Submission to the National Inquiry "Willing to Work": National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with a Disability" conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission, December 2015

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Key Findings

- Many businesses in Darwin already employ mature age workers and people with a disability. Largely, their experience with employing them has been successful, which has resulted from the personal and professional characteristics of the individuals they engaged and certain efforts made by SMEs.

- Between 76% and 93.8% of the surveyed businesses would seek to employ individuals from these two groups in the future. Many SMEs already have inclusive employment strategies and retention strategies that together underpin a successful employment relationship.

- The surveyed businesses derive numerous benefits from employing individuals from these two groups. Benefits common for all groups are good or excellent retention, gaining quality staff with exemplary work ethics and diversification of the workplace.

- A successful relationship is commonly underpinned by appropriate training for the job, open, honest and on-going communication, flexible work arrangements and an on-going fair, supportive and inclusive work environment. Reasonable adjustments to workplace also usually need to be made. Employers require adequate information about any such efforts they may need to make.

- Mature age people seem best able to find employment commensurate with the level of their formal qualifications, followed by people with a disability.

- For mature age people and people with a disability Certificate-level qualifications appear to offer the greatest choice of employment options.

- For both groups under consideration, word of mouth/networks is a key method of recruitment/finding out about employment opportunities.

1.   Background to the project

This submission discusses selected results from a pilot project that aims to inform strategies for increasing economic participation in the Northern Territory (NT).[1] It is situated in the context of the tight labour market conditions in the NT and Greater Darwin (thereafter Darwin), the Federal Government's *White Paper for Developing Northern Australia* (Australian Government 2015) and the NT Government *Framing the Future* strategy (NTG not dated). It was conducted in 2014 and 2015 in Darwin and focused on the engagement and retention of locally resident 'untapped' labour force groups by local small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs).[2] The three groups under investigation were: (a) recent migrants and refugees, (b) people with a disability and (c) people who were aged 50 and over at the time of securing employment. This submission contributes evidence on workplace practices that assist in employing and retaining people with a disability mature age people and in the workforce. It also provides illustrations of obstacles that these groups may face in actively participating in the workforce.

The growth and development of the northern workforce is key to the economic and social development of the region (*White Paper for Developing Northern Australia,* Australian Government 2015). The NT Government *Framing the Future* strategy presents a vision of the NT where *everyone* can participate in the society and the economy (NTG not dated). This project may inform the work of this Inquiry. Locally, it may inform strategies to address the current tight labour market conditions in the NT and Darwin and provide further evidence for the Federal and NT Governments as to how the northern workforce can be grown and upskilled.

2.   Data and methods

This project analyses freely available 2011 Census statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the results from an online survey of SMEs in Darwin conducted in March-April 2015. The statistical data relate to the Greater Capital City Statistical Area of Darwin as defined by the ABS. Census variables: age, labour force status, highest reported level of post-school qualifications and occupation serve to describe the characteristics of the 'untapped' groups. With regard to the labour force status, this report looks at people who are employed, unemployed and some of those who are not in the labour force but who could potentially be interested and available to take up employment. The not in the labour force include (a) retirees, (b) school students, (c) people marginally attached to the labour force (people who wanted to work and were or were not actively looking for work at the time of the Census) and (d) people who wanted to work but were discouraged job seekers (ABS 2014). The publicly available Census data do not permit

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[1] The project obtained an ethics clearance H14085/2014 from Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee.

[2] The ABS defines small-size business (excluding in agriculture) as a business with up to 20 employees. This definition covers also non-employing businesses. Medium-size business is defined as employing between 20 and 199 people (ABS 2002:1).

disentangling the size of each of these subgroups, but for the purposes of this submission, it is important to bring groups (c) and (d) into the discussion. Furthermore, this project also looks at people in the two groups who may be involuntarily employed below their formal level of qualifications. As it is often the case with statistics regarding the NT and Darwin, disaggregated data may contain small numbers, which are randomised to avoid the release of confidential information. Such cases are noted because it is important to see the results as approximate rather than exact.

This project involved a workshop with selected stakeholders[3] in which the researchers sought their feedback on the draft survey questionnaire for SMEs in Darwin. It adopted a broad definition of disability based on the 1992 Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth). The survey (hosted on surveymonkey.com) yielded a snapshot of the employers' experiences with recruitment, training, employment and retention of workers from these groups, what support they may need when engaging them and intentions for their future employment. A total of 75 responses were received with two-thirds from the SME sector and the remainder from a combination of micro-businesses and businesses that were part of national and/or international businesses. Not all parts of the survey were relevant to all respondents, so some questions yielded fewer responses even on topics that were related. Furthermore, respondents could select multiple answers so the proportions cited in the survey data section do not always add up to 100%. Similarly to the statistical data, in instances where the number of responses is very small, the results must be seen as illustrative.

3.   Overview of the Darwin labour market conditions

The Darwin labour force is small (81,550), the labour market participation rate is high (78.5%) and the unemployment rate of 3.4% (2015) is the lowest of all capital cities (NT Department of Business (NT DoB) 2015:1; Neville 2015:2; DoE 2015c). Considering employers in all capital cities, those in Darwin experience the greatest recruitment difficulties, have the highest number of vacancies per staff and receive the lowest number of applications (Neville 2015:3; 2013:23,24,28; DEEWR 2012:7). Staff retention is a problem for 35% of employers (2014); the highest proportion of all capital cities (Neville 2015:3) and of all regions in northern Australia (DoE 2015a:8).

By 2019 the NT is projected to experience the strongest employment growth of all Australian jurisdictions (DoE 2015b:9). The current (2015) and projected (till 2019) demand for labour in Darwin converge in construction; education and training; healthcare and social assistance; professional, scientific and technical services; and accommodation and food services. The community and personal services sector has a current demand for workers, while public administration and safety as well as retail trade are anticipated to have a demand until 2019. The demand for workers in public administration and safety is going to be the second strongest in

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[3] Service Industry Training Advisory Council NT (SITAC NT); Human Services Training Advisory Council NT (HSTAC NT); WISE Employment; Multicultural Council of the NT; Adult Migrant English Program at Charles Darwin University; NT Department of Business; (Federal) Department of Human Services; (Federal) Department of Employment; Melaleuca Refugee Centre and National Disability Coordination Officer NT.

Darwin after construction (Neville 2015:11; DoE 2015d). Examples of occupations currently in demand include nurses and midwives, family day care workers, teachers at all levels from early childhood to tertiary education, librarians, engineers, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, disability services officers, family support workers, personal care assistants, aged and disabled carers, general clerks, nursing support workers, dental assistants and a very wide range of trades occupations including in construction (NTG 2014). It is likely that the need for many of these occupations will continue into the future.

In Darwin and the rest of Australia, occupations that require post-school qualifications will offer increased opportunities for employment and higher salaries (DoE 2014a:30; 2014b:5; Neville 2013:21). At the 2011 Census, people in Darwin holding qualifications at the Certificate III level and higher had the highest participation rates in the labour market, above 90%, and the maximum unemployment rate of 2.5%. People who held Year 12 and lower level qualifications had a participation rate of 74.3% (Neville 2013:21). Thirty-five per cent of Darwin employers anticipate increasing staff numbers, a higher proportion than the average of 26% for all capital cities (2013:29).

Overall, in light of the strongest employment growth projections (on a national scale) in the NT until 2019, and the demand for staff in Darwin anticipated to outstrip the national average, the labour market conditions for the groups under review should be favourable, particularly in the industries projected to experience continued demand for workers such as construction, education and training; healthcare and social assistance; professional, scientific and technical services, accommodation and food services, public administration and safety, and retail trade. A challenge for them may be that around one-third of jobs are not advertised and found informally (Neville 2015:18).

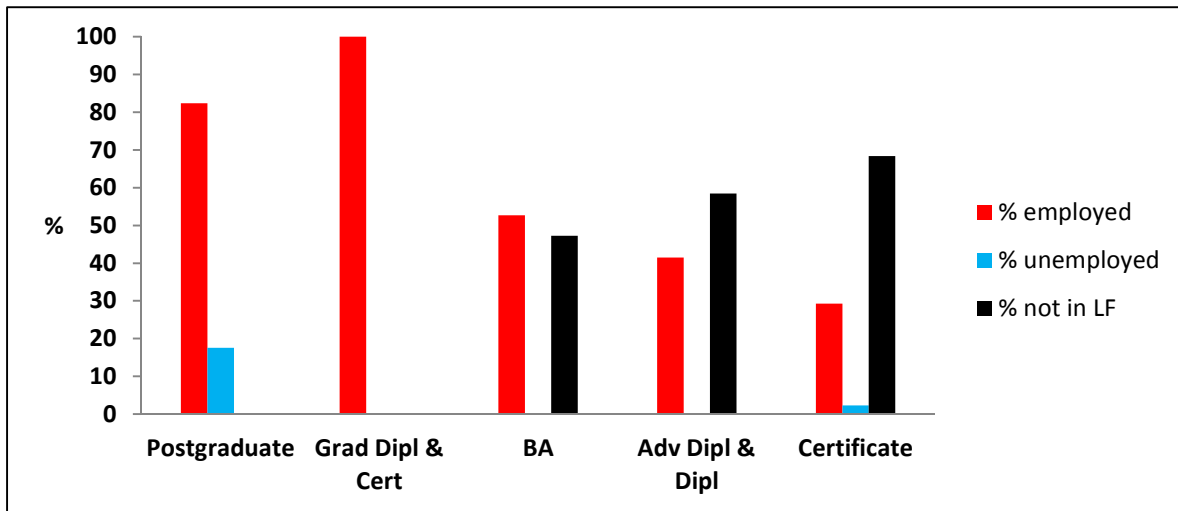## 4. 'Untapped' groups in the Darwin labour market

4.1. People with a disability

At the 2011 Census there were 1,438 people of working age in Darwin who reported a disability. Of them 26.2% (377) were employed and 73.8% (or 1,061) were not in the labour force and unemployed (ABS 2011 Table Builder, customised data).

> ### 4.1.1. *Labour force status and highest reported level of post-school qualifications of the working age population with a disability*

At the 2011 Census, people of working age who reported a disability and adequately reported their highest level of post-school qualifications, had the greatest success in securing employment if they held Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate level qualifications, postgraduate level and BA level qualifications (Figure 1). Numerically, groups at each level of qualification were small, which means that Figure 1 presents approximate rather than exact proportions. Overall, Figure 1 suggests that people with a disability were either employed or not in the labour force while unemployment was low or non-existent (except for those with postgraduate level qualifications).

