

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

**SUBMISSIONS No 83**

**Name: Name withheld**

**Submission made by**

☐ **X- Australian with disability in work**

**FORM 1: Submission regarding Older Australians and Australians with Disability**

***(a) Your experience***

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

☐ **Yes**

☐ No

☐ Not sure

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

☐ 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 was recently diagnosed with MS. I had been sick for a number of years prior to diagnosis but my doctors did not know what was wrong. I regularly had time of work and my bosses at the time were very discriminative toward me. I was over looked for all opportunities in the workplace. The managers inappropriately talked about me behind my back; to other managers, colleagues and any one that would listen to personal information, which I shared during one on one supervision.

Then commenced bullying tactics (other managers included) whereby I was threatened that I would lose my job if I continued to have sick days. Mind you I had plenty of sick days accrued at this time and always provided a doctors certificate for my days off. I was threatened that I would be sent for a medical review. To which I responded- “Please do, if they can figure out what is wrong with me I would be impressed”.

Upper management were well aware of the bullying, but ignored it and inturn were part of it.

I’ve since moved offices and have not experience any bullying- in fact I am very supported.

**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 Absolutely**

☐No

**Please tell us more**

I was so isolated by managers in my workplace. People that I used to be friendly with stopped talking to me. I hated going to work. It increased my stress level significantly

and inturn had major impacts on my health.

My manager ignored requests for assistance in regard to work matters and repeatedly sent work back to me to complete. Which was in fact way above the standard of my other colleagues.

When I was diagnosed I was faced with huge decisions in regard to my long term life, health and employment. I knew, that if the stress and bullying that I had received for years continued, then I would continue to relapse and my disease would progress.

As a result, I applied for a transfer to a unit closer to my home. Which was granted!

***(b) Barriers***

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

☐**Yes**

☐No

☐Not sure

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

Definitely. I would hate to be applying of other jobs right now. I realise that my disease if really affecting me right now and that I continue to have time off due to relapses and poor function/mobility. However, I am about to commence treatment and the future does look bright and I believe I will return to work in the near future and provide high quality and professional services.

Employers in general are not interested in supporting or employing new people with disabilities which may lead to disruption of there workplace/growth and profit!

**Does employment discrimination have an impact on gaining and keeping employment for older Australians/Australians with disability?**

☐**Yes Eg. My former manager would never write me or provide me a good reference. Even though she used to tell me that I was one of the best employees she had managerd. Once I was sick and disagreed with her inappropriate behaviour and bullying - I was essential outted.**

**She continues to defame me to people in the workplace!**

☐No

☐Not sure

**Are there any practices, attitudes or laws which discourage or prevent equal participation in employment of older Australians/Australians with disability?**

☐**Yes X**

☐No

☐Not sure

**Please tell us more**

I feel that the law has tried to make recommendations about employment of older people and people with disabilities. But it has not been enough to stop those particular people (i.e. bullies) from discriminating and effecting people abilities to work.

More needs to be done about discrimination. It happens everywhere in government

workplaces and it needs to stop.

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

**Incentives:**

The incentive of work for me is to maintain my identity and continue to grow. I am young and want to work. And I want to have a family; to which I can financially contribute. Going to work greatly assists me and other people with disabilities. It provides socialisation, cognitive development and independence.

**Disincentives:**

People tend to have a lack of understanding and tolerance for older people and people with disabilities. At present I have been very unwell and have required a lot of time off. I acknowledge that this places additional work on my colleagues as workplaces don’t often have the resources for people who are ill and disabled .

***(c) 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.**

Of course. I work in an environment with older people that hold and share a significant amount of knowledge and experience. This is essential for the growth and development of differing departments/agencies.

People with disabilities also bring such knowledge and experience, as I do to my workplace. Just because I go through periods of paralysis and motor dysfunction does not mean that I don’t contribute to the overall work environment.

***(d) Solutions***

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

Changes need to start with the attitudes of individuals. There is a lack of education in government workplaces in regard to the difficulties faced by those with disabilities and older people. Take for example the ongoing changes in technology. Such is throw upon employees with little assistance and/or education. Older people and people with disabilities are not alone in struggling with new computer programs and general workplace procedures. More effort needs to go into supporting and properly educating people to be able to effectively complete the work tasks.

In addition, there needs to be better ways of reporting discrimination and bullying. I have over 17 years in a government position repeatedly seen people (and myself) be discriminated against and bullied. When you attempt to stop this, report this you; are immediately outed and considered to be a trouble maker (this essential creates more power for the bullies). I believe that it needs to start with changing peoples attitudes!

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

Due to the government changes- we are now expected to work until we are in our 70’s. Therefore, something drastic must be done as we will see a significant change in older people working longer. We need to recognise that older people are not as fit, healthy, or tech savvy as the youth of today and therefore not discriminate because they have different skills.

In regard to those with disabilities, we need to education people about rights and the desire/need for those with disabilities to continue working. Colleagues, managers and companies need to understand the needs of the employee and assist them to work to there best ability.

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

**Inquiry?**

I would like to see a promotion of older people and people with disabilities. Whereby companies and government departments educate staff about individual capacities

and provide staff with the resources needed to complete their role effectively.