



# SUMMARY

# Rethink Ageing: Recruiting for Life Experience



**COTA**  
TASMANIA  
*for older Australians*

SUPPORTED BY



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## Where are we now?

Tasmania has the oldest median age (42 years), four years above the national average; the highest proportion of people aged over 65 years and the lowest proportion of children and working age people of any Australian state or territory. Nearly one in every 5 people is aged 65 and over. (ABS 2016)

**The percentage of the Tasmanian workforce aged 45 years and older was 45.5% in 2016. This figure represents an increase of 12.9% since 2006 and compares to a national figure of 7.5% increase since 2006.** (Denny 2017)

Government policy is encouraging Australians to work longer by increasing the pension age over time. The current qualification age for the Age Pension is 65 years, increasing to 67 years by 1 July 2023.

So too are expectations about retirement and work in later life changing due to better health, individual aspirations and the need to ensure ongoing financial security.

Despite the ageing of our workforce, existing industry workforce development plans pay limited attention to need to retain and/or reskill older workers and promote age diverse and inclusive workforces.

Nearly one in every 5 people is aged 65 and over.

Most aged over 60 said that they did not want to be or seen to be permanently 'retired' from the workforce: even if they were not currently undertaking paid work, they may do so again in the future . . . in part-time, short-term contracts or continue in full-time employment as long as possible.

— Holian 2015

## **Benefits of older workers and an age diverse workplace**

Older workers are a key component of a strong, age-diverse workforce. There are productivity and economic rewards for attracting and supporting a diverse workplace and retaining older employees, not only for the organisation but for the whole of community. Benefits include:

- The ability for older workers to mentor younger or less experienced workers to retain important knowledge, skills and institutional knowledge;
- Supported employees are more likely to be loyal and committed to their employers, making them more productive and healthier;
- Older workers tend to be more aware of workplace health and safety, have a good work ethic, networks, interests and industry knowledge. They bring work and life experience and skills that add value and support organisations;
- Supporting older workers to remain employed increases their financial security and health, and increases their capacity to better support successive generations by preserving assets and prolonging their contribution to society;
- Policies aimed at older workers support and are equally valued by younger workers; creating an overall more supportive and adaptive workplace;
- Employers can better meet the needs of their community and improve customers satisfaction as their workforce will better represent the community;
- Older employees better relate to the fastest growing age demographic in Australia – those over 65 years;
- Flexible workplaces retain and attract quality employees, alleviate stress caused by balancing work and life commitments, expand service delivery times and can improve motivation and performance for all employees.

## Barriers for older workers

Unfortunately, continuing workforce participation is not an option for all older Australians. Even if they wish to continue working, many older workers report barriers to employment and discrimination.

1. Research shows that at least 71% of Australians face **age discrimination** based on age within the workforce and community (AHRC 2013).
2. Conscious and **unconscious bias** in recruitment and human resource practice.
3. The transition to an **online job market** has meant that new skills are required that may be unfamiliar to older workers.
4. **Structural policy barriers** such as restricted benefits from workers compensation and income insurance.
5. The **absence of flexible work arrangements** that support a need or desire to work part-time due to caring responsibilities, transition to retirement etc.
6. **Lack of health and wellbeing programs** and appropriate working environments that support workplace diversity.

**One in ten businesses will not recruit persons over the age of 50.**

(Willing to Work)

Apart from the micro and macro financial impact, being subjected to negative assumptions, stereotypes and discrimination and denied the opportunity to work harms an individual's physical and mental health, social and personal needs and negatively impacts an individual's career, future prospects, financial position and family security (IFA 2016).

**There are mutual benefits for older workers, business and government if older workers can remain in employment longer if they are able to do so. The longer a person remains in employment, the more their standard of living improves. Earnings, which are above the pension income, contribute more towards superannuation and provide a protective factor against ill health and poor mental health.**

