Gendered Ageism: Job Search Experiences of Older Women
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The Department manages a Women's Grants Program which makes funds available to organisations to carry out projects and research that will benefit women.

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Preface

This study, involving interviews with women over the age of 45, was undertaken under a grant from the New South Wales Department for Women. During 1995-96, we were able to interview 90 women who had been seeking to enter the work force. The object was to examine the combined impact of age and gender on the job opportunities of these older women, which we have described as 'gendered ageism', using the words of a British study (Arber & Ginn, 1995: 7).

In the event, the participants ranged in age from 43 to 70, with 64 aged between 45 and 54. They came from the Sydney metropolitan area and from two regional centres, Kempsey and Wyong. We located the participants partly through 'snowball sampling' and 'networking', and partly with the generous assistance of a variety of public and private organisations involved in training and placement programs. These included the following:

- Customer Vision P/L
- National Skillshare Association
- TAFE Outreach program, Campbelltown
- TAFE Outreach program, Wyong
- TAFE DJIGAP Centre, Kempsey
- Work Ventures Inc.
- Working Women’s Centre

We should like to thank all the participants for their willingness to talk frankly about their experiences and to give up their time to assist in our research, and all the people involved in the organisations listed above who enabled us to find the women who took part in the study. We should also like to acknowledge the work of Sue Koenig, who conducted the first nine interviews and made initial contacts. The other interviews were conducted by Helen Studencki.

Sol Encel
Social Policy Research Centre

Helen Studencki
University of New South Wales

1997
Glossary

ABS          Australian Bureau of Statistics
CES          Commonwealth Employment Service
CRS          Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service
EEO          Equal Employment Opportunity
MWP          Mature Workers Program (New South Wales)
NEIS         National Enterprise Incentive Scheme

Special thanks are due to the secretarial staff of the Social Policy Research Centre for assistance with data processing, and especially to Gil Srzednicki. We are pleased that this publication appears as a joint undertaking of the Department for Women and the NSW Committee on Ageing, which have shared the cost of publication.

Sol Encel
Helen Studencki
Introduction

IN A PREVIOUS study of the labour market experience of older workers, we concluded:

Our research confirms the view that age stereotyping, rather than the actual abilities of the person concerned, is responsible for the difficulties faced by many mature workers. Employers still need to be convinced that 'age adds value' (Encel & Studencki, 1996: 4).

Of the 38 persons interviewed in the earlier study, all of them aged 45 and over, 12 were women. Comparing the experiences of the sexes, we concluded:

For men, employment difficulties are liable to lead to the break-up of marriage; for women, dropping out of the paid work force in order to care for children or to nurse sick relatives (mostly parents) is the more common pattern. When, as mature would-be workers, they try to return to the work force, their age (and lack of up-to-date qualifications) becomes a barrier...women appear to suffer from age discrimination at an earlier age than men, but find less difficulty in returning to the work force...women are more prepared to accept jobs at lower pay and lower status than those they have left, and also to take part-time work when full-time employment is unavailable (ibid).

In the present study, these conclusions were generally confirmed. However, with 90 respondents, we were able to explore a much wider range of situations. In particular, we came across a number of cases where marital breakdown had the effect of forcing women into the paid work force whose previous experience was that of full-time housewife and mother. For them, the problems of labour market entry were particularly severe.

The employment experiences of older women have received disproportionately little attention in the literature of ageing or of employment. An American review of the subject notes that interest in the employment problems of women centres, rather, on the dilemmas of combining paid work with family life. Women in employment are subjected to a double standard, and the hardships which this entails increase with age. Middle-aged women entering the job market for the first time, or re-entering after an absence, face a double-edged sword of discrimination. On the one hand, lack of experience is used as a cloak for discrimination actually based on age; on the other hand, older women can be eliminated on the ground of being 'over-qualified'. Age and gender thus interact to create a subclass of highly vulnerable workers, subject simultaneously to ageism and sexism (Nuccio, 1989: 317-35).

The lack of research in this area is similarly noted in a British study, which comments on the special vulnerability of women, many of whom work in jobs which are unskilled, poorly paid, frequently part-time, involving unsocial hours, poor working conditions and with few fringe benefits (Callender, 1987: 137).

Another British writer argues that the unequal position of women in the labour market
results in the poverty which afflicts many older women. The key to poverty and deprivation in old age, he observes, is the socially constructed relationship between gender and the labour market. The labour market is the primary source of the inequalities which are carried into retirement. Major changes are required in the structure and organisation of work to give women in general, and older women in particular, equal access to paid employment and, in addition, a genuine choice about retirement. Both paid and unpaid labour must be assessed in terms of their contribution to society and rewarded commensurately (Walker, 1987: 195).

Similarly, another British writer asserts that the situation of women is the result of a division of labour which reflects any ideology regarding the roles which women are expected to perform in society. Both structure and ideology profoundly affect women's access to income. The sexual division of labour characterises women's work as significant inside the home but deficient outside of it (Lonsdale, 1987: 92).

The economist Shirley Dex, who has published a number of studies of women's role in the labour market, underlines this point when she notes the impact of childbirth on women's work patterns, which mostly takes the form of downward mobility in the occupational hierarchy. In particular, she notes, two-thirds of women take part-time jobs when they return to the work force (Dex, 1984). The situation is summed up in the succinct phrase 'gendered ageism' (Arber & Ginn, 1995: 7).

In Australia, there has so far been little attention to the problems faced by older women in the labour market. One of the few exceptions, a study carried out by Rosslyn Reed with the support of the Department of Employment, Education and Training, remarks on the 'invisibility' of older women workers, who are not seriously considered as industrial citizens with the right to work. She adds that older women are unfortunately inclined to accept this view of themselves.

Reed interviewed a number of women, aged 55 and over, who were working in retailing. She found that racial origin, gender and age combined to create a hierarchy of direct and indirect discrimination which limits progression out of the ranks of sales assistance even for the tertiary educated (Reed, 1996:50).

Family responsibilities added to these problems. Women were constrained to juggle the conflicting demands of employment and the family, either through taking part-time work or through absenting themselves from the workplace. Either way, they were disadvantaged. Reed concludes that older women are excluded or marginalised from the work force, from which they are denied access as a matter of right. The inequity of the situation 'opens the way to their exploitation with additional injustice, personal and social costs' (Reed, 1996:68).
A review of the findings

FOR MANY READERS, the personal experiences of the women in the study, as described in the interviews which are recorded below, will provide the main source of interest in this report. In this section, we present a general picture based on the interview protocols. The demographic characteristics of our 90 participants are analysed in the tables in the Appendix.

Ageism

A recent labour force survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics asked unemployed persons to nominate the difficulties encountered in finding work. The survey found that 44 per cent of respondents aged 45 and over identified age as the most important single obstacle. This proportion rose to 64 per cent among respondents aged 55 and over (ABS, 1994). Similar results have been found in a number of studies in Britain and Australia, e.g. Harris (1991), Patrickson & Hartmann (1992 & 1994), Falconer & Rothman (1994), Taylor and Walker (1994 & 1995) and Steinberg et al (1994). All these authors noted the reluctance of employers to hire people aged 45 and over. None of them, however, focused particularly on the problems faced by older women, which are the focus of the present study.

The reported evidence of ageism among older respondents was considerably higher than the figures given by the ABS. 80 per cent of the sample were aged between 40 and 54, and all but one of them reported difficulties on account of age. As one remarked, 'nobody wanted a 40-year-old housewife with a B.A.', while a 47-year-old former schoolteacher was told by an employment agency 'you're so old, you're redundant'. In a number of cases, employment agencies evaded the possible accusation of age discrimination by asking life history questions, e.g. when did the applicant leave school.

Most of the women accepted the prevalence of 'gendered ageism' and were resigned to the probability that low-paid, low status jobs were all they could hope for. A number of respondents were well-educated, articulate people who had endured unemployment for long periods before accepting jobs such as routine clerical or office work, or working in nursing homes as general hands. Prolonged unemployment had the general effect of impelling our respondents to accept low-level employment, partly for financial reasons and partly because work was better than no work. A woman who had been an architect in Argentina spoke of the 'dignity of work'.

Immigrants

Immigrants from non-English speaking countries faced the treble barrier of age, sex, and foreign origins. In their case, education was sometimes a positive handicap. Unable to gain professional certification, they accepted low level jobs when they could find them. This meant a substantial loss of income compared with their employment overseas, as well as loss of self-esteem. Some were deeply embarrassed by the situation, and kept their jobs a secret from their friends, both in Australia and their home countries.
There were 18 women of NESB origins in our sample, of whom 8 had tertiary qualifications. Only one had found work in her profession. They had difficulties in obtaining certification, in finding suitable retraining programs, and in seeking current advice. Proficiency in English was undercut by lack of local experience, by employer scepticism about the value of their qualifications, and by having an accent. Migrant women with factory skills had an easier time, and they expressed satisfaction that they could contribute to their family’s welfare.

**Indigenous Women**

We were able to interview seven women of Aboriginal descent. Four of them were enrolled in a community welfare course, which they saw as their entry ticket into the paid work force. Previously, they had been full-time mothers and housewives, but they now hoped to become independent persons and find careers. Their determination and commitment were striking. Of the other three, one had overcome many hardships and personal problems in order to gain an education and a position of responsibility. Another woman had been able to combine family responsibilities with part-time employment as a welfare worker. The last one had succeeded in completing a variety of external training courses while she also had a large number of children and hoped to find a paid position as a welfare worker in her own Aboriginal community.

