



# INVESTING IN EXPERIENCE: MANAGING AN OLDER WORKFORCE

Practical action for employers



Australian Government

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## OUR POPULATION IS AGEING

Australia's ageing population presents both an opportunity and a challenge for workplaces.

The Australian Government's [2010 Intergenerational Report](#) highlighted that as the population ages; the proportion of people working is expected to drop. This will put pressure on our economy and our health systems.

The Government's response to our ageing population is to focus on [active ageing](#) and [participation](#), investing in skills and infrastructure, and promoting a longer productive working life.

With workplaces centre stage to keeping people in employment healthy and productive, integrated workplace strategies are needed in order to realise the productivity benefits of four generations at work, and remove barriers to workforce participation for older people who want to work in the Australian Public Service (APS).

## INVESTING IN EXPERIENCE: MANAGING AN OLDER WORKFORCE

This guide offers APS organisations practical guidance on how to recruit and retain older workers. It provides employers with advice and resources to help identify and manage risks associated with an ageing workforce.



This guide is designed for agency heads, human resource managers and front line managers, to help them build their age management understanding and capability. Links to checklists, fact sheets and further resources are included throughout this guide.

The *Agency Statement of Commitment to Investing in Experience* includes nine principles and actions employers can use to strengthen age-management practices in the workplace.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Investing in experience: Managing an older workforce* is adapted from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' publication [Investing in Experience Employment Charter and Tool Kit](#), developed in partnership with the Australian Industry Group and members of the Australian Government's consultative forum on mature age participation.

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## CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1. LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT</b>                                       | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>2. WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT</b>                          | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>3. WORK DESIGN</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| 3.1 Promote a positive, age-friendly workplace culture                | 9         |
| 3.2 Take an age-inclusive approach to recruitment                     | 11        |
| 3.3 Better match work for older workers                               | 12        |
| 3.4 Provide options for alternative or enriched work roles            | 14        |
| 3.5 Provide and promote flexible work options                         | 15        |
| 3.6 Help workers transition to retirement                             | 17        |
| 3.7 Use technology to help older workers participate at work          | 18        |
| <b>4. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING</b>                                | <b>20</b> |
| 4.1 Meet obligations under work health and safety legislation         | 22        |
| 4.2 Prevent harm in the workplace                                     | 23        |
| 4.3 Promote the health of workers                                     | 24        |
| 4.4 Support the ability to work                                       | 26        |
| <b>5. FRONTLINE CONFIDENCE</b>  | <b>28</b> |
| 5.1 Build age management skills and confidence of front line managers | 29        |
| 5.2 Better manage flexible work options for older workers             | 31        |
| <b>6. ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING</b>                                     | <b>33</b> |



## 1. LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Demonstrate leadership commitment to workforce age diversity. Set the 'tone at the top' and apply an integrated approach to managing workforce age diversity.

# 2

## WHY IT MATTERS

The APS has already begun to experience the effects of a shifting age profile, with rapid ageing of its workforce since the early 1990s. Many older workers are making valuable contributions in the APS and the community. Older people are choosing to work if the conditions are right. Financial reasons, social interaction and wanting to use skills and experience are commonly cited as reasons for delaying retirement.

Longer and healthier lives, changes in work design, and technology enhancements create opportunities for innovation and flexibility so people can continue to be productive and make a contribution through work, regardless of age.

The trend towards a longer working life is one the APS embraces and supports. Participation and engagement of all generations at work is essential for a dynamic and productive APS, and for organisational performance and excellence in delivery of services to the public. Government expects the APS to take the lead in realising the potential of senior Australians through work.

Recommendation 14 of the Australian Government's Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians report, *Realising the economic potential of senior Australians: turning grey into gold*, states that government should:

- > embed age diversity within their workforces and model best practice on attracting, developing and retaining older workers
- > report annually on age diversity in each agency and successful initiatives put in place.

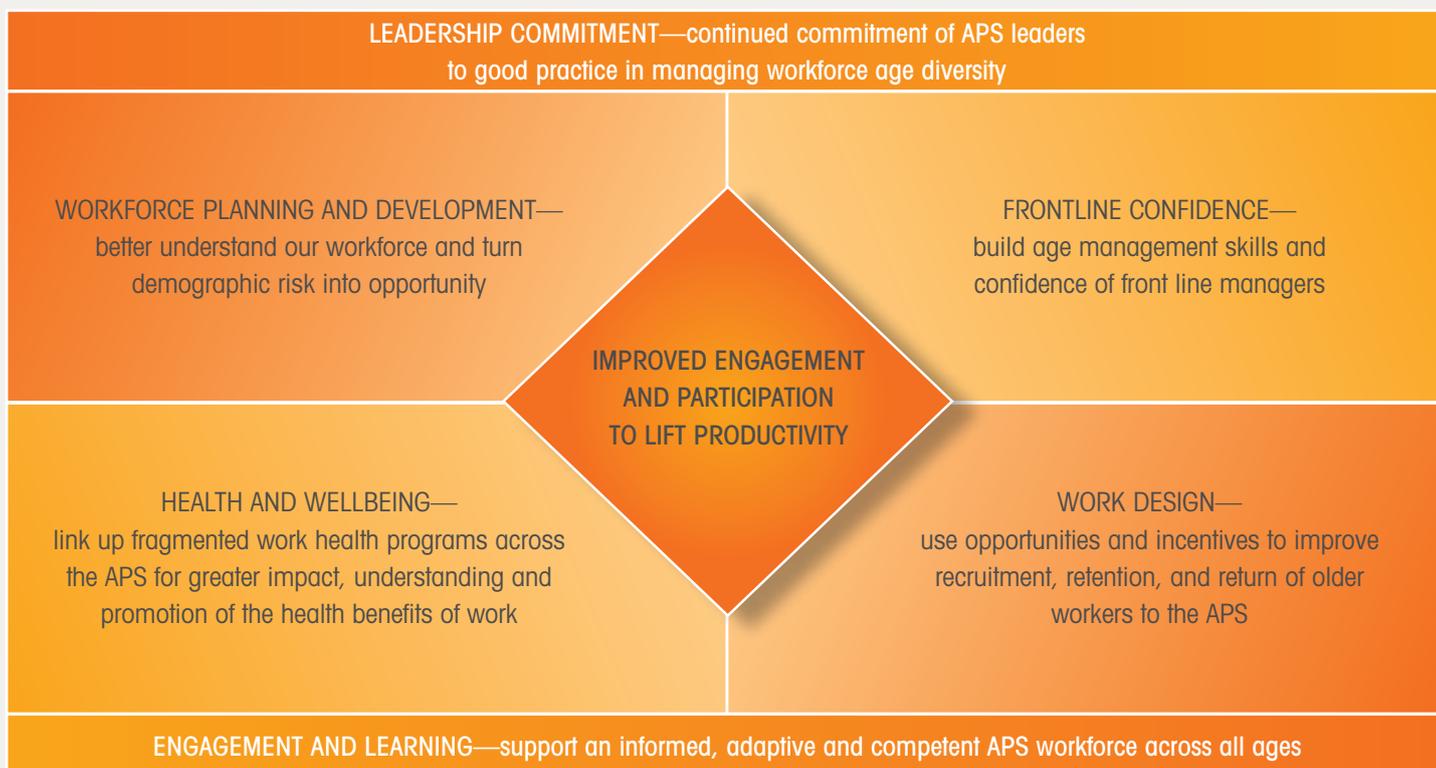
## HOW IT IS DONE

**Take an integrated approach.** The APS has considered a recent Boston Consulting Group report that identified the challenges of an older and multigenerational workforce, as well as the need for integrated workplace solutions. The Work Ability and Ageing Framework for Action (Figure 1) was endorsed by the APS Secretaries Board in 2012 to help the APS address these challenges through integrated strategies in workforce planning, health and safety, skills and human capital development. This framework will help the APS improve workforce participation, increase productivity and tackle the barriers to a longer productive work life in the APS.

Reinforced by leadership commitment, engagement and learning, the four main elements of the *Framework for Action* are the priority areas where opportunities for change can occur.

- > Workforce planning and development—Understanding the demographic profile of the agency's workers, and recognising that the tension between work and life differs with age, is essential to attracting, engaging and retaining a multigenerational workforce.
- > Frontline confidence—Building the capability and confidence of managers to better manage older workers, and better match workers with opportunities.
- > Work design—Good work design, that is fit for purpose, will facilitate recruitment, retention and return of older workers to the APS and minimise obstacles in their path.
- > Health and wellbeing—The relationship between health and work is critical to get right. The APS needs to make sure it capitalises on the huge role of the workplace in keeping people in employment healthy and productive.

