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No Worries – We’ll take care of it! An examination into managing equality and inclusivity in multicultural Australia.

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Abstract:

This paper explores the various paths to equality and inclusivity developed in the past 40 years within the Australian workplace with a view to critically examining their capability of addressing diversity and equality within the cultural needs of a unique society. A society which struggles to overcome the tyranny of distance and a colonial past as it takes its place in the world as a global 1st world economy country in what is often considered ‘the global north’ despite its geographical location. Findings indicate that despite various legislative and non-legislative approaches including anti-discrimination; affirmative action; equal opportunity; managing diversity and more recently gender equality, the individual members of the many diverse groups in the Australian workplace still experience inferior work conditions and work opportunities.

No Worries – We’ll take care of it! An examination into managing equality and inclusivity in multicultural Australia.

Introduction

Diversity itself remains an unclear and contested concept. What is clear is that 'diversity' is contextually specific, temporal and linked to the demographic and socio-political features of a population and the workforce concerned (Kirton and Greene 2005; Strachan French and Burgess 2010; Tatli, Vassilopoulou, Ariss and Ozbilgin 2012). In exploring the construction of diversity discourses in the context of Europe, Tatli, Vassilopoulou, Ariss and Ozbilgin (2012) suggest that national histories and the context of regulation are key determinants of the ways in which the concept is defined and implemented within different nation states or regions. Australia is a case in point as a diverse and multicultural nation drawing on successive waves of immigration over the past 200 years post European settlement. Prior to British colonisation in the 18th century more than 300 indigenous tribes populated the continent. Today, one in four of Australia's 22 million people were born overseas, 44 per cent were born overseas or have a parent who was, and four million speak a language other than English.

The purpose of this paper is to identify and explore the emerging discourse and policy program for managing diversity and inclusion in Australia; to evaluate its sources, implementation and effectiveness. In particular the paper examines the factors that are shaping the shift from a very monocultural (Anglo Saxon) society to a multicultural society. One of the primary purposes of the paper is to reflect on the role that national culture may have on the equality and diversity management practices that are undertaken in the workplace. The paper discusses the legislative and institutional processes that have shaped the current diversity agenda and legislative program. It also highlights how national cultural traits, such as "a fair go" and "She'll be right" and "no worries" may generate an equity program that is both progressive, yet contains gaps in coverage and enforcement.

Understanding Diversity and Inclusion

Equality and diversity are dynamic constructs that continue to develop within our social and business worlds. French (2001) identified the conflicting beliefs and the competing ideals of the various groups and individuals involved in developing equality and diversity in the social and workplace worlds. Some of their moral values and altruistic ideals are based on individual considerations while others are based on collective needs of the group. While the approaches taken to achieve equality and diversity outcomes range from the managerial prerogative of the business case to the regulation and legislation of legislative bodies (French, Strachan and Burgess (2010). Ozbilgin and Tatli (2011) identify two axes of individualism vs collectivism and voluntarism vs regulation. The individualistic end of the spectrum often supported by private sector employers and interest groups, involves the

recognition of individual differences at the expense of acknowledging the significant role of structural categories of difference in shaping workplace relations. At the collectivist end of the spectrum, equality bodies, trade unions and public sector organisations support equality and diversity on the more traditional categories of disadvantage. The voluntarism approach often supported by professional bodies and employer associations claim that equality and diversity needs to highlight short term and long term tangible and intangible benefits of diversity through a business case approach implemented that the will of the employer. While advocates for regulation often include trade unions and equality bodies that push for regulatory and legislative frameworks that offer substantive mechanisms for change. However these axes are not that rigid as to confine actors to specific spheres. Indeed, even binding regulations can be manipulated through managerial prerogative to achieve (or not) various outcomes regardless of any agency controls (French and Strachan 2007; 2009). “Organisations constantly negotiate between control and autonomous regulation and the outcomes is that rules continuously evolve and new rules are constantly created” Klarsfeld, Ng and Tatli (2012:312).

An Australian National culture?

