

MEDIA RELEASE

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OVER 50 AND 'OUT OF TOUCH'? AN AGEIST NATION PUTTING VICTORIAN BABY BOOMERS OUT OF WORK, SAYS RESEARCH

A new study released today by Australian Seniors Insurance Agency (ASIA) reveals age discrimination in the workplace is rife in Victoria, with more than half (52 percent) of Baby Boomer respondents claiming they've been turned down for a job past the age of 40 because of their age.

The study is part of *The Australian Seniors Series* and is the second instalment of an ongoing national survey to investigate the shifting attitudes and concerns affecting Australia's over 50 population.

General Manager of Marketing and ASIA spokesperson Simon Hovell said, "This in depth research not only revealed the challenges this generation must tackle within their place of work, but the problems our ageing population face in trying to make a career change or re-enter the workforce. In fact, over half (69 percent) of Victorians over 50 said that they faced substantial obstacles in their attempts."

Many Victorian Baby Boomers face considerable age-related barriers in the workplace, with more than two in five (46 percent) of respondents admitting they have felt stuck in an employment rut because a career change, opportunities or promotions are unlikely due to their age.

Delving further into these challenges, it seems Victorians struggle more than any other state or territory when trying to re-enter the workforce, with 40 percent saying it took longer than six months to find a new job when making a new career move or returning to work. Almost one in five said it took them five years or more.

In addition, a third of Baby Boomers in Victoria who are considering early retirement said this decision would be influenced by not enjoying work, with a further 9 per cent feeling that it is not worth trying to reskill at this stage in life.

"Interestingly, amid organisations' anxieties on the cost implications for healthcare with an ageing workforce, Australian Baby Boomers are in fact three times less likely than Gen Y to use up all their sick leave each year. In addition, Baby Boomers typically take three days sick leave on average per year, which doubles for Gen Y's at an average of six days," said Mr Hovell.

The fiscal impact of this leave differentiation is significant, with Gen Y costing up to \$2.8 billion more than Baby Boomers a year to the Australian economy.

The research also deflates perceived issues with hiring older workers in a modern workplace, including lack of adaptability and traditional skill sets. A sizeable 74 percent of Victorian Baby Boomers adapt well to technological innovations, and 73 percent are actively seeking training opportunities.

"Considering the Baby Boomer generation witnessed and participated in some of the largest social and political upheavals in Australian history during the 1960s and 1970s, including the Women's Movement and the Vietnam War, this myth seems even more dubious. Baby Boomers grew up not only seeing change, but driving it," said Mr Hovell.

Looking at comparative skill sets and values between Baby Boomers and Gen Y, the former proves stronger in almost all surveyed talents, while the latter felt more technically savvy by a moderate margin (10 percent compared to 27 percent, respectively).

"The findings point to what many organisations, academics and economists have known all along – Baby Boomers are a real asset to the workplace," said Mr Hovell.

Overall, Baby Boomers' skill sets make a strong business case, surpassing their Gen Y counterparts in terms of people skills (30 percent, compared to 24 percent), collaboration (26 percent, compared to 17 percent), and innovation and problem solving (23 percent, compared to 20 percent).

Associate Professor Leanne Cutcher, University of Sydney Business School, University of Sydney and one of Australia's leading researchers on intergenerational employment said, "These findings support years of sound academic research into the systemic age discrimination that undermines the important contributions of older people to the labour market.

Despite their tremendous value to the workplace, this research revealed nationally, over one in three Baby Boomers have decided not to apply for a job because they felt that age discrimination would affect their chances.

"While there is robust evidence that older people can be part of a sustainable solution to job market challenges, existing and inaccurate perceptions of the Baby Boomer generation detract from the value of employing the over 50 population," said Associate Professor Cutcher.

In light of the increasing costs of high staff turnover and a global skills shortage, which remain primary concerns for employers, Baby Boomers in Australia typically stay in a job for an average of 13.6 years, nearly three times as long as Gen Ys (at 4.4 years).

Baby Boomers are also half as likely as Gen Ys to leave their current job in the next year (24 percent compared to 47 per cent).

Furthermore, the research challenges the perceived 'Gen Y versus Baby Boomer' workplace conflict, with the vast majority of both generations believing they can complement each other well at work (87 percent compared to 90 percent, respectively).

"While exploring common misconceptions around the intergenerational workplace, we in fact found several key alignments in values," said Mr Hovell.

"Both generations identified work ethic as the most important contribution to the workforce, and loss of skills and knowledge amongst colleagues was the most commonly cited negative impact of retiring Baby Boomers," he continued.

"One of the most significant points to derive from the research is that while some negative stereotypes and attitudes towards older workers prevail, there is strong evidence of the Baby Boomer generation's agility, progressiveness and skills-based value-add to employers that we should continue to acknowledge and address," concluded Mr Hovell.

The full report and supporting data is available on the Australian Seniors Insurance Agency website:

<http://www.seniors.com.au/news-insights/ageism-in-the-aussie-workplace-are-we-missing-out>

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About Australian Seniors Insurance Agency

Australian Seniors Insurance Agency was established in 1998 to provide cost effective insurance solutions for the mature Australian Market, a market too often ignored. With product offerings in car, home, travel, funeral, pet and accident insurance, Australian Seniors Insurance Agency recognises the better risk nature of Australians over 50.

About the 'Australian Seniors Series'

In order to explore the attitudes to technology, changing family structures and living arrangements of senior Australians, CoreData surveyed online 1200 typical Australians across the nation in early March 2016. The sample collection employed soft quotas to monitor representativeness of the Australian senior adult population. While the bulk of the sample (n=1000) are over 50yrs old, a control sample of 200 Australians under 20-34yrs old was used for some key comparisons.

Hard quotas by state were also employed to ensure all the main states were represented with sufficiently robust samples in the research - (NSW = 200, VIC = 200, QLD = 200, WA = 200, Remaining states/territories = 200).