

15 July 2021

Ms Jodeen Carney
Commissioner for Equal Opportunity
jodeen.carney2@sa.gov.au

Dear Jodeen

RE – Public sector workforce rejuvenation must not become a front for age discrimination.

I am very much looking forward to meeting with you and welcoming you as our Commissioner for Equal Opportunity in SA!

In the interim, I am writing to alert you to a measure in the 2021-22 State Budget “allowing workforce rejuvenation” on a voluntary basis to create an incentive for employees to separate from the SA Public Service. Many people have interpreted this measure as having the potential to unfairly target older workers to lure them out of the public service.

Consistent surveys indicate that about a third of older workers experience age discrimination which results in unemployment, underemployment and an under investment in the training and development that maintains contemporary skills for employment.

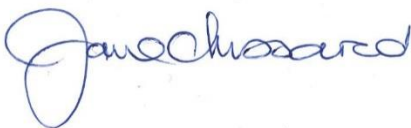
Older people are unemployed for much longer periods than any other age group. While all older workers are affected, older women are particularly disadvantaged including because they have had much less opportunity to accumulate resources for a secure future.

In our COTA SA 2021-22 State Budget Submission we urged a focus on measures that would assist older South Australian workers, and especially older women, to get and keep work. The public service workforce rejuvenation risks doing the opposite.

We ask that your office monitors the roll out of this measure so that the public sector workforce rejuvenation initiative does not become a front for age discrimination and the unfair targeting of older workers. It would seem to us very sensible to prevent age discrimination proactively and to use the opportunity to encourage access to training and development opportunities that will retain older workers.

I very much look forward to meeting you in coming weeks.

Yours sincerely



JANE MUSSARED
Chief Executive

cc Cassie Mason, Director, Office for Ageing Well (OFAW)