

The House of Representatives Employment and Workplace Relations Committee inquiry,
Clerk Assistant (Committee)
House of Representatives,
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

The house of Representatives Employment and Workplace Relations Committee inquiry on ways to increase participation in paid work in Australia regarding findings ways of increasing the proportion of the working aged population.

I wish to comment on the level of discrimination against nurses who are currently in their late 40-50 years age group. Where I work there was recently a ward meeting where the ward manager complained about the amount of sick leave the older members of staff were taking until one of the "older" members of staff informed her that if she looked at who was taking the sick leave she would realise it was the younger members of staff as their immune systems were not as resistant as the older members of staff. The manager had to admit he was right.

Where I work the younger members are allowed to work part time, shifts to suit their husbands, babysitters, school visits-after 23 years of working full time, for the same hospital, who only brought their lifting material when they had to pay their own insurance, I asked not to work mornings as my hip pain and stiffness was becoming unbearable. I sent in a letter of confirmation from my doctor and was sent a letter back saying I could have 6 weeks off mornings and then had to return as it would be unfair to the other staff.

The older staff are mostly the full time workers, where I work, as part time employment did not exist when we commenced working, we have made a pact to support each other to 55years when we will have a mass retirement.

I personally would like to stay working evenings and night duty but if I am forced to work morning duty I will have to go on a disability pension. Could the attitudes of managers be changed to allow the older employees a fair go.

I ask that managers not force older nurses to work full rosters if it exhausts them, allow them to work part time rosters, if they are unable to shower heavy patients or cope with six patients of their own and/or six pills rounds for the enrolled nurses try to reduce their patient load (I know this will need government funding as it will cost the hospitals more) but it will mean they can continue to work in a climate where nurses are needed, and surely it will cost less than the pension.

I ask that older nurses not be told, at ward meetings, that they are taking too much sick leave, many of them have a lot of sick leave owing to them, and they are entitled to take it if they get the Flu.

I ask that older nurses be employed not only younger ones.

Older nurses seem to be held accountable for problems that occur because of poor management, lack of nurses to patients, patients placed on the ward who should be in intensive care but there are no beds or no staff available for intensive care, poor staff mix, not enough experienced staff to supervise junior staff (no clinical educators), high expectations of relatives who believe their family member is getting well as doctors don't tell them they are dying.

If older member of staff are to remain in paid employment agism must cease.

Please I want to stay employed!

Alice Baker,
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A. Baker,

27th August, 2003.