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

# Submission No 81

**Name** Anthony Philip Holmes

**Submission made by**

[x]  Older Australian who would like to work

[x]  Australian with disability who would like to work

# Submission regarding Older Australians and Australians with Disability

### **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?**

[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 contacted your organization regarding the horrendous treatment I have had by **[redacted–employment service]**.

**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 severely vision impared person with 3 degrees I have been discriminated against by many services such as **[redacted–employment service provider]** and the many voluntary organizations I have been working for that I have applied for jobs such as **[redacted]**. It has been the most gut renching dehumanizing and discriminating experience I have ever witnessed and been a part of. As a professional social worker my whole life has been destroyed by **[redacted–employment service provider]** and many other employment agencies such as **[redacted]**. However it has been **[redacted–employment service provider]** staff especially those who are legally blind who can treat people such as me like animals. The fact is I should have a job and have been denied this by **[redacted–service provider for visually impaired persons]** especial its **[redacted]** service

### **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 Barriers for these pele are age discrimination and disiability discrimination. Unfair expectations and work demands makes it impossible ofr them experience a normal working career. They are targeted and forced to leave because of a system that enables discrimination to thrive. Disabled and aged people are too frightened to speak up. Whilst the laws are in place they are too weak, they are not policed and the penalties are insignificant. In other words employers and service providers like  **[redacted–employment service provider]** set their own policies and dictate what and who they can employ. My life has been destroyed despite the fact I have spent many successful years at university and working voluntary work with many community based organizations. It has been the same for many legally blind people and has never been addressed. **[redacted–service provider]** have always spoken about the horrendous problem but have failed badly to do anything to change the rules and government policy particularly in your area. My life has been totally tawn to shreads by these organizations.

**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

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

**Incentives:**

Sharing their knowledge and experiences with others. Making equity a common and best practice standard for workers to follow. Opening up services to include people with disabilities and Aged Australians rather than finding ways and means to exit them at the first opportunity. Appreciating that all people with disabilities and those who are older have productive and are mentally and physically competent in many any challenge. They are more adaptable and ready to learn new work practices as opposed to the current discriminatory work practices.

**Disincentives:**

The current disencentives are the horrendous attitudes of employers and management to make a quick profit. The misconception that people with disabilities are not good enough or cannot adapt to meet out changing world are absolutely tantamount in stopping disabled people getting into jobs and the paid workforce. The are subjected to social oppression from birth not given any encouragement and treated like animals aby services that are paid to get them into employment like **[redacted–employment service provider]** and **[redacted]** just to name a few. It is my experience that when you are as well qualified or better than abled bodied peers they immediately attack your disability and ignore the fact that you are as competent as any one else. The problem is that these services are ill equipped to help people with disabilities that are well qualified or even just starting off deal with a society that is intent on leaving these potiential workers for dead.

### **Good practice**

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

[ ] Yes

[x] 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.**

### **Solutions**

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

A royal commission into the horeendous suffering of people with disabilities and aged Australians should be commenced immediately. Penaties and incentives from the government should be increased. Organisations both private and public should be forced to adopt strict rules in dealing with discrimination and bullying of those with disabilities and ageism as employers and clients. The education system should be changed so that youth should understand that people with disabilities are part of the community and require support in overcoming the extreme views and practices of discrimination in our labour force and community. In particular blind and legally blind people as well as older Australians are extremely valuable contributors to the workforce and the community as a whole. They all have an important role to play in the paid workforce and need intense family, government and service support to find their rightful place in the paid workforce not simply thrown onto the scrap heap of hopelessness by **[redacted–employment service providers]** and others who have no idea and no willingness to deal with the complex issues of discrimination and bullying as well as domestic violence that drives these valuable members of society into despair, suicide and chronic depression as they try to pick up the pieces. It is up to the government both federal, state and local and the human rights commission to take positive action immediately. The problem is that the present government are too gutless and stingy to change anything. Their policy is to maximise economic gain at the cost of the productive lives of those with vision impairments, other disabilities and the aged. The federal government on both sides of politics are focused on political survival not on the big issues of discrimination that wipe out the lives of many people. It is alright in opposition to flag major needed changes to enable disabled people a fair go but it is another thing to implement such changes when in power. I challenge you to urgently implement policy, laws, funding and service delivery models that work. The current system is full of service providers that protect their own positions rather than highly skilled professionals like me that are committed to giving back to the vision impaired and disabled and aged their lives within the paid workforce.

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

Service providers should be given funding to firstly educate the vision impaired and aged that they are no longer forgotten about. They should be given a guarantee that they cannot be put under extreme pressure and strict guidelines to meet service provider conditions. That is many job services providers like [**redacted–employment service provider**] do everything they can to prevent clients from being accepted back into the service if they have been previously with the service. Overcoming discrimination in the workforce as it currently stands can take a very long time to overcome. Clients should not be victimised because they have not been given the right about of help to get a paid job. Secondly they should be given more time with professionals each week to adopt appropriate intensive support to overcome discrimination. They should be given a range of supports including counselling, reverse marketing from several perspectives, contact with many organisations that can add to the support given by just one employment service provider organisation. Get them into funded course such as Stepping Forward which gives them ten weeks paid work with a chance to get full time or part time paid work. More programs such as the stepping forward program should be implemented and made available to all vision impaired and aged people wanting to get back into work. People already in jobs should be given more support and a chance to speak out against discrimination and bullying so that they have a chance of survival. Lawyers should be make available to those who have been unfairly treated or who are unable to understand the rights they have to work.

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

An overhaul of the entire system should be made a priority. Discrimination is gone unchecked for many years despite legislation been enacted. The commission should have the power to make changes in each secotr of the workforce, and be able to make widespread changes to the Disability Employment Network which has failed badly over many years. The people that are working in these agencies are often unskilled and rley on a very small exposure to marketing. Marketing has not worked and focuses on those best able to be marketed not in overcoming discrimination. [**Redacted–employment agency**] workers are unskilled in dealing with discrimination and focus on admin work rather than getting out into the community to reverse market their clients. They simply have no answer based on a system that is ineffective. The bottom line is I need a job and wqnt one now as a highly qualified mature age job seeker with a vision impairment. I thank you for your time in changing this horrendous system.