

Media Release – 21 October 2013

Young Aussies embrace older workers despite expectations of prejudice

New study into attitudes of Gen's Y and X to older people as Grandparent's Day approaches

21 October 2013: The much decried generation Y is transforming its stereotype by embracing its elders, according to new research released today.

Previous research has indicated that younger managers don't appreciate elders in the workforce and are guilty of age discrimination in hiringⁱ. But the survey of 800 Australians aged 18-49 years commissioned by Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA NSW) suggests businesses should take a cue from their workers and value – and employ – older workers. Not only would this benefit individual workplaces, it would give a vital boost to the Australian economy.

While the majority of Australian office workers report that they most like working with their own age groupⁱⁱ, they also appreciate the business experience (59%), skills (56%), and ability of workers over the age of 60 as teachers to learn from (57%).

Surprisingly, nearly one in four workers aged 35 - 49 prefer working with those aged 60-plus above all others. About one in eight 18 -24 year olds – the group generally believed to have the most negative attitudes about older peopleⁱⁱⁱ – and nearly one in five 25 - 35 year olds also prefer working with their older colleagues.

"Despite these findings, we know that age discrimination in the workplace exists. But a more positive approach to employing older Australians would benefit individual workplaces as well as the economy, so there's a real business case to look at adapting the system – workers will support it," says Ian Day, CEO, COTA NSW.

A study commissioned by the Australian Human Rights Commission also shows that an increase of 5% in paid employment of Australians over the age of 55 would result in a \$48 billion impact on the national economy, every year.^{iv}

"These findings send out a serious message to businesses, but they also something give us something to celebrate. These results are very encouraging, particularly in the lead up to Grandparents Day this Sunday, which is all about fostering greater understanding between age groups and an appreciation of older Australians" says Mr Day.

When asked specifically about their grandparents, respondents said they most valued their love and care (65%) and their great life experience (60%). Again, this contradicts the stereotype that younger Australians don't respect or appreciate older Australians in their personal or professional lives.

"We know that many Aussie families rely on grandparents to look after grandchildren. At a conservative estimate, 200,000 grandparents across NSW provide 12.7 hours unpaid, informal care for children each week.^v Interestingly, this research tells us that people value the roles they play as custodians of family history more than what they do in terms of practical assistance" says Mr Day.

"This Grandparents Day, Sunday 27 October, we're encouraging people to continue to think about the experiences and memories they can share with the older Australians in their lives. Often we are reminding people to think more about older people, say thank you, or do something for them, that's important, but it's also important to remember just to enjoy time together," said Mr Day.

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About Grandparents Day

Grandparents Day was launched in 2011 by the NSW Government as an annual initiative to recognise the unique role that grandparents play in our communities as custodians of individual and cultural memories and providers of care, love and guidance to their children and grandchildren.

Grandparents Day is being coordinated by COTA NSW. COTA NSW is widely recognised as the peak body representing people over 50 in NSW. It is an independent, non-government organisation that works with government, policy makers, service providers and the media to promote the interests of older people. It also delivers adult education and a range of community programs.

Families are encouraged to celebrate with their grandparents on Grandparents Day. Community events will be held across NSW on Grandparents Day, Sunday 27 October. For full details please visit www.grandparentsday.org.au.

About the research

The study, commissioned by COTA NSW, was conducted by Galaxy Research among 804 Australians aged 18-48 years distributed throughout Australia. A survey was distributed between Friday 20 and Tuesday 24 September, and the dataset was weighted and projected to the population based on the latest ABS population estimates.

ⁱ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013, Fact or Fiction? Stereotypes of older Australians Research Report

ⁱ 73% of 18-24 years up to 82% of 35-49 year olds

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ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013, Fact or Fiction? Stereotypes of older Australians Research Report

^{iv} Deloitte Access Economics, *Increasing participation among older workers: The grey army advances* (2012), p. i. At

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/age/publications/mature_age/index.html.

^v COTA NSW estimate from ABS Census 2011 data of grandparents providing informal care calculated using current childcare costs for children aged 0 – 12 and ABS Child Care Survey 2005.