AGEING WORKFORCE READY

AWR PROJECT

MATURITY OF PRACTICE INDEX

THEMES FROM PILOT ORGANISATIONS

This summary includes insights from focus groups and interviews conducted with employees, managers and senior managers from the participating public transport industry partners.

ROADMAP

Senior leaders saw older workers as reliable and a source of valuable maturity and experience. Some common stereotypes about older people were expressed, such as older workers taking more sick leave, being resistant to change and reluctant to adopt technology. No participating companies formally incorporated older workers into their strategic planning or generated a set of metrics to provide insight into their ageing workforce profile.

RECRUITMENT

This industry is known to attract older workers, and while several companies would like to diversify the age of their workforce there did not seem to be any resistance to hiring older people. The main concern was that the people recruited were fit for work and had sufficient maturity to do the job well.

RETENTION

Fairness, social interaction and safety were found to be some of the core values that drive employees within the transport industry. This led to many positive experiences including low levels of discrimination, a strong culture of informal mentoring, and adoption of general improvements that help all drivers including older workers.

Participants talked positively about their managers with older workers respecting younger managers, on the whole. The conversations that managers found hardest were those focussing on mental health, and several acknowledged that resources to help with retirement conversations would be beneficial.

A review of the policies and procedures of the participating companies showed some consistency in the age-related gaps in their documentation. There was a tendency for companies to adopt policies that were adequate but that did not explicitly address ways to meet the unique needs of this section of the workforce.

Older drivers seemed to find flexibility that works for them within a system that can be quite inflexible given the nature of the industry. Full-time, part-time and casual positions give people flexible work options, as do school routes, charter work, split-shifts and lifestyle rosters. Some people commented that relief work and variable starting times were particularly challenging as they got older and prefer regular hours and routes. Managers try to accommodate reasonable requests (e.g. for doctor's appointments). Approaches to structuring and approving leave varied across companies and is an opportunity to introduce greater age-appropriate flexibility.

Some companies had specific health interventions such as access to gyms and an on-site physio. Voluntary health initiatives were not age-specific and were seen as having mixed effectiveness. Employees appreciated when length of service was acknowledged.

External Driver Accreditation (DA) and performance management were the mechanisms most often used to identify and address fitness for work issues. Several themes were raised around fitness for work and adjustments including physical health, breaks (including toilet breaks), mental health, monitoring fitness for work, and fairness of making individual adjustments.

RETIREMENT

Managing finances and accessing financial advice was raised by all levels at every company. While visits by superannuation representatives were appreciated, it wasn't seen as being sufficient. It was suggested that people should think about finances at a younger age, make a plan and ensure they are informed.

Very few people seemed to have a coherent plan for retirement. Several expressed a real fear that they would die soon after retiring. None of the participating companies had a formal retirement program. Some saw retirements relating to employee's private life and managers shouldn't cross that line. However, others expressed that there is a role for companies to support people as they transition to retirement and managers wanted skills and tools that would support them to have those conversations.

This industry allows people a natural transition to retirement path by ramping down the workload. However, performance issues are sometimes the catalyst for retirement, rather than a planned and supported path.

There was a noticeable difference between companies and depots about maintaining connection with retired employees. The differences were not strictly split by metro/regional, but seemed to be dependent on culture, history and demographics of a depot. One company had a reasonably formal approach with newsletters, ongoing gym access, a social club and invitations to the annual Christmas Party. Other companies found that retirees would drop in to visit or that drivers would stay in touch with each other where friendships had formed.

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