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

# Submission No 143

**Name** Margaret Sandra Shanahan

**Submission made by**

[x]  Older Australian in 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?**

[ ]  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.**

At age 59, and having worked as a schoolteacher continuously for 38 years (although as a temporary teacher for the last 20 of those years ) , I asked **[redacted]** what my chances would be of securing permanent full-time employment as a teacher with the **[redacted–employer at the time]** if I applied for a position advertised **[redacted]**. He replied that my chances would be virtually impossible due to my age and that should I quote him as saying such, he would deny that he had ever said it.

**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**

As a result of this conversation with my school principal, I decided to change jobs and am currently employed as a Recreational Activities Officer in a residential care facility. At this stage of my life, I feel very grateful to my current employer who does not discriminate against older Australians and is happy to offer them employment.

### **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?**

People are very quick to judge others and employers may be hesitant to employ theses groups due to fears of litigation if these workers are injured. Employers may also think that these two groups may have more sick leave than younger workers, be slower at their jobs, be unable to learn new skills, etc.

**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**

It is against the law to prevent equal participation in employment of older Australians/Australians with a disability but in practice things are very different and many employers have negative attitudes towards theses two groups which are based on outmoded and incorrect assumptions. Please see my responses to the previous question.

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

**Incentives:**

Maintains social contact with others, gives them a purpose in life, widens their world and stops them becoming insular and isolated. Also increases their financial independence .

**Disincentives:**

Negative attitudes from employers regarding age and disability, jobs may not be physically appropriate and be too demanding, locality of jobs may require a lot of travel.

### **Good practice**

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

[x] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] 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.**

My current employer consistently shows good practice in employing and retaining older Australians. We have several staff who are well into their sixties and early seventies and our management does all it can to help and assist theses workers to remain in the workforce.

### **Solutions**

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

Employers need to be given financial inducements to be encouraged to employ these two groups. They also need to be educated about the abilities and capabilities of older workers and workers with a disability.

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

There need to be jobs available for these groups and which take into account possible physical limitations. Permanent part-time work for these two groups would enable more participation. Governments need to value these groups and give tax concessions to employers who,are prepared to gives these two groups a chance to work.

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

I would like to see more older Australians and Australians with a disability gainfully employed . I would like to see employers who are willing to employ these groups be given financial benefits ( e.g. Tax concessions, cash payments etc). I would also like to see date of birth information removed from all documents used by any prospective employer as it is irrelevant.