



Acknowledgments

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Summary

This project examined the experiences of women from a non-English speaking background employed by Business Services in NSW. Staff, management and women employees from a NESB were asked questions about women's participation in the decision-making processes within the organisation. They were also asked to outline training opportunities for staff and women employees and identify any issues impacting upon their service that related to the area of cultural diversity. From an analysis of the data, training recommendations were developed and then used as a basis for the development and piloting of a model of training for staff, management and employees. Findings indicate that women employees of Business Services with disability have little involvement in the decision-making practices of their service. Further, there was limited evidence of the existence of policies and practices to promote and support such participation.

Although many staff members reported that they had accessed a range of training opportunities there were significant numbers who reported minimal access to training. Women employees from a NESB reported that the majority of training took the form of skills-based on the job training. While many of the women participants expressed interest in extending their learning opportunities it was clear that the majority of Business Services are in the initial stages of developing extensive training opportunities for both staff and employees.

In regard to issues around the area of cultural diversity, services stated that language barriers were of primary concern, although most had not accessed the services of a professional interpreter. The attitudes of employees' parents towards their daughters, as well as culturally specific customs, religious beliefs and traditions were also cited as examples of problems for services. In the majority, responses indicate the unquestioning imposition of Western Judaeo-Christian culture over the traditions and beliefs of others. In light of this finding the report strongly recommends the development of training for staff and employees in the area of cultural diversity.

In conclusion, although work plays a positive role in the lives of women from a NESB with disability there are a number of areas that need to be addressed by service management and funding bodies. These include the support of women workers to participate in the decision-making processes within their organisation and the need for rights-based education in participation and staff and management training in the area of cultural difference/diversity. While education and training are the obvious vehicle for change there is also a duty of care on funding bodies to provide a workplace that embraces cultural diversity, supports workers' involvement in decision-making and offers them a wide range of learning opportunities.

Recommendations for training

Recommendation 1

The curriculum to be developed should give emphasis to training in the area of cultural competence, with particular focus on awareness and values of cultural diversity and the skills and knowledge to work effectively in a culturally diverse country. Particular emphasis to be given to working with family members from diverse cultures.

Recommendation 2

The curriculum to be developed should promote the inclusion of training in 'cultural competence' as an integral part of ongoing training and quality assurance accreditation for management, staff and employees in Business Services.

Recommendation 3

The curriculum to be developed should include strategies and procedures to support the participation of employees in the decision-making policies and practices of the organisation. Particular emphasis will be given to the support of employees from a NESB.

Recommendation 4

The curriculum to be developed should address issues related to communication. In particular the identification and means of addressing perceived barriers to communication.

Recommendation 5

The curriculum to be developed should include an understanding of issues related to employees' rights in the workplace including: Disability Service Standards and legislative requirements, dignity & privacy, discrimination, salary, leave, occupational health and safety, union membership and workers' committees.

Recommendation 6

The curriculum to be developed should address networking and resource issues for management and staff. In particular, accessing ethnic community networks, accessing interpreters, liaising with schools regarding promotion of the value of work for women from NESB.

1

Overview and context

Women from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability who work in Business Services were the focus of this pilot project. The project is the initiative of the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA), the peak advocacy agency for people from a NESB with disability, who were successful in gaining funding from the Western Sydney Area Health Service as part of a state-wide program, 'Women at work'. The consultants for the project are Lel D'aegher and Fay Hickson.

The impetus behind this initiative lies in anecdotal observations and informal discussions about the lack of visibility of women from a NESB in disability services generally and in employment services in particular. Furthermore, there is very little published information on the experiences of women from a NESB with disability in the community in general.

2

Aims of the project

The project consists of two linked stages. The first stage employs a qualitative research methodology to investigate the experiences of women from NESB with disability who work in Business Services. An analysis of the findings in Stage 1 of the project will inform the focus and development of resources and implementation of training in Stage 2. The second stage involves the development of training in line with these recommendations and the piloting of this training with staff, management and employees of Business Services.

Resources developed in Stage 2 can be used as a model of good practice for rights-based education for Business Services. This will assist Business Services in ensuring they are meeting the requirements of both the Disability Services Act and the ongoing process of quality assurance accreditation.

2.1 Aim of Stage 1

To investigate current Business Services practices in relation to the participation, rights knowledge and training opportunities of women from a NESB with disability employed in those services.

2.2 Aim of Stage 2

To develop resource materials and run a pilot education session with management, staff and women employees from a NESB in a targeted Business Service.

3

Definitions and demographics

3.1 Definition of NESB

For the purpose of this project the following definition of NESB is used, which refers to a person:

- ⊙ born overseas and whose language or culture is not English or Anglo-Celtic/Saxon; or
- ⊙ born here in Australia and the first language or culture of at least one parent is not English or Anglo-Celtic/Saxon; or
- ⊙ born in Australia with linguistic or cultural background other than English or Anglo-Celtic/Saxon who wish to be identified as such.

(Less Talk, More Action: Advancing Cultural Diversity and Disability in 21st Century NSW, Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW, June 2000).

3.2 Numbers of people from a NESB with disability

There are no precise statistics available regarding the numbers of people with a disability who are from a non-English speaking background. However, in 'Less Talk, More Action (2000) MDAA has extrapolated the data from the 1998 ABS survey on 'Disability, Ageing and Carers' and estimates that if 24% of the NSW population are people with a disability, then 3.5% of this population, 217, 396 people, are from a NESB with disability.

In regard to Disability Employment Services, data from the Department of Family and Community Services (Disability Services Census, 1998) shows that 6% of consumers were born in a country where languages other than English are spoken and 5.1% speak a language other than English. From further analysis of these Census figures, the National Ethnic Disability Alliance, NEDA (2000) conclude that three out of four people from a NESB with disability miss out on receiving Commonwealth funded Disability Employment Services.

4

Disability Employment Services

4.1 History

Over the past two decades there have been significant changes to the practice and underlying philosophies related to the value of work for people with disability, in particular, people with an intellectual disability. There is now a strong recognition of the capacity of people with a disability to both gain employment and become productive workers.

The importance of work to an individual's self-worth is also widely acknowledged. For people with disability, perceived benefits include greater financial independence, enhanced feelings of self-esteem and self worth, integration and participation in their community, a sense of satisfaction from achieving goals, enhanced opportunities for social interaction and the development of social networks (Riches, 1993).

