

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Employment whitepaper takes positive steps towards addressing barriers preventing older people from engaging in the workforce**

Addressing the barriers keeping many older people out of the workforce is crucial – and today's employment whitepaper takes some steps towards breaking down those barriers, COTA Australia, the leading advocacy organisation for older Australians says.

Corey Irlam, Acting Chief Executive Officer of COTA Australia, said it was good to see commitments in the whitepaper aimed at addressing the issues facing older people including incentives for people to keep working while they receive the Age Pension or government concessions and action to address ageism in the workforce.

"This whitepaper takes important steps towards breaking down some of the barriers keeping older people who want to work out of the workforce," Mr Irlam said.

"Providing incentives for people to keep working while they receive the Age Pension by making the 'work bonus' a permanent feature will make a difference to many older people looking to continue to work.

"Allowing people to retain access to the government's concession cards for a six month period after they start to earn an income to help jobseekers transition back to work is also a welcome move."

Mr Irlam said the whitepaper's acknowledgement of discrimination as a key structural barrier keeping people out of the workforce is key and COTA Australia looks forward to working with the government to ensure practical changes to address ageism are implemented.

"We know that systemic ageism is a key reason older people are locked out of the workforce and it's good to see that acknowledged in the employment whitepaper.

"The Treasurer says he wants Australians to be masters of their own destiny. Older Australians want that too, but there are a number of barriers getting in the way of that and many of those barriers boil down to ageism at the end of the day.

"As we live longer and healthier lives, we need to make sure older people are being given the opportunity to continue to work, or get back into the workforce, if that's what they choose to do. That's not just important for older people, but for all of us.

"Older Australians are a resource with valuable experience that can and should be shared. Without harnessing that we're robbing every generation.

"The whitepaper also identified the role of businesses in creating an inclusive workplace including by implementing recruitment practices and providing opportunities that are free of discrimination and designed to allow people to balance work with other responsibilities.

"Creating an age-inclusive workplace is important not only for older people, but employees of all ages. Having a flexible working environment, free of conscious or unconscious biases like ageism is a good first step towards attracting older workers into your workplaces."

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