

## ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY.

Why is our Lions Club involved in making comment to this Committee? Our Lions International Objects give us the ability to "promote the principles of good government", "to take an active interest in the social and moral welfare of the community" and "to provide a forum for the open discussion of all matters of public interest" etc. (Copy of the Objects attached).

The three stories from our members are indicative of the experiences of individuals who have been confronted by being both over 45 and unemployed. Since sending in our submission to the inquiry, one is now back in the workforce and another has received training which he believes will enable him to again be gainfully employed.

Two major issues that need to be addressed by the Committee in respect the 45 plus age group seeking to re-enter the workforce is the social inequity that falls disproportionately on this age group and this creates division within the wider community by being unemployed and perhaps also being on "the dole".

The continual negative bashing by the media of persons who are unemployed, for whatever reason, places persons in this age grouping under additional pressure that has considerable impact on their feeling of vulnerability which effects their esteem, self worth and well being.

Morgan & Banks claim that 300,000 persons have been made redundant for each of the past ten years. Quite staggering numbers!!! The Australian Bureau of Statistics is quoted in a newspaper article on their latest figures on retirement as follows "while the average Australian expects to retire at 63, most of them will leave full-time employment by age 48. This figure is then qualified thus "This includes all Australians who leave the workforce from full-time employment and never (or never expect to) return to full-time work". The statements are further qualified "The figures show that workers who leave work earlier than they had hoped do so for reasons which include being physically incapable of continuing (25%), retrenchment, both voluntary and involuntary (19%), leaving to work part-time (2.4%) and leisure (6%). (Newspaper article attached).

All of which beg the question, that of the 25% physically incapable of continuing how many chose that course rather than joining the unemployment queue? This hypothesis is very clearly illustrated in the figures quoted for persons on disability benefit within the Greater West of Sydney, again from the Bureau of Statistics and contained in our submission.

Our contributors believe that they have been discriminated against due to their age, being unemployed and seeking to re-enter the workforce. The counter staff, or first point of contact of all providers in the main are certainly below the age threshold of this inquiry.

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This impression of discrimination has been displayed in subtle ways in a range of circumstances by the indifferent attitude displayed by this staff to our requests for advice, assistance, service and information. Similarly they believe that they have been further discriminated by there being no incentives to employers to take the persons that are the subject of this inquiry.

Therefore there is a need to:-

- (a) provide a range of incentives to employers to engage persons that are the subject of this inquiry. The skills and commitment of these persons would be valuable to employers and perhaps more importantly as mentors to younger staff.
- (b) have a greater range of information on services, training, assistance be more readily available to this age group.
- (c) have specially trained consultants (within Centrelink and Network providers) to provide service, assistance and support services to meet the specific and individual needs of this age group.
- (d) members of the Committee to experience at first hand, (1) the indignity of being unemployed, and (2) attempting to re-enter the workforce through the service providers, to have a better understanding of and an appreciation of the differences between statistics and the individuals that make up those numbers.
- (e) more flexibility on the effect that part-time and casual work remuneration has on benefit entitlements. When this remuneration is double taxed by both the Taxation Department and Centrelink in the calculation of benefit. This can also cause unnecessary delay in the receipt of and continuity of benefit.
- (f) more flexibility with the eligibility guidelines for unemployed persons to have access to NEIS programs. (Advertisement attached).

Based on our experience, we wonder how other organisations/individuals received information about the inquiry? And on that basis whether information has been sought from service providers and their experiences in assisting the over 45's re-enter the workforce?

Thank you for your attention.