

A hand is shown pointing towards the left, with the index finger extended. The background is a grid pattern with a warm, golden-yellow color scheme. In the lower right, there are several keyboard keys labeled with letters: K, L, M, F, G, and H. The overall image has a professional and technical feel.

# *Inside* **Employee Screening**

*Solutions to the legal,  
ethical and practical issues  
of employee screening*

Joydeep Hor

Steven Andrew

# Press Release

## Compliance publisher wades into controversial new territory

Employee screening, long a controversial subject in the United States, seems to have well and truly arrived on Australian shores.

Respected business publisher Centre for Professional Development has just released what is believed to be the first guide to the subject from an Australian perspective, *Inside Employee Screening*.

The release comes as the highly controversial issue of pre-employment psychometric testing comes to public attention with the case of former ABC executive Hugh McGowan.

When McGowan failed a maths test after he had been offered, and accepted, the position of director, the job offer was withdrawn. He is seeking nearly \$300,000 in a case that will return to the IR Commission in November.

Two other recent Australian cases include one where \$38,000 was awarded to a woman whose employer failed to consider her for a new position within the organisation because of an existing back injury — and another where it was found an organisation did **not** unlawfully discriminate against a man when it rejected him for a job because of an existing knee injury.

‘There’s a need for a book like this because employee screening is being more and more widely used, but there’s no regulatory framework’, says veteran HR observer and CPD’s Managing Editor for HR and IR, Peter Schwab.

‘The business community wants to use these recruitment and HR tools but is afraid to take the risk, what with findings seeming to contradict each other from case to case.’

Screening is seen to reduce recruitment costs, improve productivity, prevent avoidable injury and reduce workers’ compensation claims. But getting it wrong lays employers open to prosecution under discrimination, defamation and privacy laws.

The high-tech, Big Brother overtones of practices like drug screening and psychometric testing make pre-employment screening an emotive issue for employees, while its highly litigious potential makes it a minefield for employers.

Co-author Steven Andrew says *Inside Employee Screening* will demystify the area.

‘While some people might have visions of invasive medical procedures and batteries of psychological tests, the reality of pre-employment screening doesn’t have to be alarming. The book covers things like the wording you can use in recruitment advertisements and questions it is permissible to ask in interviews.’

'It provides clarity and helps plan procedures to avoid risk, by giving plain English explanations of what is and isn't permissible.

'For example — when is it okay to ask an applicant's HIV status, or their age? Is it reasonable to instantly dismiss an employee for being drunk on the job? And what does "reasonable" mean in this context anyway?'

Order *Inside Employee Screening* by phoning Centre for Professional Development on Free Call 1800 036 186. RRP \$75 plus GST = \$82.50.

***Review copy of Inside Employee Screening available on request.***  
**Contact: Peter Schwab on (02) 9977 7320 or 0417 443 303.**

## **Who are we?**

Centre for Professional Development (CPD) is a leading provider of business-to-business how-to information in book and electronic form, particularly to the accounting and human resources markets.

CPD is part of the international Thomson Corporation, one of the world's largest providers of business information, and publishes in conjunction with industry bodies including ASIC, AICD, NIA, ASCPA and ACCC.