

**INQUIRY INTO ISSUES SPECIFIC TO WORKERS OVER 45 YEARS OF
AGE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT, OR ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS,
FOLLOWING UNEMPLOYMENT.**

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CONTENTS:

- 1. Background**
- Recruitment and Consulting Services Association (RCSA)

- 2. Issue Statement**

- 3. Overview**
- Extent of 45 plus unemployment

- 4. Definitional Issues**

- 5. The particular nature of mature age unemployment**

- 6. Social and economic factors**
 - 6.1 Loss of self-esteem/grief**
 - 6.2 Age discrimination**
 - 6.3 Discrimination and employer attitudes**

- 7. Recommendations**

- 8. Conclusion**

1. BACKGROUND

The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association (RCSA)

The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association is the peak body representing the recruitment and consulting services industry throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Over 650 recruitment firms are members of the RCSA accounting for up to 85 per cent of the industry revenue. Individual consultants are also encouraged to join as individual members of the RCSA.

The mission of the RCSA is to “represent and service the interests of its members for the increased profile and professionalism of the industry.”

The RCSA strives to be recognised as the professional representative body and authority for recruitment and associated consulting services in Australia and New Zealand by:

- Ensuring members provide high value, high quality and responsive recruitment and consulting services to their clients
- Ensuring members deal with candidates in a professional and honest manner, actively assisting them to choose their field of endeavour
- Being the recognised voice of the profession on recruitment issues
- Guiding the advancement of the recruitment consulting profession
- Advancing the professional development of our members so that the services they provide to the community will continue to be of the highest standard.

The RCSA has a self-regulatory system in place by which the industry can monitor the professional conduct of its members. Members must abide by the Code of Professional Conduct.

2. ISSUE STATEMENT

The social, economic and industrial issues specific to workers over 45 years of age seeking employment or establishing a business following a period of unemployment.

The nature and extent of issues specific to unemployed mature aged workers can not be underestimated, nor can the social, economic and industrial impact upon society as a whole if the issues are not addressed.

Statistics reveal clearly and it is widely acknowledged, that the supply of mature workers will grow rapidly in the years ahead while the supply of younger workers will contract. If industry ignores this changing demographic, a number of detrimental outcomes are forecast, including a skills shortage and a heavy social and economic burden on society.

The changing demographics should signal to the community that there is a need for a re-think on the employment of mature workers which should include education on preparing for retirement in the training of all professions, staggered retirement over three to four years, decreasing working times each year, recognition of companies who have a mature worker policy of encouragement, the promotion of mature workers as a valuable resource to Australia and significant increased Government expenditure for retraining linked to employment opportunities.

Negative attitudes toward older workers are evidenced in: age discrimination, prejudices, older workers' negative self-fulfilling prophecies, lack of knowledge about aging and work, and lack of knowledge of older workers' skills and abilities.

Australian Bureau of Statistic figures paint a daunting picture and trend relating to the increasing numbers of mature-aged workers unemployed, and that older workers who become unemployed are more likely to remain so for longer periods than any other age group.

Morgan and Banks quarterly job index survey paint an equally dim view for the mature-aged worker with a diminishing number of companies employing this age group and increasing number of mature-age workers who had been replaced by younger employees.

Evidence does not suggest that the mature-aged worker in the main is retiring of his/her own accord, and faced with unemployment can experience very real feelings of loss of self-esteem and grief. It is critical that survival strategies are developed to address this important issue and to alleviate potential barriers to employment for this group.

3. OVERVIEW

3.1 Extent of 45+ unemployment

World demographic changes indicate an ageing population, with the average age increasing and the labour force growth rate falling. 28.7 per cent of the labour force are 45+ years which will rise to 33 per cent by 2005.

This suggests that current practices promoting early retirement and redundancies will eventually lead to a shortage in labour availability and will lead to difficulties in maintaining global competitiveness.

The subsequent socio-economic impact will be enormous unless strategies promoting older workers are put into place now.

Peter Drucker in *The Age* 1998, suggests that the falling birth rate is leading to a deterioration in the mix between older and younger workers.

“This....is becoming the key challenge for societies and economies as they move into the next century. The dominant factor for business in the next 20 years – barring war, pestilence or collision with a comet – will not be economics or technology...It will be demographics. The key factors for business will not be the overpopulation of the world....It will be the increasing under population of the developed countries...”

He also predicts that the working age will increase to 75 which will happen before 2010.

Flatter structures, changing career paths, changes in work patterns, contract, part time and self employment will also affect how organisations operate into the new millennium.

