

AGEING WORKFORCE READY

NEWSLETTER #3
OCTOBER 2020



The Ageing Workforce Ready (AWR) project is making a difference to the mental health and wellbeing of Victorian workers, with funding received from WorkSafe's WorkWell Mental Health Improvement Fund.

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THE PANDEMIC HASN'T MADE AGEISM WORSE, IT HAS INSTEAD EXPOSED AGEISM, WHICH IS A GOOD THING.

ASHTON APPLEWHITE

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The AWR project website is now live. Packed full of useful information, videos and links, the website is a great centralised resource to find information on the ageing workforce, retirement and the AWR project. You can access the website at www.awrproject.com.au

The Old Depot online community was launched; a unique online platform for late-career public transport employees. The community focussed on retirement, late-career navigation and work/life transitions, with blogs, quizzes, activities and resources on these topics.

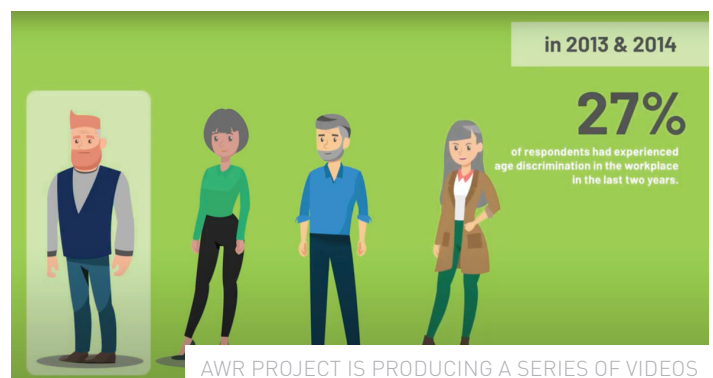
Maturity of Practice (MPI) data collection from seven of the participating pilot organisations has been completed, and the reports are being well received. Insights have also been shared with BusVic to identify themes that can be addressed more broadly to target work-related factors.

A social media campaign ran from July aimed at raising awareness about important issues including ageism, mental health and ageing workforce myths. For those wanting to address these issues, there are resources and information on the AWR website. The posts can be found on LinkedIn and Facebook, along with an article published in Dynamic Business.

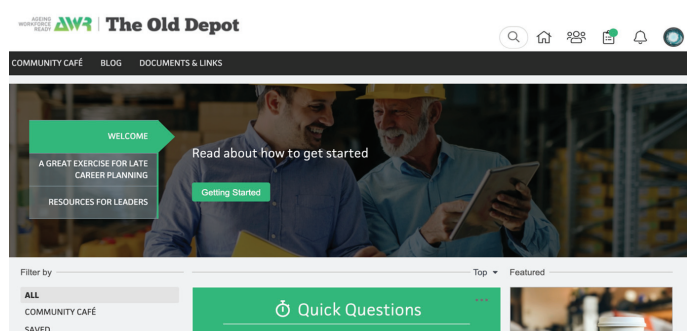
New videos feature on the AWR YouTube channel, including a case study summarising the project's progress, an explanation of the link to mental health, and a presentation recorded for COTA Victoria.

BusVic invited the project to conduct a webinar for leaders who need more ideas and guidance about how to support their older workers through the impacts of COVID-19.

In the spirit of co-design, a mid-project review was facilitated for the Steering Committee in which we looked at project inputs such as the MPI data and roundtables. These insights are being used to ensure we're on track for the remainder of the project deliverables.



THE OLD DEPOT



THE OLD DEPOT COMMUNITY HOMEPAGE

The Old Depot was launched on 14th May 2020, and the AWR project team worked hard to grow and promote it.

Participation grew steadily, and we attracted 70 members and over 600 blog views. However, we struggled to achieve active participation on the platform despite promoting it through a number of channels.

Unfortunately, despite a large readership of the blogs and positive feedback from stakeholders, the community participation was where the real value of the platform lay.

Without this, there were more effective ways to utilise project resources to raise awareness and improve late-career and retirement transitions. We therefore decided to close The Old Depot and are in the process of making the resources already developed available through the project website and training modules.

We still believe there is incredible value in a peer-to-peer support for people in their late career. There are online groups for many other topics, but not ones we can find that share resources, information and emotional support at this life-stage.

We have launched a pilot [Facebook community](#): Transitioning to Retirement. Facebook is a familiar platform that many older people already use without needing to sign up to something new, so perhaps the barrier to entry will be lower and we'll attract more conversation this way.

COMING SOON

- Delivery of manager training to pilot organisations .
- Support for industry partners as they implement the MPI recommendations.
- Ongoing resources and blogs via the website and Facebook.
- White paper about late career and transition to retirement.
- Conference presentations for BusVic Association and Health Benefits of Good Work.

MPI INSIGHTS

The AWR team has been busy analysing interview data from our industry partner employees, managers and senior leaders.

We have found plenty of useful insights which will be used to guide recommendations presented to each of the participating companies, as well as to BusVic and the relevant unions in the transport industry.

Some of the major themes include:

A general appreciation for the benefits older workers bring to organisations, but some harmful stereotypes about older people still persist.

A need for better use of organisational metrics to help guide ageing workforce strategic plans and interventions.

An almost universal request for organisations to provide more retirement transition support to older workers. This included preparing managers and 'retirement mentors' to have these conversations and providing access to practical resources.

A notable gap in policies and procedures. While existing documentation was generally adequate it often failed to address the specific situation of older workers, and there is opportunity to create further policies addressing areas such as retirement planning and fitness for work.

The AWR project's next step is to use these insights to create practical resources and to support improvements.

- "The ability to handle high pressure situations behind the wheel comes with a lot of experience and wisdom, and ageing workers have this." [Manager]
- "It would be good to have a multi-role person who can tell us 'you can go part time or casual' and 'with your super you can go here and here'." [Employee]
- "We haven't really been taught much around this [retirement planning] so anything we offer is from personal experience." [Manager]
- "You can do a permanent school run, which gives you a purpose to get out of bed each day and keeps the mind going." [Employee]
- "The organisation also needs a reasonable adjustment policy which will put in place parameters for how to make reasonable adjustments." [Senior Leader]

CORONAVIRUS AND THE AGEING WORKFORCE

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted all sectors of society and the ageing workforce is no exception.

Research has found both positive and negative outcomes:

- 36% of people aged 50 to 70 said their mental health has become worse during COVID-19. Although in general, older people tend to be coping better than younger people.
- About a third of people aged 50 to 70 have started to smoke and/or drink more since the start of the pandemic.
- 51% of older Australians believe there has been a positive outcome from the pandemic. This could be more time with family, less time commuting or an increase in physical exercise.

OVER 60'S

34%

Are 'more confident' with technology than before the COVID-19 outbreak

GLOBAL CENTRE FOR MODERN AGEING AUSTRALIA

46%

Said their confidence had not increased, because they were 'already confident'

36%

are smoking more



32%

are drinking more



24%

are getting less sleep



36%

Of people aged 50 to 70 said their **mental health has become worse during COVID** – although older people tend to be coping better than younger people

CENTRE FOR AGEING BETTER

- A third of over-60s claim increased confidence using technology, while another 46% said their confidence hadn't increased because they were already confident technology users.
- 400,000 Australians aged between 51 and 65 are estimated to have their hours and employment reduced.

Throughout the pandemic we have seen ageist sentiments being more widely expressed. For example, older people are being called on to take a disproportionate impact of the



Supported by



economic fallout of the pandemic, and there is an implication that older people's lives are more expendable than others.

At the Ageing Workforce Ready Project we believe there are many reasons why older workers are good for business; not least the maturity, insight and wisdom they can bring to the workforce.

Just as there are benefits from diversity in gender and culture amongst employees, there are also benefits from age diversity, and a global pandemic does not change this fact.

SOURCES

- [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Brotherhood of St Laurence and Nous Group](#)
- [Every Age Counts](#)
- [Global Centre for Modern Ageing](#)
- [The Centre for Ageing Better](#)

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Program funding: WorkSafe Victoria

AWR Project oversight: AustralianSuper

AWR Project delivery: Transitioning Well

Industry Partners: BusVic, Transdev, Yarra Trams

Stakeholders: Superfriend, RTBU, TWU

In addition, we are finding that many organisations are interested in what we are doing for a whole variety of reasons.



PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH THOSE IN YOUR NETWORK.

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