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

# Submission No 232

**Name** Withheld

**Submission made by**

[x]  Older Australian looking for work

[x]  Older Australian who would like to work

[x]  Australian with disability looking for work

[x]  Australian with disability who would like to work

[x]  Other
 Please describe: Student

# Submission regarding Older Australians / Australians with Disability / Both

### **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.**

Around the time Equal Employment Opportunity legislation was starting to bite (or perhaps because of it) unemployment rose, as many more women entered the workforce - and competition for jobs fostered discriminatory practises (especially on the basis of who you knew rather than what you knew). At [**redacted**] in early 1990s, I was discriminated against in favour of the 'trailing spouse' who had to be given a position as she was accompanying her [**redacted**] husband from the UK. I was also discriminated against in favour of 'a young man with a family' who was 'more deserving' than someone of my age (mid 30s) who was perceived as 'husband hunting and would just go off on maternity leave'. I was also discriminated against in favour of the daughter of a Head of [**redacted**] - because she was younger and 'needed a start'. Instead of my getting the six month contract, he employed both of us on a three month contract - so I could show her the ropes. A job was then found for her, and I was let go. At [**redacted**] I was told (by a young winemaker) that I had 'left my run too late'. At [**redacted**], I was told by the union rep not to make waves (when I was discriminated against) and was better off leaving than 'getting a name as a troublemaker'. When I worked at [**redacted**], I was libelled by the daughter of the boss's friend. She had no quals and wanted me to train her to be a laboratory technician; when I declined, she saw to it that I was sacked. I sought legal advice but was again advised it was not worth my while to take legal action. When people get jobs on the basis of who they know, it fosters a tendency is for them to do likewise - and, seeing as they were not necessarily the best person for the job, they tend to specifically exclude anybody that might be a threat to them. I.E.you dumb down the workforce.

**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**

I have been made redundant; I have had funding cut; I have ben told to massively dumb down my CV - because I would be far better qualified than most of the people doing the recruiting. I have also been told to dye my hair - and remove anything on my CV that would allude to my being over 40 (I am now pushing 60). I have suffered anxiety and depression and even been suicidal (and told to keep that off everything). My arthritic feet daren't be mentioned either.

### **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?**

A person with a mental disability is perceived as unreliable. A person with a physical disability is perceived as a potential liability.

Because most people doing the hiring and firing (many with no formal qualifications, but got their jobs based on who they know) are from younger generations - and don't social is with older people (they see the ads showing older people retiring early and moving into retirement villages) - they also impatiently conclude that anybody over 50 or 40 has wasted their chance and should move aside.

**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

**Please tell us more**

A volunteer is portrayed as a good corporate citizen - and the unemployed are encouraged (or forced) to do volunteer work. however, volunteering has been exploited to the point where, when linked to centrelink payments, it is nothing short of slave labour. There was a time when offering you services would help you get experience, make contacts and get a foot in the door. But not any more. It is now a well exploited rort by many NFPs who use it to comprise the bulk of their workforce. There are now upwards of 60k NFPs all avoiding paying taxes and wages to anybody but the chosen few at the top. It has even become a way to find yourself a job for life - set up your own charity! For the unemployed, however, every hour you spend doing volunteer work is an hour that you are not actively seeking paid work. Time to end work for the dole - and to rationalise the NFP industry (which is massively duplicated).

Govts have been looking for a myriad ways to fudge the unemployment stats - when the real figure is the number who are in full time paid work, and the number who are happy with the hours and security of paid work. People in causal work, in part time work, in temporary work, studying because they can't get work - are all part of the true 'needing to work' category. Centrelink puts over 55s into a 'transitioning to retirement' category whether they want to or not - and suspends their job search requirements (which means they don't qualify for any assistance from job search providers).

Older jobseekers are left to fend for themselves. Older people need intensive assistance (not no assistance) because they have less experience with the current job market - and need to know about LinkedIn etc.

[**redacted**] has a higher than average rate of unemployment - and half of the population is over 50 - with 17% being women over 70 (many of whom don't have super and want to work). The local council runs courses for young mums and 'entrepreneurial migrant women' who want to set up small businesses - but older women are specifically excluded.

Despite baby boomers comprising more than a third of the potential jobseeker market, DOME (Don't overlook mature expertise) in WA has lost funding. Specialised groups like this must be fostered.

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

**Incentives:**

The 'incentive' is that - if we don't work - we can look forward to the rest of our lives in poverty.

**Disincentives:**

There is no assistance to find work. Instead, we are actively discouraged (by Centrelink and its 'transitioning to retirement') to do 15 hours of unpaid volunteer work 'and don't come back and bother us'.

There is no feedback when you apply for a job. The 'send' button simply projects the application into a black hole - never to be heard from again (including in government jobs).

Since the abolition of the public service commission, even government departments recruit on the basis of who you know (including [**redacted**]) and employee standards have declined.

### **Good practice**

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

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

[x] 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.**

Although [**redacted**] employs older people, it also tends to favour those who know somebody - and especially the tradie blokes or unskilled women. The 'overqualified' are still weeded out.

### **Solutions**

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

Abolish the outsourced job network and bring back a professional and neutral service. The abolition of the CES was supposed to introduce efficiencies but, with declining standards of job service providers (and pandering to discriminatory employers), it has done exactly the opposite. An employer who wants to discriminate just selects a job service provider who will give them what they want.
Abolish 'work for the dole' and 'transitioning to retirement'. It has turned out to be an absolute rort. Nobody should be forced to work for nothing. At worst, the jobseeker should benefit from training to update their skills, be mentored - or be paid for some hours worked. There should be a job contract where both employer and employee benefit - and employers should be limited to the number of unpaid hours in their workforce.

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

Provide older jobseekers with specialised intensive assistance (e.g. DOME) - especially in the first six months, and especially to update their understanding of changes to the job system
Provide older jobseekers with training to move to self employment - including TAFE and university courses.

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

Stop tinkering around the edges with jobless figures - and be up front about the true level of unemployment and underemployment.
Introduce quotas in line with the representative age of job seekers - i.e. such that every third person hired must be over 50.
Stop falsely claiming that migration 'creates' jobs, when it predominately generates work in (taxpayer funded) service industries - such as health, education, welfare and housing - and not manufacturing or primary production. It also divides an already insecure workforce - where employers play musical chairs with people's livelihoods. They shamelessly foster insecurity in those at risk of losing their jobs, and resentment in those who have lost their jobs, in favour of 'migrants and refugees'. The displacers dismiss the displaced as racist. While the only real winners are the developers.