Services that offer employment options to people with a disability have undergone major changes across recent years. One of the most significant shifts has been the evolution of the 'sheltered workshop' model of employment to a model that aims, in the most part, to reflect similar practices to those of the general employment sector. The evolution from a custodial approach to one that promotes independence, participation and skill development mirrors the changing face of all disability service provision. This change has been driven by both legislative and funding

requirements and by the philosophies and practices of self-determination and community inclusion.

Disability Employment Services are funded by the Commonwealth Government to support people with disabilities in paid employment. The Commonwealth *Disability Services Act 1993*, (DSA) and related service standards prescribe the way that all services are required to meet the needs of service users. The Commonwealth Disability Service Standards apply to all Disability Employment Services.

To guarantee continued funding, management and staff of Business Services are required to be accountable to service users and funding bodies in a number of areas. These areas include the personal and professional development of employees with a disability; the establishment of workers' committees; implementation of occupational health and safety standards; and the provision of opportunities for decision-making and participation (Dempsey, 1994; Dempsey & Arthur, 1998).

4.2 Business Services

This project focuses on the arm of Disability Employment Services called 'Business Services'. The term 'Business Service' is used to describe services that provide both employment and employment support to people with a disability. This model differs from open employment services whose employees receive support from a disability specific

employment service but are actually employed by a generic community-based service. A feature specific to Business Services is their dual focus, that is, their two-fold responsibility for both the provision of supported employment for people with a disability along with the development and maintenance of a viable commercial business. In response to the tensions that have arisen from the competing demands of this dual focus, a review of Disability Employment Services was commissioned jointly by ACROD and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services in 2000. The review aimed to identify strategies to enable Business Services to fulfil their dual role.

This Business Service Review has been described as a response to:

“an urgent need to address a range of key issues so as to provide individual Business Services and the industry as a whole with a coherent policy, funding and operational framework within which to undertake their core activities”.

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2000).

From this Review three key priorities were identified, as follows:

- ⊙ establishment of a new perspective for Business Services which recognises their dual role, with emphasis on their core role as employers who must provide work conditions comparable to those in any other employment;
- ⊙ improving the performance of Business Services by establishing an agreed performance and benchmarking framework as a guide for the sector; and
- ⊙ development of the industry by establishing strategies to improve operation, their position in the wider employment market and gaining skills needed to drive continuous improvement. The strategic plan provides a framework to assist the sector in providing quality employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2000).

A major outcome of the Business Service Review that is contextually relevant to the project under discussion includes the development of a continuous improvement performance strategy that will culminate in an industry wide accreditation system. Major outcomes of this project, in particular the identification of issues around the participation of women from a NESB with disability and the design and implementation of training for management, staff and employees will assist Business Services in meeting accreditation guidelines.

5 *Designing and implementing the project*

5.1 Overview

This project uses a qualitative methodology to gather information on the experiences of women from a NESB with disability in Business Services. Stage 1 of the project aims to investigate current Business Services practices in relation to the participation, rights knowledge and training experiences of women from a NESB with disability employed in those services. To do this the following qualitative research methods were used:

- ⊙ face-to face consultations with management and staff of Business Services;
- ⊙ initial telephone contact and follow up with targeted Business Services;
- ⊙ the development and implementation of a questionnaire for staff and management to be sent to targeted Business Services; and
- ⊙ the development, piloting and implementation of questions to be used in focus groups with women from a NESB with disability who are employees of Business Services.

5.2 Consultations with Managers and Staff of Business Services

A number of managers and staff of Business Services were initially contacted, both face-to-face and by telephone, to identify current issues in services. From these consultations a draft questionnaire was developed and piloted.

Feedback on the draft questionnaire was obtained from a Business Service

Manager who was also a member of the project's advisory committee and from a staff member with extensive experience in Business Services. Sixty-six Business Services across rural and metropolitan NSW were contacted by telephone to ascertain their interest in the project and in completing the questionnaire. Forty-six Business Services agreed to complete the survey, which was sent by fax and/or email. In many instances follow up telephone conversations and e-mails were necessary.

Face to face consultations were implemented with eight Business Services across rural, semi-rural and metropolitan regions of NSW. Interviews and focus groups were held with staff (in particular, training co-ordinators), management and women employees from a NESB with disability.

5.3 Focus groups

An initial focus group with women from a NESB who work in Business Services was implemented to test the focus questions. A focus group methodology was used to ensure that participants felt safe and supported in communicating issues related to their work in a group environment.

In regard to research with people with a disability, Ward (1997) notes that researchers need to make a range of accommodations to their research practices that include:

- ⊙ preparation of accessible materials;
- ⊙ giving attention to issues of meaningful consent;
- ⊙ consideration of payment of appropriate monies to participants to acknowledge their involvement;
- ⊙ the organisation of accessible venues for interviews and focus groups; and
- ⊙ strategies for feeding back information to participants and any wider group they may represent.

All of these issues were taken into account in the development and implementation of this project.

5.4 Ethical considerations

A number of ethical considerations were addressed in the development and implementation of the project. A plain English explanation of the aims and expected outcomes of the project was given to all participants where necessary. The issue of confidentiality and anonymity was also addressed with the assurance given that no individuals or specific employment services would be identified in the report.

The issue of consent was also addressed. Participants were given the opportunity to choose to be involved in the project and were told that they could direct the consultants to delete their contribution at any time. When explaining issues around consent to participants with an intellectual disability, plain English was used. Checks were put in place to ensure that participants understood all written and spoken information and were able to make an informed decision about their involvement in the project.

Information gained in interviews and focus groups with women employees from a NESB with disability was recorded by note-taking rather than taping of the discussions. In a study investigating the needs and issues of women from a NESB with disability the prospect of being on tape caused one participant such considerable distress that this methodology was not implemented (Winter, 1993). In the focus groups where there were a number of women with significant support needs a methodology called 'Talking Paper' (Metaplan) was used. This strategy is designed to ensure that all participants have a say in responding to questions or issues raised. In this context each woman's response was either written or drawn on small circles of coloured paper and attached to a large sheet of paper on the wall. It was then possible to review the responses with the women at the end of the session in the words used by the women themselves. In circumstances where only one researcher ran the focus group careful notes were taken and issues raised were checked back with participants to ensure their comments were reflected.

