



4 November 2015

The Hon Susan Ryan AO
Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner
Willing to Work Inquiry
Australian Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001
Email: ageanddisabilityinquiry@humanrights.gov.au

Ask for: Kathleen McClusky
Phone: 9932 1004
Our Ref: A2242263

Dear Ms Ryan,

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

Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability.

Through Council's Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17, we have acknowledged that employment is an important determinant of health and wellbeing both for staff and the wider community. Our Advocacy Strategy 2014-18 and Economic Development Strategy 2015-20, commit the organisation to advocate for and support the growth of local employment and the local economy.

In its role as an employer and an advocate, Council supports the right to work for both older people and people with disabilities, and is committed to reducing the barriers to employment. Council's contribution to the Inquiry is attached.

If you would like to discuss this submission further, please contact Kathleen McClusky, Manager Strategy and Advocacy on 9932 1004 or email kmclusky@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Walker
Director Strategic Development



Hobsons Bay City Council's Submission for Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability

Hobsons Bay City Council's Ageing Well Strategy 2007-17 and Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-17 are underpinned by the fundamental principles of equity, human rights and social justice. Employers, particularly small to medium sized businesses, need to be supported to adopt social values in an increasingly competitive commercial environment. Societal and community attitudes which value the contribution of both older people and people with a disability are critical to improving their employment opportunities.

Preventing employment discrimination should involve a holistic approach which considers: developing pathways into education and training, adopting measures to improve the accessibility of workplaces and transport, as well as addressing attitudinal barriers of employers.

Employment in Hobsons Bay

Hobsons Bay is located towards the south west of Melbourne's Central Business District. Manufacturing is the municipality's largest employer and the sectors experiencing the highest employment growth include finance, health, construction and education. The municipality has a strong industrial and maritime history as well as a vibrant business community. The potential decline in manufacturing with the threat of job losses in the sector (e.g. Toyota and BAE) is a challenge for the municipality.¹ Fostering local business and employment opportunities is a key focus of Council's work.

As a local government organisation, Council itself is also a large employer in the municipality with a total of 849 employees.

Older People

Like many municipalities in Victoria, Hobsons Bay has an ageing population. At the 2011 Census, there were 20,777 residents aged 55 years and over, an increase of 1,467 residents since 2006. Residents aged 55 years and over now represent 24 per cent of the total population. By 2036, this proportion is projected to increase to 28 per cent.

Council employs a total of 240 people who are aged 55 years and over, which is 28.3 per cent of the Council's workforce. The majority (59.6%) are female, and approximately 60 per cent of older employees also reside in the municipality.

¹ Hobsons Bay City Council, 2015, Economic Development Strategy 2015-20, Hobsons Bay City Council



On average, one in three Australians (33.3%) over 55 years is employed full time.² However, this figure is significantly lower for Hobsons Bay residents with only 16.7 per cent in full time employment. Economic independence may be an issue for older women in Hobsons Bay, as the majority who are employed full time (67.5%) are men. Women are more likely to be employed in part time work (almost 60% compared to 40% for men). Those who do not have access to sufficient financial resources face poverty and housing stress.

Employment is an important vehicle for maintaining social connections and a sense of purpose, so opportunities to continue in paid employment are important not only to earn the funds to supplement pensions and other retirement income but also to maintain health and wellbeing.

Older people want to maintain the financial independence and freedom that participating in paid work brings. In a 2011 consultation with 'Baby Boomer' residents in Hobsons Bay, 82 per cent of survey respondents identified that having disposable income to enjoy retirement was important to them. In addition, a total of 44 per cent identified that continuing in paid work was either important or very important to them.

Council supports the view that 'participation' is a broad concept which includes economic, community and social participation. Opportunities for older people to participate in society are becoming increasingly important, not only for them individually but also for what they can give the workplace and the community. Removing barriers to participation is fundamental to enabling older people to live fulfilling lives.

Success stories

Hobsons Bay City Council, like many other councils, is a large organisation with a wide variety of positions and a plethora of job criteria. Council provides over 120 different services, enabling a diverse range of positions from full time roles to positions such as School Crossing Supervisors working approximately two hours a day.

Older people are mostly employed in two areas of Council: as Direct Care Workers providing respite, personal and home care to HACC clients, or workers at Council's depot. These are generally positions which require 'on the job' skills development. Two key success stories involve older people working as mentors and the introduction of phased retirement.

