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I am writing this letter in disgust of the government's recent comments and how it has singled out the unemployed on more than one occasion. I have been in the unfortunate position of being on the "**dole**" for several months. Like many in my age group it was no fault of my own that I found my self in this degrading situation.

This government and past governments through their eagerness to have enterprise bargaining amongst many other ideas as a basis to improve the economy have done well at the expense of the older and younger generation. The government talks about the "**dole bludger**," they bring out rules to make the situation more intolerable by placing further demands on the unemployed in relation to obtaining work keeping records etc. Let me state that I have tried my utmost to find work that I feel falls within in my capability only to be rejected over and over again to the point of desperation. In my case I am not able to continue on the path I have enjoyed for the past thirty years owing to health reasons. So in order to gain work I retrained for three years by going to evening classes and trained as a Health and Safety officer on the understanding that there was a considerable amount of work to be obtained.

Having reached a standard which enables me to call myself a Safety officer doesn't automatically get me a job as I have found out. But that's not all. Even though I find it hard to get work in the area I have trained for, I have the disappointment of being unable to secure a job in any other field. Because I have **no experience or not enough experience, do not have the right background, " age", etc** in other words to old to employ. What affect has this had on me, financially it leaves me very broke because the money I receive to support myself through the DSS is menial. No one in their right mind would say that they enjoy living on such meager income. What little savings I might have had are gradually whittled away. Self esteem starts to diminish to the point that frustration kicks in and you start to ask yourself weather life is really worth living. In the past year I have attended a weekly meeting with an agency and have applied in writing for over two hundred plus jobs including many phone inquires only to be told that there are many applications for the same position. Or your qualifications are excellent and thank you for applying but the amount of applications have been overwhelming and that you have failed to be successful on this occasion. On one occasion I was told that there was as much as one thousand applicants applying for the same position that I had applied for. I believe the government owes an apology to many of us "**dole bludgers**" for there discriminatory remarks. Let me remind the government that on the one hand it states that discrimination of any form will not be tolerated. They are obviously talking about colour, race, religion, but exclude the unemployed, yet they continually discriminate against the unemployed. Until I was retrenched I had never been out of work, had always been able to support my family for nearly thirty years. It is not easy being out of work, trying your best to cope and being forced into a situation no one in there right mind would enjoy.

The government is wrong when it declares that people become complacent and don't want to work. I was offered a menial position for one month and managed to extend it to two months only because I had achieved more than was expected of me.

The point I am making is that many of us want to work but due to circumstances are not able to obtain work. If the government implies that we enjoy being imprisoned in our homes day after day, because that's how it feels they are mistaken. May be its time the government makes a genuine commitment to help people to seek employment instead of blaming and pointing the finger. More and more companies are sizing down there operations and going offshore. Why doesn't the government encourage companies to look into a better and fairer system and make them more responsible and accountable. Helping retrenched employees reestablish themselves and may be support the worker with finance for several months after retrenchment by paying into a special fund, or having insurance to help finance retraining and placement. Its ok to have a work force well trained but unless the government is prepared to help create more jobs you end up with a well educated, well trained workforce with no where to go. May be if such a program existed companies may think twice on retrenching unnecessarily. I hope that you read this letter and that some more positive reaction can come of it.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Robins', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ray Robins
I am Age 54 in June