

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 6:00 AM AEST FRIDAY 16 APRIL 2021**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**RESEARCH FINDS THAT NEARLY HALF OF AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSES WILL  
NOT HIRE WORKERS OVER THE AGE OF 65**

**16 April 2021** - New research, released today by the [Australian HR Institute](#) and the [Australian Human Rights Commission](#), has found that almost half (46.7 per cent) of Australian Businesses are reluctant to recruit older workers, especially those over the age of 65.

This is despite Australia's ageing population, which is reflected in the increase of workplaces reporting that between 51 and 75 per cent of their workforce are over 55 years of age (12.3 per cent, an increase of 6.6 per cent since 2018) and the fact that fewer than a third of business leaders consult with older workers on issues of specific concern to their workplace.

Sarah McCann-Bartlett, Chief Executive Officer, Australian HR Institute, said that these results highlight the prevalence of ageism within Australian businesses.

"Our research has shown that a disproportionate number of older workers are facing discrimination in the workforce, which is an issue that unconscious bias plays a big part in.

"Ageism against older workers doesn't even necessarily stem from negative feelings, older people are often viewed as loyal and reliable. However, when nearly a quarter of businesses don't actively implement any recruitment practices to encourage age diversity, ageism is the inevitable result."

Australia's Age Discrimination Commissioner, the Hon. Dr Kay Patterson AO, said that by excluding older workers, businesses are missing out on skills and experience.

"While the latest AHRI/AHRC survey shows a satisfying ongoing drop in the number of organisations that have an age above which they are reluctant to recruit (down

from 51.6% in 2014 to 26.8% in 2021), too many businesses are still missing out on the advantages that come from hiring and retaining older workers,” said Dr Patterson.

“Older workers bring professional knowledge and experience to the workplace. Sixty per cent of respondents said the departure of older workers had caused a loss of key skills in their organisation, yet businesses are still failing to learn this lesson.

“Age diverse workplaces are good for business and for the economy. Failing to hire and retain older workers is a missed opportunity for everyone.”

The research found that offering flexible working arrangements was the top initiative for both retaining older workers and encouraging age diversity in recruitment, and something that McCann-Bartlett highlighted as a key strategy for HR professionals and business leaders to consider.

“There are a number of things that managers can implement to recruit and retain older workers. Training around unconscious bias is a great place to start. As well as offering flexibility, ongoing training and ensuring that job ads are actually accessible to everyone.

The last year has shown that flexible working arrangements are possible, so why wouldn't we take advantage of this to help include those over 65 in the workforce”.

The results of the ‘Employing Older Workers 2021’ report is available here. To find more resources and information for HR directors and employers on effective recruitment, talent retention and how to enable diversity in the workplace visit <https://www.ahri.com.au/>.

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### **Notes to editors**

The Australian HR Institute and the Australian Human Rights Commission surveyed 604 HR leaders, academics, and business leaders between the 15th and 23rd of February 2021.

The aim of the study was to understand organisations' strategies to recruit and retain older workers, and how COVID-19 has impacted these strategies. Further, the study was to compare how these approaches have shifted in Australian workplaces over time, utilising data from previous surveys in 2012, 2014 and 2018. The majority of respondents reside in Victoria (27.8%) and New South Wales (25.8%), in a Metropolitan area (76%), and are HR practitioners working within an organisation (67.4%).

### **About the Australian HR Institute**

The Australian HR Institute (AHRI) is the national association representing human resource and people management professionals with 20,000 members from Australia and across the globe.

### **About the Australian Human Rights Commission**

The Australian Human Rights Commission is Australia's National Human Rights Institution. An independent statutory organisation, established by an act of Federal Parliament, the Commission protects and promotes human rights in Australia and internationally.