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Cultural Copy: Visual Conversations on Indigenous Art and Cultural Appropriation

## Diversity, a Matter of Values

### An Integrated Approach to Improving Organisational Diversity

Annaliza Jackson, Research Fellow, School of Economics and Commerce, Business School,  
University of Western Australia, Australia

Representing Global Diversity, Mediating Cultural Difference: Proceedings of the Diversity Conference 2004

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## **‘Cultural Copy’ Acknowledgements**

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‘Cultural Copy’ Exhibition, UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, USA  
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BorderZone Arts Inc., Common Ground, The Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Australia

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# Diversity, a Matter of Values

## An Integrated Approach to Improving Organisational Diversity

**Annaliza Jackson**, Research Fellow, School of Economics and Commerce, Business School, University of Western Australia, Australia

### Abstract

*The Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia (FESA) responds to a wide range of emergencies across the largest and most isolated state in Australia. Traditionally, FESA has been regarded as a male dominated organisation.*

*Over the last 10 years, FESA has conducted a considerable amount of self-analysis and investigated research approaches adopted by other local, national and international agencies and organisations, to improve organisational diversity.*

*As a “values driven” organisation FESA has adopted an integrated approach through its strategic framework for improving organisational performance through its Motivated And Productive People program (MAPP). Together with MAPP, FESA has integrated into its approach, Living Our Values and Leadership the FESA Way as the vehicles for improving organisational diversity. The overall aim is to give diversity a strategic profile at the highest level of the organisation. The CEO has designated himself and his Executive Team as FESA’s ‘Diversity Champions’, each with a specific portfolio to carry through with targeted outcomes to improve organisational diversity at all levels of the organisation.*

*Another initiative which has arisen from this approach is the FESA Values Plan. This plan is being developed to clarify and demonstrate to its people, how diversity as a ‘leadership value’ is lived on a day-to-day basis, through links to its policies, programs and operational activities.*

*The results to date have been encouraging. As an example, there have been improvements in recruitment rates of people from diverse backgrounds, including women, indigenous, cultural and linguistic diversity.*

*The paper will provide an explanation of the approach; why FESA has chosen to go down this path; what results FESA has achieved to date and what it hopes it will achieve in the future.*

**Keywords:** Diversity, Work performance, Values, Leadership

### Introduction

This paper aims to provide a synopsis of the diversity journey as being travelled by the Fire and Emergency Services Authority Western Australia (FESA). I attempt to provide a background of some of the theoretical thinking and research findings that support the values based integrated approach FESA has adopted in managing diversity.<sup>1</sup>

In the sections that follow, I will provide a brief profile of Western Australia and then talk about the role of FESA in general. Subsequently, I will provide a brief overview of the research literature that links in FESA’s approach to managing diversity; outline the methodology; discuss successes and challenges and its diversity goals for the future.

### Western Australia – A Brief Profile

Western Australia covers one third of the Australian continent with an area of about 2.5 million square

kilometres of some of the most ancient landscapes anywhere in the world: rugged gorges, tropical reefs, towering forests, woodlands, white beaches and 12,500 kilometres of coastline.<sup>2</sup> For FESA, this vast landscape, in itself presents unique challenges to provide high standards of emergency services that meet community needs.

In the 2001 Census, the total population of Western Australia was 1,851,252. Of these, 922, 268 were male and 928, 984 were female. 1,241,786 people (67.8%) stated that they were Australian-born.

Western Australia’s multicultural community is reflected in the following figures. The number of people born overseas in the 2001 Census was 495,240 (27.0%). A total of 206,823 people identified as speaking a language other than English. Of these, 100,871 were males and 206,823 were females. The multicultural diversity of Western Australia’s community is broadening, with an

<sup>1</sup> I present this paper in my capacity and role as research and management consultant for FESA. Therefore, some of the views taken are independent and not necessarily those of FESA.

<sup>2</sup> This information has been sourced from the Department of Conservation and Land Management and can be viewed on its website: <http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/index.html>



increase in the numbers of people from a broad cross-section of cultures.<sup>3</sup>

The total number of indigenous people residing in Western Australia, that is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, was 58,496. Of these, 28,970 were males and 29,526 were females. Western Australia's indigenous people reside in strong traditional communities, particularly in the North-West. This is one of the reasons why FESA in a diversity initiative, put emphasis on working with

## **The Diversity Challenge**

As the globalisation of our world societies expands and grows, the demand for organisations to improve their diversity profile, for reasons of productivity, performance and improved social behaviour become increasingly pressing. (Spony, 2003; Kirkman & Shapiro 2000). The United Nations (UN) recent *Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*<sup>4</sup> (15 July 2004) provides the following reasons as to why there is a global need to accept cultural diversity:

Accommodating people's growing demands for their inclusion in society, for respect of their ethnicity, religion, and language, takes more than democracy and equitable growth. Also needed are multicultural policies that recognize differences, champion diversity and promote cultural freedoms, so that all people can choose to speak their language, practice their religion, and participate in shaping their culture—so that all people can choose to be who they are. (p.v, 15 July 2004)

The report goes on to say:

If the world is to reach the Millennium Development Goals and ultimately eradicate poverty, it must first successfully confront the challenge of how to build inclusive, culturally diverse societies. Not just because doing so successfully is a precondition for countries to focus properly on other priorities of economic growth, health and education for all citizens. But because allowing people full cultural expression is an important development end in itself (p. v)

These sentiments are at the core of what not only countries and societies are struggling to achieve but also what corporate, business, public sector and not for profit agencies and organisations, particularly in industrialised nations, are striving to make a reality.

In another recent UN 2004 Human Development Report, *The New Federalism: Diversity is Key to Building Stable Multicultural States*, it states that:

To build a viable multi-ethnic society governments must recognise that multiple and complementary identities do not represent a threat to the state. At the same time they need to build loyalties of all groups in society, through identification, trust and support. (p1, 15 July 2004)

These statements present a clear challenge to manage the human factor in achieving diversity with honesty and integrity. Managers in modern industrialised nations are used to dealing with diversity what presents itself as a modern day diversity issue is that 'managers will encounter diversity much more frequently and at higher levels both inside and outside their organisations' (Triandis, Kurowski and Gelfand, 1994). The Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) has squarely taken on the diversity challenge both in the way they work with their own people and with the community of Western Australia. The very nature of their services means they have a strong interface with the community as a whole and with individual community groups. In achieving their vision of – a safer community, FESA believes that it is only through their "values driven" edict they can achieve acceptance of diversity and develop positive relationship building blocks.

Numerous research studies have been conducted in the field of diversity with a hope of coming closer to a greater understanding and better management of diversity. Charmine Hartel (1998) provides a useful summary of diversity research over the last 5 to 10 years. Hartel explains that even though a large amount of data has been produced indicating trends of increasing diversity in the workplaces of industrialised nations, we still know very little about the effects these trends have on workplaces and workgroups (p.1). She adds that since the 1990's researchers of diversity have been developing theories, measuring it and identifying outcomes of diversity in group tasks.

Hartel (1998) notes that diversity effects in organisational groups have been identified as having short-term and long term consequences. Short-term consequences include, affective, cognitive, symbolic and communication related consequences and long term consequences include, absenteeism, performance, turnover and strategic changes (p.1). The interrelationship between these consequences is important to their impact on 'observable diversity', which includes, race, ethnic background, nationality, gender and age and 'unobservable diversity', which includes, values, skills, knowledge and cohort membership (p.1).

Heilman and Welle (1998) conducted a study whereby they examined the effects of diversity initiatives on the perceptions of competence (Hartel 1998). It seems that 'telling people that diversity was a consideration in group member selection increases stereotyping' (Hartel 1998, p.1). The study found that women, for example, were rated less competent

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<sup>3</sup> Information regarding the broadening range of cultures represented in Western Australia is available from The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs web site: [www.immi.gov.au/facts/](http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/)

<sup>4</sup> The full report can be found on the United Nations website: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/>

and less likely to be selected as a group leader when groups were brought together on a diversity-related rationale rather than when other rationales were selected (p.1).

Hartel and Fujimoto (1998) developed the 'Dissimilarity-Openness Moderator Model' as a tool to explain how diversity comes to effect group processes and outcomes. This model argues that:

The effects of diversity in groups, depends upon the openness toward dissimilarity present at the individual, group and organizational level. This model proposes that high level of openness to dissimilarity result in positive outcomes such as innovation, involvement and commitment. Conversely, the model proposes that low levels of openness or closed-ness to dissimilarity result in negative outcomes for the group such as low involvement, job-related tension, and turnover (p.1).

An individual's openness to diversity has been linked to discriminatory behaviours in the workplace. A measurement of employee's openness to diversity was developed by Hartel and Trumbel (1997). Openness to diversity is seen to provide important understandings in preventing and managing discriminatory behaviours. On-going research is currently being undertaken to gain better understanding of, and measuring 'openness toward dissimilarity' (Hartel 1998).

Overall, Hartel (1998) notes in her review of diversity research literature, that the field of diversity has uncovered that negative effects of diversity performance are not inevitable and that neither are positive effects of diversity guaranteed. She explains that it is openness towards diversity that has been found to effect discrimination and suggests that organizations "should be working hard to instil a climate of openness in their organisations, work groups and employees (p. 2).