**Figure 1: Work Ability and Ageing Framework for Action**



**Promote the importance of leadership.** Senior leaders need to set the tone at the top and apply an integrated approach to help older workers tackle the challenges of a life in work. Alongside the Work Ability and Ageing Framework for Action, signing an Agency Statement of Commitment demonstrates commitment to good practice in managing workforce age diversity in APS agencies.

**Embed strategies in broader HR frameworks.** Use the organisation's overarching people strategy, diversity strategy or implement a specific mature age strategy. Choose an approach that is tailored to your agency's needs, taking into account information derived through workforce planning, how necessary change is and the readiness of the organisation to adapt.

**Support a shared responsibility.** The principle of a shared responsibility underpins the elements in the Work Ability and Ageing Framework for Action. Self-management in optimising health and wellbeing, career planning, engaging in personal development and balancing work and non-work, are important career competencies for active ageing.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Van Loo (2011) Making the most of mature minds: issues, trends and challenges in making active ageing a reality. Cited in Older Worker research readings National Centre for Vocational Education and Research, Australian Government (DEEWR).

# 4

## USEFUL RESOURCES

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEEWR) *Investing in Experience Employment Charter and Tool Kit* is a one-stop guide designed to build employer confidence in recruiting and retaining mature age staff.

The Australian Government's *2010 Intergenerational Report* provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges facing Australia over the next forty years.

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) *State of the Service Series* provides year-to-year trends in workforce participation and capability across the APS. Chapter 5 in the 2011-12 report *Ageing and work ability*, focuses on the ageing workforce.

Boston Consulting Group's *Turning the Challenge of an Older Workforce into a Managed Opportunity* describes the challenges facing the future workforce and provides an approach to give business leaders the tools they need to cope with demographic risk.

*Managing a healthy ageing workforce: a national business imperative* developed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) UK and provides practical guidance for anyone responsible for employing people.

The National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre's *Barriers to Mature Age Employment: Final Report of the Consultative Forum on Mature Age Participation* considers the economic contribution of mature workers in paid employment.

The Australian Law Reform Commission's Report *Access All Ages—Older Workers and Commonwealth Laws* examines limitations or barriers to participation in the workforce by mature age people and makes recommendations for reforms using legislation and legal frameworks.

The Australian Institute of Management (AIM) Discussion Paper *Engaging and retaining older workers* is another useful resource.

# AGENCY STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO INVESTING IN EXPERIENCE

The principles outlined in this statement demonstrate commitment to good practice in managing workforce age diversity. By signing this Investing in Experience Statement of Commitment, you agree to demonstrate leadership in applying it in your organisation.

## 1. WE KNOW OUR WORKFORCE AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Knowing the demographics of our workforce and understanding the expectations of our mature age workers is essential for managing an age diverse workforce. This is an iterative process that can help us identify and address potential skills and knowledge gaps, and to make informed human resource and management decisions.

### Actions:

*We will take specific steps to know and better understand our workforce.*

*We will look at ways to turn our demographic risk into an opportunity for the APS.*

*We will develop and implement a plan of action to help meet the challenges of the future.*

*We will partner efforts to better understand the impacts of the ageing population on the APS workforce.*

## 2. WE RECRUIT THE BEST, REGARDLESS OF AGE

The long-term success of any business depends on the ability to tap into a diverse body of talent, knowledge and skills. By adopting age-friendly recruitment practices we are able to widen the applicant pool to make sure we find the best person for the job.

### Actions:

*We will take action to make sure our recruitment policies and procedures, including the use of any external recruitment agencies, support the recruitment of mature age people.*

*We will actively encourage mature age people to apply.*

*We will work to better match the supply, skills and ability of older workers to the work demands.*

## 3. WE BELIEVE IN LIFELONG LEARNING AND WE ENCOURAGE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Investing in training for all workers, regardless of age, and encouraging more experienced workers to consider mentoring those with less experience, brings direct benefits to business, including increased productivity and improved morale. Lifelong learning promotes integration, participation and wellbeing.

### Actions:

*We will provide appropriate training and development opportunities to our workers regardless of age.*

*We will positively encourage the transfer of skills knowledge and experience within our organisation.*

*We will take action to make sure our learning and development strategies, including the use of external providers, support the learning needs of mature age people.*

## 4. WE ARE PROACTIVE IN RETAINING OUR WORKERS AND SUPPORTING OUR WORKERS IN THE TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

Retaining experienced workers who understand our business can reduce recruitment and training costs and allow us to maintain a strong knowledge base, leading to improved quality and productivity. Positive work practices, including the provision of flexible work arrangements, can foster loyalty and reduce absenteeism, which benefits our organisation as a whole. The choice of phased retirement allows us as an organisation to capitalise on the skills and corporate knowledge of our experienced workers. It also offers more flexible work options for workers.

### Actions:

*We will develop, review or update our staff retention strategy to maximise the contribution of our workers.*

*We will work to minimise limitations on, or disincentives to, participation in the workforce by older people.*

*We will support APS-wide flexible work arrangements that improve employment options for older workers.*

*We will incorporate or maintain retirement transition planning as a standard option for our workers.*

## 5. WE BUILD THE CAPACITY OF OUR MANAGERS TO PRACTICE AGE DIVERSITY

Formal policies and procedures should be reviewed and updated to allow our organisation to meet its legal obligations and to benefit from the capabilities, ideas and insights of a diverse workforce, regardless of age. Diversity principles should be integrated with, and underpin, all aspects of human resource management. Managers who have constructive conversations with people well ahead of the traditional retirement age and who encourage workers to make informed career and financial decisions, can extend the contribution of valued workers.

### Actions:

*We will develop, review and update our formal policies and procedures, and will provide appropriate training to our workers, to help remove ageism from the workplace.*

*We will integrate age management into our workforce diversity strategies.*

## 6. WE PROVIDE A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Management has a legislative responsibility to make sure all reasonable steps are taken to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of workers. Positive age-management practices can significantly extend the working life of valued workers by preventing accident and injury and facilitating health and wellbeing.

### Actions:

*We will develop, review and update our work health and safety and wellbeing strategies to identify, and address, sources of risks to the health and safety of older workers in the workplace.*

*We will target initiatives that support and promote a healthy and productive ageing workforce.*

## 7. WE PROMOTE AND SHARE BETTER PRACTICE

The success of this statement relies on the communication and dissemination of better practice in workplaces throughout Australia.

### Actions:

*We will take part in case study research on managing age diversity and will share experiences, achievements, results and outcomes that support multigenerational workforce management.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## 2. WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Understand your workforce demographics, the opportunities and risks they pose to your organisation and plan for the future.

Workforce planning is a 'continuous business planning process of shaping and structuring the workforce to ensure there is sufficient and sustainable capability and capacity to deliver organisational objectives, now and in the future.' Australian Public Service Commission's *Workforce planning guide*.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Workforce planning is an important aspect of managing a workforce. Identifying and adapting to change is integral to ongoing sustainability and older workers are becoming an increasingly important group.

There is currently no agreed definition of 'senior' or 'older Australians'. The effects of ageing vary from person to person in terms of both their capability and capacity. Research looking into work ability suggests that efforts to extend working life need to start while people are in their 40s, so that personal health behaviours and work design is optimised before problems become acute.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, in the APS, it may be useful to define older workers as those who are aged 45 years or older.

The ageing of the Australian population and APS workforce poses a challenge to the continued growth of the Australian economy, living standards and government finances.<sup>3</sup> For employers, the risks of an ageing workforce include:

- > loss of experienced and skilled workers
- > difficulties in replacing these workers
- > rising costs related to recruitment and training
- > workers' compensation claim costs.

Participation and engagement of all generations at work is essential for a dynamic and productive APS, and for excellence in delivery of services to the public. An agency's people are vital to its functioning and this is particularly important in knowledge-intensive organisations, such as APS workplaces.<sup>4</sup>

A mature age workforce, consisting of highly engaged, skilled and experienced people, offers opportunities. The challenge for employers is to manage the risks posed by the ageing workforce and turn the risk into opportunity by maximising the participation and performance of valuable older workers.

### HOW IT IS DONE

**Collect and analyse your agency's demographic data.** Analysis of demographic data reveals the current state of affairs in relation to workforce capability and capacity, and indicates areas of potential risk and where further management is required. This is particularly important in areas requiring specialist skills and knowledge and to discern intentions for retirement or phased retirement. Sources of data include the APS Employment Database (APSED) and data from the State of the Service Series, including the Employee Census and Microagency survey results.

Understanding the workforce demographics and planning for the future is only really useful if it is an ongoing process, not a once-off stocktake.

**Monitor people's employment experience.** Seek information on the personal experiences of your workers from recruitment to exit, to highlight age variables and identify possible areas for improvement.

