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Managing a Diverse Workforce: Attraction and Retention of Older Workers

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This research project is a collaboration between the Australian Centre for Research in Employment and Work (ACREW) and the Family and Small Business Research Unit (FSBRU) at Monash University, Australia.

This report has been prepared by:

Helen De Cieri

Christina Costa

Trisha Pettit

Donna Buttigieg

For more information, please contact:

Australian Centre in Research in Employment and Work (ACREW)

Department of Management

Monash University

Level 6, Building N

PO Box 197

Caulfield East VIC 3145

Australia

Facsimile: +613 9903 2718

Email: acrew@buseco.monash.edu.au

Or visit the ACREW website at:

<http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/mgt/research/acrew/>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The increasing numbers of older workers, along with skills shortages, in Australia and many other industrialised nations present an unprecedented challenge for employers, policy-makers, and for individual workers. This White Paper presents the findings of a research project that has investigated organizational factors that are important to understand with respect to the ageing workforce. While recognising that a comprehensive approach to the ageing workforce requires involvement of many parties, the main focus in this research is on the perspectives of expert informants and managers in large private and public sector organizations. The research identifies strategies and key performance indicators to enhance organizational flexibility and address the needs of the ageing workforce. These strategies will lead to benefits for both employees and employers.

This research investigates:

- Managers' and experts' views of issues related to the ageing workforce;
- Barriers and challenges in managing an ageing workforce; and
- Organizational strategies for managing an ageing workforce.

The major findings of this research are:

- The ageing workforce should be managed as part of diversity management and strategic human resource management (HRM);
- A configuration of HRM policy and practices can be identified to overcome barriers and manage a diverse workforce;
- Training and life-long learning, flexible work arrangements and transition programs (particularly retirement programs) should be given high priority for the ageing workforce; and
- Key performance indicators and specific measures can be identified for management of an ageing workforce.

OVERVIEW: THE AGEING WORKFORCE

As is the case in many developed countries around the world, Australia is experiencing the ageing of its population. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2008a) has indicated that the ageing of both the Australian and international population is the most noteworthy population change likely to occur over the next 50 years. In statistical terms, the changing age structure which leads to an ageing population is caused by an increased proportion of older people in comparison to the proportion of children (ABS, 2008a). Antecedents driving this change are declining fertility rates, increases in life expectancy, and shifts in the level and composition of migration. Evidence and research about these population trends has grown over the past decade and the issue of ageing populations is receiving increasing attention in many sections of society. The human resource management (HRM) challenges related to attracting and retaining older workers have received the attention of researchers, policy-makers and managers (Ashworth, 2006; Naegele & Walker, 2006; Schramm, 2006). However, many employers have been slow to respond to these challenges (Arnone, 2006) and research has suggested that national policy in Australia has not fully addressed the needs of an ageing workforce nor encouraged the retention of older workers (Ranzijn, Carson, Winefield & Price, 2006).

This White Paper presents the findings of a research project that has investigated organizational factors that are important to understand with respect to the ageing workforce. While recognising that a comprehensive approach to the ageing workforce requires involvement of many parties, the main focus in this research is on the perspectives of expert informants and managers in large private and public sector organizations. The research identifies strategies and key performance indicators to enhance organizational flexibility and addresses the needs of the ageing workforce. These strategies will lead to benefits for both employees and employers.

Characteristics of the Ageing Workforce

Between June 1987 and June 2007, the proportion of Australia's population aged 15–64 years remained relatively stable, increasing from 66.6% to 67.5% of the total population (ABS, 2007a). However, the proportion of people aged 65 years and over increased from 10.7% to 13.1%. During the same period, the proportion of population aged 85 years and over doubled from 0.8% of the population at June 1987 to 1.6% of the total population at June 2007. The percentage of the population under 15 years of age decreased from 22.7 to 19.4 for the same period (ABS, 2007a) (see Figure 1).

Australia's labour force participation rate for persons aged 15–64 years has increased slightly over the

last 15 years. In 2005, Australia's labour force participation rate for those aged 15–64 years was 76%. While this was above the average (70%) amongst OECD countries for that year, it was below several other OECD countries including Sweden, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (UK) (ABS, 2007b).

The ageing of the Australian population has substantial implications for the Australian workforce. The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines 'older workers' as those who are 55 years and older (ABS, 2007b). As many older workers move into a pre-retirement or retirement phase the average age at retirement is changing. The average age at retirement from the labour force for people aged 45 years and over in 2006-07 was 52 years (58 years for men and 48 years for women) (ABS, 2008b).

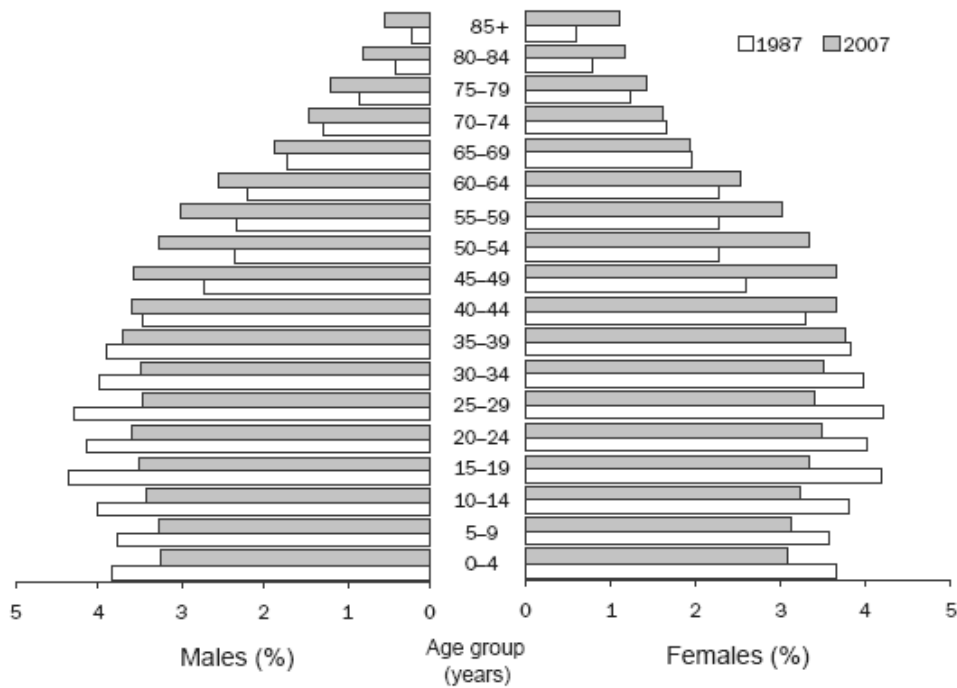


Figure 1: Australia's Population Structure - Age and Sex - 1987-2007 (ABS, 2007a)

In 1998, 21 per cent of the Australian civilian population were 'older'; this has been projected to increase to 29 percent by 2016 (ABS, 1999).

The ABS (1995) predicts that the relative size of the older population will increase steadily from 18 for every 100 of working age in 1993 to 21 in 2011, then more rapidly to 36 in 2041. More specifically, the proportion of working 45-64 year olds is projected to increase from 30% in 1993 to 39% in 2041. If

these predictions are correct, the age structure of the working age population will be considerably different in 50 years time (see Figure 2). In 2006, the Productivity Commission identified three population groups where Australian participation rates are below other developed countries – prime working aged men (25–54 years of age), child-bearing aged women (25–44 years), and older men and women (55–64 years) (ABS, 2007). Of particular relevance here, international comparisons show that Australia has one of the lowest retention rates of older workers amongst developed countries (Kossen & Pedersen, 2008; OECD, 2006).

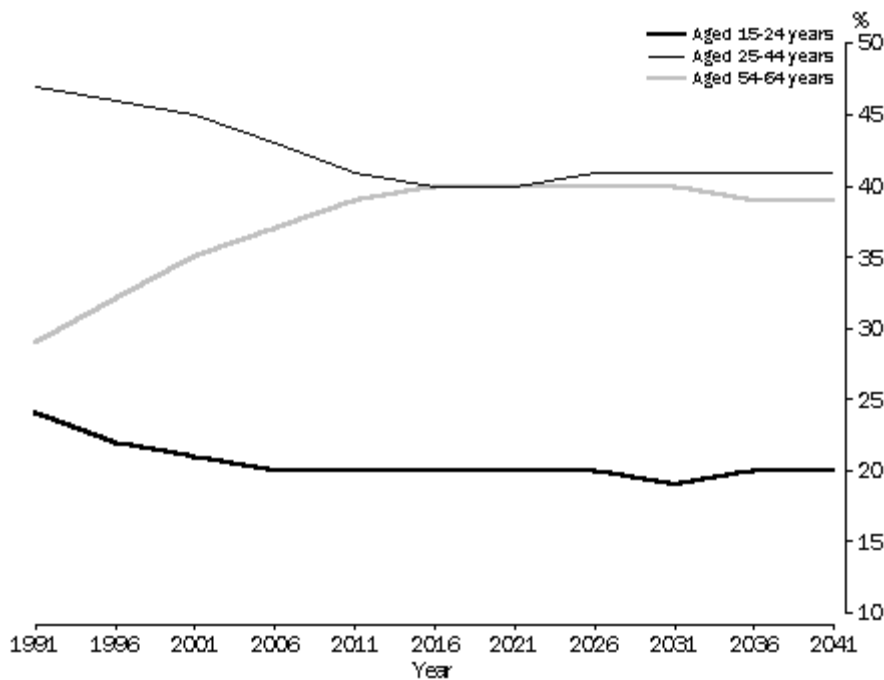


Figure 2: Projections of Working Age People (ABS, 1995)

The workforce participation of older women has been increasing and females now represent 27% of the older workforce (ABS, 2007a). More specifically, over the last two decades, the participation rate of women aged 45-54 years and 55-64 years increased by 21.6% and 26.5% respectively (ABS, 2008a). At the same time, participation rates for men declined between 1986-87 and 2006-07 for almost all age groups with the notable exceptions of men aged 55-64 years (61.7% to 67.9%) and men aged 65 years and over (8.6% to 12.8%) (ABS, 2008a) (see Table 1).

Several factors have contributed to the increasing proportion of females in the older workforce: the increase in service and information sectors; particularly in part-time employment; and changes in financial circumstances related to access to superannuation (Doughney, 2006; Salter, 2003). Gender is

an important issue in the understanding of the ageing workforce, given the increasing workforce participation of women and the enduring gender differences in workforce experiences, and greater financial disadvantage often experienced by older women. Despite such factors, research exploring the relationship between gender and ageing has been limited (with some exceptions; see Austen & Giles, 2003; Duncan & Loretto, 2004). It is argued that increased participation of females in the labour force may assist some industry sectors to manage current and potential workforce shortages (Minerals Council of Australia, 2007; Patrickson & Ranzijn, 2004).

Table 1: Labour Force Participation Rates^a by Age and Sex

Age group (years)	Men		Women	
	1986-87 %	2006-07 %	1986-87 %	2006-07 %
15-19	60.6	58.2	59.8	61.0
20-24	90.5	85.7	76.1	78.1
25-34	95.0	92.1	61.2	72.5
35-44	94.5	91.1	65.2	74.5
45-54	89.8	88.5	55.0	76.6
55-64	61.7	67.9	21.9	48.4
65 and over	8.6	12.8	2.4	4.6
Total	75.6	72.2	48.7	57.6

^a Annual averages (Source: ABS, 2008a)

As shown in Figure 3, the age structure of the Australian workforce across industries is diverse. The three oldest workforces by industry are: agriculture, forestry and fishing; education; and transport and storage. In contrast, the retail and accommodation, cafes and restaurants industry has the youngest average age of workers.

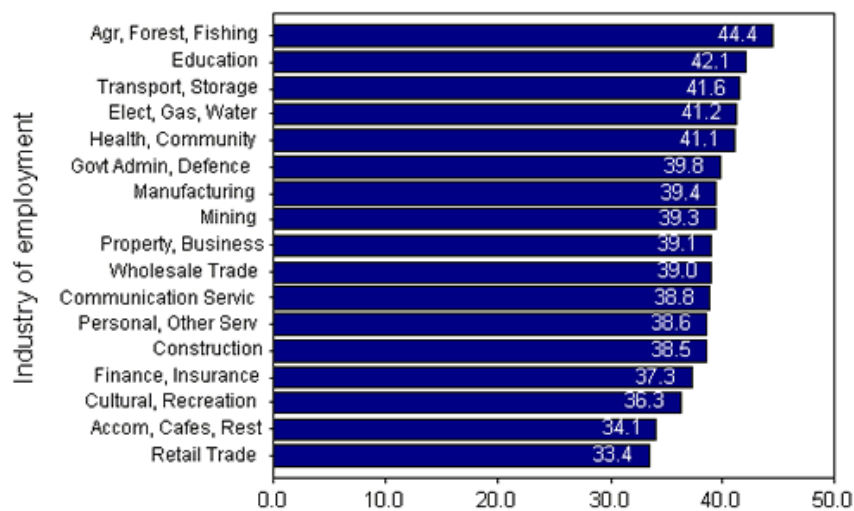


Figure 3: Average Age (in Years) of Workers Across Australian Industries
<http://www.valuingolderworkers.gov.au/Industry/industryprofiles.asp>

Research has found that older workers may prefer self-employment or alternative forms of work because of a desire or need for the greater flexibility offered (Morris & Mallier, 2003). Correlations can also be found between age and occupation within the Australian workforce. There is evidence to suggest that younger people are more likely to be employed in lower-skilled occupations and a higher proportion of older workers will be employed in more highly-skilled occupations (see Table 2). As a proportion of employed persons aged 25 and over, older workers are strongly represented in the occupational category 'managers and administrators', with those 55 years and older representing 49 per cent of this occupational group, and in the 'professionals' category, with those 55 years and older representing 59 per cent of this occupational category.