Diversity training and associated tools are regularly implemented by organisations to measure and improve attitudes and behaviour towards diversity. Diversity training is also seen as significant in providing individuals' and members of work groups an opportunity to gain greater self-understandings and improve behaviours to diversity initiatives. Various assessment workplace diversity training tools have assisted in the design, development and delivery of customised diversity training programs. One example of such a tool is DeMeuse and Jostager's (1998) Reaction-to-Change Inventory, which claims to identify an 'individual's overall basic orientation to workplace diversity' (p. 6), thereby providing the trainer a better profile with which to develop customised training programs. Such programs are considered to produce stronger positive results in both the short and long term (DeMeuse & Jostager, 1998)

Triandis (1995) presents a useful discussion on the social construction of diversity. A social

construction approach to diversity, lends itself to supporting an integrated approach to diversity strategies and initiatives. He states that diversity studies need to take into consideration socio-cultural historical factors, such as acculturation, isomorphic attributions, inter-group relations, cultural distance and level of adaptation, if they are to support the process of learning how to better manage diverse work groups. Social construction theory explains that the interaction and interrelationship between the public (world structures) and private (intrapersonal) spheres provide important information as to how behaviour is directed by both of these spheres (Geertz 1973; ed. Berger et al 1995; (Berger & Luckman 1966 p.27). The social constructionist perspective supports the approach which recognizes that human relations through the interpersonal interactions between diverse individuals are translated into actions, beliefs, constructs and self-representations (ed. Berger et al 1995).

Harrison, Price and Bell (1998) studied the 'impact of surface-level (demographic) and deep-level (attitudinal) diversity on group social integration' (p. 96). They found that 'the length of time group members worked together weakened the effects of surface-level diversity and strengthened the effects of deep-level diversity as group members had the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions' (p. 96).

McGrath, Berdahl and Arrow (1995) provide important information in understanding the complexity of the dynamics of diversity in work groups (p. 17), emphasising the importance of recognising the political issues embedded in diversity research (p. 42). A study by Chang (2001) assessed the 'competencies that are needed for a manager to manage a multicultural group of subordinates' (p. 1). The results 'suggest that the competencies needed are cultural empathy, learning on the job, communication competence, general managerial skills and personal style' (p. 1.)

The breadth and depth of diversity research issues as they relate to people in organisations is inexhaustive. The very brief overview presented here does not do real justice to the richness of research findings in the field. However, it does present a snapshot of the issues that need to be considered by any organisation if it is serious in its endeavours to better manage organisational diversity.

## **About FESA<sup>5</sup>**

In June 1997, a taskforce was established by the Western Australian Government to look at ways of improving planning and coordination across the State's emergency services. Following

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<sup>5</sup> The information below can be found on the FESA website, [www.fesa.com.au](http://www.fesa.com.au). Thanks go to FESA Executive Director Human Services, Ric Gornik for checking and editing information about FESA provided in this paper.

recommendations made by the taskforce, as an interim arrangement, the Fire and Emergency Services of Western Australia was created as a department under the Public Sector Management Act on 1 January 1998.

FESA was established in 1999 to improve the coordination and planning of emergency services in Western Australia. It brought together the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), the State Emergency Service (SES), the Bush Fire Service (BFS), Emergency Management Services (EMS) and Volunteer Marine Rescue Services (VMRS) under the auspices of one chief executive officer and one board of management.

FESA's people respond to bush and structural fires, incidents involving hazardous materials, floods, storms, cyclones, road crash rescues and a range of search and rescue call outs. FESA also undertakes wide-ranging prevention and preparedness programs and assists the community with recovery after emergencies.

FESA also aim to reduce injury, loss of life and destruction of property in our community through proactive measures. FESA helps the West Australian community prepare, prevent (where possible) and respond safely to disasters.

The main outcome for FESA, in its emergency services role, is to minimise the impact of human and natural hazards on the community of Western Australia. This is the performance expectation placed on FESA by the Government of Western Australia and against which it reports annually through key performance indicators.

### **Supporting Diversity in the Community**

FESA's Emergency Management Services division is a focal point for emergency management activities for State Government agencies and local governments. It facilitates the development and maintenance of emergency management arrangements for the State and provides advice and support on emergency management issues to key stakeholders at the local, State and national levels.

In its Local governments are actively encouraged by FESA to minimise the impact of hazards on their communities through risk management and enhancement of emergency management arrangements.

FESA's Emergency Management Services division has seen an increase in the number of local governments participating in its emergency risk management and emergency management activities.

FESA has adopted a number of strategic intentions their vision and mission and to endorse their commitment to continuous improvement in emergency service delivery. FESA's programs for the past year have been underpinned by three strategic intentions: community centred emergency management; sound business practices and quality people services. Probably the most significant for

the purposes of this paper is community-centred emergency management. The explanation below is how FESA describe this strategic intention.

### **Community-Centred Emergency Management**

FESA creates a safer community by working in partnership with the people of Western Australia. This approach encourages the community to take greater responsibility for their own safety and to be more self reliant and better prepared in case of emergencies. It also requires FESA to adjust its service delivery in keeping with social, economic, cultural, environmental, geographic and special needs of people.

