



Australian
Human Rights
Commission

**WILLING
TO WORK**

Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians and Australians with Disability

Factsheet

1 About the National Inquiry

The Hon. Susan Ryan, AO, Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner, on behalf of the Australian Human Rights Commission, is conducting a National Inquiry into employment discrimination against older Australians and Australians with disability.

The Inquiry will examine the barriers to employment for people with disability and older people. The Commission will make recommendations about practices, attitudes and Commonwealth laws that should be changed, and actions that should be taken in order to address employment discrimination.

The Inquiry will aim to consult as widely as possible with older Australians, Australians with disability and their carers and families, business and employers, advocacy groups, policy experts and government to hear their views, experiences and ideas for change.

The Inquiry commenced in April 2015 and will be completed by July 2016.

2 Why is this National Inquiry important?

We know that thousands of Australians are willing to work but are prevented by unfair discrimination. This is a human rights issue; we all have the right to work.

The labour force participation rates of older Australians and Australians with disability have significant implications for individuals, employers and the national economy.

While the labour force participation rates for Australians aged 60-64 and 65+ has increased over the last two decades,¹ they remain low compared with countries such as New Zealand, Canada and Japan.² In the year to June 2010, 71% of Australians aged 55-59; 51% of 60-64 year olds; and 24% of those aged 65-69 years were participating in the labour force.³ These statistics indicate that labour force participation still declines with age.

In 2012, the labour force participation rate for people with disability was 52.8%, compared with 82.5% for people without disability.⁴ This figure has changed very little over the past 20 years.⁵

Finding ways to remove barriers to employment has benefits for all of us. It would result in a more widespread exercise of people's rights, strengthen our economy and make Australia a better and fairer place.

3 Methodology

The National Inquiry will be conducted in two separate but related streams, in recognition of the differing needs, perspectives and experiences of older Australians and Australians with disability.

The Commission has appointed Reference Panels to provide counsel on the Inquiry. The Reference Panels are organised around three stakeholder streams: business and employers; disability peak groups, and policy experts; and age peak groups and policy experts.

The National Inquiry will involve research including a review of existing literature, reports and other inquiries; face-to-face consultations with relevant stakeholders; and a submissions process. The National Inquiry will base its report and recommendations on these findings.

4 How can you participate?

Consultations are being conducted in every capital city and some regional centres. The consultations will take place from July to November 2015. The consultations are a critical part of understanding the key concerns and challenges, as well as identifying leading practices and effective strategies.

The Commission is also receiving submissions in a variety of different ways: online, in writing, and by telephone. The submissions process will coincide with the consultations.

Two Issues Papers have been developed to recognise the distinct challenges and resulting impacts experienced by older Australians and Australians with disability. The papers include discussion questions intended to assist those who would like to participate in consultations or make a submission.

Further information about the consultations, submissions process and Issues Papers are available on the Inquiry website: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/projects/willing-work-national-inquiry-employment-discrimination-against>.

5 Contact details

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Facsimile: +61 2 9284 9611

Website: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/projects/willing-work-national-inquiry-employment-discrimination-against>

Make a complaint

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (DDA) and the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth) (ADA) ensures that people are not treated unfairly because of their disability or their age respectively. The DDA and the ADA protects people against discrimination in various areas of public life including employment, provision of goods and services, education, and administration of Commonwealth laws and programs. If you would like more information about what might be covered by the DDA or the ADA or you would like to make a complaint of discrimination, you can contact the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Information Service on:

Phone: 1300 656 419 or 02 9284 9888

Email: infoservice@humanrights.gov.au

Fax: 02 9284 9611

Online: [Enquiry form](#)

TTY: 1800 620 241 (toll free)

National Relay Service: 1300 555 727 (Speak and Listen) or www.relayservice.gov.au/

Translating and Interpreting Service: 131 450 or www.tisnational.gov.au/

You can also make a complaint online at www.humanrights.gov.au/complaints/make-complaint

¹ Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 'Two Decades of Change: The Australian Labour Market 1993-2013' (2014) 47(4) *The Australian Economic Review*, 417, 419.

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *OECD.StatExtracts*, 'LFS by sex and age – indicators'. At http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=LFS_SEXAGE_I_R# (viewed 17 April 2015).

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends, Sep 2010, cat 4102.0 - Older People and the Labour Market* (2010). At <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features30Sep+2010> (viewed 7 May 2015).

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Disability and Labour Force Participation, 2012* (2015). At <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4433.0.55.006> (viewed 6 May 2015).

⁵ Labour force participation rates of people in disability were at 54.9% in 1993, compared with 52.8% in 2012. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Disability and Labour Force Participation, 2012* (2015). At <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4433.0.55.006> (viewed 6 May 2015).