**Implement workforce strategies that support age diversity.** The goal of workforce planning is to have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time. Consider what skills and talents are needed to achieve the organisation's strategic objectives. Identify work options available to broaden the pool of workers that have the required skills and talents.

**Assess how well your organisation recruits and retains older workers.** Focus on assessing the quality of the human resource system elements that underpin good mature age employment practice.

<sup>2</sup> J E Ilmarinen, 'Ageing workers', *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, vol. 58, no.8, 2001, pp. 546–52.

<sup>3</sup> The Treasury, *Intergenerational Report 2010*, CanPrint Communications, Canberra, 2010, viewed 4 September 2013, <<http://archive.treasury.gov.au/igr/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Public Service Commission, *Workforce Planning Guide*, Australian Public Service Commission, viewed 4 September 2013, <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/workforce-planning-guide>>.



### **3. WORK DESIGN**

**Design work to maximise the participation of older workers. Use opportunities and incentives to improve recruitment, retention and return of older works to the APS.**

## WHY IT MATTERS

With longer and healthier working lives comes an opportunity for many people to work longer and possibly change career pathways. Career development and planning support can contribute significantly to enhancing employee motivation and productivity.<sup>5</sup>

Work and life balance impacts workers of every generation. Flexibility has become increasingly more important in the workplace. The ability to work part-time or flexible hours has been found to be the most important facilitator of good health for older people to work beyond retirement age.

To attract and retain older workers, employers need to create the culture, systems and processes that support and facilitate work flexibility.

'Early retirement has a detrimental effect on the Australian economy because the skills and knowledge of mature age people can make a substantial contribution to productivity, as well as mentoring younger workers.' National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre's *Barriers to Mature Age Employment: Final Report of the Consultative Forum on Mature Age Participation.*

## 3.1 PROMOTE A POSITIVE, AGE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE CULTURE

**Build a workplace culture that values older workers by focusing on the positive contributions and potential of older workers, discouraging negative attitudes, and preventing age discrimination.**

### WHY IT MATTERS

Older workers make important contributions in the workplace and their active participation at work is increasingly important in the context of an ageing society. Age discrimination at work is often a barrier to workforce participation, manifesting in both the recruitment, and retention, of staff.<sup>6</sup>

Age discrimination, either real or perceived, can also cause mature age people to self-select out of the workforce. Workplace cultures need to be non-discriminatory and actively value older workers and their contributions.

'Age discrimination in employment of mature age people arises from a combination of social perceptions and economic justifications but is usually justified in terms of productivity, whereby older people are stereotyped for having some assumed behaviours regardless of the individual's actual conditions and characteristics.' Macnicol, J, 2006, *Age Discrimination: An Historical and Contemporary Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006.

5 Career Industry Council of Australia 2011

6 National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre, *Ageing and the barriers to labour force participation in Australia*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, viewed 4 September 2013, <[http://www.productiveageing.com.au/site/grants\\_arc.php](http://www.productiveageing.com.au/site/grants_arc.php)>.

## HOW IT IS DONE

**Build age diversity within the organisation.** Creating a workplace where older workers make valuable and visible contributions to organisational success may be the best way to prevent culturally-entrenched age discrimination. Build organisational age diversity to support older workers by implementing non-discriminatory recruitment processes and practices and measures that encourage retention of older workers.

**Recognise and reward achievements by older workers.** Make sure reward and recognition programs share the achievements of older workers with the rest of the organisation. Programs should also recognise behaviours of individuals who make significant contributions to the creation of a diverse, age-positive workplace culture.

**Review recruitment and retention processes and measures and address age imbalance or bias.** Audit recruitment, performance management and other attraction and retention processes for age imbalance or bias.

**Build line management capability in relation to age diversity and management.** Line managers have a key role in building an age-positive workplace culture.

**Use the employment experiences of older workers.** The experiences of older workers can positively reinforce age management practices and identify where further work is required.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

The [\*Age Discrimination Act 2004\*](#) prohibits discrimination in the workplace on the basis of age and the [\*APS Values, Employment Principles and Code of Conduct\*](#) support this by requiring APS employees to refrain from discrimination and offer equal opportunities in the workplace to all.

More information on building organisational age diversity is available in Chapter 4.2: *Take an age-inclusive approach to recruitment* of this guide.

More information on building age management skills and confidence of line managers is available in Chapter 3: *Frontline confidence* of this guide.

The Victorian Government's [\*State Services Authority\*](#) provides guidance on the role of culture in managing an ageing workforce.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) UK guide [\*Managing a healthy ageing workforce: a national business imperative\*](#) provides useful insights into common discriminatory attitudes towards older workers.

## 3.2 TAKE AN AGE-INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT

**Review recruitment processes and practices to eliminate bias and focus strategies on maximising diversity outcomes.**

### WHY IT MATTERS

Older workers are increasingly looking to extend their working life. Organisations that are proactive in addressing the challenges of recruiting and retaining older workers will gain a significant competitive edge. There are many benefits older workers bring to organisations including:

- > accumulated experience, knowledge and skills
- > loyalty and a strong commitment to the business of the organisation
- > established networks of contacts.

Older workers will also contribute to the organisation's diversity and its ability to mirror the diversity of the community<sup>7</sup>.

Biased recruitment practices, such as assumptions of recruiters about older workers, can narrow the applicant pool and exclude mature age job seekers.

'Recruiters are key gatekeepers in the employment process. Ensuring they are aware of their obligations and appreciate the value of mature age workers is essential.' Australian Law Reform Commission's Final Report *Access All Ages—Older Workers and Commonwealth Laws*.

### HOW IT IS DONE

**Promote the workplace to older workers.** Take steps to make sure the organisation's brand and advertising material is age-inclusive and age-positive. Incentives that older workers find attractive, such as flexible work, learning and development opportunities and health and wellbeing programs, should be marketed to job seekers<sup>8</sup>. Mature-age job seekers should be able to visualise themselves working for your agency and they need to feel the organisation and job is a good fit for them.

**Know the job and focus on the requirements of the job.** Understand the work that needs to be done and make sure selection criteria align to the work and target the key competencies required. Map job or role competencies to both formal education and work experience. Be aware that a lack of formal qualifications for older workers may be offset by development of relevant skills through work experience. Make sure appropriate value is placed on work experience.

**Identify the types of flexible work options that are compatible with the job requirements.** Make sure the full range of compatible options, such as part-time, job-sharing, working compressed hours, working from an alternate site, are made available to potential candidates by including them in the job documentation.

**Seek out older workers.** This could include targeting past employees, including retirees, and advertising in different places from the usual, to create awareness of the opportunities that exist for mature workers. Graduate programs provide another opportunity to recruit older workers. Consider reviewing programs to make sure they are supportive of mature age graduates, both pre- and post-recruitment.

**Assess the cultural assumptions of the organisation or team<sup>9</sup>.** Investigate the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that exist in the workplace regarding how older workers work, or want to work. Support specific behaviours that positively influence age-diversity and workforce culture, and address any negative views, assumptions or behaviours.

7 Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, *Employ Outside the Box: Mature age people*, <http://www.cciwa.com/docs/advocacy/acci-mature-age-booklet.pdf>

8 Government of Western Australia Public Sector Commission 2010, *A Guide to Managing an Ageing Workforce*, [http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/guide\\_to\\_managing\\_an\\_ageing\\_workforce.pdf](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/guide_to_managing_an_ageing_workforce.pdf)

9 Victorian State Services Authority 2008, *Attracting and retaining an ageing workforce: a guide for Victorian public sector managers*, <http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/products/view-products/attracting-and-retaining-an-ageing-workforce.html>

**Make sure recruitment policies, processes and practices are merit-based and age-inclusive.** Language of selection criteria, position descriptions, duty statements and advertisements should be age-neutral. Diverse age-groups should be represented on selection panels.

**Educate all stakeholders about taking an age-inclusive approach.** Internal and external stakeholders must be educated. Consider inclusions in contracts for outsourced recruitment companies to prevent age stereotyping, for instance, attending age stereotyping myth-busting training.

**Review induction methods to make sure they are appropriate for the learning styles of older workers.** Supporting older workers to transition smoothly into the workplace will help ensure a successful recruitment process.

### 3.3 BETTER MATCH WORK FOR OLDER WORKERS

**Make sure jobs and tasks are designed to align with the capabilities and capacities of older workers.**

#### WHY IT MATTERS

Job structure, content and processes are important in the retention of workers of all ages<sup>10</sup>. Retention of older workers requires a good fit between the demands of the role and the capabilities and capacities of the worker. As workers age, their need for a good job fit may become increasingly more important and their requirements for a good job may change. Factors such as poor health, reduced physical capacity or a need for a new work-life balance may be more important as a worker ages. Flexibility and innovation in how work is organised will become important in order to accommodate older workers' needs and changing circumstances.

