

I would like to open my brief address by referring to part of the conclusion of my written submissions, where in I was somewhat admonishing to this Inquiry process, suspecting that it might brush over the offerings of individuals and produce a comforting or affirming report of the situation, which would fail to consider what might be regarded as the 'small', therefore less important issues, brought forward from various sources.

That has not been my experience so far, and I should like to compliment the secretariat of this inquiry, and of course the inquiry members, on their responsiveness as well as their general efforts to ensure a wide perspective is brought forward to this committee.

Whilst there are many issues that one might like to address, given the limited time, for my part I should like to focus on particularly, "the social" and I guess to some degree "industrial" issues or impacts, relating to the subject of the inquiry.

I believe I can certainly say, that for 20 to 30 years I have been a person who has always taken a particular interest in social, political and current affairs issues. And might I tell you from observations of others among my peers and the general public, in this practice I am certainly in a minority. The point is I believe I would be in a better position than most, to see coming globalisation, economic rationalism and its attendant impacts. The first elements I identified were things like Total Quality Management, Compulsory Competitive Tendering, International Standards implementation, other concepts such as "best practice", together with the various forms of bench marking and so on. I took these to be a reasonable development of new management processes and practices, in some cases introduced to create reasonable efficiencies and to address some of the untenable work practices that existed across various particular industries.

Although I broadly understood the efforts to open and liberalise world trade via GATT and such things as the "Uruguay round of agreements" and the like, at no time did I see the government of this country making a specific attempt to "inform" let alone "consult" its people concerning the nature and monumental ramifications of globalisation, as they would in particular effect Australia, its communities and culture. To some, the notion of a 'formal program' to advise a society of evolutionary structural changes, might seem unwarranted or even silly. When we compare however the efforts and expenditure taken to advise the community on the impacts of a limited and merely proposed proposition (i.e. The Republican Referendum), rather than actual predetermined changes to be introduced regardless, it is much easier to appreciate the notion of such a formal program in relation to globalisation and economic rationalism, and their massive societal impacts.

There is more than enough information available from many sources on the widespread impacts of globalisation etc. I am certainly here to say however that "older workers" are very definitely one group upon whom the ramifications have been profound.

As an aside, I have been interested to recently learn of "The National Citizenship Project" whose goal use

"to develop a set of National benchmarks and indicators for a 'good society' and 'good communities' and to do so in ways that combine 'best practice' standards (such as human rights) with a very strong community development and Sanderson participation element".

In considering this group, the first and strongest suggestion I would tender is **the empirical need for you to "discriminate" in all elements of the process**. Whilst in these politically correct times the notion of in any way discriminating it is an absolute anathema to many, I would direct you to that part of the definition of this term which says, "**to make clear distinction; differentiate**" rather than the secondary part of the definition "to act on the basis of prejudice". Further my dictionary says "to perceive the distinguishing features of; recognised as distinct."

It would be my view that **the biggest block** to making any progress in the whole spectrum of welfare or other support, is the paranoia that particularly governments have about "

differentiating" among and between particular groups to whom they are required to respond. The irony is that central to the capitalist/free enterprise, deregulated system and approach, which otherwise impacts so heavily on our lives, is the practice of "marketing"; and marketing is everything about 'responding to needs', and this is **only** achieved through differentiation.

The reality of course, is that governments and others are only too happy to differentiate and discriminate in what they or others designate to be a 'positive' or politically acceptable manner, for example youth unemployment and indigenous and multicultural affairs. "Old Workers" are a group, within which **you need to discriminate/differentiate in order to make any effective headway in addressing their problems.**

The Hon. Tony Abbott is a member of Parliament who regularly comments publicly on various points about unemployed people. His observations and comments however are only accurate and pertinent when considering in the context of differentiated targeting, which he generally fails to do. This often renders his comments, not only ineffective, but offensive. (And that is said by a person could be generally regarded as an admirer of that particular MP, among others).

Older age workers include:-

people with significant resources,

those who see themselves, and are happy to be, at the end of their effective working life,

people not really very interested in maintaining any form of effective focus on a vocation,

some who seek only part time or casual work

unmotivated 'bludgers'

and others ready, willing and very able, and indeed enormously keen and enthusiastic

to continue in fulfilling, productive and appropriately rewarding work.

My particular interest for this exercise would be to consider the latter characterised group. I further described them in the second paragraph on page 7 of my submission, as a group who have generally been "cost efficient citizens", with strong moral and ethical codes, and people who had shown to be "net contributors" to their society. To these people the biggest 'crime' of the whole situation we face, is the "**removal of fundamental reasoning**" in so many of the processes which determine the outcomes that effect them.

If it is the design of any government to take its country and citizens down a particular philosophical path even and/or particularly, when it sees it as necessary or unavoidable, then not only should it be beholden, to explain, (as I mentioned earlier), but also to **comprehensively reassess all the other structures and mechanisms** which can render such a direction, to be seen as unreasonable and unjust, when viewed in a comparative way. And believe me, the group I have described among the older age workers, cannot avoid seeing things that way.

