Royal Commission into
Victoria's Mental Health System

JOINT WITNESS STATEMENT OF
LISA ANNESE AND DAVID MORRISON AO

I, Lisa Annese, Chief Executive Officer of the Diversity Council Australia, of Level 3 & 4, 31 Alfred St, Sydney NSW 2000, make this statement together with my colleague, David Morrison AO.

I David Morrison AO, Chair, Board of the Diversity Council Australia, of Level 3 & 4, 31 Alfred St, Sydney NSW 2000 make this statement together with my colleague, Lisa Annese.

We say as follows:

1   We make this statement on the basis of our own knowledge, save where otherwise stated. Where we make statements based on information provided by others, we believe such information to be true.

2   We make this statement in our professional capacities on behalf of the Diversity Council Australia, and not on behalf of any other organisations.

Background

Lisa Annese

3   I have worked at the Diversity Council Australia (**DCA**) since 2009 and I have been Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**) since 2014. Prior to being appointed as the CEO, I also worked in the DCA as the Programs & Member Services Director.

4   I am also a Board Director at Amnesty International Australia.

5   Prior to working at the DCA, I worked at the (then) Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency. While in that role, I developed the census of 'Australian Women in Leadership', the 'Business Achievement Awards' and the 'Employer of Choice for Women' citation. I was also involved in the development and implementation of the policy framework for the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act with Australian Businesses.

6   I have a business degree from the University of Technology Sydney and a Graduate Diploma in Human Resources from Charles Sturt University.

Please note that the information presented in this witness statement responds to matters requested by the Royal Commission.

David Morrison

7   I have been Chair of the DCA since September 2015. I am also currently a gender diversity advisor to Deloitte Partners.

8   Prior to my role at the DCA, I served as an officer in the Australian Army for 36 years. I held a range of leadership and management positions during my military career, including as Chief of Army from 2011 to 2015. During my tenure as Chief of Army, I took a public stance on changing military culture to increase gender and cultural diversity in the Army.

9   I have been a member of Male Champions of Change since 2013. Male Champions of Change is a group of male leaders advocating for and acting to advance gender equality.

Diversity Council Australia (DCA)

10   The DCA is the independent, not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The DCA provides unique research, inspiring events and programs, curated resources and expert advice across all diversity dimensions to a community of over 600 member organisations. The DCA is not government funded and generates income from membership fees, sponsorships and services to business and employers.

11   The DCA, formerly the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Ltd, was established in 1985 as a joint initiative of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia. The Council was initially formed to demonstrate the business community's commitment to equal opportunity for women, but has since expanded its focus to cover all aspects of diversity in employment, including mental health.

12   The DCA's focus covers all aspects of diversity in employment. Our mission is to:

   (a)   Lead debate on diversity in the public arena;

   (b)   Develop and promote the latest diversity research, thinking and practice; and

   (c)   Deliver innovative diversity practice resources and services to enable our members to drive business improvement.

13   Our membership reaches approximately 15% of the Australian labour market and is a group drawn from business, workplace and diversity leaders. The DCA has a variety of members, drawn across the corporate, government and not-for-profit sectors, varying from small to large workforces in size.[1] We have over 600 member organisations,

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[1] See Diversity Council Australia, 'Current DCA Members' <https://www.dca.org.au/membership/current-dca-members> (accessed 9 July 2020).

including almost 40 ASX100 Listed companies. Our founding members include ANZ, AMP, BHP, Boral, Coles, IBM Australia, Myer, Orica, Rio Tinto and Westpac.

Employment supports for people with poor mental health

The importance of supporting people with mental illness to obtain employment

Lisa

14   The reason it is important that people with a mental illness continue to stay employed and remain productive in the workplace is because they have the same rights that anyone else does to make a contribution to the Australian labour market.

15   Productive work is vital for individuals. It supports people to be financially independent and thereby gives them a better quality of life. But productive work also has a positive effect on individuals more broadly, for example on their sense of belonging or their sense of achievement.

16   It is therefore fundamental that people are not discriminated against on the basis of having a mental illness.

David

17   Certain conditions do not preclude, and can indeed support, roles within particular workforces. There are opportunities for people with particular mental states to make valuable contributions, not just to an employer and an organisation, but also to themselves, in terms of their own feeling of wellbeing and inclusion and financial stability.

