

## Session 2 - Older workers, work and employability: Re-employment policies and practices



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# Case

To assist promoting and securing older workers' employability may require:

- i) combatting negative societal sentiments by advancing positive agendas about their capacities;
- ii) policies and practices encouraging employers to support and sustain OWs' employability and re-employment;
- iii) developing further and providing accessible continuing education and training (CET) that respects their readiness and engages older workers; and
- iv) assisting older workers sustain their interest in on-going employment.

All these are important for personal, community, workplace and national sustainability and advancement.

# Progression

Goals for employability

Reshaping societal sentiments about older workers

Policies and practices that encourage employers to employ and sustain the employability of older workers

Accessible CET provisions aligned with older workers' needs and contributions

Assist older workers' participation and engagement

Conclusions



# Goals for employability

The goals for sustaining older workers' employability are of three kinds:

- i) extending the duration of effective working life (i.e. sustaining employability),
- ii) greater engagement by older workers in the kinds of work required for achieving national and social economic goals (i.e. meeting workplace, community and national goals), and
- iii) richer working life for older workers, regardless of gender (i.e. personal goals).

Key mechanism in Australia is to increase age of pension entitlement – up to 67 for males and females by 2023. Mooted increases to 70. Greatest impact on those who cannot afford to retire (financial or in age intolerant work).

Targets set by government - % of workers over 65 in work force – has increased

Subsidies for enterprises employing older worker (Restart program), although this was not effective. Restart was weakly subscribed to .... Also, it reinforces negative views about older workers (i.e. you get subsidies to employ them).

# Reshaping societal sentiments about older workers

Australian government aware of the low status/erroneous views of older workers, but reports often position older people as a burden (e.g. IGR) (Gahan et al 2017)

Some Australian states have introduced schemes and marketing to position older workers more positively (e.g. DOME)

Recognition that without reshaping societal sentiments, other efforts will be short-term.

Public education and awareness about maturation, worth of experience and contributions of workers of all age.

Government and community leadership likely required here.

Use of examples, outstanding exemplars from across genders, positive portrayal

Particular effort on overcoming bias against older women as workers

# Policies and practices encouraging employment and sustaining employability

Subsidies and support need to be carefully considered and exercised (e.g. not favouring younger workers over older)

Re-employment policies achieving rather than exacerbating issues of engagement

Work rotation and opportunities for advancement

Reviewing practices assuming investing in OWs is not good investment

Victorian state government introduced a scheme to identify industry sectors where older employees could find work (i.e. age tolerant work)

Emphasising the kinds of expertise that older workers possess.

# CET provisions aligned with older workers' needs and contributions

Need to understand the diversity of OWs' needs, readiness and purposes and organise CET provisions accordingly.

Assessing readiness is a key starting premise for any intentional educational experience.

Programs for 50 year olds might not work for 70 year olds

Assess fit between workers' needs/preferences and CET provisions, and their access to them (e.g. dialogue forums).

Approaches for OWs' need to accommodate family and worklife as well as studying.

Recognition of prior learning, advancing credit, and articulation beyond the CET program need to be explicit and mechanisms enabling smooth progression.

CET provisions not limited to educational institutions; those in community or workplace settings also need to be identified, developed and enacted.

# Assist older workers' participation and engagement

As mentioned, employability, working and learning are dependant up how individuals take up the invitations afforded them:

- i) Job satisfaction principal motivator and concern for mature age professional workers.
- ii) Such workers unlikely to resist training or necessarily be hard to train. However, they may need to be persuaded of its benefits before committing themselves to CET
- iii) Older workers' employability premised on a duality between institutional (i.e. workplace and educational) and personal factors
- iv) These play out in particular ways for employees, which may well be different than for other kinds of employees (i.e. those with different levels of education and status occupations).(Dymock et al 2012)



## So what

Policy and practice considerations needs to engage employers of older workers and transform both employers and employees' perspectives.

Associated initiatives might be to:

- i) de-emphasise or realign existing classification of 'older workers' to more helpfully accommodate the scope of needs for workers aged anywhere between 45 and 70, and
- ii) consider how best workplace environments and government policies and practices by workers themselves can secure longer and more productive working lives for those aged 45 or more.

Nation-specific factors: generational divides in education levels, legacy of age-related pay, occupational engagement of particular kinds and distribution of employer support.

In sum, member states' policy responses and practices for older workers' employability need to consider these workers' qualities and intentions, and appraise the kinds of opportunities provided for them by educational institutions, workplaces and other sources of support. (Billett 2011).