A good match between older workers and their work contributes to:

- > satisfaction with their job and the opportunity to use their skills to best advantage
- > improved health and wellbeing outcomes and reduced costs
- > increased retention of workers
- > decreased errors, failures and other issues
- > increased productivity.

'Managers have an obligation to make reasonable adjustments to the design of the work and work processes to accommodate individuals' differing capabilities.'  
*Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012 -2022* Safe Work Australia.

## HOW IT IS DONE

Be clear about what good work looks like. Good work is likely to offer older workers:

- > secure employment
- > variety
- > good autonomy, control and task discretion
- > clear expectations of what is required of them
- > opportunities to use and develop skills.
- > supportive social networks
- > challenges
- > flexibility
- > protection and promotion of health, safety and wellbeing
- > confidence they will be treated fairly by their employer
- > balance between effort and reward.

'In designing jobs and developing management arrangements, companies need to think about how staff will feel valued by the organisation, and what will motivate them to deliver a quality product or service without undue stress that might lead to poor health.' Dame Carol Black's 2006 review of the health of Britain's working age population, *Working for a healthier tomorrow*.

**Gather information on work processes, systems, jobs and tasks to identify areas for potential improvement.** Look at injury or health data, risk assessment results, production failures or errors and other productivity-related data to identify areas where redesign of work is warranted.

**Consult your older workers to identify concerns, suggestions and preferences.** Older workers who are performing jobs are likely to be aware of any job design issues and will have a sense of whether or not their job is a good match for their own capabilities and capacities. Consultation with workers should be ongoing throughout the redesign or design process.

**Prepare a business case for any proposed changes to how the work is done.** Spell out the rationale for changes, including costs, expected benefits and other drivers of change, such as complying with legislation. If possible, estimate the dollar value of the expected benefit.

**Design jobs, tasks and work systems to meet the needs and capabilities of older workers.** In designing or re-designing work consider:

- > Who is at work? Think about matching skills and workers to work, age diversity, managing ill health, preventing injury.
- > How does work get done? Work processes, systems of work, tasks and job design.
- > What do we need to do the work well? Work plant, substances, equipment and technology.
- > How do we work with others? Social aspects, support and relationships.
- > How is the work managed? Communication, clarity, alignment, feedback, performance and reward, leadership and change management.
- > Where do we work? Building, location, structures and operating environment.

**Measure the impact of design changes on the older workforce.**

The information from surveys, work health and safety (WHS) outcomes and indicators and other sources can be used to measure the success of job design changes on factors such as:

- > uptake of flexible work options by age
- > retirement intentions of staff members
- > workplace culture
- > impact on injuries and illness
- > absenteeism
- > improvements in productivity and performance.<sup>11</sup>

#### USEFUL RESOURCES

Employers need to comply with legal requirements to provide reasonable workplace modifications. Relevant legislation includes:

- > [\*Disability Discrimination Act 1992\*](#)
- > [\*Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988\*](#)
- > [\*Work Health and Safety Act 2011\*](#).

The Victorian Government's [State Services Authority: an ageing workforce](#) provides guidance on job design in the context of managing an ageing workforce.

### 3.4 PROVIDE OPTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE OR ENRICHED WORK ROLES

**Provide older workers with options for alternative or enriched work roles, such as planned mobility and mentoring.**

#### WHY IT MATTERS

As workers grow older their potential for contributing to the workplace may change. The role of work in their work-life plan is likely to change, while their wealth of experience is a resource that can be shared with others. These factors, along with changing physical capacities, mean the types of work they are suited to may alter, or, they may wish to take on different roles. The challenge for employers is to continue to maximise workers' productivity and engagement in the workplace as they grow older and their circumstances change.

Workplaces can use the skills that older workers bring in new ways through mentoring or by offering alternative roles. Mentoring is a relationship that gives people the opportunity to share their professional and personal skills and experiences, and to grow and develop in the process. New or enriched roles provide opportunities for diverse career experiences, career development and transfer and retention of corporate knowledge.

#### HOW IT IS DONE

**Implement a mentoring program.** Harness the experiences of mature age workers to retain valuable corporate knowledge and transfer it to younger generations. Consider using reverse mentoring, where younger workers help older workers adapt to new technologies, as another means of developing, and retaining, older workers.

Use planned mobility to diversify career experiences of employees and build workforce capability, with knowledge transfer the key benefit for all involved. Challenge the traditional notion of a career that follows an upward trajectory until retirement. Support alternative concepts of career development, including up, down or lateral movements, to guard against career plateaus and disengagement. To make sure older workers do not feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about moving to less senior roles, it is essential to promote a workplace culture that is encouraging and accepting of employees' decisions to pursue career movements in any direction.

'Job mobility is found to be timely and relevant in an ageing workforce where knowledge sharing and talent development should be leveraged.' 2011 APSC report by Dr Glenys Drew and Ms Rosemary Cooper, 2011, *Job Mobility Research Report: Encouraging employees to expand their career experience in the Australian Public Service*.

**USEFUL RESOURCES**

[Mentoring Australia](#) provides a range of information on mentoring, including existing programs and benchmarks for effective and responsible mentoring programs.

The APSC provides information on [employee mobility for professional development](#), including a set of [employee mobility principles](#).

## 3.5 PROVIDE AND PROMOTE FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS

**Support older workers to access flexible work arrangements that suit their circumstances, drawing from a wide range of flexible work options.**

'The ability to work part-time or flexible hours has been found to be the most important facilitator, after good health, for older people to work beyond retirement age.' [National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre's Ageing and the barriers to mature age labour force participation in Australia](#).

### WHY IT MATTERS

The Australian Government's *2010 Intergenerational Report* makes it clear population ageing is already responsible for slowing economic growth. Growing the economy through improving mature age workforce participation is necessary to minimise the economic impact of the ageing population.

Flexible work options are a critical enabler for mature age participation in the workforce. Many older workers seek access to flexible work options to enable them to continue to contribute in the workplace and transition to retirement in a healthy way.

Older workers may require flexibility because they are:

- > coping with a chronic illness or injury that prevents full workforce participation
- > juggling work with care-giving responsibilities
- > striving to achieve a sustainable work-life balance that supports continued health and wellbeing
- > undertaking a phased transition to retirement.

Flexible work options are a key feature of age-friendly workplaces that successfully attract and retain older workers.

## HOW IT IS DONE

**Understand the work and identify the range of flexible work options that are compatible with the demands of the job.** Provide clarity for managers and older workers on the types of flexible work options, such as part-time work, job-sharing and telework, and how they could be managed with the work required.

**Implement policies and processes focussed on maximising the ability of the organisation to accommodate older workers' flexible work requests.** Make sure the full range of flexible work options is available to older workers whenever the flexible work option is deemed compatible with the job role. Where possible, provide alternative roles to an older worker where their current job is deemed incompatible with the flexible work option requested.

'60 per cent of mature age workers reported that they would take-up telework if it was available to them and as a result delay retirement by an average of 6.6 years.'  
*Creating jobs through NBN enabled telework*, Report by Colmar Brunton Research and Deloitte Access Economics for the Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

**Educate management about the advantages of making flexible work options available to older workers and the types of circumstances when flexible work options should be offered.** As the role of a manager is critical to enabling an older worker to access flexible work options, it is vital that managers fully understand the organisation's policy, the rationale for making flexible work options available, and their role in implementing it. Provide managers with practical strategies to implement—for example, use case studies to demonstrate strategies in practice.

'... the literature specifically identifies that the skills, attitude and resources of managers are make-or-break factors in the successful implementation of flexible work arrangements'.  
AIM White Paper November 2012 *Managing in a Flexible Work Environment*

**Promote flexible work options to older workers.** Provide older workers and managers with information on the range of flexible work options available to workers and explain how the uptake of flexible work options may be of benefit to them. Agency case studies of older workers accessing flexible work options may be useful to highlight the advantages to both older workers and their managers.

**Monitor requests for, and uptake of, flexible work options by older workers and review the effectiveness of the flexible work policy and process.** Draw on relevant agency data and feedback from older workers to review the effectiveness of strategies promoting flexible work options and make improvements. Understand the type of flexible work options accessed and the reasons for accessing them to be proactive and anticipate workforce needs.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

The Australian Institute of Management (AIM) November 2012 White Paper *Managing in a Flexible Work Environment* outlines the challenges faced by employers and managers involved in implementing flexible work options and offers practical guidance.

More information on implementing flexible work arrangements is found in Chapter 4: *Health, Safety and Wellbeing* and Chapter 5: *Frontline Confidence* of this guide..

