

Career Development Association of Australia Inc

Willing to Work Submission December 2015

“Coaching is all about having someone believe in you and encourage you, about getting valuable feedback, about seeing things from new perspectives and setting your sights on new horizons” – anon.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| About the Career Development Association of Australia Inc (CDAA)..... | 2 |
| Purpose | 2 |
| Background | 2 |
| Employment Services..... | 3 |
| Example Government Funded Coaching & Career Advice Services Involving CDAA..... | 4 |
| The Grey Matters program; Victorian Employers’ Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) | 4 |
| The National Career Advice Telephone Service..... | 12 |
| Career planning..... | 13 |
| Resume appraisal..... | 13 |
| Career coaching as intervention | 14 |
| Understanding the labour market | 14 |
| Job search skills..... | 15 |
| Recommendations | 16 |

About the Career Development Association of Australia Inc (CDAA)

CDAA is a member based Association, originally formed in 1989 (and formerly known as the Australian Association of Career Counsellors). Membership is diverse and broadly consists of highly qualified practitioners delivering career coaching, counselling and development activities within the education system (generally covering students from year 10 and above, in both public and private schooling environments, and higher education facilities such as TAFE and universities), in employed roles within organisations, in private practice, and in research functions and government department roles.

CDAA is Australia's largest and only cross-sector association of career development professionals. Career practitioners help people manage their careers, make occupational and study decisions, plan career transitions and find career information. They also work with organisations to support career and workforce development.

The Association is committed to the *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners (the Standards)*, and membership of CDAA is strictly governed by alignment to the *Standards*, in turn resulting in high degrees of confidence when accessing services from a qualified member.

Purpose

The purpose of this response is to represent the view of CDAA in addressing improved delivery of career services to mature aged and disability affected members of the public, in order to better address the employment or re-employment needs of older people or people with disability – free from any form of discrimination. In addition, this response offers potential solutions for the Commission to consider.

Background

CDAA professional (and higher level categories of membership) members are highly qualified in all matters to do with career and workforce development. The professional level of membership requires - apart from relevant experience - academic qualifications that evidence capability in core, career development competencies –

- Career Development Theory
- Labour Markets
- Advanced Communication Skills
- Ethical Practice
- Diversity
- Information and Resource Management
- Professional Practice

In practical application, CDAA members also utilise a range of tools (usually on an accredited or credentialed basis) to assist people explore and understand their interests, values and skills, and often combine these tools with psychological qualification in helping individuals formulate realistic career plans, including closure of gaps. This also leads to assistance in tapping labour markets (both visible and hidden), developing appropriate resumes, creating job specific cover letters and selection criteria, becoming familiar with interview techniques, and often extending to elements of job search. Over a number of years, CDAA and its members have been directly involved in delivering activities

associated with various government (Commonwealth and State) initiatives – however sustained funding of those initiatives has not been forthcoming; and the services provided through Commonwealth employment services (*jobactive*) generally fall short of appropriately qualified delivery.

Employment Services

In the current employment services environment (known as *jobactive*), any person seeking any form of government supported employment assistance (including financial through forms of unemployment benefit and job search assistance services), is assessed for the degree to which support is provided. This is undertaken with a *Job Seeker Classification Instrument* whereby the unemployed person is assessed to fall into one of three “Streams” – A, B or C (prior to *jobactive* there were four Streams – 1 to 4; note also that Stream C is defined for people with “Serious Non Vocational Issues”). The model is structured on a questionnaire, and a statistical outcome based on responses to the questionnaire, in determining the Stream – and therefore extent of support – to which the job seeker is allocated. Without knowing precisely how the Stream outcome is determined, it’s understood that where a job seeker also has built some degree of financial self-sufficiency (that is, savings), or has some level of support (through, for example, a partner who obtains a certain level of income), that job seeker may not qualify for any level of support.

Anecdotally, there is some correlation between mature aged people experiencing an out of work status, and being in a position where they either rely on income generated by a partner, or they need to access their savings before they are able to access any government provided support services. That is not to say that some mature aged people do not receive support through the Streams – but again anecdotally, there appears to be some correlation between lower skilled mature aged people and those able to access government support.

Where a mature aged Job Seeker does qualify for a Stream, they can expect to receive the following support from an Employment Provider (under *jobactive*)¹ –

- Services delivered with an understanding of employment and labour markets
- Support to make sure the Job Seeker is equipped to meet the needs of employers
- Identification of jobs for the Job Seekers, and actions by the Employment Provider that ensures the Job Seeker applies for and accepts any suitable job for which they are eligible

Employment Providers are also expected to implement strategies to develop and deliver training that is tailored to the specific needs of employers, and the Job Seeker should expect to receive –

- A comprehensive initial interview
- A jointly prepared/negotiated Job Plan
- Financial support to close gaps in the Job Plan
- Job search assistance

Disappointingly, there does not appear to be any definitive baseline requirements associated with the content of a “comprehensive initial interview” (for example, there does not appear to be a published guideline to determine a Job Seekers interests, values and capabilities), and the *Exposure Draft* does not set a baseline minimum requirement in terms of professionalism, qualification or capability of the Employment Provider staff delivering these services (whether or not such minimum

¹ Exposure Draft for Employment Services 2015 - 2020

requirements are included in Deeds or other contractual documents with *jobactive* providers is unknown to CDAA). *Prima facie*, the *Exposure Draft* on which Employment Providers were appointed, appears to encourage a focus on job filling, rather than carry any form of fact find and analysis of career outcomes from the perspective of the Job Seeker, and furthermore, there is no requirement for providers of the services to be qualified to any defined extent.