FESA recognises that by applying a community-centred emergency management approach it best serves the Western Australian community. To do this, it must itself have a workforce that recognises, understands and is prepared to work with the complex issues of its diverse community sectors. FESA also recognises the invaluable contribution that representatives from these sectors can make in achieving its vision of – a safer community.

### **Remote Indigenous Communities**

Progress has been made towards enhancing emergency management arrangements in remote Indigenous communities. A proposed emergency risk framework was reviewed and workshopped with Indigenous bodies and community members. It was piloted with remote Indigenous communities this year with positive results and feedback from these communities<sup>6</sup>.

One example, is the work FESA has carried out with Indigenous communities in the North West of Western Australia, with the assistance of one of its indigenous employees. The North West of Western Australia is regularly plagued by cyclones. Applying a community-centred emergency management approach has enable FESA's people to work in cooperation with these communities. This approach, has meant that Indigenous communities have been able to become part of the decision-making process in how the community, together with FESA manage emergency situations, such as cyclones, taking into account their cultural, social and economic community needs. This is a good example of FESA's commitment to the diversity needs of the community it serves.

### **FESA's People**

FESA's human resources division confirms that it has recruitment and retention strategies that attract, promote and retain the right people, who are

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<sup>6</sup> Please refer FESA website [www.fesa.com.au](http://www.fesa.com.au) for further information.

committed to FESA, its values and its mission. This means having competent, committed leadership and management and a safe and healthy work environment.

FESA has traditionally been regarded as having a male dominated work force. The figures below provide evidence of this. Collectively, FESA employs 1,163 people. Of these, 1,013 are male and 150 are female employees.

FESA employs 13 persons who self-identify<sup>7</sup> as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. Of these 8 are male and 5 are female.

FESA employs 10 persons who self-identify as being from cultural and linguistically diverse background. Of these, 7 are male and 3 female. These figures fall short of representing women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as presented in the section above Statistical Profile of Western Australians.

The number of volunteers supported by FESA include: Fire and Rescue Service 2,440; Bush Fire Service 21,168; State Emergency Service 2,308; Volunteer Marine Rescue Services 2,200; FESA Units 135; History Society 17; bringing a total of 28,968 volunteers.

### **Diversity & Equal Opportunity in FESA**

Through a diversity working group, the proposals in the organisation's Equal Opportunity/Diversity Management Plan were reviewed and amended. A new plan has been drafted, the *FESA Values Plan*.<sup>8</sup> The idea is to link FESA's diversity initiatives to all FESA policies, Living Our (FESA) Values<sup>9</sup>, Leadership the FESA Way<sup>10</sup> and FESA's strategic plan. This is an attempt to create a total integration and interrelationship of every organisational responsibility to address diversity. And this is underpinned by FESA's values. *Leadership The FESA Way* plays a pivotal role in that the behaviours expected of FESA's people. It means that FESA people will live FESA's values. The FESA Values Plan, initially designed January 2004, is currently under internal review before being put forward to the Corporate Executive for approval and ratification.

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<sup>7</sup> These figures may be unreliable. The reason being that FESA employs are under no obligation to self-identify as indigenous when completing employee forms. The same situation holds true for people of cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Hence, there could a slightly higher number of persons working in FESA who could actually fit these diversity categories.

<sup>8</sup> A brief description of how FESA came to developing a Values Plan is outlined later in this section.

<sup>9</sup> Appendix 1 has a full documentation of FESA's Living Our Values.

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 2 has a full documentation of Leadership The FESA Way.

In FESA's 2003-2004 annual report, it makes the following statements with regards its diversity initiatives:

- Information on its new website affirms a commitment to ensuring its workforce reflects the diversity of the community by encouraging women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as indigenous people to apply. The website also contains Human Resource Guidelines which reinforce a commitment to equal opportunity and diversity.
- FESA confirms it has a policy of equal opportunity and considers it the right of every employee and volunteer to carry out their job in an environment that is free from all forms of harassment, discrimination and victimisation.
- FESA is committed to ensuring its workforce reflects the diversity of the community by encouraging people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women to apply for any position including that of fire fighter.
- FESA continues to actively pursue the improvement of gender representation within the organisation. Through participation in the Public Sector Traineeship Program, one female Indigenous trainee graduated within FESA in February 2003. The FESA Board currently has four women members and there are two women on the Corporate Executive Team. Women are actively sought for nomination to the FESA Board's four consultative committees.

### **Support Programs**

Beginning March 2003, FESA commenced a three-year project to promote improved levels of integrity, leadership and organisational behaviour. FESA and the University of Western Australia received Australian Research Council funding to undertake research into Integrity, Leadership and Behaviour in Organisations.

