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Working Well, Working Wisely

How do we make longer working lives feasible and fair?

ARC Linkage Project 160100467

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CEPAR Policy Dialogue on Mature Workers in Organisations



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Special thanks to Nina Martin and Heath Murray

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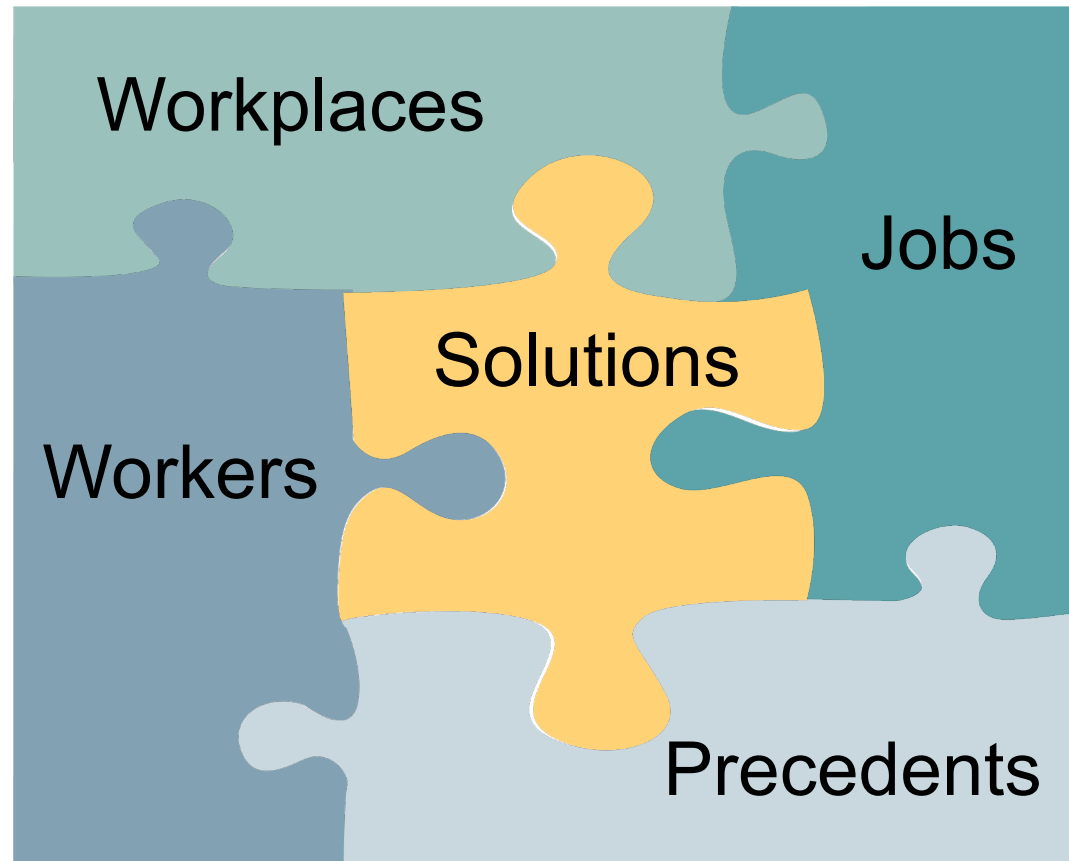
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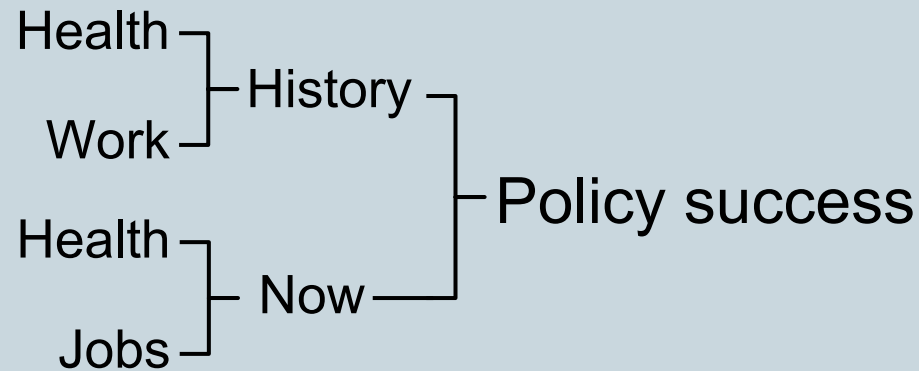
1. Survey analysis on *jobs* and health
2. Qualitative interviews of *workers*, work vulnerability
3. Survey of *workplace* readiness
4. Review of national and international *policy precedents*
5. Delphi on *solutions* and ability to enact them



