

Colley, Linda and Price, Robin A. (2007) Responding to an Ageing Workforce in an Australian State. In Proceedings Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER), 5th International Conference on Management, pages pp. 1-15, Athens, Greece.

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**5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Management  
2-5 July 2007  
Athens**

Title: *Responding to an ageing workforce in an Australian state*  
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Many industrialised nations have changing demographic profiles, as increased longevity and decreased birth rates lead to an ageing population. This presents significant challenges for workforces, as older employees retire and there are insufficient numbers of younger employees to take their place. This leads to skills shortages, and strong competition for those who are available.

This paper considers these issues in the context of Queensland, the third largest state of Australia. The Queensland Government is addressing the issues for all industries in the state, primarily through a Skills Plan and an Experience Pays Awareness Strategy. As the largest employer in the state, the Queensland Government has commenced implementing the Experience Pays Awareness Strategy within its own workforce. The approach touches on many facets of HRM. The HRM policy framework and tools are examined for their potential to support increased participation of older employees. A range of issues are addressed for older workers, including their competence and health and safety issues. Issues for managers include addressing myths and subtle discrimination against older workers, as well as managing cross-generational workforce. Other strategies and methods are targeted at cultural factors, such as the expectations of older workers, and the myths and discrimination against older workers. Yet other strategies are aimed at organisational issues such retention of knowledge and succession planning.

## INTRODUCTION

Many industrialised nations have changing demographic profiles, as increased longevity and decreased birth rates lead to an ageing population. This presents significant challenges for managing workforces, as older employees retire and there are insufficient numbers of younger employees to take their place. This leads to skills shortages, and strong competition for the remaining workers.

This paper considers these issues in the context of Queensland, the third largest state of Australia. The Queensland Government is addressing the issue of an ageing workforce for all industries in the state, primarily through a Skills Plan and an 'Experience Pays Awareness Strategy'. This paper focuses on the experience of the Queensland public sector. As the largest employer in the state, the Queensland Government has commenced implementing the Experience Pays Awareness Strategy within its own workforce. The approach incorporates many facets of HRM. This paper examines the HRM policy framework and tools employed by the Queensland public sector for their potential to support the increased participation of older employees.

Why are demographics changing?

The populations of Australia and many western countries are ageing. The degree of this ageing means that 'the population over age sixty-five represents 20 per cent-30 per cent of the population aged twenty to sixty-four in G7 countries' (OECD, 2005:2). If current trends continue, those aged over 65 will represent between 35 per cent to 50 per cent of the population by 2030.

There are four dimensions that explain an ageing population (Jackson, 2005; 2006). Firstly, *numerical ageing* occurs through an increase in the number of older people. This increase in older people can be attributed to improvements in life expectancy, both in infant mortality and improved longevity, and is important for government since it increases demand on the welfare state. Secondly, *structural ageing* occurs when the proportion of the population classified as aged increases. This ageing results from declines in birth rates, so that older people come to form a larger group of the population. This structural ageing is of concern for government since it leads to a decline in the number of people of working age within a population, and a consequent decline in the number of taxpayers. Thirdly, these trends lead to a *natural decline*, which is more deaths than births. It is predicted that Australia will experience natural decline by the 2030's or '40s – even with an annual net migration gain of around 100,000. It is already occurring across all of Europe, Canada and Japan (Jackson 2005, 2006). Fourthly, *absolute decline* occurs where there is insufficient migration to replace the lost births and increased deaths. Absolute decline has begun in many European countries and is currently beginning in Japan. Both will occur in China in the 2030s – ahead of Australia. Indeed population decline is expected to begin at a global level from around the end of this century. These shifts in the

demographic profile of a population have profound implications for government, in terms of the nature of the welfare state and funding the provision of services to citizens. However, shifting demographics are also important for government, as a major employer of labour. and also for employers who require a labour force.

