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**INQUIRY INTO OLDER UNEMPLOYED  
(Professionally Qualified, experienced)**

I apologise if this submission is outside the Terms of Reference. I have only recently become aware of your Inquiry through the press.

I have been registered with Centrelink and receiving benefits for 20 months. Each week I apply for several positions and I am not proud. I do not need to advise you what Mining Engineering is like at the moment even with a Mine managers Certificate and an impressive cv. The Industry and its professions are actually quite small so there is little about me that is not known.

I have other qualifications but in one (Civil) my experience is limited to Tunnelling and in fields not in much demand. Likewise I completed most of a Computer Science Diploma but too long ago to be of interest and I never used it. I have applied for positions in both fields, concentrating on the remote area for Civil and COBOL for Computers so far without success.

I am "type cast" even by people who should know better. Part of that type casting is that I am only what I am qualified in. It is difficult to convey to those who recruit for Companies that in the past we were expected to cope, to do things we had not done before, to learn for ourselves. Not knowing a particular computer package or the chemistry of a process or not having an MBA was not an impediment. In front of the far from docile Australian workforce, one learnt how to do quite complex computations in one's head or in the dirt and make important decisions from which there was no escape.

I have acquired many job skills but some that once needed no tickets now do (kitchen hand, animal control), or at least that is the nice way of filtering me out. I have a back problem for which have received some treatment (Steven Jensen). Thus I avoid some positions such as caring for bed-ridden.. (I cared for my uncle for several years).

Centrelink referred me to 'Intensive Assistance'. It was neither. I was already doing the one relevant suggestion made ie removing the heroic and the high profile positions in industry and the Professional Associations from my cv as well as deleting anything that could be used to guess my age. The former CES once had a Professional Employment Office. They were more useful than the Intensive assistance contractor or any of the many job search agents I have seen.

Selection Criteria have taken on the shape of a filtering mechanism. They rarely address competence. CSIRO provide a guide to addressing there criteria but others range from simply time consuming to obscure. Some Government ones appear designed to eliminate all external applications.

Employment history and references create difficulty with less skilled or unskilled positions. I would create a "legend" if that did not risk prosecution, dismissal or ethics hearings.

Work for the Dole would be nice. Indeed they appear to need help. Participants do not appear to be shown how to use hand tools properly and one shot on TV showed what would have been a sacking offence when I first worked. Something like the wartime CCC or the other Manpower Authority schemes for internees and POW's would suit me. Such a scheme is now less at risk of union objections than it would have once encountered. The problem now is that it would get hi-jacked and require a Canberra bureaucracy.

If people like me are to be lepers to family and profession we may need a colony. There are some quite liveable places where we could be out of sight and stop cluttering up the recruiting agents mail. And at least the social researchers would know where to find us.

I doubt if your enquiry can produce much. I am sure you know that you should only hold an enquiry when you know or have decided its outcome. I would suggest however that you should not let it get hijacked so that others decide the outcome. I refer particularly to vested interests of which the Education sector must be mentioned. They will invent courses. Your other problems are "experts" and "peak bodies. Even if you avoid the hi-jack they will lie in wait and ambush the result.

Yours faithfully

Rebecca Norton  
(BE., FIEAust.,FAusIMM)