### 3.6 HELP WORKERS TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

**Support older workers to achieve a healthy and successful transition to retirement by providing them with information that allows them to make informed judgements about financial security, health and lifestyle choices, and be better equipped to plan ahead for life transitions.**

#### WHY IT MATTERS

Individuals need to plan for their own future. Planning for a healthy and rewarding retirement involves consideration of a range of lifestyle and financial factors and information to make informed decisions. There is a real danger that where planning is inadequate individuals may find themselves in financially stressful and/or unhealthy circumstances that impact on their health and wellbeing.

There is also a critical need to challenge a culturally entrenched attitude that views retirement as a one-way path from full education to full-time work to full-time retirement. Early full-time retirement has a detrimental effect on the Australian economy. Developing an understanding of the options and incentives available to work beyond retirement can delay a person's decision to fully retire or may encourage a more gradual transition that benefits both workers and employers.

#### HOW IT IS DONE

**Encourage workers to plan for their retirement lifestyle.** Create opportunities for workers to think about the type of lifestyle they want in retirement and consider factors such as health and exercise, sources of social support, hobbies/pursuits and role in family. Provide information on the role of work in supporting health and wellbeing. Help workers access a diverse range of options for transitioning to retirement, including part-time work, contract work, telework and other flexible work arrangements.

**Help workers to prepare financially for retirement. Managers should initiate conversations and respond to questions by their older workers and direct workers to more information. Employers should:**

- > Provide access for workers to reliable sources of general information on financial matters, such as superannuation, pensions and tax. This could include running lunchtime workshops and providing links to information on the intranet. Employers can contact the [Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation \(CSC\)](#) to arrange seminars on these topics.
- > Encourage workers to seek appropriate personal financial planning advice. The complexity of the tax and superannuation systems, and their application to individual circumstances, means most workers will need help to organise their finances to maximum advantage. Workers who are members of a government super fund (CSS, MilitarySuper, PSS or PSSap) can access fee-for-service financial planning through their fund, the CSC.

#### USEFUL RESOURCES

The Department of Health and Ageing's [My Aged Care](#) website provides a range of information relevant to over 50s, including financial information and how to access financial assistance.

The [Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation](#) has partnered with Industry Fund Services to provide financial planning services to members of government super funds, including seminars on financial and retirement planning and individual financial planning advice for employees.

The Department of Human Services provides information for [older Australians](#) on age pensions and planning for retirement, as well as a free [Financial Information Service](#), which is available for all Australians.

### 3.7 USE TECHNOLOGY TO HELP OLDER WORKERS PARTICIPATE AT WORK

**Assess new technologies for their ability to help older workers perform their work. Manage the adoption of new technology in ways that facilitate their uptake and protect and promote the health of workers.**

#### WHY IT MATTERS

Over the past two decades, increasingly rapid technological advances have brought significant changes to how we work in Australia. Continuing changes in workplace technologies are expected. The introduction of new work technology brings challenges, and opportunities, for older workers.

The introduction of new work technologies has the potential to alter risks to the health, safety or wellbeing of older workers. There are many cases where new technology protects the health or safety of older workers—for example, lifting devices. At the same time, new risks can be created by new ways of working and need to be managed. The blurring of the line between work and home, created by the use of mobile technologies to carry out work outside of the workplace, presents potential to negatively affect the mental health and wellbeing of workers.

Community perceptions in Australia of older workers' capabilities in relation to new technologies may also generate barriers, where assumptions are made that older people do not have proficiency in the use of a technology or the capability to acquire that proficiency.

The ability of many older workers to engage in work can be enhanced by new work technologies. Technologies that allow older workers to more fully take part in the workplace, or perform work from their own homes, offer those who suffer from injury, ill health or disability more opportunity and flexibility to more actively participate in work.

Employers need to manage the integration of new technology in ways that maximise their benefits.

'Advanced technology will unlock more and more of the value that older Australians have to offer to the community.' Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians, *Realising the economic potential of senior Australians—changing face of society*.

### HOW IT IS DONE

**Take advantage of available technologies.** For workers who have limitations on their ability to perform work, consider options that could help them. Encourage managers and workers to try new options.

#### **Manage risks related to the introduction of new technology.**

Anything that brings significant change to how work is performed should be assessed before it is introduced in the workplace, and be monitored during and after implementation, to make sure no uncontrolled risks to health and safety arise. Be mindful you may need to seek advice on any obligations that may arise under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (the WHS Act) and *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* (the WHS Regulations).

Provide workers with appropriate support to adapt to new technology. Older workers may have different learning requirements than younger workers, which needs to be taken into account when developing of training and the provision of ongoing support.

'The flip side of new IT as a great enabler of flexible work, is the danger of work intensification or time pollution, where work expands into times and places previously quarantined for leisure, family or other non-work activities.' AIM White Paper November 2012 *Managing in a Flexible Work Environment*

An OECD survey of 21 countries found a major work barrier faced by older workers was 'insufficient skills relative to technological requirements', and that this was 'exacerbated by a lack of assistance and/or motivation to upgrade skills.' Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Ageing and Employment Policies: Live Longer, Work Longer* 2006.

**Challenge assumptions about older workers' capabilities in regard to new technologies.** Managers and workers are expected to act constructively and support older workers, when and where required, to successfully adopt and make best use of new technology.

### USEFUL RESOURCES

The *Code of Practice: How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks* provides practical guidance on achieving the standards of health, safety and welfare required under the WHS Act and the WHS Regulations.



#### 4. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Provide a workplace that protects workers from harm, promotes worker health and supports the ability of older workers and those suffering ill health or disability to engage in and continue to work.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Good work is good for you. While there is a complex relationship between health and work, people in work are generally healthier. Work that is healthy, safe and well designed is generally good for both physical and mental wellbeing. Conversely, the workplace also has the potential to harm workers, through physical or psychological injuries and illnesses. Hazard assessment and effective risk management needs to encompass both the risks to the safety, and long-term health, of workers. Overall, the beneficial effects of good work far outweigh the risks.

'Work is the most effective means to improve the wellbeing of individuals, their families and communities.' Waddell and Burton's *Is work good for your health and wellbeing?*

Investing in health and wellbeing makes good business sense. Organisations that invest in health and wellbeing initiatives see benefits that are broader than the financial gains from reducing absenteeism, accidents and injuries. Health and wellbeing programs that address the health risks of older workers within the organisation lead to increased staff engagement, reduced turnover and higher productivity.

The workplace, and its associated health and wellbeing approach, has a critical role to play in:

- > preventing illness and injury, by eliminating or minimising exposure to hazards or risks, and the promotion of health and wellbeing
- > intervening early for those who are injured, unwell or develop a health condition can help them take part in work
- > supporting those with injury or illness can allow them to continue working.

The workplace is a key for slowing the rising prevalence of lifestyle related chronic disease by positively influencing the health and wellbeing of its workers.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

*Working for a healthier tomorrow* is a comprehensive review of work and the health of Britain's working age population. It discusses the evidence base for supporting health and work.

*Is work good for your health and wellbeing?* This website provides an evidence base for work and wellbeing.

PricewaterhouseCoopers assessed the case for investing in workplace health and wellbeing in the United Kingdom in *Building the case for wellness.*

## 4.1 MEET OBLIGATIONS UNDER WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

Take action to protect older workers from harm at work, in compliance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act). Understand the legislative requirements, including the scope of duty of care, and the requirement to consult workers, and apply a risk management approach to resolving issues affecting the health or safety of older workers.

*\*\*\*The information below is general information only and should not be used as a substitute for independent legal advice and cannot be relied upon as a statement of law relating to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) and Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Cth). It is recommended that duty-holders obtain appropriate independent legal and other expert advice relevant to their particular needs and circumstances.\*\*\**

### WHY IT MATTERS

The WHS Act, together with its associated regulations, prescribes duties in relation to protecting health and safety at work and the codes of practice provide practical guidance to achieve a health and safe workplace.

### HOW IT IS DONE

**Exercise your duty of care.** Persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) have a duty of care under the WHS Act to ensure the health and safety of workers. Meanwhile, while Officers of the Commonwealth are required to exercise due diligence to ensure the PCBU complies with duties or obligations under the WHS legislation. This means eliminating or minimising physical and psychosocial risks to health and safety, including those faced by older workers. Organisations need to ensure that they take a systematic approach to managing WHS that addresses all aspects of this duty.

**Consult your older workers.** PCBUs must consult with workers, so far as is reasonably practicable, whenever they are likely to be directly affected by a health and safety matter.

**Use risk management to minimise exposure to workplace health and safety risks.** Applying a risk management approach enables duty holders to proactively and systematically prevent harm to health and safety. Regulations 34 to 38 of the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* outline the responsibilities of duty holders in relation to managing risks to health and safety.

### USEFUL RESOURCES

A full description of the PCBU's primary duty of care is detailed in *section 19* of the WHS Act.

The *Code of Practice: Work Health and Safety Consultation, Co-operation and Co-ordination* provides detailed, practical guidance on how to comply with the requirements of the WHS legislation in relation to consultation with workers.

