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

# Submission No 167

**Name** Christine Ford

As I approach 63 years of age, I can absolutely avow that age discrimination is rife in the workplace.

I have been fortunate to always be working, until a contract concluded in February 2015. I then applied for nearly 180 jobs, getting at least 40 interviews – but never cracking it for a job. At many interviews just looking at the faces of the interview panel, I knew I wouldn’t get anywhere. I wanted to work locally, but expanded my job search, often travelling up to 80kms to interviews. Waste of time. After 6 weeks, I was suffering severely from depression, and my friends were very concerned. I went to one interview where I was offered the job, but was asked to come back the next morning to meet the manager. I did, but in the middle of the interview, the owner asked to speak to the other 2 girls outside. I overheard him saying to them that he was worried about the ‘age demographic’ of having a senior person – that he would prefer someone in the same age group as current staff. I got up and left the room, saying to them as I left that I had heard what they had said, and wouldn’t feel comfortable working in a company that concentrated on age, not ability.

My neighbour told me that the local school was looking for cleaners. I went down, spoke to them and left my details. I followed up the next day, but they said there were ‘no jobs available’. The next week, they advertised for cleaners. I went back and spoke to them, but was again told there was no positions. The absolute worst people to deal with are employment agencies – the way they treat older work seekers is just disgraceful. It is rampant.

So instead of falling into a deep hole, or something worse, I decided to look outside the square. I did my research, and headed out into the country where top workers are valued for their ability not just youth. Now at the age of 63, I have just got a job in the Public Service, on an excellent salary. I am very happy with the job, the work I do, the people I work with, and the place I live. But, boy has it cost me allot of money, simply to get a job. I really feel as though I have had to pay to work. What really annoys me, is that I had to rent my house out, after working hard to pay it off. BUT now I have to pay tax on that rental income – I cannot offset it against the rent I have to pay at my new job. That I believe is extremely unfair. The Govt wants people to work longer, and should be encouraging older people to do this – move to where they can get a job. But don’t penalize them! Should be able to offset the rental income against rental expense. I now not only have to pay rent, but tax on my rental income. So I am effectively penalized for getting out and finding a job.

I have friends my age who cannot get a job. Some are retraining in jobs they loathe, at base junior rates, simply to stay working. We all have minimal to low super.

The Govt offers $10,000 to employers who take on senior workers. BUT to qualify is just ridiculous. This incentive should be available to all employers who take on workers over the age of 50. Bring back the Pensioner Bonus Scheme, and allow rental income to be offset against rental expense. On one hand the Govt wants seniors to work, but on the other hand, makes it bloody hard to do so.