### Changing demographics in Queensland

The experience of changing demographic profiles affects different states within Australia to differing degrees. Queensland is one of Australia's largest states in the Australian federation, being second largest in land mass, and third largest in population with 4 million residents, which comprises more than 20 per cent of Australia's population (OESR 2006). Queensland is also a state where the population is growing, and the population is projected to grow by 18 per cent by 2016, and by 40 per cent by 2026 (to 5.6 million) (OESW 2006). However, much of this growth is due to interstate and international migration, so it is not expected to radically alter the structural ageing process in the Queensland population, but the process will be delayed (Jackson 2006).

Most of those who migrate to Queensland are in the key working ages of 25-44 years, which are also the key ages for having children/families, so you get strong gains at the youngest ages as well. Relatively few of Queensland's migrants are aged 65+ (3 per cent last year). Thus, migration will delay natural decline in Queensland until at least the 2040s (Jackson 2005; Jackson 2006). As well as the demographic profile differing between the Australian states, the demographic profile of the population is highly diverse within states. Of 125 local government areas within Queensland, 51 (or 41 per cent) already have fewer entrants than exits. By 2016 this figure is projected to be 83 local government areas (or 66 per cent), so while Queensland itself will still have a positive population growth ratio in 2016, that will not be the case in two-thirds of the state.

Changes to the age profile of the population affect labour market entry and exit numbers. ABS projections suggest that the number of Queensland labour market exits (by people aged fifty-five to sixty-four years) is rapidly approaching the number of entrants (aged fifteen-twenty-four years), and will exceed them by 2020. This will be a little later than national trends, where this will have occurred around 2017-2018. This is not due to a decline in the number of young people, only a decline in their ratio compared to those leaving the labour market (Jackson, 2005).

### **The impact on the shape of the labour market**

Changes to the age profile of the population affect labour market entry and exit numbers. Indeed, the Australian government has identified that the workforce is ageing more rapidly than the general population (Parliament of Australia 2005). The demographic structure of the Australian labour force replicates that of the population as a whole, with an increasing proportion of ageing workers. Couple this with higher retention rates of young people in education and the result is skill

shortages in the labour market. Skill shortages take a variety of forms. Genuine skills shortages occur when an employer is unable to fill vacancies at prevailing conditions. Recruitment difficulties occur when an employer experiences difficulty filling a position, although there may be sufficient numbers of workers with the required skills in the labour market. The third type of skill shortage is a skill gap, where there are not sufficient numbers of people within the labour market who possess the required skills (Australian Senate 2003).

One reason for skill shortages is an ageing workforce. Other reasons include: an employer's poor image; new industries; attraction and retention problems created by poor wages, working conditions and career prospects; technological changes; and a lack of investment in training. Skill shortages are exacerbated by low levels of unemployment and a tight labour market, such as Australia is currently experiencing (DET 2005). Another factor that contributes to the problem is the trend towards the early retirement of older workers, either through forced retirement or retirement by choice (Shaw 2002). This has particular consequences for the ageing worker as most employers are reluctant to employ workers over age 45 (Patrickson & Hartmann 1995), and the current median retirement age in Australia is 55 (Patrickson & Ranzijn 2004).

As a result of changes to the demographic profile of the population, Australian employers will all be facing the same problem, searching for younger workers who simply are not there. This will lead to increasing competition between industries, and higher labour costs. Employers will have to increase workforce participation in whatever way is possible. This means addressing under-utilised segments of the labour market – young people, unemployed people, people staying home to care for children, and older workers. Of all of these groups, older workers are arguably the most suitable and valuable in terms of maturity, work ethic, organisational experience and potential commitment to an employer.

### **HRM strategies for an ageing workforce**

There is some agreement in the literature on a broad group of strategies to attract and retain older workers. Patrickson and Ranzijn (2004) state that there are three main influences on retirement choice: health, financial position and motivation to work. It is therefore important that HR staff tailor their policies for ageing workers with these influences in mind.

Limited promotional opportunities are identified as a key factor in creating a desire to exit the organisation. This is particularly important issue for employers, such as public sector organisations, where jobs and salaries are grouped in scales or bands and often the older workers will be sitting at the top of the salary scale for their job classification, with limited opportunity for further upward movement (Elliott 1995).

