

“INQUIRY INTO ISSUES SPECIFIC TO WORKERS OVER 45 YEARS OF AGE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT”

Introduction

Approximately 50% of jobseekers referred to our Job Network Offices from Centrelink are aged in excess of 40. Many of these jobseekers have spent much of their working life in one industry and have been retrenched. Another significant portion of these clients are migrants with overseas qualifications. These jobseekers can be difficult to place due to employer perceptions that mature aged workers cannot be redeployed or re-trained. However, there are significant benefits to hiring older workers and, once trained, the financial benefits associated with their productivity are significant.

Benefits of hiring mature aged workers:

- Reliable and punctual
- Level headed, common sense
- Loyal
- Experienced
- Hard working and productive
- Low absenteeism

Barriers to Employment:

- Experience can be narrow
- Reticent to embrace new technology
- Outdated skills and qualifications
- Can be reluctant to change
- Employer perceptions that they have less energy and are less adaptable in an environment requiring increasing flexibility and adaptability.
- English language skills

Suggestions to assist 45+ year old clients:

1. Mature Age Wage Subsidy - employers pay a reduced wage (say, the National Training Wage) to new mature aged employees who have been unemployed in excess of 12 months and the government pay the difference between that and an appropriate award.
2. Training Allowances - new mature aged employees could attract special training allowances so that their skills can be upgraded at no cost to the employer.
3. Reduction of Government Taxes associated with older workers - such as Payroll Tax.
4. Government subsidised superannuation for older workers - the government could pay 4% or 5% differential, thus providing the employer with a discount on their overall wages bill.
5. Group Re-training schemes - mature aged unemployed people could be re-trained in areas that they would be well suited such as: Call Centres Trainers Retail Personal Care
6. Expand the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme - to include businesses that may already be established but not "succeeding". Many mature aged people could run a business but not necessarily a brand new enterprise.
7. Provide information to potential migrants that suggests an easier entrance to the Australian workforce is possible if they actively consider part time / casual / contract /

voluntary / temporary positions rather than waiting for "perfect permanent" positions to be offered to them after arrival in Australia and also ensure they understand that their qualifications may not be accepted in Australia and thus they may not be able to work in their current profession.

8. Modify the unfair dismissal laws to exclude 45 year olds from these provisions.