6.1 Women from a NESB with disability

Although there is an extensive body of knowledge on the experiences of women with a disability, there is limited research which investigates the experiences of women from a NESB with disability.

One study which investigated the experience of women from a NESB living in Australia, recommends the need for education of health professionals and service providers around the relationship between disability and culture and the necessity for further research and writing on the experience of being a woman with disability (Pane, 1994).

In another study Lavarche (1992) identifies the barrier that women with a disability experience arising from both society's expectations of women's abilities and general societal attitudes towards people with disabilities. Pane (1994) further asserts that service organisations in particular show a lack of understanding of cultural issues related to women from a NESB with disability.

6.2 Participation of people with disability

There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the participation of people with disability. While in most instances participation is viewed from a global perspective rather than one specific to an individual's life or work experience, a number of local authors have published practical suggestions to assist in enabling participation.

Ryan (1997) recommends a series of organisational structures that may optimise the participation of people with a disability in terms of both service delivery and broader community life.

These include:

- ⊙ a commitment from the organisation to power sharing with service users;
- ⊙ an acknowledgment that there are prerequisite skills and knowledge needed before participation can become a reality; and
- ⊙ the success of a facilitator is measured by becoming obsolete once they have provided the strategies for ensuring that individuals have the skills and knowledge to participate.

In line with the acknowledgment of the need for skill development, Yeatman (2000) stresses that it is pointless to teach people with a disability how to participate if they are not given the opportunity to put this theory into practice. The need for others to act in ways which invite an individual to participate and to provide necessary supports is also stressed (Yeatman, 2000).

While little is written about participation at a service level there has been some discussion of broader participatory processes. Community consultations with people with a disability are often given as an example of a participatory process and are widely used by government when implementing new legislation or related reforms. While this may provide individuals with an opportunity to have

their voices heard, it may not extend to the actual practice of service delivery.

Bleasdale and Kayess (2000) suggest that there is little incentive for services to extend themselves to be fully responsive to the expressed needs and wants of service users as there are no rewards from providing a responsive service and no penalties for lack of effective consultation.

The importance of rights knowledge is also given emphasis in the literature on participation. Ryan (1997) states that participation can be a very important mechanism by which to build rights and enhance citizenship. West & Parent (1992), who studied consumer empowerment issues in supported employment, suggest that the powerlessness and lack of self direction that many people with significant disabilities experience has less to do with their limitations and impairments and more to do with attitudes and practices of care-givers, service providers, funding agencies and social institutions. They further suggest that the restriction of opportunities to learn about choice and participation and the pre-selection of activities and work will impact upon whether or not participation becomes a reality (West & Parent, 1992).

6.3 Staff training in Disability Employment Services

The need for ongoing training and education of staff in Disability Employment Services in the context of changing philosophy and practice is identified in a number of local research reports (eg. Parmenter, 1991; 1993; Dempsey & Arthur, 1998). Two areas commonly identified as problematic include the lack of training available to staff working in employment services and the high level of staff turnover.

The professional experience and qualification of staff in employment services has also been identified as an area that needs to be addressed. A local study that investigated the professional development needs of staff in employment services in the Hunter region of NSW found that 53% had no previous professional experience working with people with a disability (Dempsey & Arthur, 1998). The same staff members were less likely to have an educational qualification relevant to the disability area (Dempsey & Arthur, 1998). In support of these findings, a more recent study of staff training in employment services in NSW found that very few staff had qualifications relevant to their job and that only 51% of all staff had attended training courses in the last two years (Parmenter, Knox & McDonald, 1990).

Dempsey & Arthur, (1998) also investigated the nature and focus of training undertaken by staff in employment services. They found that the topics routinely offered included information about disability; individual program plans; assessment techniques; and on-the-job training of clients. The topics that staff were least likely to have received training in included working with families; tendering for contracts; and transition from school to work.

While the attitudes of staff toward people with disabilities are consistently cited in the general disability literature as of critical importance to quality service delivery (West & Parent, 1992) there is no evidence of attitudes and values training in any of the studies investigating training in employment services.

The limited number of staff from employment services who access training is also cited as an area of concern. A study of staff training in NSW employment services found that

Only 51% of total staff had attended training courses across the last two years. While the majority, 66%, had been funded by the organisation to attend training, 14% had paid for training courses themselves. Services cited lack of funding (44%), lack of replacement staff (38%) and lack of good trainers (27%) as a rationale for these figures (Parmenter, Knox & McDonald, 1990).

7

Demographic information

7.1 Consultations and contact with Business Services

In total contact was made with Sixty-six Business Services spread across rural and metropolitan NSW (see Table 1). In some instances consultations took place with more than one person from each service. In the larger services where there was a specified person responsible for training we spoke to both the Manager and the Training Co-ordinator. Of the Sixty-six services contacted, forty-six said they were interested in receiving the questionnaire. A large number of rural services stated that the project was not relevant to them and/or they did not have any employees from a NESB with disability. Comments included:

“we have no-one from a NESB in our service - in fact we have no-one in the whole town”.

“after working for 15 years in this service we have never had anyone from a NESB”.

“why would we have any women from a NESB. Only 0.2% of the population here are not Australian so we wouldn't get any”.

A number of services needed clarification of the definition of NESB before they could understand the relevance and focus of this project. Others remained confused. For example, one rural service said:

“we have two aboriginal workers, you can talk to them”.

Other services stated that the project was not relevant to them, as the nature of the work they offered meant that they only employed men. Many services did not see this as a problem as stated that it was an historic factor of many Business Services specialising in mechanical or horticultural work. One rural service that specialised in horticulture and ran a nursery commented:

“the work isn't suitable for women”.

However, an outer metropolitan service that offered work in the horticultural area, acknowledged the under-representation of women in their service, particularly women from a non-English speaking background.

Table 1 Contact made with services

Geographical area	Services Contacted	Questionnaires sent	Questionnaires returned
Rural	26	11	5
Semi-rural	15	10	2
City	25	24	15
Total	66	46	22

They stated:

“we’d love to have more women workers but young women don’t seem to want to get their hands dirty. It’s a shame because when they do come they love the work and most of our trainers are women”.

While these attitudes may, to some degree, reflect those of wider society there are clear implications here for services, funding bodies and the education system. Studies of women and work reveal many discrepancies between female representation in specific types of employment, the existence of a ‘glass ceiling’ in terms of opportunities for promotion and discrepancies between male and female employees’ earning capacity.

The assumption that there is a distinction between ‘men’s work’ and ‘women’s work’ leads to a continuing perpetuation of the under-representation of women in Business Services.

7.2 Personnel contacted

In most instances the initial contact was made with the Manager of the Business Service. In larger services contact was also made with the person responsible for training, variously described as the Training Co-ordinator, Training Manager, Training Officer or Employment Development Officer. These contacts were a useful source of information. Questionnaires were often sent to both the Manager of the service and the Training Co-ordinator. In a number of instances telephone contact was followed up with face-to-face interviews of Training Co-ordinators and Managers. A number of Supervisors, Site Managers and Trainers who worked

closely with employees on a day-to-day basis were also consulted.

7.3 Nature of work offered to employees

The work offered by services to employees, both male and female, varied. In the metropolitan services the work offered included packaging, gardening/horticulture/lawn care, paper re-cycling, mailing, process work, cleaning and laundry. In the semi-rural areas the work included horticulture and packaging while the rural services we spoke to offered work in the hospitality (food processing) and horticulture industries.

7.4 Contact with women employees from a NESB

In total, seventeen women who work in Business Services from a NESB with disability were consulted (see Table 2). The majority of women participants had an intellectual disability but women with physical and psychiatric disabilities also participated in the focus groups. To enable women to feel comfortable and safe in speaking out, four focus groups were implemented. One of these was held at the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association’s Office at Harris Park with women from metropolitan services. Another was held with 4 women from rural services. The third was held with a group of 4 women who worked for a large outer metropolitan service and the fourth with three women from a small inner city Business Service.

Table 2 Women employees from non-English speaking backgrounds

Geographical area	Number	Cultural background	Languages spoken
Rural	4	Indian, Greek, Croatian	Hindi, Greek, Dalmatian
Metropolitan	13	Chinese, Macedonian, Croatian, Fijian, Iranian, Italian, Polish, Mauritian, Vietnamese, Czechoslovakian, Greek	Cantonese, Mandarin, Dalmatian, Farsi, Polish, French/Creole, Vietnamese, Czechoslovakian, Greek, Italian

8

Results of data analysis: consultations with staff and management

8.1 Perceived participation of employees in the management of the service and supports provided

A general question on the participation of all employees with disability was included in the questionnaire, as follows:

“Give some examples of situations where employees with a disability actively participate in the management of the organisation”.

The vast majority of services stated that employees were given opportunities to participate in employee/worker committees. In most cases, however, these committees were not linked in any way to the management structure of the organisation. The following statement reflects a common response from services:

“employees sit on a workers’ committee that then informs Management of any issues. It is up to Management whether or not they take the issues up”.

However, an example of ‘good practice’ was given by one service:

“employees have monthly employee meetings in which all employees are involved. Minutes from these meetings go to the Operations Meeting in order to address issues, and then onto the Board of Directors Meeting”.

Limited opportunities were extended to employees to participate in a number of other committees. These included Workplace Safety Committees, Grievance Committees, ISP Meetings and to a lesser degree Quality Assurance Committees, Management Committees and Policy and Procedure Reviews.

In the majority of services there seemed to be no clear structure or policy in place for the higher echelons of management to hear the voices of the employees. Only one service reported that a structure existed whereby:

“workers’ representatives from each Business Service attend Board Meetings (monthly) on a rotating basis”.

Another service stated that employees did not participate in the management of the organisation at any level. They stated that the ‘employee representative’ on a major committee was someone with a disability from an external advocacy organisation. They went on to say that:

“this person had no contact with the employees of the Business Service to ascertain issues or to give them any feedback as to what was happening”.

When asked about supports offered to employees with disability who were members of committees, the majority of services acknowledged the need for support and nominated the Training Co-

ordinator or equivalent as being responsible for any support given.

Some services had recognised and addressed the need for support:

“in the meetings we use visual aids and Plain English versions of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement and the Disability Service Standards, for example. There was the use of advocates for the EBA in regard to understanding the document”.

“we use augmentative communication formats to minute meetings”.

The need for training as a pre-requisite to meaningful participation was recognised by another service:

“employee reps are given training in running meetings”.

Although these responses show some recognition of the need for support there are still a large number of services that stated that it was not necessary to provide support, particularly if the employee spoke English.

8.2 Participation of women employees from non-English speaking backgrounds

To find out more about the actual participation of women employees from a NESB with disability, services were asked about practices of participation in the management and decision-making of the organisation. They were also asked to identify any supports that were put in place to optimise this participation.

The answers to these questions showed that 60% of women employees from a NESB with disability did not participate at any level in the decision-making within the organisation. It was stated that the remaining 40% were involved in

workers committees but there was no evidence of the level of their involvement. While it is not clear how representative this is of the overall experience of employees of disability employment services generally, it is of note that there are still significant numbers of women employees from a NESB who do not participate in decision-making within their service.

When asked about the specific supports put in place for women employees from a NESB who did participate on committees, a large number of services stated that support was not necessary as all of the women employees spoke English. For example, one service reported:

“there were not any issues because they all have a good understanding of English”.

Another said:

“they speak English and have a good understanding”.

While these findings are of concern, not all services automatically linked the ability to speak English to a full understanding of what is being said at meetings. In one service where the opportunity to participate in the workers meetings was extended to all employees it was stated that:

“because each of the 12 women from non-English speaking backgrounds use English at work, we have not been faced with the need for interpreters. The team facilitator is careful to present matters in varying shades of complexity so that no one misses out. However, we are never 100% confident of the level of understanding or retention”.

A few services acknowledged the need for further support at meetings if understanding of English was an issue by distributing materials 'in appropriate formats'.

Similarly, another service stated:

"information is delivered in a consumer-friendly format using plain English and pictures where necessary to assist the employees to understand in the same way that other employees who do not come from non-English speaking backgrounds are assisted. Sign language is also used where necessary".

A number of services identified issues related to parental and staff attitudes to women from a NESB as examples of barriers to participation. Two staff members from different services stressed the importance of working with parents to enable greater participation of their family member. They stated:

"we need some parent education in the rights of people with disabilities. Parents see employees as 'eternal children'".