Allowing and encouraging employees to shift to more flexible working time arrangements is also widely recommended (Elliott 1995). Flexible working arrangements, originally designed to retain workers with caring commitments, can be equally useful for allowing ageing workers a phase-in period when approaching retirement (Patrickson & Hartmann 1995; Elliott 1995; Patrickson and Ranzijn 2004). It is, however, necessary to ensure that ageing workers are not financially penalised by this process, as they would be if their superannuation payout was an average of their last three years wages. Ageing workers should be encouraged to work part-time, or work from home where possible, so that the transition to retirement becomes a phased process.

Another solution is to review the organisation's retirement policies, and if possible, reduce the attractiveness of early retirement (Patrickson and Ranzijn 2004). While, on one level, the exit of ageing workers from the organisation provides opportunities for the promotion of younger workers, which is a positive retention strategy, it can also bring the loss of significant organisational knowledge and experience (Elliott 1995). Elliott (1995) and Patrickson and Ranzijn (2004) suggest running retirement seminars where attendees are educated in the realities of financing retirement. This financial advice will enable workers to ascertain whether they can afford to retire, and consequently may encourage ageing workers to stay in the workforce for longer.

Aligned with these financial planning seminars, HR policies should be developed so that employees can trial retirement, and if they find it does not suit their needs, return to the workforce within 12 months of taking retirement. Another strategy is to allow workers to retire, but to re-engage them on short term contracts for fixed periods when they will be available to meet known fluctuations in demand. This benefits the individual worker by providing a level of income and also enables the organisation to meet their labour supply needs.

Another means of dealing with any valid problems encountered by ageing workers is to use the job analysis process to formalise the requirements of the job, and if necessary, restructure the job in order to meet the competencies of the ageing worker (Elliott 1995). Murray and Syed (2005) also advocate changes to job design to reduce discriminatory practices, and to make jobs inherently more rewarding.

The literature also recommends a range of strategies for increasing worker motivation to remain in the workforce. One such recommendation is the introduction of functionally based teams that emphasise collaborative action, so that skills are shared and each team member actively contributes (Jorgensen 2005a). Aligned with this team based structure, ageing workers should be encouraged to perform a mentoring role for younger and less experienced workers. This not only enhances the organisational knowledge of the less experienced workers, but recognises and respects the experience and knowledge of the ageing worker (Jorgensen 2005a). It is also argued that a team

based management will reduce the hierarchical 'command based management' structure that exists in some public sector organisations, and therefore will enhance the workplace experience and organisational culture (Jorgensen 2004). Making the workplace more enjoyable and having workers feel they are making a valued contribution will aid in the retention of all workers, not just ageing ones.

While these recommendations for the introduction of HR strategies and policies may contribute towards the retention of ageing workers, a simple policy approach is unlikely to be enough. Numerous negative stereotypes exist about the capacity of older workers. Older workers are often considered to be slower, less committed, less productive, less adaptable to new processes and technologies and unwilling to change (see for example, summary in Patrickson & Hartmann 1995). Regardless of the diversity of views as to the validity of these stereotypes (McNaught & Barth 1992; Brooke 2003), a focus on policy changes may be too simplistic to overcome this ingrained culture of age discrimination. Schein (1985) identifies culture as having three levels. The first layer consists of artefacts, technology and visible and audible behaviour, which is visible, but may be hard to decipher. The second layer is espoused values or what people say they believe. The final layer is more tacit assumptions, usually invisible or taken for granted, such as the nature of relationships and human activity (Schein 1985).

It is possible that too much focus is placed on the visible level – policies and artefacts – and even the espoused values, without adequate focus on the underlying assumptions.

Achieving sustainable changes in workplaces requires activities to change this awareness level. This might include developing a broader culture of learning, rather than short term training for specific skills. It is essential to ensure that ageing workers are given equitable access to training and educational opportunities, as most of the evidence suggests the training needs of older workers are largely ignored (Patrickson & Hartmann 1995). Given that studies show that ageing workers are more likely to stay with their employer, any investment in training will be rewarded.

