ACPET
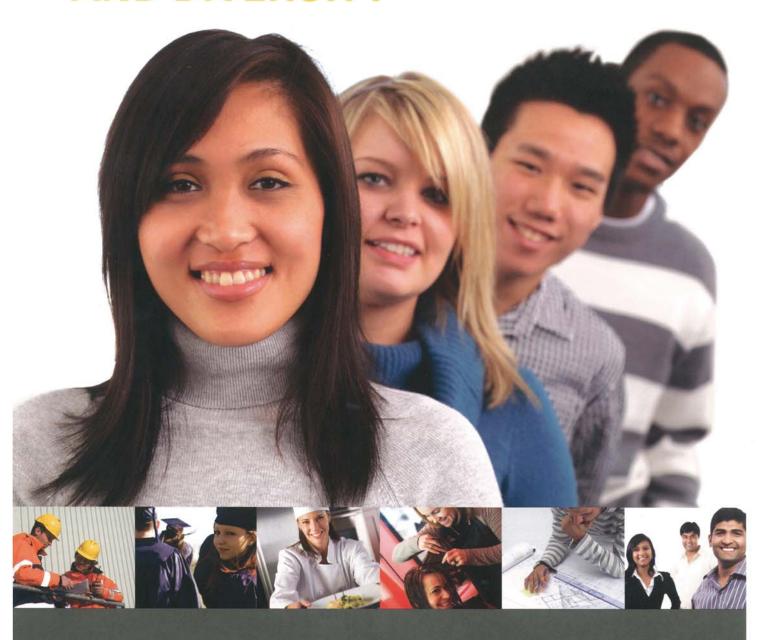AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR
PRIVATE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ACPET
STATEMENT ON
SOCIAL INCLUSION
AND DIVERSITY

Creating futures

Social Inclusion

When people lack certain resources, opportunities and/or capabilities, they are unable to participate in education and training, work or activities that connect them to their society. The Australian Government launched the social inclusion agenda in January 2010. While for many of us it may just be a more formal way of understanding the Australian tradition of 'a fair go', it is useful in helping us to rethink the way we run our training and education businesses. It might also show us where we are leading and where we can do better.

Setting the Scene

In the last fifty years, the make-up of the Australian workforce has changed significantly. Today the workforce is made up of people of diverse backgrounds[1]:

- In 2008, 58% of women of working age were in paid employment. (Compare this with June 1982, when 45% of women of working age were in paid employment).

- 26% of the Australian workforce was born overseas.
- Workers aged 45 and over currently make up nearly two-fifths of the workforce - 38% in 2008.
- In Australia in 2008, 28% of employed people were working part-time (less than 35 hours per week). Australia has a higher percentage of part-time workers than New Zealand, the UK, USA or Canada.

- 12% of the full-time workforce are also carers of people with disability or the aged.

Despite this apparent increase in our workforce diversity, many people are still either underemployed or missing from our workforce. They include:

- People with a disability[2]
- People with a mental illness[3]
- People who are homeless
- Indigenous Australians[4]
- New arrivals and refugees.

Statement on Social Inclusion & Diversity

This statement outlines the definitions and principles that inform ACPET's approach to social inclusion and diversity. Its intention is to guide all those who work on ACPET's behalf and to ensure that ACPET's policies, products and services contribute to an inclusive tertiary education system and do not exclude or unfairly disadvantage potential learners.

Definitions

Equity

The principles and practices of fairness and impartiality in ensuring that all members of a community have appropriate and equitable access to and potentially equal outcomes from the opportunities, resources, goods and services provided by an enterprise.

Diversity

The human and social differences within a population, particularly those differences that are significant in terms of access to goods and services and participation in the workplace and the community.

Social inclusion

An Australian society in which everyone feels valued and has the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society.

Principles

An Integrated Approach

ACPET has an integrated approach to managing diversity so that all its policies and practices contribute to a socially inclusive culture in which differences of culture, background, and ability are recognised, understood, and supported in all aspects of its work, products and services.

Strengthening Capacity

ACPET focuses on strengthening the capacity of the tertiary education system to respond to a diversity of clients while attending to the demands of broad client groups.

Support and Challenge

ACPET supports policies and practices that support social inclusion. It also challenges policies and practices - within its mandate - that privilege certain groups of students and exclude others.

Flexibility and Resources

ACPET develops its policies, products and services with regard for the flexibility, resources and support needed at the point of delivery to encourage and support equitable participation in nationally recognised training.

Consultation

ACPET seeks the advice of its members and other stakeholder/partner organisations to strengthen its capacity to contribute to an inclusive tertiary education system.

Evaluation

ACPET will continually evaluate the impact of its policies and products on diversity.

Leveraging socially inclusive practices into good business practices

ACPET's members can promote social inclusion and diversity by incorporating socially inclusive practices into each stage of their business. Some possibilities include the following:

Networking

Tertiary education institutions are encouraged to join a diversity support/awareness organisation eg. Diversity Council Australia (see: http://www.dca.org.au/) so that they can better understand and take leadership in diversity thinking and practice in an Australian context; realize business improvement through successful diversity programs; implement effective compliance management in a changing legislative environment; and publicly demonstrate their commitment to diversity.

