

MEDIA RELEASE

## **Older workers discriminated against because of perception they can't learn new things, especially technology**

**3 May 2018** - In a Benevolent Society survey of 1,005 people aged 50 plus from across Australia, people currently in the workplace and people seeking work were often told they were too old to learn new things and particularly too old to learn technology. These were often 'excuses' for people over the age of 50 not being successful in their job hunt.

Marlene Krasovitsky, Director Campaigns – Older Australians, The Benevolent Society, says, "Being discriminated against because of your age, whether young or old, is ageism. Particularly in those over 50, they may be told, or it's implied, that they're too old to learn new technology and thus won't get a position or won't get promoted. Age discrimination is also illegal."

The survey was commissioned by The Benevolent Society and carried out by PureProfile with 1,005 people age 50 and over, 92 per cent of whom were working either full time or part time. While a third of those surveyed said they had never experienced ageism – being discriminated against because of one's age – almost 40 per cent said they didn't understand ageism or had heard the term but weren't sure what it meant. But when they described their experiences in the workplace, it was clear that many had encountered ageism.

In the survey, 32 per cent of people said there was a perception that older people could not learn new technology.

"Ageism is so entrenched in the workplace and in our lives, people don't even realise when they're being discriminated against. It's almost as though it's accepted, especially when it comes to technology.

“People said they were told: ‘you’re not up with the latest tech’, ‘Why should I invest in training you as you’re too old’, ‘you’re not able to learn new technology’ “, said Marlene.

Almost half of people surveyed they had seen or been confronted with “older people don’t want to learn new things”.

Several studies have shown that people in the technology industry themselves experience ageism, including a recent cull by IBM (see Pro Republica, 22 March 2018:

<https://features.propublica.org/ibm/ibm-age-discrimination-american-workers/> ).

Said Marlene, “The idea that older people can’t learn new things or new technology is absurd. People over 50 used to use typewriters – they now use computers. They went from using carbon paper to scanning and emailing documents. They’re using social media in a big way – Facebook (70 per cent of people over aged 55 use it), Instagram and Twitter (21 per cent of people over 50 use it), LinkedIn (24 per cent of people over age 50) [**Source:** The Pew Research Centre, Social Media Update, 2016]. In fact, people over 55 are the second biggest demographic on Facebook [**Source:** emarketer, 2018]. Why does this perception exist?”

The Benevolent Society’s Older Australians advocacy team received a grant from the Wicking Trust Foundation to fund the EveryAGE Counts campaign. EveryAGE Counts aims to change negative perceptions about getting older and towards older people, and mobilise a holistic political response to the opportunities presented by our ageing population. The campaign is expected to last for several years.

“Changing attitudes and behaviours takes time. Effective advocacy requires money so that people will understand, and get involved with, what we’re trying to accomplish. We are extremely pleased to have been selected by the Wicking Trust for this grant. Working hand in hand, philanthropy and advocacy are powerful forces for change,” added Marlene.

For more information, go to <https://everyagecounts.org.au>

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### **About The Benevolent Society**

The Benevolent Society is Australia's first charity, working as a catalyst for social justice and change for over 200 years. Founded in 1813, The Benevolent Society advocates for a better life for all Australians, and provides in-home services for older Australians, and people with disability, as well as providing programs in Family support and early intervention. We help people age well and live their best lives, staying in their homes wherever possible.

For more information, please visit [www.benevolent.org.au](http://www.benevolent.org.au), on Facebook/thebenevolentsociety or on Twitter - @BenevolentAU