Table 2: Employed Persons by Age and Occupation (2006-07)

Occupational group	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59	60-64	65 & over	Total
Managers & administrators	0.3	1.9	6.4	10.0	10.1	10.8	13.1	25.3	8.2
Professionals	1.7	13.0	23.6	21.0	21.4	21.2	19.2	18.2	19.3
Associate professionals	3.8	10.0	14.4	14.1	14.4	13.7	12.7	11.1	12.9
Tradespersons & related workers	14.7	17.3	14.1	12.4	10.6	10.4	10.1	9.0	12.7
Advanced clerical & service workers	1.2	2.9	3.7	4.3	4.1	4.5	4.5	4.6	3.8
Intermediate production & transport workers	16.5	23.3	16.5	15.8	16.0	15.0	13.4	8.8	16.5
Elementary clerical, sales & service workers	36.8	14.6	6.4	5.7	6.1	7.0	7.2	6.6	9.3
Labourers & related workers	16.4	9.1	7.3	7.4	8.3	8.5	9.8	8.9	8.6

(Source: ABS, 2008a)

The ageing of the Australian workforce represents an increasingly significant aspect of diversity. A range of statistics show the need for attention to issues of concern to older workers and the need for employment practices that manage the generational diversity of the workforce, retain this older cohort in the workplace and facilitate employees' life transitions.

Workforce Diversity

Age can be viewed as one aspect of workforce diversity, along with sex, religion, ethnicity, and other forms of diversity. Each form of diversity may influence an individual's attitudes, values and behaviours at work. Indeed, a largely neglected aspect of diversity management is the challenge of managing a widening age range of employees with vast experiential and attitudinal differences (Wagner, 2007). Such diversity creates an imperative for flexible and inclusive management strategies (Childs, 2005; Dass & Parker, 1999; Joplin & Daus, 1997). The goal of managing diversity in an organization is to enhance the achievement of an organization's competitive advantage by managing the similarities and

differences between people (De Cieri et al., 2008).

Diversity management practices are specific activities, programs, policies, and any other formal processes designed to improve management of diversity via communication, education and training, employee-involvement, career management, accountability and cultural change. For example, diversity practices may include practices such as training programs to reduce stereotyping and improve interpersonal communication and skills (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007; Wentling, 2000). Overall, diversity management places emphasis on the development of organizational strategies and cultures that are not only tolerant of diversity but actively encourage flexibility and inclusion (Burke & Ng, 2006; Childs, 2005).

Workforce diversity is increasing, and managers need to develop ways to effectively manage the different views and characteristics of the new, diverse workforce. The assumption of 'value-in-diversity' suggests that diversity in work-groups will enhance effectiveness and performance (Cox, 1993; Miroshnik, 2002). Cox (2001) identified five ways in which diversity could add value to an organization: improved problem solving; increased creativity and innovation; increased organizational flexibility; improved skill variety in the workforce, and improved marketing (e.g. increased customer base). For example, a diverse workforce is proposed to help organizations to understand the different needs and values of the cultural groups that comprise their client base (Friday & Friday, 2003; Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007; Wentling, 2000). Further, it is suggested that diverse groups such as cross-generational project teams will generate different opinions, engage in more thorough critical analysis, and thus make better-quality decisions (Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1998).

On the other hand, there are recognized costs associated with managing diversity poorly. When organizations do not manage diversity well, there is increased likelihood of turnover and absenteeism among minority groups. In addition, organizations that do not manage diversity well may be in breach of legislation and may incur associated costs. There are also indirect costs, such as the loss of organizational reputation and inability to attract high-quality employees to the organization (Childs, 2005).

While there has been considerable research exploring the 'value-in diversity' approach, many questions remain unanswered. The evaluation of diversity programs remains an area for attention. While many firms have implemented diversity practices, it is difficult to measure the relationship between diversity practices and organizational performance outcomes. Recent research has explored the factors that moderate the relationship between diversity and performance (Grimes & Richard, 2003; Richard, 2000).

Richard (2000: 174) concluded that diversity does add value to a firm but the effects of diversity "are likely to be determined by the strategies a firm pursues and by how organization leaders and participants respond to and manage diversity".

Stereotypes and Older Workers

Just as there has been a rise in the number of older workers in the labour force, evidence indicates that this has been accompanied by an increase in discrimination against this segment of the workforce (Wilson, Parker & Kan, 2007). Although discrimination is illegal in Australia, there is evidence that age discrimination continues to occur (Encel & Studencki, 2004; Gringart & Helmes, 2001; Gringart, Helmes & Speelman, 2008). Older workers have been characterised as slow, absent-minded, resistant to change, having poor health and being difficult to train (Lucas, 1993). Recent studies have found that a younger worker is much more likely to be offered an interview than is an older worker (Lahey, 2008), and managers may discriminate without foundation against older employees when making performance assessments (Ferris & King, 1992). Other research has suggested that, while employers view older workers as generally more reliable, more loyal, and harder working than younger workers, they consider them to be inferior to younger workers on many other job-related attributes and will therefore offer a job to a younger worker before an older one (Gringart et al., 2005). Lower participation rates of older workers have been shown to be partly related to inadequate or discriminatory employment practices (McVittie, McKinlay & Widdicombe, 2003; Vickerstaff, Cox & Keen, 2003). Further, age discrimination, victimisation of older workers, and negative stereotyping of older workers have been found to be predictive of early retirement decisions (Sheen, 1999).

However, researchers have shown that, whilst some specific functions or abilities decline with age, general ability does not; hence, there is no link between age and work performance or productivity (Haight & Belwal, 2006; Koopman-Boyden & Macdonald, 2003). Evidence also indicates the general health of older workers is improving (Alker, 2006), debunking myths of increased health costs or costs associated with increased sick leave. A recent study reported that older workers are at least as motivated and committed as other employees and found that older workers are more satisfied in their job, more loyal and experience more enjoyment and pride in their work than their younger co-workers (Lord & Farrington, 2006). Older workers in the workforce can have a positive impact by bringing more experience, less conflict and great productivity (Remery, Henkens, Schippers & Ekamper, 2003). Older workers can also provide a potential pool of workers to address skill shortages (Remery et. al., 2003). For a comprehensive review of research on age stereotypes, see Posthuma and Campion (2008).

In sum, discrimination in the workplace must be addressed and eliminated. Discrimination in the workplace has negative consequences for individuals and employers. There is a need to shape a positive image of the older citizens of our community, an image that reflects the potential of their contributions to both the workplace and society in general (Yelyutina & Smirnova, 2006). By attracting and retaining older workers, employers can uphold their important role in instigating positive changes in attitudes and approaches towards the ageing workforce (Business Council of Australia, 2003).

A Comprehensive Approach to Age Management

Management of an ageing workforce requires new approaches for employment practices and re-thinking of social and economic policy. A comprehensive approach to the ageing workforce requires involvement of many parties, including managers and employers, policy makers, employees, and the general community (Kossen & Pedersen, 2008; Naegele & Walker, 2006). The need to attract, retain, and develop awareness of the contributions of older workers is influenced in part by factors such as skill shortages, economic growth in sectors such as mining, and declining rates of young people entering the workforce (see Hedge, Borman & Lammlein, 2006; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, 2005; Productivity Commission, 2005).

The main focus in this research is on the perspectives of managers in large private and public sector organizations, in recognition of the important leadership role that such employers can play. We have also sought the views of a range of experts, to inform our understanding of the context in which large employers operate. There are two major organizational drivers of effective management of a diverse workforce that includes older workers. First, there is a recognised need to build and maintain the skills and knowledge base of the organization; for example, retaining older workers via phased retirement or re-employment can provide intergenerational knowledge retention and transfer (Armstrong-Stassen & Templer, 2006; Shacklock, Fulop & Hort, 2007). Second, there is an ongoing need for an efficient and effective HR strategy and practices that best suit the organization's and employees' needs and respond to the dynamic economic context and changing labour market (Armstrong-Stassen & Templer, 2006; Holland, Sheehan & De Cieri, 2007).

The Ageing Workforce, Diversity Management and Strategic HRM

We propose that a viable approach to managing diversity and the ageing workforce would be to view these as part of HRM strategy (Armstrong-Stassen & Templer, 2006). HRM is an important function for many employers (see, for example, Brewster et al., 2005; De Cieri et al., 2008). It is widely accepted

amongst HRM researchers and managers (e.g., Boselie, Dietz & Boon, 2005) that employers will benefit from developing an HRM strategy and establishing broad policy for the management of employees across all HRM activities. It can be argued that it is the overall understanding and support for HRM within the organization, rather than HRM policy design, that has the potential to add real value to an organization (Pfeffer, 2005). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) emphasize the importance of a shared view of HRM, and argue that the impact of HRM policy and practices on performance outcomes will not be determined by the content of HRM practices but rather by the processes that signal to employees desired and appropriate responses to form a collective sense of what is expected. This highlights the value of a shared understanding of responsibilities related to HRM amongst all managers.

Strategic HRM has three core elements (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). First, CEO and top management support for HR and diversity practices is essential. Early in the development of the HRM literature, Beer and Spector (1985) and Dyer and Holder (1988) made the prediction that senior management support would be a critical factor in successful outcomes related to HRM. Research over the past two decades has shown that CEO and top management support for HRM practices, such as those for diversity management, has an important influence; diversity practices are more likely to contribute to employee and organizational performance when there is top management support (Enns & McFarlin, 2005; Sheehan, Cooper, Holland & De Cieri, 2007). The support of senior management is a key tool for change; top management support for diversity with respect to age is vital if organizational change is to occur in relation to the management of an ageing workforce (Howell, Buttigieg & Webber, 2006). The involvement of the senior HR manager in a firm's senior management team provides several important advantages. Firstly, it offers an important channel for information flow and communication. Second, acceptance and adoption of diversity practices by other managers across the organization is important, as the attitudes and behaviours of managers and supervisors are crucial components of any successful attempts to create an organizational culture that supports a diverse workforce. It is necessary for HR managers to work effectively with line managers, as they have direct and frequent contact with employees and a capacity to understand, motivate, control, and respond quickly to employees (see Budhwar & Khatri, 2001; Currie & Proctor, 2001). Welbourne (2005: 114) has proposed that not only is CEO support critical in influencing the uptake of HRM but that HRM should be recognized as a priority for all managers "... from the CEO to the first level supervisor". To successfully manage a diverse workforce, all managers require a comprehensive skill-set (see Table *).

- communicating effectively with employees from a wide variety of backgrounds;
- coaching and developing employees of different ages, educational backgrounds, ethnicity,

physical ability and race;

- providing performance feedback based on objective outcomes rather than on values and stereotypes that prejudge an individual's abilities and talents; and
- creating a work environment that is inclusive of employees of all backgrounds (De Cieri et al., 2008).

Gaining the acceptance and support of executives and managers relies on a demonstration of HR competency to deliver diversity practices and evidence that the initiatives will add value. A recent U.S. study has suggested that the growth in diversity practices in American corporations is leading to "diversity fatigue" amongst senior executives and middle management. This fatigue, or scepticism about the effectiveness of diversity practices, is argued to be due to a failure to demonstrate tangible results, in turn based on ineffective methods, poor implementation and lack of measurement. Many organizations have launched diversity practices but have not seen evidence of tangible business results (Felton-O'Brien, 2008). Hence, the third key element of strategic HRM is competency within the HRM function and a configuration of coherent and consistent HRM practices. HRM policy and practices must be bias-free, promoting knowledge and acceptance of differences, ensuring involvement in education both within and outside the company and dealing with employees' resistance to diversity (Avery & McKay, 2006; Friday & Friday, 2003).

There needs to be effective management within the HRM function, providing training, resources, and good communication of HRM policy and practices, to ensure practices are carried out in accordance with policy (Budhwar, 2000b; Budhwar & Khatri, 2001). The core HRM activities have been identified as employee recruitment and selection, training and development, remuneration and rewards, and performance management. However, strategic HRM expands beyond these four core areas to include a wide range of activities such as workforce planning, industrial relations, diversity management, employer branding and reputation, and attraction and retention of employees. Researchers and practitioners agree that a comprehensive configuration of HRM practices will lead to positive employee attitudes and behaviours, with positive outcomes in terms of organizational performance. Conversely, a lack of preparation and planning for diversity management may hinder the ability of organizations to retain older workers, as has been found in Australia and elsewhere in the world (McVittie, McKinlay & Widdicombe, 2003; Oka & Kimura, 2003).

For firms operating across multiple locations, particularly global firms with operations across developed and developing countries, it is important to manage the dual and often conflicting demands of global

integration and local responsiveness (Brewster, Wood and Brookes, 2008, in press). Many HRM policies and practices, including diversity management, may work well in developed, 'Western', countries but may require adaptation or replacement with locally-sensitive practices in developing and transitional economies, such as in Asian cultural contexts (Lewis et al., 2007; Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007).

A diverse workforce requires effective HRM policy and practices. For example, with regard to staffing, it is important to ensure that tests used to select employees are not biased against groups such as older workers. With regard to work design, employees need flexible schedules that allow them to meet non-work commitments. With regard to training, it is clear that all employees need to be made aware of the benefits of inclusive work practices and potential damaging effects of stereotypes. With regard to remuneration and rewards, benefits such as eldercare and childcare need to be included in reward systems to accommodate the needs of a diverse workforce.¹

Of particular importance in research related to HRM and diversity management is the evidence that flexible work arrangements are a critical success factor in the management of a diverse workforce (London, 1996; Sheridan & Conway, 2001). Working life in Australia is changing, with increases in diverse employment arrangements, flexible working time patterns, and people working part-time hours (ABS, 2006). The contingent workforce, which includes temporary, part-time and self-employed workers, is growing. There are significant changes evident in Australian workplaces, utilising new technologies, new forms of employment and varied hours of work. Recent Australian studies suggest evidence of the common pattern seen in other industrialised countries: employment is moving from the 'traditional' forms of full-time, permanent work towards a wider variety of working arrangements, including part-time work, temporary employment and contract employment (Kalleberg, 2000; Mallon & Duberley, 2000). More work is being done outside the traditional workplace; this includes distributed work, telework or telecommuting, work done at home, on the road or anywhere a person can connect to the office or peers using technology (Lindorff, 2000). Distributed work has important implications for managing human resources. Employees need to be trained in using technology to share data, information and ideas with peers, managers and customers. Employers need to adapt types of employee evaluation to fairly and accurately assess performance. Flexible work arrangements may include:

- temporal flexibility (flexible work hours; flexible scheduling);
- functional flexibility (such as multi-skilling);
- numerical flexibility (changing the workforce size, by contingent employment or contract arrangements); and

¹ These areas of HRM policy and practice are discussed in more detail in reference to the key findings of our research.

- locational flexibility (distributed work, telework or telecommuting, work done at home, on the road or anywhere a person can connect to the office or peers using technology).

Understanding the needs and preferences of older workers should be part of any sound HRM strategy. Many organizational practices have been designed to recruit, train, engage and retain a youthful workforce (Dychtwald & Baxter, 2007). Changing demographics, skill shortages and the ageing of the workforce requires a radical rethinking of the way managers approach HRM and diversity management. The most successful organizations will be those that reorient both their organization and workplace strategies to take advantage of a diverse workforce.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants and Procedure

This project aims to investigate ageing workforce issues from the perspectives of employers, diversity managers, human resource practitioners, and expert informants. The main focus in this research is on the perspectives of managers in large private and public sector organizations with responsibility for HRM and diversity management. While recognising that a comprehensive approach to dealing with the ageing workforce requires involvement of many parties, we have focused on employers as a first step in developing a guide to assist those who take responsibility for employment. In addition to gathering the views of managers and employers, we sought the views of expert informants to provide a broad understanding of the context in which large employers operate.

As a preliminary stage in our research, we collected and analysed secondary data, such as Australian Bureau of Statistics reports, government reports and industry reports.

After obtaining Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH) approval, we conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with managers in 16 large employers to identify policies and practices relevant to the ageing workforce. Table 3 shows the industry spread for participants. We sought to include organizations across all major industry categories; within the time-frame for this project, it was not possible to secure complete representation. Nevertheless, the participating organizations represent a range of industries. These organizations have a mix of metropolitan, regional and rural locations within Australia; several of the organizations are global firms with operations outside Australia. As shown in Table 4, these interviewees included 3 General Managers, 4 HR Directors (or those with most senior responsibility for HRM in the organization), and 9 HR Managers or specialists (e.g., those directly responsible for diversity management).

We also conducted a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 11 subject matter experts, to identify macro policy issues, broad organizational issues and individual issues related to the ageing workforce. As shown in Table 5, these subject matter experts included representatives from: industry and professional associations, advisory bodies, professional advisory services, service providers and independent consultants. Their organizations have national, and in several cases international, representation.

Table 3: Participant Manager Characteristics

Participants by Industry	
Not-for-Profit	1
Education	1
Finance	3
Financial services	1
Defence	1
Manufacturing	2
Health	1
Communication & Distribution	1
Federal Government Agency	1
State Government Corporation	1
State Government Department	2
Hospitality	1
Participants by Position Title	
General Manager (e.g., Principal, Executive Manager)	3
HR Director (most senior HR in organization)	4
HR Manager / Specialist (e.g., Diversity)	9

Table 4: Managers - Organization Profile

Industry	Number of employees (estimated)	Reported proportion of older employees
Not-for-Profit	1000+ staff and 600+ volunteers	67% (age 40 or more)
Higher Education	6700	60% (over 40 years)
Finance-A	30,000	42.7% (age 40 or more) 28.9% (age 45 or more)
Finance-B	38,000	24% (age 45 or more)
Finance-C	9,000	Not available
Defence	13,000	Not available
Manufacturing A	10,000	Not available
Manufacturing B	284,000 (world wide)	31% (age 45 or more)
Health	1,600	40% (age 45 or more)
Communication & Distribution	35,000	15% (age 55 or more) 'almost half' (age 45 or more)
Federal Government Agency	22,000	60% (age 40 or more)
Financial services	Not available	Not available
Hospitality	Not available	Not available
State Government Corporation	2,700	47% (age 45 or more)
State Government Department A	11,500	40% (age 45 or more)
State Government Department B	550	25% (age 55 or more)

Table 5: Experts - Participant Profile

Organization / Association	
Recruitment industry service provider	2
Consultant and professional advisory services	4
Advisory body	2
Professional/Industry association	3

Interviewees were identified through the profile of the organization or individual. Where possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face; in some circumstances, interviews were conducted by telephone. Interviews averaged an hour in length. Interviews were audio-recorded (with the consent of interviewees) and transcribed verbatim. Qualitative data were coded and subjected to thematic analysis (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Themes were verified using a dual-coding method. To present our research findings, below we provide a brief outline of the major theme and present selected representative interviewee quotes that provide a clear depiction of the respective theme or issue being analyzed. Individual participants remain anonymous; we identify the individual's affiliation and position to provide some perspective.

KEY FINDINGS OF OUR RESEARCH

Defining the Ageing Workforce

As shown in Table 4, most employers in our study reported that they have at least one third of their workforce aged over 45 years, consistent with national statistics (ABS, 2008a). While ABS reports have identified older workers as those over 55 years of age, interviewees varied in their views of older workers. These managers and experts are aware of the ABS (2008a) definition of older workers; however, there is an overall recognition that the ground is shifting. Overall, the managers and experts recommended moving from a focus on defining a specific age range towards developing an organizational culture that recognises and encourages workforce diversity.

It's really mindset ... from my perspective, ... the chronological age is irrelevant but some people can feel very tired, burnt out and need to take a break at 40. So the concept for us of chronological age as long as there aren't physical demands on the role I think is one that I'd like to say is unnecessary (HR Director, State Govt Corporation).

It could be most beneficial for employers, and employees, to adopt a long term approach to employees' life-phases and transitions. For employers, it makes sense to adopt a broad view of diversity in the workforce and an inclusive work environment and culture. At an individual level, raising awareness of ageing issues and the benefits of planning for life's changes will better prepare individuals for their career transitions.

... It just depends which definition you go with but I think it's important probably to bring the age down closer to 45 so that we are already talking about our workers at 45 as somebody that we should be looking after and protecting rather than limiting it to that tiny age group of 55. On a federal level we talk about it at 55 plus because that's when people often are retiring and we want those people to come back into the workforce. That's not necessarily about their risk and protecting them and maintaining them in the workforce. They leave at 55 but those decisions happen before that and the damage that keeps them out of the workforce at 55 happens before that, so we need to be protecting people well back into their life span and that's where 45 is when we really should start thinking about people (Advisory Body).

The way that I've determined to tackle it in our strategic approach is to actually move away from

looking at generations and age groups and look at life phases. So ... saying that surely there's got to be some commonality as well as differences between the different generations ... so if we look at someone in their 20's the questions that we asked were "what does 20's look like now, how is it so different?" and actually it might be a bit different from when I was 20 but the similar things about the desire to travel, education, first job, etc. (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

Is the Ageing Workforce Seen as an Important Issue?

Previous research has indicated that whilst most organizations are aware of the issue of the ageing workforce, they choose to approach the situation in different ways. Most of the employers participating in this study have identified the ageing workforce as an issue or concern. However, the extent to which they have taken action to address this concern varies considerably. We found differences between organizations and industries in their level of activity related to the ageing workforce. Employers and industries with an older workforce have already recognised ageing as an issue of concern:

In one sense we're ahead of the game in that we're already used to working with older workers and what they can do but it's also a challenge because some aspects of the work are quite physical and, that's probably more of a challenge for older workers than it is for younger ones (Industry Association).

I found it a bit shocking, ... when one of the managers in one of our workplaces told me that he had more people over the age of 70 than under 25 in their workplace (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

We note that not all industries and employers share the experience of an ageing workforce. For example:

In my culture an older worker would be anybody over the age of about 35. We are a very young workforce (General Manager, Defence).

However, the majority of employers in our study are facing an ageing workforce and the majority of these employers have not really dealt with the potential impact of the ageing workforce:

Next year for the first time ever we'll have more exits than entrants to the work force. That's going to be the tipping point of when this starts to bite us. I think we've still got maybe another couple of years up our sleeve, maybe another two to five years before this really starts to bite

(HR Manager, Manufacturing).

Look, I don't think it's [ageing workforce] seen as a burning issue. I think what is starting to be seen as a burning issue [is] being able to attract and retain talent in a shrinking labour market and also the Generation Y factor. It hasn't become a burning issue because we haven't raised it as a burning issue we're not targeting older workers to hire them. I mean I know other companies are starting to have strategies and campaigns to actually attract older workers. We don't do that (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

Several of our expert informants were able to identify connections between the ageing workforce and skill shortages overall:

I don't think they've [employers] yet realised how big the issue is going to be and quite quickly. I mean it's already an issue but within five years a lot of these folks are going to be searching around for people who just aren't out there (Consultant).

A lot of people are going to get jobs they're not ready for and all hell's going to break loose because they're going to have to train them and quickly (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

Older Workers, Stereotypes and Barriers

Overall, the interviewees in our study showed a high level of awareness with regard to diversity management, inclusive work practices, and dealing with negative stereotypes. Interviewees identified several sources for stereotypes and negative attitudes towards older workers. Some managers may hold negative stereotypes; some older workers themselves may hold attitudes or expectations that may not serve them well. The interviewees' comments reflected their depth of experience as professionals working in the diversity field and reinforced the need for ongoing awareness-raising and education, for managers and for individuals, in order to address and change attitudes.

There are some myths about older workers that you have to challenge. ...dealing with unconscious bias is our number one challenge and that is about the assumption about what people can do and what they can't do (HR Manager, Finance).

I think that part of it is not allowing the prejudices or the stereotypes to dominate because if they do, then that's going to impact on older workers actually being able to get jobs (Advisory Body).

There were some examples of negative experiences with older workers:

We get isolated cases where some people, as they get a bit older, aren't able to cope with the demands and that creates a performance issue but I would have said that that's in the minority (HR Director, Health).

Given the often physical nature of our work I think there are some realistic concerns about the physical capabilities of older workers, especially moving beyond this age, 55... that physical change leading to a change in their productivity levels (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

In contrast, numerous examples of positive observations of older workers can be reported:

We find that experienced workers are much more knowledgeable and much more able to navigate through ambiguity than a very young worker...They [older workers] are more respected as wise workers just because of that experience. You can't buy that experience, particularly in an increasingly complex industry and organization (HR Manager, Not-for-profit).

Older workers are generally well respected by others and may be regarded as teachers or mentors. They are respected for their wisdom and experience. Informally used as mentors (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

Overall, our interviewees agreed that the key issue for attracting and retaining employees, or for management in the long term, is not about age but rather about the fit between the person and the job or organization. The presence of a mindset that is appropriate to the work context is of key concern.

I think it's not necessarily the productivity that's different, it's probably more the mindset, the commitment issues that people talk about (HR Director, Finance).

I think it's a bit of a myth that because they're older ... I think different people of all ages either accept change or don't like it, you know what I mean. You get young people that don't like change as well (HR Director, Health).

We are more focussed on attracting the right people for the right roles, irrelevant of gender, irrelevant of age. We'd rather not fill a role. We'd rather wait until we actually get the right person for that role (HR Director, Hospitality).

Further, views of an ageing workforce are often influenced by one's own experiences. Interviewees often reflected on their own experience of work:

I'm not ready to retire, I've got like 20, 30 years ahead of me as far as I'm concerned and a huge amount of aspiration about the future and I know that there are many, many people like

me who are not looking at old paradigms of when you get to 65, you retire and you quietly slow down and disappear. (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

Negative stereotypes of older workers must be eradicated for older workers to be encouraged to remain in the workforce or attracted back into employment (Loretto & White, 2006; Posthuma & Campion, 2008). Overcoming barriers to the employment and attraction of older workers requires positive actions such as implementation of formal policies to address age discrimination, an organizational culture that values a diverse workforce, including older workers; and the introduction of policy and practices that support a diverse workforce (Loretto & White, 2006).

Public Policy Implications of an Ageing Workforce

Extending the working life of older workers has been argued to be an important public policy goal in Australia and overseas, given the context of an increasingly ageing society (Kossen & Pedersen, 2008; O'Brien, 2007). Legislative change and public policy change is advocated by several interviewees, particularly with respect to superannuation:

The biggest problem is the superannuation issues that make it less attractive for a person to come back into the workforce.... There's just not enough incentive there to come back into the workforce. So maybe one of the things that need to be addressed on a legislative requirement is the age of eligibility for superannuation. That would be a good starting point (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

So offering employees incentives and all that sort of stuff, doesn't work too well. What I do think is important from a policy framework perspective is that the obstacles are removed. So if you flip it over and take the opposite perspective, what is it in our public policy infrastructure that would actually obstruct men and women from continuing to participate in the labour market? (Consultant).

Yes you have to offer all of it because any one individual piece is not the answer. So phased retirement is not the answer in itself, so that the HR pieces are not answers in themselves and the physical work environment is not the answer in itself... So it's about a very holistic approach. It's just like any of these very complicated problems. Maintaining someone in the workforce is a very complicated problem. It's related to their mental health, their physical health, the work that they do, the way that they do the work. A whole series of things that interrelate

and you can't pull out a piece of that and deal with it, you've got to do all of it together. So any one organization has to do all of this stuff together, as an organization, they've got to do all of that stuff. You can't just offer 48/52 or a day off every other week. The HR piece is part of the puzzle, that's only part of the puzzle (Advisory Body).

While the impact of an ageing workforce has many implications for public policy, the main focus in this study is on the implications for management. Diversity management requires a broad, strategic approach within an organization, as well as being viewed as a general social and economic concern.

Organizational /HRM Strategies for Managing an Ageing Workforce

Strategic Integration/ Strategic Approach to HRM

In many organizations, the HR function carries major responsibility for managing diversity practices such as those related to an ageing workforce. As discussed earlier, managing an ageing workforce can be approached in the context of diversity management and strategic HRM. A strategic approach to HRM has three core elements: CEO and top management support for HR and diversity practices, acceptance and adoption of HR and diversity practices by other managers across the organization, and a configuration of coherent and consistent HR practices. Below we discuss each of these elements of HRM, as they apply to managing an ageing workforce.

The Role of CEO and Top Management

To raise awareness of workforce diversity and the need for flexible management strategies, support and direction from the CEO and top management team is essential. When the top management team demonstrate support for diversity practices and a commitment to diversity management and practices such as flexible work arrangements, there are recognised benefits, for individuals and employers.

My boss talks about in the 80s and the 90s, employees had to be flexible for companies. We are now in a stage where companies are going to be flexible for employees. ... That is the world we are in. It is a dramatic shift because it will free up the mature age space. I haven't got a doubt it will allow people to stay in the workforce (HR Manager, Finance).

In contrast, a lack of role modelling by top managers and their failure to demonstrate support for diversity practices undermines the organization's capability to manage the needs of a diverse workforce.

I think that people at the top generally speaking don't understand work/life balance very well.

It's like this term that gets thrown around that means that people want time off or it means that they don't want to move or whatever but it is not well understood. ... The role modelling isn't there (General Manager, Defence).

To raise awareness and understanding of workforce concerns, and to change attitudes amongst senior managers, the senior HR representative needs to participate in strategic decision making; the earlier that the HRM representative is involved in the decision-making process, the greater will be their impact (Buyens & De Vos, 2001). Further, the HRM function plays a critical role in educating senior executives:

I see the first role [of the HRM function] is educating, and particularly educating senior teams, around the kind of environment that they need to create to make it an attractive workplace for all, so that they minimise their labour supply crises that have been forecast, maximise the retention of their workforce and create as effective workforce as they possibly can or as a productive a workforce as they can (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

The Role of Line Managers

The second core element in a successful HRM strategy is acceptance and adoption of specific practices by other managers across the organization. To achieve line managers' buy-in to diversity management, a change of focus from policies to a shared mindset, or organizational culture that endorses diversity and inclusion, is viewed by leading employers as important.

I think success for us will be when managers move past policies and they customise offerings to individuals. So what we're trying to do with our broader policies is to grant parental leave and all these types of things we've brought in but that's more about creating a view within the organization that it's legitimate for employees to ask to take time off, or work part time, or work odd hours, or work from home, or anything, and it's okay also for the manager to say "yes". So we're trying to transition from [the policies] to generate a cultural change. I think most organizations in this country are being basically unsuccessful in just putting out policies and getting uptake (HR Director, Finance).

However, our participants recognised the difficulties in raising awareness of diversity policies and achieving comprehensive adoption and implementation of diversity policies across the organization. This at least partly reflects the large size of the participating firms.

The policies are there. However they're not well coordinated. For instance we have flexible

work practices, a range of those and various other programs. But are they coordinated under an umbrella of work/life balance? No. They might be in reports like this but they're actually not sold to us as "Well this is work/life balance and these are the programs and managers are not encouraged to manage as you guys have got to get across this work/life balance. You have got to be aware of it" (General Manager, Defence).

HRM Competencies and the Configuration of Practices

To influence top management and line managers, senior HR executives need to have credibility and influence. This requires key competencies and qualities and capabilities, such as business acumen, influence skills, networking, and project management, to be nurtured in the HRM function itself (Meisinger, 2005; Sheehan et al., 2007). Indeed Meisinger (2005) contends that successful HRM professionals require increasingly complex technical skills and personal strengths including competence, curiosity, courage and a sense of caring for people. Further, it is important for the HRM function to communicate policy and practices to the rest of the organization:

We have many, many things that we do that we in HR know about but no-one else knows about and it's not because we're deliberately not telling them, it's just that we're not good at marketing ourselves, we're not good at communicating this (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

A configuration of HRM policy and practices is at the centre of an effective approach to management of diversity issues. All of our manager-interviewees reported a range of policies and practices across HRM activities including recruitment, training and development, performance management, remuneration, and working arrangements. Approaches that could be described as more advanced or sophisticated included a broad strategy, such as the design and implementation of an age management strategy or a diversity strategy, integrated with other broad platforms such as leadership development, employer branding, and employee value propositions. We found a high level of activity in the HRM function with regard to reviewing, revising, and developing new initiatives. This mirrors the high level of policy development activity reported by Sheehan, Holland & De Cieri (2006) in their national survey of Australian HRM professionals. As one example:

We've also been working on an EVP [employment value proposition], and we've also done a review of values and I've just completed, under the age management strategy a review of working flexibility (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

Our interviewees reported on their range of initiatives related to the ageing workforce. Attraction and retention of employees are an increasingly important aspect of building organizational capabilities to

ensure sustained competitiveness (Holland et al., 2007). HR managers need to re-think and revise their employment systems, practices and organizational structure to ensure they capture and retain talent (Storey & Quintas 2001).

A small number of interviewees described their main focus as not on attraction but on retention. It is important to remember that older workers may leave bad jobs for the same reasons and in the same way as any other employee (Davey & Davies, 2006).

So, unlike a lot of organizations we're not running out there looking at ways of recruiting older staff because we've already got them. We're looking at ways of extending their working lives (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

[Referring to another organization] ... they have an average age of 48 and because people aren't leaving their workforce, it's in a retirement belt and people aren't leaving so people aren't coming in, they don't have the recruitment issues we do but they do have a situation where in four or five years time potentially could have a significant number of people leaving. So, it's not necessarily good to retain all your staff all the time. The staff turnover and having a real broad section of your age group is quite important (HR Director, Health).

Working flexibly is probably one of the most critical factors across all age groups in terms of retaining, engagement and attracting (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

Attraction and retention of talent relies to some extent upon the HRM policy and practices. Research consistently shows that employees who perceive their work conditions to include aspects such as opportunities to fully use and develop their skills, greater job responsibilities, flexible work arrangements, a fair promotion system, and a trustworthy manager who represents the employee's best interests, are more committed to their companies (Fulmer, Gerhart & Scott, 2003). In the following sections, we provide a detailed discussion of our findings with regard to the HRM policy and practices reported by interviewees as contributing to attraction and retention of employees.

Workforce Planning

Effective workforce planning is an aspect of HRM that is integral to organizational strategic planning; workforce planning is the process through which organizational goals are translated into human resource goals concerning staffing levels and allocation. In an environment of skill shortages and competition to attract and retain employees, there are three keys to effectively utilising labour markets to an employer's competitive advantage. First, managers must have a clear idea of their current workforce

competencies and capabilities. Second, organizations must have a plan as to where they are going in the future and be aware of how their present workforce competencies and capabilities relate to those that will be needed in the future. Third, where there are discrepancies between the present workforce and future needs, organizations need plans and programs that will address these discrepancies. Workforce planning involves forecasting human resource needs for an organization and planning the necessary steps to meet these needs (De Cieri et al., 2008).

Most of the employers in our study have conducted some workforce planning or data analysis of their workforce age profile. Several of the HR managers viewed workforce planning and data analysis as fundamental to their management of the ageing workforce; several employers have already conducted age audits of their workforce. Closely related to workforce planning is the need for HR metrics and measurement of HRM practices. HRM researchers and practitioners have advocated the development of a systematic process of measurement that enables an organization to obtain and evaluate evidence about the performance of HRM, to ensure clear relationships between its goals and outcomes (Boudreau 2006; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2007).

We've just gone through ... an ageing study in which we surveyed a whole lot of employees who were 45 plus. We also surveyed ex-employees who had retired within the last two years [to] look at the whole thing around retirement planning, the experience of retirement, what would keep people in the workforce longer, what were the issues as people approach retirement and then immediately after retirement (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

The key question is whether or not the ageing labour force is going to stay and for how long. So there's a workforce planning issue there (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

We actually have demographics that are reported monthly internally. We did an age audit (HR Director, Finance).

In a small number of organizations, interviewees recognised that the ageing workforce was an emerging concern, yet were having difficulty capturing the attention of top management for this issue.

The number of people over 55 has increased 10% in the last ten years and it is projected to increase by 34% in the next ten years. Anyway it has got a bit of data there but when you look at what our priority areas are then it is nothing about the ageing population. And people are really concerned about the hot topics around branding and recruitment and leadership, building leadership capabilities (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

Several employers are readily able to identify key areas that require attention with regard to skill shortages and attraction of employees:

Where we're facing employment pressure tends to be in rural areas. So rural and regional Victoria is problematic to recruit to (HR Director, State Govt Corporation).

As engineers and other professionals reach retirement age the organization faces a loss of intellectual capital (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

The demand for our [...] services is drastically increasing and we are not going to have the labour to service them, so we have been looking at how we can address that. We can try to entice younger people into the industry, although it is not a sexy industry and its very hard to attract younger people in. We find we have more success through flexible work practices and so on, keeping people longer and also attracting sea changers or career changers to enter our industry. So the older workforce is actually more attracted to us and therefore very attractive for us in terms of attraction and retention (Industry Association).

While a few organizations have done a substantial amount of research and analysis of their workforce, the majority indicated that they could do more work in this area, with regard to general workforce planning and particularly with regard to succession planning.

So the ageing workforce is an interesting one from a personal perspective because in most cases there is data that tells you what's going to happen and people choose not to do anything about it and then the person gets up and goes and they say "Well now what do I do?" So we know that these people ... are potentially going to leave, so what have we done to succession plan behind them and get that knowledge and get the experience? Not a lot, so we've only got ourselves to blame to some degree (General Manager, Federal Govt Agency).

Succession planning. We have done a little bit in that space. We don't have a comprehensive strategy around it ... So our succession planning and ... extraction of that knowledge is actually really poor I think the issue is you are actually aware of what potentially might happen to you, it's what you choose to do about it in the meantime, that's the problem. Most people say well I won't do it because it's two years, three years down the track (General Manager, Federal Govt Agency).

We were able to identify only a few examples of succession planning practices in place:

[Company X] have a very good transitional program where they bring someone in for six

months, they'll pay the salary of the incoming incumbent while the existing incumbent's in the position, so that they get a really good handover of knowledge and skills and culture (Industry Association)

Employer Branding

Employer branding is a means of attracting and retaining staff (Ewing et al., 2002) by facilitating the promotion of the organization both externally and internally (Lievens, Van Hoye, & Ansell, 2007). Employer branding can be used as a means of promoting the organization and its reputation both internally and externally. A positive employer brand can positively impact upon employees' experience of work (Ewing et al., 2002), and employees' perception of the workplace can be construed by the external environment as the organizational image (Lievens et al., 2007).

We need to develop an employment brand that will appeal to the ageing workforce in order to increase the pool of available candidates (HR Director, State Govt Corporation).

One of the challenges for us is that our immediate competition historically has always been [same industry, direct competitors], we're now competing outside of that. ... The individuals that are going for those roles are a little bit more particular about where they align their careers. Some of them, it's not career driven it's just "I want to work here because I like the environment" you know, so they've got different motivations. Whereas, 20 years ago people aligned themselves with a brand because they believed that the brand would assist them with their career development. Today it's a little bit more "this is a great place to work now, it's the place to be seen" (HR Director, Hospitality).

A few of the employers in this study have recognised that the attractiveness of work extends to the meaning of work and the social contribution one can offer. Opportunities for community involvement were reported as particularly of interest to older workers:

We have a lot of community involvement, so people hear and usually approach us because they have heard of something we are doing. And then they start exploring "I was an Office Manager in [Company X]" or whatever but I'm looking to actually making a difference". So a lot of our staff come here who had a corporate or a professional background in government and are actually looking to make a difference (HR Manager, Not-for-profit).

Related to the development of an employer brand, a small number of interviewees raised the matter of taking a labour market segmentation approach:

The challenge for organizations is that they have got to ... understand market segmentation and how you actually directly target different cohorts of the labour market.... I reckon it is segmentation in terms of attracting and then coaching managers to be good about the way they manage their teams and the diversity in those teams. So nothing new in that. We did it for girls and various other target groups once before and now we are doing it for a different group (Consultant).

There's different segments of people out there in the workforce and if you believe and I'm a believer, that things may get a little tighter in the future then you need to be more innovative, more lateral about how you tap in and make yourself attractive to every single one of those segments so whether it's you set up virtual working arrangements so you can tap into sea changes, whether you have different arrangements which tap into mature age workers, etc., etc. I don't think you can just do one (HR Director, Finance).

What I think is that the challenge for organizations is that they have got to get super smart about – they have got to take some leads out of the books of marketers and understand market segmentation and how you actually directly target different cohorts of labour market, in this case rather than customers (Consultant).

However, we note concerns raised by researchers with regard to the potential for discrimination related to labour market segmentation (Kossen & Pedersen, 2008).

Recruitment and Selection

Many organizations are dealing with skills shortages and difficulties in attracting and retaining talent. It could be said that every business has some key people, skills or knowledge capital that cannot be easily replaced, so recruitment and selection are fundamental to any employer's its ability to survive, adapt and grow. Recruitment refers to any practice or activity carried on by the employer with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees, while selection is the process by which employers decide who will or will not join their organizations (De Cieri et al., 2008).

Our interviewees reported numerous challenges in addressing skill shortages and attracting employees to their organization. A small number of managers described their recruitment process as lacking a strategic link:

I don't think they really focus on it. I think they focus on opening the doors up to older workers in the hope that they'll come in and plug some of the gaps for a while. I am not aware of any

focussed strategy that “Yes, these people are valuable and we need to focus on these people because they’ve got experience or whatever” (General Manager, Defence).

Several problems were identified specific to the recruitment and selection processes. Some managers reported difficulties related to older workers who are unfamiliar with new technology. New technologies such as computers have altered and continue to alter skill requirements within the workplace (Friedberg, 2003). Skill maintenance and development is crucial at all ages (Larwood, Rodkin & Judson, 2001). It has been found that age is a poor predictor of the capacity for learning new technologies; however, the perception exists that older workers are unable to or are slower to learn new skills (Reed, Doty & May, 2005).

If we’re trying to recruit people who are older workers, a lot of them are not yet savvy on computers. So you know chances are that you might need to brand it a bit differently and you might need to approach them in a more traditional way maybe through newspapers or something like that. So you might not use seek.com as your tool (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

If we recruit older people in we have got to give them more technology training in our call centre ... it is not that they can’t learn, it is actually that they’re at a different place to a 19 year old which is obvious. But because you are in these standard recruiting processes people just don’t always think about it (HR Manager, Finance).

Several interviewees described perceived discrimination and stereotypes against older workers in the recruitment industry.

In [the recruiting industry] you get companies saying we don’t want women, we don’t want men, we don’t want people over 50, and we don’t want people under 50. ... there are some industries particularly that would find it difficult I think to contemplate hiring people over 50. [Even in the recruitment industry]... a lot of the recruitment companies around town will only hire you if you’re under 30 (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

Recruitment specialists are working on addressing problems.

We got Government funding to run our own program ... and the whole focus of that program was to train recruitment consultants, particularly younger consultants, in how to interview someone old enough to be your mother or your grandmother (Industry Association).

Several of those in the recruitment industry identified the need for government action:

[T]he government needs to think about issues like that I think because unless there's a targeted campaign to actually educate a lot of these older workers that there are jobs available and training available to lure them back into the workforce, they just won't be there (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

Several interviewees highlighted the need for individual job seekers to have access to assistance when they are seeking employment:

Part of the problem is the lack of communication. Companies don't know how to communicate with mature aged workers and mature aged workers don't know where to look. That's part of the problem. A lot of those people that have gone out of the job workforce in the last ten years, even over the last 30 years, when they actually get made redundant or they leave the workforce or whatever, they actually don't know how to go about finding a job (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

There is also an attitude problem with the mature age workers themselves... If you've been out of employment and have not gone into job interviews ... for five years or more, the whole process has shifted. It is not now about how many degrees you've got it's what your competencies are ... it's about your emotional fit, it's about your cultural fit. It's not just about the skills you've got but what other skills you're prepared to learn. That battle with the older workforce is a hard one (Industry Association).

A common theme amongst employers was that recruitment strategies need to be broad, to attract a more diverse range of potential employees.

Our view is that we want to open up that pool to include mature aged workers, we want to open up that pool to include mums coming back to work, we want to open up that pool to include sea changers so therefore we have a bigger pool of people to choose from which we believe will then lessen the impact of the war for talent on us. So, I suppose we take a more holistic view of how do we broaden our labour pool to choose from (HR Director, Finance).

The recruitment market for us is just hotting up now. Our talent people who look after recruitment are finally putting together strategies that have got diversity integrated in them. Up until now it has been very targeted (HR Manager, Finance).

Well we don't target any age demographic for recruitment obviously and we don't target an age spread. We do have issues of skill mix... It's more of an experience factor than an age factor. ...

Given that most of our vacancies are occurring in specialist areas we're really after the specialist skills regardless of age (HR Director, Health).

Several employers reported strategies specific to their industry needs or organizational context.

As an organization I guess for us the ageing workforce isn't too bad because we'll just rob from all the other agencies. So we'll recruit all of their top line; people will apply and we just take them, so it becomes a whole of government issue down the track. If you're an agency that's small and doesn't pay as much, you'll potentially just keep replenishing your workforce and the bigger agencies will just sweep them out and take them across (General Manager, Federal Govt Agency).

Some industries, for example mining, are utilising temporary work visas (eg 457 visas) to bring in workers from overseas to address skill shortages.

Some people talk about importing workers from overseas. That's harder to do in Australia than elsewhere for a variety of reasons (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

We found several firms that have insourced, or plan to insource their recruitment processes:

What we've done twelve months ago is we've now brought recruitment in-house, we run recruitment ourselves so we've moved from 100% agency twelve months ago to probably about 60%-65% internal. We now have our own website for careers, we now have a database, we own the candidates now. We want to own the pipeline. ... I suppose it's a pre-emptive step in terms of shortage of labour. If we've got the database and we own the candidates ... so it's a strategic response to the issues around age or shortage of labour (HR Director, Finance).

Job Analysis and Design

Job analysis and design is the process of defining the way work can be performed and the tasks required within a job (De Cieri et al., 2008). Job analysis and design contribute to the day to day experience on the job; determining what jobs involve and how work is organized. Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2003), in a review of labour turnover and retention in New Zealand, found that one of the main reasons why individuals left their employer was to pursue more interesting work elsewhere. In the broad context of skill shortages, it is worthwhile for employers to examine how jobs are constructed and connected (Sheehan et al., 2006). Research has shown that, to attract and retain older workers, stressors related to job design should be minimized, by keeping work demands within reasonable bounds and providing employees with maximal control over their work (Elovainio et. al., 2005). Indeed,

while good quality job design is an important factor in attracting and retaining any employees, Nichols (2001) has reported that job design is an important factor specifically for older workers.

There are numerous ways in which job design can incorporate flexibility to accommodate older workers, such as:

Reducing the physically demanding aspects of jobs. Making job sharing and part-time positions available to older workers; providing remote access to allow people to work from home; considering phased retirement as part of the flexible working policy and work-life balance programme; and downshifting (i.e., moving from a higher level job to a lower level one) (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

In terms of job design, we ask them quite often. It's like their hours and so on, we don't assume. We have got flexible policies that say we will try to accommodate flexibility wherever we can, but we really need to be informed by them as to what looks best for them. Whether it's Monday tennis or Thursday looking after the grandkids or whatever it is (HR Manager, Not-for-profit).

Some interviewees argue that industry and job/occupational characteristics may restrict the amount of job re-design or flexibility possible:

Look we don't do a lot of that [job design] because of the nature of the rosters and work. We have a lot of part time but that doesn't equate to job sharing for our sort of organization. So job design isn't really a focus (HR Director, Health).

Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational health and safety (OHS) refers to the physical, physiological and psychosocial conditions of an organization's workforce, related to aspects of work and the work context. With this broad perspective, effective OHS management relies on improving OHS conditions and preventing hazards (circumstances, procedures or environments that expose individuals to possible injury, illness, damage or loss) in the work context by implementing comprehensive HRM and organizational strategies (De Cieri et al., 2008). A fully developed OHS system should encompass not only prevention of and compensation for illness and injury, but also health promotion. A major area of OHS management focuses on health promotion and training programs. Occupational health and safety training and development for managers and supervisors should encourage these organizational leaders to develop and maintain concern and commitment to OHS, effective communication about OHS and involvement of employees in OHS. Managerial attitudes and behaviours are an important factor in safety culture and

will influence employees' safety attitudes and behaviours (Barling, Loughlin & Kelloway, 2002; Zohar, 2002). OHS training and development for employees may include specific communication about their current job tasks and broader organizational OHS issues. Safety awareness programs and training programs, along with employee fitness programs, encourage both fitness and safety orientation, and lead to a reduction of work-related injury and illness. Effective health promotion has been shown to be associated with improved employee health status, quality of work, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as reduced rates of absenteeism and early retirement (Eichar, Norlan, Brady & Fortinsky, 1991; Naegele & Walker, 2006; Wolfe, Parker & Napier, 1994).

OHS was mentioned by several interviewees as an area in which there may be perceived differences across age groups with regard to workplace injuries and incidents. Some interviewees identified occupational health and safety differences across employee age groups; others did not. There was no consensus with regard to older workers and occupational health and safety.

Do our WorkCover claims show that older workers are more likely to injure themselves? I don't know whether they do (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

Older workers are off work for longer when they sustain an injury. However, this is more due to physiological factors and time taken to rehabilitate than attitude....Return to work is a significant challenge. Older workers require longer to recover from an injury and are therefore off work for longer periods of time (8-9 weeks). Men and women aged over 55 are also somewhat less likely to return to work (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

We would find that our older workforce would have more incidents than our younger workforce mainly from sprains, trips and falls. But having said that, the longer term people that are off on long standing claims are not our older workforce. It's our middle workforce in there that goes off and never seems to come back. The older workforce will go off if they've had an incident but getting them back to work is much easier than getting someone in the middle age group back, for us (General Manager, Federal Govt Agency).

A few interviewees identified specific HR strategies to manage occupational health and safety concerns in an ageing workforce. However, it may be that these matters are more likely to be dealt with by OHS specialists, rather than HRM generalists or diversity managers, in large firms.

Well the trends are showing that our workforce is ageing and obviously as HR practitioners it does raise a number of issues for our workplaces. One of the big areas is around the management of medical injuries and peoples increasing physical frailty as they get older but

also as with other organizations with the very competitive labour market but we are keen to make sure we recruit and retain our good staff and so purely from the sense of trying to keep good retention strategies we're interested in how we might continue to train and attract the older workers (HR Manager, Govt Dept).

[We] need to improve claims management and invest greater time in return-to-work programs. Promote health and wellbeing programs to reduce the likelihood of injuries (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

Training and Development

While training typically is focused on enhancing employees' ability to perform their current job, lifelong learning and employee development refers to any purposeful learning activity designed to enhance employees' knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes relevant to their current and future work. HRM policy and practices that enhance employee development can positively influence both employees' and external constituencies' perceptions of an employer; this is particularly pertinent for employers with large numbers of knowledge workers. Lifelong learning and employee development has also been shown to be an important factor in employee perceptions that their employer cares about and is supportive of them (Fuller, Hester & Barnett, 2006).

Common types of employee development include:

- short courses and workshops;
- formal education programs;
- interpersonal relationship skills building through mentoring and or coaching;
- job experiences, including transfers, job rotation, job enlargement, and promotions; and
- assessment by collecting information and providing feedback about behaviour, communication style or skills to employees (De Cieri et al., 2008).

These are complementary and not mutually exclusive; therefore, many employers routinely use a combination of these types.

The provision of training and development has been shown in numerous studies to be of 'paramount' importance in the retention of skilled workers (Boxall et al., 2003; Edgar & Geare, 2005). Results of a national survey by Sheehan et al. (2006) indicated, however, that although organizations were attending to training and development, the levels of investment could have been stronger. Investment in training is an important factor to consider for any organization.

Some evidence does exist that older workers may cost more to train; however, from a continuous improvement or innovation perspective all employees incur a similar cost in continued professional and skill development (Greller & Simpson, 1999). Older workers may take longer to learn in some learning environments but there is no evident discrepancy in their ability to learn (Spitulnik, 2006). By creating and designing training programs for a diverse group, including older workers, individual and organizational performance can be enhanced. Research has found that it is critical for managers to have the appropriate levels of training and skill so that they can competently support older workers in their employment (Armstrong-Stassen & Templer, 2005; Spitulnik, 2006).

Amongst the employers in our study, there was a consensus that training and development are important for the entire workforce, not only for older workers. Overall, managers interviewed expressed their keenness to attract and retain good staff. However, employers recognised that there may be a need for training targeted towards older workers. Training for older workers is viewed as an important element in a retention strategy for older workers. As noted earlier with regard to recruitment, several interviewees noted the need for older job seekers to receive training for on-line job applications.

Problems identified by employers with regard to training and development typically related to areas where they have insufficient or inadequate resources and activities, or a lack of employee engagement. One of our industry experts expressed this as a problem stemming from the focus of boards on short-term targets.

[O]utside the very big companies, there's not a lot of training done and developing of people, you know, it's all short term thinking. I think boards are responsible for that. ... boards have created this expectation with shareholders ... So the whole thinking is short term, there's no long term thinking done at all really beyond maybe the top 50 companies or 100 companies and as an MD, if you don't deliver in the first two or three years, you're out the door so it just encourages all that short term thinking (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

A lot of training is mandatory and they will participate and seek education ... in any age demographic. Some people pursue education vigorously and some don't and some young people do and some don't and some older people do (HR Director, Health).