Studies on the rise in contract employment suggest that by 2005, over 50 per cent of the population will work outside the traditional organisation.

Workplace reform and subsequent downsizing within companies led to massive losses of older workers through enforced early retirement or redundancy. This baby boomer generation had begun working in the '50s and '60s and the understanding was that a job was for life.

The '90s has thrown these old understandings out of the window. Frustration, anger and grief added to this group's inability to regain its place in the new workforce.

Mature age unemployed are represented as the group which remain unemployed for the greatest number of weeks compared to younger unemployed.

According to a report by the employment committee, Jobs East, more than 700,000 Australians over age 45 are unemployed, and are spending on average 79 weeks between jobs, compared to 42 weeks for their younger counterparts.

Between 1981 and 1991 the population of 65+ year olds increased by 33.4 per cent which is twice as fast as the total population.

Between 2011 and 2031 the total population will increase by 14 per cent. The number of elderly will increase by two thirds of that number from 2.89 million to 4.84 million.

The total number of aged will exceed the total number of children by 2026.

These statistics are alarming in the context of wider economic and social implications as the total number of elderly will impact on housing, health and other services which will need to be supported by a declining working population.

The increasing displacement of mature age workers will add to an increase in the dependency ratio.

According to Managing Director of Lyncroft Consulting Group, Mr Geoff Slade the fact that over 700,000 Australians over 45 were out of work is a major social tragedy, which would create long term problems for society.

“With the changing demographics the business community need to wake up to the fact that a third of the workforce will be mature age workers by 2015 and a changing attitude towards older workers is an important issue.”

Mr Slade said that the popular trend for people to seek early retirement has only increased because of major corporate restructuring, downsizing of companies and changing technology, not because people want to retire.

To date it is estimated that nearly 350,000 older workers have lost their jobs during the period of economic rationalism which has seen downsizing of government and corporate structures.

It is estimated that more than half the six million Australians over 45 are fully retired.

It has been reported that in the past 20 years the number of employed older workers had declined and that working life had decreased by an average of 5 years.

Morgan and Banks (RCSA Corporate Member), in their quarterly job index survey reported that 26 per cent of Australian companies have fewer workers over 45 than five years ago.

More than 25 per cent of the 3,500 employers surveyed nationally said mature-age workers had been replaced by younger employees. 24.6 per cent cited downsizing as responsible for the decline, and only 8.4 per cent of employers cited an inability to adapt to technology as a reason for fewer mature-age workers.

Larger companies had more mature-age workers. In 18.4 per cent of companies surveyed, 40 per cent of the staff were over 45, while 45.5 per cent of small businesses had less than 10 per cent of staff over age 45.

According to the ABS, 86 per cent of Australian managers believe 35 years or less is the optimum age of an employee. The main difficulty for mature aged unemployed people seeking work was that employers considered them too old. However, workers aged 45 plus are the fastest growing sector of the workforce.

Aged Care Minister Bronwyn Bishop has called for an employment policy for elderly Australians and those over 45. Minister Bishop said the ageing of Australia's population would force a change in attitude to retirement among workers and employers.

Addressing issues raised in the Government's National Strategy for an Ageing Australia, Mrs Bishop said there were 100,000 people aged over 50 "desperate to get back into the workforce".

"The reality for the majority of older workers is that they face a difficult task in obtaining employment following retrenchment. We cannot afford to waste this resource of knowledge and expertise."

4. DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

The House of Representatives Standing Committee Inquiry into the issues relevant to older workers defines that group as those 45 years old and over. This is clearly a very broad age group, spanning at least a spectrum of 20 years. It includes those who could be considered to still be in their prime working years through to those who are nearing the end of their working lives.

There is not any single statutory guideline to determine the end of working life. The qualifying age for the Age Pension is 65, and while there is general community acceptance of this as the norm for retirement age, a sizeable number of people – through either choice or necessity – continue to work after that age.

Anti-discrimination legislation in some states has made it unlawful to force retirement at 65, although some occupations do have limits to employment beyond that age.

The superannuation legislation allows access to superannuation funds to provide income for early retirement from the age of 55.

While community norms would see retirement as a possible option for those aged over 55, those in the 45 to 54 age bracket would generally be understood to be part of the working population.

It is critically important to understand that unemployed people aged over 45 are not a homogenous group, and that therefore a range of policy measures is required to meet their diverse needs.

