



20 May 2004

Julia Brennan  
Australia's Demographic challenges  
Social Policy Division  
The Treasury  
Langton Cres  
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Julia

### **AUSTRALIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the paper "Australia's Demographic Challenges". I am a Demographer and Town Planner so I am interested in the issues from a professional point of view. I also believe I have some practical knowledge of the problem of the older worker trying to enter the workforce.

I believe more immigration by younger workers may need to be encouraged not just increased participation of the older worker. Immigration levels were very high in the 1950's but have declined significantly in recent years. Why doesn't Australia accept more refugees?

Current working arrangements are too inflexible for the older worker who may need to leave the workforce at short notice to care for elderly parents or relatives who are living longer. It is very hard to find well paid part-time or well paid casual work.

Also there are a lot of prejudices against the older worker. Younger workers are now managers and they do not want to work with older workers. Older workers find it humiliating to work for younger workers who may now be their managers.

Older workers find it harder to concentrate at work or to adjust to new work practices. It is not necessarily a skills issue but a reduced capacity to absorb new information when one gets older. Older workers are also less able to do hard manual work due to a decline in their physical abilities. Hence, I agree that good health is a major factor in workforce participation.

I support a new Choice 5 which is to encourage more immigration to Australia.

I have made a brief submission but would like to expand on it at the workshop in Melbourne on June 1.

Yours faithfully

BIRUTE DON – DIRECTOR