The *Code of Practice: How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks* provides detailed, practical guidance on how to manage work health and safety risks in compliance with the WHS legislation.

Comcare provides information on the systematic management of work health and safety.

## 4.2 PREVENT HARM IN THE WORKPLACE

**Consider the varying vulnerabilities of all members of the workforce, understand what these may be for older workers, and take action to prevent harm to health.**

### WHY IT MATTERS

As more people choose to remain at work beyond what was previously considered to be the common retirement age, employers are under more pressure to keep their older workers safe from harm and to maximise their workplace contribution. Ageing does affect an individual's capacity and potentially their health and wellbeing. Taking action to look after older workers offers opportunities for improving the health and safety of the entire workforce.

### HOW IT IS DONE

**Educate line managers and others with WHS responsibilities.** This should cover common age-related changes and implications for health and safety, as well as preventative and remedial measures that can be put in place. Everyone experiences ageing differently, depending on age, lifestyle, finances, fitness level and genetics. It is important to avoid assumptions about an individual's capacity to work based purely on their age.

**Implement risk management processes and activities that consider individual workers' capacities.** Risk profiles for older workers should be no higher than for other workers and work should be matched to the capacities of the worker. An advantage of this approach is that action taken to reduce risks to older workers often has the potential to improve health outcomes for others in the workplace.

**Consider assessing individuals for their work ability.** Use an individual's strengths to compensate for any age-related impairment.

**Be proactive, not reactive.** Implement measures that prevent harm to health for the whole of the workforce, understanding that harm to the health of younger workers may impact on their health and ability to work in later years. One way of proactively preventing harm to health and safety is to make sure the work to be done is good work. See *Promote the health of workers* for more information on good work.

### USEFUL RESOURCES

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) UK provides guidance on [\*Managing a healthy ageing workforce\*](#).

Safe Work Australia specifically considers the issue of older workers and OHS in their [\*Surveillance Alert, OHS and the Ageing Workforce\*](#).

The Western Australia Department of Commerce provides an [\*Older workers and safety guide\*](#), that helps stakeholders understand and manage the safety and health needs of older workers.

Canada offers detailed guidance on keeping older workers safe and healthy at work in [\*Safe and Healthy: A Guide to Managing an Aging Workforce by the Government of Alberta, Canada\*](#), offers detailed guidance on keeping older workers safe and healthy at work.

The [\*Comcare website\*](#) contains a range of information on preventing harm to health and safety at work.

### 4.3 PROMOTE THE HEALTH OF WORKERS

**Create workplaces that support and promote worker health and wellbeing and encourage workers to make, and enjoy, the benefits of healthy lifestyle choices.**

#### WHY IT MATTERS

Workplaces are centre stage when it comes to influencing, educating and supporting health and wellbeing.

**Good health is good business.** Good employee health and wellbeing boosts organisational health. The benefits to business in supporting the health and wellbeing of employees are now well established. Promoting health and wellbeing is and should be an extension of the approach to preventing harm to employees. The workplace can play a critical role in slowing the acceleration of the risks associated with age and lifestyle related chronic diseases.

Integrated workplace health and wellbeing programs can significantly improve the health of workers, including preventing or delaying the onset of chronic disease and disability in older workers.

Health and wellbeing programs are associated with:

- > improved work performance and productivity reduced costs associated with absenteeism, presenteeism, disability, staff turnover and workers' compensation
- > improved workplace culture and attraction and retention of skilled workers.

Successful programs are cost effective, often returning in the realm of \$5.81 for every \$1 invested in employee health and wellbeing. L S Chapman, *Proof Positive. An Analysis of the Cost Effectiveness of Worksite Wellness*, Chapman Institute, 2007.

**Good work promotes good health.** Good work is work that is meaningful to the worker and the work team. Consider how staff members feel valued by the organisation and what may motivate them to perform well, without undue stress that may lead to poor health. Evidence-based characteristics of good work include:

- > The worker is able to manage the demands of the work—workload, work patterns and working environment.
- > Individuals have control—a say in the way they do their work.
- > Workers receive support—encouragement, sponsorship and resources from the organisation, their managers and their colleagues.
- > There are cohesive working relationships with effective communication practices—positive working relationships avoid conflict and deal with unacceptable behaviour.
- > People understand their role within the organisation.
- > Organisational change is communicated and well managed.

'The quality of the experience that a person has in their workplace is also likely to impact on health and wellbeing.'  
*Dame Carol Black's 2006 review of the health of Britain's working age population, Working for a healthier tomorrow.*

## HOW IT IS DONE

**Take a strategic approach to implementing a health and wellbeing program to make sure programs are effective and integrated into the organisation's strategic direction.** Health and wellbeing programs need to be designed to meet the needs and risks of workers. Data on the health of older workers and their risk factors should inform the content of the program.

**Actively involve senior managers in health and wellbeing initiatives to demonstrate leadership commitment.** Senior management buy-in is essential for success. Senior management involvement must extend beyond endorsement of programs to active and visible participation in health and wellbeing initiatives. Link leadership commitment to performance expectations of senior managers. This will help shape the culture of the organisation.

**Create a supportive environment and a culture focused on wellness.** Embed health and wellbeing into the way things are done within an organisation. Actions to achieve this include:

- > aligning health and wellbeing programs with organisational strategies
- > integrating program elements into organisational systems
- > modifying the physical environment to support healthy lifestyle choices, such as healthy food choices and engaging in physical activity.

**Establish effective two-way communication.** While workers need to understand the importance of wellness, they also need to be involved in each stage of the process. Ask questions to determine workers' needs, motivations, interests and knowledge and keep them informed of progress and outcomes.

**Plan, execute and manage programs using a continuous improvement cycle.** Ongoing program sustainability and success will depend on continuous assessment and improvement of initiatives to ensure their ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

**Measure and monitor the results.** Link health and wellbeing initiatives to key lead indicators to gauge the level of wellness activity and its impact in order to demonstrate program effectiveness to senior management. This could include assessing the impact of the program on age-related risk factors and health indicators. Note that we need good baseline data in order to conduct a before-and-after comparison.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

Comcare's [promote worker health and wellbeing](#) web pages provide more detailed information on designing and implementing workplace health and wellbeing programs.

The Department of Health and Ageing's [Healthy Workers Portal](#) contains many resources relevant to workplace health and wellbeing programs.

PricewaterhouseCoopers assessed the case for investing in workplace health and wellbeing in the United Kingdom in [Building the case for wellness](#).

## 4.4 SUPPORT THE ABILITY TO WORK

**Support the ability of individuals with injury, ill health or disability to enable them to participate in the workplace to the best of their potential. This means acting to support workers with a health problem or injury to stay on or return after illness, and helping people with a disability to work effectively in the workplace.**

'We have an obligation to rigorously attack an individual's obstacles to a life at work and minimise the impact of injury on workers and the community.' Sir Mansel Aylward

### WHY IT MATTERS

Older workers are more likely than younger ones to have ill health, most often related to the development of common chronic diseases. Employment is an important factor contributing to the health and wellbeing of people who are sick or have a disability.

Supporting workers with illness, injury or disability to enable them to realise their full potential at work reduces the harmful effects of long-term sickness absence, reducing risk of incapacity and poverty, and improving recovery, rehabilitation and health and wellbeing outcomes. To employers it is likely to bring significant benefits, including improved work performance and productivity, reduced absenteeism and high levels of engagement and loyalty. For the Australian community it means less reliance on social and health support systems.

### HOW IT IS DONE

While work is generally good for physical and mental health and wellbeing, the work offered needs to suit an individual's knowledge, skills and circumstances—and be undertaken in a safe and supportive environment.

**Build the age management skills and confidence of front line managers.** Wellbeing, engagement and resilience are strongly influenced by how people are treated on a day-to-day basis. Line manager capability is the key to workers feeling supported in the workplace. Effective line managers with the right skills will be able to recognise signs that a worker is not coping well and will intervene early by offering appropriate support. Support may mean altering work practices, patterns, tasks or job roles or offering increased flexibility. Chapter 5 Frontline Confidence provides more information on building line manager capability.

**Implement effective workplace rehabilitation, including early intervention, and absence management processes.** All injuries and illnesses experienced by workers should be appropriately managed in the workplace, regardless of whether or not they are work related. When workers who are ill or have been injured are supported to remain at work, or return to work at an early stage, they recover more quickly and with less likelihood of relapse. In relation to mental health and musculoskeletal conditions, early recognition of warning signs—such as discomfort or signs of stress—and risks, may prevent injury or illness from developing.

