something new and tasty! Host a lunch at work where people bring foods that represent their culture
- Games and recreation: play popular games from around the world such as chess, card games and dice games

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INFORMATION

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- Decorate your workspace with photos, arts and crafts and flags from around the world
- Teach your colleagues 'basic' words in a language other than English. The most commonly spoken languages in Australia include Mandarin, Italian, Arabic Cantonese and Greek
- Music, songs and dancing bring people together, plus you can all share a laugh at everyone's dance moves
- People love telling and hearing stories. Many cultures have unique stories, morals, fables and myths. Sharing these tales can help bring new insights and ideas to your workplace

### SUPPORTING CHAMPIONS OF DIVERSITY

Tolerance, celebration, respect and inclusion are characteristics of workplaces that champion diversity.

When diversity is a key value of your organisation, you can proactively support staff to embrace and celebrate this by providing training around:

- The value of tolerance and respect in the workplace
- Understanding definitions of harassment and discrimination in relevant legislation
- Reviewing your organisation's policies and procedures around tolerance and respect
- Responsibilities of managers and leaders in relation to managing workplace behaviour
- Avoiding and managing conflicts in the workplace

### REMEMBER, IT'S ABOUT CELEBRATION!

Embracing diversity at work is about more than large volumes of human resources policies and guidelines stuck on the wall of the lunchroom. Celebrating diversity should always be about bringing people together and giving people an opportunity to express their unique background and traditions in a way that's good fun and inclusive.

Everybody loves a celebration, and when recognising and championing diversity at work is enjoyable and engaging, it's something that all of your staff will enjoy participating in.

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