This group has many very talented, experienced, knowledgeable, intelligent, enthusiastic and committed people. They have witnessed changes that are in fact, not in any way in accord with the implementation of new efficiencies and best practice, but rather in many cases have been manipulated to meet the needs of those who in a lot of cases just happened to be in the right place at the right time, to gain a hold of 'the levers' and entrench themselves among the benefactors or "winners".

Everyday they are taunted by examples of unbelievable inefficiency, ineffectiveness and incompetence which they are unable to reconcile with their position of not being able to gain reasonable employment. If part of the process of 'best practice' is to ensure that you have the best available people in any given position, and we are in a situation where there is a massive over supply of very excellent talent to choose from, how can so obvious a situation occur so constantly?

Part of the answer lies in what I call the "them's that are in, are 'in' syndrome. It says "them's that are in, are 'in", and them's that are out, are 'out". And them's that are 'in', are making damn sure, that them's that are out, don't get in". Or, 'I'm alright Jack, and I want to keep it that way'.

Now some of course will see that as an odd of proposition, to them I can only say "run it past a few well credentialed and experienced older age group people out of work and trying to get back in, and see how they relate to the notion ". I further support my proposition by referring to the recently released report of "far-reaching research conducted by Drake Management Consulting in which over 500 senior executives and HR managers nationwide were questioned about their age preferences when it comes to recruiting, retrenching and training executive staff ".

" According to the findings, a very sizeable 62% of organisations make most of their selections from the 31-40 age-group, while almost a third less, (23%) have the greater penchant for those in their forties."

The report states " shockingly, none of the 500 respondents would choose to employ managers and executives in their fifties". It continues " tragically, it is also the 50-somethings who are most likely to get the boot, with up to 65% of companies saying this group would be first to go when retrenching".

According to Drake Management Consulting's national manager, Chris Meddows Taylor, the results were much worse than had initially been anticipated. " While we have long known that ageism is a problem in organisations, we were unaware of just how deep rooted the problem is".

His statement accompanying the release of his report continues:-

" We have always recognised that ageism is prevalent in some industries. However, we now find, it is endemic across the entire workplace-- with just a handful of exceptions." "The results also come at the time when companies are beginning to recognise that knowledge and learning are a crucial to their competitive success and instead of retaining our mature the third of work workers -- our power houses of knowledge -- we're relegating them to the employment scrap heap!"

"Mr Meddows Taylor says the current trend by organisations -- to rid themselves of mature veterans and make way for younger, dynamic and more energetic management teams -- may look good and visibly demonstrate change, but generally these were just band aid solutions."

" Being seen to get rid of dead wood and bring in the new brooms is often done to appease shareholder demands, but do be aware. Investment analysts are increasingly looking behind the quick fix solution and wanting to assess the depth of knowledge, talent and wisdom in the company as well as the strategies to develop these things ".

" Simply presenting a young, new beautiful executive team, is no substitute !"

There is much else relevant to our discussion and worthy of quoting from this abridged version of the report, my purpose for the moment is to lend weight to the veracity of my initial proposition, which broadly speaking is that globalisation and laissez-faire economics does not produce fair, equitable or reasonable outcomes, but indeed adds to the environment where the predominant attitude becomes " bugger you Jack, I'm alright".

Proof of the pudding in terms of peoples reaction to the widespread inequities spawned by the current circumstances, is clearly evident for all to see. One needs only look at a number of recent elections and the referendum, to plumb the mood of our society.

Important characteristics of 'the new way of things', are manifested in many indicators including the levels of social dislocation, the burgeoning of the self-indulgent me generation, much clearer delineation of the 'haves and the have nots' (what class of Olympic tickets does one have access to!), the ability to structure your affairs to grossly minimise your tax obligations and the nature of the methods of wealth creation such as the exponential growth of certain industries, like gambling and pawn broking, the latter where profits are derived from charging interest rates of up to 300% per annum to the most vulnerable in the society.

Some of you hearing what I have to say could be excused for (dare I use the term) rationalising away my views as those of the prejudiced left leaning and/or anti-Conservative. The irony is that I in fact could be accurately characterised as a long-standing vehement antisocialist, traditional Conservative who has not once in 32 years voted for the Labor Party. Neither do I covet other's success and/or affluence. It's just that I was raised with "an underpinning of responsibility, accountability and discipline all on a bed of truth", which produced a belief in the systems of society and the governments which guided them, essentially had hearing to the "fundamental reasoning" to which I referred in page 7 of my written submission. Your Inquiry seeks. "... issues specific to older workers seeking employment...". It is the "feelings" of many in this group which I have chosen to attempt to illustrate to you today. I'm sure my thesis in this regard, if tested, would gain widespread empathy and agreement, that might be summed up by saying; that people no longer feel as they not so long ago did, that provided they had a good range of skills and abilities, were industrious, applied, diligent and honest, that Australia would always deliver "a fair crack of the whip". I am sure you will find many people fitting this description no longer believe that to be the case, and that's a very sad indictment for this country.