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

# Submission No 101

**Name** Lakshmi Kamla Wati Swarup

**Submission made by**

[x]  Older Australian looking for work

# Submission regarding Older Australians

### **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 was forced into a situation where I had to resign.

**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 have explained this in my submission.

### **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

**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**

They are totally ignored, overlooked for promotion,etc

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

**Incentives:**

Remain useful to the community, maintain a sense of self-worth and usefulness.

### **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

### **Solutions**

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

It should be made easier for victims to take their case to the authorities without fear.

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

Maybe another report--i am sorry, I can't see my situation turned around--apologies for being pessimistic.

Message for Susan Ryan

I moved to Victoria, Australia in January, 1989 as a qualified secondary teacher of Science and maths.

I was offered a teaching position at **[redacted]** Secondary College in Gippsland and taught there for four years.

I was moved to **[redacted[** Secondary College in 1993 and have remained there till May, 2014—the day I went home as normal, not realising this was to be my last day.

During this period I have taught Maths, Science, from years 7 to 11.

My career at **[redacted]** Secondary College has been good with the usual ups and downs—issues with students, parents–nothing out of the ordinary and nothing that could be sorted to the satisfaction of all.  I have been quite content with my professional life.

Now that I am 57 years young and at the top of the pay scale, it has become an issue about which I have absolutely no control.

Towards end of 2013, the Administration of the College realised that I cost too much and they can employ two people for the price of me.

To push me out of the profession that has been my life, they picked on a couple of issues with students and parents and magnified them enormously.

At the beginning of 2014, I was monitored by 5 members of the Administration team for 8 weeks.  They would come into my classes and observe me teach.  They made notes of events in the class that they chose—nit-picked negatives.  At the end of each fortnight during that period on a Friday after school, they would sit around a table in the boardroom and bombard me with these nit-picked negatives.  These sessions were so humiliating and degrading after being in the classroom for over three decades.

At the end of the 8 weeks I was called into the Principal’s office and told that based on the observations my performance was unsatisfactory and that he would write to the Regional Director about the next course of action and he withdrew me from classroom duties.

 For a fortnight, I was asked to dust shelves and stack books in the library.  I was asked to put mail in staff pigeon holes and other mundane duties. At the end of this fortnight I was given a white folder titled “Report on Unsatisfactory Performance”.  This folder had 111 attachments of letters written by students, parents, colleagues (some of which I wasn’t aware of) and other documents that implicated me in some situation and had my name on them.  These dated back to 1993 to early 2014.

I was asked to write a response to “allegations” in the content of this thick white folder within ten working days and send it to the Regional Director.

I walked out of the school with this folder on the 2nd of May 2014 and have not returned to this day and mentally and psychologically I cannot go there.

I went to see my doctor on 05/05/14 in a bad state and he put me on a mental health plan and referred me to a psychologist.  I was put on anti-depressant and continued to see my psychologist fortnightly.  I was also put on extended sick leave.

During this time, I started writing the response under a lot of mental and psychological stress.  This situation was having an effect on my physical health as well.

 I also sought help from a career’s counsellor paying $120 an hour for her service.  Among many things we considered change in career direction, while remaining in the Education Industry.

To distract myself from my debilitating state and to seek a change in career direction, I enrolled to do CELTA online from Holmesglen Institute.  This would enable me to teach ESL to adults.

In January 2015, I completed Certificate IV in TAE.  I have applied to many jobs with no success.

At this stage I was unemployed at age 57 with three decades of teaching experience and these qualifications:

    Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAE40110, Chisholm

    Institute,

    English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), Cambridge University

    (Holmesglen Institute),

    Master of Education (CW. Minor Thesis/2A), University of Melbourne

    Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Education University of Melbourne,

    Graduate Certificate in Education, University of the South Pacific,

    Bachelor of Science, University of the South Pacific

I am prepared to work till 65 years of age (or 70 if that becomes a reality) and am in good health.

I would like to submit this account and hope hear from the commission.

 Regards,

 Lakshmi