In short, the project draws on work in the philosophical tradition to propose a new multidimensional conceptualisation of leader integrity and to develop a measurement instrument for its assessment. During the program the influence of leader integrity on the behaviour of leaders and subordinates is explored, and a program aimed at enhancing integrity in organisational leadership will be developed and trialled.

Given the important link between FESA's Living the Values and Leadership the FESA Way, to improving its diversity profile, this project is currently playing a significant role in raising awareness and evaluating attitudes, beliefs and personal values.

## **FESA's Diversity Methodology**

Over the last 6 years, FESA has conducted a considerable amount of self-analysis and conducted research into the approach taken by other like and diverse agencies and organisations both nationally and internationally. FESA adopted a range of "traditional" type approaches, such as, setting up a task force and appointing a diversity officer. None of which have been able to bring significant changes. Funding is not available to set up or establish a unit within the organisation to manage the issues that would bring about the desired outcomes. So with the assistance of our research consultancy, FESA decided to take a new approach, at least, new in the sense that we were not aware of a similar approach being applied in any other emergency management service across the globe.<sup>11</sup> It was agreed that the way forward should take an integrated approach in developing its diversity strategies. The aim was to give diversity a strategic profile at the executive level of the organisation. The Chief Executive Officer at the time, Bob Mitchell, identified himself as the lead champion for this initiative. From the very outset, he expected that everyone in the organisation, at all levels and all positions, were responsible to apply and implement FESA's values<sup>12</sup> in their day-to-day behaviour and decision making processes. FESA's values as listed below have a strong focus on diversity.

FESA has adopted a unique integrated approach to achieve its goal of a diverse workforce, reflecting the diverse profile of the Western Australian community. Traditionally, FESA has been known as a male dominated organisation. This view emerged predominantly from the fact, that fire-fighters and other emergency services workers were and still are men.

The methodological approach that FESA has adopted in its task to improve its diversity profile is one of integration and inter-relationship. In other words, an approach bringing together any or all aspects of the organisation that impinges on its people. As noted above, this approach links all policies, programs, strategies and even legislative requirements to a key diversity initiative, the *FESA Values Plan*.

As a "values driven" organisation FESA has adopted an integrated approach through its strategic framework for improving organisational performance through its Motivated And Productive People program (MAPP). Together with MAPP,

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<sup>11</sup> We investigated diversity initiatives around the world and found that methods applied in other emergency management services more or less applied methods that had already been trialled in other similar type agencies. This is not to say, that since our research in 2003 that another agency has in fact, adopted a different, creative or innovative approach to improving organisational diversity profiling.

<sup>12</sup> Other emergency services operations in Australia have recently adopted values into their organisations.

FESA has integrated into its approach, *Living Our Values* and *Leadership the FESA Way* as the vehicles for improving organisational diversity. The overall aim is to give diversity a strategic profile at the highest level of the organisation. The CEO has designated himself and his Executive Team as FESA's 'Diversity Champions', each with a specific portfolio to carry through with targeted outcomes to improve organisational diversity at all levels of the organisation.

These categories have been identified and squarely placed on government and public sector agendas. These categories are understood and recognised by the community at large. Diversity in these terms, include gender, culture, language, religion, levels of ability (disability), age and family responsibility.<sup>13</sup>

## **A Cognitive Understanding**

FESA's ascribed leaders have long acknowledged the importance of cognitive understandings within the social and cultural context of FESA. It is through the development of FESA's *Living Our Values* and *Leadership The FESA Way*<sup>14</sup>, that it hopes to engage the heart and minds of its people to support each other, work with integrity, commitment and collaboration and to support diversity initiatives in the organisation. Integrating cognitive understandings to its overall methodological approach lends itself to bringing about the desired cultural change required

This cognitive reality is probably the main and most significant reason that has determined for FESA the importance of integrating its organisational values and leadership style to engage its people to embrace diversity. It is doing this through having identified a clear set of values and leadership attributes it expects its people to demonstrate on a day-to-day basis in every facet of their work. This approach is supported by Kirkman and Shapiro (2000). Discussion as to how FESA developed and adopted Living The (FESA) Values and Leadership the FESA Way are outlined in the sections below.

I will outline some of what I understand the reasons have been for adopting this approach<sup>15</sup>. As I go through these reasons, I will attempt to provide background information as to why the successes and

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<sup>13</sup> FESA has explored the notion of addressing diversity from the broader perspective, whereby diversity includes factors such as, work styles. FESA had attempted to embrace this broader vision, however, it recognised that it has to first, adequately address those categories as identified by government statutory bodies. FESA will look to including the broader definition at a later subsequent phase of the process.

<sup>14</sup> I have included a section below to further discuss the documentation provided to FESA's people about Living Our Values and Leadership The FESA Way.

<sup>15</sup> I provide reasons as I understand them in my capacity as research and management consultant for FESA, together with clarifications as provided by various members of the corporate executive team.

failures occurred and then why the newly applied approach or strategy for current and future action was adopted.

