

A1 Employment & Training
Services Pty Ltd

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A1 Employment & Training Services Pty Ltd has been in the employment field for a number of years catering for people of school age wishing to go into Apprenticeships or Traineeships to people registering for part-time, casual or full-time work. Then as of the 1st May 1998 A1 Employment & Training Services began as a member of the Government's Job Network programme.

Listed below is a precise of those areas of the 45 and over age Job Seekers and the obstacles facing them today in trying to acquire work, these topics will then be expanded upon. The bulk of this information is based upon those Job Seekers registered with Centrelink and Job Seekers who are not registered with Centrelink at this stage. The breakdown of these Job Seekers into family and single groups again influences the degree of their plight.

ECONOMIC

The family orientated Job Seeker is needs to work because either their family unit is now older and requires the Job Seeker to provide more financial support or that both partners need to work to provide a 'certain standard of living.'

SOCIAL

Job Seekers face enormous social issues of being in the older employment group, society is expecting that at this age you should be settled into a job, children off your hands or about to. And that planning should now be focused on future retirement options. But the economic environment now requires the older worker to remain in the workforce longer. Thus this age group finds it increasingly difficult to remain in their chosen field because of younger, more qualified Job Seekers challenging the role.

APPRENTICESHIPS/TRAINEESHIPS

An estimated 80% of our older Job Seekers would gladly take the opportunity of undertaking an apprenticeship/traineeship if the employer was willing to take them on -they don't mind the lower wage to start off with. But there is little or no incentive for employers to take on older workers.

EMPLOYER PREJUDICE

Most employers are looking for Job Seekers who can grow with the organisation and they tend to believe that the forty-five age group are classified as 'you are passed it' yet other employers are realising the wealth of knowledge and experience these people can offer a company.

Other areas Employers are concerned about is that the older age group are too set in their ways and that the Job Seeker is not willing to learn new ways and they believe the Job Seeker says 'but in the old days we did it this way'.

The technical knowledge and experience required today of the older Job Seeker is not available through other avenues - yes they can go back to TAFE or University to obtain the credentials but loose out because they are unable to organise the work experience necessary to apply to the Employer. The Job Seeker may need to have a provision made available where they can be covered for a set period of time, similar to students who go on work experience.

FIRST TIME UNEMPLOYED

The older Job Seeker who has never been unemployed is now faced with this prospect and the psychological effect on the individual and family members is enormous. They are bewildered by the concept of Centrelink and being tagged as a 'Dole Bludger'. There is no or little assistance from Employers who have retrenched or downsized the organisation. These employers need to be able to call in a Job Network Provider to undertake Job Search activities for staff as not all companies have the finances of BHP to do this for their workers.

MULTI-SKILLING

The older Job Seeker is now confronted by the fact that the job they did is no longer required as a stand-alone job, they need to have other skills that they can call on even need to upgrade their skills e.g. a few years ago gas fitters were required to do an Electronics Course at TAFE because of the onslaught of electronic ignitions in gas equipment/appliances.

The above is great if there is a direct path to follow for multi-skilling, but how does the Job Seeker identify what skills they will need now or in the future. There are resources within TAFE and elsewhere, to assist potential students choose the right courses for them.

The old style Vocational Guidance Centres were there to assist not only school leavers but also allowing people to know what their options were. As a registered unemployed person, you have the Career Information Centres and although these Centres are available to anyone - not just the unemployed but it is not widely known. Of course these Centres can not provide all the answers but this certainly provides a 'direction' to the Job Seeker.

JOB SEARCH TRAINING

The older Job Seeker once unemployed, then begins the process of learning about Centrelink and becoming registered however they can not access Job Search Training for three months as Centrelink believes that most people once becoming unemployed, would normally find another job within three months. (Also the associated paperwork involved in processing a Job Seeker is not easy).

But it is at this critical time that the 'new Job Seeker' would benefit from Job Search Training - their motivation is still at a high, their ability to pursue opportunities is fresh and they are fully aware of the unemployment process ahead of them if they do not gain employment.

NEIS & THE BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Although the NEIS programme is available - very few older Job Seekers know about it. The changing face of Centrelink's responsibilities and information processes are occurring at a faster rate, there are delays in training staff at Centrelink and their numbers are also being cut, making the communication of resources available to Job Seekers very limited.

The Business Enterprise Centre (Newcastle) is providing an opportunity for older workers to contemplate the concept of staffing their own business. The seminars they run are not only informative but extremely practical in dispelling the illusion that 'starting your own business is an easy notion, but that if you are prepared to do the 'ground work', then you can start your own business.

COMMUNICATION & ADVERTISING

Communication and Advertising of services available to Job Seekers is always required through all mediums. But we do not believe Job Seekers are advised to watch out for this advertising. TAFE always advertise both full-time and part-time courses including those courses that are FREE. Job Network Providers advertise on Radio, Newspapers, Centrelink Information Sessions etc.

TRAINING - FREE

The older Job Seeker once informed about the processes ahead of them are extremely willing to take on further training and as registered unemployed Job Seekers they are not always aware that they are entitled to one FREE TAFE course per year.

We have had some older Job Seekers express concern that if they could only get their Fork-Lift Ticket, Truck Licence or Responsible Service of Alcohol etc - they could get work. But funding for this area is restricted to Intensive Assistance clients.

There are limited Training Organisations who offer free training because they have received funding through the Government - but again, these organisations are rare and opportunities are quickly snapped up.

Preparing the older Job Seeker for the concept of further training would also be worthwhile e.g. similar to the University's Open Foundation programme. Because there is still a fear for the older Job Seeker that they left school over twenty-five years ago and they have doubts as to whether they could cope with part or full-time training.

FAILURE AS A PERSON

The final insult for a Job Seeker is of course their declining morale and belief in themselves that they can recover from the situation (unemployment, retrenchment etc) Depending upon the length of unemployment, the older Job Seeker may need to have an avenue to ongoing support. Being mindful of course about 'holding the Job Seeker's hand' for too long and the older Job Seeker becoming dependent.

Employment & Training Services Pty Ltd

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21 April 1999

Mr Paul McMahan
The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education & Workplace Relations
Suite R1 116 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr McMahan

Re: Inquiry Into issues Specific To Workers Over 45 Years of Age Seeking Employment, Or Establishing A Business, Following Unemployment

Please find enclosed a written submission and a disk version of A1 Employment & Training Services response to the Standing Committee's investigation.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact.

Yours faithfully

MADELAINE ATKINS

General Manager

Encl: Report & Disk