

19th September, 2002

9 Guger Road
MIDDLE SWAN WA 6056

Dr Andrew Southcott, M.P
Chairman,
Committee on Aging,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA ACT 2600.
Dear Dr. Southcott,

I welcome the opportunity to provide some comments which I hope will be useful to your Committee when considering the long term strategies for ageing.

As a short background to my own experiences I 'retired' at the age of 59 years in 1997 which after 1 year of physical work soon convinced me it was not such a good move. Having occupied managerial type positions in the Human' resources field I developed a fairly active brain which I soon found out needed stimulation in problem solving and people interaction.

On trying to get back into the workforce I found it was nearly impossible as over a period of 12 months I applied, in writing addressing selection criteria and some of these were comprehensive, for some 194 advertised positions. Of the employers involves approx. 12 had the courtesy to reply to these application and 3 of these resulted in interviews. All the interviews were unsuccessful.

I then started my own consultancy and was very successful but domestic arrangements forced me out of this because of long absences from home. I eventually secured employment with the Salvation Army, an empathetic organisation, as an Employment Consultant and then was head hunted into my current position by another organisation that has empathy for the disadvantaged.

The reason for giving you this background into let you know. that with over 35 years experience in Human Resources Management it was disappointing not to get more interviews for jobs I applied for. I conclude from this that employers are actively discriminating against older workers in a subtle way so as not to be under the notice of the relevant State EEO tribunals. Even then there is little support for workers who take their cases to the tribunal as I have had experience in this aspect as well I pursued the City of Rockingham through the WA tribunal' on a position for Human resources Officer when they appointed a person who 2 years beforehand was a trainee under my control. I knew I met all the criteria for the job and still did not get an interview. I provided the sate EEO tribunal with all the evidence they needed but because someone did not say you are too old for this position' they refused to continue.

To try and over come the situation I have enrolled in a Masters Degree in Human Resources management so I could have some legitimacy to my years of experience. It is interesting to note that I was not allowed to do an undergraduates course because the Murdoch University considered I had nothing to gain from such a programme because my experience probably - exceeded that of some of the lecturers. Now I will be indebted to the P.E.L.S. scheme for some time.

To assist older workers in such cases I advocate a few simple steps which. will ensure fairness

Older workers should be given the ability to seek information as to why their experience and qualifications are passed over,

Be provided with information (comparative) as to why experience and qualifications do not meet the standards required. I would recommend this be done by personal interviews to give unsuccessful older applicants the piece of mind that they genuinely did not meet the selection criteria. Body language at personal interviews tells different stories to words on a letter. I would limit this privilege to those over 45 years of age.

Another suggestion I would like to make for those unemployed over say 46 years of age who possess many years of experience and good qualifications I would make this suggestion to assist them, employers, the relatively experienced workers and the economy.

- ✓ Allow employers to employ older experienced workers for say 2 or 3 days per week as mentors to less experienced people in an organisation sharing the same technical skills.
- ✓ Ask the employer to pay a nominal amount for this work (eg. \$100 per day)
- ✓ Make these payments legitimate tax deductions on business expenses
- ✓ Such amounts earned by the older workers be TAX FREE,
- ✓ Such amounts earned be not included as income for any purposes, that any existing payments (pensions, unemployment benefits) continue without reduction
- ✓ The Federal Government provide all the insurance indemnities required by employers

Benefits

Older people will feel more valued,
They will stay healthier in mind because of worthwhile activities,
It will give them extra spending power to assist the economy,
Less experienced and qualified staff will benefit from a mentor programme, bring them up to a higher standard of competence quicker,
Employers will save because of less mistakes and training that may be required.

Disbenefits

I see none.

Attached is an extract from the CCH Website of a recent survey in the united Kingdom where 60% of Human Resources and payroll/training people put ageism as the most common form of discrimination in employment's. I am not aware of any studies in Australia but would venture to suggest the figures would be similar. If this the result of thoughts by those who should maintain the social policies to ensure compliance what are the thoughts of others who do the hiring and firing?

I would ask you to seriously consider some of my suggestions as all the 'economic surveys' suggest that Australia will be short on knowledge and skilled labour once the full impact of the exit of 'baby boomers' from the workforce is felt.

I would be happy to expound on any of these views if you would like to contact me on (08) 9451 9777(W) or (08) 9274 2757 (H).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some input.

Tom