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

# Submission No 204

**Name** Catherine Mary Kohlenberg on behalf of Hannah Elizabeth Kohlenberg

**Submission made by**

☒ Carer/family member of Australian with disability

# 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.**

I am writing this submission on behalf of my 22 year old daughter, Hannah. Hannah lives with Dyslexia. She also has mild Cerebral Palsy. Hannah's reading and writing skills are very limited. Her motor control with her hands is affected by her Cerebral Palsy. She has many strengths, of which resilience is one!. The discrimination she faces begins when she attempts to apply for a job. Job applications usually involve a written task, even if the application is on line. To complete a job application Hannah uses technology or the help of another person to read and write. This discrimination needs to be recognised by the employment sector.

In a recent position in the animal care industry Hannah was required to do a reading task. The support she needed to do this task was put in place by Hannah and her family. There was no attempt by the employer to support her to do the task, it was left to her to succeed or to fail. This position was a casual position for a limited period of time. When the time finished there was no feedback from the employer about her work. Hannah has the impression that the employer was not willing to offer her more work because of her literacy difficulties.

Hannah is a person who desperately wants work.

**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**

Hannah's disabilities make it very difficult for her to compete in the employment market. She face periods or underemployment and no employment. There are some jobs she would like to do. She would need support/ training and adjustments to be able to do them. The worpkplace frequently doesn't appear to be willing to give her an opportunity to contribute.

### **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?**

The barriers for older people when looking for work in my profession is that it is cheaper to employ younger, less experienced staff.

**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**

A history of underemployment and unemployment makes it difficult to gain workplace skills.

The disability employment services do not offer skill training or support the adjustments in the workplace. They linked Hannah with low paid unskilled jobs. She has discussed what she feels she needs to enter different parts of the workforce but no training or support to do this was available. She only ever found one job through these agencies. The process of attending appointments regularly with a disability agency to be told there is no jobs didn't support Hannah to stay linked with the agency. The disability employment agency staff had no understanding of Hannah's skills and difficulties.

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

**Incentives:**

To have a place in society.

To feel worthwhile and to contribute

To have finances to live a good life.

To be financially secure and AVOID POVERTY and prevent a cycle of social disadvantage.

To mantina health and well being

**Disincentives:**

Limited Jobs

Lack of workplace training

Employers willingness to invest in a person with a disability.

### **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.**

Our experience has not been positive.

I am sure there are examples. but this news isn't out these in the social media My comment is that the good news stories only apply to very few people.

Many people with a disability a disadvantaged in regards to employment.

### **Solutions**

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

Workplaces to have access to funded professional support to support the workplace to make the adjustments required.

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

For people with a disability publications and information about workplace success stories would provide information about about what worked, what didn't work to support the person with a disability to gain employment.

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

Improved work opportunities for people with a disability