Managers and the general workforce both need education regarding the benefits associated with employment of older workers (Elliott 1995). Awareness training programs should be run for managers, as well as training managers in how to restructure jobs to meet the needs of ageing workers. Jorgensen (2005a) argues that older workers can be supported to remain in the workforce for longer if the organisation creates and retains an organisational culture that makes it a desirable place to work. As part of this cultural change process older workers also need to be educated about their potential and to raise their expectations.

Given the importance of an ageing workforce for government, both in terms of provision of social welfare, and as a major employer, all Australian state governments have introduced a range of policies to attempt to alleviate the potential effects. The Queensland government has taken a proactive approach to

changing citizen's perceptions of the value of ageing workers in an attempt to promote cultural change. The government, in its role as a major employer has also introduced a range of HR strategies to deal with its own ageing workforce. The following section provides a preliminary analysis of these strategies.

### **Queensland Government in its role as a government**

The Queensland labour market has changed extensively. First, it has experienced strong employment growth, with a boom in coal and other industries. Queensland created over half of the new full-time jobs across Australia in 2004. This has resulted in a rapid decline in Queensland's unemployment rate, and the 'tightest labour market for thirty years' (DET, 2005:2). Additionally, the labour market has changed due to the information and technology revolutions, which have changed the nature of required skills, as well as the nature of work, and the nature of occupations. There has been greater than average growth in professional and associate professional jobs, which require the highest skill levels. There has also been a growth in non-standard forms of work (such as casual, part-time, contractors, and labour hire) across Australia, with flexibility being traded for job security, and full-time jobs constituting only around half of all employment (DET, 2005).

All these factors have led to a situation where there are skill shortages in the labour market. Skills shortages occur for a range of reasons, including ageing workforces, poor image meaning fewer job seekers, new industries, attraction and retention problems due to poor salaries and/or working conditions, poor career prospects, technology changes, and declining investment in training due to casualisation or work intensification. These may take the form of genuine shortages in numbers or a shortage of contemporary skills within an occupation (Australian Senate, 2003; DEST, 2002; Green, Machin and Wilkinson, 1998). The federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations monitors national and state skills shortages. Queensland tends to experience similar shortages to those at a national level. Many of the professional occupations identified in these skill shortage lists are key groups for the operation of public services, including: engineers, accountants, registered nurses in various fields, other health specialists, secondary teachers, and information and communications technology workers (DEWR, 2004). The Queensland Government identified changing demographics and skills shortages as a prominent issue, and prepared the Queensland Skills Plan to address skills shortages through initiatives such as training and workforce participation (DEIR 2005).

### **EXPERIENCE PAYS AWARENESS STRATEGY**

One strategy under the Skills Plan was "age proofing our workplaces through the new Experience Pays Awareness Strategy" (EPAS) (DEIR 2005). This strategy recognises that older workers tend to be undervalued in the workplace, due to

systemic and overt discrimination, and takes steps to attempt to remedy this situation. The Experience Pays Awareness Strategy, will be implemented over three years, and revolves around:

- forming partnerships with peak industry bodies, unions, government agencies, registered training organisations and community based organisations to maximise opportunities for older workers,
- providing information and referral services for older workers seeking employment and training assistance,
- raising awareness and encouraging the adoption of age-friendly recruitment and workplace practices by businesses
- highlighting the benefits of adopting age-friendly recruitment and workplace practices through a state-wide campaign (REFERENCE NEEDED).

A range of liaison officers have been appointed including representatives of the major unions and employer associations (such as the Queensland Council of Unions, Australian Workers' Union, Commerce Queensland, and the Australian Industry Group). These liaison officers will be responsible for communication and awareness raising within the cohort they represent.

The program has only recently commenced with a two day workshop in January 2007, to develop promotional material, such as brochures. An 'Experience Pays Pack' has been developed to inform employers of the problem and provide suggestions for improving HR practices. The pack contains guidelines on improving recruitment practices, such as attracting candidates over 45 years, inducting them to make them comfortable, and retaining them through job share and phased retirement options. Another part of the pack deals with the retraining of existing mature age employees, to ensure they are up to date with technology, pass on their knowledge to younger employees and using them for new opportunities in the organisation. The final section of the pack focuses on the retention of older workers through flexible working arrangements, attention to health and safety issues, and promoting the values of experience and age.

