



Australian Government
Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations

Mature Age Workers: Building age inclusive workplaces



Recruitment

One third of Australian organisations believe their recruitment practices have a negative impact on mature age people, and less than 10% of Australian organisations proactively recruit mature age workers.

Outlined below are some helpful tips for improving recruitment processes in your business.

Job analysis

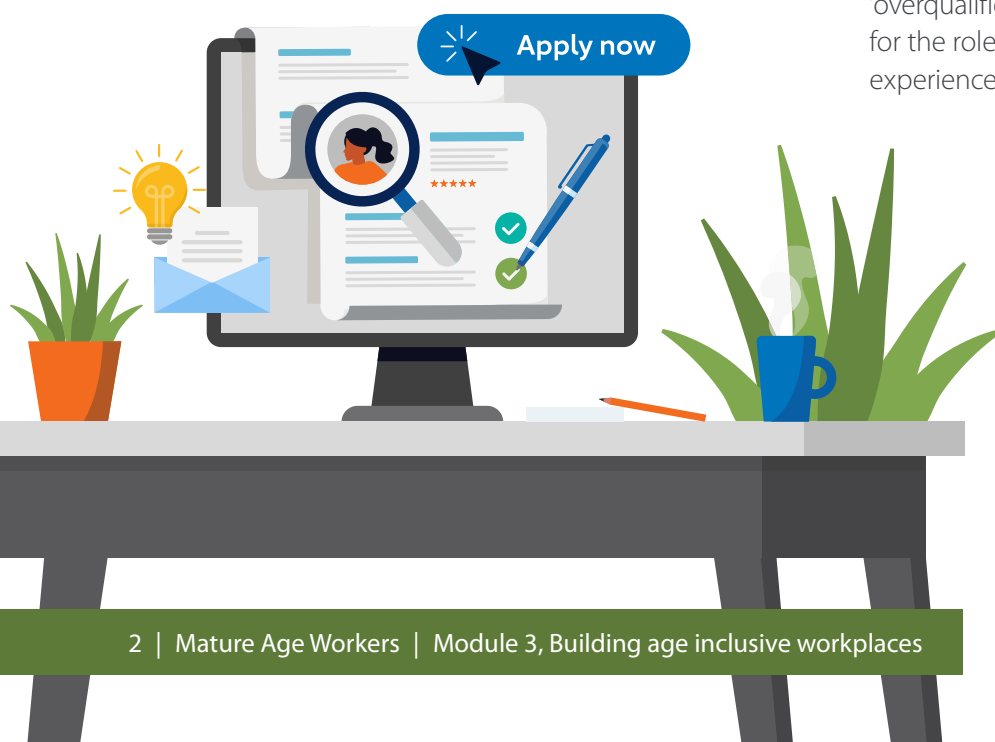
- > Establish key aspects of the job including duties and tasks, the work environment, specific tools or equipment required, supervisory relationships and flexible working practices. This allows for objective recruitment based on skills and characteristics required for a role.
- > Ask someone to review the description to ensure it does not include any wording or imagery that may deter certain groups from applying. An interesting tip - words like 'energetic' and 'fresh' are often considered euphemisms for young so avoid using these.

Advertising

- > Use age inclusive language, remain objective by focusing on the requirements of the position and advertise widely to achieve a diverse pool of applicants.
- > Consider asking the applicant for their relevant experience against a set of competencies rather than chronologically. This avoids any indication of age, as well as the submission of a CV. Often CV's can include date of birth as well as the applicant's experience with a time stamp and/or in chronological order which can trigger concerns around unconscious bias.

Shortlisting and selection

- > Ensure staff are mindful of possible unconscious biases before entering this stage of the process.
- > Be aware of the benefits of age diversity. If you can, ensure there is an age diverse team as part of the short-listing and selection process.
- > Try to avoid indicating that the applicant may be 'overqualified'. The applicant has likely applied for the role knowing the requirements, pay and experience sought.



Retaining mature age workers

What you can do for your mature age workers

Offer flexible working arrangements

Flexible arrangements enable workers at various life stages to manage their work life balance and potential caring responsibilities for loved ones. Under the *Fair Work Act* mature age workers are able to request flexibility in their workplace.

Here's what you can do:

Provide a 'menu' of options to suit different employee groups (let's focus on mature age workers here). These can include:

- > part time work
- > job sharing
- > flexible hours and leave options
- > remote working options, and phased retirement programs.

What your organisation can do

Diversity and inclusion strategies and activities

Developing a diversity and inclusion strategy will assist in translating your vision into strategic goals for your organisation. It will then be possible to define initiatives and programs needed to work towards these goals and deliver practical outcomes.

The Diversity Council Australia's *Change at Work model* is an evidence based model of D&I organisational change, which empirical research indicates will enable organisations to more effectively achieve D&I outcomes in the workplace.

It sets out the following 4 steps when starting your diversity and inclusion journey:

- > Diagnose
- > Design
- > Engage and enable
- > Embed and evaluate

Diversity Council Australia, Change at Work Model, Sydney Diversity Council Australia, 2019



Retaining mature age workers

Provide learning and development opportunities

Learning

Here are some actions you can take to ensure learning is maximised in your organisation:

- Provide both younger and mature age workers equal learning opportunities.
- Tailor training towards mature age workers' learning and development needs. Some mature age workers have worked in their field for a long period and do not require basic training.
- Provide different training methods and allow mature age workers to choose the methods that fit their own learning style.
- Allow them to decide for themselves the knowledge they want to obtain and address the possibility of anxiety related to learning.

Mentoring

Given the long held experience, skills and corporate knowledge of mature age workers, it is beneficial for organisations to set up formal mechanisms to ensure this is passed on to other staff members.

Training for leaders and management

Over two thirds of Australian organisations don't offer line management training on how to manage different generations, and just under half don't offer unconscious bias training for employees.

Upskilling leaders to support age inclusivity is a critical activity for your organisation. Negative age stereotypes held by individuals in leadership roles contributes to ageism in organisations.

Conversely, leaders championing age inclusion results in age inclusive cultures.

Below are key training areas to consider for leaders:

- conscious and unconscious bias
- organisational policies regarding flexible working and phased retirement
- leading multigenerational teams
- courageous conversations.

In addition, evidence shows that appointing a manager or committee with responsibility for change and accountability is more effective than diversity training on its own.

Useful resources

- [Australian Human Resource Institute \(AHRI\) – Employing Older Workers Report 2021](#)
- [OECD - Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce: Living, Learning and Earning Longer](#)
- [Diversity Council Australia – Grey Matters: Engaging Mature Workers](#)
- [Diversity Council Australia – Diversity and Inclusion Explained](#)
- [AHRC – A step-by-step guide to preventing discrimination in recruitment](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman – Request for flexible working arrangements](#)