



Union of Australian Women

NEWCASTLE BRANCH

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PAGES INCLUDING COVER PAGE: 6

ATTENTION : M.CHAN

**FROM: BETTY MAWDSLEY UNION OF AUSTRALIAN
WOMEN**

**PLEASE FIND MATERIAL AS AGREED TO RE PHONE
CONVERSATION.**

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THE difficulties OF EMPLOYMENT FOR mature age WOMEN.

Many a mature age woman in this present climate finds it rather frightening to be seeking employment. A woman who has stayed at home to raise her children, then seeks to supplement the family income to assist with educational costs for teenage children, either for their high school costs or for university--where they have in a number of cases borrowed money to give their children an opportunity for career training- or for house payments, the increased cost of living etc. is faced with the need in many cases to update her skills. If she can afford to do this before seeking employment she finds many of the courses previously supplied by Tafe have been cut, so she has to borrow even further to retrain herself.

On the other hand many of these women are unable to take the time to retrain--their need is urgent. When she was previously employed she relied on her union to do her negotiations, now she is often put in the position where she has to do her own individual bargaining and this can be a very nerve racking experience.

Members of the Union of Australian Women were somewhat alarmed to read Professor Encel's evidence, even though he seemed to defend the mature age worker, his suggested solution of people taking the time off for a year or two to retrain themselves or to encourage a greater amount of voluntary work, hardly solves the problem for somebody in financial difficulties. And in any case if a woman is out of work and receiving dole payments she is expected to spend much of her time applying for employment.

From the Union of Australian Women we have spoken to a number of union officials and their members to find out the position of workers in their industries.

In the Miscellaneous Workers Union that covers cleaners etc. because no intricate skills are required, the mature age worker is not disadvantaged except if she has been injured on the job and in need of time off to recover-- she then finds it almost impossible to be re employed. However in the Liquour and Hospitality Section of that Union the situation is quite different. Even though employers try to hide it because of discrimination laws, they do give preference to younger women. By younger we mean 30 and under. An official of the union said there is a need for Affirmative Action of mature age



women in the industry. Employers are not prepared to supply any training themselves, they go for preference for the young woman just out of university, already trained. Even though there is evidence that much of the hospitality work is at weekends when the younger woman naturally wants to be out enjoying herself, and the older woman is prepared to work, the preference still goes to the younger woman. Even the Bar Maids are younger these days.

It appears, after discussion with employees in the Retail Trade more and more permanent jobs are disappearing, replaced by part time and casual employment. To continue with this form of employment can only exacerbate the problem for the mature age woman, especially when she is the sole income earner.

In the Teachers Profession where there is a shortage of teachers the problem for mature age women only exists when there is a call for a casual teacher for just a few days, then the younger woman is given preference because of the cost factor.

In the Hunter Valley numerous women have lost employment with the close down of many clothing trade and textile factories. Over recent years places such as Katies, Rundles and the latest, the National Textiles have left workers with nowhere to go. There does seem to be a concerted effort by governments etc. to completely phase out these industries in Australia. And these are industries that employed many mature age women.

We contacted the Hunter Valley Research Foundation for data on unemployed women in the Hunter Valley, and these are the figures we received:

For young women from 15-19 there is	2.8% unemployment
20-24	1.8
25-34	1.0
35-44	3.6
45-54	2.8

So the 35-44 age range is by far the highest percentage of unemployed, pointing we think to the woman who has stayed home to care her children, maybe to teenage, and then has felt the need to return to the workforce either for financial reasons or pick up her career where she left off some years ago. But as we have said, unless this woman is able to finance her own retraining

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her chances of being able to be re employed are very dim, because very few, if any, employers these days are prepared to do any training themselves.

It would seem, also, even those women working in the entertainment industry, once they reach the thirties are regarded as too old. Nicky Buckley from Sale of the Century is a case in point. She is told she is no longer needed at the age of 34, while her male co producer age 45 remains.

The Union of Australian Women says there is a need for a change of attitude by both employers and governments towards the employment of married women in the workforce, or we will revert back to the fifties where married women were expected to stay at home and vegetate. Maybe this is what governments want!!

Betty Mawdsley
Secretary
Union of Australian Women.

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**PLEASE NOTE : Enquiries Times 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Monday - Friday**

Date: 28 January, 2000

Transmit to...

Reference No.: 3518

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Fax Number: 49714264

From...

The Hunter Valley Research Foundation

Name: Marilynne

Enquiries Officer

No. of Pages: 2 (including cover sheet)

MESSAGE:

Betty,

Please find below female unemployment figures for the Hunter region for November 1999 (the most recent we have). Hope these will be of some assistance.

Regards

Marilynne

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UNEMPLOYMENT - HUNTER REGION - FEMALES - NOVEMBER 1999

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15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
2.8	1.8	1.0	3.6	2.8	0.0