**Provide sufficient flexibility in the workplace.** Flexibility in the workplace is important to the retention of good staff. Tailored flexible working arrangements or workplace modifications can be offered to older workers to support their health and wellbeing and enable them to contribute in the workplace to the best of their ability. Consider both the needs of the worker and the requirements of the job in identifying and negotiating suitable arrangements. Chapter 3: *Work Design* and 5: *Frontline Confidence* of this guide provide more information about flexible work.

**Design work to protect and promote workers' health, safety and wellbeing.** The *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022* has highlighted the need to design work to eliminate or minimise risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of workers at work. When designing work the abilities, diversity and vulnerabilities of workers need to be considered and accommodated, including those returning to work following injury or illness. Chapter 3:3 *Better match work to older workers*, of this guide, provides more information on job design.

**Access further support, if required.** There are many sources of further support available to employers and workers, both financial and advisory. Ensure workers are aware of, and have access to, the supports available to them.

#### USEFUL RESOURCES

A valuable source of support for employers and workers is the [JobAccess website](#), which provides help and workplace solutions for the employment of people with disability.

*Various Tool kits* provide information and advice on a range of disability employment issues. Financial help is available to assist the employment of people with disability. [Job in jeopardy](#) assistance is a free program offering immediate support to employees who are at risk of losing their job as a result of disability, injury or health condition.

[Preparing and modifying the workplace](#) has information on designing work to protect or promote health and safety.

The [Workplace Adjustment Tool](#) is a searchable database of products and solutions that can remove barriers to participation in the workplace.

Legal requirements to provide reasonable workplace modifications may stem from the:

- > [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)
- > [Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988](#)
- > [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#).

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a red top and a necklace, is smiling broadly. She is in a meeting setting with other people blurred in the background. The bottom of the image has an orange overlay with white text.

## 5. FRONTLINE CONFIDENCE

Build the age management skills and confidence of front line managers.

## WHY IT MATTERS

An effect of the demographic change associated with the ageing population is a shortage of skilled workers. Organisations need to make the best use of skilled and experienced people. This includes extending the working life of older workers. For managers, having the right employees, with the right skills, in the right place and at the right time, is increasingly challenging.

Line managers have a key role to play in making sure older workers are developed, motivated and engaged.<sup>12</sup> Line managers can be the key to how employees view the organisation and their work. Skilled managers are well placed to support the wellbeing of older workers, identify any issues early and implement interventions that allow older workers to participate fully in the workplace.

'Managers and supervisors are the key persons to improve the age-friendly work life.' J Ilmarinen, 2011, '30 years' work ability and 20 years' age management', in *Age Management during the Life Course, 2011*.

## 5.1 BUILD AGE MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE OF FRONT LINE MANAGERS

### Build age management skills and confidence of front line managers.

#### WHY IT MATTERS

The mindset and capability of line managers is critical to promoting work ability throughout working life. Older workers want to work for managers who treat them well on a day-to-day basis and manage them in ways that support their health and wellbeing. Investment in line manager training is a key strategy to prolonging working life and improving the work ability of ageing workers.<sup>13</sup>

To make sure older workers are developed, motivated and engaged, line managers need to:

- > Understand the implications of an ageing workforce in their organisation.
- > Manage performance management to align with both personal and business needs.
- > Place sufficient value on the experience and knowledge people gain as well as formal qualifications.
- > Consider how flexible ways of working can meet both employee and business needs.<sup>14</sup>

12 Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, *Managing a Healthy Ageing Workforce: A National Business Imperative*, Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012, viewed 4 September 2013, <<http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/managing-healthy-ageing-workforce.aspx>>.

13 J E Ilmarinen, J.E., 2001, 'Ageing workers', *Occupational and Environmental medicine*, 2001, vol. 58, no.8, pp. 546-52.

14 Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, p.26.

# 30

## HOW IT IS DONE

**Clearly articulate the age management competencies of your frontline managers.** Successful age management skills may be viewed as an extension of good people management skills. Managers must also understand the needs of their older workers. Managers should have a good understanding of age-related issues and be able to support their older workers to take part at work and achieve a healthy transition to retirement.

**Demystify the myths of an older workforce.** Challenge current biases, conscious and unconscious, and myths about older workers, their risks and capabilities.

**Train your line managers in age management practices, with a focus on building knowledge, skills and confidence.** Training should create an awareness of age-related changes and issues, and develop the participants' ability to find solutions to age-related problems.<sup>15</sup>

**Provide ongoing support to line managers on age management issues.** HR areas, Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) manager support services and senior managers all have the potential to provide ongoing support and guidance to managers who are struggling with effectively managing a multigenerational workforce. Identify sources of support for line managers and make sure this support capability is developed and resourced.

'Line managers should be supported to understand that the health and wellbeing of employees is their responsibility, and should be willing to take action when health and well-being are at risk.' *Dame Carol Black's 2006 review of the health of Britain's working age population, Working for a healthier tomorrow.*

**Make sure performance management processes adequately address line management capability in age management practices.** Encourage the incorporation of age management capabilities into individual performance agreements to make sure managers are clear about their responsibilities when supervising and managing older workers. Help managers gain better performance management techniques.

Recognise and reward line managers demonstrating quality age management skills. Recognise the achievements of line managers, both privately and publically. Good performance should be identified in the context of performance appraisals and ongoing performance feedback. Individuals who role model high quality age management skills should have their achievements publically acknowledged and celebrated within the organisation.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) UK has published competencies for *Line management behaviour and stress at work*.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) UK guide *Managing a healthy ageing workforce: a national business imperative* provides practical guidance for anyone responsible for employing people.

Comcare's *In conversation with Professor Juhani Ilmarinen* discusses the importance of line managers in managing an older workforce.

The [Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations](#) website contains information on services and initiatives supporting mature age job seekers and older workers that may be useful to line managers and workers.

<sup>15</sup> J E Ilmarinen, '30 years' work ability and 20 years' age management', in *Age Management during the Life Course*, Nygard Clas-Hagan, Savinainen Minna, Tapio Kirsi, Lumme-Sandt Kirsi (eds.), University of Tampere, 2011.

## 5.2 BETTER MANAGE FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS FOR OLDER WORKERS

### Build the skills and confidence of front line managers to support older workers to use flexible work options.

#### WHY IT MATTERS

APSC research shows that while large portions of the workforce are approaching the traditional retirement age, their intentions are not necessarily to retire.

Older workers are looking for flexibility in their working lives. The ability to work part-time or flexible hours has been found to be the most important facilitator of good health, for older people to work beyond retirement age.<sup>16</sup>

Many older workers require flexibility in the workplace, for a variety of reasons, and flexible work options are a critical enabler allowing them to participate at work.

Managers have a key role in mainstreaming flexible work within organisations. Managers are responsible for putting flexible work policies into practice and their actions can help change the organisation's culture in relation to flexible work.

Implementing flexible work is not always an easy process and successful implementation draws on a range of management capabilities. Managers may need support to help them meet the flexible work challenge.<sup>17</sup>

'There is a growing consensus that the greatest advantages from flexible work, for both employers and employees, comes when flexible work is mainstreamed within an organisation ... mainstreaming flexible work means changing the culture and practices of the organisation as a whole, not simply responding to an individual or a specific group of employees.' Australian Institute of Management (AIM) White Paper November 2012 *Managing in a Flexible Work Environment*.

#### HOW IT IS DONE

**Demonstrate senior leadership commitment to mainstreaming flexible work.** Support from senior leaders is essential to encourage managers to implement flexible work. The best results are achieved when senior staff members are explicit in their support for flexible work and themselves access flexible work options.<sup>18</sup>

**Build the following capabilities in your line managers:**<sup>19</sup>

- > **High-level communication skills.** Managers need to be able to initiate conversations with older workers to identify what their flexible work needs are. They must also maintain effective communication with workers once they have taken up flexible work options, particularly teleworking or off-site options.
- > **Good negotiation skills.** Negotiation skills are needed to select flexible work options and manage a workplace that is characterised by flexible work arrangements. In negotiating the selection of flexible work arrangements managers should look for flexibility that is mutually beneficial. Clear policies and procedures addressing flexible work are a source of valuable support to managers.

16 Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2010-11*, Australian Public Service Commission, Canberra, 2011, viewed 4 September 2013, <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/print-only#sosr>>.

17 The Australian Institute of Management, *Managing in a Flexible Work Environment*, Australian Institute of Management, 2012, viewed 4 September 2013, <<http://www.aim-nsw-act.com.au/white-papers>>.

18 C McMahon & B Pocock, B, *Doing things differently: Case Studies of Work-Life Innovation in Six Australian Workplaces*, Centre for Work + Life, Adelaide, 2011.

19 The Australian Institute of Management, *Managing in a Flexible Work Environment*, Australian Institute of Management, 2012, viewed 4 September 2013, <<http://www.aim-nsw-act.com.au/white-papers>>.

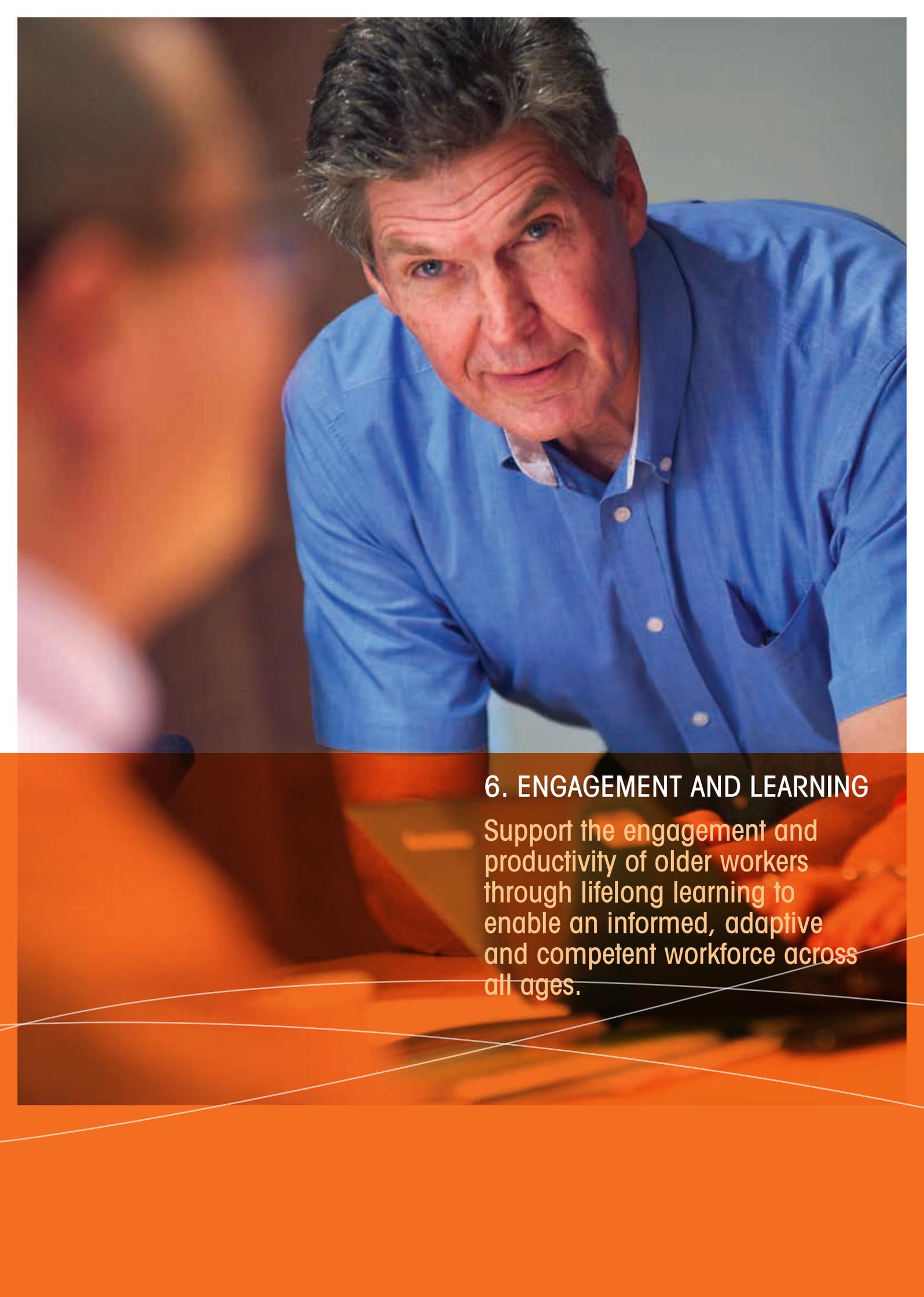
- > **High level organisational skills.** Providing flexible work options can add to the complexity of a manager's job and increase the need for well-developed organising skills. When many workers are working flexibly, logistics for scheduling rosters, meetings and coverage for client-facing tasks, among other duties, become more demanding.
- > **Ability to redesign jobs, tasks and work processes to support flexible work practices.** Increasing uptake of flexible work options in some workplaces may require an accompanying reorganisation or redesign of the work itself. Making work more accessible to flexible workers increases the pool of workers able to perform the work, providing more opportunities to attract and retain valuable experienced older workers.
- > **Strategic ability to see that the long-term benefits of increasing flexibility for older workers outweigh short-term costs.** Managers must understand the longer-term benefits of offering flexible work and be supported by the organisation in taking what can be a more difficult option in the short-term.
- > **Effective supervisory skills.** Effective supervision and management is important to make sure flexible work does not exacerbate the issue of work intensification. Managers need to understand that letting staff members with flexible work arrangements overwork in the short-term is likely to negatively impact on productivity, health and wellbeing, as well as worker engagement in the longer term. Another common issue is the reluctance of some managers to offer off-site work options to workers unless they are particularly trusted. Australian Institute of Management (AIM) recommends developing managers' skills and using tools to supervise off-site staff, with a focus on objectives, outcomes and outputs, rather than activities and inputs.

- > **High level performance management skills.** Managers must continue to promote the development of the careers of older workers who work flexibly. This includes considering these workers for training, development and promotion opportunities and identifying work practices, policies and attitudes that may be a barrier to work flexibility for older workers.

**Make sure managers are supported to implement flexible work policies and procedures.** This includes providing resources to support the introduction of flexible work options, appropriate training and making sure demands on managers do not conflict with requirements on them to offer flexible work options to older workers.

#### USEFUL RESOURCES

The Australian Institute of Management (AIM) November 2012 White Paper *Managing in a Flexible Work Environment* provides more detailed and comprehensive advice and tips on managing flexible work.

A photograph of a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt, leaning over a desk. He is looking intently at a laptop screen. The background is blurred, showing other people in a meeting or office setting. The bottom half of the image has an orange overlay with white text.

## 6. ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING

Support the engagement and productivity of older workers through lifelong learning to enable an informed, adaptive and competent workforce across all ages.

'Lifelong learning contributes to an innovative and adaptable workforce, creative and strong communities, and more satisfying personal lives.' Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians, 2011, *Realising the economic potential of senior Australians: turning grey into gold*

### WHY IT MATTERS

Learning is a lifelong process and an important part of successful ageing, particularly within the workplace. Learning and training allow older workers to adapt to changing demands in the workplace, as well as satisfying personal and social purposes.<sup>20</sup> Employers need to recognise the skills of older workers and encourage further skill development. Investment in appropriate learning and development opportunities, regardless of age, bring direct benefits to business by building resilience to adapt to changing demands in the workplace.<sup>21</sup>

When people construct their own career paths, work in areas that use their potential and meet their own goals, they are likely to be more motivated and more productive.

Investing in learning and development for older workers brings benefits to both employers and workers. Older workers need training throughout their careers to keep their skills up-to-date and relevant for the needs of the organisation. They are likely to be more engaged, satisfied in their jobs and more productive.

As older workers frequently remain with their employer for a longer period than younger workers, employers are likely to reap a higher return on their learning and development investment in older workers.

### HOW IT IS DONE

**Understand the business needs.** Business needs change over time. Older workers need opportunities to build and develop capabilities to keep abreast of changing business needs.

**Offer learning and development opportunities to all workers, regardless of age.** Consider learning opportunities developed for younger workers and adapt for older workers, where appropriate. This could include graduate development programs, leadership development and talent identification programs.

**Raise awareness of barriers and enablers to the ability of older workers to access learning and development opportunities.** Assumptions about the career aspirations or learning ability of older workers can be a barrier to learning and development opportunities.

**Strengthen performance management processes and practices and make sure they are applied to older workers.** Managers need to have the skills and motivation to engage in meaningful performance management conversations with older workers. Performance management conversations may need to include consideration of non-linear career progression options, and other options to fully use the talent and capability of an older worker.

**Monitor the uptake of learning and development opportunities by older workers.** Review training data and consult older workers about their learning and development needs and experiences, including perceived barriers.

<sup>20</sup> Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians, *Realising the economic potential of senior Australians: changing face of society*, The Treasury, 2001, viewed 4 September 2013, <[http://epsa.treasury.gov.au/EP SA/content/publications/changing\\_face\\_of\\_society/default.asp](http://epsa.treasury.gov.au/EP SA/content/publications/changing_face_of_society/default.asp)>.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

### USEFUL RESOURCES

The Australian Institute of Management (AIM) discussion paper on *Engaging and retaining older workers* offers employers and managers practical suggestions for offering older workers training and career development opportunities.

The Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians, *Realising the economic potential of senior Australians: turning grey into gold* discusses engagement and learning issues for older workers.