How do we make longer working lives feasible and fair?



Longer lives don't necessarily
mean healthier lives



The workplace is the watershed





No evidence of:

- ✗ Age discrimination
- ✗ Lowered productivity
- ✗ Unified work age limit/retirement age

Advantages of employing older workers:

- ✓ Loyalty
- ✓ Better problem solving
- ✓ Dealing with customers



Awareness of older workers' health needs and rising presence in workforce.



Policy support/direction on older workers (attract, retain, and WHS issues) is needed, especially for those aged 60-70.

Interviews - Workers

Focuses on the lived experiences of workers

- What role do financial and health vulnerabilities play in older workers' labour participation?
- What job characteristics are significant for the health of older workers across occupation types?
- What helps employees manage their health while working? What needs to be improved?

Blue collar case study

- Health and financial vulnerabilities accumulate over time
- Workplaces can accommodate health and financial needs
- Positive case study



Blue collar case study

- **School bus drivers and bus depot manager** from same depot within large bus company
- **19 face to face interviews** over 1 week in 2017 on site in WA
- Interviews recorded, transcribed, and analysed using qualitative data analysis software
- Inductive approach used: common, recurring, dominant themes – as expressed by participants – inform results

Blue Collar Case Study

Participants

- 13 men, 6 women
- Mostly older (89% above age 60)
- Most had low level of formal education (63% had not completed secondary school)

Annual Household Income	%
Below 20K	26%
20 – 40K	26%
40 – 60K	21%
60K +	26%

Work histories = financial histories

- **Previous extended work histories in blue and pink collar occupations (industrial, trades, farming, retail, disability and aged care work)**
- **Frequent job changes and interrupted work histories**
- **Low income, super contributions, and financial security**



Financial Pressure

Pay off mortgage, increase superannuation, supplement pensions, living costs

I was forced back into work because I couldn't live on the... with the high rentals and everything, wasn't able to live off the disability support pension, so that forced me back to work. (Sandra, 65 years, bus driver)

Because I had [my son] so late, superannuation won't come in... so when I started [driving buses] I probably had \$20,000 in super. Because of regular work, it has actually built up, but I still haven't got enough to retire on, and basically, I'm still working. (Roslyn, 66 years, bus driver)

Work histories = Health histories

- **Previous extended work histories in blue and pink collar occupations (industrial, trades, farming, retail, disability and aged care work)**
- **Heavy manual labour**
- **Back pain, arthritis, joint deterioration, leg and hand injuries**
- **Thyroid, diabetes, cardiovascular, epilepsy, kidney disease**



Workplace structure & culture

Organisational structure and culture ensured participants were able to manage their health needs through key principles and attributes that were features of their workplace, reflected in:

- 1. Job requirements**
- 2. Flexible working arrangements & weekly hours**
- 3. Work environment**
- 4. Work enjoyment**

Job Requirements



Well matched to older workers' physical abilities and health needs:

- Required little physical effort
- Cushioned seats
- Automatic vehicle
- Aides to help with children

Flexible Working Arrangements

Conducive to management of health conditions and health needs of older workers:

1. Split shifts (morning and afternoon with a break in between)

- Schedule medical appointments
- Manage fatigue (naps)

