

58. R Christiansen

Full name: Dr Rowena Christiansen

Proposal 2-1:

Agree. As an older worker I believe that I have experienced age discrimination. There is a lot of hidden age discrimination e.g., in medical specialist training program selection procedures. This needs to be addressed in an open and transparent fashion. You are more or less expected to be suitable for GP training and nothing else.

Proposal 2-2:

Agree. It is very important that the experience and wisdom of older workers is not lost.

Proposal 2-3:

Agree. This is very important as many of these people will be younger than the mature-age workers and may have a natural preference for favouring people closer to their own age.

Proposal 2-4:

This could assist in achieving 'cultural change'.

Proposal 2-5:

This could be especially important for older workers, who may have responsibilities not only for children but also elderly parents and other relatives.

Proposal 2-6:

Agree. This could assist in achieving higher levels of awareness and 'cultural change'.

Question 2-1 :

In my past experience as a doctor there are very few part-time and job sharing arrangements available with hospital jobs and training positions. It would be good if this could change and a greater degree of flexibility was available. Otherwise you really only have the option of working as a locum, which does not help in advancing your career or structured training.

Proposal 2-7 :

Agree. With the ageing of the population the contribution of mature age workers will become increasingly important and retention of these workers will assist society, the taxation system and those people and their families.

Proposal 2-8:

Agree. It is much more difficult for an mature age worker to obtain another position.

Question 2–2:

Consistency and clarity are really important if the average person is to understand their rights and remedies.

Proposal 2–9:

Agree. Competency-based assessment is the norm in a number of industries (and becoming increasingly so). This makes a lot more sense than just saying "we don't want you because you are too old".

Proposal 2–10:

Agree. The same principle as in 2-9 should apply.

Proposal 2–11:

Agree. The same principle as in 2-9 should apply.

Question 2–3:

Yes. This would add 'gravitas' to the general perception of how seriously non-discrimination against mature age workers should be taken at large.

Proposal 2–12:

Yes. Many younger people have a negative attitude towards older workers and their capabilities. I have experienced this myself, for instance a young woman in her 20s telling me I was far too old even to consider applying for the surgical training program.

Proposal 3–1:

Yes. This makes sense with the increasing ageing of the population and the fact that many older workers may have health conditions or co-morbidities which could make them more susceptible to injury and slower to recover.

Proposal 3–2:

Yes. This makes sense with the increasing ageing of the population and the fact that many older workers may have health conditions or co-morbidities which could make them more susceptible to injury and slower to recover.

Proposal 3–3:

Agree. Ignorance is no excuse for treating people badly.

Proposal 3–4:

Agree. This would help to raise the profile re treating older workers appropriately.

Proposal 3–5:

Proposal 3–6:

Question 3–1:

If people would have been able to continue their work past the age pension age and they are prevented from doing so due to injury then it makes sense to provide ongoing compensation.

Question 3–2:

Yes.

Proposal 3–7:

Yes. This is the main issue that I wish to comment upon. Over the years I have been a volunteer in a variety of contexts, with community and musical groups, as an interviewer/examiner at University level, as a first aid and medical services provider and as a ski patroller and also a search and rescue volunteer. In these situations I have usually had no idea whether I was covered by insurance/compensation if I was injured whilst volunteering.

It has been a matter of great concern to Victorian ski patrols such as Lake Mountain and Mt Baw Baw (I am associated with both) as to whether volunteer patrollers are covered whilst carrying out their patrolling duties and participating in training and driving to and from the mountain locations where they volunteer. There appears to be some coverage under Victorian Emergency Management provisions, but this is invoked in a convoluted way which is ultimately tied back to organisations which Victoria Police may call upon in the situation of an emergency. This really isn't satisfactory for such high risk volunteering situations. The same also applies to another group to which I belong, Alpine Search and Rescue. At the moment, volunteers may be covered whilst engaged on a search (using the linkage of being called upon by Victoria Police) but there doesn't appear to be any coverage for injuries which occur during training activities and meetings related to organisational business. This really isn't satisfactory either.

Volunteers shouldn't have to rely on legal niceties and all the dominoes falling in order for them to have coverage, especially where they are volunteering in situations where there is a not inconsiderable risk of physical injuries which could have extended consequences. Whenever I provide my services as a volunteer, I would like to have the peace of mind of knowing that if I am injured in the line of duty that there is a clear and simple mechanism through which I can claim and receive compensation. People give up a lot of their time and often make a large financial commitment in terms of purchasing clothing and equipment that enables them to work as a volunteer, and it is simply wrong that they should not have the security of insurance protection as a 'safety net' when they are injured as a volunteer.

I would urge the ALRC to take this issue seriously as a priority. Many volunteers are older people who already have health problems and will be slower to recover from injury, and given the difficulties that older workers have with getting and retaining work, an interruption to their work due to injury could have catastrophic consequences in terms of career continuity and mental health issues, and if there is no insurance coverage then they would potentially be left in a very difficult financial position.

It is also very important that this is nationally consistent. Ski patrollers and search and rescue personnel are subject to different regimes in different states (for instance there is a very favourable situation in NSW) and it should be "one rule for all" and the same standard of coverage for all.

I attach a copy of a letter recently received by Mt Baw Baw Ski Patrol regarding insurance coverage for volunteers, which demonstrates how convoluted the situation is with regard to establishing the nexus for workers' compensation coverage of volunteers. There is currently considerably less clarity for members of Alpine Search and Rescue Victoria and this is of great concern as people simply do not know whether they will be covered if injured. I am aware of people who have decided to stop patrolling and stop being a searcher because the risks and consequences of being injured whilst volunteering and not being covered by compensation were simply too great. The community cannot afford to lose the services of these volunteers.

Question 3-3:  
Proposal 4-1 :

Agree.

Proposal 4-2 :

Agree.

Proposal 4-3 :

Agree.

Question 4-1 :  
Question 4-2:  
Question 4-3:  
Proposal 4-4:  
Proposal 5-1:

Agree.

Proposal 5-2:

Agree.

Question 5-1 :  
Question 5-2:  
Question 5-3:  
Proposal 5-3 :  
Proposal 5-4 :  
Proposal 5-5:  
Proposal 5-6:  
Proposal 8-1:

Agree.

Question 8–1:

A reasonable test for what constitutes part-time or casual work should be established.

Proposal 8–2:

Agree.

Proposal 8–3:

Agree.

Proposal 8–4:

Agree.

Proposal 8–5:

Agree.

Proposal 8–6:

Agree.

Proposal 8–7:

Agree.

Question 8–2:

Question 8–3:

File 1:

[mbb\\_insurance\\_letter.pdf](#)

File 2: