

Are you

too old... too old... too old... ?

Many of us may feel we are too old at certain times of the day but most of us feel younger than our chronological age and get most upset when told we are looking old.

Imagine how you would feel if you were told by your employer that you are being retrenched because of your age? Yet this is happening to workers on a regular basis. Of course, it tends to be more subtle than that. People are told they lack the skills or they don't fit the company image or the company has restructured.

While many jobseekers over 50 find paid work again within six months, it is sometimes at a lesser salary and may not be in a preferred field. Those not able to find work soon quickly lose their skills, confidence and their currency value.

The House of Representatives Employment, Education and Workplace Relations Committee is investigating these issues specific to the mature-age workers seeking employment, or establishing a business, following unemployment.

The Committee has received over 160 submissions from a variety of organisations giving 'big picture' information as well as from individuals – some of whom have presented quite personal views.

In response, the Committee has arranged a comprehensive public hearing program across Australia. It has already visited Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane and has had regular hearings in Canberra.

All transcripts from public hearings are placed on the Internet and may be accessed on the Committee's site:
www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/eewr/OWK/index.htm .

Mature-age jobseekers in regional and remote communities have greater problems finding work, especially where businesses have closed operations. The recent Regional Australia Summit (27-29 October 1999) held in Parliament House showed that regional Australia needed to move into the information age if country communities are to revive.

Research has shown that many employers are prejudiced against workers over 40. Drake Personnel in a recent survey found that:

- 65% of the respondents stated they would target those in their fifties when retrenching.

- 62% of some 500 organisations made most of their staff selections from the 31-40 age group.
- None of them would chose anyone in their fifties, even for managerial or executive positions.

Some employers have found there are benefits in hiring mature-age workers since these people instil work ethics among the younger workers and generally help make the workforce more productive.

From the evidence already received by the Committee, we can see there is growing concern about mature-age unemployment.

People with experience in such issues can play a very important role in providing evidence for an inquiry like this. Without input from concerned organisations and mature-age individuals, the Committee can gain only a limited picture of:

- the spread of issues specific to mature-age workers in Australia;
- the actions implemented to help mature-age jobseekers;
- the extent of client satisfaction with the action taken; and
- whether unemployed mature-age people are more heavily concentrated in some sectors than others.

For further information on the inquiry:

www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/eewr or

Telephone: (02) 6277 4573 or Email: eewr.reps@apf.gov.au

