

EveryAGE Counts Campaign

Policy Directions to Challenge Ageism

The EveryAGE Counts campaign is driven by a national coalition of organisations and individuals formed to shift negative social norms on ageing and towards older people; raise awareness of ageism; campaign against the structural barriers caused by ageism; and research the attitudes and beliefs that drive ageism and prevent older people from participating equally in social, civic and economic life.



1. EveryAGE Counts Campaign

Ageism against older people is stereotyping, discrimination and mistreatment based solely upon age.

It comes from negative attitudes and beliefs about what it means to be older and impacts on older people's confidence, quality of life, job prospects, health and control over life decisions.

Ageism has loomed larger in policy and practice as Australians live longer and our population ages. Longevity coupled with falling birth rates has resulted in steady growth in both the number and the proportion of the population who are older, giving rise to a public narrative around older people as a burden and cost to society.

The purpose of the EveryAGE Counts Campaign is to positively change thinking about ageing, to re-imagine getting older and to set the foundations for current and future generations to age well. To do this, we intend to work collaboratively and co-operatively with governments, political parties, employers, unions and community sector stakeholders, based on the strong engagement of diverse older people themselves.

At its heart the campaign respects and acknowledges the inherent worth of each individual and their right to choice, control and dignity regardless of their age or health.

The campaign is aiming for an Australia where older people:

- are valued and their contribution is acknowledged;
- have opportunities to learn, grow and live purposeful lives;
- participate in work for as long as they want to;
- are visible and represented in media in all their diversity;
- are connected with their community and contact between generations is fostered;
- have a voice and are part of all major policy decisions that affect them;
- have equal access to goods and services and consumer protections when they need them;
- get the right care and support which maintains their dignity and autonomy when they need it.

To achieve this impact, the EveryAGE Counts Campaign is in for the long haul. We recognise that change can take time to grow and embed in individual and collective attitudes, interpersonal relationships, community behaviours, media representation, professional practices and government policies, programs and laws. We also recognise that it will only be achieved through collaboration between the generations and across different groups in society. The EveryAGE Counts Campaign wants to be a partner with and a supporter of governments, policy-makers, employers, unions, learning institutions, service providers and community groups to achieve a positive future for older Australians.

EveryAGE Counts is organising to build:

- a national coalition for action;
- an active, broad-based social movement;
- effective advocacy and political engagement;
- a stronger policy, research and evidence base;
- powerful responses to structural ageism and discrimination in
 - employment
 - healthcare
 - aged care
 - housing
 - digital inclusion
 - economic security
 - media representation;
- effective communications and marketing.

2. EveryAGE Counts Policy Directions

The EveryAGE Counts is a campaign against ageism towards older Australians. It is a long-term commitment. This first edition of *EveryAGE Counts Policy Directions to Challenge Ageism* is timed for release to accompany the 2018 campaign launch. It lays out our foundational policy positions and 'asks' in the priority areas of

- political leadership and
- work.

As the campaign progresses we will release our policy positions on tackling ageism in

- health
- aged care

- housing
- digital inclusion
- economic security and
- media representation.

Our policy stance will evolve as the campaign unfolds and we turn our attention to specific expressions of ageism, and engage with opportunities within political cycles, such as elections, legislative programs and government inquiries.

Our policies will develop through the engagement and input of individuals, communities and civil society organisations; as a grassroots, social movement for change strengthens; and as the research and evidence base on ageism and the opportunities presented by an older population expands and deepens.

EveryAge Counts is committed to the active involvement of diverse older Australians in all aspects of our campaign.

2.1 Our Policy: Political Leadership

Why this matters

Governments, political parties and politicians (at all levels of government) in Australia are in a unique position to lead a positive narrative and conversation around age-inclusivity, intergenerational interdependence and the intrinsic and social value of lives at all stages across the lifespan. However, political leaders are only at the earliest stages of taking up this responsibility. The EveryAGE Counts Campaign wants to support and work with our political leaders to step forward as champions of change on this important issue.

