

405 Lygon St
Carlton Vic 3053
28 June 1999

Submission

TO:

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations

Inquiry into Issues specific to Older Workers seeking employment following unemployment

I think it is an excellent idea to convene this inquiry, and it is in this overall positive context that I wish to make a few brief points in relation to the inquiry, as follows:

Firstly, it appears the inquiry is using the age marker of 45 years as the start point for the term 'older worker'. As there is still 20 years from this age until the existing retirement age, this term seems premature. I think the term older worker should only be applied to people working after the official retirement age. Up to that age, ie 45-64 years, the term '*prime age worker*' would be preferable, and more in line with the notion that this period from age 45-64 is a legitimate working age period.

Another concern I have with the structure of the inquiry is its remedial, rather than preventive, focus, as indicated by the emphasis on workers' state after unemployment. This seems like shutting the gate after the horse has bolted. Developing interventions to assist employability would need to include programs that intervene before someone becomes unemployed. That is, what programs or campaigns could assist workers to maintain their employment. This would be particularly pertinent, for example, to offers of redundancy where some workers jump at the short-term offer of a pecuniary incentive to exit, without considering the longer-term financial and occupational disadvantages. Thus, I think the inquiry should be broadened to report on ways of assisting workers who are currently employed as to how they can maintain that employment (job maintenance). This would include a greater emphasis on keeping one's skill-set current via continued training courses.

For Your consideration

John McCormack