



Section 51 – A measure intended to achieve equality

Equal opportunity in public employment

The Western Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (the Act) recognises that equal opportunity is not necessarily achieved by treating everyone the same. The objects of the Act are to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for individuals, wherever possible. The Act also recognises that in certain circumstances discrimination which would otherwise be unlawful can be used positively to further meet the objects of the Act.

What is Section 51 of the Act?

Section 51 of the Act is a measure intended to achieve equality related to race. It affords a person of a particular race access to facilities, services or opportunities to meet their special needs in relation to employment.

Why is DMIRS using Section 51?

DMIRS is working towards increasing workforce representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the department. One of the department's main initiatives to support this is the Aboriginal Employment Program (AEP).

All AEP positions have been created to provide employment and career opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to support achieving equality and increasing workforce representation. For this reason, AEP positions are advertised using Section 51 of the Act and therefore only applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be considered for the positions.

The AEP sits within the department's Aboriginal Employment Strategy, Reconciliation Action Plan and the Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Plan.

How do you decide if an applicant is Aboriginal?

Applicants will need to identify themselves as being of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent as part of the recruitment process. Applicants will be asked to provide confirmation of this to ensure that the intention of Section 51 is upheld.

Is this lawful?

Yes, the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA) is an act of legislation and the specific section of this Act provides for organisations to implement this measure. It is lawful to discriminate in favour of a group of people in order to provide these people with the same opportunities as other people, in the areas of life covered by the Act.

For more information, you can visit the following websites:

[Equal Opportunity Act 1984](http://www.legislation.wa.gov.au) (www.legislation.wa.gov.au)

[Equal Opportunity Commission](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au) (www.eoc.wa.gov.au)