

### Press Release

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## Governments get an “F” in employing older workers, new report finds

Governments - both federal and state - lag well behind the private sector when it comes to employing older workers, a new report reveals.

Using ABS and Census data, the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre report *Past, present and future of mature age labour force participation in Australia* highlights variations in rates of ageing and mature age participation across the country.

An interesting finding is a marked decline in the proportion of people aged 60 and over employed by governments. For example, around 16.4 per cent of men aged 50 to 59 work across national, state and local bureaucracies, but this falls to 12.7 percent for men in their 60s. Women drop from 24.2 per cent in their 50s to 20.1 per cent.

Conversely, private sector employment actually increases as people age.

National Seniors chief executive Michael O'Neill said the findings were surprising considering Treasurer Joe Hockey's recent emphasis on the costs of population ageing.

“Government threats to raise the pension age, when they don't employ older workers themselves, are a bit rich,” said O'Neill.

“The public service should represent the gold standard in hiring and retaining mature age staff. Instead, public servants aged over 60 are a rare breed across the country”.

“When it comes to employing senior Australians, governments, both federal and state, get a big ‘F’”.

The report concludes that an ageing workforce underscores the importance of addressing the barriers to mature age employment from age limits on workers compensation to discriminatory recruitment practices.

“Unless governments lead by example and stamp out age discrimination, Australia's mature age participation rates will continue to lag behind those of other OECD countries,” he said.

### Key findings on mature age participation across the country include:

- A strong decline in public sector workers aged 60-plus is consistent across the country
- Self-employment industries show high levels of mature age participation
- Tasmania (which, along, with SA is ageing fastest) does not perform well in mature age participation against the other states
- ACT performs well for mature age workers under 60
- WA performs well for all males over 45 but females are broadly consistent with the national level

In 2012, 14% of the population was aged 65 and over. This is projected to increase to 20% in 2042. The proportional decline in the “working age” population (15 to 64) may result in wage inflation and lower productivity.

Earlier research conducted for the Human Rights Commission indicates that just a 5 percent increase in paid employment of Australians aged 55-plus would add \$48 billion to the economy annually.

*Past, present and future of mature age labour force participation in Australia: How do regions differ* was funded by the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre and written by Dr Jeromey Temple.

**Michael O'Neill is available for interview on 0448 125 898**

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*With 200,000 individual fee-paying members Australia-wide, National Seniors is the consumer lobby for the over-50s. It is the fourth largest organisation of its type in the world*

#### Public Affairs

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