I don't think that older people have an inability to learn but if they're not provided with the opportunities then there's a deskilling that takes place as a result of that. Certainly our staff attitude surveys show that our older workforce is a highly engaged segment (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

You know it's the engagement, to some extent that's the engagement processes that we need to be using in business that makes sure that we're tapping into all of the knowledge and skills of our people and are inclusive about that (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

The majority of our interviewees recognised that employees will have different training and development needs across their career or life cycle, so employee development programs need to be broad and address the changing needs of the workforce. Career management and mentoring were the two areas raised by several interviewees as particularly important in managing a diverse workforce with skill shortages. In particular, reciprocal mentoring programs, to encourage knowledge sharing between senior employees and recent graduates, were recommended by several employers. However, in one case, a manager commented on the need to build a culture of trust so that employees will willingly share their knowledge without fear of job insecurity.

There's probably more that we can do around career management and that will include helping people plan and manage their careers in [Company X] by talking to [Generation] X's and Y's, also supporting them to plan for a career that takes them out of [Company X] but hopefully giving them enough support to say "hey, we're a fabulous employer, come back again". To help older, current employees perhaps plan for other roles within [Company X] we're also looking at encouraging retirees to come back and work for us seasonally (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

Particularly mentoring. We are very lean in supervising; the whole structure of organization is now managers don't have the time to mentor and support people. We are having to put back a whole lot of infrastructure around supporting people because middle management is so lean ... Yes so older people are just invaluable for younger grads coming in and we have got a big grad [graduate employee] program. We are doing reverse mentoring [too – younger workers mentoring senior executives] (HR Manager, Finance).

They love the work.... They also love the capacity that they can mentor younger people and we often rely on them perhaps more than other staff to be able to help with the new influx of graduates. They're good supervisors, they're not tied up in trying to prove themselves in the workplace. So they're saying "I can really help you, I need to help you because the future of [Company X] is you guys so we want to make sure the knowledge is passed on (HR Director, State Govt Corporation).

A third area commented upon by several interviewees refers to the needs for communication, education

and training in inclusive work practices, to address issues such as generational differences in the workplace. Their comments mirror recent research that has highlighted the benefits of validating generational differences in the workplace (Arsenault, 2004; Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000).

I think there's a bit of a view that they grew up in a different era and there are different expectations from younger people in terms of how people communicate to each other. I think one of the things we found was the issue of bullying and harassment in the workplace. [Younger employees] expectations are different and they come into the workplace and if they're being sort of shunted around a bit by some of the older, more experienced [employees], some of them basically don't tolerate it and I think that's where we get our notions of bullying, where junior staff now are saying "you're not talking to me like that, I don't have to put up with that"... We have to continually be re-educating both young and old about communication standards and how people should talk to each other (HR Director, Health).

Performance Management

A performance management system should link employee activities with organizational goals both at the level of strategic business objectives and at the operational level. Performance management typically involves processes of identifying performance objectives, defining performance required, facilitating performance, encouraging performance, measuring performance, and providing feedback on performance. Performance management should be both developmental and evaluative. The system must be flexible because when goals and strategies change, the results, behaviours and employee characteristics usually need to change correspondingly. Performance appraisal is a major part, but not the only component of the broader process of performance management (De Cieri & Sheehan, 2008).

In a diverse workforce, performance management needs to be sensitive to the perspectives and needs of different employee segments. At least one interviewee suggested that older workers do not like highly bureaucratic performance management systems and they prefer a more flexible, personalised approach.

In terms of performance management, I think that it is a stereotype but I think that experienced older workers have much more pride and responsibility of self in terms of their jobs. They are much more insightful and take a higher sense of responsibility for their performance. So sometimes there can be more gentle conversations, they are more likely to beat themselves up than we would (HR Manager, Not-for-profit).

Many of our interviewees pointed out that performance is not related to age and we must be careful not

to make erroneous assumptions about age:

There are some things that you get better at as an older worker and there are some things that you get worse at. That's just the general trend. Everybody is different and the research shows that within a cohort, an aged cohort, there is more variability within an aged cohort than there are between aged cohorts (Advisory Body).

Numerous national studies, such as research by Sheehan et al. (2006) indicates widespread uptake of performance management in Australian organizations. Nankervis and Compton's (2006) review of the status of performance systems in Australia found that the main purposes of performance management are almost equally distributed across training and development needs and the appraisal of past performance; alignment of objectives is evident in a smaller proportion of organizations. However, some interviewees noted that many organizations do not utilise performance management as effectively as they might:

Most companies do not conduct formal performance management. I would say it's probably practiced professionally or formally in no more than about 20% of companies (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

Remuneration, Rewards and Recognition

An employee's total package of remuneration, rewards and recognition does not depend solely on the job she or he holds. Instead, differences in performance (individual, group or organization), seniority, skills and so forth, are used as a basis for differentiating pay among employees. Remuneration, rewards and recognition can motivate employees and influence behaviour, employee performance and consequently organizational performance, outcomes and effectiveness (De Cieri et al., 2008).

Several of the employers included in this study reported that they are implementing innovative reward and recognition programs as retention strategies for a diverse workforce. Some firms are implementing programs to reward and recognise all workforce segments.

Reward and recognition has become ... a point of difference between us and our competitors. I'm designing programs at the moment that we're looking to implement in 2008 and 2009 which is financial recognition and reward for [semi-skilled employees] which would never have happened in the past (HR Director, Hospitality).

While some employers are focusing efforts on specific reward and recognition strategies to attract and retain older workers, others are not targeting any particular segment of their workforce. This appears to

reflect debates on labour market segmentation (Kosser & Pedersen, 2008). Some employers do not differentiate their reward programs on the basis of age:

We have reward and recognition programs but I don't think we would differentiate older workers from younger workers (HR Director, Health).

Other employers adopt the view that older workers are different; for example, their focus is on superannuation:

[T]he older demographic have a very different approach to what they want. One of our reward strategies, for instance, is looking at salary sacrificing superannuation, that's a big thing (HR Director, Hospitality).

Provide rewards that are valued by older workers. E.g. superannuation co-contributions, financial planning, etc (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

Many employers offer non-monetary rewards and work conditions, particularly flexible work arrangements, recognising that financial reward is not the most important factor in employee attraction and retention:

The research is showing that it's not just about money, it's about flexibility, it's about the ability to control your work life balance (Industry Association).

I think the rewards are more likely to be around flexibility and the ability to work part time and that sort of thing rather than specific monetary rewards designed for the older worker (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

A few organizations are seeking to emphasise intrinsic rewards, such as meaningful experiences via their employment:

[V]ery successful [people] over 50, are searching for meaning. ... we are just launching a leadership program with a hunger project in India. We are going to take 20 senior executives off for a week to India and work with disadvantaged women in India ... So there is a lot of people who want to put back into the community ... I'm no longer needing to earn the huge income and everything. I want to make a difference. Yes, I think it is much more about "can I have more of a sense of meaning and purpose because I have been successful materialistically but that is not enough" (HR Manager, Finance).

Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements can have substantial benefits for employees for staff, and they have been shown to lead to reduced absenteeism, increased motivation and higher rates of employee retention. As might be anticipated for large organizations, the employers in our study have comprehensive practices in areas such as flexible work hours, leave arrangements, work arrangements (such as work-from-home). Flexible work arrangements may be included in enterprise agreements. All managers recognised and emphasised the importance of flexibility for managing a diverse and ageing workforce

Flexibility, flexibility, flexibility. ... Flexibility underpinned by mutual benefit so it's not just about one side or the other (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

Flexibility is the key. For older people all the data shows they actually want to stay working but they don't necessarily want to stay working 24/7. Saying flexibility is the key enabler [as part of the organization culture] ... if you do work flexibly your contribution is still valued. [Flexibility] is right across our diversity agenda and then we have a whole policy suite to support managers to make good decisions. ...we're really not there yet but we want to get to the stage where we pretty much have the right to work flexibly and manager discretion disappears if you can demonstrate that the business needs are going to be met We are holding onto the wisdom because people are staying and working part-time for us (HR Manager, Finance).

Flexible work arrangements may address a wide range of employee needs and preferences, as shown in Table 6. As this is a growth area for diversity management, we recognise that this is unlikely to be a conclusive list.

Many of our interviewees are already implementing a comprehensive suite of flexible work arrangements. The consensus is that flexible work arrangements are a critical success factor in managing a diverse workforce and should be built into the overall HRM configuration such that flexibility becomes part of the organizational culture. Examples of the approaches taken for flexible work arrangements include:

- Adopting flexible work arrangements as part of a talent retention strategy (with CEO endorsement, a major program for talent management and flexibility);
- Adopting flexible work arrangements (e.g., flexible scheduling, telecommuting, phased retirement) as part of a diversity management strategy;
- Communication to managers and the workforce about flexible work arrangements (e.g. sharing success stories);
- Education for managers and the workforce about flexible work arrangements (e.g., a program to

change the mindset of senior managers);

- Expanding existing flexibility programs to be accessible to a broader spectrum of the workforce (eg broadening availability of part-time or job-sharing roles); and
- Designing targeted programs for specific workforce segments (eg, pre-retirement programs, part-time work; designing work around projects that can be done in flexible ways).

It is not surprising that large employers would have suite of flexible work arrangements:

We have a great amount of flexibility for people ... the ability to work from home and telecommute or the acceptance around part time work, the pre-retirement contracts that are on offer. There's already a great deal of the policies in place and acceptance of the way of working that facilitates older workers' preferences perhaps (HR Manager, Education).

We have got carer's leave and long service leave and RDOs [rostered days off] but it is more around, and I think this is happening a lot more, people working from home, telecommuting, working flexible start and finish times... We have job-sharing, job-splitting, part-time... We have got two tiers of career breaks. With the one year, you get guaranteed reemployment back at the same level of pay and everything... After five years; you can come back. It might not necessarily be at the same area but you will come back. [We also have] salary averaging [also called 48/52] (HR Manager, Finance).

Table 6: Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible working

1. Job share opportunities (also job-splitting)
2. Opportunity to negotiate for part-time work
3. Work from home
4. Telecommuting
5. Flexitime / flexible work scheduling
6. Compressed working week
7. Time off in-lieu/rostered days off
8. Cap on the number of overtime hours that can be worked
9. Reduced working hours in exchange for lower salary (salary averaging, 48/52)
10. Annualised hours
11. Contract and temporary employment

Leave entitlements

12. Leave during school holidays
13. Elder care leave
14. Study/training leave
15. Career breaks
16. Public/community service leave
17. Cultural/religious leave
18. Bereavement leave
19. Emergency leave
20. Paid maternity leave
21. Paid paternity leave
22. Paid adoption leave
23. Extended maternity leave
24. Pre-natal leave

Life choices

25. Phased retirement
26. Phased return to work after pregnancy
27. Lactation breaks
28. Private expressing/breastfeeding room
29. Employer assistance with childcare costs
30. Employer-provided childcare
31. Social support (e.g. 'bring children to work' days)
32. Health and well-being support programs and services
33. School holiday programs (childcare)
34. Employee assistance programs
35. Alumni relations (newsletters, social events)

(Adapted from: Bardoel & De Cieri, 2008, unpublished)

Several interviewees emphasised the need to understand the workforce characteristics and match HR policies to different age groups and cohorts:

So what do they want? Well then it's a matter of finding out what they want, they're all different.

What do 55 year olds are going to want and what a 70 year old is going to want are going to be very different, as different as a 20 year old and a 35 year old (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

I think in the over 55's, more and more people are looking for the part time, flexible arrangements. Now they don't necessarily mean that I want to work two or three days every week of every year, you know, some of these people are interested in working for six months and having four off (Consultant).

So that whole concept of contract labour is becoming more and more the norm which give mature aged workers a lot more ability to actually be recruited ((Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

For us as an organization to continue to do as well as we do into the future, we have got to retain older workers and the flexibility and the way that we can do that seems to be working for us. You can leave and come back. We have a section in our alumni newsletter, which goes to all people who leave, called "Boomerangs", which are people who have left the organization and come back. We profile them in the newsletter. So we are doing everything to position ourselves as "if you leave us allow us to stay in touch with you so that you'll always be open to employment" because for us we do need older people through to the future." (HR Director, State Government Corporation).

For employers in the public sector and not-for-profit sector, flexibility is a well-established feature of the workplace:

I think because we are a public sector organization it means that we have to model good employment practices so we have good return-to-work arrangements, we have flexible work hours, we offer generous flexibility in the workplace. So only 60% of our workforce are full-time. So we have a high proportion of part-times and casuals.... A lot of people working from home. Generally we offer a flexible working environment. ... we do it as part of our normal business and the expectation that we are a good model employer. ... Much of the employment is part-time because it is shift work, rostered work and so people are engaged to do part-time rather than full-time because it may be too demanding full-time (HR Manager, State Govt Dept).

We probably only have about 15% full time and ... the rest of them are part-time or casual but probably about 60% part-time and that is also a reflection of that we have predominantly female workforce as well, who want to balance family and kids. ... [This organization] is already very

attuned to how to work around that flexibility (HR Manager, Not-for-profit).

However, for other employers, flexible work options are a fairly new and growing area for attention, at least partly related to emerging skill shortages.

We're looking at flexibilities of employment for more of our older contingent so part time work is more prevalent.... we're looking at job sharing, we're doing that more often so yes, we've definitely started to tailor the way in which we run our business based on the shortfall of individuals or available talent and we know that that's an issue so if we want to keep our people, we have to change the way in which we run our business (HR Director, Hospitality).

I think there's a trend for companies to be much more flexible around their working arrangements and in terms of re-educating them to do the jobs they want done or need done. I'm not sure that any of those trends are in what you'd call full flight yet but I think there are trends moving in that direction. There's a lot more full time and part time (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

Of particular relevance for older workers are temporal flexibility and control over time worked, which can be major considerations for older workers with many interests and responsibilities outside of the workplace (Davey & Davies, 2006). Flexible work arrangements are a crucial factor in providing maximum opportunities for older workers to remain in the workforce (Keating, 2004). In particular, practices such as phased retirement, part-time work and job sharing, can encourage older workers to consider remaining in the workforce rather than entering retirement (Armstrong-Stassen & Templer, 2006).²

I think generally... employers recognise that there is a role for part time experienced workers. So people who may have been senior in a firm, they either stay there or they go to somewhere else for two or three days a week and whether they have a mentoring role, they're not in senior management but their experience is being used... I think some employers are recognising that if you're looking for that part time job in your 60's, if you like, "if we don't keep you our competitor might grab you..." (Professional Advisory Services).

² Retirement programs are discussed in more detail in a later section.

Barriers to Flexible Work Arrangements

Although the employers in our study shared the view that flexible work arrangements can provide many benefits for employers and employees, most of the interviewees reported problems or barriers for the implementation of flexible work arrangements.

Even in organizations that embrace flexibility, with a range of practices included in enterprise agreements, employees may find it difficult to utilise flexible work arrangements. Several interviewees noted that managerial attitudes can present a barrier to flexible work practices, reflecting the importance of executive and line manager support for HRM and diversity management (Sheehan et. al, 2007; Welbourne, 2005).

We've got a stack of policies and we've got as many as anyone else, maybe a few more but I suppose what we're trying to do is we're trying to move from policies to customization to the individual. The difficulty we're having is that our managers like policies so they've got it in black and white (HR Director, Finance).

We have a suite of flexibilities, probably the same if not more than anybody else. They're award winning ... and I guess that comes back to a critical point underpinning this strategy. From the research that I've seen it would appear that working flexibility is probably one of the most critical factors across all age groups in terms of retaining, engagement and attracting. Having said that, yes ... there's all sorts of leave available to you. The issue around that is how managers interpret that leave and how they work with that suite of flexibilities (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

Flexibility is such a tough issue for male senior executives to get their head around. ... It is not so much about older people; it is about this issue we've got with people who want to work flexibly, that we've inherited from the women's space, that "oh, you want to work flexibly, you are not as committed." And I think we are all trying to undo that because it is not true. ... For a male, for many of our men they'd argue they still feel unsafe to do that and we try to challenge that at the moment (HR Manager, Finance).

There's probably also a bit of a culture that if you look at taking a flexibility then you're not really serious about your job (HR Manager, Communication & distribution).

A lot gets back to the lack of organization in organizations. They're actually not geared to flexibility that much. I mean there has been a huge sort of improvement and move towards

flexibility but it's still a long way behind where it could be and in some organizations it doesn't exist at all (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

Some interviewees viewed this as a problem related more to the constraints of their industry or types of work:

The organization is not really dealing with the issue of older workers. There are no flexible arrangements. Production is 24/7 and does not lend itself to flexible arrangements. A lot of older workers are contractors (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

We have got a challenge in the defence force to afford people those things that probably in civilian life is a little bit easier. We do have policies to afford people those but it's really only workable when people are not operationally active. But when there are people who are [operationally active] it is not impossible and they are working on some strategies for that. Things like flexible crewing and that sort of stuff but still there is an imperative still in the service that people move around a lot.When you are moving the requirement is to move around every 18 months to two years then that is highly disruptive.... And those people that are posted overseas to Iraq or Afghanistan or wherever, there is no work/life balance, sorry. Not for that period of time (General Manager, Defence).

So we can't necessarily be as flexible. In the call centres it's very... regimented and you have your break at this time (HR Manager, Finance).

In some cases, employers have identified situations where opportunities for flexible work arrangements may have been overlooked due to a lack of awareness of the options available to employees.

I think the key thing for us is that we need to educate experienced workers ... Quite often we have people have made the decision to leave because they didn't realise the flexibility was available to them, and then we talk them out of it, and say "no, no, no – if you could stay but made up your own rules what would that look like" and usually we can accommodate that. So it's probably more an assumption that they grew up in an environment where it was "our way or the highway" (HR Manager, Not-for-profit).

Life-time Transition Management

Many organizations in Australia and elsewhere are seeking to address skill shortages and the demands of a diverse workforce by designing and implementing transition programs. These include programs to facilitate the transfer, re-entry, or extension of employees in their workforce. Targeted programs

include:

- Green worker programs (seeking to attract workers in other industries with transferable skills);
- Return-to-work programs (seeking to attract people who have been out of the workforce for some time, such as women with dependent children and retired workers, and facilitate their re-entry to the workforce); and
- Retirement programs (also known as exit programs or phased retirement programs, seeking to extend the involvement of older workers in the workforce, via practices such as phased retirement or part-time work);

Strategies for Retirement Management. While retirement programs are likely to be of particular relevance for older workers, we suggest that these be viewed as part of the overall approach to employees' life phases and transitions. Indeed, retirement programs may overlap with both green worker programs (attracting workers who have retired from other industries), and return-to work programs (attracting retirees back into the workforce).

Researchers have shown that HRM practices are an important influence on employees' decisions about early retirement (Blekesaune & Solem, 2005). We propose that HRM practices related to retirement should be a priority in managing an ageing workforce. Practices with regard to retirement will be most effective when built into the overall HRM strategy for the organization, so that there is CEO and top management support, line manager buy-in, and synergies with the whole configuration of HRM and policy practices.

Phased retirement (or pre-retirement or bridge retirement) programs encompass "a broad range of flexible retirement arrangements, both informal practices and formal workplace policies, which allow employees approaching normal retirement age to reduce the hours worked or work for their employers in a different capacity after retirement" (*HR Focus*, 2008b: 7). Phased retirement is often arranged on informal terms and is quite popular, particularly in organizations with a suite of flexible work arrangements (Hutchens & Grace-Martin, 2006; Lim & Feldman, 2003). Pre-retirement contracts can provide an attractive transition to retirement. Pre-retirement contracts might be a short term contract, such as a three year contract, that allows the employee to work part time and still contribute to their superannuation. A recent survey found that the majority of employees entered into a phased retirement program in order to gain and enjoy more leisure time; other reasons for phased retirement included shorter and more flexible working hours, reduced stress and improved job satisfaction (*HR Focus*, 2008a).

HRM practices are also important in influencing the decision of retirees to return to work. Research has indicated growth in re-entry and re-employment practices, attracting retirees back to the workforce (Shacklock, Fulop & Hort, 2007). A recent study by Armstrong-Stassen (2008) suggests that people in post-retirement who may re-enter the workforce are drawn to organizations that provide HRM practices tailored to the needs and desires of older workers. Retirement programs have a range of benefits for the organization, including enhancement of internal and external reputation, transfer of knowledge from retirees to their successors in the organization, and creation of a pool of people who may return to the workplace in future in case of staff shortages (Naegele & Walker, 2006).

In our study, we identified a range of ways in which employers approach their management of retirement. When asked 'what happens when an employee indicates an intention to retire?', responses varied from the *ad hoc* 'buy a present and have a party' to a co-ordinated strategy for retirement transition, including part-time work possibilities, provide financial planning advice, and health and well-being counselling. Rather than being piece-meal or reactive practices, retirement practices should be co-ordinated into a lifetime planning program, particularly for large employers with diverse workforces, as shown in Table 7. As this is a growth area for diversity management, we recognise that this is unlikely to be a conclusive list. We also recognise that the barriers that have been discussed with reference to flexible work arrangements, such as a negative mindset and lack of managerial support, may also apply to retirement programs.

Examples of these retirement management practices are shown in the following quotes:

We did have a range of information seminars at the beginning of the year around the changes to the superannuation .. providing some information sessions for people to work out their financial situation, to make the decision. It's probably about the only initiative that we've done around that. I think that one of the things we should be doing is making sure people have good information about what retirement means to allow them to make a good decision and what the options are. I don't know that we've done a lot around that (HR Manager, Education).

[We will create] another intranet site about retirement transition ... we want to provide a focussed portal for a time of transition which will hook into superannuation information, health and well being information so that what's existing is filtered for that particular audience (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

If we were talking about a long term employee that is genuinely retiring in terms of their intent is to not work again, we'll actually put them in contact with a financial advisor and we provide them

with support along that line. We look at where they're sitting in terms of superannuation and we get them advice in terms of how they're going to live going forward and we're quite good at that (HR Director, Hospitality).

It's now about providing almost a sort of coaching/consulting opportunity to do a financial check with people, to do a health check with people because it seems like people haven't actually worked out exactly how much they need to retire. ... So, I think employers need to be able to sit down with people and seriously help them work through what their expectations and needs are and to also educate them to the organizations needs and present the possibilities (Consultant).

Table 7: Retirement Management Practices

• CEO/Top management endorsement of flexible work arrangements and retirement practices
• Training and education for managers and supervisors to build understanding of and support for flexible work arrangements and retirement practices
• Workforce planning and analysis (e.g., an age audit)
• Succession planning
• <i>Lifetime / Transition/ Life phases program for employees, which may include the following:</i>
• Knowledge transfer and mentoring programs (to retain knowledge in the organization)
• Information seminars and workshops (on matters such as financial planning, superannuation, health and wellbeing; social changes in retirement)
• Information resources (e.g. packages available to employees, information available on the intranet or in a variety of formats for employees)
• Career breaks or sabbaticals to provide time to prepare for retirement
• Individual coaching and information about life transitions and retirement
• Assistance with the individual's search for a new position
• Opportunities for retirees to maintain contact with colleagues (e.g., alumni networks and retirees' associations)
• Pre-retirement /Phased retirement / Bridge retirement contracts
• Re-employment /re-entry
• Transition arrangements included in enterprise agreement
• Flexible work arrangements targeting older workers (see Table 6: Flexible Work Arrangements)
• Flexible transition arrangements (e.g., phased reduction of working hours leading to retirement; retirees continuing to work on temporary basis, retirees undertaking voluntary work in the community)
• Recognition of gender differences in life time planning program (e.g., targeted workshops on financial planning for women).

[We have a] lifetime planning program - aimed at people 45 plus ... it is only implemented at this stage in a small area but we would really like to have it available to everybody. Apparently it's quite confronting but it is fantastic at the same time but start asking those serious questions and get people thinking and just about "Okay so what does the future look like for me? Do I want to work part-time til I'm 65?" (HR Manager, Finance).

We talked to recent retirees from [Company X] ... they really wished they'd planned more

financially but they were also finding the social impacts far more significant than what they had thought about. People hadn't thought about the loss of those social connections and that work is often one of the major sources of self meaning. So in structuring these pilot programs I wanted to take a really holistic, humanistic approach to have people think about whole of life planning as part of retirement transition (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

We have a retiree's association.... That really highlights a sense of community (HR Director, State Govt Corporation).

Tacit knowledge is the issue for us. ... the social kind of stuff that we don't capture well so we're starting to do the mentoring. We've started, even simple things like the library has finally moved into podcasting and collecting information and we're starting to look at interviewing and collecting information about older employees, senior managers so that we can get a snapshot of them before they leave (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

In some industries, phased retirement is not currently an option. Some managers do not seek to retain people who have decided to retire:

It's their decision and I leave it up to them. There is no point in trying to offer them more money if they don't want to be there (General Manager, Federal Govt Agency).

I think too that when someone initiates their retirement they've obviously thought about it for a long time, they know exactly what they want to do and therefore it's a done deal (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

In contrast, others are developing and implementing strategies to negotiate, discuss, and seek to retain where possible. Many employers will seek to negotiate some transitional arrangements, or flexible work arrangements. Flexibility is an important factor for people transitioning into retirement.

They want flexibilities, they want access to good superannuation information and financial information almost as a package of three things (HR Manager, Communication & Distribution).

Well we have got processes in place where we interview them and see if we can change their minds. If not well then that resignation is processed (General Manager, Defence).

They don't have to retire completely one day. They are quite able to negotiate a working arrangement that allows them to stay partly into the workforce and then continue other interests. One of the factors for older people leaving is the financial security (HR Manager, Education).

We want to know if they will consider some short term work, some temporary work (HR Director,

State Govt Corporation).

Sometimes they like to work part time because they look after their grandchildren one or two days a week. We actually have a school holiday program here ... and we let people bring their grandchildren in as well as children (HR Director, State Govt Corporation).

Yet other employers have a sophisticated suite of strategies, tied in with flexibility and retention and comprehensive planning for employee wellbeing.

Often a lot of our people will do the overseas trip and in old organizations you used to have to resign to do that because of the old super stuff. But here, you just take a career break and then you come back three months later and you may come back in a part-time role and so you just continue on. Where we have had our really good success stories is people ... able to become grandparents so they could spend time minding grandchildren a day or two, still be in the workforce and it is a much better transition. We also introduced long service awards [recognising people for their service] (HR Manager, Finance).

If we were talking about a long term employee that is genuinely retiring in terms of their intent is to not work again, we'll put them in contact with a financial advisor and we provide them with support along that line. We look at where they're sitting in terms of superannuation and we get them advice in terms of how they're going to live going forward and we're quite good at that. ... I guess the thing is that we're also conscious of the fact that we don't force them to stay because they generally feel a sense of loyalty to the company when they've been here for a period of time. We'll sit down, we always do exit interviews and things like that as well so we identify if there is anything we can assist them in going forward and we have a keep in touch program as well for people that have left the company so we let them know what's happening in the company. They get our newsletters and if we've got employee functions and dinners, they get an invite to that (HR Director, Hospitality).

