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

# Submission No 188

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**Submission made by**

☒ Australian with disability who would like to work

# Submission regarding Older Australians / Australians with Disability / Both

### **Your experience**

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

[x]  Yes

[ ]  No

[ ]  Not sure

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

[ ]  Yes

[x]  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.**

My experiences were not monitored and relate to indirect discrimination during the application process.

During my employment search, I did not have a mentor or support from my support agency and was unsuccessful for more than 6 years of continuous applications.

I did not take any action because I felt humiliated.

I felt that at least one of those employers could have responded to my application more favourably and that their lack of response and interest was severe discrimination by them.

**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?)**

[x] Yes

[ ] No

**Please tell us more**

It caused me to suffer from severe depression and loss of motivation resulting in severe social isolation.

### **Barriers**

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

[x] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Not sure

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

Primarily due to chronic lack of supports and the effects of stigma.

People with disabilities need mentors, guides and coaches and group supports (group employment search programs while looking for work and support and mentor programs when they are in work).

They need to be able to be given opportunity to disclose their disability early on in the recruitment process so they are not subject to indirect discrimination and the effects of stigma and negative reputation.

They need assistance at all stages of their employment search so that they are not subject to loss of motivation / worse, when their efforts fail.

There are major barriers to gaining employment due to lack of common knowledge of recruitment processes, and the general effects of stigma constantly acting against them / their efforts.

There needs to be much greater encouragement for people with disabilities to apply for positions they are suitable for and then actual results where people with disabilities do gain employment ie. an equal employment policy in relation to hiring people with disabilities.

There needs to be a visible presence of people with disabilities who are actually given employment.

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

[x] 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?**

[x] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Not sure

**Please tell us more**

Employment discrimination can be difficult to define but in general terms it may be the discrimination of refusing a person for a position because there is a presumption they are not capable of doing the work because they have a disability, which is very hard to decide during the application phase.

Changes to recruitment practices may be the only way to counter this discrimination where adopting a policy to 'trial' staff so that their skills can be properly assessed.

Agencies providing support to people with disabilities who are actively seeking work, should be able to be held accountable for their success / lack of success in assisting people in taking up suitable employment / etc.

I have personally encountered discrimination by agencies claiming to be a support to my job searching where they were highly ineffective and unsupportive.

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

**Incentives:**

Primarily the freedoms gained by having access to wealth ie, better overall health care and dental care, capacity to take up housing loans and mortgages leading to the ability to own a home. General improvement to quality of life; being able to afford to take holidays, eat better food, afford gym memberships and exercise programs / equipment, greater ability to expand in their personal, social and professional life and build social networks with other successful people. Being able to move on from living on a low income / in poverty etc.

**Disincentives:**

Exploitation, discrimination, being locked in to doing unsuitable / humiliating employment with no future for professional growth. ??

Being long term unsuccessful at their job search; and perceived as lacking in employable skills when they are just being discriminated against and subject to stigma - this results in long term unemployment and being forced to live at poverty level.

### **Good practice**

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

[x] 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.**

Communicating at the outset of employment and making adaptations suitable for the employee.

### **Solutions**

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

A national employment policy specifying an "employment percentage target" to ensure employment of people with disabilities actually represented in the workforce.

Anti-stigma campaigns high-lighting the achievements of people with disabilities who are in the workforce.

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

Encouragement highlighting the incentives to work.

Awards to employers who take up people with disabilities for ongoing employment.

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

Greater rates of employment of people with disabilities.

Greater support for people with disabilities who want to work in the form of assistance programs and mentoring.

Accountability of employers and support agencies.