18   However, it should be noted that mental health is a spectrum and a huge area. We have to be very careful not to define responses to problems that are too holistic because that does not work in an area as complex as this.

Benefits to the employer by supporting people with a mental illness to obtain and maintain employment

Lisa

19   Instead of asking *"why should an employer hire or work with someone who has a mental health condition?"*, we should reframe the question as *"why wouldn't you just hire individuals with all of their diverse presentations, understanding that everyone peaks and troughs throughout the course of their life?"*

20   If employers made the conscious decision to exclude everyone who had experienced mental health issues in their life, most employers would have a very narrow pool of people

to recruit from. This is because mental illness encapsulates a spectrum, from conditions such as low-level anxiety and depression to serious complex manifestations of psychotic illnesses and everything in-between.

21   Further, people can move in and out of being mentally healthy. Just because an employer hires someone who does not have a mental health condition at the time, it does not mean that they will not have one in five years. If during the course of those five years, they have contributed an enormous amount to an organisation, but then the employer makes the decision that they are no longer worthy due to their mental illness, on what basis is that decision made? There is no evidence to suggest that simply having a mental illness makes you any less capable of contributing in a workplace, except in particular circumstances - for example, you would not want someone in a public speaking role if they have a phobia of public speaking. However, unless a person's illness is directly exacerbated by the type of work they do, there is no reason why that should impact hiring.

22   Workplaces instead need to create a work environment that enables people to live their 'true lives'. By this, I mean the freedom to develop their full potential in the workplace without being unfairly held back on the grounds that they have or have had a mental health condition.

23   The work environment should not cause or exacerbate mental health conditions and should be supportive. That way, if a person is experiencing a mental health issue but stays connected to a workplace, it will be good for both the individual and the organisation once the individual reaches the end of that episode or situation.

Barriers faced by employers when employing people with mental illness or those who have caring responsibilities for people with mental illness

Lisa

24   The biggest barrier faced when employing people with a mental illness is disclosure. The barrier of disclosure can be mammoth and monumental. Many people do not feel comfortable disclosing their situation. In some situations they may be right not to disclose, because employers are human beings with a myriad of unconscious biases and preconceived ideas of what a leader, lawyer, doctor or teacher is that they are unlikely to be able to rationally work through.

25   Non-disclosure can also be problematic for employers. This is because they are then unable to respond to an individual's particular needs and make the workplace inclusive of the person who has disclosed their mental health condition, which in turn can create an inclusive workplace for all employees

26   When people do disclose they have a mental illness, there can be serious consequences. They can be "time-capsuled" by their employer and colleagues as though their mental illness defines them and their state of their mind at the time they disclose is something that will dictate their ability forever. Which is not true.

27   When deciding whether to disclose, individuals will take their cues from many things. They will look at what the leadership of the organisation says and what the infrastructure is like in the organisation. They will also look to the culture of the organisation. Culture is an invisible thing that happens based on the interactions that every individual has with everybody else every day, which can vary from team to team.

28   When an individual does disclose a mental health issue, the response really does depend on the individual they disclose to, and that individual's ability to understand that the mental illness does not have to be something that excludes someone from a workplace opportunity. That knowledge and ability to understand is not innate. There are some people who naturally do it well, but most people do not. We find in the work that we do at the DCA that individuals have to learn how to be an inclusive employer, manager or leader. Most people have to learn the requisite skills because we are actually not programmed to be comfortable with difference, we are programmed to be comfortable with things that are very similar to us.

29   Outright discrimination can also be a barrier to the employment of people with mental illness. However, there are also other more invisible ways in which we organise work that can act as barriers. The way that work is structured and organised, and the ability of employers to understand difference, can be both enablers or barriers depending on the workplace.

30   One example which has come into focus during the pandemic is workplace flexibility. Where there is a lack of workplace flexibility, it can be a barrier to employing people with a mental illness. Greater workplace flexibility, conversely, can be an enabler to employing people with mental illness. If, for example, you are struggling with a particular condition and you have had a medication change and that medication change makes you really lethargic in the mornings, you may need longer to become alert. Workplace flexibility enables you to work at times where you are really productive, rather than having to adjust to the not very rational idea that we must work from this time to this time in this place. If due to your physiology, you do not feel productive during those hours, or you are not at your peak, then this structure can create a wheel of disadvantage that prevents you from fully contributing to the workplace and can also mean that you are judged within the workplace.

Inclusiveness of workplaces

31   The level of knowledge and understanding of mental illness varies across workplaces. The level of knowledge and understanding can affect the barriers or enablers to employing people with mental illness. There are some workplaces that really focus on trying to improve the inclusive capabilities of their supervisors, managers and leaders. Those workplaces perform well on the DCA's Inclusion@Work Index.[2]

32   The DCA creates the Inclusion@Work Index every two years. There are some workplaces with very high levels of inclusion as they have taken an active approach to help people build that capability.

33   Whether an organisation is inclusive can be measured objectively. An inclusive workplace has four qualities:

(a)   the workplace is respectful - it does not have discrimination or harassment, or it at least deals with discrimination and harassment constructively;

(b)   employees have human connection;

(c)   employees feel that they can add value or contribute; and

(d)   employees can advance or progress.

34   All four things need to be in place for us to be able to rank and understand that a workplace is an inclusive workplace. There can also be degrees of inclusion within a workplace. For example, an individual in a leading practice organisation may say: "*That's not my experience of that workplace. It's getting all these accolades for being amazing but actually I'm working in a really hostile team.*"

Supports needed by employers in in order to employ people with mental illness and to support them to remain productive in the workplace

Lisa

35   One of the most important supports for employers to employ people with mental illness is education. Education helps people to understand what good mental health and poor mental health looks like and how it manifests. This knowledge will then improve an employer's capabilities.

36   A lot of people, when they think of mental health conditions, will think about clinical depression. They might think about other 'high profile' incidents of mental health, such as

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[2] See Diversity Council Australia, 'DCA-Suncorp Inclusion@Work Index: Mapping the State of Inclusion in the Australian Workforce' <https://www.dca.org.au/inclusion-at-work-index> (accessed 29 June 2020).

post-traumatic stress disorder or anxiety disorders. In reality, a lot of people who have complex mental health presentations have aspects of many different conditions and go through periods of being very well and periods of not being very well. I think that we need to improve our sophistication of mental health knowledge, because otherwise an employer may just think "*oh, my employee had depression and now they don't have it*" without an understanding of how the illness manifests.

David

37   My own experience is that leaders have a vital role to play in defining the culture of organisations. A leader's focus and actions affect how culture is built and supported in an organisation.

38   However, when people have a fear of disclosure, and concerns that stigma will be attached to them if they offer their true self at work, a lot of the pressure is actually at a peer level. That is why education and training is so vital, and needs to be cascaded throughout all organisations, because it is in a small team level that human interaction is at its most vital and where people's concerns are probably the deepest.

39   It can be enormously powerful when leaders offer a candid and open view of how they are feeling and how they have experienced issues within their life. Leaders can have a reticence to do so because it is still innate in Australian culture that we are care-free and 'ANZAC-like'. The more we see people who have the courage to say "*well, look I'm not travelling well*" and actually make it clear to their workforce or colleagues, the more it will change culture.

40   There are some notable cases in the public domain, for example, high profile sports men and women who have had extraordinary courage to say that they are not in the right frame of mind, which then has a very powerful impact on us all. For example, when a young cricketer said I'm not ready for National selection because I need to focus on my mental wellbeing, that was huge statement to make to hundreds of thousands of other Australians. Even though most Australians probably do not even follow cricket, it is such a powerful message for an organisation like Cricket Australia, to pause and say: "*We applaud [you] for having the courage to discuss [your] situation ... [your decision] was the right one in the circumstances and one that everyone in the Australian cricket family*

supports".[3] It is significant that Cricket Australia responded to this disclosure by investing in the mental health and wellbeing of its players.[4]

41   Whilst culture is slow to change, I do think there is reason to be optimistic. When we look across contemporary Australia, there is a lessening of the degree of stigma that is attached to saying, "*my world is not right and it is coming from within me, and I don't understand it all but I want to be included and supported*". The workforces of the late '70s would have had little or no tolerance for that, but we have come some way in reducing stigma and supporting people with mental illness.

42   There is clearly, however, a long way to go. I think it does go to the heart of a leader instilling a culture of inclusion at all levels, and that takes an enormous amount of continuing focus. It is a difficult process, and it only comes about through having leaders in all walks of life continually coming back to these issues and absolutely affirming the culture of their workforce and that their workplace is the right one to be inclusive. It is easy to talk about, but much harder to achieve in practice.