Marketing and Product Design

Tertiary education institutions are encouraged to design and promote their education/training products and services so that they reach out to socially excluded groups in addition to their usual broad client base. Tertiary education institutions are also encouraged to be explicit in promoting their credentials as a 'diversity-aware' or socially inclusive organisation.

Enrolment

Tertiary education institutions administrators and trainers currently discuss the needs and supports of prospective students and trainees upon their enrolment. They are encouraged to create an environment in which prospective and enrolled students/trainees from socially excluded groups feel confident in volunteering their additional educational/training support needs.

Training/ Learning Management

Tertiary education institutions trainers are encouraged to organise and maintain the necessary range of supports to meet the diverse training/educational needs of all students/trainees. Tertiary education institutions are encouraged to keep abreast of the supports, subsidies and services that are available to help them build a confident and diversity-aware organisation. See ACPET's booklet 'The Creativity of Success. Disability in the Classroom and the Workplace: a guide for private training organisations'.

Graduation

Tertiary education institutions are encouraged to be innovative in celebrating the achievements of all their graduating trainees and students in a way that also celebrates the diversity of their students and trainees. Tertiary education institutions are also encouraged to nominate themselves and/or their staff for industry awards and celebrations that honour diversity/ social inclusion eg the Australian Human Rights Commission (see: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/hr_awards/index.html) recognises the often extraordinary contribution to Australian society of a wide variety of men and women committed to issues of human rights, social justice and equality through the annual Human Rights Medals and Awards.

Transition to Work

While transition-to-work arrangements for their students and trainees do not fall within the remit of most Tertiary education institutions, they are encouraged to build partnerships with employers and employer groups, particularly those who support diversity eg. Australian Employers Network on Disability (AEND. See: http://www.emad.asn.au/)

Student Services

Members will ensure that all students/trainees/clients are given appropriate orientation, and are given reliable and up-to-date advice on accommodation, counselling, in course placements, remedial education and welfare facilities having regard to the cultural and special needs of disabled students/trainees/clients and those from different backgrounds. Members will monitor the progress of students/trainees/clients and ensure individualised support and counselling for those having difficulties with a course.

Members will be sensitive to the specific cultural and social needs of all students especially those who are under 18 years of age. They will ensure that students receive adequate orientation, appropriate information and advice on accommodation, counselling, health and welfare services, and assistance in accessing bridging courses or additional educational support.

Creating futures

Appendix 1
Summary of the Australian Government's Agenda on Social Inclusion[5]

The Australian Government's vision of a socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. Achieving this vision means that all Australians will have the resources, opportunities and capability to:

- Learn, by participating in education and training
- Work, by participating in employment or voluntary work, including family and carer responsibilities
- Engage, by connecting with people, using local services and participating in local civic, cultural and recreational activities and
- Have a voice in influencing decisions that affect them.

The agenda is based on a set of social inclusion principles and specific priorities. The principles include a set of aspirations - what we want to achieve - and approaches to help us get there.

Aspirational Principles
- Reducing disadvantage
- Increasing social, civic and economic participation
- Developing a greater voice, combined with greater responsibility.

Principles of Approach
- Building on individual and community strengths
- Building partnerships with key stakeholders
- Developing tailored services
- Giving high priority to early intervention and prevention
- Building joined-up services and whole of government(s) solutions
- Using evidence and integrated data to inform policy
- Using locational approaches
- Planning for sustainability.

Priorities

Australians generally have a good standard of living compared to other countries, but about five per cent of those aged 15 years and older experience multiple disadvantages that are likely to affect their ability to learn, work, engage and have a voice. Disadvantage and social exclusion tends to be higher amongst certain groups of people. The Australian Government is focusing on:

- Supporting children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage by providing health, education and family relationships services
- Helping jobless families with children by helping the unemployed into sustainable employment and their children into a good start in life
- Focusing on the locations of greatest disadvantage by tailoring place-based approaches in partnership with the community

- Assisting in the employment of people with disability or mental illness by creating employment opportunities and building community support
- Addressing the incidence of homelessness by providing more housing and support services
- Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement and employment outcomes.

In developing programs for increasing participation by the above priority groups, the Government is also committed to helping vulnerable new arrivals and refugees.

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[1] These statistics are from Australian Bureau of Statistics publications, including: 6202.0 Labour Force October 2008; 6105.0 Labour Market Statistics October 2008; 4430.0 Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings Australia 2003.

[2] In 2004, the workforce participation rate for people with disabilities was 53%, in comparison with 81% for the rest of the working age population (ABS, 2004). Among the OECD countries, Australia is currently ranked a disappointing 13 out of 19 in employment rates for all people with disability. (From 'Opportunity' published by the Australian Employers Network on Disability at www.disabilityconfidence.org.au

[3] In 2008, beyondblue reported that 2.1 million Australians have a mental or behavioural problem (particularly depression) as a long term condition. On the balance of probability, this would indicate that many people with a variety of conditions are productively employed: privacy laws preclude employers from eliciting the information. (From NCVER 2010 'What would it take: employer perspectives on employing people with a disability'

[4] In 2006, 43.2% of Indigenous Australians were employed, one third of whom were in community work-for-the-dole schemes. 38.5% of Indigenous Australians were disengaged from the workforce altogether. (Statistics provided by Diversity@Work)

[5] Taken from: http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/SIAgenda/Pages/Overview.aspx