

JAN GILLINGS
45 Corlette Street
Cooks Hill 2300

SUBMISSION

Sole Parents Are Long Term Unemployed Too

I was employed in the secretarial and banking spheres prior to raising a family of three children. During the 1990's I first gained University entry through an Open Foundation course at Newcastle University, completed a Bachelor of Arts degree, and then successfully completed a Bachelor of Laws degree. I was admitted to practice as a solicitor and an officer of the Supreme Court of New South Wales last month.

During the 1990's I have been on a sole parent pension, and undertook further education as an avenue to retrain as a useful and employable member of the community while raising the family to ages where full-time work became possible. The result, of course, is that I now owe the government \$15,000 in unpaid Higher Education Contribution fees.

I have applied for twenty-eight positions advertised by private companies and government institutions over the past two months and have not had one return phone call, or one offer of an interview. I have received approximately eight rejection notices.

I am 48 years of age and in excellent health. I estimate that I have a good ten to fifteen years of productive work time ahead of me.

As a sole parent I presume I, and others in my position, are not counted among the unemployment figures.

This “potted history” indicates that government policies concerning discrimination against older unemployed persons is alive and well in Australian business and government institutions. Perhaps they choose to ignore such applications for employment in order to avoid any possibility of discrimination issues arising from unsuccessful applicants who are over 45. This despite the stated “... women and mature age persons encouraged to apply”. I ask the Standing Committee to consider whether it is fair or just that the result of ten year's hard work to retrain as a useful employed member of society, and actively encouraged to do so by government policy, results in a sole parent bearing a further crushing debt of \$15,000 owed to the government? Surely there is a legitimate expectation that gainful employment will be available at the end of the road

My suggestion to remedy this situation is to recommend that a pro-active program be urgently instituted to assist people like myself to gain suitable employment, so that the hard work of the individual is rewarded, the community is economically benefited, and the government can recover the HECS debt from a willing payer.

As sole parents are not technically counted among the unemployment figures they are, in fact, conveniently hidden or ignored as a factor of policy making in the employment arena.

These matters would seem to fall squarely within the Standing Committee's term of reference to consider issues specific to potential workers over 45 years of age who seek employment or to establish a business following long term unemployment.

I await your response to this submission, and in the meantime will carry on applying regardless.