



NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA RELEASE

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HIGH TIME FOR A NATIONAL SURVEY INTO AGE DISCRIMINATION SAYS COTA NSW

“Age discrimination in the workplace is a reality,” says Ian Day, CEO of COTA NSW. “Our own surveys of people aged 50-plus in NSW tell us that more than one in five people have experienced age-discrimination, and of these, 50% had experienced discrimination in the workplace.”

“Despite findings like these, little has been done to tackle discrimination in the workplace, so COTA NSW is pleased to hear Age Discrimination Commissioner Susan Ryan announce the first ever national survey into age discrimination.”

“Whenever we talk to our constituents, they tell us their own stories of age discrimination. Despite being highly productive, they find they’re overlooked for training and promotion, or that they’re targeted for redundancy.”

Additionally, there are structural barriers in place that inhibit employers from appointing older employees. “The experience of Leigh Bowden epitomises this. A qualified, experienced high school and TAFE teacher with post-graduate qualifications, Leigh wished to return to work. Despite years of experience and enthusiasm, she was unable to do so without paying to complete a Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training. The cost of completing this training was prohibitive, so Leigh was unable to progress back into work. This represents a very perverse outcome. Sadly, it’s all too common.”

“It’s also important to note that age discrimination besets people very early on in their careers. People are staggered to find themselves encountering age discrimination as early as 45 years of age. This means that ironically, many Australian CEOs could expect to face workplace discrimination if they sought employment in their own company.”

“Tackling age discrimination is not just a task for government. Business leaders also need to drive change and reshape hiring and firing practices inside their own human resources departments.”

“Great strides have been made to combat discrimination against other groups – such as female employees – in recent decades. Many employers now acknowledge that they’d lose a big part of their talent pool if they discriminated against women.”

“Unfortunately we’re seeing the mistakes of the past repeated at present, with employees who discriminate against older workers depriving themselves of access to a lot of talent. It’s time for people to be recruited, retained, and rewarded on the basis of merit. It really should be that simple.”

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