43   I use an expression relatively frequently when I am talking to organisations that are trying to deal with any major issue. I often say, "*where are you celebrating your small victories?*" The fact that someone is included in a workforce and a workplace and is helped, assisted or supported to see themselves through a troubled time in their lives might be a small victory for the organisation, but it is a massive life changing victory for that individual. The small victories are achieved when the organisation is pausing to say: this employee was not in a good spot, but now they are in a better spot and contributing to the organisation. That is because we did not stigmatise them, we had training in place and the organisation and their colleagues supported them.

44   Many organisations - particularly at the moment with all the pressure they are under due to COVID-19 - find it almost impossible to celebrate small victories, because they are hit with small problems every hour of every day. In my experience, the way you move culture forward is when you stop and celebrate those small victories and say: look what has been achieved by this individual or this small team, in the face of some resistance, or in the face of some innate culture that previously did not recognise them.

Ways that employers across Victoria can support employees with mental illness

Lisa

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[3] Cricket Australia, 'Pucovski steps out of Test selection race' <https://www.cricket.com.au/news/will-pucovski-non-test-selection-mental-wellbeing-australia-pakistan-first-test-gabba/2019-11-14> (accessed 9 July 2020).
[4]   See Cricket Australia, 'Cricket's 'Gameplan' to tackle mental health' https://www.cricket.com.au/news/feature/mental-health-pucovski-tait-silk-maxwell-maddinson-henriques-bolton-feature-cricket-australia-aca/2019-11-19 (accessed 9 July 2020).

45   The way that employers across Victoria and Australia can support employees with mental illness is by treating people like human beings. At a minimum, employers should provide flexibility and a psychologically safe environment. Employers might have to work on improving the culture within the team or the organisation, or may need to call out disrespectful or bad behaviour.

46   Organisations can simplify processes for individuals, bearing in mind that there is a difference between someone who has a mental health condition that has been created or made worse by a workplace and someone who has a mental health issue that has nothing to do with the workplace.

47   Organisations can support individuals by having simple processes for individuals to raise and resolve issues without it becoming a complex legal issue that people do not want to be part of. Increasing red tape never helps to resolve issues. As a community, we are better off focussing on education, empathy and helping people build good relationships with other people at work.

48   Technology can also help to facilitate engagement in the workplace. It enables the workplace to be more portable and to happen at different times. It enables people to be connected in different ways, which can be really useful for people with anxiety disorders. Technology also helps people to choose where, when and how they work. Having flexibility means that you can create a workforce that enables people to work in a way that allows them to bring the best version of themselves to work.

49   However, technology never replaces good human practices. All the brilliant technology in the world will never replace the fact that you have a bully for a manager. If you have a bully for a manager, you are still going to feel stressed and anxious about that, even when working from home.

50   Leaders need to be trained to develop emotional intelligence capabilities, in particular the ability to provide psychological safety. Leaders who provide psychological safety are trustworthy, supportive and honest about the nature of the change and of the future plans of the organisation. They create an environment where staff feel comfortable to express dissenting views, make mistakes, and engage in learning in relation to the changes being implemented.

51   Job design is also a critical element of mentally healthy workplaces, and good job design is essential to ensuring that flexible work can be come mainstreamed in organisations. Job design means designing an individual's job to enable flexibility. This involves restructuring the elements of a particular job (including the tasks, duties, responsibilities, location and timing) to improve the performance and wellbeing of the organisation, the team, and individuals.

The role of governments in supporting employers to attract, recruit and support the employment of people with mental illness

Lisa

52   The role for governments is in providing a framework for a safe workplace. A safe workplace is often seen through the lens of physical safety - the Fair Work Commission has done a lot of work in that space. However, a safe workplace also means a psychologically safe workplace. There is a role for governments to ensure that organisations achieve minimum standards for psychological safety, which may mean working on eradicating things like harassment, bullying and any generally psychologically unsafe work environments.

53   Governments can also support employers by making it easier for organisations for organisations to work in a flexible way. They can also support employers by helping and supporting people who don't feel like they are in a safe workplace and by providing avenues for people to resolve issues they are having without too much distress.

54   The Federal Government could also play a national education role. The Government could use their huge platform to engage with the general public: from public health campaigning, to curating the provision of government services, to funding the appropriate education and health bodies.

55   Taking a health approach to mental illness may also be constructive. As a broader society, we should look at some of the root causes or why we are living in such a culture where there is so much anxiety and depression. We should also consider the role of things like alcohol that might exacerbate or trigger particular conditions.

56   However, whenever there is the prospect of getting involved with an authorised organisation which is funded by the government, you already have people who are mentally vulnerable not wanting to be part of that because it might be overwhelming or feel as though it's an insurmountable thing. This may be because they do not have the mental energy to expend on such a thing, or perhaps because they are tired of being called upon to be the 'example, or they do not want to have their mental health experience the target of focus.

Strategies employers can put in place to recruit people with mental illness

Lisa

57   Any sort of good recruitment practice that does not exclude or disadvantage particular people will be based on a true merit based process of recruiting. That means having good processes for going to market and ensuring that recruiting processes allow people who

may be vulnerable to participate. Organisations will need to work to adjust and adapt their processes for recruitment and bringing in talent to ensure they are setting people up for success.

58   For example, if you have hired someone who has disclosed in the interview process that they are socially phobic, you should not throw them into a working situation where they need to show up for drinks on a Friday night to be part of a team. It is setting them up to fail, because you are not adjusting how you value their contribution.

59   I think that organisations - in any area of diversity and inclusion - need to have appropriate processes for what it is that they are trying to achieve. As much as possible, organisations need to remove bias and other barriers to participation and success and then try to set individuals up for success in a way that's relevant to the actual work.

60   As an employer, you always have to focus on the fundamental inherent requirements for job; everything else is secondary. If you are focussing on the inherent requirements of the job, and you are recruiting someone to be a computer programmer for example, then how they interact with others in a social context is irrelevant and should not matter. We need to build capability in employers so they can understand the difference between things that are relevant or not relevant and then how to create work structures that enable people work in a way that helps them be the best version of themselves.

The role for positive affirmation

David

61   Positive affirmation is very important, as we all find it easier to become something that we can see. We use positive affirmation for gender equality, and I think it applies equally for mental health. If you are going to try and change the tone of an organisation or the culture of the organisation, one of the most powerful things that you can do as a leader is to find examples of where the changes to that culture are beneficial not just to the organisation but to the individuals within it.

62   You cannot just wish a better working place, you have to have plans for it. Once again, it is the role of the leader to have a strategy, plans and education; to have an active focus on building inclusive workplaces. This is most effectively done through finding people who have met these challenges and overcome them and been seen as successes in that respect. I think it first speaks volumes for the individual, then it speaks volumes for their colleagues, then it speaks volumes for the organisation itself.

Lisa

63   Sometimes to correct historical exclusion, you need to have positive affirmation. There should be space made in the economy for people who have not been able to participate because of the way things were always done having excluded them or not set them up for the best opportunity. This includes making space for people with mental illness or people who are carers for people with mental illness.

Mentally healthy workplaces

Effectiveness of Victorian workplaces in promoting good mental health

Lisa

64   In my view, organisations are starting to take the issue of mental health increasingly seriously. At the DCA, we recently ran an event with Beyond Blue on how to create a mentally healthy workplace. We had over 1000 registrations – that is the biggest number of registrations we have ever had at a DCA event. We always get the largest number of registrations for mental health events.

65   You could interpret that negatively, as meaning that we have such a long way to go, that individuals and employers are looking for any inspiration. However, you could also interpret it positively as it shows the level of engagement that employers currently have. I have to preface this by saying that organisations or the members of DCA are more likely to already be committed to having inclusive workplace. That enthusiasm is probably not played out uniformly in the economy. However, I do think that more and more people are taking the issue of a mentally health workplace seriously, even if only in an abstract way, and they still struggle with how to deal with it in an organisational setting. I think this is because most people have been touched by mental illness in their life in some way, whether it is themselves personally or people that they know and love, their children or their partners.

66   Importantly, mental health touches every type of person in Australia. This is not a gender, race or culture issue. It is not about millennials versus baby boomers. It is not about the LGBTIQ+ community, although there may unique mental health challenges for particular communities who have experienced a history of oppression or exclusion. I think that people see the movement to create mentally healthy workplaces as a humanly good thing that is good for the whole of society.

67   In a lot of other diversity and inclusion conversations, you will often hear it being spoken of in the context of: there is a winning team, such as women at the expense of men (even though of course, this is not true). In this instance, I think we can capitalise on the goodwill of most individuals who see this as a humanly good thing for everyone to do. It is a

unifying force which means you have a more receptive audience than with lots of other diversity and inclusion issues. We should be able to achieve more change because of that captive audience.

68   There is, however, a lack of data as to what workplaces look like in Australia. We are lucky enough in Australia to have an agency called the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, who produce some census data on gender which is unheard of across the world. However, for other data, we are dependent on the particular workforce. The public sector collects some data, but I do not know how much they collect or how much people disclose.

69   Even when people do capture data on mental health, such as in a company's Annual Engagement Survey, it is voluntarily disclosed. That means that you may actually be looking at the minimum number of people who have a mental health issue, being the ones who feel comfortable disclosing. Further, you may only be capturing people who have a mental health issue at that moment: they may have recovered from post-partum depression for example.

70   There is a serious lack of data in Australia – I think we are quite scared to college it. I know this because the DCA collects data all the time for research. People either ask us whether we are legally allowed to collect this data – which of course we are – and are also concerned about privacy issues, worrying what we will do with the data. There is a real lack of trust around the motives for collecting data and where it is stored and how it is looked after.

Challenges faced by diverse employees (for example, those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds or people who identify as LGBTIQ+) in workplaces that may impact on their mental health

Lisa

71   Every kind of diverse identity that you have might complicate your experience of a particular condition. For example, for the LGBTIQ+ community, there could be a lot of trauma in terms of what you are experiencing, and for culturally and racially diverse people, there may be things about your culture or ancestry that make it complicated to have a conversation around your mental illness. It is difficult to make blanket statements as there is such variation between and within cultures as to how things are discussed, what things are feared, how things are stereotyped and particular myths around mental health and wellbeing issues. It is true to say, however, that it adds an extra layer of complexity to mental health issues.

The impact of mental health stigma in workplaces

Lisa

72   Stigma stops people disclosing mental health conditions. Mental health conditions can be attached to a perception that you are somehow deficient and unable to function and perform at a high level. There is a lot of self-editing that happens because even if people are in a psychologically safe work space, it does not stop their internal stigma. People fear that if they disclose something, it will change the way they are perceived.

73   The way you dismantle stigma is to talk about things in the open. If people (especially leaders) share stories, it can demystify things and make people feel like there is nothing wrong with them. That is also why it is important when leaders within organisations disclose if they have had an experience with mental illness. There is less risk to someone who has already had success in their career to disclose their experiences with mental illness, as there is a reduced risk of a negative impact on the person's career. The more that happens, it will become normalised and people may be more likely to feel that they are in a safe environment to disclose.

74   Dealing with stigma is complex in the mental health space. In other areas, such as sex discrimination and LGBTIQ+ discrimination, you can create laws which say it is unlawful to discriminate and you have organisational policies that you have to uphold. However, even all of those laws and policies do not remove the feeling that people have that mental illness is a private thing they do not want to disclose. You can, however, be helped by people being open about their stories. If there is an opportunity to deal with an issue or a matter in a really constructive way I think that that's a really good thing as well.

Systems or structures that perpetuate or help to address mental health stigma in the workplace

Lisa

75   I do not think that workplaces which allow mental health stigma are different to any other unsafe workplace that allows harassment and bullying to perpetuate. Ultimately, stigma is the perpetuation of untrue myths and stories that cast people in a negative light and make people feel shame. I think that it is not really that different to other forms of harassment and discrimination. Work cultures need to take a zero tolerance approach across the spectrum.

76   I do think it is important though to note that some people might not view their prejudices as stigma or as harassment; they might view them as reasonable prejudices to have. For example: someone might think, I cannot hire this person or promote this person because

you know this is a really challenging work environment and the pressure might be too much. They may think that they are being benevolent about their reasons for discriminating, but we need to be careful with "benevolent discrimination". People need to step back and realise that they are not the best decision-makers when it comes to the mental health and wellbeing of other people.

David

77   Reducing the amount of stigma in organisations is a key issue for leaders. The strategies that leaders employ to do so will depend on the size of the organisation. The organisation will need organisational strategies and to have, in some respects, campaigns to combat it. It is about correcting erroneous perceptions in the workforce and that does not happen by putting a poster up. It happens when the leadership team at all levels is seen to be committed to it.