Figure 1. Labour force status and highest reported level of post-school qualifications, working age population with disability, Darwin.
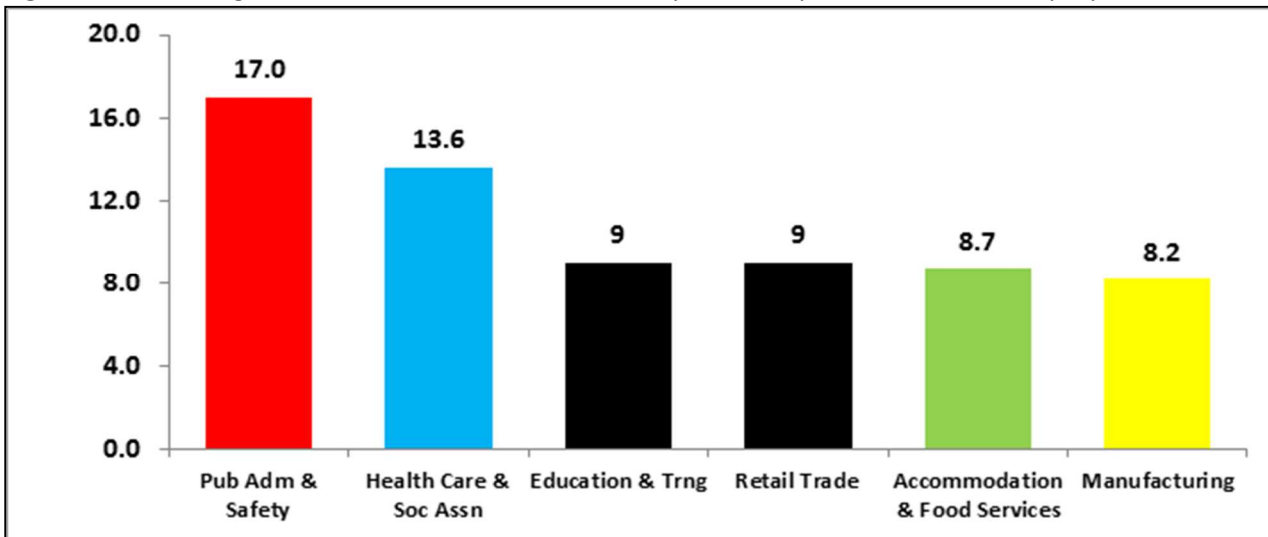

Note: This Figure only reflects those who adequately stated their level of qualifications.
Source: ABS 2011 Table Builder, customised data.

4.1.2. Industry of employment

At the 2011 Census workers with a disability were employed in most industries. Figure 2 shows those industries that had the highest proportions of these workers. Between five and less than one per cent of these workers were found in the remaining industries.

Figure 2. Percentage share of workers with a disability in the top 6 industries of employment, Darwin.

Note: ABS uses the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZIC) 2006. The total figure used to calculate these proportions excludes 'not stated' and 'not applicable'.
Source: ABS 2011 Census Table Builder, customised data.

4.1.3. Occupations of employment and highest reported level of post-school qualifications

People with a disability are well represented at all occupational levels (Table 1). Jointly, 52% are employed as professionals, clerical and administrative workers and labourers.

Table 1. Occupations of employment, people with a disability, Darwin.

Occupation	% all occupations
Managers	10.8
Professionals	17.0
Technicians & Trades Workers	8.7
Community & Personal Service Workers	10.0
Clerical & Administrative Workers	18.3
Sales Workers	8.0
Machinery Operators & Drivers	8.5
Labourers	16.7
Inadequately described	2.1

Note: To code occupations, ABS uses the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) First Edition, Revision 1. The total figure used to calculate these proportions excludes 'not stated' and 'not applicable'.
Source: ABS 2011 Table Builder, customised data.

Data from the 2011 Census disaggregated by disability, occupations and the highest level of post-school qualifications (ABS Table Builder, customised data) reveal that people who held BA level qualifications were concentrated in professional level jobs and those with Advanced Diplomas and Diplomas were mostly employed as clerical and administrative workers. Those with Certificate level qualifications were mostly employed as community and personal service workers, clerical and administrative workers, and smaller numbers as managers, technicians, trades workers, and machinery operators. These results are indicative because a high number of workers employed in medium and lower-skilled occupations provided no and/or inconclusive information about their highest level of post-school qualifications.
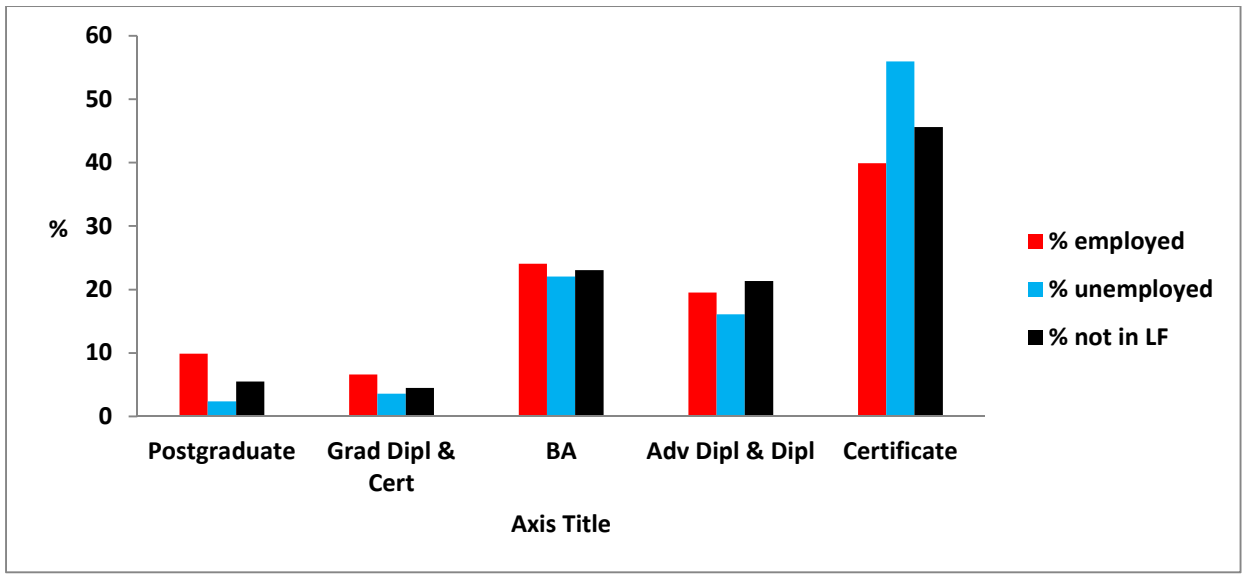
4.2 Mature age job seekers (aged 50 to 64)

At the 2011 Census there were 18,479 people in this age group: 76.9% were employed (14,212), 1.8% were unemployed (324) and 21.3% (3,943) were not in the labour force (ABS Table Builder, customised data).

4.2.1 Labour force status and highest reported level of post-school qualifications of the working age population aged 50 to 64

At the 2011 Census 85.1% of mature age people who adequately stated their highest level of post-school qualifications were employed, 1.7% were unemployed and 13.2% were not in the labour force (ABS Census Table Builder, customised data). Figure 3 reveals that people most successful in obtaining or keeping jobs had Certificate (39.9%), BA (24.1%) or Advanced Diploma and Diploma level qualifications (19.5%). It is at these same levels that mature age people reported having the highest incidence of unemployment (e.g. 56% for those with Certificate level qualifications) and not being in the labour force.

Figure 3. Labour force status and highest level of education in the mature age population (aged 50 to 64), Darwin.
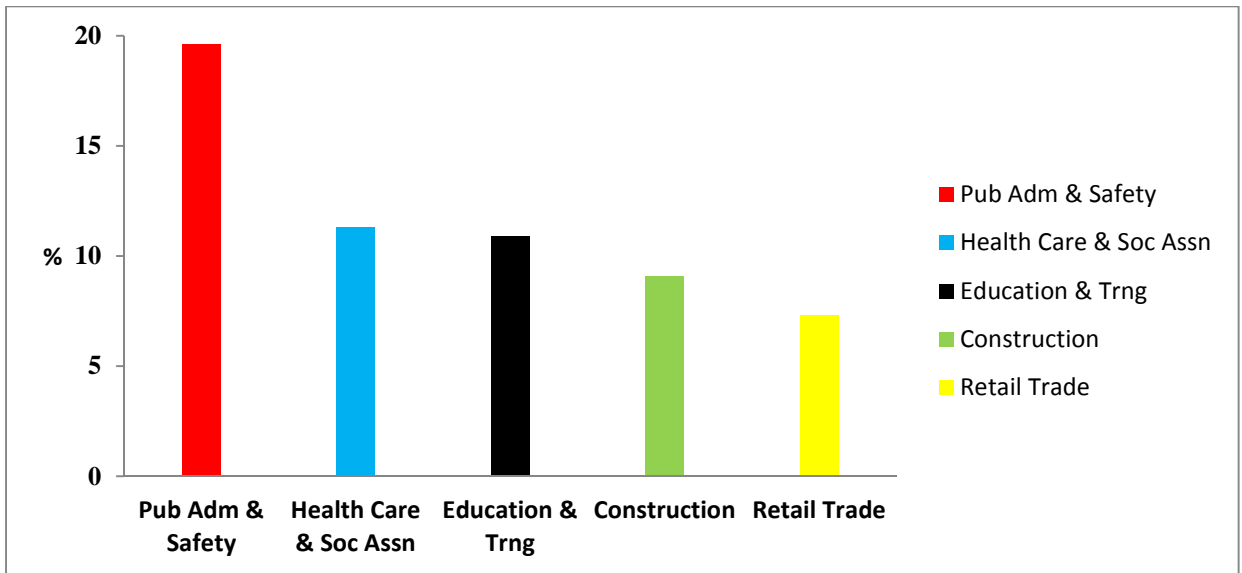

Note: This Figure only reflects those who adequately stated their level of qualifications.
Source: ABS 2011 Table Builder, customised data.

4.2.2   Industry of employment

At the 2011 Census mature age workers were employed across all industries. Figure 4 shows those industries that had the highest proportions of these workers of all industries. Between around seven and two per cent of these workers were found in the remaining industries.

Figure 4. Percentage share of mature age workers (50 to 64) in the top 5 industries of employment, Darwin.

Note: ABS uses the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZIC) 2006.The total figure used to calculate these proportions excludes 'not stated' and 'not applicable'.
Source: ABS 2011 Census Table Builder, customised data.

4.2.3   Occupations of employment and highest reported level of post-school qualifications

Table 2 reveals that mature age workers are usually employed in higher and medium-skilled occupations as professionals (21.6%), managers (16.9%), technicians and trades workers (13.2%) and in clerical and administrative roles (17.4%).

Table 2. Occupations of employment, mature age workers (aged 50 to 64), Darwin.

Occupation	% all occupations
Managers	16.9
Professionals	21.6
Technicians & Trades Workers	13.2
Community & Personal Service Workers	9.0
Clerical & Administrative Workers	17.4
Sales Workers	5.5
Machinery Operators & Drivers	7.3
Labourers	8.0
Inadequately described	1.2

Note: To code occupations, ABS uses the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) First Edition, Revision 1. The total figure used to calculate these proportions excludes 'not stated' and 'not applicable'.
Source: ABS 2011 Table Builder, customised data.

The 2011 Census data (ABS Table Builder, customised data) disaggregated by age, the highest level of attained qualifications and occupation reveal that mature age workers with Certificate-level qualifications were concentrated in the top five occupations spanning higher to medium-skilled roles that is, managers to clerical and administrative workers. The largest number reported employment in technical and trade occupations, as managers and administrative and clerical workers. Besides these five groups, high numbers of Certificate-level qualified workers were employed as machinery operators and drivers and as labourers. Workers holding any of the remaining levels of qualifications that is: postgraduate degrees to Advanced Diplomas and Diplomas were generally concentrated in the two highest-skilled occupational groups: managers and professionals with the exception of some BA level qualified people working as community and personal service workers and clerical and administrative workers where lower qualifications are commonly required. These results are indicative because high numbers of workers employed in medium and lower-skilled occupations and as managers provided no and/or inconclusive or insufficient information about their highest level of post-school qualifications.

5.   Survey results

5.1 People with disability

5.1.1   Motivations for recruitment and employment, recruitment methods

Fifty-seven percent of the businesses responding (n=60) had recruited and employed at least one staff member with a disability in the past five years, whilst of the 25 businesses who further responded to why they recruited and employed these individuals 80% reported they were the best candidate for the position, 24% had an inclusive recruitment strategy and 16% were motivated by

government incentives. One-third (33.3%) of the businesses responding (n=27) reported word of mouth as the most common method of recruitment, followed by newspaper and online recruitment (22.2% each) and using a mainstream recruitment agency (11.1%). Using Job Services Australia and Disability Employment Service was helpful in a small proportion of cases (3.7% each).

5.1.2   Industry and occupations of employment

The most common industries of employment were education and training, health care and social assistance (22.7% each), administrative and support services (13.6%), information, media and telecommunications, and retail trade (9% each) (n=22). People with a disability were also employed in arts and recreation, construction, and public administration and safety. The single highest proportion were employed in occupations requiring medium-level skills; in clerical and administrative roles (50%) and community and personal service roles (26.9%) (Table 3).

Table 3. Occupations of employment of people with a disability.

Occupation	% all occupations (n=26)
Managers	15.4
Professionals	19.2
Technicians & Trades Workers	19.2
Community & Personal Service Workers	26.9
Clerical & Administrative Workers	50.0
Sales Workers	7.7
Machinery Operators & Drivers	7.7
Labourers (non-qualified in trade)	7.7

Note: To code occupations, the online survey used the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) First Edition, Revision 1. Multiple answers were permitted hence the percentage shares do not add up to 100%.
Source: Online survey of SMEs in Darwin, March–April 2015.

5.1.3   Training required

Training and upskilling was needed in 37% of the businesses responding (n=27). The most common forms of training were induction and on-the-job training by others in the workplace (90% each), and on-the-job training by other organisations (with a certificate) (50%). Training provided 'sometimes' involved formal training by external Registered Training Providers (with certificate) (42.9%) and on-the-job-training by other organisations (with certificate) (25%).

Further responses were obtained from a smaller number of businesses (n=8) and they should be treated as illustrative rather than representative results. The training was most commonly related to workplace health and safety (100% responses), however technical and administrative requirements of the job were also prominent. Training with Registered Training Providers (n=8) was most commonly undertaken at a Certificate (50%), Diploma or Advanced Diploma levels (40%) and in single units of competency (33.3%). Overall, 22.2% of businesses (n=9) reported training-related costs. It is unclear if they sought external funding to provide training because a different number of responses were obtained to a question regarding seeking such funding.

5.1.4 Reasonable adjustments in workplace

Reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of staff with a disability were reported by 63% of businesses responding (n=27). Table 4 provides illustrations of these adjustments.

Table 4. Reasonable adjustments in workplace to accommodate needs of staff with a disability.

	Workplace culture	Accessibility	Flexible work practices
Reasonable adjustments	Workplace health and safety-related changes, including of information about disability issues and the importance of disability disclosure	Physical modifications to business premises	Flexible start and finish times, and leave arrangements
	Education and training of line managers about their obligations in relation to managing employees with disabilities	Physical modifications to work stations	Occasional or regular work from home
	Provision of disability awareness training	Information technology modifications Accessible, barrier-free training available and/or provided	Flexible rostering Supported wage subsidies Part-time work

Source: Online survey of SMEs in Darwin, March–April 2015.

5.1.5 Appraisal of employment of people with a disability

Employing people with a disability was successful for 68% of the businesses (n=25), 24% were still unsure and 8% did not find the experience successful. When asked to comment on the extent to which their appointment had been successful (n=14) businesses most commonly responded that these employees were committed to their roles, disabilities did not affect their ability to perform at the required standard and their work was of high standard. Some spoke of long-term employees with disabilities, retaining people with a disability past the probation period and mutually agreeing to increase their work hours. These examples suggest successful retention. Employing a person with a disability was believed to benefit the team by breaking down barriers and stigma attached to disability and to benefit the employee concerned by improving their confidence and self-esteem. A lack of success was illustrated in generic terms such as that workers with a disability performing high risk activities were a risk to themselves, co-workers and the business and in specific terms, where respondents referred to a poor (and unexplained) record of turning up for work before finally stopping, and to productivity losses when employees with a disability needed time off work to recover.

5.1.6 Retention strategies and future employment intentions

Businesses responding (n=10) thought that the best retention outcomes could be achieved by (a) working with the individuals concerned, (b) by ensuring the physical work environment and attitudes of the team were supportive and (c) practising fully inclusive policies. In the former case, it was possible to understand needs of employees with a disability and agree on necessary amendments such as flexible work times; open and honest communication was believed to be crucial. Creating an accessible work environment was important, as was educating able co-workers

about challenges a disabled person might encounter daily. Respondents believed that treating employees with a disability like everyone else was also important for retention. Illustrations included orientation and induction to the policies, the job and the work environment and offering appropriate training for the job.

Seventy-six percent of the businesses (n=25) would seek to employ a person with a disability, 20% were unsure and 4% would not seek to employ a person with a disability.

5.1.7 Why applicants with a disability were not employed

Overwhelmingly, 75% of the respondents (n=24) were not aware that a candidate with a disability was seeking employment. Twenty-five percent reported that candidates were unable to perform tasks at the required level, whilst 13% were concerned about workplace health and safety issues. Other reasons featuring (8.3% each) were that applicants were unsuitable for the available positions, employers were concerned about the costs related to workplace modifications, supervision and training requirements, they were fearful of being seen as discriminatory if the employment relationship did not work, and some thought that the employee culture would not support hiring a person with a disability.

5.2 Mature age job seekers

5.2.1 Motivations for recruitment and employment, recruitment methods

Most businesses (89.5%, n=38) had recruited and employed at least one staff member in the past five years who was over 50 years of age. Of the 33 businesses that further responded to why they recruited and employed these individuals, and how they identified them, 90.9% reported it was because they were the best candidate for the position, whilst 30% also stated they had an inclusive recruitment policy. Word of mouth/networks (66.7%) and newspaper (54.5%) were the most common forms of recruitment media followed by online sites such as SEEK and Gumtree (24.2%). Mainstream employment agencies and Job Services Australia were not used at all by the businesses that responded to the survey.

5.2.2 Industry and occupations of employment

The most common industries of employment were health care and social assistance (17.1%) and education and training (14.3%) (n=35). The industry sectors employing staff over 50 were more diverse than the two other populations presented in this report. People aged 50 and over were typically employed in occupations requiring higher and medium level skills (Table 5).

Table 5. Occupations of employment of people who are over 50 years of age.

Occupation	% all occupations (n=30)
Managers	50.0
Professionals	40.0
Technicians and Trades Workers	26.7
Community and Personal Service Workers	13.3
Clerical and Administrative Workers	36.7
Sales Workers	6.7

Machinery Operators and Drivers	6.7
Labourers (non-qualified in trade)	10.0

Note: To code occupations, the online survey used the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) First Edition, Revision 1. Multiple answers were permitted hence the percentage shares do not add up to 100%.
Source: Online survey of SMEs in Darwin, March–April 2015.

5.2.3 Training required

Training and upskilling of employees aged over 50 was reported by 27.3% of the businesses (n=33). The most common forms of training (n=9) were induction (100%) and on-the-job training by others in the workplace (88.9%). On-the-job training by other organisations (with certificate) (20%) and formal training by Registered Training Providers (with certificate) (20%) were used 'sometimes'. The training (n=9) was most commonly focused on workplace health and safety (100%), administrative (75%) and technical requirements of the job (71.4%). As only two businesses provided information on the level of formal training undertaken by their mature age staff with Registered Training Providers, these results are not discussed. Overall, 66.7% of businesses (n=9) reported training-related costs and the remaining 33.3% reported them 'sometimes'. None of the nine respondents sought external funding for this purpose.

5.2.4 Reasonable adjustments in workplace

As only 12.1% of businesses (n=33) reported reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of mature age staff and two businesses offered illustrations, these results are not discussed.

5.2.5 Appraisal of employment of people aged 50 and over

Remarkably, employing people aged 50 and over has proven successful for 100% of the businesses (n=32). When asked to comment on the extent to which the appointment of employees over 50 years of age had been successful, businesses (n=21) most commonly responded that they had great work skills and experience as well as life experience which were making a difference to the teams and business outcomes. Life experience was in particular believed to be helping them to cope well with high pressure and deadlines. Further comments related to their excellent work ethics demonstrated by reliability, dedication to the job, taking fewer sick leave days than other staff, hard work, courtesy and a sense of values. Respondents commented on their good retention, which in the case of one business reached 90% in the last two years, and that older workers were easier to attract to particular types of jobs than the younger ones. Only one respondent who indicated successful employment also described a lack of success, where another applicant/employee had not been honest about their skills and knowledge and therefore the subordinate staff quickly lost respect in the person's ability to lead and manage a team. Even with additional support the individual resigned after a few months.

5.2.6 Retention strategies and future employment intentions

When asked about how they thought they could best retain employees over 50 years of age in the business (n=25) the most common responses were related to (a) flexible work arrangements, (b) utilising and valuing their professional and life skills and experience, (c) keeping them active and engaged but leaving certain tasks to younger staff and (d) having a fair workplace. Flexible arrangements were related to flexible and/or reduced hours of work, allowing extra time off e.g.

for unpaid holidays and allowing older workers to have a real work-life balance. There was an appreciation of the skills, knowledge and wisdom, both professional and arising from life experience, that older workers possessed, which should be utilised and respected. Respondents believed that older workers should still learn new skills (however, if in training courses, these should not re-invent the wheel) and younger workers should be doing the harder physical tasks for them (e.g. in certain trades occupations), or the older workers should be allowed to move from intensely physical active duties (e.g. provision of outreach services in remote areas) to more office-based positions in the business. A fair and inclusive workplace was mentioned as an important ingredient in a retention strategy. Examples included treating these workers the same as everyone else, providing them with job security and promoting, if suitable.

Nearly ninety-four percent of the businesses (n=32) would seek to employ a person who was over 50 years of age and 6.3% were unsure.

5.2.7   Why applicants aged over 50 were not employed

Only four businesses explained why they thought that the business had not employed a candidate who was over 50 in the past five years. The top reasons were lack of awareness that an applicant was in this age group, concerns they would be unable to perform at the required level, and that their current skills and experience would not be transferable while training would be costly. The small number of these responses does not permit drawing broader conclusions about why businesses may be reluctant to hire people aged 50 and over.

6   Discussion and recommendations

6.1 Employment prospects

At the 2011 Census, there were approximately 5,328 people in the two groups under review who were aged 15 to 64, held post-school qualifications and were unemployed and not in the labour force (sections 4.1., 4.2). If the strongest employment growth projections (on the national scale) in the NT materialise, and the demand for staff anticipated by Darwin employers remains higher than it is nationally, the labour market conditions for these groups should be favourable.

6.1.1   Alignment of post-school qualifications and occupational levels

Evidence gathered in this project reveals that post-school qualifications do not always translate into employment for each group. For example, the 2011 Census reveals that among people of working age with a disability, those with post-graduate level qualifications have the highest level of unemployment from all levels of qualifications and high proportions of those with BA, Advanced Diploma and Diploma who are not in the labour force (section 4.1.1). Reasons for this situation gleaned from the survey include employer concerns that they would be unable to perform at the required level (combination of education and skills) and that high training costs would be involved if they were engaged. Although reasons for staying out of the labour force are diverse, some of these individuals may be discouraged job seekers, who believe that their disability may discourage employers (ABS 2014).

Though only 26.2% of people with a disability were employed at the 2011 Census, it would appear many secured employment commensurate with their formal qualifications (section 4.1.3). For example, holders of BA level credentials were concentrated in professional level jobs, and those with Certificate level qualifications were well represented among community and personal service workers, clerical and administrative workers, while smaller numbers worked as managers, technicians and trades workers, and machinery operators. Higher proportions of those in the survey employed as technicians and trades workers, community and personal service workers (more than two-fold for each of these two occupational groups), and clerical and administrative workers (almost three-fold) as compared to the Census can partially be explained by the fact that only SMEs, rather than public and private employers, participated in the survey. This may further suggest a wide utility of Certificate level qualifications needed in these occupations.

At the Census, high numbers of mature age people holding qualifications ranging from post-graduate to Advanced Diploma and Diploma levels were employed in managerial and professional roles, which would be commensurate with these qualifications. The only group possibly over-qualified were those with BA level credentials employed in support roles for example as clerical and administrative workers (section 4.2.3). This could have arisen from a combination of their qualifications and skills being assessed by employers as out-of-date and suitable for these roles instead and conscious decisions taken by some pre-retirement people to work in positions with less responsibility. High numbers of mature age people with Certificate level qualifications employed at each occupational level suggest these qualifications make them very employable, similarly to people with a disability with Certificate level qualifications.

Overall, the mature age people seem best able to find employment commensurate with the level of their formal qualifications, followed by people with a disability.

6.1.2   Whom and how to support

At the 2011 Census 76.9% of the mature age people were employed compared to 26.2% of people with a disability. The proportion of working age people unemployed and not in the labour force was higher among those who had a disability (73.8%) than in the mature age population (23.1%). First, all people unemployed and some who are not in the labour force in the two groups under review would benefit from assistance to find and retain jobs. The priority populations should be:

1. Among people with a disability – the unemployed who hold postgraduate level qualifications, and people not in the labour force (the marginally attached to the labour market and the discouraged job seekers) who possess BA, Advanced Diploma and Diploma as well as Certificate level qualifications
2. Among mature age people – the unemployed and not in the labour force (the two groups listed in point 1) with qualifications at Certificate, Advanced Diploma and Diploma, and BA levels.

While many of the unemployed may be registered with one of the job intermediary agencies and able to be identified, people marginally attached to the labour force and the discouraged job seekers would need to be socially connected through community associations and individual

community members. They in turn could direct them to support agencies and/or advise of employment opportunities on a more personal level. According to the survey, informal job search methods are most useful for the two groups. As a recruitment method, word of mouth/networks is the most effective for mature age job seekers, while registering with an employment agency and Job Services Australia appears ineffective for them and marginally helpful to people with a disability. As the survey is not fully representative of the recruitment landscape in Darwin, future research could establish for what 'untapped' groups and industry sectors employment agencies and Job Services Australia are particularly useful and how their valuable role could be expanded to benefit other untapped labour force groups and industry sectors.

