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Brighton Qld 4017

25 July 2003

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE  
RELATIONS**

**SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO EMPLOYMENT: INCREASING  
PARTICIPATION IN PAID WORK**

*This is an individual submission, and does not represent the views of any other person or organisation.*

As a person who is fast approaching the "retirement" age, I have a particular interest in ensuring that I have an adequate and rewarding working life up until the date I choose to retire. My present situation is such that I do not believe that this will necessarily be the case.

**The Ageing Worker and Discrimination**

According to my readings, much of the concern regarding income support recipients, tends to revolve around those who are entering the workforce (i.e. school-leavers); those who are re-entering the workforce (from redundancy or after a break to look after children). There is much less said about effective and rewarding paid work for those in the 50 plus age bracket.

Age discrimination is rife in Australia. People have become smarter as a result of anti-discrimination legislation and do not usually declare to a prospective employee that they are "too old". Instead there are a number of euphemisms in place e.g. "not fitting the team", "not energetic enough" or the like. This is an area of discrimination which is less likely to be challenged, as it is harder to prove. Government organisations are less likely to infringe the legislation.

To resolve this, *I would like to see a campaign to promote the value which older generations can provide to the younger.* In many cases, older workers would be just as happy to mentor or assist, and not necessarily lead, younger workers as long as their skills and expertise is recognised. All of us need recognition and to feel that our efforts are appreciated.

**Utilisation of Older Workers' Skills**

*I would also like to see assistance provided to older workers to update their skills.* Money is tight in many areas, and some organisations are not able to provide funds for upskilling or reskilling older workers into new fields. Many workers, through age related illnesses, are not able to undertake the range of duties they carried out previously. Or they mask their problems through a fear that they will be retrenched. The situation currently provides little opportunity for these workers because they are limited by opportunities within their current place of work. *A register of workers with particular skills and desired jobs may provide alternatives for those who still*

*have something to offer, but need to change to a different type of role.* This should be separate to listings of unemployed – there is a difference.

For many women on their own, access to a register of people who could undertake small jobs around the home would be very much appreciated. There are commercial businesses who provide this service in some areas, but a community based organisation would no doubt have more appeal for some older people.

### **Review of Superannuation**

The current situation in some superannuation funds means that a retiree's pension is linked to their last yearly income. Consequently, moving to part-time employment will affect the income of these workers into their retirement years. *I believe that the superannuation requirements should be reviewed to allow older workers to reduce their working hours as preparation for full retirement without impacting any of their superannuation entitlements.*

While on the subject of superannuation, and this may not be in your terms of reference, *I wish to object to the current superannuation surcharge arrangements.* It assumes that if a worker earns more than a certain amount, then s/he must be "wealthy", and can wear the surcharge. In my own case, although I have paid superannuation for the past 40 years, circumstances have meant that I actually have quite a small amount set aside in superannuation. And three property settlements over that time, also means that I have very little assets – I don't even own my own unit. The surcharge is an extra financial burden when I am definitely not "wealthy". The surcharge should be means-tested on all assets, not just income.

### **Participation in the Workforce**

Your terms of reference specifically discuss a balance of assistance, incentives and obligations to increase participation. I believe that the items I have outlined above would improve participation for older workers, and thereby reduce the support required for age pension recipients.

*Another incentive may be to provide partial benefits for part-time workers*, i.e. if an older worker who would normally qualify for the age pension chooses to work two days a week, then s/he does not forgo all of the benefits s/he would have received if receiving the full age pension. For most people, there is such a large amount of benefits forgone, that working does not seem to be worth while. This approach would likely be of benefit to younger people who are usually only eligible for fairly low wages, and the differential between working and not working is not great. In their case, perhaps transport concessions would be appropriate.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views.

Yours sincerely,

Mae Mulheran (Ms)