Applying “traditional” or regularly used methods and strategies to improving FESA’s diversity profile have had less positive short term and long term impact than desirable<sup>16</sup>. For example in 2002 FESA established a Diversity Working Group, made up of key representatives from each of its divisions: Fire Services; State Emergency Services and Volunteer Marine and Rescue; Human Services, Community Safety and Business Services. The group’s mandate was to develop Terms of Reference and to identify, through analysis, what strategies were required to raise the diversity profile of the organisation. In short, after 12 months the group had put into place an equal opportunity policy and commenced identifying strategies other agencies had used in similar circumstances, however, no real inroads had been made. On reflection, it became apparent that although all members supported the concept of raising the diversity profile of the organisation, there was division in strategic direction. Some members of the group, believed diversity was the sole responsibility of the human services division and that if people were living the FESA values there should already be an acceptance of diversity. The remainder of the group were not convinced that diversity was yet totally embraced by everyone in the organisation and wanted to identify and develop strategies, policies and programs that would support diversity initiatives, together with all other FESA divisions. The role of the group was revised and the CEO adopted diversity as one of the key initiatives of his office, identifying himself the “lead champion”. As a result a workshop was held with members of the corporate executive team, all of whom were identified as champions of a diversity category for the organisation. The role of the corporate executive team members as champions is to identify strategies that will raise the diversity profile within their identified category. For example, the Executive Director for Emergency Services has undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure FESA improves its diversity profile with Indigenous people and their communities. One of these initiatives, as noted above, is to work in close collaboration with indigenous communities in emergency management.

One learning for us all, I believe was that for FESA a working group or steering committee was not going to be able to produce desired results. The culture and nature of the organisation needed the highest profile persons, the CEO and his executive team members driving diversity. It also became apparent that diversity was best driven utilising existing “tools”, like FESA’s Living the Values and

Leadership the FESA Way. We also needed to link more closely into other initiatives, like community-centred emergency management. Particularly, as this incorporates the community as a key stakeholder and directly aligns with FESA’s responsibility and vision of – *a safer community*.

FESA also recognised it needed an approach that engaged everyone at all levels of the organisation and across divisions. The approach adopted by FESA as indicated above lends itself to the executive team members to work as diversity champion utilising resources within their division, and those existing across other divisions. Thereby working to enhance collaboration among the executive members on diversity issues.

The following is an outline of the MAPP Program and its role in supporting diversity initiatives within FESA.

### **The MAPP Program<sup>17</sup>**

In 2001 FESA introduced a “quietly achieving” program called the Motivated & Productive People Program (MAPP). This program works across the human resources division and the office of the chief executive.

MAPP is the acronym for “Motivated and Productive People”. The MAPP Program itself is a framework for improving organisational performance through motivated and productive people. One of the strategic foci of the MAPP program is “improving FESA’s organisational performance through motivated and productive people. The aim of MAPP is to adopt a focus on people, their growth and development for the purpose of underpinning the future of FESA in sustaining itself as a strong and successful organisation. The MAPP program aligns with FESA’s strategic planning process; FESA’s vision statement: A Safer Community, and FESA’s mission statement which states that in partnership with the people of Western Australia FESA will improve community safety practices and provide timely, quality and effective emergency services.<sup>18</sup>

These alignments have been and are important to consistency and congruence of policy, strategy, research and project implementation and outcomes. If diversity is to become and remain a top priority strategic item, then it must hold “senior” positioning in all organisational initiatives.

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<sup>16</sup> When I make comments such as, “less positive long term impact that desirable”, I am talking about, desirable to the organisation, not to myself.

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<sup>17</sup> Further information about the MAPP program can be obtained by contacting the FESA Executive Director Human Services via the web [www.fesa.com.au](http://www.fesa.com.au)

<sup>18</sup> These and subsequent statements taken from the MAPP Strategic Framework documentation and further information on the MAPP program can be accessed from the FESA website [www.fesa.gov.wa.au](http://www.fesa.gov.wa.au)

## MAPP Program Outline

The strategic focus of the program is to improve FESA's organisational performance through motivated and productive people. The MAPP Program brings together the full range of human resource management functions and activities into one strategic framework, in which its functions and/or activities are being examined from a 'whole of FESA' perspective. These range from Induction and Recruitment, Training and Development, Occupational Health and Safety to Recognition and Reward. The MAPP Strategic Framework states that, 'diversity in these areas means, a diverse working environment is one that values the contributions of all members and recognises that each individual has something unique to contribute. FESA will ensure it upholds the principles of diversity in the provision of its training and development programs'.

A key outcome expected of the MAPP program is to create 'greater diversity and a wider pool of skilled and expert people who can operate in a variety of cultural and business settings'.

