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

# Submission No 145

**Name** Susanne Lorraine Johnston

**Submission made by**

Other  
 Please describe: I study and want tol contribute **[redacted]** meaningfully and be appropriately paid for my contributions.

# Organisation or Government Agency Submission

### **About you**

**What is your role within your organisation?**

Owner

Manager

Human Resources Manager

Other

**If other, please tell us your role within your organisation**

**What is your experience of providing work/services/advocacy for older Australians/Australians with disability?**

**Do you have any case studies of the experience of older Australians/Australians with disability working or looking for work?**

**What are the impacts of employment discrimination on older Australians/Australians with disability working or looking for work?**

### **Barriers**

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

Yes

No

Not sure

**Please tell us more**

As an older Australian I constantly find insurmountable barriers to gaining meaningful, appropriately paid work. Yet until I was around 49 I worked very successfully for more than 33 years - and was paid for my services. So I am sure people like me, who also have a disability, would be even more discriminated against, no matter how valuable their contribution could be to Australia.

**Is employment discrimination a barrier (please tick all that are relevant):**

While working in a job

While looking for work

While dealing with recruitment companies

**Please tell us more**

Point 1 is not applicable, because I am automatically dismissed on the basis of my age as soon as my age is known. In the 10 years after turning 49 I applied for more than 300 positions. Of those I received only 2 interviews. At those interviews I was told each time I was "overqualified" for the position - by institutions like **[redacted]**. After that I saw the writing on the wall (which I refused to believe till then) and only applied intermittently. Since then I have had a couple of short-term consultancies (which is how I historically worked) for a total paid work period of less than 1 year - during a period of more than 9 years. Interestingly enough there is heaps and heaps of high-level unpaid, volunteer work available to me - anytime. I know, as I have volunteered all my life. There is an age-related anomaly even in volunteering: my age seems to preclude me from even non-paid, volunteer non-executive Board positions, an area where I am well-experienced.

**What impact does employment discrimination have on older Australians/Australians with disability gaining and keeping employment?**

I don't know, as advanced age is my only current disability - sorry. From my own experience, as briefly outlined above, I would assume old Australian who are also disabled would be even less likely to get a foot in the door, so there is little hope of them either "gaining or keeping" employment.

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

Yes

No

Not sure

**Please tell us more**

I don't know - see above.

**What are the incentives and disincentives in employing older Australians/Australians with disability?**

**Incentives**

I don't know - see above.

**Disincentives**

I don't know - see above.

### **Good practice**

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

Yes

No

Not sure

**Please let us know about practices you are aware of.**

I have never seen any at all.

### **Solutions**

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

It would be good to create a good database of information that could be used to analyse the types of work these older Australians wanted to be involved in, and also who were capable of carrying out their roles.

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

You could find them jobs?

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

1. Australia to identify and stop the many ways Australia constantly and actively devaluates its old - for example, almost every day I read how Baby Boomers have destroyed this country. I also read regularly about how old the Australian demographic is now. Yet if you study results from the most recent Census it is clear the median age of Australian society is 37 years. Surely this a very difficult median age to achieve if a majority of your population is over 60, and you have a low birth-rate?

2. Australia to actually pay attention, time and money to fully understanding the enormous value its elder citizens contain and can deliver to this country.

3. Australia to then use this information to create valuable, enjoyable, stimulating, relevant, inclusive and rewarding roles for older Australians who wish to occupy themselves for return.