– Deloitte Access Economics for the AHRC 2012

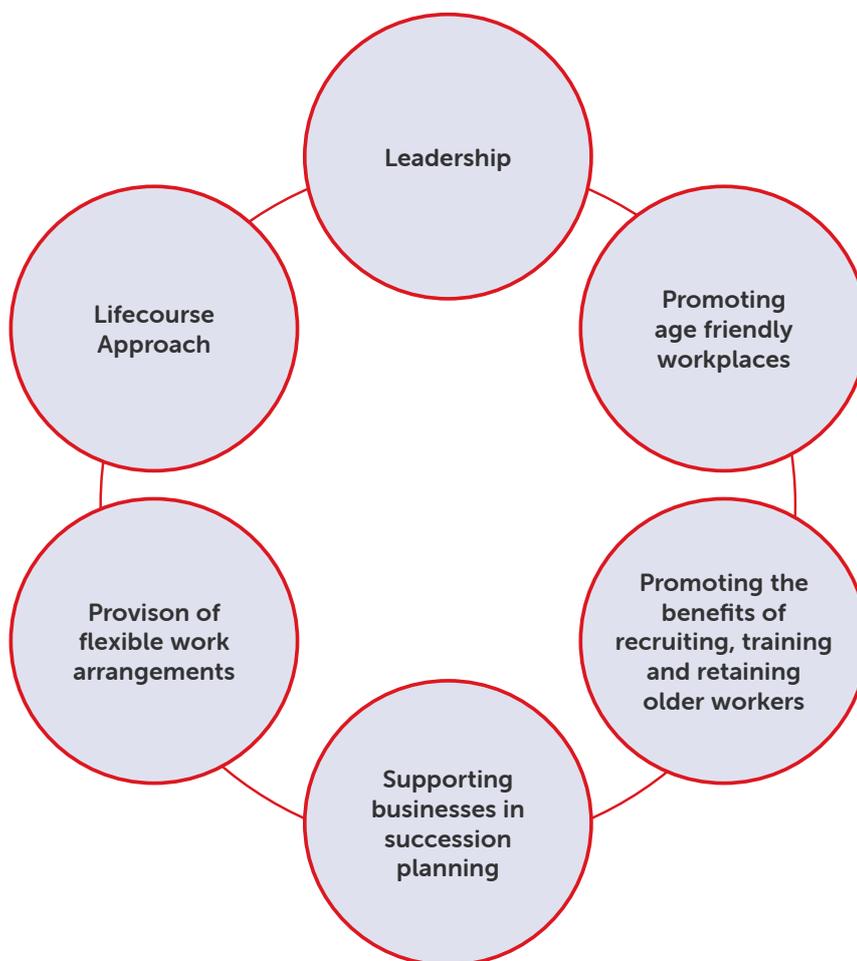
## What needs to change?

Reducing barriers and disincentives to labour participation is important. Current research shows that organisations need to commit to a flexible, diverse and supportive work environment, which will attract and retain mature-aged workers. (Appannah & Biggs 2015)

The *Recruiting for Life Experience* report outlines recommendations arising from a review of current Australian and International literature, case studies and best practices that can support achieving 'recruiting for life experience' in Tasmania.

The following diagram illustrates the key elements of best practice that promote strong, age diverse workplaces.

**Figure 1: Key attributes of Age Friendly workplaces<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> COTA Tasmania, Recruiting for Life Experience: Older Workers Workforce Development Research Project, P 10

**Leadership:**

Managers and leaders are committed to inclusive and supportive workplaces, planning for future workforce needs and dispelling ageist stereotypes. Good leadership removes barriers in the workplace and promotes positive change.

**Lifecourse approach:**

A lifecourse approach focusses on the needs of the individual at their particular life stage and values intergenerational teams. Diverse, healthy and skilled employees can decrease early retirement and increase workplace productivity.

**Flexible work arrangements:**

A typical 9 to 5 working week is no longer standard for workers of any age. Flexible work options allow people to remain engaged in the workforce while caring for others, balancing health and work and transitioning to retirement among many reasons.

**Succession planning:**

Succession planning anticipates loss of key workers and sets strategies in train to transfer skills and knowledge to successors in the organisation. This approach ensures smooth transitions and cost savings for the business.

**Recruiting, training and retaining older workers:**

Implementing non-discriminatory recruitment and skill development practices that challenge conscious and unconscious bias is critical to creating an age-diverse workforce.

**Promoting age friendly workplaces:**

Health promotion and wellbeing programs benefit all employees at any age and support longer working lives.

## Checklist for Recruiting for Life Experience

*The Business Case for Recruiting and Retaining Mature Age Workers*<sup>2</sup> identified a series of practices that can be used as a checklist for businesses seeking to recruit and retain age diverse workers:

- Review attitudes towards employing mature aged workers for bias and ageism;
- Dispel myths and misconceptions with evidence
- Have a commitment to change and implement sound policies and practices to assist in recruiting and retaining mature aged workers;
- Have an holistic human resource strategy of lifelong education and remedial measures, which can be effective in avoiding intergenerational conflict;
- Promote cultural change in the way that the community perceives mature aged workers;
- Encourage early involvement of mature aged workers of any policy changes;
- Review the organisational culture to ensure it benefits the business as a whole and employees whatever their age;
- Identify alternative jobs or flexible work arrangements;
- Introduce age awareness training for HR personnel, managers and other key personnel;
- Remove ageist barriers in language, processes and policies that might hinder retaining or recruiting mature aged workers.

**Older people bring a wealth of experience, skills and commitment to any enterprise.**

— Susan Ryan, Age Discrimination Commissioner 2011 to 2016

<sup>2</sup> Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2014, *Employ outside the box: The business case for recruiting and retaining mature age workers*, Canberra, <http://acciasn.au>

## Further information

COTA Tasmania: 2017, Recruiting for Life Experience: Older Workers Workforce Development Research Project

[www.cotatas.org.au](http://www.cotatas.org.au)

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