**Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability**

# Submission No 12

**Name** Withheld

**Submission made by**

Older Australian in work

# Submission regarding Older Australians

### **Your experience**

**Have you (or the person you are submitting on behalf of) experienced employment discrimination?**

Yes

No

Not sure

**Did you take any action in relation to the employment discrimination you experienced?**

Yes

No

**Please tell us more, for example, what action you took and how effective you felt it was; or why you chose not to take any action.**

Anyone who complains is likely to be the subject of intense scrutiny and put under such pressure that their performance is likely to decline and then that will be used as an excuse to get rid of the employee.

**Did your experience of employment discrimination impact on your participation in the workforce? (For example, did you have to stop work, change jobs or take sick leave?)**

Yes

No

**Please tell us more**

In the past, yes. Changed offices, took sick leave and attending counselling.

### **Barriers**

**Do you think older Australians/Australians with disability face barriers when they look for work or are in a job?**

Yes

No

Not sure

**If yes, or not sure, what do you think these barriers might be?**

Employers are looking to maximise the output of workers in many cases and anyone who requires more assistance or supervision is seen as a less desirable type of employee to have. Also, older people or with a disability, may be slower in some cases and employers are generally likely to choose faster workers or those who are perceived as going to be faster. My experience is that employer delegates, such as in public service, are happy to reap the benefits of older workers such as knowledge, skills, commitment, work experience, etc. but do not consider any trade offs at all. Employees are milked for all they are worth in my view.

**Does employment discrimination have an impact on gaining and keeping employment for older Australians/Australians with disability?**

Yes

No

Not sure

**Are there any practices, attitudes or laws which discourage or prevent equal participation in employment of older Australians/Australians with disability?**

Yes

No

Not sure

**Please tell us more**

Very little equality of respect for older people in this country. If you're not young, aggressive and seen as "cool" you are not welcome.

Financially, if you work over 70 y.o. you will effectively be taking a pay cut, as the employer will not be contributing to your superannuation, which is part of the value of your salary package.

Also, you are not covered under workers compensation, so expect to lose your job if you are injured (costs will not be available from workcover), and I believe that life insurance and loss of income insurance may also not be available. Makes working after reaching 65 not very attractive. Also you are not eligible for the national disability support scheme as we are expected to access aged care/geriatric services which are notoriously underfunded relative to need.

**What are the incentives and disincentives for older Australians/Australians with disability to work?**

**Incentives:**

Many people enjoy learning new things, social interaction and participation, keeping up with social trends and technological change and importantly, value being able to make a contribution to society and to feel valued.

**Disincentives:**

Not being able to be hired by people who are young/er and with no disability! Disrespect, lack of understanding and appreciation for others who are perceived as different from those hiring.

### **Good practice**

**Are there examples of good practice and workplace policies in employing and retaining older Australians/ Australians with disability?**

Yes

No

Not sure

**Please tell us of examples of good practice in employing and retaining older Australians/ Australians with disability in work that you are aware of.**

Bunnings hardware store!

### **Solutions**

**What action should be taken to address employment discrimination against older Australians/Australians with disability?**

Address the legal and financial implications as informed above. Create education programs such as occur with diversity of culture, gender, etc. to lead to attitudinal change. Normalise the need for assistance, particularly at the entry to new employment situations, of olders Australians with a disability so they are not seen as an unacceptable burden or cost to the organisation.

**What should be done to enhance workforce participation of older Australians/Australians with disability?**

Positive rewards to employers for hiring elders with a disability. Support training for such Australians at a reasonable cost.

**What outcomes or recommendations would you like to see from this National Inquiry?**

Change in policy and law as well as community attitudes.