"our major difficulties arise when having to deal with families because of language and cultural difficulties".

The area of staff education was cited by a number of services as the major means of enabling participation. The need for a change in the culture of employment services that give little value to education and training was also identified as shown in the following statement:

"changing the mindset of staff... and the culture of the workplace. Staff training, knowledge and qualifications in disability are not required in this Business service."

Therefore education and training are not a priority".

Overall, the responses show that there is limited 'real' participation of women from a NESB with disability in the decision-making processes within the organisation. While a number of services identified the need to ensure that written and spoken communication was in 'plain English' there was little acknowledgment that language may not be the major barrier. The perceived over-protection of women by their parents was raised as an issue but there were no clearly identified strategies proffered for addressing this issue. The need for further training and education is evident and a general commitment to the development of policy and practice of processes of participation by service providers is yet to be developed.

8.3 Training/education offered to staff of Business Services

To assist in the development of a training package for management, staff and employees of Business Services, services were asked to identify any training that had been offered to staff across the past two years. A range of training areas were identified which clustered into four distinct areas: First Aid, Occupational Health and Safety, Behaviour Management and Certificate IV Workplace Training (see Table 3).

During telephone conversations and face-to-face interviews with training co-ordinators, the issue of limited funding for off-the-job training was cited on numerous occasions as a major obstacle. However, a number of Business Services expressed a strong commitment to staff training and ensured that their staff were

given the opportunity and encouragement to access training. A number of services also noted the necessity to address the issue of training in the context of current quality assurance assessment and accreditation.

It was clear that in many Business Services, staff training was not mandatory. One service stated that staff had declined the offer of participating in any training, although they were encouraged to do so. Although it was evident from the results of the questionnaire that many staff access training courses (see Table 3) it was also evident that some staff undertake minimal training.

It was also clear from our face to face discussions with managers and training co-ordinators that while some services are in the process of developing a 'training culture' within their organisation, others are still grappling with this issue.

Table 3 Training offered to staff across the past two years

Management	Service focus	Employee focus	General professional development	Health/ safety	Cultural diversity
Team building (2)* Crisis management (1) Supervisor training (1) Australian Institute of Management course (1) Front-line management (1) HR Management (1) Internal auditing (1) Accounts/Payroll (1)	DSA (3) Standards (2) Policy & Procedures (1) Legal aspects (1) Incidence response training (1) Complaints (1)	Behaviour Management/Challenging behaviour (5) Programming IP's (1) Orientation to disability (1) Sexuality in the workplace (1) Protective behaviours in the workplace (1) Responding to sexual assault (1) Augmentative communication (1) Makaton (1) Introduction to rehabilitation (1)	Certificate 1V Workplace training (4) Certificate 111 & 1V Community services Disability (3) Certificate 111 & 1V Working with people with Disabilities (2) WELL** training (2) Certificate 111 in training small groups (1) Diploma in Community services (1) Horticulture 11, Certificate 111 & 1V (1) VETAB Accredited Equal employment opportunity for women (1)	First Aid (7) Introduction to OH & S (6) OH & S Accredited trainers course (1) Manual handling (1) Risk management (1) Introduction to Mental Health (2)	Managing cultural diversity (1) Cultural differences in making decisions-workshop (1) Principles of cultural awareness-workshop (1) Multi-cultural diversity in disability (1)

* Number of times nominated by a service

** Workplace English Language & Literacy

Respondents to the questionnaire were also asked to identify some priority training areas for their service. Six services identified the area of Occupational Health & Safety, three identified Quality Assurance and a further three identified training around the Disability Service as a priority. Not surprisingly a number of services nominated 'Cultural Diversity' training as a priority area and many mentioned that it was an area they had not previously thought about.

Overall, staff and management of Business Services showed a great deal of interest in the proposed training that will form Stage 2 of this project and acknowledged that it would assist them in meeting the quality accreditation guidelines.

8.4 Training/education offered to employees from a NESB

Services were asked to describe any education/training provided to employees with a disability from a NESB (see Table 4). The majority of training provided to employees fell into the category of on-the-job skills based training which related directly to the nature of the work undertaken. Services stated:

"training is tailored to suit the needs of the individual-on the job".

"we train employees in the job they are to do".

Very little off-the-job training was available to employees from a NESB, although some professional development training had been undertaken. The need to address this issue was noted by one Training Co-ordinator:

"we recognise a hole in assessing, encouraging and meeting the needs of people from a NESB in this service".

A small number of services with an identified training culture stated that all training offered to staff and employees took the same form. These services cited a range of supports provided to ensure that material presented was understood:

"all education and training is the same for employees and trainers. We place individual needs high on our priority list whether this be through alternative communication aids, interpreters, compic, sign language and audio".

One service with an identified training culture offered employees a wide range of ongoing training:

"we have a committed training culture and train our employees both 'on the job' and in face-to-face training 'off the job'. We have training groups called 'Quality Circles' made up of 8-10 employees who have one hour of training every week in work associated skills. This covers a wide range of subjects from 'concentration', 'working with others' to 'sexuality in the workplace' and 'money skills'. We also offer Numeracy and Literacy skills in cooperation with the (local) TAFE"

Table 4 Training offered to employees

On-the-job training	Professional development	Personal development	Health/safety
Job skills training (10) Employee Induction training (1)	DSA (2) WELL training (1) Numeracy & Literacy - TAFE (1) Concentration Skills (1) Working with others (1)	Sexuality & the Workplace (1) Travel training (1) Money skills (1) Rights (1)	OH & S (3) Health & Hygiene (1)

In face-to-face interviews with Training Co-ordinators much information was gleaned about the nature and scope of training offered to employees with disability generally and women from a NESB in particular. Although many Business Services have implemented training around the Disability Services Act and Occupational Health and Safety, the majority of Business Services have yet to develop a structure for ongoing training and education. Clearly, the majority of existing education offered to employees with disability takes the form of skills-based on-the-job training. A number of services showed interest in offering employees a broader range of training opportunities but many stated that the major barrier to the development of off-the-job training were financial constraints and that the present budgets did not take account of the need for more extensive training.

Only a small number of the larger services have developed their own training curriculum, although many expressed interest in doing so. It is of note that one Business Service, with a reputation for quality staff and employee training has recently gained approval as a registered training organisation (RTO).