The MAPP Program has assisted in bringing about a number of significant changes across the range of FESA's human resource activities. One example, in the recruitment area, where initiatives have been put into place to improve recruitment rates of women, people from indigenous and linguistic and culturally diverse backgrounds. Other targets include youth and people with disabilities.

The following section will provide a brief outline of the development and implementation of FESA's *Living Our Values*.

## Living Our Values

FESA has long recognised the complexity of managing diversity. And in more recent times the ever growing pressures to better manage and improve its diversity profile and relationships. FESA sees itself as a "values driven" organisation. This means that the day-to-day work place behaviour of its people is directed by its values.

Values shape all human behaviours and influence the wide-range of choices we make in life. Organisations are built on values and beliefs. For employees to align with them they first need to understand their our belief system, clarify the factors that shapes values and identify and appreciate the beliefs of others so as to anticipate and minimise potential conflicts with other thus improving company performance. Values and diversity build bridges to understanding each other and the community we serve (Carlopio, Andrewartha & Armstrong, 1997).

The following are excerpts taken from academic authors and researchers on the significance and importance of values in the community at large and in organizations.

Values are emotionally charged beliefs about what is desirable or offensive, right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate. Within any society there will be a variation in the values held by individuals. Even within our own families we are unlikely to have precisely the same values as our parents or siblings. With work associates or neighbors, value differences may be even greater.

(Michael C Howard,1995)

Values are among the most stable and enduring characteristics of individuals. They are the foundation upon which attitudes and personal preferences are formed. They are the basis for crucial decisions, life directions and personal tastes. Much of what we are is a product of the basic values we have developed throughout our lives. An organization, too, has a value system, usually referred to as its 'organisational culture'. Research has found that employees who hold values that are congruent with their organization's values are more productive and satisfied (Posner and Kouzes, 1993). Holding values that are inconsistent with organisational values, on the other hand, is a major source of frustration, conflict and non-productivity. Being aware of one's own priorities and values, therefore, is important if one expects to achieve compatibility at work and in a long-term career (Lobel, 1992).

(Carlopio, Andrewartha & Armstrong, 1997)

In 2001, FESA's Corporate Executive Team built onto a set of existing values that had been developed by Fire and Rescue. The idea was to incorporate the other divisions of the newly emerged FESA and uphold a common set of organizational values. The process adopted in developing these revised values was similar to that described above, as had been adopted by Fire and Rescue. The result was a newly revised set of six (6) organizational values, which have become known as FESA's *Living Our Values*. FESA's Living Our Values document state that:

FESA is a progressive values driven organisation. We place great importance on people. Living their values and strong leadership are integral to the way we work with each other and the community for a safer Western Australia. We use our values to guide our behavior and decision making.

In 2003 a seventh value, dealing with safety, was adopted by FESA. (Please see Appendix 1 for full documentation of FESA's seven values).

FESA's values are aligned to Leadership The FESA Way. The organization decided that if the values were to be demonstrated at a behavioral level, it needed to identify the style of leadership it expected of its people to carry this through.

FESA based its *Leadership The FESA Way* on the work of Kouses and Posner (1993). The reason for this was based on the fact that their work was already know to FESA and it fit in with moving to a more collaborative and cooperative style of leadership. FESA believes that this style of

leadership lends itself to supporting diversity. FESA's *Leadership The FESA Way* was introduced and implemented in 2002.

FESA's values and leadership style indicate the commitment that FESA has to improving the quality of working conditions and relationships of its people, paid and volunteer. In a diverse workforce, this commitment is imperative to its success of achieving harmony and cohesion.

Clearly, FESA is aiming to bring about 'cultural cohesion' through a set of shared values and leadership attributes. Values and leadership that not only hold meaning and significance for its people,

that have significance for the community at large. Thereby, building a bridge between FESA and the community and strengthening its relationship in a collaborative, cooperative manner.

Overall I hope to have presented a clear, even though brief picture of FESA's integrated approach to its future designs in the management of its diversity. In time FESA will know whether its initiatives will bear the fruit of success. One fact that remains a constant is that FESA continuously looks to improving its strategies and initiatives in managing diversity.

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### **About the Author**

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## **Appendix 1**

FESA has seven values. Each value has its own set of descriptors. These descriptors were included to assist FESA's people to understand what behaviours are expected in their day-to-day behaviour with their colleagues and members of the community. Below is an excerpt from their pamphlet, *Living Our Values*, providing background significance and importance of these values for FESA's people.

The Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) is a values driven organisation. We are expected to use values that have been established by the organisation to guide our behaviour and our decision making.

By living our values we believe we are better placed to work with the community for a safer Western Australia.

