



Be proud to be an outlier

As an attendee at a recent workplace diversity event, it was encouraging to know that many Australian organisations are actively embracing employee diversity. It got me thinking about the diversity of the actuarial profession. I think the younger generation is generally very diverse. But do diverse demographic profiles translate to diverse ideas and opinions?

As the saying goes, if you ask 10 actuaries for their opinion, you will probably get at least 10 different answers. In my view, the actuarial profession is not a hive-mind but more of a collection of professionals with common interests. Therefore it seems unusual that the Actuaries Institute appears to have a policy position on many matters in order to lead or participate in the public discussion. Assuming that Members read these policy statements, do the majority of Members honestly agree with every public policy? Are these policies we 'ought' to have forced upon us even if we cannot honestly reach consensus? Or are these policies so watered down and bland to maximise agreement?

Some argue that the Institute needs to have a position when asked, and that 'no comment' or 'there's no consensus on this' is not acceptable. Issuing an Institute view for public relations' sake seems to dampen debate and new ideas. Instead, I think that the Actuaries Institute should be encouraging individual Member opinions rather than Institute opinions. This will encourage debate within the profession as well as in the wider community.

Often those who speak out do so with a vested interest, or are generally old or jaded. Therefore it is important that the Institute encourages more Members from all backgrounds, to get engaged, speak up and speak out to get a balanced and healthy debate.

In nature, diversity and mutation is risky, but it is also a highly-valued strength. We as actuaries should continue to 'think different', debate, challenge and push the envelope. It is ok to stir trouble, after all, many effective and inspirational leaders are, or were, outliers.

Barry Rafe and Peter Carroll talk about their different points of view on this issue on pages 26-27 in this edition.

What do you think? **A**

Editor

