
Feedback from New Zealand's Ageing Workforce Forum

Introduction

In the final workshop session of New Zealand's ageing workforce forum in mid-June 2016, participants were asked for their stand out insights or observations, key challenges and opportunities for employers and older workers and their top three actions or recommendations. This document is an analysis of emerging themes from the feedback.

Forum feedback - bigger themes

- New information, new knowledge and **understanding**. The ageing workforce is here and will impact New Zealand both positively and negatively. A lack of knowledge of the benefits, lack of NZ statistics on the ageing workforce. Biases of older workers are based on myths and myths are busted
 - *Demographics are undeniable*
 - *Not something we can ignore*
 - *NZ will not be young again*
- Aligned to this new understanding is the need for **leaders** at a government and business level to successfully guide New Zealand, providing direction on the ageing workforce. Mentions of 'specifics' around leadership include; lack of debate on NZ policy issues including New Zealand Super, KiwiSaver. Reinvest the Super fund to pay for retirement costs, review employment law to reflect needs of older people, engage the recruitment industry, create job share opportunities, review healthcare funding
 - *Develop a mature age strategy and plan*
 - *Older leaders of business to start the conversation,*
 - *National level policy work required on implementing ageing workforce strategies*
 - *Prepare now*
 - *Reimagine life 65+, not same conversation*
- Further aligned to the new understanding of the ageing workforce is the theme of **communication**. Communicate the issues. The action point of implementing a national discussion. Framed as a media campaign, public conversation, raise awareness of the ageing workforce and future skill shortages. Includes reframing retirement, thought and language
 - *Publicise the opportunities presented by the mature sector much more widely*
 - *Get the message out there*
 - *Start the national discussion*

- *Changing the language around retirement – outdated*
- The challenges and opportunities for employers **planning** for an ageing workforce. How to adapt to health issues, physical needs, manage older workers including their need for time flexibility. Adapting the workplace, supporting workers to work. Includes the challenge for employers to ensure good relationships and harmony between older and younger workers. Educating the workforce in the value of older workers
 - *Challenge of creating environments that allow older people to work*
 - *Planning for changing demographics*
 - *How to manage your Mum*
 - *Challenge of younger generation managing older workers*
 - *Opportunities for organisations by supporting aged workers*
 - *It is essential that workplaces adapt and learn to get the best out of older workers*
- Includes planning for businesses and organisations to meet skill shortages in future. Succession planning. The opportunity to use older workers' skills to benefit businesses
 - *Ageing workforce, cohorts leaving, skills shortages, succession planning*
 - *Mature workers are a valuable source of labour*
- A sub-theme is comment that employers can't change or adapt in time. Limited coordination of efforts to address the issues. Lack of plans and strategies for aged workers. Some businesses and organisations are starting to develop strategies.
 - *Organisations are not prepared.*
 - *Employers are not really ready for profound changes in population ageing*
- Associated with employer needs to plan for older workers is the action point of the employer need for **guidance and support**. Framed as practical tips, tool-kits, education, strategies, guidelines, best practices, advice, guides, training on working with older workers, templates. Includes guidance on having 'courageous discussions', employers working together to develop practices
 - *Preparing an ageing strategy. Is there a template that business can adapt?*
 - *Offer to stage sessions such as this for larger organisations or groups of CEO's*
 - *Develop a suite of ideas for employers to access in determining age friendly work policies*
 - *Provide education for employees on retirement options*
 - *How companies should approach this and promote companies that are doing it*
- The challenge of age bias and age discrimination for older workers and for employers. The negative attitudes of organisations to older workers. An action point is to break down discrimination, address biases
 - *Age bias is still too common with employers*
 - *Prejudices are bad for business*
 - *Address bias, how to identify if your workplace has them and practical support to bust them*
 - *Develop programmes that are inclusive of all*

- Knowledge and experience retention and transfer. The challenge and opportunity for employers of retaining institutional knowledge and experience. The opportunity for older workers of mentoring. Mentoring is often mentioned.
 - *A lot of focus continues to be on hiring new workers, best option is to retain them*
 - *Tapping into the wisdom and life experience of older workers*
 - *Mentors to guide younger generations*
- Older workers wanting to work past 65 on their own terms especially the opportunity and challenge of flexible hours (often mentioned). Achieving a work/life balance. The idea of a phased retirement.
 - *Take control and speak up. Reduced hours*
 - *Flexibility is a real option*
 - *Opportunity for employer to transition to more flexible options*
 - *Flexibility is the biggest need*
- The challenges and opportunities for workers of staying relevant. Keeping up, learning new sector knowledge, the stress of new careers, learning new skills. Getting retrained
 - *Remaining relevant to the economy, skills required*

Forum feedback - smaller themes

- The economic contribution of older workers and their spending power. The silver economy
 - *Older workers are an essential part of the economy*
- The importance of working for social activity. Working for health and engagement
 - *Many older workers want to work to retain social connectedness*
- Older workers forced to work past 65. The economic necessity of continuing to work. Not enough to retire on
 - *Older workers remain at work and they need to, rather than want to*
- Regional issues.
 - *Small towns full of elderly people*
 - *Regional areas where employers may struggle to find workers*