8.5 Perceived issues related to cultural diversity

When asked about issues related to culture many services lacked a clear understanding of what was meant by a 'cultural issue'. Nine services said they had not experienced any issues related to culture even though they did have employees from a NESB with disability. The remaining services gave examples of issues that they perceived as culturally based. These fell into three groupings: issues related to language, issues related to religious and/or cultural practices, and issues related to lack of funding.

Issues related to the family of women employees from a NESB with disability were also cited as having an impact on service delivery. Examples given related either to language or to family members' relationships with their daughter or sister.

The stigma of having a family member with a disability was also identified as an issue for families and women. Such perceived stigma caused a problem for one Business Service who felt that it impacted upon the woman's self-esteem at work.

8.5.1 Issues related to language

The majority of managers and staff highlighted language issues as the major cultural issue within their organisation.

Services identified the impact of language barriers on employees:

“one of our service users speaks Armenian at home and has very limited English at work. When she is upset it is very hard to understand the cause or nature of her problem. We are trying to resolve this by teaching her words in English that are related to work issues by repetitive training”.

In a limited number of instances language barriers were addressed through the use of pictorial aids or the use of family members as interpreters. Some examples cited include:

“procedures have been presented in pictorial form”.

“there is a limited level of understanding about more complex issues eg the Disability Service Standards. We have addressed this by developing a series of pictures to describe each standard”.

“if parents do not understand issues discussed in Employment Planning Meetings, positive outcomes for the employees are affected. Planning meetings are held at times when another family member is able to be present to act as an interpreter”.

The need for interpreters was cited as an issue by many services although they were rarely accessed externally. Services stated:

“it has sometimes been difficult to explain issues to parents and family members who have English as a second language”.

“there have been no interpreters used for client meetings”.

“one employee speaks Persian and is having problems understanding”.

When employees or other family members were used as interpreters a number of problems became evident:

“sometimes employees are not keen to interpret for their parents or acknowledge their ‘home’ language”.

Another service gave the example of an employee’s brother who acted as an interpreter for her parents in a meeting with staff. The woman’s mother then interpreted what was being said back to her. The staff member present made the following observation:

“the woman only speaks a ‘pigeon’ version of her language and her mother is the only one who can communicate with her, but her mother doesn’t speak English so we need the brother to interpret to the mother first. In the end we have no idea if the woman has gotten the message or not!”

Only two services reported that they had accessed external accredited interpreters when there was an issue with language.

It is of concern that the majority of services nominated issues around language as the major cultural issue that had impacted upon their organisation. While services found that a lack of understanding of English was a barrier to communication there were few strategies in place to address this. Further, once the perceived language barrier was addressed there was an assumption by many services the issue had been ‘fixed’ and all problems would automatically disappear. There was a general lack of awareness that many cultural barriers are far more subtle and influential on an individual’s participation than the ability to speak and understand English.

8.5.2 Issues related to family expectation

A further cultural issue identified by services was that of parental expectation and its impact upon the employee with a disability. Examples given included:

“we have experienced differences in expectations for workers by their families - not just families from a NESB, but more widely. Younger women who are not permitted to access out of hours social events or training when it is offered to them”.

“women employees have been exited from the program by parents/guardians to take up domestic duties at home when their brothers and sisters have children”.

“employees are unable to achieve employment outcomes because parents are fearful of them being hurt”.

“parents do not encourage women employees to form friendships or relationships with males in the workplace”.

Some services had difficulty in acknowledging that issues related to culture would influence women’s life at work. One service manager stated:

“we have no cultural issues. We have one person from a NESB in our service but their issues are at home. Their parents don’t treat them as an equal member of the family”.

8.5.3 Issues related to religious traditions and beliefs

Religious traditions and beliefs were identified by services as having an impact on service delivery. In most instances the examples given were viewed as a ‘problem’ for services rather than purely a difference in belief system. Only one service noted that they had been remiss in addressing cultural difference, stating that:

“traditions or festivities that are culturally different have not been celebrated or discussed in the past”.

Three services stated that Ramadan was celebrated by some of their employees. While this was an accepted cultural tradition, one service saw it as a problem:

“one problem we have had is during Moslem Ramadan where employees fast during the day. We have had a problem with an employee becoming ill because of the heat and not eating or drinking”.

A further example related to specific religious beliefs was noted by a service who said there were:

“problems related to separate eating and food preparation with employees who are Jewish”.

The examples given show the imposition of the dominant culture, in this case a Western Judaeo-Christian culture, imposing its beliefs and values on different cultures. Traditions and practices from other religions were viewed by services as ‘problems’ rather than differences in belief. The development and implementation of training in the area of attitudes and values related to religious beliefs and traditions would be of benefit to a better understanding of cultural diversity.

8.5.4 Male employees’ attitudes to female employees

Two services mentioned issues related to male employees’ attitudes towards women employees. This issue was perceived by staff members as being culturally based. Staff stated:

“one male employee from a specific background interacts with women inappropriately”.

“we also experience difficulties with male employees and their attitude to female

employees because of cultural and religious backgrounds and beliefs”.

Again, it is of note that these issues are seen as related to culture. While the relationships between male and female employees who were not from a NESB were not examined it is possible that the issue is gender based rather than culturally based.

8.6 Issues related to funding

Issues related to financial and funding constraints were consistently cited by Business Service management as a rationale for the limited training opportunities offered to both staff and employees and for the limited use of accredited interpreters. One newly appointed Manager suggested that the funding issue was something of a ‘Catch 22’ situation. She stated:

“in terms of funding, I have noticed the inability to attract more funding due to the lack of skills and knowledge to attract employees from non-English speaking backgrounds”.

Another staff member suggested financial constraints were the first consideration when any new initiative was proposed. She commented that:

“decisions regarding service delivery are purely financial”.

The cost of using interpreters was also mentioned on numerous occasions with the manager of one service stressing that financial considerations were a major issue in quality service provision. She said she would like:

“ interpreters at no cost to the service”.

8.7 Perceived benefit of education/training in supporting women from a NESB in participating at work

Staff and management gave unequivocal support to the development of training focusing on cultural diversity and supporting women from a NESB in participating in decision-making within the service.

Some saw the positive outcome of such training as benefiting the service as a whole. Comments included:

“any training that assists & increases client participation has to benefit firstly the person, their workplace and improve staff awareness”.

“we never stop learning...it would be of benefit”.

“all training to improve the quality of support and service will be of benefit”.

Others pinpointed the area of cultural difference as critical:

“yes, staff would benefit from education and training in cultural awareness”.

“yes, however equally beneficial would be opportunities for staff to learn more about cultural diversity within the workplace and the effect this can have on service delivery and interactions with employees”.

“yes, most of our staff are women from a NESB themselves and I think education would enhance patience and tolerance in the workplace”.

Another Manager highlighted the need to learn more about diversity per se:

“ I believe it is essential to train the staff... an awareness of the concept of valuing diversity and personal difference...not just cultural diversity”.

One staff member who worked in a rural service where there were no employees from a NESB, recognised a possible future need, stating:

“yes, although it is not an issue at present, in the future it may be and we may need it for certification”.

However, not all services recognised a similar need with two stating that there was no benefit at all in this type of training and a further two commenting:

“we have very little requirement for this support in our service...not saying it will never arise”.

“not really as NESB status is not a major factor for our clients”.

8.8 Conclusions

In many instances staff and management of Business Services report that they experience difficulty in recognising and addressing issues related to cultural diversity. The majority of services stated that language barriers were the major cultural issue in their service. Many believed that addressing these barriers was a ‘quick-fix’ for all cultural barriers. A study of occupational health and safety of immigrant workers in NSW states that language barriers are often more visible to government agencies than equally important cultural barriers and stresses that ‘getting the translation right’ is only one of the issues to be addressed (Alcorso, 2002).

Participants’ responses citing parental expectations identify the need for services to work more closely with parents. Also, few services had accessed professional interpreters where there was a need identified and often employees were used inappropriately as interpreters for their family member.

A lack of understanding of differing cultural and religious traditions and beliefs was also evident. It is likely that the lack of training offered to staff in the area of cultural diversity limits the ability of staff and management to offer support in these areas and to have a better understanding of individual difference.

9

The views of women from a NESB

9.1 Introduction

To capture the views of women employees from a NESB with disability four focus groups and one face-to-face interview were undertaken. The sessions began with round table introductions and a plain English explanation of the focus and aims of the project. The confidential nature of discussions was stressed and informed consent was gained from all participants.

9.2 Women's views of their work

When women employees from a NESB with disability were asked about the type of work they did they stated that they were involved in a range of activities including packing, stapling, clothes cutting, sticking on labels & bar codes, food production, hospitality and horticulture.

When asked how they felt about their work, participants gave a range of positive answers. These included the nature of the work itself and the social interactions they had with other workers:

"I like to work because it's boring at home".

"I like meeting people".

"It's good to learn new skills".

"I like earning money".

"work keeps you going".

When asked if there was anything they didn't like about work many said that they liked 'all of it' but there were a number of women who expressed

concerns. Some issues identified by participants related to relationships with co-workers:

"sometimes I get stressed. Sometimes I feel no one is talking to me. Some people are cheeky and rude on purpose. Some people here are not well. I'm happy when it's 4 pm".

"some of the men I work with are pains".

Other problems reported included disagreements with other workmates:

"sometimes we have a lot of fights".

"some people don't get along with one another".

In one instance these issues were resolved by clear procedures:

"people who cause problems are given three warnings and then they are sent home. _____ was suspended for a week because he's been a problem for ages".

One woman participant who had formed a close relationship with a male co-worker spoke about the 'balancing act' required in having a relationship with a colleague. She said:

"It's been hard for me, as there's been no-one to talk to. I get upset at work. I've been talking to an advocate and she's been a great help. I can't talk to my parents and because I live with them I can't ring him. It's very hard for me at the moment".

Other concerns raised by women employees related to the attitude of staff:

"I don't like some of the staff's attitudes to people with disabilities".

“staff talk down to us too much”.

A further problem identified by a number of women related to the high turnover of staff:

“there are new people all the time, too many changes in staff”.

“I just get used to someone and then they leave”.

Working conditions were also mentioned:

“I don’t like heavy work, I can’t carry heavy things and I can’t do the machines”.

“I don’t think I get paid enough for what I do”.

“I don’t like the long hours”.

“they changed our work hours and people are unhappy”.

Problems with the type of work undertaken were also identified. One woman said she had previously worked in a coffee shop and her major task was to unload and load the dishwasher. She said:

“I was too slow with the dishwasher. They weren’t happy and I wasn’t happy. They weren’t paying me properly. We couldn’t fix the problem. I had to leave in the end”.

9.3 Means of communicating about problems at work

When women were asked whom they spoke to when they had a problem at work or when they wanted something changed, the majority said that they spoke to their supervisor. Some women said that they spoke to members of their family although one woman stated that she found it difficult to talk about work problems to her family. Two women mentioned that they would prefer to speak to a woman staff member about some of their concerns. They stated:

“men don’t understand how girls feel”.

“when we have our periods or something we can’t tell the men”.

A number of women also said that they kept their problems to themselves rather than tell either their workmates or their ‘boss’. Concerns expressed included:

“If I have a problem I don’t say it”.

“workmates may blab to others, there’s no confidentiality”.

9.4 Perceptions of participation in decision-making

To compare the participation of women employees from a NESB in the organisation with what was stated by management and staff, participants were asked about their involvement on committees.

The majority stated that they had little or no involvement on committees, reflecting similar responses from managers and staff. Responses included:

“I have no idea about committees”.

“there’s a workers’ committee once a month but I’m not on it”.

“No, I don’t know anything but I think B...is on a committee”.

Those women who were members of committees gave us some insight into how they perceived their input. For the most part they viewed their experiences as disempowering:

“we do sometimes get a reply to our questions from Management”.

“we make a lot of decisions but then nothing happens, nothing changes”.

“we make suggestions for problems we have... I don’t know what happens”.

“we do a lot of talking but who knows what happens with our ideas”.

9.5 Nature of interactions at work

To ascertain the nature of interactions with others at work participants were asked whom they spoke to most often. As expected, a number said that they spoke to staff:

"I speak to my Employment Development Officer".

"I talk to a supervisor who I know well".

Others said that they spoke with friends or workmates:

"I talk to a friend. We say keep happy and do the job".

