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

# Submission No 27

**Name** Roger Rex Griffiths

**Submission made by**

[x]  Older Australian in work

# Submission regarding Older Australians

### **Your experience**

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

[ ]  Yes

[x]  No

[ ]  Not sure

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

[x]  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.**

**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

[x] No

**Please tell us more**

### **Barriers**

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

[x] Yes

[ ] No

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

This is not really relevant to my submission but as you ask: everyone faces barriers every day. Surely the question here is more about how a prospective employer can assess the capacity of an individual to perform the work, what level of risk is it reasonable to expect of an employer, and how society/the government can support an employer in taking that risk.

**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**

In 1987 I had some trouble gaining approval to employ a 38 year old on the grounds that he was considered by one particular individual to be too old to adapt to the job, and that he would not be in the job for long - in the event he worked for me for over 20 years. Are such attitudes are less commonly encountered today?

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

**Incentives:**

Maintain an interest - and an income - and to feel part of a group.

**Disincentives:**

I reluctantly decided not to seek full-time employment for a number of reasons which include:

 - I am still working in as much as I am involved with two Australian institutes, to continue with that work would require negotiations with a prospective employer;

 - It would be highly unlikely that I would be employed at the same level that I had attained and unlikely that I would be able to improve on that in a few years (no-one wants to work for ever at my job which does make occasional physical demands - have to be fit and reasonably agile and yet many employers provide little or no support for maintaining fitness)

### **Good practice**

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

[ ] 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.**

Provision of free access to physiotherapy services in the workplace.

The Japanese practice of starting the working day with some form of exercise (or Tai Chi etc). (There are similar examples in Australia, I believe.)

Hearing and eye-sight testing, lung function tests.

Noting, however, that these are also susceptible to misuse by an employer.

### **Solutions**

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

Can this be a matter of education? In the last few days before I left my employer I was surprised and very touched at the number of young engineers who sought me out to thank me for what I had been able to tell them or teach them - for the insights I had. One of my sons is employed as an engineer in a related but distinct industry, and is clearly performing very well in his own right, but occasionally asks my advice and I can often help, just working from first principles. If employers - and HR departments - had a better understanding of the value of experience perhaps that would help.

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

As above! Perhaps employers could be encouraged to actively seek older/disabled applicants.