

Factsheet: Older Persons

Background Information

Australia has a significant ageing population. Older people face human rights challenges relating to poverty, workforce discrimination, stereotyping, and violence.

Since the last UPR, the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth) was amended with the position of Age Discrimination Commissioner created. The Commissioner has been working on issues such as workplace participation and overcoming stereotyping of older people, and improving financial security. Additionally, the Australian Law Reform Commission conducted an inquiry in 2012-13 into Commonwealth laws that prevent or impede the workforce participation of older workers.¹

Reforms in some states that have a positive impact on workforce participation by older people have included changes to the driver licensing system for older drivers to remove barriers to participation,² and reforms to workers compensation acts to remove compensation limitations based on age.³

Major reforms to the Australian aged care system were announced in 2013 and continue to be implemented. The ten year reform program aims to create a more flexible and consumer focussed system that provides greater control and choice.

Key Issue – Older people and work

Australian workforce participation rates amongst older people when compared with other OECD countries remain low. In 2014, 61.5% of Australians aged 55 to 64 were participating in the workforce, more than 15 percentage points lower than New Zealand with participation rates at 76.2%.⁴

The Commission's campaign, *The Power of Oldness*,⁵ exposes the stark difference between the skills and strengths of mature workers with the discrimination they face when trying to gain or maintain work.

The Australian Government announced a national inquiry into barriers facing older workers and people with disability in employment in late 2014. The Commission is undertaking the National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability at the request of the Attorney-General.⁶ The Inquiry will report on its findings and recommendations by July 2016.

In June 2015, Commissioner Susan Ryan was appointed the Australian Government's Ambassador for Mature Age Employment⁷.

Recommendation

The Commission recommends that Government ensure programs support positive ageing, reduce workplace discrimination against older Australians and address poverty in old age.

¹ Australian Law Reform Commission, *Age Barriers to Work* (2012). At <http://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiries/age-barriers-work> (viewed 20 June 2015).

² Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commission, 'Commissioner welcomes removal of barriers to older drivers', (Media Release, 30 August 2011). At http://www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/176382/WEB_-_11.08.25-MR-Older_drivers.pdf (viewed 20 June 2015).

³ Western Australia Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Removal of age discrimination in workers' compensation welcomed', (Media Release, 18 August 2011). At <http://v1180.vividcluster2.crox.net.au/community/news.aspx?NewsItem=bc40adb4-a219-4139-8646-4d34644f9479> (viewed 20 June 2015).

⁴ OECD Data, *Employment*. At <https://data.oecd.org/emp/employment-rate-by-age-group.htm#indicator-chart> (viewed 9 June 2015).

⁵ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Power of Oldness* (2014). At <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/age-discrimination/projects/power-oldness> (viewed 20 June 2015).

⁶ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability*. At <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/projects/willing-work-national-inquiry-employment-discrimination-against#about> (viewed 20 June 2016).

⁷ Australian Government Treasury, 'New Ambassador for Mature Age Employment', (Media Release, 24 June 2015). At <http://bh.ministers.treasury.gov.au/media-release/063-2015/> (viewed 25 June 2015).