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

# Submission No 21

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**Organisation name** BONZA

**Submission made by**

[x]  Older Australian who would like to 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?**

*Discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably than another person in a similar situation because of a characteristic they have, such as their age, or disability.*

*It is also discrimination when there is a rule or policy that is the same for everyone but has an unfair effect on people who are older or people with a particular disability.*

[x]  Yes

[ ]  No

[x]  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.**

I complained to Work Cover Qld but withdrew the complaint under pressure from my former workplace

**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 suffered extreme anxiety from dealing with management and took sick leave. I was asked to take it further if I had any complaints about management but when I did they suggested I resign which I decided was the best course of action as less stress than fighting them.**

### **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?**

The problem in my opinion and certainly backed by thousands of mature age workers I have spoken to in my role as **[redacted]** Personal Advisor and later in community services dealing with unemployed is that once you show visible signs of ageing or management is aware you are in the over 50s age group is that you are no longer respected or appreciated.

My CEO suggested that they needed to look for a younger replacement as team leader as I was ageing so there was nowhere for me to go. I was not taken seriously when applying for job vacancies in the organisation and dressed down if I suggested any changes.

The barriers are drawn from the industrial age workplace when grey meant workers were keen to retire so they are earmarked. This is not the case in the info age workplace and mature age workers are willing and able to work on as there is no retirement age and we want to save as much superannuation as possible.

It is the same if you are under or unemployed and applying for jobs. There is little to no interest from employers whose mindset is dinosauric once they work out your age or when they interview you.

**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**

Employers are keen to keep a younger workforce because of misconceptions and urban myths about older workers ability to cope.

Advertising for workers should indicate if mature age workers are encouraged to apply as so much time is wasted by applying for positions that have no interest in over 50s.

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

**Incentives:**

The government have employer incentives that are being mostly ignored because we have an employer attitude which is anti-mature age worker.

**Disincentives:**

Older workers tend to be focused on retirement as has been their right for decades but a new millennium workplace has no room for a negative attitude to work from older workers.

Mature age need to be aware and focussed on the fact that they will need to work longer and they will need to have sustainable superannuation to get them through 1-4 decades of retirement.

Employers have to stop culling their workforce of mature age workers by offering them redundancies or firing them and instead focus on retaining them in a balanced workplace.

### **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

**Please tell us of examples of good practice in employing and retaining older Australians/ Australians with disability in work that you are aware of.**

Not aware of any but would suggest the likes of Coles and Bunnings have adopted a mature age friendly workplace form what I have seen in employment advertising.

### **Solutions**

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

I would like government to accept a role of educating the employer of a need to have a mature age policy in all workplaces or taking a more serious approach and legislate for it.

This policy would outline incentives to keep mature age by allowing for extended no pay leave for travel, shared working weeks, mentor roles with younger generations and awards for long service that show mindful recognition and appreciation of their skills and contribution to the company/organisation.

The policy would allow and encourage mature age workers to stay on in their current roles but they would be diversified to make them feel wanted and proud of their contributions rather than the current negative practices in culling them.

The older workers should be encouraged to contribute to any such mature age policy in their workplace in conjunction with management and the developed policy should be clearly displayed in front office and on web sites that mature aged workers are valued in this workplace.

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

If older Australians have been culled from workplaces then we need to find them meaningful jobs. They can been retrained but there are few options available. Security, traffic control, cleaning are a few areas but they will not take the numbers needed.

A government forum in each state should be encouraged to plan activities that could be initially financed by a grant to engage older workers. I believe we need huge projects in the community that can actively employ older workers such as Tutoring in schools- skills are many and varied but agriculture for sustainability, living history and reading for life are a few that come to mind which could employ thousands in schools and communities.

The forums should be no frills events that list ideas that could employ baby boomers in large numbers and then entrepreneurs/ organisations/small businesses could apply for grants to develop a business around the concept chosen from the public list of forum ideas.

Participants could be entrepreneurs, all tiers of government, community organisations, business and corporate. About twenty for each would be workable.

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

Mature age workers are in trouble. Thousands are already under or unemployed and living off their savings and/or their superannuation that they will need later.

We need to find work for those who are looking and encourage employers to keep those who are still working as valued employees.

I would like to see a mature age policy in all workplaces and workers better informed on why they should not retire early plus a think tank forum on job suggestions for baby boomers.

I have spent 20 years trying to educate the community about these issues through my baby boomer website [www.bonza.com.au](http://www.bonza.com.au) and community presentations and will continue to do whatever I can to support my fellow boomers find or retain work.