

My planned statement to be read out as my evidence response.

To the Commission Panel

There are many Job-seekers who through age, length of time in the system and lack of positions available face an on-going problem of ever finding work. During this time they face social, financial and emotional turmoil that effect families and the wider community. Some people will never work in the traditional sense which is a major problem for those people and society. Unemployment is a major community problem in Australia especially, the age group over 40. For some reason there seems to be a business community conception that once you become unemployed in that age group you have reached "Your Use By Date". The reality in most cases is you have a wealth of experience and have a responsible and reliable attitude.

Society today faces many problems that are compounded by the effects of unemployment. A vast amount of money is spent to rectify the problems faced by individuals and the community after they have arisen. State and Federal Governments provide funding to assist people and families once problems have reached a crisis point.

My proposal would attempt to improve the situation by decreasing the number of unemployed people and utilise this wealth of resource to its best potential.

This proposal would attempt to create an environment that would assist people find alternative employment in the future. It would also provide positive activities for those who may never re-enter the regular workforce. It would also make the community a safer, happier and more productive place to live.

I would like to see positions created through local councils that utilise the skills and experience of older unemployed people. The participants would still receive the dole and a bonus of a pre-arranged amount paid by the council or a corporate sponsor/s. The council could fund the bonus from funds that would be saved by a reduction in graffiti and vandalism through a visible community presence on the streets.

A company like Telstra could be approached to provide funding as a project to reduce the amount of damage caused from vandalism. It would also enhance their corporate image of being a caring and community spirited organisation. There would be the opportunity to obtain the naming rights to the new scheme. The participants could be known as "Telstra - Community Officers" or "Optus" or "Holden" etc .

In summary I would like to make three points:

1. Unemployment is a major problem in Australia especially, for older Australians and every effort needs to be made to alleviate the burden for the individual their families and the community.
2. State, Federal and Local Governments spend millions of dollars repairing the damage of graffiti and vandalism, and projects that help people when they have reached the bottom of the heap. Also small, medium and large companies and corporations spend millions of dollars repair of similar damage and corporate advertising. Therefore, it would be proposed that some of this money could be redirected to reduce the number of these crimes and reach people before they become desperate.
3. The concept I proposed is meant to be a catalyst for discussion about establishing a solution to the problem. The solution may be a concept like mine, a combination or a completely new concept. The most important outcome is that a positive solution is found that benefits the individual, their families and the wider community. There is an untapped resource of experience, knowledge creativity and human spirit that is being wasted and needs to put to work for the benefit of all concerned.

I read with interest a plan to offer barter dollars on top of the dole for people working for companies as part of a new employment scheme. This is a proposal that may work with a scheme like the one I outlined.

Last night I was thinking about presenting this submission and decided to add another idea that might assist in providing a scheme that was beneficial to all parties.

My wife and I are considering renting our home next year and travelling to other parts of Australia in search of work. With this in mind I would like to suggest that unemployed people could be organised into groups that travel Australia as part of a Land Army or Green Corps. They could be part of projects that plant trees, assess and rectify environmental damage and assist in cleaning up after major disasters. This could also include assisting care workers in places like Darwin support and care for the East Timor refugees.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee for this opportunity to submit my evidence for their perusal.