

MEDIA RELEASE

19 November 2019

COTA welcomes long term approach to planning for older population and support for older Australians who choose to work

Australia's peak consumer body for older Australians today welcomed the Treasurer's call for a comprehensive policy approach to planning for an older population.

Mr Yates said the fact that more Australians are living longer is a major positive achievement and like all societal change offers many positive opportunities as well as challenges.

"This isn't about forcing people to work longer than they want to or are physically able to, it's about supporting Australians to work longer who choose to do so, and creating and capitalising on opportunities for them to do so," he said.

"A significant proportion of people aged between 65 and 75 are still working and more would do so if age discrimination and lack of support weren't such barriers to remaining in the workforce, often from the 50s onwards," Mr Yates said.

"People work longer for many reasons, whether that be financial freedom, professional satisfaction or staying engaged socially and they should be supported to work as long as they choose to."

Mr Yates said the Australian economy will need more mature workers as the overall ratio between workforce to non-workforce populations shrinks.

At the same time all employers will benefit from an age diverse workforce, which has been shown to be both more resilient and more productive

However, he said more work needs to be done to fight ageism and discrimination by employers and improve education and training and skills development across someone's life so they can easily access supports to remain abreast of workforce needs as they change.

Mr Yates called for a major culture shift among Australian employers to stamp out ageism and discrimination directed to older Australian workers.

"At least 30% of employers admitted to the Australian Human Rights Commission last year that they would not recruit workers over 50¹, which is morally reprehensible and entirely illegal," Mr Yates said. "Australia needs stronger laws and government leadership in line with measures on gender discrimination and racism.

"We also need a coordinated set of workforce measures to support people to develop skills, retrain for new careers, find new work opportunities and incentivize employers, building on the good start in the 2018 Budget's "more Choices for a Longer Life" package".

Mr Yates said "The Treasurer's comments are a wake up call that needs to be followed up with a comprehensive policy approach so that Australia optimises and builds on the many benefits of an older population and proactively and productively manage the risk and challenges."

Media contact: Ian Yates 0418 835 439, Jenny Stokes 0478 504 280

1. <https://www.cota.org.au/news-items/media-release-survey-shows-ageism-alive-and-well-among-australian-employers/>