78   There are education programs, but there is also the celebration of victories as people are helped and assisted to be their true selves and to bring themselves, their true selves to work and for the benefit of themselves and the organisation. There also has to be an acceptance that whatever the strategy or plan is, it will be imperfect and subject to continual review and modified as we learn more.

Incentivising employers to ensure their workplace is supportive of, and responsive to, the mental health of their workers

Lisa

79   Putting aside the moral argument for being decent, there are two ways you can incentivise an employer in this space. The first is that diversity is also good for your business, because a better work culture will leader to higher levels of productivity, better problem solving and better creativity.

80   The second motivating factor is it that a supportive workplace reduces risk. It keeps you out of the paper and away from the Fair Work Commission. We would obviously prefer that organisations were motivated by a desire to create a great, supportive workplace. However, it is a reality that in some instances, it can be just as powerful to motivate workplaces to stay out of litigation or embarrassing public relations.

81   The difference between an organisation that takes that a leading practice approach and one that just tries to minimise their risk is the leaders of that workplace. For whatever reason – whether it is shareholders, clients, staff, the market, or their own self-reflection – it is most effective when leaders accept and understand that an inclusive workplace is the kind of workplace that will deliver them the best possible performance outcomes.

82   There are a whole range of ways that leaders get to the point of understanding and accepting that. Once you understand that this kind of work environment will foster the best possible performance outcomes, it then becomes easy to articulate the behaviours that will be – and those that will not be - accepted. It then becomes easy to modify processes, improve capability and change the way that success is measured.

83   DCA's research shows that inclusion is strongly linked to mentally healthy and psychologically safe workplaces. We have a range of research and resources to support organisations to develop their capabilities in inclusion. For example, the DCA report 'Building Inclusion' provides an evidence-based model for inclusive leadership.[5] It provides the evidence to show how important leaders are to the success of inclusive organisations, and a tiered approach to build the capabilities needed. While essential, inclusive leaders on their own are not enough to create inclusive environments, and DCA also provides a range of other guides, services and training to build more inclusive, and therefore mentally healthy, organisations.

Increasing the diversity of the mental health workforce

Lisa

84   Every service provider needs to understand that in order to deliver a top-rate service, in any discipline, you need to reflect the community that you are serving.

85   I do not know anything specifically about the current mental health workforce. However, in general, if you want to change the profile and the demography of any workforce then you need to do a number of things. You first need to understand your current position and have some baseline information about that position. Data collection is very important for establishing this, otherwise you are just guessing. You then have to work out where you want to get to and identify the gaps. Is it a deficit in the recruitment of diverse people, or is a deficit in the retention of those people? Is it that all of the people who are diverse are stuck in low paid, low status areas of the company? Once you work out what the actual barriers are, there are many things you can do to remove those blocks. Blocks can be removed by: implementing flexible work practices; focussing on training leaders to be inclusive leaders; focussing on the culture of a workplace to make it a psychologically safe one; and by calling out behaviours when they are observed.

86   The corporate sector has been through this process many times: setting targets for change, making statements around the kind of workplace they want to be and examining their processes for recruiting, training, developing talent, remuneration and rewarding performance. It then becomes a matter of focussing on your human resources and

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[5]   See Diversity Council of Australia, 'Building Inclusion' (Report, 2015) accessed at: <https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_il_synopsis_online.pdf>.

leadership practices that provide the opportunity to change the profile and demography of the workforce over time.

The role for technology in improving responsiveness to diversity in the workplace

Lisa

87   As discussed above at paragraph 48, technology is useful as it can improve the accessibility of the workplace for people who want to connect, or do better when connecting, with the workplace in a different way. It allows people to work flexibly from somewhere else or at a different time.

88   Technology may facilitate these benefits, however, technology only facilitates; it does not create workplace culture. It does not create the decisions of the leaders or put its value stamp on workplaces – it facilitates the values that the organisation wants to achieve. For example, if the organisation wants to be a connected, psychologically safe workplace, it can use technology to assist.

89   However, if those values are not built into the culture of the workplace, and technology is not used well, it can be isolating and reduce the ability to create a cohesive work environment. It is easy to lose connection with the team if you are all working in disparate locations with only a weekly tele-conference meeting to dial into. Technology is a useful and helpful tool if you know what you want to achieve and how you plan to get there.
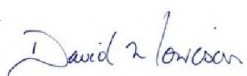
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print name Lisa Annese

date 14 July 2020

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