If I don't go home and have a granny nap each day, most days, I'm absolutely... I feel tired... and if I haven't had a granny nap by Thursday I'm absolutely tired and pushing myself. (Joanne, 68 years, bus driver)

Flexible Working Arrangements

2. Timetable flexibility & Tailored hours

- Manager organises weekly timetables to accommodate ongoing health needs of individual workers (ex. migraines, kidney dialysis)
- Work hours tailored according to employee needs

With the bus company it's been good because they've allowed me to work the mornings and in the afternoons I have dialysis...Thanks to the bus company and our manager who organised that to allow me to work it that way, it's good. I'm very good. (Robert, 61 years, driver)

Flexible Working Arrangements

2. Timetable flexibility & Tailored hours

- Variability in hours
- According to financial status and needs of individual employee

And that works for the demographics that I'm dealing with. Because a lot of staff don't want big hours. If they're on a pension big hours harms them. I've got one that's on 10 and $\frac{3}{4}$ hours a fortnight. Anything above that, and his pension's affected. So [work hours] vary enormously. (Ray, 65+ years, depot manager)

Flexible Working Arrangements

3. Regularly rostered replacement worker

- Every morning, from 6am for 2 hours
- Other drivers available who knew all bus runs
- Depot manager fills in as needed
- Sick employees covered at short notice with little disruption

So probably the message I get if you're employing older people, you've got to have more back up staff than if your staff is younger. (Ray, 65+years, depot manager)

Work Environment & Enjoyment

Management

- Open door policy
- making time for the small talk = awareness of health and financial needs

I have an open door policy so people can come in... and there'll be 3 or 4 queued up to see me and they're insignificant things, but you've got to listen just in case... if someone is having a problem they don't usually address it straight out with you. They'll get to it in a roundabout way. So you've got to have your ears open.” (Ray, 65+years, depot manager)

Work Environment & Enjoyment

Management

- **Values older workers**
 - **Experience; needs well matched**
 - **Paid above hourly award rate**

So, it's about keeping them coming back. If you don't offer this sort of facility, there's a chance that you'll lose that driver because you can't back hours... I trust him and he's reliable on the job. So why not do that little bit extra to keep him? And particularly if they're on a pension. If all my employees were young family men and women, I'd be pulling my hair out because there are not enough hours to give them enough to pay their mortgage.

(Ray, 65+years, depot manager)

Work Environment & Enjoyment

Co-workers

➤ Egalitarian

We're all on the same plane. There's a level playing field, if you like. There's no superiority here. (Phil, 67 years, bus driver)

We all see each other as being equal, no better more superior. (Mary, 61, bus driver)

We all love our boss. He's such a lovely man. See, he gives us respect, and we respect him. (Nigel, 60, bus driver).

Work Environment & Enjoyment

Co-workers

➤ Team, family

I love what I'm doing.... we're all like a big family here.... we've got a fantastic boss. He's fair and he's a peoples' person.(Carl, 65 years, bus driver)

We've got a terrific boss and a good lot of people. We really try not to let each other down. (Joanne, 68 years, bus driver)

➤ **Tangible health benefits:** management of health conditions

Ex: Epilepsy

Conclusion – What Works?

- **Job requirements** that match the employee
- **Flexibility** – the ability to calibrate work days and work hours according to workers' health needs (medical appointments, health conditions, naps) & varied financial situations; employee-centred (agency & autonomy)
- **Regularly rostered** employees who can cover those who are sick

Conclusion – What Works?

- **Manager with emotional intelligence** attuned to employee needs, and with **autonomy** in organisation to help employees craft appropriate work arrangements (schedule changes, etc.)
- **Workplace culture** that values older workers
- **Workplace culture** characterised by **egalitarianism, team work**
- **Pays** them well

Conclusion – What is the result?

- **High workplace satisfaction**
- **High organisational commitment**
- **While managing ongoing health conditions**
- **Continued labour participation for group of financially vulnerable older Australians**



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