Assuming that the experiences and needs of this group are broadly similar is likely to result in inappropriate policy responses and may be counterproductive in properly identifying need and providing affective assistance.

Age is one distinguishing feature – one that requires different strategies to assist those who still have a substantial working life ahead of them, and those who are much closer to making the transition to retirement. It is not, however, the only distinguishing feature. Factors such as gender, ethnicity, education levels, occupational history and socio-economic status also impact on the diverse experiences and needs of unemployed people over the age of 45.

5. THE PARTICULAR NATURE OF MATURE AGE UNEMPLOYMENT

Despite the diversity of mature aged unemployed workers, it is also true that they have some common experiences. For example, the duration of unemployment rises and participation rates drop for those over 45.

There are also significant rises in the incidence of hidden unemployment and underemployment, with the effects being more extreme for the older cohort.

It has been argued that unemployment may be a more severe problem for mature aged people, particularly those over 55 years, than for any other age group.¹

To understand the nature of mature age unemployment it is necessary to look at a range of factors and not just the official unemployment rate for this group.

In March 1999 when the national unemployment rate was 7.4 per cent, it was 5.5 per cent for people aged 45 to 54; 7.2 per cent for those aged 55 to 59; and 6.0 per cent for the 60 to 64 age group.

The official rate of unemployment for this group therefore appears to be relatively low, but it masks other significant labour market indicators that reveal the opposite effect.

Older workers are more likely than any other age group to withdraw from the labour market and abandon their job search efforts, with the majority of discouraged jobseekers being over 45, and those in the 45 to 69 age bracket accounting for 62 per cent of all discouraged jobseekers.²

This is reflected in the declining participation rates of older unemployed people, particularly those aged 55 to 64 (58.1 per cent) and 65 years plus (31.8 per cent). It should be noted, however, that the participation rate for those aged 45 to 54 years (at 77.8 per cent) is not markedly different to the younger 25 to 44 year cohort (79.7 per cent).

Adriana Vandenheuvel of the National Institute of Labour Studies calculates a 'revised' unemployment figure, combining the official rate of unemployment with

¹ Adriana VandenHeuvel of the National Institute of Labour studies, comes to this conclusion in her article, 'Mature Age Workers: Are they a Disadvantaged Group in the Labour Market?' in the *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, Vol. 25, No.1, March, 1999.

² JobsEast (1998) *Profiting from Maturity, The Social and Economic Costs of Mature Age Unemployment*, 1998, quoting ABS statistics from *Persons not in the Labour Force*, 6220, September 1996.

hidden unemployment, to provide a more accurate, and significantly higher rate of unemployment for older people. This produces a 'revised' unemployment rate, for those over 45 in September 1998, of 8.9 per cent for men (compared to a recorded rate of 6.3 per cent) and 9.4 per cent for women (recorded rate 7.8 per cent).

A recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) study, using longitudinal survey data, found that those aged 55 to 64 have a greater likelihood of becoming retrenched than any other age group (apart from the 18 to 24 age group) but their chances of being re-employed were the lowest.

Older workers who become unemployed are more likely to remain so for longer periods than any other age group.

According to VandenHeuvel's research, older unemployed males, over 55 years, account for only 9.6 per cent of all unemployed males, but they make up 13.3 per cent of long-term unemployed males and 16 per cent of very long-term unemployed males.

For women over the age of 55 years, the figures are similar. They comprise 3.8 per cent of all unemployed females, 7.1 per cent of long term unemployed females, and 8.7 per cent of very long term unemployed females.

6. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

45 plus job seekers have come from an era of 'job for life', where personal identities were linked to a job role, where there was a perception of early retirement, pensions and increased leisure time.

Today's work environment is changing with increasing temporary placements and casualisation of the workforce.

A restructuring of government employment support agencies and a promotional campaign and implementation that has had mixed success.

The economic downturn of the '80s and early '90s saw many over 45s targeted for retrenchment in the downsizing movement. Economics – not lack of ability – was the major factor.

The restructuring necessary over the last decade to increase productivity and respond to global competitiveness and the subsequent industrial reform brought with it massive workplace change.

In this climate, the group which suffered most dramatically has been the older worker. Packages offered to older workers were more attractive than to other age groups because the length of years service translated into larger payouts. Other groups of older workers had been actually downsized within their existing workplaces through lack of training and career opportunities and were often the first to be targeted.

While the official unemployment rate is around 5.9 per cent for this age group, it fails to address two significant characteristics of this group. The high non-participation rate in the labour force of 28.9 per cent for men and 58 per cent for women aged 45 – 64 (ABS 1995) and the very high numbers of discouraged jobseekers at 62 per cent (ABS 1996).

As mentioned before, one of the results of the downsizing in the '90s has been the movement of hundreds of thousands of experienced older workers to the ranks of the unemployed.

The tragedy of this situation is that, once unemployed, the chance of finding comparable work becomes very slim.

Mature age job seekers will remain unemployed, on average for a far longer period and comprise the majority of discouraged jobseekers.

6.1 Loss of Self Esteem/Grief

Probably the singular most significant element in the downhill spiral experienced by most jobseekers and particularly for mature age unemployed is that of loss of self esteem.

This can be caused by a variety of reasons: breakdown of business and social networks, extreme financial hardship, continual rejection of job applications, the nature of dismissal, breakdown of the family support network.

Grief and loss are very real to the older worker. If unemployed, the loss of a lifestyle and loss of position in the family are particularly relevant. Stages of grieving are the same as grief for a death in the family, and as painful.

Survival strategies are critical. More attention given to this important issue would lead to significantly greater success rates for jobseekers.

The result of prolonged loss of self-esteem and the associated issues can result in depression and other illnesses which must also be taken into consideration. Grief management and the recognition that feelings are a legitimate part of this process are critical.

6.2 Age Discrimination

Studies have shown that ageism is the greatest problem mature age unemployed face. Age discrimination in the workplace ie. In training opportunities and promotion leaves the older worker as the most likely to be chosen for redundancies and retrenchment.

Age discrimination is widely experienced by mature age jobseekers from employers, recruitment agencies, Centrelink and Job Network agencies.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) findings show that in 1994 mature age unemployed thought that age was the biggest obstacle to their employment prospects. By 1997, the number had increased to 81.7 per cent.

It is worth noting that only 24.9 per cent of the 25-49 age group thought that age was relevant.

Age discrimination on the part of employers, agencies, colleagues and the unemployed themselves, maintains the myth that older unemployed are less capable than others of securing work.

Age discrimination is rife in the workplace and the mature age jobseeker has to carry the additional burden of financial and emotional distress in this difficult time.

The reality, of course, is that a very large group of mature workers are displaced from the workplace and unable to regain a position due to a range of difficulties.

So the dilemma for the older worker is to come to terms with the changing workplace, to adopt positive strategies, to recognise their own potential and to be able to identify opportunities in traditional or new industries.

Mature age unemployed account for over 62 per cent of discouraged jobseekers. That is, those who have given up the search.

Employers, in many cases the mature age themselves, often judge mature age employees and jobseekers according to old and outdated rhetoric which has been allowed to remain in the workplace.

That is, that mature age workers are less competent than their younger colleagues, are unable to be re-trained, have memory difficulties, are resistant to new technology and lack motivation.

We know that these are unsubstantiated claims. In fact, research has shown the opposite to be true.

Mature age workers bring to their workplace many skills and attributes which enhance and add value to the workforce.

Mature age unemployed may not be IT literate or may have been denied access to other training in the workplace for many years.

Older workers may not have knowledge or information on other or new industries where their skills can be transferred.

There is difficulty in identifying transferable skills and the subsequent application of these skills into a professional marketing document.

Skills loss compounds loss of self-esteem which exacerbates the situation even further.

6.3 Discrimination and employer attitudes

As well as experiencing discrimination in relation to access to training and retraining, older people report discrimination in recruitment practices.

The most common difficulty reported by older unemployed people seeking work is that they are ‘considered too old by employers’ – with almost half of unemployed people aged 55 and over, and more than a third of those aged 45 to 54, giving this reason in the ABS survey.³

It would appear that many employers are reluctant to employ older workers, despite their significant experience, possibly believing them to be unable to learn new skills or inflexible.

Alternatively, it is possible that the sometimes expressed view that older people should make way for younger people has an impact on employers’ hiring decisions. This is a baseless view, not only because there is unlikely to be direct substitution of older workers by young people, but because it is counter-productive.

The aim of fair and equitable employment policies and programs must be to provide work for all people and not discriminate against any group on the basis of age or any other personal characteristic.

A degree of systemic discrimination towards mature-aged people can also be seen in their general lack of recognition as equity target groups for employment assistance or vocational education and training.

CEO of the Australian Over 50s Association, Brian Shakes said that many employers still view older workers as liabilities, a drag on the bottom line of profitability, flexibility and innovation.

“This is beyond belief because, in fact, people over 50 are just as innovative and flexible as anyone and are every bit as capable of using their initiative as younger people.

“For displaced older workers today the future is fraught with uncertainty and anxiety – the economic fallout is considerable. These people cannot add to their superannuation and will probably have to draw on it at an earlier age.”

By not acknowledging their disadvantage and special needs in employment assistance, vocational education and training, the system fails to ensure that it adopts strategies to assist them achieve equitable access and successful outcomes.

The continuing emphasis in vocational education and training expenditure on young people and the transition from school to work, despite increased theoretical understanding and support for the need for lifelong learning, means that the needs of mature-aged students are not being adequately addressed.

³ ABS Job search experience of unemployed persons, 6220.0, July 1998.

So, for socio-economic reasons, employers must begin to change their employment practices in order to address this fundamental problem in the near future.

Age discrimination is actively practiced by employers based on the myth that older workers are less productive, less motivated, have declining mental capacity and overall skills despite absenteeism and staff turnover being far more common with other age groups.

A survey by Falconer and Rothman, 1994, revealed that HR managers are reluctant to hire a person over 45 and less likely to encourage that person to stay at work and that recruitment companies often screen out applicants over the age of 40.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The direction for the industry is to begin career planning strategies now in order to address the real issues of skills loss in the future.

There needs to be a focus on the issues of grief management, skills loss, identification of transferable skills, knowledge of appropriate industries, skills enhancement especially IT and marketing, and the practical issues such as appropriate documentation and jobsearch skills.

While the latter can be prepared by almost any job placement provider, the critical issues of grief management, identification of transferable skills and their application in the workplace and other common issues such as family responses, financial management and social interaction need to be addressed in homogeneous working groups.

Some creative thinking can devise solutions for jobseekers from all backgrounds with projects more appropriate to the jobseekers' skill levels and types of work being sought.

The small business industry for example, could be assisted by providing a mentor/coaching network, which could provide valuable help to the small business operator and great incentive to the mature age unemployed.

Recruiters have a valuable role to play in helping business understand the value and contribution of older adults in the workforce, minimise the risk of age discrimination claims, avoid potential skill shortages and keep pace with international best practice.

Suggested strategies for the RCSA and key players pivotal in maximising employment success rates for 45 plus:

Australasian employers, unions, human resource managers, recruiters and related professionals need to recognise the relationship between age and the labour market as an important issue.

The RCSA believes all parties need to promote consistently:

- the benefits of older workers as mentors
- the ability of older workers to apply a range of experiences to assist in increased productivity
- the intellectual capital of older workers as a vital resource
- the importance of older workers in team dynamics for maximum productivity
- that settled, mature workers are a stabilising influence on the workplace
- that older workers are dedicated and committed with a strong desire to work, and are more likely to stay in a job longer.

7.1. That inter-linked associations hold a forum to discuss strategies to alleviate potential barriers to 45 plus employment:

7.1.1 RCSA members and the association

- be briefed on the advantages on mature applicants
- be briefed on age discrimination issues
- become aware of career counselling services to ensure a referral system to keep unsuccessful applicants in the job seeking cycle
- make a commitment to be honest and accessible
- make available a copy of the Code of Professional Conduct to job seekers and candidates
- RCSA association promotes to its members the positive attributes of employing over 45s through formal and informal professional development and publications

7.1.2 The Careers Advisers association

- Member careers advisers need to ensure that they are corporately aware of how candidates may utilise the services of recruitment firms and other members of professional associations who may provide clients with vital skills to maximise placements
- To ensure that candidates are job ready for career opportunities in so far as having adequate career counselling to promote themselves as the best candidates for the job
- To ensure that candidates are kept abreast of new technology that may assist in exposing the hidden job market eg. The RCSA new Internet employment site www.positionsvacant.com.au

7.1.3 Financial planners association

To promote the importance of having a budget and clear financial goals to:

- Minimise the impact of periods of unemployment that go with today's job market to plan for all stages of life's financial needs
- Integrate financial planning as an important part of the job search process
- To reduce stress

7.1.4 Government health agencies

For example, mental health, state health organisations such as Vic Health in Victoria, Life Be In It, Quit, Heart Foundation.

- To integrate the message of the positive impact of balanced employment and satisfying employment on lifestyle

- To develop strategies to use periods of unemployment or early retirement positively and productively

7.2 Government assistance

7.2.1 To assist job seekers in the development of ‘career intelligence’ and self awareness skills

- To ensure that career counselling: skills analysis, goal setting, research support, self-esteem building, services are accessible on an equitable level.
- Financial planning and time management/goal setting sessions are integral in the service delivery and cannot be overlooked in the process.
- Childcare services may need to be made available for evening sessions.
- To ensure that the persons engaged to provide such services are in touch with corporate and business economic realities.