Example Government Funded Coaching & Career Advice Services Involving CDAA

The Grey Matters program; Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI)

The Grey Matters program was initially funded by the Victorian Government in response to the release in 2002, of the first *Intergenerational Report*. The purpose of the funding was to develop an education awareness program targeted at employers to explain the myths and realities of the changing nature of the Australian workforce and the ageing population impact on the demographic profile. This initiative was funded under the *Positive Ageing* program and joint research and product materials were developed with the *Business, Work and Ageing Centre for Research* at Swinburne University. The project became known as the Grey Matters initiative and was funded only for the 2005-2006 period.

However, concerns with regard to increasing unemployment rates amongst mature aged people in Victoria led to the Victorian Government establishing the *Victoriaworks for Mature Workers* program. VECCI was approached in 2009 to submit a proposal under the program as existing providers were not gaining the traction required to successfully place unemployed mature workers into employment.

The program was targeted at those in the 45-54 age group and those in the 55-65 age group. The program had 268 participants from 2010 – 2011 and the original intention was to provide training interventions to reskill participants for job roles in growth sectors such as business services, the hospitality sector and also to respond to the demand for employees in the community services sector. However it became apparent that many of the participants required further assistance through career development services, which had not been accessed by participants through their working life.

Negotiations with the relevant Department saw the suite of services to be provided being augmented to increase the employment outcomes for the participants through qualified career coaching interventions. A formal arrangement was developed with the CDAA so that program participants could access the "Find a Practitioner" pages of the Association website, and service costs were covered under the program budget allocation that covered interventions. Services provided included:

- Resume review
- Career coaching
- Job search support
- Job specific training
- Consultancy training
- Employer introductions

It's important to note that these services are consistent, depending on the allocated *jobactive* stream, with the services that are included in Employment Provider services – **the only difference being that the services delivered through the Grey Matters program were delivered by qualified career practitioners.**

Diversity of participants (*Figure 1*) ranged from those commonly described as unskilled, through to more highly qualified skill holders. There is no reason to believe this range differs from those who may present to Employment Providers under *jobactive*. However, those involved in the Grey Matters program did include people who had been precluded from qualifying for services delivered under the Stream categorisation applying to the *Job Services Australia* regime (pre-dating *jobactive*), and preclusion reasons included availability of financial support through other sources. So for these Grey Matters participants, this was the only program providing career development and advice support (unless sought – and financed - independently).

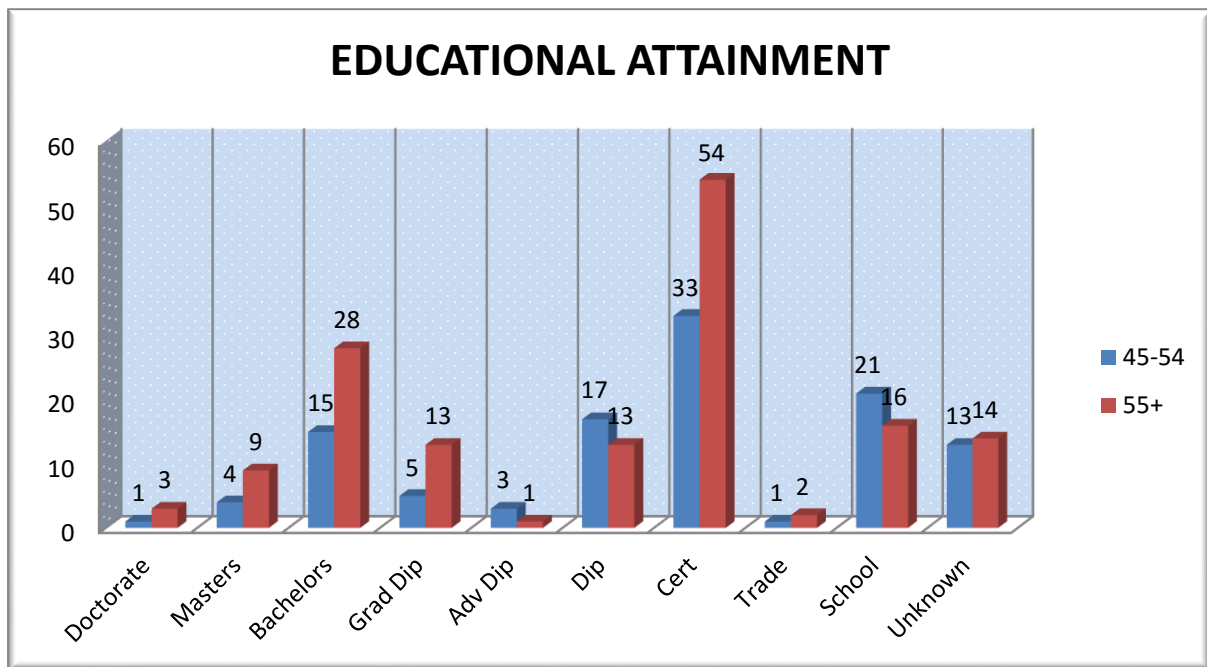


Figure 1

Figure 2 represents the unemployment duration of the Grey Matters participants, at the commencement of the program. And whilst data represented duration categories, an indicative average duration of unemployment across these participants was approximately 48 weeks. This average is marginally favourable against the 62 week average reported by the *Australian Law Reform Commission* report *Access All Ages – Older Workers and Commonwealth Laws*², but arguably comparable. Perhaps more importantly, the average far exceeds the unemployment duration experienced in younger cohorts – 34 weeks for 25-44 year olds, and 24 weeks for 15-24 year olds³.

² *Access All Ages – Older Workers and Commonwealth Laws*; Australian Law Reform Commission; March 2013 – page 55

³ *Ibid*

Figure 3 then splits the participants between those receiving support from *Job Services Australia* (now *jobactive*) providers, and those not receiving. Overwhelmingly, participants in the Grey Matters program were not recipients of *Job Services Australia* support.

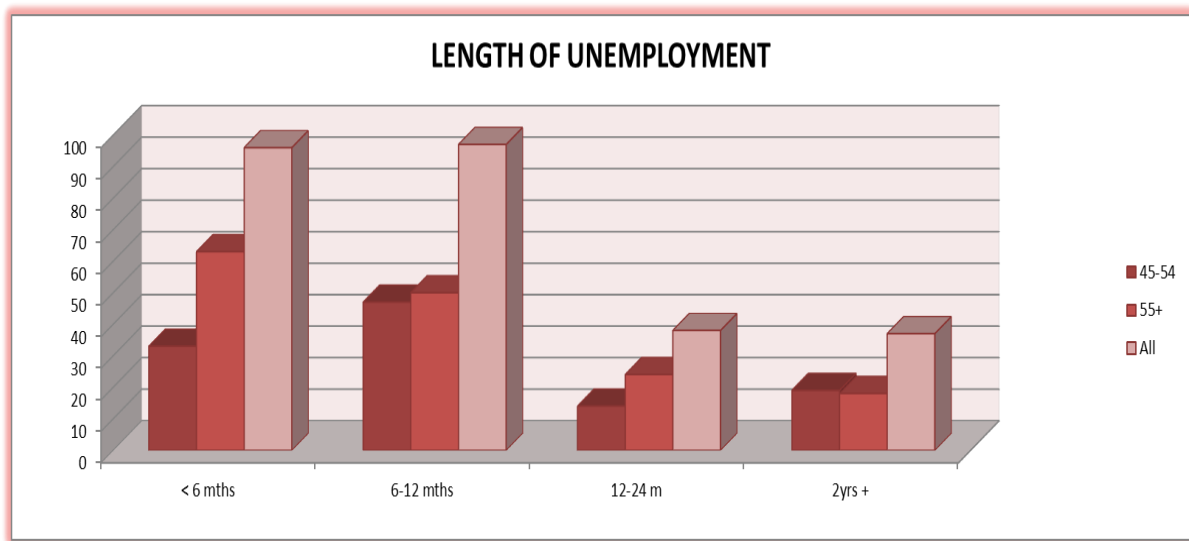


Figure 2

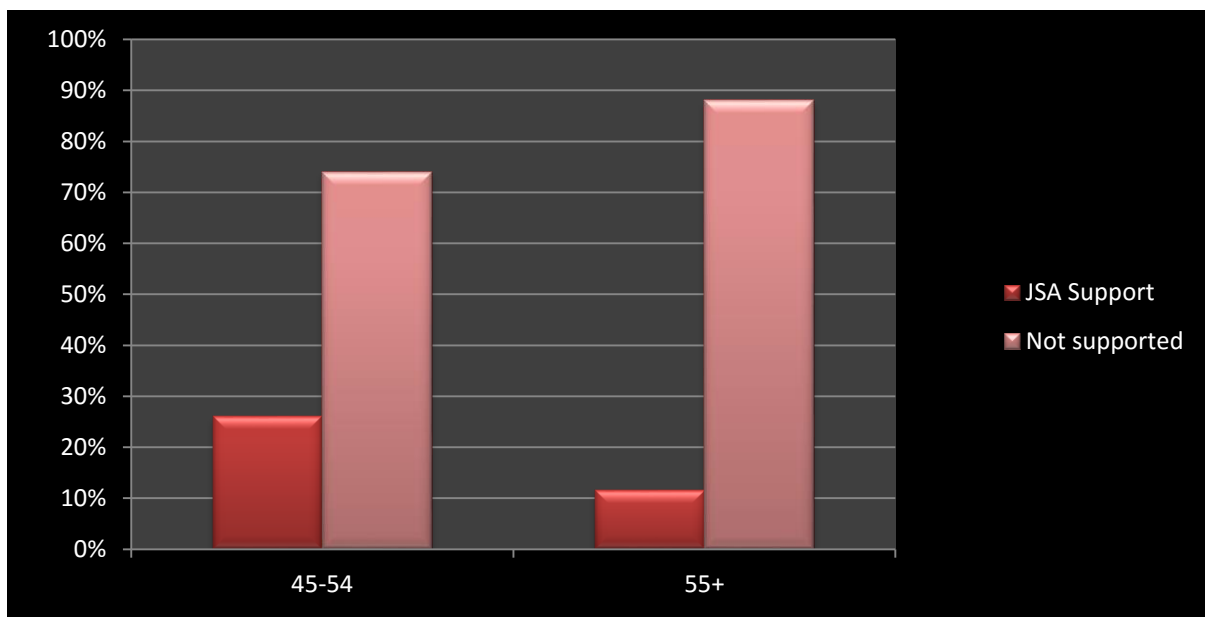


Figure 3

It's worth repeating, in slightly different words, that the primary difference between service provided under Grey Matters and *Job Services Australia* (*jobactive*) was the extent of qualification of the individual service provider (and arguably a focus on outcome for the individual as distinct from a measured employment outcome for the purposes of contract payment associated with *Job Services Australia* [*jobactive*]).

Outcomes under Grey Matters were impressive. *Figure 4* evidences the industries in which employment outcomes were achieved.