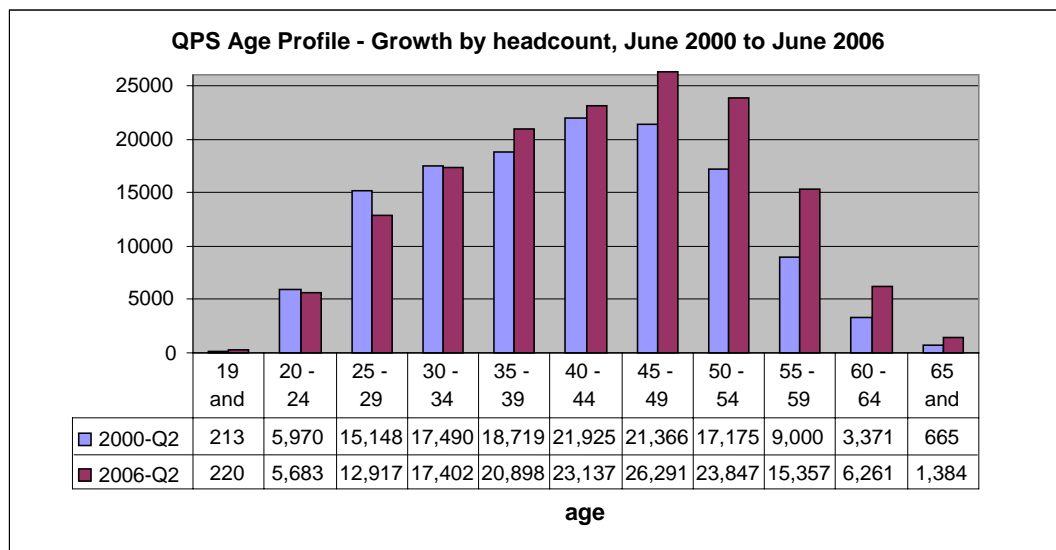
The strategy was formally launched in February 2007. Communication included a formal launch by the Minister, television, radio and print advertising, direct marketing and a toll free number for employers to ring to request a free information kit on how to recruit, retrain and retain experienced workers. Letters have also been sent to all Ministers (or equivalent) of departments and public sector offices to advise them of EPAS (OPSC 2007). These strategies are relatively recent and it is too early to judge their effectiveness in changing employer' perceptions of ageing workers, but the Queensland government is also using its role as a major employer to influence community perceptions of the value of ageing workers, and to manage its own ageing workforce..

## What the Queensland public service is doing as an employer

In the Australian federation, public services are divided between federal, state and local government levels. Generally, state public services undertake a range of functions, including the direct provision of services (such as health, education, roads, police, and emergency services), as well as management and regulation functions (such as justice, natural resources, employment, environment, and local government) and promotion of state concerns (such as tourism, trade and economic development).

The Queensland Public Service (QPS) workforce is old and ageing, but it is also growing. The overall growth in the number of employees was around 17% between 2000 and 2006, and this growth differs between age cohorts (see Figure 1). The number of employees in all age categories below 30 years of age has decreased over the period, while the number in all age groups above 30 years has increased, with those above 45 years rapidly increasing. While there has been a 108% growth in the 65+ age cohort, this represents only a small portion of the workforce. More significant is the 70.6% growth in the 55-59 year cohort and the 85.7% growth in the 60-64 year cohort.

**Figure 1 QPS Age profile, Growth by headcount June 2000 to June 2006**



The QPS, like many public sector organisations, has many leave and hours policies that are more flexible than many private sector organisations. In the last decade, with a large proportion of the males and females in the workforce having dependent children, the Queensland Government has further enhanced employment conditions to accommodate employees' responsibilities to care for both children and elderly relatives (DIR 2005b). In the last five years, it has recognised that many of these same policies can be utilised as specific strategies to retain older workers.

The QPS introduced flexible working hours arrangements in the early 1990s, replacing mandatory working hours and days with more flexible accounting for hours on a four-weekly basis. This enabled employees to vary their starting and finishing times, within agency parameters, and access whole days off (*Queensland Government Departments – Hours of Work Arrangements – Industrial Agreement*). In a response to the peak trade union body, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), campaign for reasonable hours, the Queensland Government has also entered into enterprise bargaining commitments to address workload management issues (Certified Agreement 2003). A Workload Management Tool has been developed to assist with research and monitoring of workload issues and employees and unions are able to raise these issues at agency level consultative committees (DIR 2005b).

In addition to flexibility of time, the QPS has policies to support flexibilities in the place of work. Working from home (or telecommuting) was approved in July 2002, as a measure to assist employees balance work and life commitments (DIR 2002b). Formal take-up rates appear to have been slow, and it seems to be used more in an ad hoc manner (DIR 2005b). It is unquestionably of appeal to older workers, who list detractions from working as being the effort to travel to and from the workplace (particularly if they have bought retirement or lifestyle change homes some distance from their office).

There are also a variety of options to extend leave periods. Special unpaid leave is available for up to three years, for any purpose, subject to operational convenience (DIR 2005d). Recreation leave on half-pay was introduced in 2005, which allows older workers (and other groups) to take up extended travel opportunities or other interests (DIR 2005b, Memorandum of Agreement 2005). More accessible long service leave provisions were also introduced (long service leave is a legislated entitlement for Australian employees). These include relaxation of restrictions on the purpose of the leave, a reduction in the minimum period of leave, and pro-rata long service leave after 7 years in certain circumstances (Memorandum of Agreement 2005). Purchased leave arrangements are also included in the suite of policies. These arrangements allow employees to “purchase” additional periods of leave over a specified time (often called 48/52 policies) and fund it via salary deductions throughout the year. It was first introduced in 1994, but recently extended, to a minimum of six weeks, with no maximum (Certified Agreement 1994; DIR 2005b; Memorandum of Agreement 2005). It is unclear whether this will have broad appeal, given other simpler processes such as half pay annual leave. All of these policies provide for extended periods of leave or shorter working weeks, most while on full pay, and have appeal for those seeking to transition to retirement.

In addition to these central policies, some agencies are pursuing innovative strategies to engage with their older or retiring workers. Establishment of alumni groups has proven to be a powerful strategy for maintaining contact with

professional employees who are passionate about their field. It provides older workers with an opportunity to both stay up to date with developments, as well as to identify ways in which they might stay involved in paid or unpaid capacities. Some agencies have implemented coaching and mentoring strategies, to ensure the knowledge of older workers is passed on to remaining staff (OPSC 2007)

A longstanding benefit of Australian public services is a strong superannuation fund (a combination of self and employer funded retirement income scheme), with all employees required to contribute at least 5% of their salary, and the employer contributing at least 12.75%. Other arrangements are in place to ensure that transferring to part-time employment in the final years of work does not have a significant impact on the final benefit (with full time salary being counted for part-time employees, and only the length of service multiplier being affected) (QSuper 2006a). Salary packaging arrangements also provide opportunities to contribute additional monies to superannuation (Certified Agreement 2000; Memorandum of Agreement 2005), which might actually result in employees being able to afford to retire earlier. Forthcoming federal government changes to superannuation laws will further assist employees to ease into retirement, without having to retire completely. Employees over age 55 who have not yet retired completely will be able to access their superannuation while still working, by transferring some or all of it into an allocated pension and drawing on it to supplement their income. This raises a number of possibilities for both lifestyle and taxation planning (QSuper 2006b).

While these policies are important for employees making decisions about retirement, organisations must have a range of other policies and strategies to ensure they remain aware of imminent risks to their workforce capacity and plan to minimise these risks. Workforce planning is one tool that should assist agencies to forecast potential risks from retirements of key employees. However, workforce planning is an option rather than a requirement of agencies (due to the decentralised and hands-off approach to public sector human resource management). Workforce planning activities appear to be sporadic across agencies, and agencies rate them as not particularly useful in predicting workforce requirements. There are few central guidelines on succession management and knowledge transfer policies, and most agencies do not have sufficient policies or strategies in place to manage knowledge retention (OPSC 2007).

In addition to this general employment framework, central personnel agencies have provided guidelines on ageing workforce issues for use in agencies. These include: *Guide to managing an ageing workforce* (DIR 2005); and *Workforce Demographics Toolkit: Framework and Strategies for an Ageing Workforce* (DIR 2002). As with many of the central agency resources, these guidelines were produced and placed on the website, but there does not appear to have been subsequent training and support to ensure they were utilised by agencies.

### *Queensland public service culture*

While the QPS has a reasonable framework of work-life balance policies, there is no integrated analysis of how, when or if these policies are utilised by employees. However, there are a number of sources that provide indications about these issues.

In 2005, a Work/Life balance survey was undertaken of more than 13000 employees across 48 agencies in the Queensland public service, as part of a broader initiative to promote understanding of the need to balance work and family responsibilities (Certified Agreement 2003). An on-line survey of employees asked questions about their awareness of work-life balance policies (including leave arrangements and flexible working arrangements) in their organisation, the importance they allocate to these policies, and their perceptions about the extent to which the workplace culture is supportive of work-life balance (DIR, 2005b, Monaghan et al 2005). Generally, employees aged 50 years were the most aware of the policies available. However, they rated the policies as significantly less important than employees in younger age groups. Further, younger workers considered that the workplace culture was significantly more supportive of work-life balance than all other age groups, with a decline as the groups. Interestingly, males rated the workplace culture as less supportive of work-life balance than females, possibly because they use the policies less or perceive that the QPS may be less accepting of males using such policies. Perceptions of workplace culture are important as they are likely to affect the willingness of males to utilise work-life balance policies (Monaghan et al 2005).

Another source of information was discussions with the senior human resource representative in each of the 22 public service agencies. These HR managers recognised that their workforce will be affected by skills shortages in particular occupations and areas, as well as loss of technical and corporate knowledge as senior and experienced people retire. Most had used the central OPSC policies on flexible work arrangements to a high or medium extent, and were aware of the ageing workforce guidelines, but had not yet used them. Most HR managers had developed their own policies on flexible work arrangements, but few had developed policies for their ageing workforce or on phased retirement. These HR managers felt that the managers within their operational area had a reasonable level of understanding of flexible work arrangements, but felt that the awareness of the ageing workforce was mostly low. This resulted in a situation whereby flexible working arrangements policies had been used successfully, but not for ageing workers or phased retirement.

These findings confirm that the policy framework is a starting point, and valued as a resource, but implementation raises other questions and requires other strategies. The HR managers welcomed central assistance with issues such as culture change, myth busting about the capabilities of younger and older workers, and managing intergenerational issues. They also sought QSuper information sessions, to outline for employees how realistic their retirement intentions were.

The QPS is participating in the broader Queensland Government *Experience Pays Awareness Strategy*, which is designed to assist “age-proof” Queensland workplaces. A key focus of the strategy is to debunk myths about the value of older workers, and highlight issues such as the tendency to offer them less training and make them most likely to be offered redundancy. These attitudes are not sustainable in the face of the shrinking workforce and skills shortages. (DEIR 2005). Given that the QPS already has an extensive policy framework in place, it intends to focus on raising awareness and dispelling myths about older workers (OPSC 2007). Most agencies indicated that they were interested in awareness training, as well as guidance on how to implement cultural change and remove discrimination. The project is at an early stage (OPSC 2007).

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has highlighted changes to the demographic profile of the Australian population, in particular, the ageing of Australian society. It has focussed on the case of the state of Queensland and discussed how an ageing population will create an ageing workforce. After reviewing the literature on strategies for dealing with an ageing workforce, the paper describes the strategies put in place by the Queensland government to address the ageing of the population, including an ‘Experience Pays Awareness Strategy’ directed at changing the public perception of older workers. This strategy was only introduced in early 2007, so it is too early to draw firm conclusions about its effectiveness in influencing cultural change within Queensland society, and a greater acceptance of the value of ageing workers. The latter portion of the paper examines the strategies adopted by the Queensland government to deal with its own ageing workforce. