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

# Submission No 39

**Name** Withheld

**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?**

[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.**

**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**

### **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?**

Next to impossible to get work or at least skilled work when you are over 45

**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**

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

**Incentives:**

Money - that's it really

**Disincentives:**

Hard to get work and lowering your expectation to get work lowers self esteem

### **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.**

Really none

### **Solutions**

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

As outlined in my document [**at Attachment A**]:

A compulsory federal government register for recruitment agencies

An advice bureau for those people in work to obtain information about their rights and legal entitlements

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

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

**Lack of Employment Options**

I am 60 years old and a contractor in the IT industry. When our son was born my intention was to take a couple of months off work to help my wife look after him.  I was then 45 and have struggled to find work since that time.

Over 3 years ago I started a 2 month contract with my current “employer”.  My contract has not been renewed but I am still working there.  Now I know of 2 others about my age that are currently unemployed and have been so for over 3 years, so in that context I am lucky.  However, because I was struggling to find work I started at a fairly cheap rate and of course because my contract has not been renewed I am stuck on that cheap rate (apart from allowed CPI increases).  In June every year my boss insists on a performance review where he promises me full time employment that never eventuates.  Last year I was very forthcoming on what I thought about my current employment arrangements.

To provide context, my company that I use for IT contracting also processes my wife’s book review work and the proceeds from a small electronics project.  All up the income from my company last financial year was $81,000.  The Australian Computer Society lists the base pay rate for someone doing my IT work as $85,000.

In an ideal world the simple answer would be to find another job. The underlining problem is of course is the lack of employment opportunities for older Australians. In the absence employment opportunities it is a case of accepting whatever job you can get and hanging on to it!

I believe that employers that take advantage of the lack of employment opportunities for older Australians are engaging in a form of ageism even if they would claim otherwise. I certainly feel disheartened by the notion that I am worth less because I am old.

I would like to propose a couple of measures that might assist older Australians in the job market. Firstly recruitment agencies should be required to be in a federal government controlled register. The IT job marketplace is basically controlled by recruitment agencies. Experience has taught me that I am wasting my time applying for any job advertised by a recruiter. They attempt to “culturally fit” people to jobs which means that older persons are instantly excluded. If the federal government controlled recruitment agencies via a register, the government would of course require that they not be prejudice in job selection. This would not instantly end this behaviour of course, but would I believe increase public and government awareness of the issues surrounding prejudice in job selection.

Secondly, given that the lack of employment opportunities for older Australians and the very real potential for exploitation that that entails, there should be an advice bureau. This advice bureau could provide information on the legal rights of employees. In my case for example, is it actually legal for an employer to employ someone without any form of contract or employment agreement?

Finally, I would like to point out that even those people that are supposedly employed to look after the interest of older Australians seem to assume that there is some underlying good amongst employers. That if you get a job and work hard that you will be able to prove that you are as good as someone younger. I would like to say most emphatically that there is no underlying good. If you are old you are open to exploitation – end of story.