"I talk to my workmates but some are very bossy".

Some responses indicated that there was often a problem in communication for some of the women:

"I can't talk to my boss because he won't listen".

"I only talk to other workers a little".

"a lot of people don't speak English".

9.6 Support in speaking up

Participants were asked who gave them support in speaking up when there was an issue that needed to be addressed. Responses indicated that a large number of women were given support by family members. Examples included:

"my mum helps me when I have problems at work with the other workers....I tell her and she helps me solve the problems".

"my mum comes and talks to my supervisor but she needs help with English".

"no-one helps me...sometimes I talk to my sister, but no-one really".

Two participants stated that they were given support by individuals external to the service. They said:

"I have a mental health worker. I can call her anytime and she will come and help me".

"An advocate from _____ helps me".

Only one woman said that she spoke up for herself. This woman was in her late forties, lived in a flat by herself and had learned English at school.

9.7 Involvement and interest in training

When asked about what kind of training they had been involved in at their workplace a number of women were unsure of what the term 'training' meant and asked us what the word meant. In these instances it was necessary to prompt their answers by giving examples of some training that others may have been involved in.

The majority of women participants stated that they had not been involved in any training other than on-the-job training that focused on work skills. They said:

"what do you mean by 'training?'".

"the supervisor trained me how to do the job".

"I've had no training at all".

"no, there's no training they just show you what to do".

"the supervisor showed me on the first day, no more".

However, a number of women had been involved in training other than on-the-job training. Most of this training took place within the service and was run by the Training Co-ordinator or a staff member.

Only a limited number of women had undertaken training that was offered at an external venue. Examples included:

"I've been trained in marketing".

"I've had lots of training: management committee training and computer training".

When participants were asked about specific types of training including rights training, Occupational Health and Safety and Disability Service Standards a small number said they had been involved in some form of in-house training in these areas:

"yes, the boss talks about rights and standards".

"we learned about the fire alarm".

"we saw an occupational video about what to wear".

Some participants reported, however, that they had not been involved in such training:

"I don't know anything about safety or my rights".

"I need to know about safety, I don't know about it".

A number of participants stated that they had accessed TAFE training, including:

"I did a TAFE course once".

"I did some computer training at TAFE - on my own, I organised it....here, the supervisor just showed me around on the first day, nothing else".

When asked about any further training they would like to be involved in, two participants mentioned 'Office Skills'. Another four women expressed an interest in learning about how to use computers. They said:

"I'd like to learn about computers. I need to know. They say don't touch".

"I'd like to do a computer course at (the local TAFE). I'm interested in that".

A further five women mentioned they would like to know more about 'safety at work'. Comments included:

"I want to know about being safe at work".

"I'd like training on safety and how to use the machines and different equipment in the factory".

From these findings it can be concluded that the women involved in this project had limited opportunities for off-the-job training and yet could clearly identify areas they would like to learn more about.

9.8 Perceived issues around cultural diversity

To ascertain any issues around 'culture' participants were asked if anyone at work ever spoke with them about the country that they or their family are from.

Some responses showed that there was limited interest in cultural difference from co-workers and staff with only one positive experience reported:

"people ask about my cultural background as it's unusual, they ask for stamps from my country".

Negative experiences were more common, including:

"they think I'm Chinese and call me names. I'm not Chinese, I'm from Vietnam".

"some have called me a wog".

"not much, if a new client comes I sometimes get teased because of my cultural background".

"I've been called a wog. I used to get hurt but it doesn't worry me now".

"when I talk to people in my language others turn away".

“no, we have lots of different cultures at work and we don't get along all that well”.

These responses show that cultural barriers exist in the workplace and may impinge upon the way individuals feel about themselves, their work and their cultural heritage. They also give further emphasis to the need for training of all staff and employees of Business Services in the area of attitudes, values and cultural diversity.

9.9 Access to interpreters

To ascertain whether women or their family members had ever needed help from an interpreter participants were asked about their access to and use of professional interpreting services. Again, answers mirrored those of staff and management.

A number of participants said that although they spoke English well their family might need assistance. In all instances cited, family members acted as interpreters:

“yes, we use family members”.

“I use my mum or my brother”.

“they would need help to speak English”.

Difficulties with the nature of communication with family members were also noted. One woman employee stated:

“mum speaks English and can understand but sometimes if (staff member) writes a letter for me to take home she doesn't understand it very good and we have to give it to my sister”.

Another woman who did not speak English and needed to access the assistance of an interpreter to participate in the focus group said:

“I have never had an interpreter at work”.

She went on to say:

“Because I don't speak much English it is a barrier at work. I just keep quiet and do my work. I have never learned any English at work”.

9.10 Conclusions

Overall the responses from women employees from a NESB mirror the responses from staff and management. In particular, it is evident that the majority of women employees have limited opportunity to participate in the decision-making process of the organisation. It was also evident that there were few structures or policies in place to ensure that issues raised by workers were dealt with in a way that was meaningful to them. Only one woman employee from a NESB with disability mentioned that she had been involved in Management Committee training.

However, the majority of women saw their work as a positive part of their lives. While interactions with co-workers may have been problematic in some instances they were not a major issue and took second place to the stress caused by the high turnover of staff. Issues related to cultural diversity were highlighted with a number of women experiencing name-calling and teasing while others said they were shown indifference when they spoke in 'their own language'.

It is clear from the findings that the development and implementation of training for employees in Business Services is in its infancy. While the majority of women stated that they had been involved in on-the-job, skills based training, many were unclear of what was meant by the general concept of training. Few had been involved in any training related to rights, standards, occupational

health and safety or grievances. Many expressed interest in learning more about safety at work with a number expressing concern about using heavy equipment and being safe at work. Others stated that they would like the opportunity to learn more about office skills and using computers.

The need for an established model of education and training for employees with a disability is identified from an analysis of the views of women employees from a NESB. In line with the findings from the consultations with staff and management it is clear that the implementation of a model of rights-based training in Business Services with particular emphasis on issues related to cultural diversity would be timely.

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Abbreviations

DSA	Disability Services Act
HR	Human resources
IP	Individual plan
ISP	Individual service plan
OH&S	Occupational health and safety
NESB	Non-English speaking background
TAFE	Technical and further education
VETAB	Vocational Education Training Accreditation Board
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy