



Recruiters have "a lot of work to do" on mature-age worker stereotypes

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Average-age consultants tend not to recruit candidates who are "as old as their mum" and need to work on their biases, according to Federal Workforce Participation Minister Sharman Stone.

Stone, who this week launched the Adage awards to recognise top employers of mature-age workers, said it was time that recruitment companies adjusted the language and images in their job ads in order to appeal to mature workers.

"This is one of our problems - the visual imagery in a lot of job ads is still of younger people and the wording of the ad is 'come and join an energetic, innovative, fun team', which just screams at the 55-year-old or 60-year-old 'not me'."

Stone also criticised the "Toyota-man"-style image used by Adage - which is a new job board for the over-40s - for its promotions (see the "Why hire with Adage?" button on its "about us" page), saying "he looks about 45".

She said the average recruiter - "the person sitting across the desk interviewing candidates" - is in their 30s, "and so if they've got a candidate who's as old as their mum who's got all the credentials, perhaps more, than the other candidates. they won't be able to contemplate adding them to the team.

"So we've got a lot of work to do in that stereotypical area".

She told Recruiter Daily after the speech that it's important that people who interview candidates are conscious of their own biases towards employing people of a similar age and life experience to themselves.

"For example, a 28-year-old recruiter may subconsciously be against recruiting a highly competitive candidate who happens to be as old as his mother."

She told the audience that the Federal Government was "absolutely committed" to helping mature-age workers.

"We've got a role model in a 67-year-old Prime Minister. He's the fittest 67-year-old I know - I've tried to walk beside him, I call that running. Sure, he's got some hearing deficit. you've got to lean closer to that ear," she said.

Stone said that in some areas there had long been a sense that "you keep working as long as you're able to", such as in agribusiness and in the creative arts.

"When did we tell a superb writer or a musician or a poet, that 'you're 62 years - stop!'. We don't.

"So we've got to mature as a society and say, the grey hair means nothing. The lines are character, we no longer should venerate youth as the only place to be. It's a fantastic place to be, and so is the maturity and the ability to pass on what you've learned, the capacity to empathise.", said the 56-year-old Stone.

Stone cited her family's experience, where four generations were working on the family farm, including her 92-year-old grandmother, who raised all the lambs and fed the chooks.