

Volunteering ACT

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Please find following Volunteering ACT's submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations. If further assistance or a verbal submission is required by the Standing Committee, Volunteering ACT will be only too happy to supply the committee with this information.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss this matter further with the committee.

Yours truly,

MARY PORTER
Executive Officer

Volunteering ACT

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations.

Terms of Reference:

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

Submission from Volunteering ACT. Volunteering ACT do not feel equipped to comment on industrial issues or long term unemployed seeking to establish a business. Volunteering ACT therefore will address the social and some economic issues as declared in the committee's term of reference.

Social Issues.

People over the age of forty-five who have become unemployed lose social networks because of;

- reduced social contact.
- A person's identity is often established by their paid employment and consequently is lost with unemployment.

Reduce Social Contact.

Reduced social contact emanates from the fact of loss of salary endangers a loss of social mobility. The unemployed are less able to take part in the social fabric of society due to a lack of funding. With a loss of employment people's sense of self worth becomes reduced and leads to a lack motivation to mix socially. Unemployed people also have less reason to meet socially with previous work mates and this leads to feelings of isolation.

Society's Inability to Meet the Person and not that Person's Employment.

Most people when meeting a new acquaintance for the first time will inquire as to what work he / she carries out. People who are forty-five years of age and unemployed can become embarrassed and distressed at having to admit what is generally perceived by many in society as a failure.

The effect of being unemployed can have a different impact on men than on women.

Men

Even with the advent of gender equality many males still have the perception that they need to maintain full time paid employment and are required to be the main financial support for their family. Consequently males establish support networks from within the work place environment. If that male has been in the work force from the age of twenty to forty-five years, it is often the only support network established. As the general perception (although incorrect) is still held

within society that the male should still be the main financial support for their family, the loss of employment at forty-five years of age can lead to loss of;

1. self esteem
2. confidence
3. self worth
4. wellbeing.

Women

Women establish networks not only in the work place but also within their local community. Women, in general still care for children so can establish networks with other mothers. Women can also establish networks as they are more likely to take on volunteer positions within the local and wider community. So although the loss of employment at forty-five for women is equally devastating, they are better equipped to cope in this situation.

The Benefits of Voluntary Work for unemployed people of Forty - Five years of age.

All unemployed people can benefit from participating in voluntary work on a regular basis. They gain;

1. self esteem
2. 2. self worth

They may;

1. develop networks
2. 2. new skills

They maintain;

1. a work ethic
2. 2. established skills.

Research conducted in Australia has shown that unemployed people of forty-five suffer a high rate illness than those in paid employment. Research conducted in Canada and the USA has established that people who volunteer have;

1. lower stress levels
2. 2. lower cholesterol levels

and their immune systems are better able to cope with infections.

Volunteering ACT would like to express their appreciation at being asked to present this submission to the *House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations* and will welcome the opportunity to verbally present the issues expressed within this submission for the committees benefit.