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

# Submission No 116

**Name** Withheld

**Submission made by**

☒ Australian with disability in work

# Submission regarding Older Australians and Australians with Disability

### **Your experience**

**Have you (or the person you are submitting on behalf of) experienced employment discrimination?**

Yes

No

Not sure

**Did you take any action in relation to the employment discrimination you experienced?**

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.**

After completing my undergraduate degrees (Bachelor of Commerce Bachelor of Business) I applied for in excess of 170 jobs in my chosen field of accounting with no success. Whilst waiting for one particular interview I overheard the interviewer say to a colleague “Don’t worry about the next candidate where only doing the interview to be seen to be doing the right thing”. A regular comment I received during interviews was that I had no finance experience so in 2012 I return to Uni to complete a Graduate Certificate in Business focusing on finance. It was during this time I was offered a 3 month contract as an executive assistant of the organiser of a major local sporting event. When my boss realised my work ethic the contract was quickly extended to 12 months and worked anywhere up to 70 hours per week. When I left this position 12 months ago I initially intended to find work in my chosen field of accounting but after attending an interviewer where the interviewer had told me that I was incapable of doing the role that I had applied for (Graduate Accountant) but that if they could access a big enough subsidy for my wage they would hire me to research what government handouts their rural clients were eligible for, I decided to open my own virtual admin business instead.

**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?)**

Yes

No

### **Barriers**

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

Yes

No

Not sure

**If yes, or not sure, what do you think these barriers might be?**

My experience has been that mainstream employment agencies refuse to deal with people with a disability and refer us to segregated (employment agencies for people with a disability) agencies. The segregated agencies do not have contacts for people who have professional qualifications.

**Does employment discrimination have an impact on gaining and keeping employment for older Australians/Australians with disability?**

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?**

Yes

No

Not sure

**Please tell us more**

It is my opinion that the anti discrimination legislation actually has a negative impact on the employment of people with a disability as employers are too scared to ask the applicants questions in relation to their disability which could allow the applicant to address the employers concerns.

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

**Incentives:** There are very few obvious incentives. It has been my experience that when I've gone to Centrelink because of job capacity assessments etc the staff have been shocked to learn that I am not on a disability support pension. One worker even accused me of not accepting my disability because of my refusal to go on a pension. This is not the case, I just don't have a desire to live below the poverty line, I have ambitions and goals and am determined to prove that people with a disability can make a contribution to the workforce and in deed the Australian economy.

**Disincentives:** There are many disincentives for Australians with disabilities to work;

- attitudes of employers

- loss of benefits

- lack of education of employers

### **Good practice**

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

Yes

No

Not sure

### **Solutions**

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

Education of employers

Educating mainstream employers about the need to work with people with a disability

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

Ensuring more workplaces are wheelchair accessible

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

Education of employers and mainstream employment agencies

Having an expectation that people with a disability work