Well, first of we have the conversation about "do you want to retire now or do you want to retire in three months, or six months or twelve months?" Hopefully, because we have now embedded in our culture this acceptance of flexibility, we're not getting the "here's my letter, I'm retiring in two weeks" approach.... which is what we used to get. Now it's about people having the conversations much, much earlier and I think people themselves, individuals are realising as they get older they have so much to give and they're actually a valuable asset (Industry Association).

Hire them [retirees] as consultants. ... They come in and act as consultants, particularly senior positions. They come in and advise and maybe project manage things and do things like that. ... or maybe three days a week, or two days a week to look at different things that the company has in place. ... So they might set up a company structure and pay them, they might even pay them into their superannuation fund which is the logical thing to do today (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

Superannuation. Financial concerns are a major consideration, and often the paramount concern, of people entering the retirement phase (Patrickson & Ranzijn, 2004; Salter, 2003). Changes in superannuation legislation are a major topic of concern for employers and employees, reflecting substantial public debate and research (ABS, 2008b). The provision of workshops and financial counselling to educate and inform employees about superannuation was universally viewed as important amongst our interviewees.

For us as an organization, ... the biggest issue for us is the 54/11 super[annuation] issue in that ... 64 per cent of our current workforce is older than 40... [those in the 52 to 54 age group] potentially will get up and go at 54/11 if they're in the old super scheme and we've seen I guess over the last 18 months to two years, a large number of those people actually do that (General Manager, Federal Govt Agency).

The biggest problem is right now is the superannuation issues that make it less attractive for a person to come back into the workforce. So, I guess what we need to think about is how do we make it attractive for an aged worker to come back when there is enough money in superannuation elements of their retirement to live comfortably without having to come back (Recruitment Industry Service Provider).

Several interviewees highlighted the problems faced by retirees who have inadequate superannuation. This may be particularly a concern for women, as national statistics show that men are more likely to have made contributions to a superannuation scheme than women (ABS, 2008b). Of the 3.1 million people aged 45 years or over who were retired from the labour force, 1.6 million (52%) had made contributions to a superannuation scheme. More than two-thirds (67%) of retired men aged 45 years and over had contributed, compared to 41% of women. Further, of the 1.6 million retired people aged 45 years and over who have contributed to a superannuation scheme, men are more likely to have contributed for a longer period of time than women (ABS, 2008b).

I think generally most people say that Australians don't have enough super but I think a lot of people don't realise that until they get to the point of people trying to translate it into pensions and other things (HR Director, Finance).

Many women going into their 50's and 60's have woken up to the fact that their superannuation is not enough and therefore a longer work period is going to be necessary (HR Director, State Govt Corporation).

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this research identified a range of issues that have implications for public policy makers, organizational decision makers and individual workers. Interviewees reported on a range of strategies or practices to address skill shortages and attract and retain older workers. Based on the interviewee reports and the literature reviewed for this research, Table 8 summarises our key recommendations for diversity management to address the needs of an ageing workforce. Reflecting our focus on large employers in public and private sectors, the recommendations are mainly directed towards those in such organizations who take responsibility for diversity management and HRM. However, in order for these to be effective, the three elements of strategic HRM are essential:

- CEO/Top management endorsement;
- Line manager buy-in; and
- HRM competencies and configuration of HRM/diversity practices.

These elements enable a framework for managing the ageing workforce to be built. Organizations may choose one or more of the frameworks such as age management, talent management or diversity management. In this paper, we have favoured the use of a diversity management framework. Specific practices can be developed to build a comprehensive configuration of HRM/diversity practices, from workforce planning and analysis to lifetime transition management. We recognise that this is not a conclusive list; organizations may customise these and/or develop new practices.

Key Performance Indicators for Diversity Management

To support a framework for managing an ageing workplace, and based on our review of the relevant literature and our research with managers and experts across a range of industries, we have identified a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) for a diversity management approach that includes the needs of an ageing workforce. These are summarised in Table 9.

The KPIs:

- reflect a clear and unwavering focus on diversity management;
- stand the test of time—although they may be tailored to your organization and need to be reviewed annually—they should, with only minor modifications, provide a broad set of strategies for up to a 5-year period;
- are sufficiently broad to “speak” to the community. That is, they should be meaningful (not just a series of vague platitudes) and inclusive;
- are measurable; and
- are linked to strategic plans that will enable your goals to be fulfilled.

Table 8: Managing an Ageing Workforce - Recommendations

Focus	Strategy/Practice
Strategic HRM Foundation	Establish the basis for strategic HRM via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO/Top management endorsement • Line manager buy-in • HR competencies and configuration of HR practices
Framework for Managing the Ageing Workforce	HR practices to manage an ageing workforce should be built into a framework. Organizations may utilise one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age management • Talent management • Diversity management • Leadership development • Attraction and retention
Design, Implementation and Maintenance of HRM/ Diversity Practices	The configuration of practices should be customised for the best organizational fit. Each of the practices should be (a) linked to the overall strategy and (b) consistent with other practices.
Workforce Planning and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of external and internal labour market conditions • Analysis of public policy and legislation • Age audit • Succession planning • HR metrics and evaluation of diversity management practices • Engagement with internal and external stakeholders
Employer Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee value proposition • Labour market segmentation • Communication about practices to employees and the general community (internal and external stakeholders) • Communication suitable for people with a wide variety of backgrounds
Recruitment and Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment to attract diverse pool of candidates • Prevention of discrimination • Awareness of needs of older job candidates • Technology and print based advertising
Job Analysis and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of and adaptation to suit needs of diverse workforce • Links to flexible work arrangements (see below) • Inclusive work environment
Occupational Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of and adaptation to suit needs of diverse workforce • Prevention of and compensation for occupational illness and injury • Health promotion
Training and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of and adaptation to suit needs of diverse workforce • Training and education of all managers and supervisors with regard to the needs of an ageing workforce • Training and education of all employees with regard to the needs of an ageing workforce • Coaching and mentoring
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of and adaptation to suit needs of diverse workforce • Performance Feedback based on objective outcomes, not values and stereotypes
Rewards, Remuneration and Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of and adaptation to suit needs of diverse workforce • Non-financial rewards • Meaning of work
Flexible Work Arrangements	See Table 6
Lifetime Transition Programs	See Table 7

Managers may develop a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to provide a strategic focus and broad-brush performance measures for diversity management. Our framework may be adapted or customised by any organization. For example, a fifth column could be added to specify targets for diversity management.

Table 9: Managing the Ageing Workforce: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Category	Key Result Areas	Key Performance Indicators	Examples of Measures
WORKFORCE PLANNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and understanding of policy and industry context • Compliance with legislative context • Labour market segmentation • Analysis and understanding of current workforce characteristics • Analysis and understanding of future workforce needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of external environment • Public policy context • Factors specific to your industry context • Analysis of internal environment • Public policy context • Factors specific to your industry context • Identification of drivers for diversity management • Identification of barriers for diversity management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT analysis (External and internal environment analysis) • Conduct of an age audit • Analysis of current workforce knowledge, skills and abilities • Analysis of current HR and diversity management policies • Gap analysis (where are we now, where do we want to be in 5 years?) • Scenario planning • Succession planning • Employee surveys, focus groups
STRATEGIC INTEGRATION/ ALIGNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic alignment of diversity practices • Leadership support for diversity management • Organizational culture for diversity and inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of senior HR in strategic decision-making • CEO and top management team endorsement of diversity strategy Evidence work-life initiatives are aligned to the business strategy • Establishment of objectives for diversity management • Line manager support for diversity management • Employee involvement in identifying diversity practices • Employee uptake of diversity practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget and resources allocation for diversity management • Review of current policies and practices for diversity management • Stakeholder analysis (internal and external stakeholders) • Examples of active leadership support

Managing a Diverse Workforce

Category	Key Result Areas	Key Performance Indicators	Examples of Measures
HRM/DIVERSITY PRACTICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with relevant legislation • Design and implementation of a diversity management strategy • Achievement of targets for diversity management • Global policy development, local implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity practices have been developed & tailored to meet the needs of the organization and employees • A diversity action policy, plan and practices are in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of diversity practices (also see Table 6 – Recommendations): • workforce planning • age audit • succession planning • role modelling by executives and managers • diversity and inclusion training programs for all levels • diversity in recruitment • removal of discrimination and stereotypes • training to meet diverse workforce needs • flexible performance management • flexible rewards (monetary and non-monetary) • flexible work arrangements (see Table 6) • lifetime transition programs (see Table 7)
CEO/EXECUTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement of diversity management strategy • Employer branding • Focus on long term targets, not only short term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executives are active role models for diversity management • Budget and resourcing for diversity practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executives utilise flexible work arrangements • Executives participate in education and training for diversity management • Executives communicate to all employees to endorse diversity management • Executives communicate effectively with employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. • Executives coach and develop employees of different ages, educational backgrounds, ethnicity, physical ability and race. • Executives provide performance feedback based on objective outcomes rather than on values and stereotypes that prejudge an individual's abilities and talents • Executives create a work environment that is inclusive of employees of all backgrounds

Managing a Diverse Workforce

Category	Key Result Areas	Key Performance Indicators	Examples of Measures
HRM/DIVERSITY (HR/D) SPECIALIST ACCOUNTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer branding • Effective communication of diversity practices • Identification of accountabilities for executives, managers, HR, and employees for diversity practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All managers and employee have knowledge of, uptake of, and satisfaction with diversity practices • Adequate budget and resource allocation to diversity practices • HR/D credibility and influence with senior executives • HR/D credibility and influence with other managers • HR/D credibility and influence with employees • Communication of diversity practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive & managers interviews/survey/focus groups to assess their knowledge of, uptake of, and satisfaction with diversity practices • Employee survey/focus groups to assess their knowledge of, uptake of, and satisfaction with diversity practices • Accountability tools or system • HR/D utilise flexible work arrangements • HR/D provide education and training for diversity management to all levels of the organization • HR/D support and facilitate uptake of diversity practices across the organization • HR/D communicate effectively with employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. • HR/D coach and develop employees of different ages, educational backgrounds, ethnicity, physical ability and race. • HR/D create a work environment that is inclusive of employees of all backgrounds

Managing a Diverse Workforce

Category	Key Result Areas	Key Performance Indicators	Examples of Measures
MANAGER ACCOUNTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement of diversity management strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers are active role models for diversity management • Managers 'buy-in' to diversity management policy and practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers utilise flexible work arrangements • Managers participate in education and training for diversity management • Managers support and facilitate employee uptake of diversity practices • Managers communicate effectively with employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. • Managers coach and develop employees of different ages, educational backgrounds, ethnicity, physical ability and race. • Managers provide performance feedback based on objective outcomes rather than on values and stereotypes that prejudge an individual's abilities and talents • Managers create a work environment that is inclusive of employees of all backgrounds
VALUE AND IMPACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated value for the organization, for employees and stakeholders • Impact on reputation, employer brand, attraction and retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity practices are individually measured • Impact of diversity practices is measured • Diversity practices are reviewed and revised as appropriate • Barriers/obstacles to diversity and inclusion are removed • Demonstrated organizational culture for diversity and inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee surveys (e.g., satisfaction, organizational commitment, engagement, intent to leave) • Attraction and retention statistics (recruitment, employee turnover) • Exit interviews, surveys • Measurement/audit of diversity management practices (cost/benefit, efficiency, effectiveness, satisfaction) • Analysis of management reporting • Organizational culture analysis/audit

CONCLUSION

We propose that a viable approach to managing the ageing workforce and the broader issue of workforce diversity would be to view these as a central aspect of HRM strategy. As shown in Table 9, a strategic approach to managing the ageing workforce identifies accountabilities, key result areas, KPIs, and has specific measures.

Although many Australian corporations have been leaders in developing diversity programs, there is much progress yet to be made. We suggest that the roles and responsibilities adopted by all managers (executives, line managers and HR managers) will be important influences on the way in which HRM and diversity management policy and practices are developed and implemented (Novicevic & Harvey, 2001; Sheehan, et. al, 2007). A major implication is that HR professionals may have to proactively assist the organization's leaders to understand and adjust their mindset, so that diversity management becomes a source of competitive advantage.

With regard to outcomes of diversity management, first, diversity practices can provide an incentive to increase motivation, job satisfaction and commitment and thus achieve higher levels of engagement and productivity from the current labour pool. Second, these practices can be part of strategy that supports attracting, managing and retaining talent. Third, an effective diversity strategy can enable the best quality people to advance in the organization. Finally, companies can obtain community recognition and reputation by being seen as a 'good' corporate citizen or caring organization. As Childs (2005: 113) has stated, 'Leaders must help all people with their business understand that workforce diversity can be the bridge between the workplace and the marketplace'. In addition to positive outcomes for employees, diversity management can enhance the employer brand that will lead to other associated benefits including a broader and better quality labour pool available, improved employee retention and reduced turnover (Barrow & Moseley, 2006). Overall, the complexities and ongoing developments related to diversity management present many important challenges and opportunities for managing an ageing workforce.

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For more information

Please contact us at:

Australian Centre in Research in Employment and Work (ACREW)

Department of Management

Monash University

Level 7, Buliding N

PO Box 197

Caulfield East VIC 3145

Australia

Facsimile: +613 9903 2718

Email: acrew@buseco.monash.edu.au

Or visit the ACREW website at:

<http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/mgt/research/acrew/>