7.2.2 Create recognition programs and incentives for businesses to engage the services of 45 plus. Eg. The Victorian Government initiative throughout Australia.

7.2.3 Develop strategies to show business how they might profit from maturity.

7.2.4 Significant government expenditure in education retraining linked to employment growth areas.

8.1 Promotional and educational campaigns

Target audiences:

- Job seekers and those currently employed in the age groups of 15-20, 20-40 and 40+
- Careers counsellors and recruiters
- Business community

Key messages:

- That a balanced lifestyle is for all ages – that early retirement is a fallacy. Most people will need to work for as long as they can to sustain a comfortable lifestyle
- Both youth and age have valuable contributions to make in employment/business
- Highlight the positive attributes of each age bracket and life-stage
- That at different stages of life the employment framework needs to provide support to families eg. Sick leave, family leave, flexible working hours. That it’s okay and acceptable
- Motivational – promote resourcefulness in job search for any age
- Promote ourselves as individuals who can do...(a range of skill areas) rather than individuals who were linked to past occupations (I used to be a...)

- Promotion of all workers irrespective of age as a valuable Australian resource
- Graduated retirement campaign
- The hidden jobs market – expose the 74 per cent of hidden jobs
- Anti-discrimination advertisements regarding age discrimination targeting employers
- Highlight mixed age workforces as impacting positively on bottom-line productivity and profits – change employer attitudes and younger employees towards the value and attributes of older workers.

Media utilised for campaigns:

- That media chosen is appropriate to target audience eg. BRW for business sector, large event sponsorship for 15-40 sector

Maximising PR spend throughout Australia:

- That strategies are developed to link the various groups advocating the positives of ageing so that PR spend and exposure in this area is maximised and integrated.
- Perhaps a series of 40 plus job expos are facilitated as is held for youth.
- That resources are pooled throughout Australia – this is a generic issue rather than a state specific one.

9.1.1 TAFE and Higher Education

- Discuss strategies to target older students
- Have specifically targeted assistance for older students who have not encountered the new technology in libraries and classrooms that younger students have grown up with.

10.0 To promote a warm-down approach to retirement eg. Staggered retirement, or part-time employment over the final 5 years:

- **Employers' Chamber of Commerce**
- **AHRI (Australian Human Resources Institute)**
That HR practitioners providing briefs to recruiters or conducting their own recruitment are educated in the benefits of 45 plus workers and don't provide job briefs citing age as a selection factor
- **The over 50's association**
- **Jobseekers Over Forty Association (JOFA)**
- **Candidate/job seeker role**
 - Seek assistance for resources to access career counselling
 - Seek career assessment to ensure that they are best positioning themselves to closely fit the position applied for
 - Adopt a mindset for on-going learning and skill development
 - Undertake on-going research and reading in the area of economic, business and employment trends and job-search strategy so that they are 'career intelligent' and ready to seize the opportunity

- To ensure that they are applying through RCSA members and to ensure that companies or individual consultants are upholding the Code of Professional Conduct
- To be proactive in reporting any mis-conduct or discrimination by recruitment firms, recruitment consultants or employers
- Prepare and maintain a budget
- Actively network with a range of contacts of diverse age and occupation
- Join several professional associations and maximise learning and networking opportunities
- Stay positive and continually self market
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle and pay attention to grooming
- Don't stop at job advertisements in job search
- Highlight skills and experience on CVs
- Avoid reference to age on applications, highlight over 10 years experience

8. CONCLUSION

As stated in this submission, the impact of prolonged unemployment has a detrimental effect on an individual's self-esteem and confidence and also has wider socio-economic implications.

The RCSA believes it is vital that the private and public sector work together to tackle the issues, and that a co-ordinated approach by all concerned parties is required to address the nature and scope of the issues involved.

The RCSA has an important role to play in education, training and promoting awareness within its membership and in the industry of the positive attributes of employing over 45's.

Through a greater awareness of the advantages of mature aged workers, RCSA members are ready to break down the myths which exist around older people, particularly in relation to health issues and ability to adapt.

We need to address the issue of re-employment at the point where people are made redundant, thereby ensuring this group who are just as innovative and flexible as anyone, do not become displaced in society.