Second, mature age BA-level qualified professionals involuntarily employed in administrative and other support roles normally requiring lower level qualifications would benefit from assistance to secure employment aligned with their qualifications and skills. In mutual agreement with an employer and where opportunities exist or may materialise in the future, they may be supported to move into roles aligned with their actual formal qualifications. For example, employers and training providers may consider referring them to short, focused courses such as a Graduate Certificate (Certificate) or an Advanced Diploma (Diploma).

According to the survey, the most common forms of workplace-based training for the two groups under consideration are induction and on-the-job training by others in the workplace and the most common purposes they serve are learning about administrative and technical job requirements and workplace health and safety (sections 5.1.3, 5.2.3). The support agencies need to advise potential employers about the need for such training for employees from these groups and encourage them to consider these individuals for higher-level positions if they are interested and capable.

6.1.3   Support needed by employees and employers to achieve retention

The support for employers may need to be in the form of information about the initial and/or on-going matters that need to be addressed when individuals from these groups are recruited and employed. This information would be best conveyed by recruitment agencies, Job Services Australia and other intermediaries between businesses and candidates.

Many surveyed SMEs report successful experience of employing people from the groups under review and between 76% and 93.8% would seek to employ them in the future. Many SMEs already have inclusive employment strategies and retention strategies that together underpin a successful employment relationship. Positive messages about the contribution individuals from the two groups make to the businesses should accompany the advice any employment intermediaries may dispense on:

1. Matters that may need to be addressed initially, such as reasonable adjustments to workplaces by making them accessible to people with a disability
2. The on-going need for flexible, inclusive policies that contribute to a successful employment relationship and retention.

Retention strategies are in many cases *de facto* support strategies (sections 5.1.6, 5.2.6). The common ones for the two groups include:

1. Appropriate training for the job
2. Open, honest and on-going communication
3. Flexible work arrangements; and,
4. An overall fair, supportive and inclusive work environment.

6.1.4   Benefits to businesses, individuals and Governments

The surveyed businesses derive numerous benefits from employing individuals from both groups. While there are differences resulting from specific contributions that each group makes (sections 5.1.5, 5.2.5), the common are:

1. Good or excellent retention (improved ability to address staff turnover)
2. Gaining quality staff with exemplary work ethics; and,
3. Diversification of the workplace (e.g. by expanding and deepening the collective skills set and knowledge by employing a mature age person, changing perceptions of a disabled worker in the rest of the team).

Other benefits in the form of improved economic and social well-being can accrue to the individuals concerned (and their families) and to the Federal Government in the form of reduced outlays for regular support payments and provide a broader tax base. Support from the Federal and NT Governments for information strategies for SMEs in Darwin and the NT about the advantages of meaningfully engaging individuals from the two groups that would lead to an actual increase in the employee intake would demonstrate their commitment to developing Northern Australia. The NT Government would additionally be implementing its vision of the inclusive, socially just NT community presented in the *Framing the Future* strategy.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Government-funded (e.g. Job Services Australia) and private employment intermediaries, other bodies and individuals who regularly or occasionally assist individuals from the two groups to gain and retain employment should promote the benefits that SMEs in Darwin can derive from employing them: improved staff retention, gaining committed, reliable employees and diversification of the workplace.

6.2.2 They should also communicate the need for SMEs to develop support strategies. As the minimum, they should include appropriate training and orientation to the role (and any costs that may be involved); honest communication; flexible work arrangements; and a fair and inclusive work environment.

6.2.3 Further, they should advise SMEs about the initial and/or on-going matters that may need to be addressed when individuals from these two groups are employed. An example can be reasonable adjustments to the workplace. Some small-size businesses or businesses engaging an individual from any of the three groups for the first time may not have the in-house capacity or resources to address these matters. This should be established and referrals made to external

training providers or other external experts (e.g. in order to modify a workplace station to the needs of a disabled person).

6.2.4 The 'untapped' labour force comprises individuals with post-school qualifications who are unemployed, discouraged jobs seekers and people marginally attached to the labour force (not in the labour force), as well as people who are employed below their formal levels of qualification. The potential of the latter group is also being underutilised. Hence, SMEs should be encouraged to establish, in mutual agreement with individuals from the latter group, if they were interested in gaining employment at higher, more suitable levels, and how they may be supported in doing so. If full-time, prolonged university degrees are not an option, shorter forms of training such as Advanced Diplomas (Diplomas) and Graduate Certificates (Certificates) may be considered as a way of refreshing and topping up their existing qualifications and skills.

6.2.5 Certificate level-qualified mature people over 50 and people with a disability are employed at every occupational level. Support agencies and employment intermediaries may discuss Certificate-level qualifications with job seekers from these groups interested in obtaining them as a way of expanding their choice of employment opportunities.

6.2.6 Word of mouth/networks is a key method of recruitment/finding out about employment opportunities for the groups considered here. Community groups, individual community members, support agencies and employment intermediaries may consider providing job seekers with informal opportunities to connect with SMEs and find out about job vacancies.

Acknowledgements

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