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## Welcome:

Welcome to this month's edition of IEA's registrant e-zine "Information Overload".

For those of you who received last month's newsletter you will have noticed that issue 24 marked the end of our second year of publication. During that time we have covered a wide variety of subjects and we hope that you enjoyed reading them. This month we start the new year of publication with a subject that can encompass everything and everyone; I am of course, talking about discrimination. Have you ever been told that you are too old, too young, have too much experience or not enough, Have you been told you are too short (at one point if you wanted to be a policewoman in the UK you had to be over 5'4" tall), too tall, too fat, too skinny, do you have the wrong hair colour, gender, race, religion or sexual proclivities? Discrimination, the list is as long as a person's own bias.

Living and working in Australia we are fortunate not to have to suffer the religious persecution that has pitted neighbour against neighbour for decades in many countries across the world, but we can and do discriminate against certain segments of our community on a daily basis. If you don't believe me then you will have to read on.

But before we get into the discussion about discrimination, I would like to say thank you to Joanna. Joanna is the only person who took the time to respond to last month's plea for feedback. So I am going to have to assume that you like the present format and the subjects that we have covered to date, and intend to cover in future issues.

We hope you enjoy reading  
Lorraine Bradshaw  
Marketing & Training Coordinator

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### In this Issue we will be looking at:

- Discrimination: What is it? And how do we get rid of it in today's society?
- New anti-discrimination laws will ban the use of phrases such as "experienced", "graduate" or "mature";
- Job Applications;
- Interviews: First impressions count.
- A Thought to ponder.

### Discrimination: What is it? And how do we get rid of it in today's society?

Ageism, Sexism, Racism, Sizeism, Dress, Glass ceilings, Religion, Skin Colour, Accents, Workers compensation claims, convictions. Sexual preferences, illness and disability are all forms of discrimination that occur in our society on a daily basis. For those people who

are looking for work, all or some of the above can prevent you from getting the job that you want. For those of you who are currently enjoying the benefits of having paid employment, discrimination can take many other forms and can be described as "Unfair treatment of a person, racial group, minority etc.," and is any action that is based on prejudice. This can include actions such as harassment and bullying. Then there are the extremes of discrimination ranging from those people who bear the brunt of the endless rounds of "jokes" that permeate through workplaces, organisations and groups in general. Who hasn't heard (or told) a "blonde" joke for instance?

Recent news stories across Western Australian have high lighted the fact that some words have become very much part of our

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society. As a pom I find it interesting that the debate over such terms has reached parliament and is being debated as part of the anti-racist legislation being tabled. Do I mind being called a pom, and sometimes a whingeing one at that? Well it depends on the context. But is the term discriminatory? Only if it precludes me from doing what I want.

### **New anti-discrimination laws will ban the use of phrases such as “experienced”, “graduate” or “mature”.**

In an article in The Guardian (a UK Based newspaper) on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September, it has been reported that new anti-discrimination laws will ban the use of phrases such as “experienced”, “graduate” or “mature” in a bid to prevent discrimination against people who are deemed to be too “young” or who may lack experience. The new laws, which are to be introduced in the UK in October 2006, will seek to redress any current imbalances felt by people in their quest to find work.

A survey conducted by law firm Eversheds has found that:

Whilst 48% of employees over 45 felt people of their age were being sidelined in the working environment, 58% of those aged between 16 and 24 felt they had been unfairly treated because of their age or lack of experience.

To read the full article, “Age discrimination widely felt at work ... by the young” go to: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/story/0,3604,1308157,00.html>

In America it is not yet illegal to discriminate against someone for being “too young.” In fact, the anti age discrimination laws do not protect anyone under 40. The purpose of these laws, and the way they are written, are to protect workers from discrimination on the basis of being “too old.”

<http://www.discriminationattorney.com/article-age.shtml>

Is age discrimination (and other forms) a concern for job seekers in Australia?

The answer is unfortunately – YES.

### **Job Applications**

In today's competitive job market, it has become necessary to remove as much

“personal” information from a job application as possible. The reason is a simple one. People do not want to be discriminated against. For example, most people have removed information such as Date of Birth, Marital Status, Number of Children, Religion, and even removed some if not all-personal interests, especially if they have no bearing on the job that they are applying for, reasoning that is easy for a prospective employer to make decisions and judgements based on a pre-determined set of unwritten rules and guidelines. Whilst no prospective employer will willingly admit that they discriminate against a certain segment or segments of the job market, in reality they do. It is unlikely that a pregnant woman would get a job as a labourer or a truck driver, whilst the woman may be perfectly capable of doing both jobs of work, being pregnant immediately precludes her from obtaining the job. If asked, the employer may cite “Duty of Care” and “Occupational Health and Safety” behind their decision, but in reality the pregnant woman has been discriminated against.

Is this an extreme case? Is a pregnant woman likely to go for a job as a labourer or a truck driver? The answer depends on the woman of course, but is likely to be “probably not.”

It must also be noted that a lot of personal information can be gleaned from other sources, including personal knowledge of candidates (Perth is a very small place and the library and records management communities a tiny proportion of that) as well as from the rest of your application, including – length of service, place(s) of work, languages spoken and so on, however, an employer will have to read your application in some detail in order to determine both it, and its significance. At the end of the day, your CV/Resume has but one purpose – and that is to get you to the interview stage of the process. How you present yourself and your skills is then up to you.

### **Interviews: First Impressions Count**

We've all heard the premise that first impressions count, and that people really do make up their minds within the first few seconds (let alone minutes) of meeting you. But how true is it?

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Well, unfortunately, people do make assumptions about others based on what they see and observe.

Be honest, we've all done it, haven't we? The question is - How accurate were your observations?

If I were honest I would have to say that sometimes I was spot on, and other times I was completely and hopelessly off the mark, but the fact that we can and do, make assumptions based on nothing more than a few spoken words, gestures and the physical appearance of another person is part and parcel of being human. In fact, people often remark that they wouldn't be human if they didn't do it.

Is this discrimination? – Well yes and no. It becomes discriminatory if a prospective employer judges a person less favourably than someone who has “conformed” to the stereotypical “image” of what was expected. Ask yourself the question, would you recruit someone who “looks the part” but doesn't have the skills required to do the job, rather than the person who may not “look the part” but has the necessary skills and qualifications.

Of course all prospective employers will say that they would recruit the best person for the job regardless of what they looked like. But in reality, other factors will be taken into consideration.

So what can you do?

Always present yourself in a professional manner. This includes any documentation that you send to a prospective employer. Ask yourself the question – what would I think if I was the person who needed to employ someone – would this application impress me enough to ask them to come in for an interview?

Always dress to impress, and dress in an appropriate manner for the position that you are going for.

Always conduct yourself in a professional and courteous manner, and be prepared to accept that sometimes you will be successful and other times you will not.

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## A Thought to Ponder:

“Now, I say to you today my friends, even though we face difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream, I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: - We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968), Speech at Civil Rights March on Washington, August 28, 1963.

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