The posture of these Aboriginal women is succinctly conveyed in the words of one of them who described her participation in a training program as ‘the best thing I have done – breaking through the comfort zone’.

**Participation in Labour Market Training Programs**

One-third of the women were unemployed at the time of the interview. All of them (as well as some of those who were employed) had participated in at least one labour market program. The majority reaction to the various training programs was positive, even when it did not lead to employment. We interviewed one group of women at a regional training centre who were painfully aware that, given the level of unemployment in the area, training was no guarantee of finding a job. Nevertheless, they praised the training program for having enriched their lives at a personal level. They felt they had gained significantly from their contact with others in similar situations, and discovered previously unrecognised abilities within themselves. Many of them had experienced social isolation in their roles as wives and mothers, and in some cases as carers for aged parents or parents-in-law. One of the participants observed that her participation in training courses had made her aware of a previously dormant thirst for learning, and for work which was of recognised social value and not merely ‘a means to eat’. Divorcees and widows found the courses particularly beneficial. By attending classes, mixing with people and sharing ideas with others, they felt that they had regained confidence in themselves and found renewed impetus in their search for employment.

Lack of confidence was a problem mentioned by a number of respondents. Apart from age, long periods out of the work force and the lack of a track record of employment were seen as serious handicaps. One respondent described herself as being treated like
an ‘imbecile’ by a prospective employer. The result of reported rejections was a degree of emotional stress and withdrawal into the category of ‘discouraged job seeker’.

Not all comments on labour market programs were positive. Some participants criticised the level of tuition, the quality of equipment, obsolescent computer software and the attitude of employment officers. Most courses were seen as too short to be effective. One woman was especially cutting in her comments:

A factory; totally useless; not enough attention; you can’t learn anything; nobody shows any personal interest; it only provides jobs for the trainers.

The Commonwealth Employment Service (as it then was) came in for a particular beating. It was criticised for a total lack of effort and understanding of the needs of the older unemployed, which echoes similar criticisms recorded in our earlier study (Encel & Studencki, 1996). One women claimed that CES officers discriminated against applicants on grounds of age. Regional offices of the CES were criticised just as sharply as metropolitan branches. One women living in Kempsey suggested that the only growth industry in the area was welfare, as more and more people were becoming clients.

Despite criticisms of labour market programs, a large majority gave them a positive rating: of the 37 women who had participated in programs, 28 rated them as positive and only 6 as negative. A further three gave them both ratings.

Work and Family

Unemployment creates obvious problems for family life, financial and otherwise. As we noted above, the impact differs between men and women. Women sometimes have to contend with non-supportive partners. One woman with a successful career described her husband as a ‘male chauvinist pig’. In her case, after a turbulent period, she made a ‘lifestyle change’, which meant moving to a lower-status, lower-paid job. This change meant she was able to accommodate her husband’s discomfort with the fact that his wife had done better in the labour market than he himself. In other cases, similar tensions led to separation or divorce. When husbands were transferred or moved to other jobs, this often meant the sacrifice of the wife’s career and increased difficulties in regaining employment. It is also apparent that early commitment to matrimony rather than career was no guarantee against marital breakdown.

One-third of our sample were divorced, and 45 per cent were married. Some of the married women were sole breadwinners in their family. A number of respondents complained about disincentives for those on Social Security benefits. Unable to survive on benefits during periods of acute financial hardship, they were forced to take jobs in the cash economy, laying themselves open to exploitation. Interrupted job histories also meant inadequate or non-existent opportunities to contribute to superannuation. A number expressed their frustration with the lack of recognition for work done in maintaining a household and carrying out aged care as well as child care. Some of the divorced women, who had been left by their husbands in middle age, had great difficulties in getting a share of the family assets. In the words of one respondent, ‘I got the children and he got the caravan park’.
Women without children were subject to another set of expectations. One respondent asserted that ‘if you don’t have kids and don’t have a career – then you are in no man’s land’.

Despite discouragement, all our respondents showed great determination to find employment, and readiness to accept whatever challenges came their way. They all believed that their maturity and life experience were great assets in many jobs, and in some cases more valuable than specialised qualifications. Those who managed to break through the age barrier found no difficulties in coping with the work or learning new skills. Some had completed university degrees in their 50s and 60s and embarked on new careers. A woman who had been employed by a major retail firm, well known for its accent on youth, found that the customers were pleased to be served by her and commented ‘how nice it is to deal with someone older who gives better service’.
The interviews

A SAMPLE OF 90 is unlikely to be representative of the population as a whole. The difficulties of finding participants, and the need to rely on agencies which are in contact with persons seeking jobs, also tend to skew the sample. However, the evidence from labour force surveys, and other data from Australia and overseas, suggest that the experiences of our group are fairly representative.

Although the life histories of our participants ranged over a number of issues, most of them can be characterized in terms of a dominant theme. We have chosen 41 interviews to illustrate the range of experiences undergone by the women in our sample, arranged under thematic headings, as follows:

- Marital tension and breakdown
- Immigrant experiences
- Aboriginal women
- Widows
- Success stories
- Miscellaneous
Marital tension and breakdown

The most common theme was that of marital tension, manifested in a variety of forms, both as cause and as effect, in the following 12 case histories.

**case history**  RK. Age 49. Separated. Part-time salesperson.

RK was born in the United Kingdom and came to Australia with her parents at age three. After secondary school, she enrolled at the National Art School in Sydney to study illustration and commercial art. After graduating, she worked for two years, married at 21 and had three children in quick succession, returning to paid work when her youngest was a few months old. After a year working as a tracer, RK moved to a job as a remedial reading assistant and stayed there for three years, leaving to travel overseas with her family.

When the family returned to Sydney, RK went back to work, but became pregnant again. She returned to work when the child was only three weeks old, as she was afraid of losing the job. She also enrolled for a university external degree, but was unable to complete the course because of the pressure of work and family demands. She stayed in her next job, an administrative position at a university, for 8 years and left because of a change in the management.

RK now encountered the multiple problems of marital breakdown, unemployment, and ageism. Her husband, who had become clinically depressed, gave up work and for a time she was the sole breadwinner. The situation was aggravated by her husband’s refusal to seek treatment. When RK herself became unemployed, the domestic situation deteriorated further. Now aged 45, RK found that her age had become a barrier to employment, and despite a number of interviews she remained out of work. She was constantly asked about her age and about her children. Her health suffered, and she had recurrent bouts of asthma. RK registered with the CES and enrolled in a word processing course. Part of the training program was a personal development course, and she credits this with giving her the confidence to leave her family home and embark on an independent life. After a short period in employment, she was advised by the CES to undertake a desktop publishing course. She expressed the view that although the curriculum was excellent, the course was too short to be really useful in obtaining employment. Also, the equipment used was inappropriate and the software was obsolescent.

Following her training, RK found a job in a bookshop, but had difficulties with her supervisor. Ultimately, she moved to a part-time job with the same company. At the time of the interview, she was hoping that this could become full-time. She felt that part-time work was preferable to unemployment. She now felt healthier than ever before, and had not experienced an asthma attack for over a year. She now felt in charge of her life, and was managing her finances. ‘It’s not much money – but I’m in control of it’.
JR. Age 50. Married. 
Government administrative official.

JR was born into a strictly Catholic family in Canberra and married at age 17. The family did not encourage her to continue her education.

She became pregnant while employed, but continued working until an advanced stage. JR observed that this was unusual at that time, but her employers were involved in a large tendering operation and wished to retain her services as long as possible. She left with 'a present and a pat on the head', and assumed the role of full-time wife and mother, having three children in quick succession. However, the family was short of money and JR supplemented the family income by selling Avon products and colour TV sets. Her husband was a bus driver, and they fitted her activities around his shifts. Later, JR also worked part-time at a department store, but she conceded that her life at that time revolved around her children. In her own words, she was 'obsessed with kids, school and housework' and had become an 'intellectual dropout'.

At the age of 28, her youngest child began at pre-school, and JR applied for a part-time job in the finance industry. Her previous experience turned out to be valuable, and she found the job satisfying. However, the work entailed interviews with male clients, some of them in the evening. Her husband, whom she described as a 'male chauvinist pig', disapproved, and she was constrained to give up the job. She found another temporary position in the Australian Public Service as a keyboard operator. However, with the conclusion of the project on which she was employed, she was relegated to the departmental typing pool.

She was able to escape from the typing pool and moved to a department whose clerical work was in the process of computerisation. Because of her keyboard skills and experience, JR was rapidly promoted and became responsible for project management in other departments. At this point, however, her rapid advancement became a problem to her husband. As JR put it, they had grown apart, both intellectually and otherwise, and for some time the marriage broke down. In due course, however, her husband accepted a retirement package and JR was able to take a position in Sydney, where she
moved together with her husband. She made what she termed a 'lifestyle choice rather than a career choice', since her promotion opportunities were now restricted.

JR's senior position in the APS has enabled her to nurture the careers of other women, which is extremely important to her. She also commented on the problem of sexual harassment, which had affected her career several times. On one occasion, she was refused promotion after she had refused the advances of a male superior. She did not speak out, as she was concerned she would be the loser. On another occasion, she missed the opportunity to work overseas, as the superior officer involved made it clear that he expected her to have an affair with him. JR decided not to take the job but again remained silent about the matter, as she did not wish to rock the boat.

JR agreed that there was age discrimination in employment, and expressed concern at society's obsession with youth. She also deplored the fact that, because of a total lack of support from her family, she was unable to complete the external degree for which she had enrolled. It would appear, however, that her personal qualities enabled her to achieve a great deal without this formal qualification.

**MA. Age 57. Divorced. Social worker.**

MA trained as a radiographer and found a position in private practice, but within a year she married and left the paid work force. Shortly afterwards, she was approached by a former colleague who had established a new private practice. Her husband, who believed that 'a woman's place is in the home', refused to allow her to accept the offer, and went directly to her prospective employer. He acquiesced and withdrew the job offer; according to MA, he told her husband that he 'fully understood the issues'. She was 'permitted' by her husband to take jobs as a locum for a month or so at a time.

MA then had four children, but at age 37 she left her husband. Her husband refused to give her child support, although he was by now the owner of a prosperous caravan park. MA received a supporting mother's benefit and earned extra money in the cash economy, since the benefits were insufficient and the restrictions imposed by the Department of Social Security made it impossible to obtain meaningful part-time employment. She was disadvantaged by the divorce settlement. The judge refused to divide the family assets equally, commenting that he was not about to 'take away a man's livelihood'. As MA observed, 'she got the children and he got the caravan park'. Eventually, she was granted enough money to buy a small house and struggled to make ends meet for the next 10 years.

In 1986, MA enrolled in a Social Work degree course, living frugally during her studies. She obtained a full-time job as a social worker, which she had held for four years at the time of the interview. She was relieved to be no longer a pensioner after so many years. MA was also able to save money and to travel to conferences overseas. She felt that she still lacked confidence and had been extremely upset when one of her young fellow students asked if she did not feel guilt about taking a young person's place. She had also been patronised by some young co-workers who treated her and another older woman as 'silly old things', but she now felt able to cope with this situation.
JE. Age 54. Divorced. Unemployed.

JE was born in South Africa. She would have liked to go to university, but her sister became seriously ill and the cost of care did not leave enough money to support JE while she was studying. She enrolled in a secretarial college, encouraged by her high school headmistress, who told her that university education was unnecessary. Rather, she should think of marriage and children.

JE married at age 25 after holding several secretarial posts and had two children. In 1969, the family migrated to Australia. She wished to return to work but was opposed by her mother-in-law. To make some money, she took up screen printing and was quite successful. At age 33, she had a third child.

Following her success with screen printing, JE planned to set up her own business but was prevented by a series of family catastrophes. Her mother, who had remained in South Africa, died in 1984, and her father died in the following year. Her husband embarked on an affair with another woman, which led to an expensive and traumatic divorce, leaving her with very little in the way of material resources.

Despite these cumulative shocks, which left her anxious and depressed, JE decided to undertake the university education which had been denied to her at an earlier stage. She enrolled in a design degree, and was close to completion at the time of the interview. While studying, she also enrolled in a training course under the NSW Mature Workers’ Program (MWP). She found this particularly helpful in easing her transition to the work force and applied for part-time work after completing the MWP course. After more than 30 applications, she found a job with a telemarketing company. Although the work suited her, it entailed long journeys through heavy traffic, and she resigned after two months.

Finding another job proved very difficult, and telemarketing seemed to be the only field in which employment was available. She obtained a position as a switchboard operator, but found it very stressful. Working conditions were not good, and she felt that the other staff treated her as an ‘imbecile’, probably because of her age. She resigned from the job, because the company refused to give her leave to complete her degree.

At the time of the interview, she was hopeful of returning to the work force as a designer, emphasising that her priority was to repay the loans which family and friends had provided to enable her to complete her studies. The divorce had made her feel ‘ugly and unrespectable’, but the completion of her university studies had done much to restore both her morale and her health.
**Case History**  
**ML. Age 55. Widow. Casual tour guide.**

ML was born in New Zealand, where she qualified as a primary school teacher, and moved to Australia at age 21. While on holiday in Europe, she met and married an Englishman and lived in London for 5 years. Her first child was born in 1967, and for the next three years she was a full-time mother and housewife.

The family moved to Australia in 1970, and she had a second child in the following year. Her husband insisted that she remain a housewife, and for the next few years she ‘rotted in wild suburbia’, playing tennis, taking part in school parents’ activities, and giving ‘boring dinner parties’.

At the age of 39, her marriage broke down. ML continued to live in the family home with her children (now aged 8 and 12). Her husband refused to give any support beyond maintenance for the children and threatened to sue for custody if she ‘neglected’ them by taking part-time work. She was able to obtain a supporting parent’s pension, but after further disputes with her husband, he was successful in gaining custody of the children. With the money allocated to her under the divorce settlement, she purchased a flat and looked for employment. She found secretarial work, first with a motor vehicle distributor and then as a school administrator. In the meantime, she married again, this time to a much older man. When her second husband’s health deteriorated, she gave up work to look after him until he died.

ML then enrolled in a 3-months course as a travel guide, run by a private company but sponsored by government. She was the oldest student and found it hard going. After graduating, she applied to 35 tour operators, but did not receive a single response. Finally, she obtained work through personal contacts. Apart from acting as a guide during the tourist season (November to April), she also does casual work at conferences, and uses her foreign language skills as an interpreter. ML finds her work suitable for a mature person, since many tourists are older people and relate better to people of their own generation.

ML has encountered considerable age discrimination. She quoted one example where she responded by telephone to an advertisement for a ‘mature person’. After telling them her age, she was informed that ‘mature’ meant someone in their 20s. When she asked, ironically, if the prospective employer thought she should stay at home and take up knitting, the response was ‘yes’, and the call was abruptly terminated.

**Case History**  
**JL. Age 60. Widow. Unemployed.**

JL completed secondary school and obtained a clerical job. She would have liked to go to university, but her parents said they could not afford to support her. She married at age 19 and had a son. When the child was two years old, her husband became mentally ill and subjected her to frequent physical abuse. This led to a prolonged custody battle, during which JL lived with her parents 'like a nun', so that her husband could not find any pretext to take away the child. In the end, however, she was divorced on grounds of desertion and received no financial settlement. While living with her parents, JL found work as a secretary, and was promoted to become personnel secretary to one of the senior executives of a newspaper chain.
At the age of 32, JL remarried and had a daughter. When the child was aged 2, she returned to work and her parents looked after the child. At this point, she decided on a career change and enrolled in a nursing course. She continued working as a nurse for 20 years. The family moved to the Kempsey district in 1980, where JL's husband ran a farm. She supplemented the family income by working at a local nursing home for older people. Her husband became ill and suffered two heart attacks, so they moved into the town, and JL became a nurse at the local hospital. She also enrolled in an external university course, majoring in German and obtaining excellent results, she was awarded a scholarship to study in Austria. This was a very satisfying experience, and she developed close friendships with some fellow students, whom she plans to revisit when she has saved enough money.

After returning to Australia from Austria, JL had to cope with her husband's last illness, as well as the illness of her mother and grandmother. After her husband's death, she was able to complete her degree and enrolled in a master's program. She was promised a teaching position in adult education.

JL summed up her situation in an optimistic manner, declaring that 'life begins at 60'. In her sixtieth year, she graduated, became a grandmother and was due to start teaching.

**Case History**

**DM. Age 51. Divorced. Casual home care worker.**

Born in Sydney, DM left school at 15, married a policeman at age 16, and had her first baby. She became pregnant again a year later, but miscarried.

Her husband was transferred to Grafton, where DM had another child. In addition to her own children, DM looked after babies who had been taken into care. After two years, her husband was again transferred, this time to Forbes, where she prepared meals for prisoners in the local lock-up and also looked after juveniles in custody. She then suffered another miscarriage, followed by a nervous breakdown.

This pattern of repeated movement continued for some time. In Newcastle, she worked as a nursing aide, but her husband suffered a serious accident and she gave up daily work to care for him. At night, she worked in a nursing home to supplement the family income. The dual burden proved too much, and DM left her husband and moved to Sydney, where she again worked in a nursing home.

In 1986, the couple were reconciled, moved to Kempsey and took up farming. After assisting with the development of the property, DM found work with the local health service. The job entailed a great deal of travel, and ultimately DM again broke down under the stress. As a result, she again parted from her spouse and they were divorced. When she had recovered her health, she returned to Kempsey and worked as manager of an accommodation centre for disabled persons. However, her ex-husband was appointed to the board of management of the centre, and she was unwilling to work there as his employee. She moved again to Sydney and trained as a psychiatric nurse, but once more her health broke down under the strain.

After recovering, DM returned to Kempsey and enrolled in several training courses.
under the Skillshare program. She credits this training with restoring her self-confidence. Her ex-husband was supportive, and helped her to obtain her present job in home care. She has restricted her workload in the light of her past experiences.

**Case History**

**DB. Age 43. Separated. Part-time literacy tutor.**

DB trained as a shorthand-typist and worked for two years in the NSW public service. She suffered health problems and lost her job, a fact which still rankles.