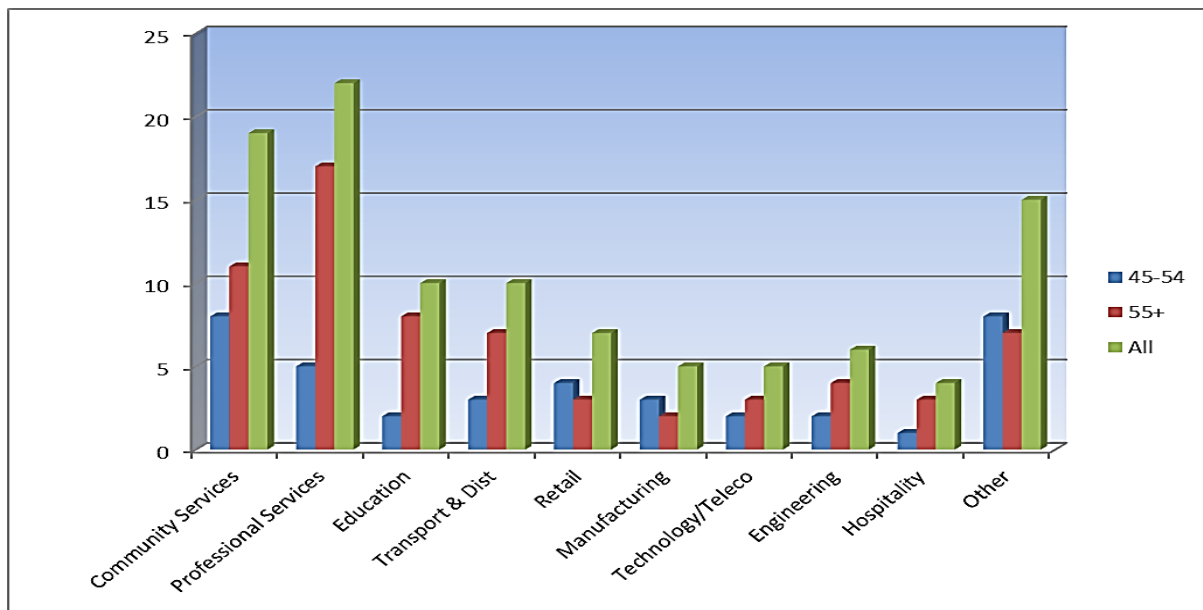


Figure 4

Of the 268 participants, 139 achieved employment outcomes (42% in the 45-54 age range, and 58% in the 55+ age range). Importantly, 65% of all employment outcomes had participated in career and resume reviews, job search training, and/or career coaching.

In terms of unemployment duration assisted –

- 44.5% had been unemployed for 6-12 months
 - 39.6% had been unemployed for less than 6 months
 - 10% had been unemployed for 12-24 months
 - 6% had been unemployed for more than 24 months
- (NB: percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding)

This suggests that intervention and support to unemployed mature aged people is best delivered early (in the first 12 months) in periods of unemployment.

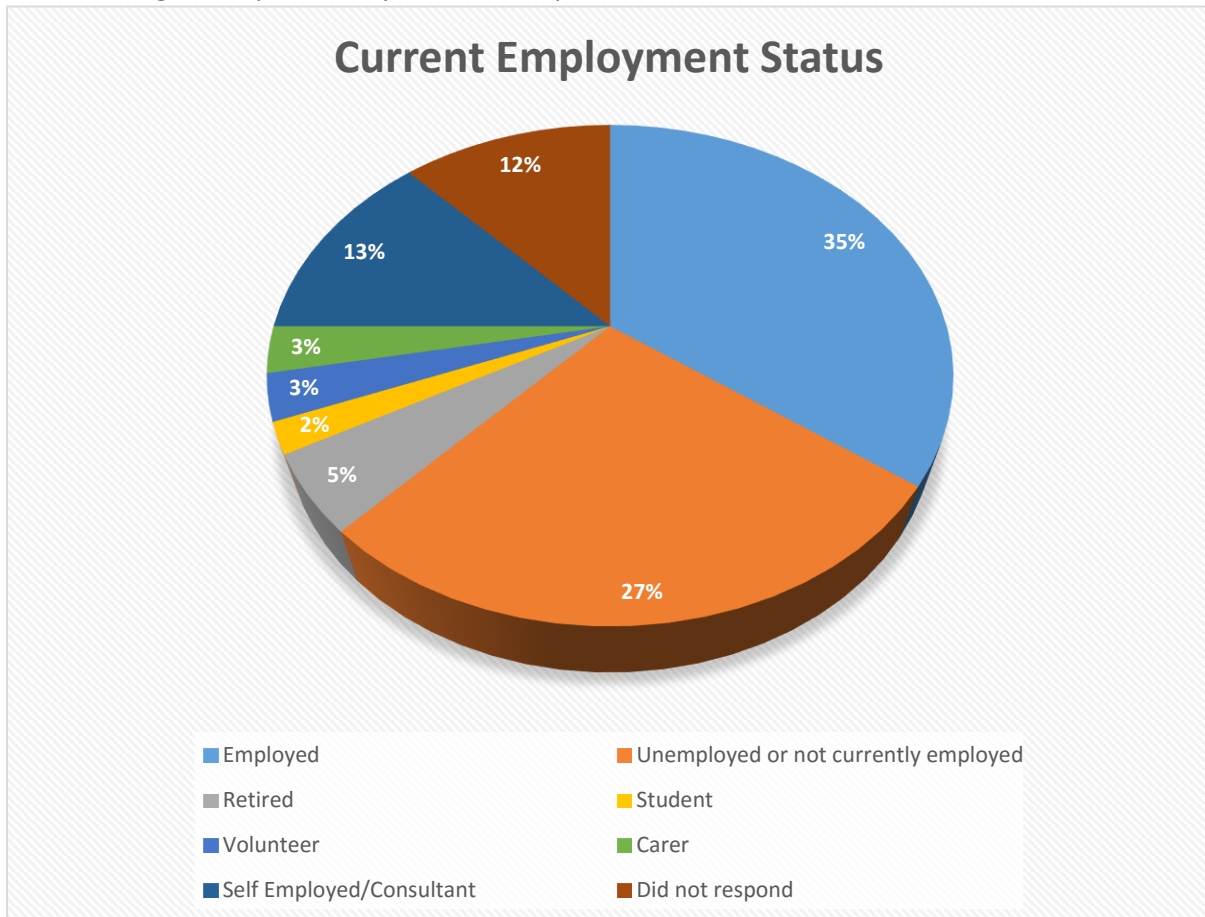
VECCI was interested to review how participants had fared since the conclusion of the program in June 2011, and in partnership with the *Business, Work and Ageing Centre for Research* a survey instrument was developed and distributed to all participants in 2013. There was a 22% response rate (n=60) - 44% of respondents were male and 53% female with an error margin of 3% for respondents not identifying gender.

This second stage follow up of participants involved questions developed in order to assess:

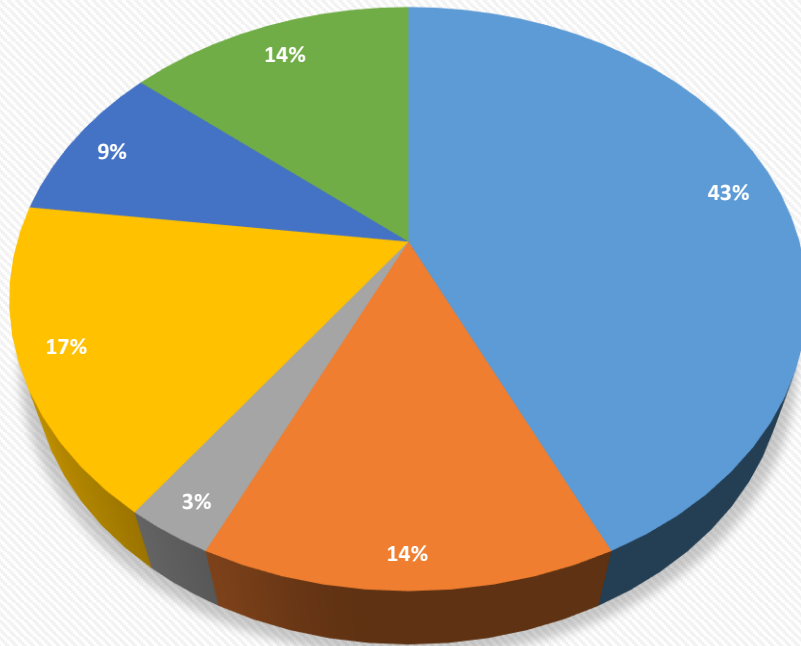
- The value and use of the program initiative through registration and assessment;
- The career development process undertaken with the 45-54 age group and 55+ age group to provide further insight into the usefulness of career development - including coaching, guidance and counselling;
- A broader range of services in job search training, counselling and consultancy;

- Experience before, during and after the program in dealing with recruitment companies and also in job application processes to identify issues associated with perceived age discrimination (eg invisibility and exclusion) from consideration as an applicant; and
- Issues impacting on the workability of participants.

The following charts provide key results of responses:

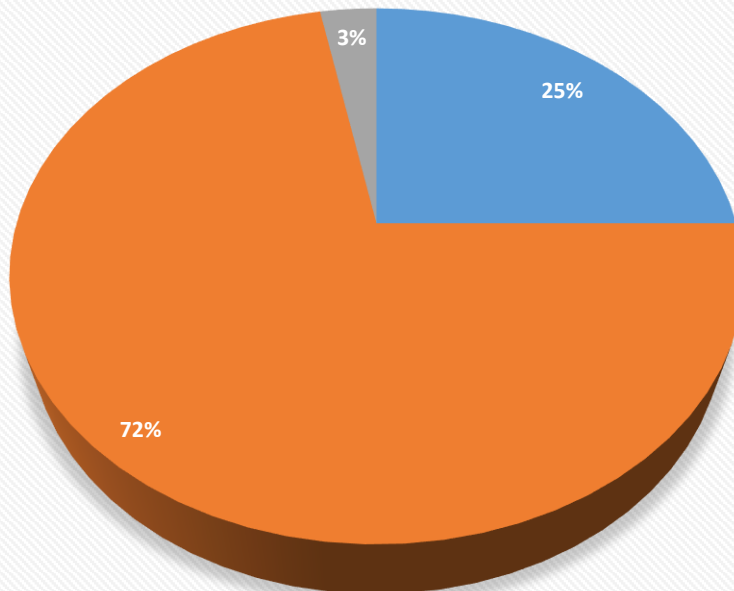


Length of Time to Secure Employment



0-3 Mths 4-6 Mths 7-10 Mths 11-18 Mths 18+ Mths Did not respond

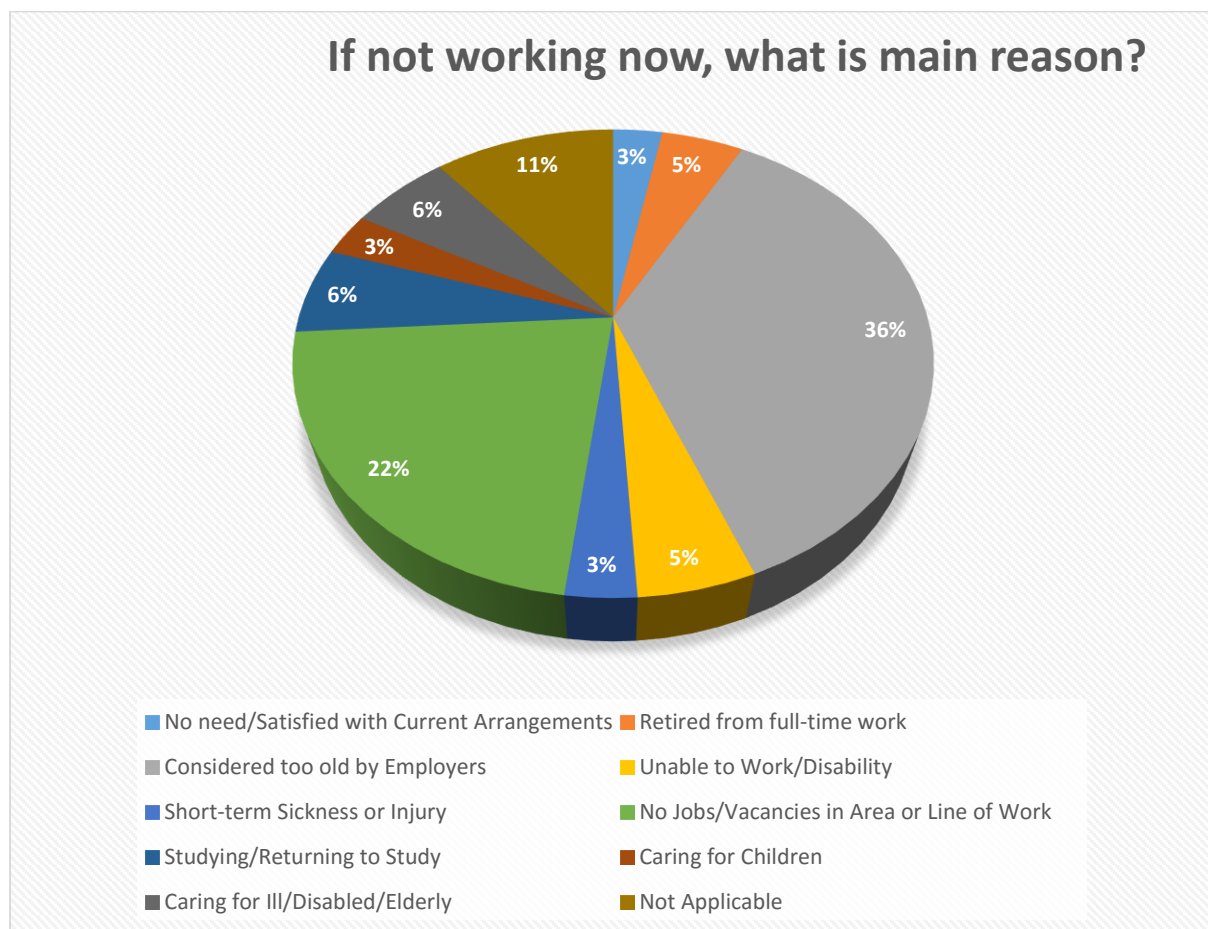
Rec'd any Job Search Assistance through Centrelink, JSA or DES?



Yes No Did not respond

As only 16% were registered with a JSA, mature age jobseekers fell between federal government program cracks. Only a quarter of respondents received job search assistance through Centrelink, JSA or DES. The reach of government employment services in providing job search assistance to mature aged jobseekers was particularly low and 72% did not receive any form of government funded job search assistance.

“The availability of appropriate job search assistance is important in determining whether mature age Australians can find employment”⁴ further evidences the need for qualified intervention for mature aged job seekers. This report further identifies that mature-age jobseekers often experience difficulty finding employment because of out-dated job search skills, having skills and knowledge that are not in demand in the present labour market, and age discrimination.



A significant finding of the survey was that the predominant reason for unemployment according to respondents is age discrimination. This finding indicates that participants were highly conscious of processes which impeded older workers’ job seeking.

Age discrimination in recruitment is a major barrier to employment as shown in a review of age discrimination in employment conducted for the *Equal Opportunity Commissions of Victoria*, (Brooke 2001). Youthful images projected by particular ‘youth centric’ industries (such as information

⁴ National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre, August 2012 – Barriers to Mature Age Employment: Final Report of the Consultative Forum on Mature Age Participation; p.12

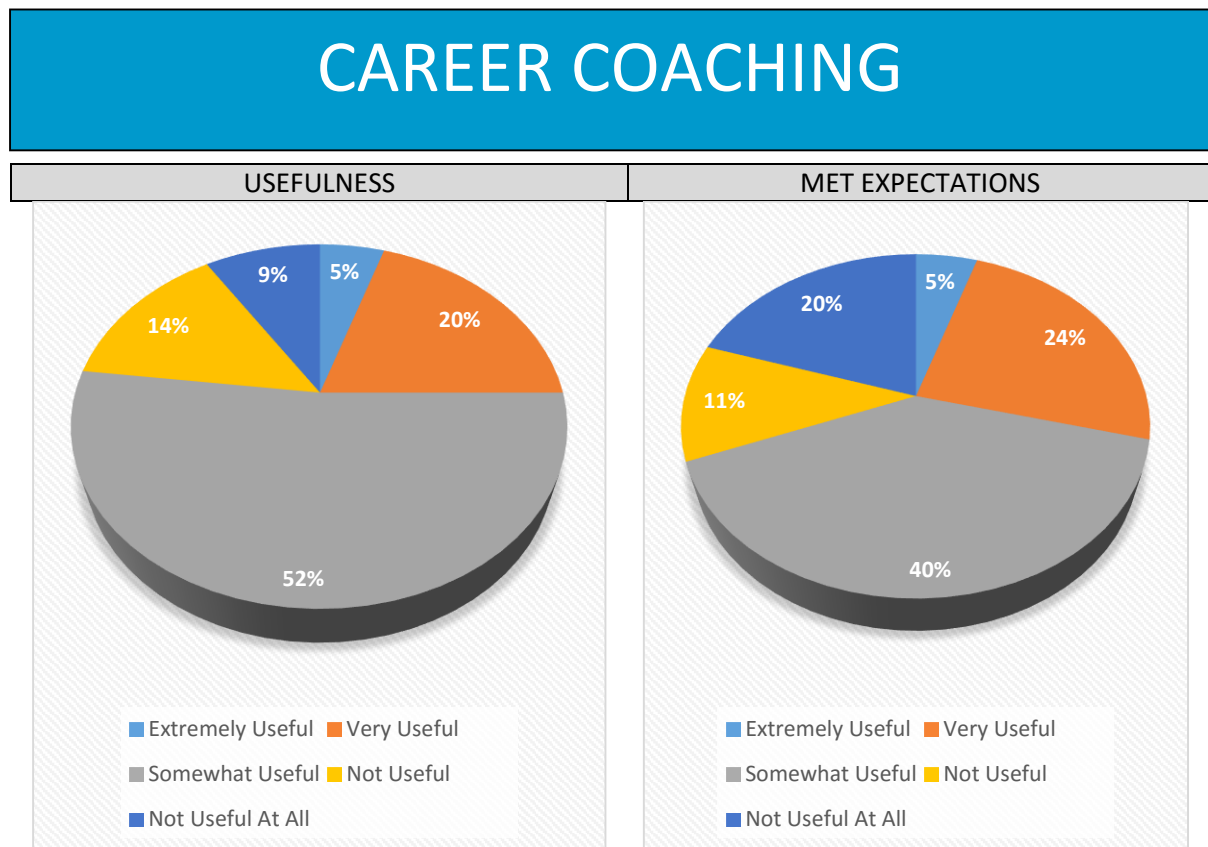
technology and financial services) often imply that older people lack the adaptability to learn technical skills.

Additionally, the *Australian Human Rights Commission* (2010) points to a range of stereotypes of older people as being a risk due to inability to learn new skills, and seen as too 'dependent', in decline and offering 'more limited returns in investment'.

Another finding in relation to recruitment consultants' attitudes indicated that 56% of respondents felt discrimination due to age was most definitely a factor. The interaction between the age of recruiters and mature age candidates has also been highlighted (Brooke 2003) and age stereotyping can effectively screen out mature age candidates.

A related finding was the number who had made a decision to cease attempting to seek work because the recruitment process was either too difficult (34%) or the job seeker faced too many objections to continue (53%). It could be construed that the recruitment process was found to constitute a formidable and often insuperable barrier by the vast proportion of respondents (87%). The implications of this experience with recruitment should influence the design or programs provided by the government's employment services. This also suggests that recruitment should take into account the age-specific target group and adapt recruitment practices to match this group.

In terms of Career Coaching the following results were most interesting:



A total of 77% found career coaching to be useful. Given the recruitment barrier of age discrimination, career coaching has made a reasonable contribution to employability.

This finding can be viewed as a **headline factor of the contribution of career coaching to employability, taking into account the environment of age discrimination, lack of training and jobs.**

The question of whether career coaching met expectations depends on whether expectations were low or high at the outset. The direction of expectation was overwhelmingly positive as 69% considered that it met their expectations.

In terms of responses to the issue of what could have assisted participants there was a mix of findings. The assistance provided by Grey Matters **provided social support from peers** most strongly (to a very large extent and to a large extent) to around half the respondents (51%). Other factors receiving strong agreement were provision of **realistic information** (32%), support to reinforce **self-esteem** (31%), and **general job search support** (33%).

Grey Matters was less successful in providing skills development (13%), information which assisted respondents in contacting recruitment agencies (19%), career transition advice (19%) and contacting prospective employers (25%).

A reasonable conclusion from this data is that **social support is a major outcome of the program for at least half the respondents.**

The findings of the VECCI Research and Grey Matters project have been presented to the CDAA annual conference in 2014 and also to the Career Development Association of New Zealand annual Symposium (also held in 2014). The findings were also presented to the Asia Pacific Career Development Association in Tokyo in September 2015. Therefore, in this response to *Willing to Work*, the Association has drawn on information and findings that are available in the public arena.

In terms of the Association reflection of this research data it is apparent that there is still a very strong rationale for an education piece to provide employers and the community with better information and advice on labour market issues and particularly the imperative to meet productivity objectives through retaining, retraining and recruiting mature workers. The overall recommendations address these broad concerns.

The National Career Advice Telephone Service

This National service was a Commonwealth (Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations – DEEWR – as it was known at the time) funded Program (Experience+ & Career Advice for Parents [CAP]) delivered from April 2011 until funding was withdrawn on 30 June 2014.

Whether participants were currently working and looking for a career change, or actively looking to re-enter the workforce (that is, participants did not have to be unemployed), Experience+ Career Advice provided professionally qualified career advice with the objective of providing the greatest opportunity to achieve an employment outcome.

The Career Advice service was telephone and email based and offered two different types of assistance - Career Planning and Resume Appraisal.

Career planning

This involved professionally qualified CDAA Career Advisers assisting the participant to discover and identify:

- skills, knowledge and experience already held by the participant;
- education and training options to assist closure of skills gaps in relation to career options consistent with interests, values and capabilities; and
- those industries and occupations that were consistent with career options aligned with the participants interests, values and capabilities.

Resume appraisal

This involved professionally qualified CDAA Career Advisers applying their professional skills and strong understanding of general employer and market place needs, and then with the participants, reviewed application letters, resume or selection criteria to assist individual marketing to provide the greatest likelihood of success. Career Advisers provided detailed feedback and advice on matters such as -

- preparation and presentation of an application;
- matching skills, experience and qualifications to employment goals;
- managing career gaps; and
- relating skills, experience and achievements to the needs of the employer and the requirements of the job.

This “**solution-focused**” service assisted participants in considering available career options; potential career transition alternatives; and assisting those not currently employed or seeking to return to work.

During the duration of the Program (38 months) approximately 28 professionally qualified (CDAA) career practitioners worked on a rostered basis with the Program, whilst also maintaining their diverse private practices. This diversity of practice was particularly important to the success of the Program given the level of diversity amongst participants. Over the duration of the Program, there were 14,002 appointments (1 hour each); about 368 per month from all over Australia.

Whilst outcomes were not measured through this Program, the anecdotal feedback evidenced considerable acceptance and appreciation amongst participants -

- *“I would like to thank you and your team for the assistance that has been provided to myself. It has been very appreciated. Thank you. Wishing you and your team all the best for the future.”*
- *“Thank you, and your other colleagues, for the assistance you provided in helping me with a career change and to finding a job to match.”*
- *“I have found a job.”*
- *“It's nice to have conversation with you and thank you for providing these valuable information. Thank you so much and it is very helpful.”*
- *“A few of the consultants helped me with my Resume and interview skills under the over 50's program. I am delighted to say that I managed to secure a new position, very close to what I wanted.”*

Anecdotal feedback suggests the value of and access to this type of professional career intervention service was particularly pertinent and relevant to mature aged participants, enabling understanding

of changes in the work environment and employment arrangements (in terms of workplace, flexibility and rapidly changing functions), resulting in more positive outcomes for those mature aged people finding themselves in need of career transitions, often through increases in workforce restructuring and associated redundancies across various industries.

Career coaching as intervention

There are numerous studies that evidence the value of appropriate (professional) intervention being applied to careers at various stages of life. *Whiston, SC and Blustein, DL*⁵ found unequivocally that career development intervention is effective, and cited individuals receiving career interventions being generally able to negotiate career development tasks with greater ease and effectiveness – “...particularly important in (a) climate where people ... have to retrain and retool for work”. And in an Australian context, we know industry is generally transforming, with manufacturing and mining reducing significantly in size, and forecasts that a large proportion of jobs as we know them today will not exist in as little as 15-20 years – alarmingly, this transforming environment hits hardest at the mature aged population where people have been entrenched (and skilled) in traditional functions.

So the extent to which mature aged people find themselves in a position of unemployment or underemployment, they stand to benefit most from professional career development intervention – and economically for Australia, the relatively small investment in professional intervention would lead to vast economic gains – “(a) 5 percentage point lift in participation (among workers aged 55 and over) would see around \$48 billion in extra GDP – or 2.4% of national income.”⁶ CDAA believes it has evidenced throughout this submission that these gains are most likely when intervention is provided on a professionally qualified basis.

Understanding the labour market

It is well documented that mature age individuals are at risk due to the changing nature of work and the changing face of numerous industries. Citing one particular study –

“...human cost of (industry) restructuring is a displaced worker group...”; “...while displacement impacts on all affected workers, there are significant challenges for older workers facing unemployment from industries where larger proportions of the workforce have lower skills, few formal qualifications and poor literacy and numeracy skills.” And “...research highlights that early engagement of workers with support and training services ... is crucial.” Finally, “Training is more likely to be effective when training providers and support agencies partner **to ensure displaced workers access upfront career counselling...**”⁷ (emphasis added).

Many of these individuals feel lost in career direction through witnessing and experiencing closure or downturn of the very industries in which they have spent their entire careers. Attempted solutions via current *jobactive* avenues may tend to job outcomes rather than career choices aligned to the

⁵ Whiston, SC & Blustein, DL (2013): *The Impact of Career Interventions: Preparing our Citizens for 21st Century Jobs (Research Report) – National Career Development Association (US) and Society for Vocational Psychology (US)*

⁶ Deloitte Access Economics – July 2012: *Increasing participation among older workers: The grey army advances (Report prepared for the Australian Human Rights Commission)*

⁷ Callan, V & Bowman, K – 2015; *Industry restructuring and job loss: helping older workers get back into employment – NCVET Adelaide*

interests, values and competencies of the individual. Such outcomes run the risk that individuals remain disengaged and face underemployment or unemployment again in the near future. By applying professionally qualified career coaching as an intervention, individuals are enabled with a deeper understanding of options and further skills development and training requirements, aligned to interests, values and competency.

Job search skills

This same cohort may rarely have been required to apply for a job throughout their entire career. For many, the lack of awareness in how to successfully seek new opportunities in the current market is substantially hindering their ability to look for a job. Specific areas of focus include:

- 80% of jobs are reported to be available only in the hidden job market
- E-recruitment technologies utilise various algorithms to scan resumes for specific keywords and statements to identify a suitable candidate
- Online networks such as LinkedIn are providing talent management solutions which recruiters and hiring managers are utilising in place of traditional job advertisements

Qualified Career Coaches/Practitioners specialise in job search strategies, and have detailed awareness of these tools and initiatives – and this may not always be the case through the *jobactive* network. Technology has substantially changed the face of recruitment, however the general consumer (and arguably more so for mature aged participants) is unaware of how to ensure consideration within the boundaries of these tools. Specialist knowledge in this area is provided by qualified Career Coaches/Practitioners and is imperative to providing an individual with the ability to give themselves the greatest opportunity to leverage the market place.

Recommendations

The CDAA provides the following recommendations to the Willing to Work call for submissions, noting that the Association carries directional support via the *Recruitment and Consulting Services Association (Australia & New Zealand)* and *Disability Employment Australia* (but recognising this does not amount to formal endorsement by either of these organisations of any content of this submission).

Recommendation 1: Introduce Career Coaching as the first point of intervention

Career coaching is not an explicit service that is within scope to be delivered by providers within the *jobactive* network. Furthermore, there is no requirement that *jobactive* providers be qualified to any professional level, even should such services be provided. ***The CDAA recommends that funding be provided to establish a support program for mature age individuals and individuals with disabilities to receive qualified career coaching, with a strong recommendation that this be supplied through professional members of the CDAA.***

Recommendation 2: National training programs

The CDAA recognises the importance of supporting individuals who may not qualify for funding support through government initiatives – the need to rely on an individual’s savings (usually for retirement) or asset liquidation, runs contrary to the economic objective of self-funded (or contribution to) retirement, and exacerbates further economic drain on public funding as such people would likely become a societal financial burden as their own funds are exhausted. ***The CDAA therefore recommends that funding be provided to enable appropriate training programs, identified through career development intervention, to be run in each state and territory for job search training and guidance.***

Greg Parker
National Manager, CDAA
3rd December 2015