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Many thanks for your reply dated 22 April 1999 in reference to mature aged unemployed people. I am aged 55yrs, a Mechanical Fitter by trade and unemployed for two and a half years now. There are several aspects which frustrate me in my job search.

I find that having submitted hundreds of job applications over the last couple of years that my failure rate in gaining an interview is alarming. I find that the potential employers I write to in the main do not bother to offer any sort of response; despite submitting what I consider to be a good resume. Not for-getting the expense which is incurred in doing this. It has become clearly evident to me that their rudeness in not bothering to reply is due to age discrimination and possibly the fact that I am of British descent; despite being an Australian citizen for years. There is a blatant disregard by these companies of the so called anti discrimination laws. It seems to me the Government has not been very forceful in reminding companies of their legal responsibilities. I recently referred a Brisbane company by the name of Readiskil to the anti discrimination council here. This turned out to be a non event as no action was taken. I was furious at the content of the forms which I had to fill out for Readiskil and for Transfield; the company I would have been hired to if I had been successful. However, needing a job I had no choice. The forms were riddled with questions asking for medical information, date of birth, kilos could I lift, nationality. Where is the enforcement of these anti discrimination laws if all the e companies are continuing to ask employees to answer these questions? There seems to be more weight put on these questions at interviews than a persons actual ability to perform the job itself. I have come to the conclusion that these companies are really searching for the level of risk in an applicant being susceptible to a workers compensation claim...due to being older! Incidentally it is common to be asked to be repeatedly asked to fill out a form authorising clearance to search a person's workers compensation records, which again is supposed to be illegal. I have also had the misfortune to be involved with case managers in Gladstone; two of them at a year each. Neither of them produced any constructive outcome whatsoever. An absolute waste of taxpayers money, as is the "new" system. It is an insult to my intelligence to be put in a situation whereby I am compelled to be manipulated in to job searching by a person very often of far lesser education than myself. The fact is that employers have no desire to hire older people, and non of this paraphernalia generated by the Government is going to change this attitude. This business of taking a form to Social Security every three months to verify that one has looked for at least two jobs in that period is a farce. Every three months I have applied for far more positions than that. Unfortunately the plethora of labour hire companies is assisting the depletion of permanent jobs at an alarming rate. Hiring of staff through this system is a boon to companies, due to massive savings in overheads, but this is of little consolation to the unemployed. Why cannot there be utilisation of skilled older people to pass on their knowledge, instead of leaving us on the scrap heap? I think there should be encouragement for people to upgrade their skills so as to open up further employment prospects to them. The expense of TAFE courses cannot be met by dole recipients; there should be some form of offer of free further education. Paying exorbitant rent and bringing up a family on the dole, which is well below the poverty line really is a struggle. Ask a politician to survive on a fortnight's unemployment benefit; I think he would use the lot in half a day! The powers that be are in fairyland as far as what it costs a family to live these days! There is no incentive to try to obtain part time work, as what little one can earn is immediately siphoned from the dole payment. In fact from past experience one usually ends up worse off! The Government seem to think that if one earns a few dollars via casual work that the worker is immediately wealthy. They forget about the backlog of bills is still there.

In conclusion I do hope that this letter has offered some insight to the Government how tough it really is out here. I also hope that your enquiry is going to bring about some form of constructive action, not the usual rhetorical non event.

The real solution for this country is to generate industry to create jobs. The Government is not addressing the nucleus of the problem. Unfortunately until something constructive (not political) is done about this situation, people like myself are doomed to remain on the scrap heap in the form of an extended retirement. Above all what an absolute waste of a valuable resource to this country.