We define culture as meaning the rituals, norms and traditions that distinguish the members of one society from any other (See Schein date). In this case exploring the cultural features of Australia we begin with the Hofstede typology (Hofstede 2013). While there has been criticism for this model in terms of its validity, particularly relative to the non-recognition of sub-cultures within nations (an apt criticism for Australia), the strength of the typology is that it provides a degree of clarity about the general behaviour of individuals in different countries and therefore highlights the broad national differences (Simmons, Duffy and Alfraih 2012; Moulettes 2007). Despite its limitations, it provides a starting point for discussing national identity. Australia scores low on the power distance dimension indicating that within Australia and its organizations, hierarchy is established for convenience, rather than any belief that power is or should be distributed unequally in society. It is preferred that superiors be accessible and that managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise. Both managers and employees expect to be consulted and information is shared frequently. At the same time, communication is informal, direct and participative. Australia scores very highly on the dimension of individuality. This translates into a loosely-knit society in which the expectation is that people look after themselves and their immediate families. In the business world, employees are expected to be self-reliant and display initiative. Also, within the exchange-based world of work, hiring and promotion decisions are based on merit or evidence of past achievement or potential. On the masculine/feminine dimension Australia scores high and is considered a “masculine” society. This results in shared values that people should “strive to be the best they can be” and that “the winner takes all”. Australians are proud of success and achievement, especially in sports, and this offers a basis for hiring and promotion decisions in the workplace on merit. Conflicts

are resolved at an individual level and the goal is to win. On the uncertainty avoidance dimension, Australia displays a fairly pragmatic culture in terms of uncertainty avoidance. This means that both generalists and experts are needed. There is a focus on planning, which can be altered at short notice and improvisations made. Emotions are not shown much in Australia and people are fairly relaxed and not averse to taking risks. Consequently, there is a larger degree of acceptance for new ideas, innovative products and a willingness to try something new or different, whether it pertains to technology, business practices, or foodstuffs. On the long/short term orientation, Australia shows up as a short-term oriented culture. As a result, it is a culture focused on traditions and fulfilling social obligations. Given this perspective, Australian businesses measure their performance on a short-term basis, with profit and loss statements being issued on a quarterly basis. This also drives individuals to strive for quick results within the work place. There is also a need to have the “absolute truth” in all matters (Hofstede Centre accessed Dec 2013).

In short, Australians generally believe in egalitarianism, individual authority rather than the collective; has a masculine focus that involves winning and valuing the skills of success and winning; with an acceptance of change and risk for the greater good and with a focus on the here and now rather than any long term outcomes. While some of these elements prima facie appear to support increasing equality and inclusivity in the workplace, others may not. For example, power distance has been found to be an influence of men’s perceptions of women at work, particularly women in management positions, (Simmons, Duffer and Alfraih 2012), while the masculinity/femininity dimension is less influential in developed nations than developing ones (Kiausiene, Streimikiene & Grundey 2011).

Multiculturalism and social inclusion

Australia is a nation with an Indigenous population and, for the past 250 years, immigrants have settled from around the world following colonisation by the British government in the late 18th century. The rights and customs of the indigenous population were not recognised, and land ownership was vested in the British crown. In the early years of colonisation, segregation and exclusion was the means of addressing difference. The Indigenous population suffered through ‘race wars’, segregation and severe restrictions on the social and economic activity. The progress towards recognition and reconciliation has been slow. It took until 1967 to change the constitution to recognise and count the Indigenous population in the Australian census. Since white settlement Australia has relied heavily on immigrant labour, especially from the UK and Ireland. This dependence on imported (and skilled) labour remains to the present with the labour demands of the current resources boom being met through short term and long term skilled labour migration programs. A formalised system of labour regulation that recognised trade unions and enshrined minimum rights and conditions of work such as a minimum wage has been a feature of the labour

market (Burgess, 2004). However, the minimum wage was not universal in its rate, with lower rates applying for women and for indigenous workers in the pastoral industries. There was a linkage between protection for industry, minimum conditions for male workers and a gendered division of labour within the household.

White UK and Irish settlement was the major characteristic of early immigration; and not all of it voluntary. The shift towards continental European immigration coincided with the dislocation of communities following the two world wars. The cultural and ethnic background of immigrants and the local population broadened in the last decades of the 20th century as refugee and family reunion programs resulted in migrants from the Middle East, Asia, Africa and South America. Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, seven million people have migrated to Australia. The profile of the Australian community has shifted from monocultural to multicultural.

Until 1966 Australia's immigration was influenced by the 'White Australia Policy' which encouraged assimilation of 'European' newcomers into the Anglo-Australian culture. Changes were made from the 1970s. A policy of multiculturalism was adopted which emphasised that all members of society 'must have equal opportunity to realise their full potential and must have equal access to programs and services', while at the same time everyone should be able to maintain their culture 'without prejudice or disadvantage' and 'encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures' (Hugo, Njuki and Vas Dev 2012, 135). Tavan (2012, 550) concludes that 'governments and community leaders of the 1970s conceded the right of ethnic groups to preserve their cultural distinctiveness, but this occurred in the context of an assumed adherence to the "core" Australian values and institutions' (Tavan 2012, 550). Australian multiculturalism 'was premised on a minimalist approach to migrant welfare and cultural pluralism aimed at appeasing the competing interests of both pro- and anti-multicultural forces. The social justice focus of public policy was increasingly overshadowed by public discourses that recast multiculturalism as a "national" characteristic embodying cultural pluralism and tolerance' (Tavan 2012, 552). Tavan (2012, 550) argues that Australian multiculturalism is a 'distinctive model' which operated as 'an institutional component of immigration settlement policy aimed at assisting migrant integration'. There is reason to believe it will be maintained in the future because 'its deep institutional roots and long historical association with migrant settlement have provided a measure of legitimacy and resilience that has protected it from recent challenges, including the growth of anti-Muslim feeling.' (Tavan 2012, 557). This contrasts with European countries 'where the absence of a strong institutional base has made it harder to sustain the social shocks' (Tavan 2012, 557).

Recently (adopted nationally in 2008) Australia has developed a social inclusion framework (Hugo, Njuki and Vas Dev 2012, 135-137). This socially inclusive society 'is defined as one where all people

feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity' (Hugo, Njuki and Vas Dev 2012, 136). Hugo, Njuki and Vas Dev (2012, 136) expand on this saying that 'at the core of the social inclusion philosophy is the understanding that, although ultimately citizens are responsible for their own lives and everyone has a duty to work hard and make a go of it; not everyone starts with the same advantages and some people face setbacks and crises in their lives that can result in them being left behind'.

The pathway from mono-culturalism to multiculturalism and from exclusion to inclusion has been a long one associated with different legislative programs and underlying assumptions behind these programs. The process of recognising and accommodating diversity in immigration coincided with the recognition of diversity and disadvantage within the workforce and the workplace associated with age, disability, sexuality, gender and other markers of difference. Well into the 1960's women faced lower unequal wages and in the public service and many private companies, were forced to resign from their jobs as permanent officers if they got married. Legislative and industrial changes from the 1970s changed this with equal pay awarded and anti-discrimination legislation from 1975 included the grounds of sex. The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, family responsibilities and prohibited sexual harassment. The Global Gender Gap Report 2013 puts Australia at 24 out of 136 countries on the gender gap index which measures the relative gaps between men and women in the areas of health, education, economics and politics (World Economic Forum 2013, 120-121).

Our research identifies three approaches to equality and diversity management evident in Australia indicating that despite a strong legislative base in some arena of equality and diversity there is flexibility in how these are interpreted and implement. The first approach is based on individualism; the second is based on regulation (implemented through individual or collective approaches; and, the third supports a managerial prerogative. Each has different outcomes in terms of actions and activities supporting equity and diversity and each has different outcomes for different groups. Our research in this area is confined to equality and diversity measures implemented to address gender disparity in the workplace in Australia and our statistics are related to men and women in the workplace.

1. She'll be right Mate!

One approach to equity and diversity management in Australia may be called the "She'll be Right Approach". "She'll be right mate" is an Australian slang term that means "whatever is wrong will right itself with time". In a song written by Don Spencer/Allan Caswell and published by MCA-Gilbey, the chorus says:

"She'll be right mate - no worries!

She'll be right mate - no sweat!

Always remember that it's up to you,
Things will get better if you want them to."

This sums up both the term and this approach to managing equality and inclusion in addressing difference. Things will be seen to get better in time but it is up to the individual to want this to happen and to make the effort for it to happen. This approach to equality and inclusion in diversity supports the individualist nature described in the Australian culture and the view that it is not up to the Government or the Society to look after you in the market place but the individual. It also supports the masculine nature of the society that acknowledges the importance of "winning" and all the aspects of "winning" such as commitment; hard work; and perseverance. In addition it is not inconsistent with Australia's value in egalitarianism or its pragmatism. This view of addressing equality in diversity through individual input and change, combines neoclassical economics with political liberalism Petzall, Timmo & Abbott (2000). From neoclassical economics it takes the idea that optimal efficiency is the result of perfect competition i.e. unfettered competition leads to full employment and an efficient allocation of workers to different jobs. From political liberalism it supports the opposition to state intervention and a commitment to freedom of choice for all in the market. Proponents of this view do not see (or won't acknowledge) that power inequalities exist in a range of social contexts that threaten different peoples' freedoms. They believe power inequalities can be minimized by limiting the role of government and institutionalizing the free market. This approach encourages deregulation of the labour market and one on one relationship with employers unimpeded by statutory minimum conditions. This approach fixed the meaning of the concept of difference and inclusion to the acknowledgement and recognition of difference between different groups in society and in the workplace. However, according to Jakubowicz (1984) the early multiculturalism did not go beyond the realm of mere communication and explaining cultural dissonance. In the view of discursive politics developed by Lombardo et al (2009) to explain the contextual process of attributing meaning to concepts through fixing, shrinking, stretching and bending the concept, this approach to managing diversity was fixed towards a minimal program of public action. In Australia this meaning was "to develop an awareness of the diverse culture that now exists in Australia as a result of migration,...to promote tolerance, and ethnic communities" (Lynch 1982:23).

Since 1986 under the EEO legislation in Australia relatively large organizations (employing more than 100 persons) have been required by law to develop programs, and report on these regularly (usually annually), to assist women employees to overcome institutional disadvantage within the workforce across a range of conditions including hiring, training, promotion, pay and leadership. Yet, individualism dominates in some organisations and industry areas and the ignorance of equality and diversity regulations, measures, and activities has changed little in many of those organisations. In a study undertaken by French (2001) looking at 1961 organizations and their progress reports for

gender equity and inclusivity findings show more than 12% of the targeted population of private sector organizations had taken a “classical” approach to equality and inclusivity for men and women in the workplace by not introducing any significant policies to address inequality or inclusion. These organizations had significantly lower percentages of women in management overall as well as in the lower tiers of management (such as supervisor) or in the top tier of management than organizations. Supporting this finding is further research in specific industries in Australia, namely, in the finance, transport and construction industries (French and Strachan 2007; 2009; and 2012). Those organizations undertaking this classical “She’ll be Right Mate” approach to equality and diversity refuse to recognize the regulations or legislation for what it may offer but suggest that choices made by women in the market are the drivers of any disadvantage. Comments made by CEOs and HR Managers who sign their progress reports submitted to the Federal Government explain their lack of policies to address the disparity between men and women in their organizations.

‘90% of applicants to sales positions are female’

‘Records show that all positions were advertised internally with recent middle management appointments from existing staff’,

‘There have been no instances of sex-based harassment reported during the past 12 months’ ‘Females fill most of the casual positions. Such positions attract predominantly females, as casual positions suit their needs’.

‘Recruitment and selection is always based on the best match between the prospective candidate to the skills and competencies set out in the job description’;

‘Women are mainly employed in clerical positions’;

Findings from these studies show that between 10 to 17% of organisations in the finance industry, 32 to 41% in the transport industry and 40% and 75% of organisations in the construction industry reported no policies or activities of any type across various policy areas including recruitment and selection; training and development or promotion and transfer, to address any perceived disparity or inequality of women in their organisations (French and Strachan 2007; 2009 and 2012).

2. A Fair Go for All!

The problem with the early policies of multiculturalism and managing difference was the failing to identify and address the essence of discrimination on the ground of difference (Kalantzis 1990) and it was against this back drop that Anti-Discrimination legislation and later Affirmative Action and then Equal Opportunity Legislation were introduced from 1975. More recently Gender Equality legislation has been introduced. A body of anti-discrimination legislation began with the Race Discrimination Act in 1975 and Sex Discrimination Act in 1984 and Disability Discrimination Act in 1997 and Age Discrimination Act in 2004. AA/EEO legislation was launched in 1986 and has been redeveloped to the Gender Equality in the Workplace Act 2013. In the private sector this legislation is for gender

equity only. In the public sector this legislation has been developed in each state in the Federal sector to address more groups including indigenous people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with a disability and more recently age. This change in policy involved a “stretching” of the concept of managing equality and inclusivity and included new areas of meaning for difference management and the growing recognition of ethnic stereotyping, sexism and discrimination in the workplace Taksa & Groutsis 2009. Anti-discrimination and EEO legislation was originally argued for in Australia in terms of providing “a fair go for all” which is “Aussie slang” for giving “a person a chance or an even break” to achieve. The belief in a "fair go" is a key part of Australian culture and Australian society (Dept. Immigration and Citizenship 2013). This principle is reflected by the fact that Australia was one of only eight countries that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has been a leading proponent of its consistent and comprehensive implementation ever since (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2013).

Anti-Discrimination legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate in the workplace on the basis of a number of identity differences, including sex, race, disability, age etc. Based in human rights and civil libertarianism this approach is based on the belief that individuals in society should have equal entitlements and that these should be supreme over any other authority including state, corporation or group. Enshrined in law, basic entitlements provide a benchmark of rights and duties for both employers and employees (Ronalds, 1991). The anti-discrimination legislation meets Australia’s legal obligations in respect of its ratification of international treaties with the United Nations and other international organisations. The *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (formerly called the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986*) established the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now known as the Australian Human Rights Commission) and gives it functions in relation to a number of international instruments to which Australia is a signatory, including:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (ILO 111)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Declaration of the Rights of the Child
- Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons
- Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, and
- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

EEO legislation in Australia has focused on employment and predominately on women in private sector with a broader application (or further stretching of the concept) in the public sector including

other groups across most of the States in Australia. The principles of the legislation recognise that certain specific steps aimed at promoting equality in employment need to be undertaken to eliminate disadvantages and ensure that the system is fair and equal to all employees and applicants (Ronald 1988; 1991). In contrast to anti-discrimination legislation, EEO legislation the social justice framework and does not advocate individual solutions to addressing unfair discrimination. Rather it encourages an analysis of systems and structures to identify discriminatory processes and the design of appropriate remedies at an organisational (or societal) level (Ronald 2008). Rather than being an alternative to anti-discrimination, EEO is seen as an umbrella term that includes a range of corrective responses to discrimination past and present (Poiner and Wills 1991). In the early years the legislation was called Affirmative Action; later it became Equal Employment Opportunity and more recently it has become the Workplace Gender Equality legislation. While the intent is similar the focus has changed over the 30 years since its beginnings as the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986. Equity and equality provided the further push and ultimately the business case (Kramar 2012) for workplace based remediation was encouraged linking equality and diversity to higher productivity, stretching the concept even further. The *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* now focuses the debate on gender equality, highlighting equal remuneration between women and men, and caring responsibilities as key dimensions. However this changing of the concepts of equality involves bending the concept to now include equity for men and women across two main areas, the traditional responsibility of women – that of caring; and the traditionally discriminatory outcome of remuneration in Australia for men and women where the difference has been enshrined in legislation for more than half a century.

These different legislative approaches to equality and inclusion support different values of the Australian culture. Anti-discrimination legislation supports the egalitarian, individualist nature in Australia and even the planned approach to change and given the early focus and leading nature of this change in 1975 it also supported the innovation aspect of the Australian culture. However, the EEO and Workplace Gender Equality legislation challenges some of these cultural elements, particularly the individual and masculine nature of the culture, and supports the egalitarian notion of social justice and planned approaches to change through the collective group based approach. Whether the “Fair Go For All” approach to encouraging equality and inclusivity within diversity in Australian has been effective can be viewed through research into the outcomes of those organizations that undertake these approaches. French (2001) found 36% and 32% respectively of 1961 organizations reporting their policies implemented an anti-discrimination approach or an AA/EEO approach. However only those organizations utilizing the AA/EEO approach to their policies had significantly more women managers than those organizations utilizing a classical and individual (or She’ll be right) approach to implementation. Further there was no significant finding for organizations utilizing an individual approach to implementing their policies of equity and diversity

management. This finding is supported by further research in specific industries in Australia, namely, finance, transport and construction (French and Strachan 2007; 2009; and 2012). Those organizations undertaking this “A Fair Go For All” approach make comments such as:

Anti-Discrimination through Individual application

‘We treat all applicants the same’,

‘Our policy is to treat men and women equally’

‘Total new hires 52 – 24 female and 28 male’.

AA/EEO through collective group application

‘Parental leave Information Kit details entitlements and benefits for pregnant and potentially pregnant employees are distributed’

‘We encourage women still predominantly employed in Clerical/Administrative category to apply for other positions advertised internally’

The findings of the studies in these three industries namely, finance, transport and construction suggest that equality and inclusion in Australia implemented to meet legislative requirements is not as deliberate as law makers may wish. Activities are most often implemented through an approach that encourages the equal and individual treatment of men and women to meet the coercive requirements of the legislation particularly to address discrimination in relation to sexual harassment, and the neutral (and equal) treatment of both men and women in the area of work organization to encourage inclusivity through flexible work practices. In investigating outcomes of these policy approaches and practices, no correlation between them and the numbers of women in the industries or in non-traditional work areas or in management was found. This individual and regulatory approach does not appear to be predictive of change to the horizontal or vertical integration of women in the workplace. Only activities that support the collective and regulatory approach are predictive of change in the numbers of women in some areas of the organization.

3. No Worries - We’ll take care of it! The Business Case for Managing Diversity

Most scholars disagree as to where the “frameworks” or “approaches” called diversity or equity intersect. However the reality for organizations in Australia is that they have to respond to the ‘equity framework’ which has given rise to the legislation mandating specific organisational practices as well as to the influence of the ‘diversity framework’ which encourages a managerial prerogative and an organizational strategic focus. Managing Diversity developed in the US. On the basis of the global competition companies faced and the changing workforce demographics identified in Workforce 2000 (Johnston & Packer 1987), Thomas 1990:12 proposed that a different approach was needed within organisations. To these two reasons for change he added a third: the legislation that aimed to achieve equity in the US (known as AA) was insufficient to achieve the outcomes. Thomas suggested (1990: 109) ‘we have to learn to manage diversity - to move beyond affirmative action, not to repudiate it’. The identified goal was to managing diversity in such a way ‘as to get from a diverse workforce the

same productivity we once got from a homogenous workforce' and diversity could perhaps deliver a bonus in performance. Further stretching the concept of difference in the workplace to include not only race, gender, creed and ethnicity but also age, background, education, function and personal Thomas implied the reasons to be 'positive business outcomes'. Adoption of the MD idea was swift. Some suggest this was due to the joining of forces of EEO specialists and MD specialists (Kelly & Dobbin 1998), while others suggest it was driven by the interests of business owners and managers (Konrad, 2003). This approach addressed the disquiet some may have felt with the approach and the outcomes of the legislation. In meeting the values of the Australian culture this approach taps into the individual element of the Australian culture and the here and now component.

The "No Worries – We'll take care of it" approach to encouraging equality and inclusivity within diversity in Australian organizations supports a managerial prerogative approach in interpreting the issues and implementing the relevant action that can be driven by various goals including valuing employee differences or utilizing those differences for strategic advantage. Whether this has been and effective approach can be viewed through research into the outcomes of organizations implementing elements associated with this approach. French (2001) found 20% of 1961 organizations implemented this approach to equality and inclusion. While there is debate about exactly what constitutes policies and programs variously labelled 'diversity' and 'managing diversity' (Bacchi 2000; Kirton and Greene 2005), French 2001 used the term concept to incorporate elements of organisational change and external recognition. In order to classify policies as gender diversity, organisations needed to include elements of culture change within the organisation and involve unions or other groups external to the organisation. Proactive equal employment opportunity activity that included specific treatment to address the potential for disadvantage for all workers or different needs of all workers not limited to gender and often including external measures such as enterprise bargaining and union advocacy were included in this categorisation. Reports that included leave opportunities that were the same for both genders and included maternity, paternity and adoption leaves were classified as diverse in nature. Examples included:

'All employees have opportunity to work either full-time part-time job share, flexible hours casual or on contact [through negotiation]. All positions are reviewed to see if flexible-working arrangements can be accommodated. With core hours being between 7am - 7pm the majority of employees are able to keep their own hours';

'All staff on maternity, paternity or paid parental leave have the option of dial in access ... to receive corporate communications ... via email';

'Flexibility in working hours, part time/job share workers being able to hold management positions'

However there were no significant findings for increased numbers of women in any area of management in organizations undertaking this approach. Further in the three industries studies French and Strachan (2007; 2009; 2012) there were no correlations between these policies and the increased numbers of women in the industries or in non-traditional work areas or in management

itself. While the traditional cultural elements of egalitarianism; individualism; and masculinity in Australia are high, the concepts of equality and inclusivity in diversity have been moulded to fit different “stories” of how the disparity between different groups has occurred and how it may be addressed. The key taboo areas remain equal pay, and the use of targets/quotas. Despite legislation in the 1970’s and 1980’s and 1990’s to achieve equal pay, Australian women are further away from it than they were 10 years ago (). Recent legislation for Gender Equality is set to challenge this taboo. While there is a strong encouragement for private sector organisations to set their own targets for equality and inclusion the reality is very different as the backlash against targets continues.

Despite these different approaches to managing diversity in the community and workforce the results or the scorecard on the outcomes remains mixed and in many cases disappointing. The labour force participation rates and workforce shares of women have increased but the gender wage gap and women in leadership roles remain indifferent to policy (French & Sheridan 2010). Indigenous Australians remained disadvantaged on nearly all labour market indicators (Dyer 2010). Other long standing areas of inequality such as migrant workers from a non English speaking background and workers with disabilities persist despite improved awareness and access programs (Strachan French & Burgess 2010). Recent developments on a national disability insurance program and pay increases for low paid occupations dominated by women suggest that policy is becoming more targeted and nuanced.

Conclusion

In the late 20th century Australia moved from exclusionary laws and policies to multicultural and social inclusion policies including legislation prohibiting discrimination on many grounds and promoting equity in employment for some groups. These changes in the character and values of the population and the workplace have resulted in legislation to support and protect diversity, anti-discrimination legislation and equal opportunity legislation. Prior to multiculturalism there were forms of discrimination and segmentation within the population and workforce, especially around race and gender. Anti-discrimination legislation, equal opportunity legislation and equal pay legislation embodied ideas of social justice and a fair go for all. There remains a strong justice and equality element in the national culture however against this there is a willingness to accept that markets, business and institutions are capable of addressing inequities and discrimination. This results in elements of voluntarism and tokenism around some of the implementation of these programs and some principles are not supported by systematic and enforceable actions. More recently the different and concurrent approaches to managing inclusivity and equality in diversity are blending into each other. Elements of different approaches can be recognised as they “bleed” into the other approaches. For example the individualism of the “She’ll be Right Mate” approach is noticeable in the “No

Worries Approach – We’ll Take Care of It”, while the managerial prerogatives of the “No Worries – We’ll Take Care of It” approach” is increasingly accepted in the “A Fair Go for All” approach. Research indicates that there are no clear separations between the means of implementation of equality and inclusivity policies and activities and outcomes are challenged as a result. Now after a good start in Australia to challenging the disparity between groups and individuals on the grounds of difference some previous gains have been lost and taboos remain entrenched.

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