

# Woolworth refutes accusations of racism, disables wall

Ian Moir, Woolworths CEO says that it is "simply not true" to suggest that Woolworths follows racist recruitment practices - specifically, of not employing white people. The retailer has also disabled its Facebook wall after it became what the company terms "a platform for a well-orchestrated campaign of hate speech".



"The rumours apparently were sparked by some of our recruitment ads that designate certain posts for certain groups, and are being fuelled by an organisation that has called on its members to boycott us," he writes.

"As a Woolworths customer, we thought you'd like to hear the facts:

- Woolworths DOES employ white people. We employ women and men of all races - white, black, coloured, Indian, as well as people with disabilities, and will continue to do so.
- We're a passionately South African company, so diversity is important to us. So is offering fair career opportunities. There are some areas of our business where certain groups are seriously under represented. These are the positions where we actively look for qualified candidates from specific groups.
- Most other businesses do the same to bring diversity into their workforces. In fact, in South Africa all businesses that have more than 50 employees are required to do this.
- We believe the responsible thing to do is to be open and transparent in our recruitment ads about the type of candidates we are looking for. Integrity is one of the values we hold dear."

Moir writes that as a born-and-bred South African company, Woolworths "cares deeply about the long-term sustainability of our country. We've made significant contributions, through programmes like MySchool, to socio-economic development. We'll continue supporting transformation and socio-economic development because they're essential for our country's (and our company's) future."

## Wall disabled

Meanwhile, in radical move, the retailer has disabled its Facebook page and posted an open letter to its customers...

"Woolies fans,

"Disabling our wall was not a decision we took lightly and not one we're particularly happy about. But when your page becomes little more than a platform for a well-orchestrated campaign of hate speech, we owe it to our customers not to subject them to such vitriol in our own house.

"We have, in a variety of channels, repeatedly refuted the claims being made against us. We have also allowed thousands of comments on our Facebook page, debating the pros and cons of Employment Equity as a national debate... deleting only overt hate speech and comments inciting violence.

"However, we've always put our customers first... and many, many customers have asked us to stop hosting this vitriol. We will re-open our page as soon as we think we can resume reasonable discussion."

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