Increased longevity – much of which in Australia is lived in good health – is one of humankind's great success stories, and calls for innovation and flexibility in our governance, economic and social structures. Yet on balance, political responses continue to treat longevity and our ageing society as a crisis and burden, or at best a series of separate, disconnected policy problems to be solved. There are myriad opportunities offered by longer, healthier lives, but they are mostly overlooked by government and political party policies and programs operating from an outdated view of the population structure, the length of life stages and human capability across the lifespan.

It's time to change our approach.

Governments in recent years have taken important steps to protect the rights of older people (for example, through age discrimination and equal opportunities laws) and through individual portfolio initiatives aimed at responding to an older population and barriers to participation. However, these measures rarely attempt the crucial task of systemically tackling head on the ageist mores and attitudes that underpin discrimination and barriers. The absence of a two pronged approach – to both the underlying ageism and its discriminatory manifestations – often results in the value and impact of initiatives petering out or not achieving their intended impact.

We call on our political leadership to take immediate and ongoing action to build on the strengths of our changing population now and into the future and to abandon the deficit model of ageing. While ageism has always harmed individuals, in an ageing society it also runs counter to the national interest, economically and socially.

What needs to happen

EveryAGE Counts will collaborate with, support and encourage governments, political parties and politicians in Australia to:

- demonstrate leadership on challenging ageism and positively respond to the opportunities presented by an ageing society and increased longevity;
- drive a public conversation about ageing and ageism, promoting contemporary, positive narratives about ageing, older people in all their diversity and an ageing society;
- increase research and the evidence base and innovative measures built around the opportunities and benefits associated with an ageing society and longer lives, not just the challenges;
- advance whole-of-government action on ageing and ageism, ensuring policies and programs take an integrated, life-course approach.



Priorities for action

- A National Agenda for Older Australians to improve economic, social, health and civic participation outcomes for older people, which
 - is negotiated, developed and implemented across all tiers of government
 - is co-designed with the diverse range of older Australians
 - acknowledges and responds to the different ways ageism plays out as it interacts with factors such as gender, cultural and linguistic background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, disability and sexual identity
 - draws on existing, significant government research and policy papers of the past¹
 - takes an integrated approach to various aspects of wellbeing and participation and to addressing disadvantage
 - creates a stronger culture in service delivery of enabling and empowering older Australians to counterbalance the focus on dependency and decline;
- A broad, sustained public awareness and education campaign on ageism, which
 - aims to shift social norms on ageing and being older
 - builds on recent government campaigns such as Long Live You;
- Research and evidence
 - That the Productivity Commission research the economic and social contribution made by older Australians within families, communities, the workforce and as tax payers, to provide balance to its inquiries and projects over the past decade which have focused on the costs and challenges of an ageing society;
- A whole of government approach
 - That governments at all levels maintain a ministerial position responsible for ageing and older Australians, which
 - has cross-portfolio responsibility, enabling a whole of government approach to ageing policy
 - leads the integration of a life course approach into policy and program development and implementation
 - speaks up against and responds to ageism, as well as age discrimination
 - builds policy responses on the opportunities and benefits offered by longer lives and not just the challenges.

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¹ For example: Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians, Realising the Economic Potential of Senior Australians. Australian Treasury, 2011 http://epsa.treasury.gov.au/content/publications/grey_gold/downloads/grey_gold.pdf
The Role of Standards and Innovation for Driving APEC's Silver Economy: An Issues Paper for the 2017 APEC Workshop on Standards and Innovation. APEC
Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance March 2017 <https://www.standards.org.au/news/release-of-issues-paper-to-support-apec%E2%80%99s-silver-economy>

2.2 Our Policy: Work

Why this matters

The human right to work (and to fair working conditions), supported in national legislation and Australia's international treaty commitments, does not diminish with age. Australians have the right to participate in work for as long as they choose.

Ageism and age discrimination undermine this right and deny older people economic security and the personal benefits of work—dignity, independence, a sense of purpose and social connectedness. It also places great personal strain on the individuals involved and their families. This is especially stark for those people over 55 who lose their job and are seeking re-employment.

While older employees have lower rates of unemployment than younger workers, when they lose their job, on average, it takes them much longer to get a new job². Many spend this time trying to exist on Newstart Allowance, depleting savings and personal confidence.

Importantly, ageism is bad for business too, limiting access to an entire pool of skill and talent simply based on chronological age. In addition, it strains government budgets to support long-term unemployed, older job seekers and people retiring earlier with lower levels of personal savings and superannuation than might have otherwise been the case.

A number of important recent government and academic reports, most notably the 2016 *Willing to Work* report from the Australian Human Rights Commission, provide a wealth of insights on what needs to be done to remove the barriers to employment for older people.

At the same time, extending the working lives for many of those who have been employed in physically and/or psychologically demanding jobs is neither feasible nor fair. There may also be health or wellbeing reasons why some people are unable or unwilling to work into later life.

Tackling ageism towards older people in employment is aimed at removing artificial age barriers for the growing numbers of older people who expect to, want to, and are capable of working. Opposition to ageism, however, is not an excuse to force people to work beyond the age they are capable of doing so. People across a broad age range will transition to changed working arrangements, reduced working hours, pro bono work, volunteer work, or no work, according to their individual needs.

What needs to happen

EveryAGE Counts will collaborate with, support and encourage governments, employers, unions and employees to

- remove discriminatory barriers facing older employees and job-seekers

As people live longer many will choose or need to work longer, and as our population ages our economy and society will increasingly rely on an older workforce. Employment culture, structure and practices must adjust to accept, include and welcome people at older ages than in the past, as legitimately belonging in the workforce.

² In November 2015, the average duration of unemployment for mature-age people was 68 weeks, compared with 30 weeks for 15–24 year olds and 49 weeks for 25–54 year olds. Source: AHRC, *Willing to Work* Report, 2016 p37 (quoting ABS Labour Force statistics)

- support strong age discrimination laws and processes
- implement inclusionary practices in recruitment, workforce development, workplace adjustment, flexible working arrangements, career transitions and retention
- change workplace cultures that are hostile to older workers through public education, influencing organisational policies and practices, and advocating for consistent and sustained leadership at all levels of organisations
- foster intergenerational solidarity and assist the expanded number of generations within the workforce to thrive, through
 - embedding intergenerational cooperation and sharing as 'business as usual'
 - innovation in products, services, business models and work practices to suit a multigenerational workforce
 - leadership that promotes healthy, diverse, age-integrated workplaces
- respond to the link between health and workforce participation and the need to address healthy ageing across the entire life course, with an emphasis on prevention and reduction of chronic conditions
- support mass participation in genuine life-long learning and the maintenance of personal work capabilities, through advocating for strengthening of
 - educational strategies, structures and processes
 - individual and workplace learning habits, and
 - social norms and expectations.

Priorities for action

- Public and workplace education and information campaigns
 - challenging myths, stereotypes and negative attitudes about older people in the workforce
 - increasing awareness of ageism and aged based discrimination and their impacts, and the options for recourse.
- Sustained federal government investment in *More Choices for a Longer Life Package* to
 - evaluate and amplify successful strategies (including from the forthcoming career transition initiatives)
 - incorporate learnings and valuable strategies from relevant Test, Try, Learn projects
 - target trials of integrated policy initiatives in regional, rural and remote areas responding to specific challenges in local economies
 - design employment initiatives to address cohort needs such as for women at risk of homelessness.
- Establishment of a network of shared value partnerships³ with a focus on ending ageism towards older employees.
- Establishment of a Work and Ageing Clearinghouse to
 - collect and share data and research
 - disseminate success stories, better practice examples and resources.

³ Shared value is defined as policies and practices that enhance the competitiveness of companies while improving social and environmental conditions in the regions where they operate. It is a business strategy focused on companies creating measurable economic benefit by identifying and addressing social problems that intersect with their business.' <https://sharedvalue.org.au/>

Coalition Members



AAG
Australian
Association of
Gerontology



Aboriginal
Community Services



ACSA
Aged & Community Services Australia



Australian
Human Rights
Commission



For older Australians



Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia



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