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via email: ageanddisabilityinquiry@humanrights.gov.au

Dear Commissioner Ryan AO

Submission to the *National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability*.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the *National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability*. As the Greens NSW Spokesperson for Ageing and Disability, I have strongly advocated for equality of opportunity for people with disabilities and older people. In this brief submission, I will focus on ways the NSW Government could work with local government to increase employment rates of people with disabilities and older people in NSW.

Incentivise local government

The NSW *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* requires all local governments in NSW to create disability inclusion action plans which specify the measures they intend to implement to facilitate people with disabilities' participation in the community. These plans may include 'support employment of people with disability' (section 12 (3) (iv)), but this is not a requirement. Copies of the plan must be made public as well as provided to the NSW Disability Council.

I am not aware of any legislative requirement for local governments to support employment of older people.

I propose that the NSW Government should encourage local government to increase employment of people with disabilities and older people by requiring them to report annually on the number of people with disabilities and people aged 50 and over employed in local government. Reporting would allow local and state government to monitor trends in employment of people with disabilities and older people and hold local government to account. The NSW Public Service must report each year on its employment of people with disabilities. This has become a key tool in creating awareness of public sector employment of people with disabilities and has consequently shown that the NSW Government must do more to improve employment of people with disabilities.

As well as requiring annual reporting, the NSW Government should incentivise local government to boost employment of people with disabilities and older people by recognising local governments which reach specified employment targets. The NSW Government could provide awards to local governments which have reached set targets, and/or done the most to increase employment of people with disability and people aged 50 and over within local government.

Local governments that work towards creating positive change in their community by encouraging local business to employ people with disability and older people should also be recognised in these awards. Not only would such recognition encourage other local government to do better, it would allow for the sharing of information about effective programs and initiatives to counter age and disability discrimination in the workplace.

For these proposals to be successful, the NSW Government should develop a website to provide information to local governments about employment of people with disability and older people. This information should include relevant legislative requirements as well as any assistance available to support employment of people with disabilities and older people (for example, the Commonwealth's Employment Assistance Fund, which provides financial assistance to employers to make modifications to the workplace for people with disabilities). There should also be a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section about the awards and any other relevant material.

The website could also include ways that local government could boost employment of people with disabilities and older people. For example, local government could develop age-friendly workplace practices such as providing flexible work environments for older people who have caring roles and grandparenting responsibilities. Equally, it could encourage people with disabilities to apply for roles by providing specific information in job advertisements about employment supports available to people with disabilities.

There is a big opportunity for local governments to take the lead in breaking down barriers to employment for people with disabilities and older people. Local governments are in an excellent position to show their local communities the benefit of employing people with disabilities and older people and counter discrimination in the workplace experienced by these communities.

I congratulate the Australian Human Rights Commission for conducting this inquiry into this important issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Barham".

Jan Barham MLC