After losing her public service position, DB worked in a number of secretarial jobs. She married at the age of 25, but the marriage broke down after 5 years. DB then moved to Kempsey, but found it difficult to obtain employment. She was discriminated against because she was not a local, or because she was 'over-qualified'. The lack of a local network was also a handicap. She became ill, and had to survive on sickness benefits.

Her circumstances improved in 1989, when she inherited some money, which enabled her to buy a property and build a house. She then undertook several training programs, which led to employment as a literacy tutor for Aboriginal students and also as a youth worker. DB found the role of youth worker to be extremely stressful and suffered a nervous breakdown. Having recovered, she was re-employed in the literacy program.

DB commented that women living in country towns become isolated, lose their skills and find it difficult to return to paid employment. She also remarked that because there was little local industry, welfare services had become the largest employer of local people.

**Case History**

**PY. Aged 60. Divorced. Data entry operator.**

Born in Romania, PY came to Australia at age 11. She left school at 15 and worked in several shops and offices until she married at age 20.

She had four children in her 12 years of marriage and was a full-time housewife during that period. PY realised that she had no qualifications and enrolled in a TAFE certificate course in hotel and catering management. This led her to the job of supervisor in a major hotel. Although she liked the job, she was constrained to give it up because of shift work and night duty which interfered with the care of her children. She was able to move to a hospital job, where she could keep regular hours, and stayed there for 7 years.

As her children grew older, PY found that the cumulative effect of intense work and family responsibilities was proving too much for her. She left the hospital job and became a doctor's receptionist. PY also enrolled in a computer course, which proved to be a great asset. At this stage, PY's elderly mother required her constant attention, so she left the receptionist's job and took casual work, as well as receiving Social Security benefits. However, she became frustrated with the situation of being 'forever broke' and found a job in data entry where she could use her computer training.
Although her contract has been renewed, PY does not feel secure and is apprehensive about age discrimination. Her supervisor (aged 40) has hinted that she is not keeping up with the technology and has asked when she plans to retire. She has no plans to retire and emphasises the importance of work. Unemployment, she said, made her feel ‘useless and worthless’ and had made it impossible to assist her children as she would have wished.

**Case History**  
**DD. Age 49. Divorced.**  
*General assistant at TAFE college.*

After completing secondary school, DD worked in a variety of office jobs and as a waitress and a chef. She married at age 20 and had her first child two years later. She returned to work after only a week, explaining that her husband, whose occupation was the breeding of Labrador dogs, had no interest in earning a living.

A year later, the family moved to the Central Coast so that she could be close to her mother. DD continued to commute to Sydney for work. She also worked as a waitress in local clubs. In 1970, she gave birth to twin boys, this time returning to work after two weeks. Her mother and her husband took care of the babies. However, her husband left the family three years later. DD’s aunt now helped with the children, while DD herself was forced to limit her working hours. She found employment as a domestic in a local motel, working in the morning. In the afternoon, she did factory work.

A year after leaving the family her husband turned up again. However, he left 5 years later, and they were divorced. For two years, DD subsisted on the supporting parent's
benefit and then found employment as a salesperson. She continued in this capacity for 10 years, in the meantime giving birth to a son (fathered by another man).

DD gave up work because her youngest child was having health and emotional problems. To relieve her boredom, she enrolled in a variety of TAFE courses and gained several certificates. At the time of the interview, she was working 10 hours per week at the local TAFE college, but was looking for full-time work so that she could move off the parent's benefit.

She concluded by stressing that women who stay at home should prepare themselves for future employment by taking training courses while the children are young. Training courses will help women re-enter the work force when the children have finished school.

**Case History**

**JM. Age 51. Divorced. Computer keyboard operator.**

JM learnt shorthand and typing at high school and became a typist. She worked for the NSW Department of Motor Transport and later for CSIRO. In the process, she received training in the use of computers and became a supervisor of computing services.

She married at age 30 and left her job two years later to have a baby. She took the 12 months maternity leave to which she was entitled. However, JM decided not to return to work and stayed out of the work force until she was 45, when her second child started school. She then obtained work with a computer company and stayed there for three years. At the end of that time, the company ran into difficulties, and JM was retrenched together with a number of others. There was no retrenchment package, and her employer asserted that since she was a married woman with another source of support, it was not so important for her to have a job.

Unfortunately for JM, dismissal came at a bad time. Her marriage was breaking down; her children were causing difficulties; and her health was affected by the onset of the menopause. She was, however, able to obtain a part-time job with another computer company, and she found other part-time work to supplement her income. The strain of coping with long hours and with difficult children was too much, so she gave up her employment and obtained a sole parent's pension, which she subsidised with the occasional part-time job. In the meantime, she looked for a full-time job and discovered the reality of age discrimination. Ultimately, through personal contacts, she applied successfully for a job as keyboard operator in a bank. Although the job entails two hours of daily travel, JM is pleased with it because it appears to be secure and gives her fringe benefits which she could not get in temporary, part-time jobs. She now feels able to cope with anything.
Immigrant experiences

JL. Age 49. Divorced. Unemployed.

JL was born in Lebanon and worked as a secretary for several small companies in Beirut. In 1971, she migrated to the USA with her family and supported herself by working as a carer for elderly women, a waitress, a research assistant and a clerk. After learning English, she took a degree course in business administration.

Having graduated, she applied for a position as a bilingual secretary in a hospital in Saudi Arabia, mainly because of the high salary. While there, she married an Australian engineer and had two children. As a married woman, she could no longer work in Saudi Arabia.

The family came to Australia in 1989 when JL was 42, and her husband pressed her to find employment. She refused on the ground that her children were too young. After a few years, her husband left her for another woman, and divorce proceedings were pending at the time of the interview. JL then registered with the CES and was directed to two labour market programs dealing with office procedure, clerical skills and computer training. She rated some of them highly, but others she found very poor. She described one of them as 'a factory; totally useless; too many people; not enough attention; you cannot learn anything; nobody shows any personal interest; it only provides jobs for the trainers'. Some of the courses were too short to enable the participants to learn anything useful.

At the time of the interview, she was receiving advice from a placement office at Work Ventures Inc., a voluntary job-seeking agency, and from a case manager at the CES. She was also working three days a week for the voluntary aid group, Community Aid Abroad. Although she had been offered paid work, she had refused because the jobs would require too much travel, and her children would need paid child-care both before and after school. No suitable part-time job was available, but she believed that she would be able to take a full-time job within a year as her elder child (a daughter) would be aged 14 and could take responsibility for the younger child. A divorce settlement would also give her some financial security.

JL’s problems were obviously compounded by her lack of a kinship network in Australia, and no support of any kind from her husband, illustrating specific difficulties suffered by migrant women.

KZ. Age 47. Married. Secretary.

KZ was born in the United States and completed her college education there. She then looked for an opportunity to work overseas. In her own words, ’I did not want to get married and become a housewife like most of my friends in St. Louis’. In 1971, she came to Australia as a home economics teacher and stayed for 18 months. She returned to the USA but then came back to Australia. She spent 1980 in the USA, intending to find permanent work, but had no luck. KZ commented that she was
regarded almost as a 'traitor' for taking a job overseas.

At this point, KZ was invited by an Australian colleague to take over her teaching job on a temporary basis, an offer which she accepted with alacrity. She then moved on to a teaching post in a Catholic school but resigned in 1984 when changes in the system left her with no subject to teach.

KZ got married at this point, to another immigrant, and looked for jobs outside teaching. She registered with the CES, but was interviewed by an official whom she described as 'computer-illiterate' and incapable of recording her details properly. The CES directed her to a training course devoted to computer skills and business administration. Although KZ found the teaching to be of high quality, the equipment and the software were obsolescent. Having competed the course, she applied to a number of employment agencies, but was told that only temporary jobs were available to a person of her age. At one agency, the principal (a woman in her fifties) told KZ that 'she was so old she was redundant'. KZ was so humiliated that she broke down and wept while waiting for her train. She felt 'old and ugly', and the job offers she had received were located in suburbs 'equally old and ugly'. KZ remarked that the best way of finding a job was 'networking', which was particularly difficult for her since neither she nor her husband, as immigrants, had any relatives in Australia. She finally found a job as a secretary with the Salvation Army through answering a newspaper advertisement.

Reflecting on her experiences, KZ emphasised the reality of age discrimination. In particular, she commented on the fact that after working for 5 months as a temporary secretary with a government agency, which gave her outstandingly good references, she was unable to find any further work through the employment agencies. She is convinced this was entirely due to her age.
**case history**  
**BP.** Age 46. Married. Unemployed architect.

BP comes from Argentina, where she worked as an architect and also taught at university. She came to Australia at the age of 38 and was employed as an architect for three years by a municipal council. She left to get married, on the understanding that her job would be retained for her. However, the council refused to re-employ her, and at the time of the interview, she had been unable to find work in her profession despite repeated attempts over more than four years. She sends out résumés every week and cultivates all possible contacts but has received very few replies and no interviews.

After BP had been unemployed for almost a year, the Professional Employment Service (a branch of the CES) directed her to a full-time course in computer drafting (AUTO-CAD). Following the course, she had two weeks of work experience with a design group, but, although they were impressed with her ability, they were unable to offer her a position. She found occasional jobs working as a draftsman. During this time she became pregnant and gave birth to a daughter in 1994. The family was hit by financial disaster during her pregnancy when her husband's business failed. To add yet a further complication, her husband was now suffering from the effects of multiple sclerosis and was unable to seek work.

BP found employment a few months after the birth of her child, working for an interior design group, but the job terminated after 6 months. At the time of the interview, she was again unemployed and continuing to seek work.

Reflecting on her experiences, BP stressed the ‘dignity of work’ and the corresponding indignities of living hand to mouth. She identified several factors contributing to her difficulties, including the depressed state of the architectural profession, her age, her sex, and the fact that she is an immigrant. She concluded that the only way out would be to return to Argentina, where she would have family support and better opportunities for finding work.

**case history**  
**MD.** Age 49. Divorced. Unemployed.

MW was born in Hungary, where she completed secondary school and entered university to study economics. Before graduating, she met another Hungarian who had emigrated to Australia. They married, and she came to Australia.

The marriage ran into trouble after MD gave birth to a son. For 6 years she was subjected to continued physical abuse by her husband. With no family and few friends, MD decided to return to Europe. Unwilling to return to Communist Hungary, she settled in Austria, where she found work as a cleaner. After a year of this, she decided to return to Hungary where she could use her knowledge of English and German. In Hungary, she found an interesting and well-paid job with an import-export agency. She worked there for 10 years.

After the transition from the Communist regime in 1989, the agency collapsed, and MD found herself without a job. For the next four years she subsisted on casual jobs.
The hardship was intensified by the fact that her son was also unemployed. MD tried to use her previous connections by setting up her own export-import business, but the economic situation was too difficult and she lost her investment. At this point, she decided to return to Australia. She sold her car and bought airline tickets, arriving in Australia late in 1994.

Unable to find a job, MD had to wait 6 months before she became eligible for a training course. She then enrolled in a TAFE course, 'English for Employment'. She also joined a Job Club. However, after sending out 40 applications without a single reply, she found a job with the help of a personal friend. At the time of the interview, she was doing general office work for a voluntary welfare organisation and taking part in several Skillshare training programs to improve her job prospects. She stressed the value of these programs, which had been most helpful to her, especially in view of the absence of any family support system.

**case history**

**Dr BB. Age 59. Married. Part-time carer.**

Dr BB qualified as a medical practitioner in the Ukraine, and worked as an endocrinologist at her local hospital for 33 years. Her daughter was cared for by her mother and by state-provided child care.

As medical practitioners were not well paid in the former Soviet Union, she was able to save very little money. If she had stayed in the Ukraine she would now be entitled to a pension but cannot draw on it as there are no reciprocal arrangements with Australia.

BB's daughter and her two children migrated to Australia in 1989, and BB followed them four years later. At her age, she feels it is too late to undertake medical training courses which might enable her to practise in Australia. Her husband, who migrated with her, found work when they arrived but suffered a heart attack and is now on a disability pension.

BB supplements the family budget by working as a part-time carer for an 85-year old woman. As this makes some use of her medical skills, she gains some satisfaction from it. Some other immigrant doctors of her acquaintance have found it necessary to take domestic work, but Dr. BB feels that this would be extremely demeaning. She would like to find some voluntary work in a hospital, which would put her back into the atmosphere to which she is accustomed.
case history

Dr ZZ. Age 45. Married. Unemployed.

Dr ZZ is also a qualified medical practitioner, trained in the former Yugoslavia. She married while still studying. After completing her internship, she practised for two years in a remote village where she was the only doctor.

Dr ZZ's husband, an electrical engineer, then accepted a managerial position with a Yugoslav company which had interests in the Middle East, and the family moved to Iran. The Yugoslav embassy barred her from practising in Iran. When they returned to Yugoslavia, the political situation had deteriorated so much that they decided to emigrate. The family arrived in Australia in 1993.

Her husband, who speaks fluent English, was unable to find a job despite the fact that his qualifications were recognised in Australia. ZZ herself undertook several training courses in English language, and now regards herself as proficient. She applied for admission to the medical bridging course but was unable to afford the costs of the training and the examinations. Accordingly, she enrolled in a nursing course at the University of Sydney, where she can gain credit for one-half of the program. In this way, she can return to a job in the medical field much sooner. Although there are other para-medical specialties open to her, most of the vacancies are in nursing. While studying, she has been able to do some respite work with geriatric patients. It was clear that Dr. ZZ's long-term objective was to return to medical practice. She was determined to overcome the obstacles that would prevent her from achieving her objective.

case history

SJ. Age 48. Married. Unemployed.

SJ was born in Iraq into an upper-class family. Her father was a judge, and she studied at university and became a high school English teacher.

SJ was married at age 20 to a lawyer who became an Iraqi diplomat and represented his country in a number of diplomatic posts in Europe, the United States and the Middle East. As a diplomat's wife, she was not permitted to work, much to her regret. In 1980, her husband fell foul of his own government and was recalled to Iraq and imprisoned. SJ remained overseas and lobbied hard through her diplomatic contacts to get her husband released. Failing to do so, she decided to return to Iraq despite warnings from her husband.

In Iraq, SJ returned to school teaching and continued to lobby for her husband's release, using her family connections. She even secured an audience with President Saddam Hussein. Ultimately, her husband was released, but after almost two years in an Iraqi jail he was suffering from heart problems and was, in SJ's words, 'a broken man'. She became the sole family breadwinner. After a few years, her husband had recovered sufficiently to open a business and in due course SJ gave up teaching. As her only daughter was studying medicine, SJ looked after her infant grandchild to facilitate her daughter's studies.

In 1993, SJ's husband suffered a massive heart attack and was forced to sell his business. They then contemplated leaving Iraq for good, and after living in Jordan and
the United States, decided to settle in Australia, where they arrived in 1995 and
gained permanent residency status not long afterwards.

At the time of the interview, SJ had applied unsuccess...
To earn extra money, and to relieve the stress of caring for the baby and her father-in-law, AM took a job selling cosmetics door-to-door.

As the family's income was still inadequate, AM found a job promoting pharmaceutical products for a drug company. After her second child was born in 1974, she enrolled as a trainee in a health visitors' course, specialising in early childhood nursing. She found work with a municipal council, and put her children into day care.

In 1978, AM and her husband decided to migrate to Australia, where her husband had been offered a position. As assisted immigrants, they were entitled to hostel accommodation, but this proved to be unavailable because of a bureaucratic error. As a result, the family was in financial difficulties. AM could not gain certification as a nurse, because she could not afford the registration fee. She took a series of casual jobs, after which one of her employers offered her a full-time job in market research where she stayed for 5 years.

AM then decided to return to nursing but had a difficult time and felt she was being badly treated by the registration board. However, after completing the required examination she went to work for the Karitane child nursing service and ran a mobile clinic for nine years. She found this an extremely satisfying occupation. In 1992, however, the clinic was closed because of funding problems. AM was then able to move to a community health centre where her work has become administrative rather than clinical. This depressed her for a time, but she concluded the interview by acknowledging that she was coming to terms with the situation.

**Case History**

*MP. Age 52. Married. Part-time cleaner.*

MP was born in Portugal, where she was a member of a middle-class family living in a coastal resort town. Her father was part-owner of a milk processing company. At age 15, MP left school to work as a clerk for the company and gained an accountancy certificate through evening classes. She then worked in a local bank for 5 years. She married at age 23 and her husband emigrated to Australia soon afterwards. MP followed him a year later.

For MP, emigration was a frustrating and unhappy experience. Without language skills she could only find unskilled factory work, followed by a job as kitchen hand in a hotel, working on eight-hour shift from 5 a.m. She also worked part-time as a cleaner. MP became pregnant and worked until the last possible moment.

After her son was born, she took a year off to care for him and then took a job as a cleaner. This enabled her to care for the child while earning money. A second child was born in 1972, and MP then stopped work until her son was of school age. She then returned to cleaning.

In the interview, MP expressed considerable embarrassment about her work, which she has never described to her family in Portugal. There have been times when she would happily have returned to her native country, especially as her employers at the bank kept the job open for her for 10 years. Her husband, however, had no wish to
return. She stresses that neither she nor her husband have ever received any social security benefits, but nevertheless she refrains from telling anyone about her job and never mentions her earlier work at the bank.

With the passage of time, it would have been possible for MP to find other work, but cleaning suited her because she could regulate her own hours and adjust them to her child care responsibilities. The children are now independent, and MP has reduced her hours, but she declared her intention of remaining in employment as long as her health permitted.

**case history**  
**KL. Age 55. Married. Machine operator.**

Born in a small village in southern Italy, KL left school at age 10 to help her parents on their farm. To earn extra money, she worked on an adjoining property for 6 years, picking olives and corn as well as other tasks.

In 1961, aged 20, she came to Australia, to join a sister and two brothers. She found immediate work in several factories. Married in 1962, she gave birth to a son two years later, and then gave up work for over a year. KL then returned to the work force and paid for a carer to look after her son. After working as a packer, she then became a machinist in a clothing factory. She moved on to work in a restaurant, where the hours enabled her to take her son to school and look after him in the afternoon. The job came to an end when the family moved to another neighbourhood.

In 1972, KL had another child (a daughter) and left paid employment for three years, taking only casual jobs. She then took a factory job, but had to stop because her daughter was suffering from asthma, and for some years she operated from home as an outworker. When her daughter’s health improved, she returned to factory work.