FESA has seven value sets each with its own list of action descriptors:

### **Living Our Values: a FESA Publication**

#### **Put The Community First**

We exist for the benefit of the community. Our services are driven by community needs

To live and apply this value we will:

- Immediately respond to all calls for emergency assistance
- Encourage and foster long term relationships with the community
- Involve and work with the community in identifying, understanding and meeting their needs
- Structure our service delivery to meet the needs of the community
- Regularly ask the community whether the services we provide meet their needs

#### **Act with Integrity and Honesty**

We will honour our commitment to supporting each other and the community

To live and apply this value we will:

- Treat people affected by emergencies with dignity and respect
- Be sensitive and respect other views
- Deliver on promises and commitments
- Be truthful and sincere in our dealings
- Act in good faith
- Be accountable for our actions
- Be willing to listen to different points of view

#### **Continuously Improve Our Services**

We always look for ways to improve our services and build on our strengths

To live and apply this value we will:

- Look for and implement ways to improve our services
- Be flexible and prepared to respond to change
- Admit and learn from our mistakes
- Measure, monitor and review our services in partnership with the community
- Initiate and undertake research and development
- Recognise and build on our strengths

#### **Respect and Value Each Other**

We recognise and value the skills and contributions of each other.

To live and apply this value we will:

- Treat each other with respect and dignity
- Value opinions, skills and experience
- Listen to what others have to say
- Be positive and supportive
- Treat others as we would have them treat us
- Respect cultural, social and religious values

#### **Work Together as a Committed Team**

We will encourage each other to work towards a common purpose, irrespective of our role

To live and apply this value we will:

- Work together as a team regardless of organisational roles
- Value each others capabilities and knowledge
- Encourage and respect input from other people and the community
- Encourage each others development
- Develop and encourage teamwork and cooperation
- Participate in team and individual development

### **Have Open and Honest Two-Way Communicatons**

We are truthful in our communications and listen to, encourage and respect feedback

To live and apply this value we will:

- Provide and share accurate information
- Listen to and respect the views and opinions of others
- Encourage open and honest two-way communications
- Use appropriate ways to communicate
- Provide and encourage feedback
- Provide timely responses to all communications
- Communicate clearly and concisely
- Express opinions in a constructive and reasonable manner without fear of recrimination.

### **Strive to Keep Ourselves And Others Safe**

We are committed to a safety culture where together we think safety and act safely to avoid injuries.

To live and apply this value together we will:

- Think safety and act safely
- Be responsible for our own and each other's safety and well being
- Work together to encourage safe behaviour
- Ensure our safety is the priority in a hazardous environment
- Make safety a priority in our decision making

We at FESA believe that by living our values it will lead us to the achievement of our Mission.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Leadership The FESA Way**

FESA recognizes that leadership is the key to achieving its goal of a diverse workforce.

It also recognizes that its leaders are critical to achieving its strategic aims and objectives. To this end it developed Leadership the FESA Way, to support and inspire its people in the way it works with the community and its people.

The following is an excerpt taken from its documentation of Leadership The FESA Way.

FESA is a progressive, values driven organisation. We place great importance on people.

Strong leadership and the values are integral to the way we perform our duties

Leadership is the responsibility of everyone associated with FESA, whether we are in the role of an employee or as a volunteer.

The five leadership attributes that apply within FESA are:

### **Strive to Achieve Our Vision**

To live and apply this leadership attribute FESA leaders will:

- Understand how our role in FESA contributes to a safer community
- Accept responsibility for the vision and its achievement
- Ensure our actions contribute to our mission
- Initiate and promote activities that lead to or contribute to a safer community
- Do something to make it happen
- Be proud of FESA and our contributions to it

### **Foster Teams and Partnerships**

To live and apply this leadership attribute FESA leaders will:

- Encourage people to work cooperatively
- Bring people together to assist and support each other
- Get to know and understand the individual groups that make up our community and their needs

- Involve groups in the community in a way that makes sense to them

### **Empower and Coach**

To live and apply this leadership attribute FESA leaders will:

- Assist and encourage people to learn and develop
- Delegate with accountability and responsibility
- Establish and agree achievable expectations
- Provide opportunities and choices for career development
- Confront and manage poor performance
- Encourage and maintain a balance between work and personal life

### **Challenge the Way WE do Business**

To live and apply this leadership attribute FESA leaders will:

- Look to how we can do things better within FESA - Question the status quo in a positive manner
- Look elsewhere for alternatives and ideas
- Try something different
- Learn from mistakes
- Encourage others to try different things

### **Acknowledge Achievements**

To live and apply this leadership attribute FESA leaders will:

- Recognise and celebrate individual and team achievements
- Provide credit where credit is due
- Say “well done”
- Recognise the community's contribution

We should all encourage each other to develop these leadership attributes and to develop Leadership the FESA Way across the organisation.

Leadership the FESA Way goes hand-in-hand with Living Our Values. FESA's six values guide our behaviour and decision making processes towards each other and the community we serve.

Strong leadership and living the values are integral to the way we work with each other and the community for a safer Western Australia. Leadership is the responsibility of everyone within FESA.