

**Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee  
Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers  
Parliament House, Spring St  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002**

Via email to: [jobseekersinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:jobseekersinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au)

To whom it may concern

**Re: Evidence to inform Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers**

I am writing on behalf of Council on the Ageing Victoria (COTA Vic) - the peak consumer body representing the interests of people over the age of 50 in Victoria. We work with older Victorians to facilitate their active contribution to society, maximise their wellbeing and protect their rights. To this end, we value the opportunity to submit evidence to inform the *Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers*.

Systemic Ageism continues to prevent many older Victorians from obtaining and retaining meaningful employment. It is apparent in:

- employers' attitudes towards older workers.
- lack of access to appropriate training and professional development.
- undervaluing of the skills, experience and earned wisdom of older people.<sup>i</sup>

While people are now expected to remain in the workforce for longer than ever before due to the increase in the retirement age:

- Two thirds of employers say they are reluctant to hire workers who are over the age of 50.<sup>ii</sup>
- People over the age of 50, on average, spend twice as long looking for work.<sup>iii</sup>

Through our work at COTA Victoria, we commonly hear about the distress, poor health and poverty experienced by individuals who are unfairly excluded from paid work. We know, for example, that:

- 1 in 3 Australian pensioners currently live in poverty.<sup>iv</sup>
- one in seven people experiencing homelessness are over the age of 55.<sup>v</sup>
- Older women struggling in the rental market are the fastest growing group of people to experience homelessness in Australia.<sup>vi</sup>
- Retirement can increase the likelihood of an individual experiencing clinical depression by about 40%, and their likelihood of having at least one diagnosed physical health condition by about 60%. The risk of ill-health increases with the number of years spent in retirement.<sup>vii</sup>

In light of the above statistics, taking steps to increase the workforce participation of older Victorians will undoubtedly lead to cost benefits for health and social services. Such steps will also, however, become increasingly critical to the sustainability of the economy as the state's population continues to age.

The number of people aged over 65 in Victoria is projected to increase to 1.1 million by 2021, growing at more than twice the rate of the general population.<sup>viii</sup> This will result in the pool of younger workers gradually decreasing over time; pointing to a need for older people to remain in the workforce for as long as possible.

It is clear that Victoria needs a new public policy framework to enable meaningful opportunities for workers as they age. To this end, COTA Victoria believes that there are a number of measures that can be implemented by Government and industry to improve the productivity of Victoria's ageing population. These measures are outlined in detail in our 2017 submission to the Premier's Jobs and Investment Panel's *Inquiry into Victoria's Economic Performance and Productivity*. A copy of this submission is enclosed for your reference. We trust that this submission will provide useful evidence to inform the *Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers*. We also suggest that the Committee refer to the Australian Human Rights Commission's 2018 report, *'Employing Older Workers'*, to assist with its investigations.

If you require any further information in relation to any of the information we have provided, please contact COTA Victoria's Policy Officer, Lauren Henley. Lauren can be contacted by phone on (03) 9655 2140, or by email at [LHenley@cotavic.org.au](mailto:LHenley@cotavic.org.au)

Yours Sincerely

Ronda Held  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>1</sup> Council on the Ageing Australia (2019) 'Ageism and Discrimination', accessed 29 July 2019 <<https://www.cota.org.au/policy/ageism-and-discrimination/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission (2018) 'Employing Older Workers', accessed 29 July 2019 <<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/age-discrimination/publications/employing-older-workers-2018>>.

<sup>3</sup> Williamson, B. on behalf of ABC Radio Adelaide (2017) 'Age discrimination: Over 50s search twice as long for work', accessed 29 July 2019 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-19/age-discrimination-over-50s-worst-bracket-to-be-unemployed/8540548>>.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Council of Social Services (2018) 'Poverty in Australia', accessed 28 July 2019 <[https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ACOSS\\_Poverty-in-Australia-Report\\_Web-Final.pdf](https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ACOSS_Poverty-in-Australia-Report_Web-Final.pdf)>.

<sup>5</sup> Housing for the Aged Action Group (2013) 'Older Persons Housing Fact Sheet', accessed 27 June 2019 <https://www.older tenants.org.au/publications/older-persons-housing-factsheet>

<sup>6</sup> McDonald, P. (2017) 'Homelessness: Older women couch surfing, sleeping in cars due to unaffordable housing', accessed 27 June 2019 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-0807/older-women-become-hidden-face-of-homelessness/8782816>

<sup>7</sup> Institute of Economic Affairs in association with the Age Endeavour Fellowship (2013) 'Work Longer, Live Healthier: The relationship between economic activity, health and government policy' (Discussion Paper No. 46) accessed 29 July 2019 <[https://www.iea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Work%20Longer,%20Live\\_Healthier.pdf](https://www.iea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Work%20Longer,%20Live_Healthier.pdf)>.

<sup>8</sup> Victorian Department of Health & Human Services (2015) 'Mental health and wellbeing of older people', 10-year mental health plan technical paper