Unlike other immigrants recorded here, KL has had no difficulty in finding employment, and has been able to pay periodic visits to her relatives in Italy. KL also criticised the use of taxpayers’ money to help immigrants, saying that she ‘resented’ such assistance. She expressed the view that government assistance discouraged migrants from working, and that they should be required to work as hard as she, and others like her, had needed to do in order to make a living.
Aboriginal women

Case history

RC. Age 50. Separated. Education Officer.

RC was born in rural Queensland and attended school until the age of 15, when she moved to Brisbane. She worked in a factory and then in a government office.

At the age of 20, she married a shearer and moved to Dubbo, where her husband's parents managed a country property. She lived with her in-laws and was unable to find work in the area. Her first child was born in 1966, and she moved back to Queensland with her husband. RC visited a local doctor and asked for a prescription for the contraceptive pill but was refused on the grounds that she must have a 'solid reason'. RC remembered that she was too young and inexperienced to argue. As a consequence, she had four more children in seven years.

They were now living on a property more than 50 miles from the nearest town. With her husband home only at weekends, RC was a full-time mother. This remained the pattern of her life for a number of years - living in small country towns, close to pastoral or farming properties where her husband could find work. Her marriage gradually began to deteriorate, and her husband's visits to the family became increasingly infrequent. RC then found the first paid employment since her marriage, working as a cleaner in a country high school. She moved on to become an Aboriginal students' assistant, monitoring the progress of Aboriginal students and maintaining contact with her parents. In 1987, she enrolled in a 3-year external course for Aboriginal education assistants and then transferred to an Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Studies (again external) at the University of New England. Having completed this program, she enrolled for a B.A. degree, again at UNE. In the meantime, she continued to work full-time and to care for her children.

Between 1992 and 1994, RC worked in several positions in Aboriginal education in Dubbo but found her situation increasingly stressful, for both professional and matrimonial reasons. Her marriage had deteriorated steadily. As she became better educated and more independent, her husband became increasingly hostile and accused her repeatedly of 'bludging'. She considered leaving him a number of times, but stayed on for the sake of the children and also because of family pressure. In 1994, however, she applied for a post in Aboriginal education in Sydney. RC's success in obtaining this job provided her with the necessary impetus to leave her husband.

Because of the illness of her youngest daughter, RC deferred her University studies but continued to work full-time. Her intentions at the time of the interview were to complete her studies and to participate actively in her local church congregation, where she felt 'at home and at peace'.

Job Search Experiences of Older Women 29
**Case History**

**SR. Age 45. Married.**  
Enrolled in TAFE welfare course.

SR was born into an urban Aboriginal family. She left school at age 15 and worked in a clothing factory, later moving to a job in a supermarket. She married at age 21 and had four children in rapid succession. The family then moved to a country town where SR had relatives who could assist with child care. She worked in the cotton industry doing 'back breaking work' which was, however, well paid.

In 1992, the family moved back to Sydney to provide more opportunities for the children. SR now decided to enrol in a TAFE course, and having done well, applied to enter an intensive program for the Community Welfare Certificate. At the time of the interview, she hoped the certificate would enable her to gain a position at the TAFE college where she was enrolled. SR's husband regularly does the shopping and often the cooking to help her.

SR commented that Aboriginal women like herself are now claiming their right to be educated and to seek careers, having fulfilled their traditional roles as wives and mothers, she is pleased that her children have grown up to value education.

**Case History**

**VB. Age 40. Single.**  
Enrolled in TAFE welfare course.

VB was born in Queensland and describes herself as having been a rebel all her life. At 15, she ran away from home, was found by the child welfare authorities, and placed under supervision. She found a job in a supermarket but soon ran away again.

At 17, she became pregnant for the first time and had several children in rapid succession. Her eldest daughter now has a child of her own and helps with VB's youngest child, aged 3.

She enrolled in the TAFE course as a result of persuasion by her friends and some good experiences with other courses in general education. VB commented that her experiences as a young runaway had given her much insight into the problems of young people. She felt that that experience, combined with the formal education, would make her particularly well qualified as a welfare worker in the Aboriginal Community. At the time of the interview, she was working in an education centre for young boys and obtaining considerable personal satisfaction from her role.

**Case History**

**LC. Age 47. Single.**  
Enrolled in TAFE welfare course.

LC was born in rural NSW and came to Sydney at the age of 11. She left school at 15 and, for the next 25 years, alternated between jobs in the clothing industry and domestic staff work in hospitals.
Like other Aboriginal women, she became a mother at an early age (17). Her son was looked after by his grandfather and several aunts, enabling LC to remain in employment. In the last two years before entering the welfare course, LC worked as a teachers' assistant in a pre-school centre. She was employed for only two days per week, because more hours were not available. LC registered with the CES but refused to accept an offer to send her on an 8-week computer course since she believed it would lead nowhere. She expressed her view that the CES discriminated against her because of her age, citing examples of vacancies which she felt competent to fill.

LC learnt about the TAFE course through personal contacts. She found it easy to cope with course requirements and was hoping to enrol in a further program as a drug and alcohol counsellor. She also considered that her participation in the program would help the cause of the Aboriginal people, and that it was important 'to get the word out'.

**Case History**  
**JS. Age 44. Single. Full-time student.**

JS became a state ward in her early youth. She left school at age 15 and obtained a position as a live-in servant in a private home. Two years later, she moved to Young, again working as a live-in servant. After three years, she returned to Sydney and became a factory process worker.

A year later, JS moved to the country once more and entered into a *de facto* relationship with an Aboriginal man, with whom she had six children. When her partner died she returned to Sydney and raised her children as a single parent. When the children were all grown up, she felt ready to move on to something other than full-time mothering. Through friends, she learnt about the TAFE welfare course. JS commented that the course had given her much more confidence. She was pleased to be back in the workforce and described herself as 'breaking through the comfort zone'. JS felt that joining the TAFE program was the best thing she had ever done, and fortunate that she was still young enough to meet the challenge.

**Case History**  
**AD. Age 49. Married. Part-time health worker.**

AD was born in rural Queensland and left school at the age of 15. Her first job was that of general hand on a cattle station, and she held similar jobs at other cattle stations over a period of 6 years, sending money to her unemployed parents. She then moved to Mackay, where she worked in a variety of jobs as a packer, a waitress, and a cook. However, she was always keen to educate herself, read numerous books and listened to educational radio programs.

AD married a cane-cutter who was an immigrant from Malta, and they moved to Sydney where they lived for two years in a caravan. AD worked in a factory and saved money towards a house. She then had several children, returning to casual employment when her youngest child reached kindergarten age.

AD was conscious of the fact that she had become isolated from the Aboriginal
community and enrolled in the TAFE course for Aboriginal welfare workers. She commented on the great value of the course and the fact that all the women who had completed it had obtained employment. She then decided to enrol in an Associate Diploma at the University of Technology (UTS). After completing it, she was offered a teaching position but had to decline because of family commitments.

Unable to take a full-time teaching position, she has worked as a supply teacher and Aboriginal studies co-ordinator at several colleges. At the time of the interview, she was working as a student support counsellor and as a health worker in a women's refuge. Although helping victims of rape and domestic violence is stressful, AD felt that she was doing a valuable job.

AD assigned much of the credit for her success to her husband, who resented her studies at first but had become very supportive and proud of her achievements. She has also encouraged her children to gain the best possible education. There is, she emphasised, much more to be done, especially for Aboriginal women.

case history

MD. Age 44. Married. Disability pensioner.

MD was born in Kempsey. She left school at 14 to care for her sick mother and her younger siblings. Two years later, she moved to Sydney, where her aunt lived, to find work. She was employed in several factories, but became homesick after a couple of years and returned to Kempsey. She worked for some time as a nursing aide in the local hospital.

At age 19, MD married an itinerant worker and for the next 10 years they lived in a number of country towns. During these years MD had four children. When the eldest child was ready for school, they returned to Kempsey to settle down. She became particularly active in the Aboriginal community, was a founding member of the local Land Council and helped to establish a branch of the Aboriginal Medical Service.

In her early 30's, MD had two more children, but continued her community activities and also enrolled in a number of continuing education courses. All her work is voluntary, but she would like a part-time job as a welfare officer with the local Aboriginal community.

Asked about discrimination, MD said that she had encountered it only once when, at the age of 12, she moved from an Aboriginal school run by a Christian mission to a state high school. She looked forward to a future without racism, in which her children and grandchildren would have a better life.
Widows

**Case History**

**JM. Age 45. Government Official.**

JM was one of five children and the only daughter. Her ambition was to become an art teacher, but her parents made it clear that they would not support her to gain a university education. JM attended TAFE secretarial courses and obtained work as a typist in the state public service. After saving enough money, she left the job to travel for a year in Europe.

JM returned to Australia, aged 25, and married shortly afterwards. She obtained a position with the National Cash Register company (NCR), demonstrating and selling their products. She was well regarded by NCR and would have stayed with them but for a tragic motor car accident in which her father was killed and her mother and brother seriously injured. JM left NCR and found a job with another office products firm whose premises were located near the hospital where her mother and brother were patients. She worked as a programmer for two years, leaving to have her first child.

