

Caring works Why older workers are in demand



Australia's birth rate is declining and its population is ageing

In the 1960s the fertility rate in Australia was 3.43 babies per woman of fertile age. In 2002 the rate had dropped to 1.76, and it is predicted to drop to 1.6 by 2011.ⁱ

This means there will be fewer people to care for older Australians. People are living longer, but there are less people to care for them.

There are now five people of working age to support every person over 65.

By 2047 this will fall to 2.4 people.ⁱⁱ

Our workforce is shrinking

Australia faces a shortfall of 195,000 workers by 2010, mostly in NSW.ⁱⁱⁱ

During the 1980s and 1990s our workforce grew by 170,000 each year.

But predictions indicate that the workforce will grow by only 125,000 for the entire 2020 decade.^{iv}

Labour force growth is predicted to fall below 0.2% a year by 2021.^v

Older workers - a growing labour force

There are currently 1.7 million, or 15%, of people in the labour force aged 55 and over.

By 2018 the number of people 65 and over will outnumber children under 15.^{vi}

Twenty five per cent of the population will be 65 or over by 2047.^{vii}

Population ageing will impact on all major industries and occupations across most Australian regions.^{viii}

By 2012/13 this is expected to swell to nearly 2 million people (17% of the labour force).^{ix}

There will be fewer younger workers. By 2011 the proportion of workers aged 14-24 years will fall by 18% and the proportion of workers aged 45-64 will rise by 34%.^x

In 1998, the 20-44 age group represented 62% of the labour force. They will represent only 20% of the projected growth in the labour force between 1998 and 2016.^{xi}

Businesses are unprepared

Research shows that in 2006, 62% of Australian businesses were unaware of our ageing population and workforce and that only 26% of Australian companies had strategies to adapt to this change.^{xii}

Likewise, many businesses have not assessed how the caring responsibilities of older workers will impact on their operations and productivity.

By 2016

80% of labour market growth will come from people aged 45 and over.^{xiii}

The labour force aged 60-64 is projected to almost double.

Business operators meeting the current and future caring needs of older workers will keep valuable, loyal workers with years of experience behind them.

For information about employing mature aged workers with caring responsibilities visit www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au

References

- ⁱ ABS Cat 3105.0, *Australian Historical Population Statistics*.
- ⁱⁱ Australian Government, *The Intergenerational Report 2007*, p19.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2006), *Workforce Tomorrow: adapting to a more diverse labour market*, p3.
- ^{iv} Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2003, *Grey Matters: positive ageing workforce project*.
- ^v ABS Cat No. 6260.0, *Labour Force Projections 1999-2016*, p6.
- ^{vi} NSW Government, 2008, *Towards 2030: Planning for our changing population*, p 7.
- ^{vii} Australian Government, *The Intergenerational Report 2007*, p9.
- ^{viii} NSW Government, 2008, *Towards 2030: planning for our changing population*, p26.
- ^{ix} Mercer Australia, *Workplace 2012- what does it mean for employers*, p6.
- ^x Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Grey Matters: positive ageing workforce project*, at <http://www.vecci.org.au/professional+services/veet/positive+ageing+workforce/index1.asp>
- ^{xi} ABS Cat. No. 6260.0, *Labour Force Projections 1999-2016*, p8.
- ^{xii} Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2003, *Grey Matters: positive ageing workforce project*.
- ^{xiii} ABS Cat. No. 6260.0, *Labour Force Projections 1999-2016*.