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

# Submission No 199

**Name** Withheld

**Submission made by**

☒ Older Australian looking for work

☒ Older Australian 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?**

[x]  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.**

I telephoned the Anti Discrimination Board regarding experiences at two interviews and was told that there was a possible “link” on one occasion. It appeared to me that unless someone actually stated that I was too old then there was no case to pursue. I discussed these two experiences with our Federal Member of Parliament earlier this year who was astounded by some of the tactics used by employers when hiring employees.

**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**

I did not get employment. It certainly takes and emotional and psychological toll and one’s confidence plummets.

### **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?**

Public attitudes. There is a visual image that businesses want to project and older workers do not fit, this is particularly so for women workers or applicants. Grey hair and wrinkled skin are certainly not considered “cool”. How much responsibility does the media bear for this attitude (or the media watchdog)? Youth, beauty, toned body and perfect skin are certainly promoted. We don’t see **[redacted]** promoting themselves on television as hiring older Australian workers or Australians with disability. Dubbo NSW, like other country centres does not have a manufacturing industry as such, there are no out of sights jobs. NSW government department won’t hire new older workers, including the **[redacted]**.

Government programs.

* As a large inland centre Dubbo draws people from western NSW and local council is also part of this Evocities program enticing people from the metropolitan areas to relocate here and they have not put any real thought into the issue of rising unemployment and it has been stated that they are subsidising housing for some on work visas.
* The increasing availability of childcare places and rebates means less work available for older workers.
* Work visas. A large number of workers on visas and some say government is subsiding wages at a much higher rate than that offered for mature age job seekers. (I have attempted to get clarification on this point from various government officials but no one will talk to me).
* Job Services/Job Active and the monthly quotas of applications imposed upon the unemployed. Job seekers get a reputation of being unemployable simply by the number of refusals they get from applications as this information becomes common knowledge in regional areas. It has become apparent that some HR departments are providing details of the unlucky applicants to various businesses including non government employment agencies and educations providers. I have received three calls of this nature; one caller stated that they obtained details off resumes from HR departments.
* Lack of relevant training opportunities. Training for jobs particularly suited to mature applicants is not available or the cost is prohibitive and not covered by Fee Help.

Lack of Transport. Very limited, if any, public transport and this becomes an even bigger hurdle in times of weather extremes. The unemployed have difficulty covering the cost of owning a motor vehicle.

Health. The longer an older Australian is out of work the faster their health deteriorates due to factors including, poor diet, inability to afford medication and recommended supplements, stress and general living conditions. Older Australians not eligible for the age pension were born from the late 1940’s to the mid 1960’s and our bodies didn’t have access to luxury tools and equipment. There was a lot of pick & shovel work, hand sawing and back breaking hand washing (just to name a few tasks).

**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**

Age is considered to be unattractive. This visual discrimination appears to be encountered more often by women than by men.

There is stigma attached to being unemployed. There is belief held by some that if you are unemployed then you are lazy, idle and useless. Some employers won’t even consider an applicant if they aware they are unemployed.

Apparently the government has a program that pays fifty nine cents (59c) in the dollar towards the wages of migrants seeking residency. They are required to complete two year work in the country as part of this residency. This information has come directly from those on visas. The large supermarket chains transfer staff from Sydney to Dubbo. I have called Minister Dutton’s office (Immigration and Border Protection) and the Local Regional Development organisation for confirmation and been told that someone will call me back. This was some weeks ago and the calls back have not eventuated. It appears that no one wants to admit to anything or they do not know what is occurring. This subsidy is far greater than any offered for mature job seekers.

There are many covert practices used by employers when hiring staff including but not limited to: (personal experience)

* Group interviews – large number of people in a room in groups of about six seated around a table listen to company history and complete one child’s jigsaw puzzle while the company business representative makes an entry against names and seating locations around the table. New supermarket opening in town, **[redacted]**.
* Different questions for older and younger applicants. Very job relevant questions asked of one group. New supermarket opening in town, **[redacted]**. (a possible “link”, Anti Discrimination Board)
* Stores place advertisements in windows which include the words “Inquire Within” and a website or email address and when an older person enters to apply they are told to go online but younger applicants have their resumes/applications accepted on the spot. Several ladies fashion stores.

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

**Incentives:**

Need money to survive and pay day to day expenses. Government raising the pension age

**Disincentives:**

Huge emotional and psychological price that has to be paid through constant rejection in favour of younger workers and those on visas.

### **Good practice**

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

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

[x] 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.**

### **Solutions**

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

The government needs to take steps including:

* Limit visas and police the rules
* Tighten up the laws relating to discrimination
* Take a real look at the causes of the problem
* State and Federal Ministers need to take responsibility and firm hold of their departments and stop wasting funds and putting government money into useless programs eg $16 million in NSW for work with sharks (let fisherman catch for food, costs taxpayers nothing) and put the funds into infrastructure that will provide employment far into the future.

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

1. The three levels of government need to work together
2. Local councils should include in development applications that apart from immediate family members a business is required to hire and/or train a certain percentage of local unemployed people of varied ages.
3. Councils should deny completely or limit the number of self serve checkouts permitted.
4. The number of Work visas need to be reduced and conditions policed
5. Bring manufacturing back to Australia and prevent any more from going overseas. **STOP SELLING US OUT**.
6. Improve the inland rail network.
7. Establish manufacturing in regional areas
8. Invest in value adding to local produce e.g. wool and cotton. I can’t find yarn or fabric made in Australia.
9. Better access to training and increases courses covered by fee help.
10. More apprenticeships. I was told I had “no hope”
11. Return the pension age to what it used to be (60&65). Creating vacancies for younger Australians.

Basically there just not enough jobs to go around and certain groups will always bear the brunt of the shortfall. In our area there can literally be hundreds of applications for the one advertised position.

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

1. There needs to be a big focus on increasing/creating employment opportunities including bringing jobs back onshore.
2. Wage subsidies offered to employers of older Australians and Australians with disability should at the very least match those offered to employers of other groups including those on work visas and those seeking residency.
3. Covert discrimination practices used by employers when hiring need to be outlawed and employers held accountable. Laws regarding discrimination need tightening.
4. The three levels of government need to work together on many issues including unemployment and not just focus on getting re-elected.
5. There needs to be a solid plan for the future. Our local federal member agrees that we need to improve the inland rail network and encourage new manufacturing to regional and country areas. Apparently not enough support from Canberra.
6. Local councils (country areas) need to amalgamate or work together and invest in infrastructure and transport that will attract investment and create employment opportunities for local people.
7. Government Fee Help needs to be extended to cover more courses including different classes of driving licences and security licences.
8. Modes of study need to include distance educational packages sent via post. This method appears to have disappeared in recent times. Not everyone has access or can afford computers and the internet.