JM then became a full-time housewife for 8 years. When she realised that her marriage was breaking up, she decided to prepare herself for re-entry into the paid labour force and undertook an accounting certificate course where she learned a new range of skills. After the divorce, she was able to buy a house and found work with accounting firms. However, this involved long hours and lack of security, so she sat for the Australian Public Service examination and obtained a job in the Taxation Office. This entailed a considerable financial sacrifice, since her salary was substantially less than her earnings in the private sector. However, her ability and drive meant that she had been promoted several times since her initial appointment.

JM also remarried at this time. Several years later, her second husband became very ill and JM was obliged to give up work for a year to care for him. She rejoined the Tax Office after his death.

Asked about discrimination, JM said she had not experienced active discrimination, but had been hindered in her quest for promotion by male supervisors who were reluctant to support her. On the other hand, she emphasised the inequity of superannuation schemes which did not allow for the disrupted work histories of many women. She added that the high rate of marital breakdown meant that sole mothers face enormous problems in trying to save for their old age. She expressed her personal determination not to be a burden to her children.
**NE. Age 55. Unemployed.**

NE was born in Romania and trained as an industrial chemist. She worked as a laboratory technician for several years before she emigrated to Israel at the age of 23, having married two years earlier. In Israel, she worked for three years in the textile industry, but then became a teachers' aide in a school for mentally handicapped children. While in Israel, she bore two children and took two years off from paid employment.

The family migrated to Australia in 1975, and NE found a part-time job as a laboratory assistant. She did not return to full-time work until 1983, as a technician in a drug testing laboratory. NE observed that her husband was earning enough to support them, and she felt it was important to stay home with the children. However, her husband became ill and died in 1984, leaving her with two young children to support. In 1987, she obtained a well-paid job in the laboratory of the Colgate-Palmolive company, although she found it necessary to work overtime and had few opportunities for leisure.

In 1994, Colgate-Palmolive moved their operations to Queensland and NE was unable to move with them. Although she was offered a job with a chemical company, she found the work too demanding and resigned. Since then she has had no regular employment up to the time of the interview. Just before the day of the interview she had been offered a job with a major food manufacturer but was extremely ambivalent about it because it entailed highly skilled work at a very low salary. She was convinced that this 'degrading' offer was due to her age and had not made up her mind to accept it. As she expressed it, she was too young for a pension, too old for a job, and without enough superannuation to retire. In addition, she had concentrated her efforts since her husband's death in bringing up her children, which had left her little time for a social life, and she now found herself isolated and lonely without too many solutions in sight.

**HP. Age 47. Government Official.**

HP was born in Sydney and trained as a teacher, with B.A and B.Ed degrees. She started teaching English at high school but disliked it so much that she dropped out. She then applied for a position in the state public service but was unsuccessful. HP and remarked that she still resented this failure.

To make herself more employable, HP took a 6-month course at a business college and then found a job as a secretary in a factory. She then decided to return to university and study psychology, but found this too stressful and suffered a nervous breakdown.

HP married at 20, and her academic difficulties were compounded by the fact that her marriage broke down and she was divorced by the age of 24. She then returned to teaching and worked as a teacher for four years, during which time she remarried and had a child. At this point, HP was able to find work as a copy-writer and proof reader for an advertising agency. However, she had lost a great deal of self-confidence and did not do particularly well at her job. Because of the lack of confidence, she turned down several job offers which, in retrospect, she regretted.
In 1985, her second child was born and she gave up work for three years. Her husband was a musician and HP assisted him by writing lyrics for his songs. As her husband earned little from his work as a musician and music teacher, most of their income was derived from social security benefits. They were assisted by HP's parents, who bought a house for them.

HP finally found a job as an administrator with an Area Health Service and worked there for three years. In 1991, however, her husband developed a brain tumour and died. HP was devastated and suffered another nervous breakdown. She subsisted on social security benefits, working one day per week in a series of casual jobs. In 1994 she applied for a full-time job with the state government and was successful.

HP expressed her wish to gain promotion so that she could make use of her educational qualifications, but was concerned that her age would be a barrier. She remarked that what she really needed was a good mentor, something which she had not found so far.
Success stories


KB was born in Sydney and graduated with a B.A degree at the age of 21, after which she trained as a librarian. She had been brought up by a widowed mother, and worked to support herself through her studies. Shortly after graduating she married a lawyer.

KB's first job after completing her librarian's course was in a TAFE library and subsequently in a university library. In 1973, her first child was born and she gave up work. According to KB, she and her husband jointly decided that her first commitment was to the family, and she did not exercise her right to maternity leave. KB emphasised that she regarded full-time mothering as most important and felt vindicated by the fact that her four children have grown up without problems. She did, however, undertake various part-time and contract jobs which did not interfere with the task of child rearing. She purchased a computer and taught herself a wide range of skills. When the family moved to Western Australia for a year, KB worked in her husband's office and then found a part-time job as a librarian with the Federal Court. On returning to Sydney, she continued to work as a private contractor, regulating her work so that she was at home when the children returned from school.

At the age of 40, KB found herself becoming bored and applied for a full-time job with the Taxation Office. Because of her varied experience, she was soon promoted to a responsible position in charge of developing a data base on taxation law. She also enrolled in a post-graduate diploma course in information systems, and completed it successfully despite her apprehension that she might lack the necessary discipline.

KB attributes her professional success to her early training and her ability to develop her skills further in her later years. Her motivation was illustrated by the fact that although she was seriously ill in 1993, she continued to work while receiving treatment. KB also observed that her periods of unemployment had been a 'learning experience' which showed her the value of steady employment. She was also assisted considerably by a female superior who acted as a mentor and encouraged her to undertake difficult projects.

KB expressed satisfaction at the way she had been able to combine child-rearing with employment. She conceded that had she continued in full-time employment, she might have reached a higher level in the public service but did not regard this as cause for regret. On the question of age discrimination, she remembered that she had not encountered any overt discrimination, but that she was recurrently asked when she intended to retire - too often for her liking. As for sex discrimination, this had not been a problem, although she had encountered several 'misogynists'.
**Case History**  
**SE. Age 52. Self-employed. In a relationship.**

SE was born in England and came to Australia with her family as a small child. She graduated from university with a degree in social work, and spent the following year travelling in Europe. On her return, she decided to change course, enrolled for a degree in Fine Arts, and started work as a fashion designer. She then moved to Italy, where she lived for 11 years, working as a volunteer for a feminist group and also teaching English at a university. She married an Italian and they had two children. In 1982, the family settled in Australia, but the marriage broke down.

She went to work as a fashion designer working from home. When her children were both at high school, she decided to change course again and to use her social work qualifications.

SE now started work as a counsellor and family therapist. She also enrolled in a postgraduate program to upgrade her qualifications. Working as a counsellor she decided that women were not receiving the right kind of support from community based services, and decided to set up her own practice. In order to learn more about business management, she enrolled in the NEIS program sponsored by the Commonwealth Government and found it extremely helpful. At the time of the interview, SE’s business was developing and she expected to do well out of it once she had established a sufficient client base.

**Case History**  
**DP. Age 48. Married. Management consultant.**

DP was born into a rural family where, as she observed, women were expected to work as a matter of course. Also, she remarked, her mother and grandmother were active feminists and provided important role models. In addition, her father had always encouraged her, believing that women needed education and a career because of the vagaries of life.

DP’s ambitions were, however, interrupted by her father’s illness, which forced her to leave school before matriculating. She had a number of jobs, including accounts clerk and ‘jillaroo’. She then worked in Sydney at an employment agency, which she left to start her own agency. This was a successful enterprise, but DP decided to sell the business after several years. Married at the age of 23, she gave up her business to look after her three children, and stayed out of the paid work force for three years.

DP returned to the work force partly because of financial pressures and partly because she wanted an occupation apart from mothering. Her mother had, in the meantime, been admitted to a nursing home, which imposed an additional financial burden. She then opened a retail store caring for children’s needs and worked there for several hours per day, including weekends. Her mother encouraged her in this enterprise, which was a substantial success. However, after 8 years, DP decided that she wanted to do something different and sold the business. After finding a job with a computer software company, she returned to the employment agency business, and found that there was a dearth of information concerning opportunities for casual and part-time work. She then wrote and published a handbook for this purpose.
Following the publication of the handbook, DP's husband established his own consultancy business, having left his previous job as human resources manager for a multi-national corporation. DP then joined him, specialising in advice to small business clients. She also became a consultant to a state government agency concerned with promoting small business. At the time of the interview she was employed by a large consultancy firm, while continuing to do some work for her husband's company.

Reflecting on her career, DP believes that she has not been affected either by ageism or sexism, although she is aware that these problems exist and is concerned to combat them in her own professional sphere.
Miscellaneous

The interviews in this section did not fit snugly into any of the previous categories, but each of them is sufficiently interesting to warrant inclusion and they widen the range of experiences recorded in this report.

DG. Age 50. Married. Part-time welfare worker.

DG left school at age 15 and worked as a clerk for an oil company while attending business college at night. At 19, she became an air hostess but was obliged to give up the job when she married (aged 23), because the airline’s policy was not to employ married women. She had two children, but returned to the workforce when her second child was 8 months old, working as a waitress at weekends. Later, she worked for the family retail business and was also employed part-time by a confectionery company.

In 1987, the family business was sold. DG and her husband then bought a franchise for a fast food outlet, which DG managed for 6 years, working seven days a week. During this time, she also started work as a volunteer with the Salvation Army.

In 1993, the business was sold when DG required a major operation. DG decided to upgrade her keyboard skills and enrolled in an evening college. Having realised the importance of computer training, she then entered a retraining program for mature workers.

The retraining program was a bad experience. It was, according to DG, a waste of taxpayers’ money. In 12 weeks, she learnt very little, as the training was superficial and the computer software was obsolescent. Much of the time was spent in preparing résumés and rehearsing interview techniques. She expressed particular criticism of the two women who acted as trainers, describing them as ‘demons’ who made the trainees feel incompetent and repeatedly reduced them to tears. One of the trainers told the group almost every day that they would in any case not find jobs. DG maintained that the whole program was futile and was no more than a money-making exercise.

DG then applied unsuccessfully for a number of jobs and was convinced her lack of success was mainly due to her age. After six months, she found work with a welfare organisation which places children from dysfunctional families with surrogate aunts and uncles. She was paid for 15 hours per week but worked much longer hours. At the time of the interview, she was on the point of resigning, because the work was too demanding and involved too much responsibility for deciding where to place a child.

On leaving her welfare work, DG’s intention was to take an extended holiday overseas and to seek another part-time job when she returns. However, she observed that her experience indicated that she should never admit to being 50 years old.
**Case History**

**AC. Age 50. Married.**

*Part-time research assistant.*

AC completed secondary school and went to work at the Reserve Bank as a clerk. She also enrolled in an economics degree program as a part-time student but dropped out after a year. She married at age 23 and continued to work at the Bank, but was obliged to resign when she became pregnant, as this was Bank policy.

AC was then out of the work force for 8 years. She returned to university as a part-time student and completed her B.A. degree after five years. She was offered a place in a graduate law course, but decided that family commitments prevented her from accepting. Instead, she started applying for jobs, but found that 'nobody wanted a 40-year-old housewife with an Arts degree'. After more than 80 unsuccessful job applications, she gave up and registered with the CES, which was totally unhelpful. She also enrolled in a series of seminars run by Rotary, designed to help people in mid-life to rejoin the paid work force. After the seminars, she was able to find some temporary work.

AC then joined a graduate trainee program at a government agency, but found the experience profoundly frustrating. According to her, she spent a whole year doing nothing. She was promoted to the recruitment section of the agency, but found that she was being sexually harassed by her supervisor. Although she complained to the departmental EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) officer, nothing was done to help her. To escape the situation, AC enrolled in an internal training program to train policy...
analysts. At the end of it, however, she had to return to the recruitment section, where she was given 'a desk, a chair, and no work'.

She then became very ill, evidently because of the stress she had experienced, and was away from work for 18 months. She returned to work on a part-time basis, since her doctor warned her not to work full-time. For three years, her situation was much more to her taste, but in 1994 she was given the option of redundancy or re-deployment. For the next six months, she worked in a section of the agency described by the staff as the 'departure lounge'. At the end of 1994, she finally took redundancy and registered with the CES, which referred her to a Mature Workers Program training course. AC appreciated the value of this course, but felt it was inadequate to help older workers. Returning to the CES, she was referred to the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS). The CRS was able to place her in a temporary work experience position, which she still occupied at the time of the interview.

AC accepts the fact that she will probably have to take low-status jobs, but observed that women were, in any case, obliged to adapt to difficult situations 'as a matter of routine'.

**Case History**  
**BE. Age 44. Single. MWP program officer.**

BE left school at age 17, and drifted in and out of a succession of short-lived jobs, including clerical work, making and selling jewellery at market stalls and working in an alternative health clinic. In her 20's and 30's, she had several nervous breakdowns and underwent prolonged periods of psychotherapy. In between jobs she spent periods on the dole.

At the age of 34, BE enrolled at university as a mature age student but dropped out and returned to the dole. She then decided to leave Sydney and left to join friends in Lismore, where she was involved in 'alternative lifestyle' groups. The only employment available was in casual or part-time jobs, mainly waitressing. She registered with the CES, which directed her to a special group for women who had been out of the workforce for long periods. BE found this course very encouraging. It stimulated her to recognise that she had an unsatisfied need for education, and that she also needed work that engaged her interest as well providing an income.

Following the course, she decided to return to Sydney. She secured a temporary job managing a café and enrolled in a counselling course. However, the pressure became much too great and she went back on the dole for 6 months. While seeking employment, she realised that she needed computer skills and enrolled in a word processing course. She was offered a job as trainer in a program for unemployed persons seeking to re-enter the work force. She enrolled in a diploma course which will give her formal qualifications as a trainer and employment counsellor.

Reflecting on her chequered career, BE acknowledged the value of continuing education. She would like, in due course, to move back to the Lismore area where she could work part-time and 'enjoy life more'.

*Job Search Experiences of Older Women*  
41
MK. Aged 47. Single. Part-time teacher.

MK was born in the former Yugoslavia, and came to Australia as a baby. She completed high school and then a secretarial course. She then worked for six years as secretary to the managing director of an engineering firm.

Wanting a change, MK applied for a position as a secretary with the World Bank in the United States, and worked there for two years. After returning to Sydney for six months, she went back to the US and worked in several jobs for the next three years.

After several years in the US, MK became homesick and returned permanently to Australia. She worked in a variety of jobs in Sydney as secretary, sales manager, and research assistant. In 1983, her parents moved to the Central Coast and MK went with them. After searching for employment for several months, she found a job in the electricity industry, and then moved to a position of secretary with the local club. She was forced to leave this position because of sexual harassment by the manager, who told her she should 'act like a wife'.

MK's next job was with a computer company, but she was retrenched after a year. She tried working from home, making and selling ceramics. Unfortunately, the income was insufficient. She found an administrative position with another computer company, but was again retrenched after 18 months. Unsure of her next step, she enrolled in an Associate Diploma course in art at the local TAFE college. While studying, she continued to work on her ceramics at home and supplied gift shops with her products. In due course, she opened her own gift shop and ran it for four years until she decided to sell the business. She was then taken on as a part-time art teacher by TAFE and decided to make teaching her career. When interviewed, she was studying for an external degree of B.Ed. Her plans, she indicated, were flexible. If she could find full-time work, she would study part-time, but was also prepared to do the reverse.

MK was particularly pleased with the TAFE Outreach courses in which she had participated, remarking that they were extremely valuable in restoring confidence to women who were endeavoring to enter or re-enter the work force.

EM. Age 55. Unmarried (de facto relationship). Part-time direct marketing employee.

EM was born in rural NSW and completed high school. She gained a university scholarship, but her results were poor and she lost the scholarship. As her family could not support her, she took a job as copy writer for a local radio station where she worked for two years. EM then moved to Sydney and worked for another radio station where she stayed for a further two years.

Following this experience, EM decided to move into advertising and worked for a number of agencies in Australia, New Zealand, and Britain. Between 1977 and 1984, she worked in New Zealand, where she met her husband. During this time, she filled many roles including creative director, copy writer and 'anything in between'. EM
believes that she was consistently underpaid by as much as 50 per cent because she was a woman, although she acknowledges that her fluctuating employment history may have contributed. She admitted that she was not particularly career driven.

After three years, her marriage broke down and she returned to Sydney, aged 43. Her age now became a major obstacle to employment in advertising. Finally, she secured a job with a small agency, which retained her for three years. After a change of policy in relation to advertising accounts, EM decided to leave.

At this time, she entered her de facto relationship with her present partner and they set up a company to market leather products. She was retrenched when one of the major shareholders decided that the company had to downsize. Her next step was to take on direct marketing of cosmetic products. She also enrolled in a 'Jobsearch' program with the CES, and did courses in the use of computers, financial management and retailing. She was highly critical of these courses, claiming that they catered for 'the lowest common denominator' and provided no help for the participants once the training period was over.

In the two years before the interview, EM had applied for a number of jobs to which her skills and experience were applicable, but had been interviewed only twice. She was told, variously, that her extensive experience in advertising was no longer relevant, that employment agencies considered her as being 'over the hill', and she was sure many of her résumés had gone straight into the wastepaper basket. Although she had numerous excellent references, they were obviously of no value. EM recalled her mother's advice to 'make the best of it', which meant resigning herself to the fact that she would not get another job in advertising.

EM also remarked that she had come to realise much more acutely that she had been discriminated against as a woman throughout her working life. EM's case appears as a well-developed example of 'gendered ageism'.
## Appendix

### Table 1: Age distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
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### Table 2: Marital status

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
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### Table 3: Country of birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Of the 29 in the 'other' category, 18 can be classified as being of non-English speaking background (NESB). The others came as children and were locally educated.

### Table 4: Education level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>Primary only</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some secondary</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed secondary</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
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### Table 5: Previous and present employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Previous</th>
<th>Present</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled manual</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6: Present employment status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7: Mode of leaving previous employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Leaving</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resignation</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrenchment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary redundancy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (incl. no previous job)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8: Mode of finding present employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Finding</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private agency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contacts</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper advertisement</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

ABS (1994), *Job Search Experiences of Unemployed Persons*, Cat. no. 6222.0


Reed, R. (1996), *The Invisibilty of Older Women Workers*, report for DEET, Canberra, AGPS.