Older Direct Care Workers who are now no longer physically able to provide home or personal care to HACC clients are being transitioned into mentor roles. They accompany a care worker who is in training to the client's home, providing continuity for the client and flexibility to retain older workers in a different role. This type of flexibility is important in order to

² Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015, Willing to Work National Inquiry



encourage and retain an older workforce and large organisations are often best placed to provide it.

Council also provides an option for older people to enter phased retirement whereby their hours of work are reduced and another staff member shares the role, building their capacity to assume the substantive role upon the older person's retirement. This helps with the transfer of knowledge and skills accumulated over many years which may otherwise be lost.

Opportunities

Legislation does not currently require employers to make superannuation contributions to employees after 70 years of age. Council has addressed this through its Enterprise Bargaining Agreement however this is a systemic barrier that needs to be addressed at a Federal level if employment of older people is to be encouraged and facilitated in the future. The requirements for small and large organisations need to be relative and achievable.

Small business need to be encouraged, through funding or other types of government assistance, to adopt measures that attract and retain older workers. Expectations of small business in this regard must be different to larger organisations which have the resources and breadth of work to provide the flexibility that older workers need.

People with Disability

In 2011, 4,382 people or 5.2 per cent of the Hobsons Bay population reported needing help in their day to day lives due to a severe or profound disability. In a recent Employee Diversity survey, five per cent of Council employees who responded to the survey identified as having a disability. Both these figures are self reported, and are likely to underestimate of the overall impact of disability. The National Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2009) states that approximately 17 per cent of the population has a disability, which translates to 14,876 Hobsons Bay residents.

In Australia, 45 per cent of people with disability live in or near poverty - the highest proportion of any country in the OECD.³ Underrepresentation in employment is likely to be one of the key reasons for this.

Labour force participation for people with disability has reduced from 54.3 per cent to 52.8 per cent over the 20 years from 1993 until 2012.⁴ This reduction of an already low proportion is

³ PWC, 2011, Disability Expectations – Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Melbourne

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012, Disability and Labour Force Participation



very concerning, and may indicate that people with disabilities face so many barriers that they stop looking for work.

The issues paper highlights that people with disability want to work and are capable of working. This view is consistent with the views of people with disability in Hobsons Bay. During consultations to develop the Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-17, people with disabilities said that they wanted the ability to be spontaneous and do "the things that everyone else in the community takes for granted. They want to go to school and work, get married, go on holidays and have access to shops and restaurants".⁵ Economic participation forms a vital part of the freedom and independence that those without disability enjoy.

Attracting people with disabilities to apply for Council positions is a constant obstacle for Council. Despite advertising positions through the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator (NDRC) and Wesley Mission, very few applications are received. It is possible that people with disability experience barriers to employment before they consider looking for work e.g. societal attitudes, carer availability or inaccessible public transport and workplaces, and it is important that addressing these wider barriers also forms part of the response to this issue.

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has the potential to empower individuals with choice over their employer, the job they would like to do, as well as a greater ability to get the support they need in order to consider applying for advertised positions. Providing detailed and consistent information to employers and the wider community about the implications of the NDIS throughout its implementation will be vital.

Workplace accessibility is also an important issue. Federal and state governments provide organisations and businesses with financial assistance to make reasonable adjustments to their workplaces. Being able to promote the availability of this assistance may help people with disabilities know that any reasonable physical access barriers at the workplace can be overcome. This financial assistance should be widely promoted to the private sector, especially small and medium sized businesses.

Businesses often consider they do not have the time or the resources to employ people with disabilities. This false perception reflects attitudinal barriers that can be overcome, so it is important to educate the business community about the benefits of employing people with disabilities for both their business and the wider community.

In his farewell speech as outgoing Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graham Innes encouraged employers to embrace targets, highlighting "if you don't have numbers and work

⁵ Hobsons Bay City Council, 2013, Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-17, Hobsons Bay City Council



towards those numbers, it's just not going to happen".⁶ Accompanied by a holistic approach to address the barriers to employment, this may be an approach that larger organisations can adopt with the right support.

⁶ Hurst, D, 2014, 'Disability discrimination commissioner condemns 'lifters, not leaners' slogan', *The Guardian*, 2 July 2014