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

# Submission No 197

**Name** United Voice Northern Territory Branch

**Submission made by**

Trade union  
  
Organisation or Government Agency Submission

### **About you**

**What is your role within your organisation?**

Owner

Manager

Human Resources Manager

Other

**If other, please tell us your role within your organisation**

Branch Secretary

**What is your experience of providing work/services/advocacy for older Australians/Australians with disability?**

United Voice provide regular advocacy for our older members and members with disability.

The advocacy we provide is representation in the NT Anti Discrimination Commission, Fair Work Commission and Workers Compensation.

**Do you have any case studies of the experience of older Australians/Australians with disability working or looking for work?**

The current case studies we are dealing with for older workers directly related to their employment are:

* workers compensation - over 65 years
* Older workers are not covered under the current NT workers compensation legislation if they injure themself in the workplace.
* Income protection insurance - insurers not providing coverage if members are over 60 years old
* Not accommodating training and professional development for older workers ie: technology, soclal media
* Not accomodating carer responsibilities - caring for grandchildren
* Not accomodating older workers who in outside employment - physical manual labour.
* Work for the dole - older Aboriginal and Torres Strait workers.

The current case studies we are dealing with for workers with disabilities directly related to their employment are:

* Dismissing workers with disabilities or making them redundant citing organisational restructure as the reasoning;
* Not providing appropriate work stations for workers with disabilities; and
* Attempting to discipline workers with disabilities without advising of them of their workplace rights ie: union representation

**What are the impacts of employment discrimination on older Australians/Australians with disability working or looking for work?**

The impact of employment discrimination for older workers and workers with disability is quite significant:

* the members feel very vulnerable;
* the members feel they are not a valuable employee;
* experience financial anxiety;
* members experiences depression;
* members feel like they have no self worth;
* causes strain on their personal relationships;
* experience frustration

### **Barriers**

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

Yes

No

Not sure

**Please tell us more**

The barriers older workers with disabilities face barriers in their employment are:

* Lack of professional development;
* Lack of training;
* Lack of career opportunities/development;
* Lack of career promotions.

**Is employment discrimination a barrier (please tick all that are relevant):**

While working in a job

While looking for work

While dealing with recruitment companies

**Please tell us more**

Employment discrimination is indeed a barrier for older workers and workers with disabilities.

We deal with employment discrimination for these workers on a regular basis - these barriers are becoming more common as the workplace is ageing.

**What impact does employment discrimination have on older Australians/Australians with disability gaining and keeping employment?**

The impact of employment discrimination for older workers and workers with disability is quite significant:

* the members feel very vulnerable;
* the members feel they are not a valuable employee;
* experience financial anxiety;
* members experiences depression;
* members feel like they have no self worth;
* causes strain on their personal relationships;
* experience frustration

**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**

Legislation we experience which discourages or prevents equal participation in employer is Worker Compensation legislation - age of worker and Income protection insurance - age of insurance.

Attitudes play an important role in this discouragement - the workforce is ageing but education on discrimination within the workplace is just need as a 'flick n tick' checklist which employers have to conduct to meet their basic obligations within the workplace. Many employers and unfortunately workers do not see treating someone less favourably due to their age and disability as discrimination - employers and training providers focus more on educating workers on obvious discrimation behaviours.

**What are the incentives and disincentives in employing older Australians/Australians with disability?**

**Incentives**

There are many incentives in employing older workes with disabilities but some obvious examples are:

* A wealth of knowledge;
* Dedicated employees;
* Provide a balance within the workplace;
* Promotion of a diverse workplace

**Disincentives**

There should be no disincentives in employing older workers with disabilities.

### **Good practice**

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

Yes

No

Not sure

**Please let us know about practices you are aware of.**

Large employers are encouraging older workers in conjuction with Industry Superannuation funds to consider near retirement age to work part time and access superannuation to top up wages.

Providing workplace flexibility to work from home.

### **Solutions**

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

Address workers compensation cut off age;

Prohibitation of age requirements at interviews, curriculum vitae's etc.

Workplace education on age discrimination.

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

Education on attitudes - attitudes will only change if age discrimination no longer becomes an accepted norm in the workplace.

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

A change to workers compensation legislation which has a cut off age which is not consistent with the retirement age.

Changes to any employment related legislation which has a cut off age which is not consistent with the retirement age.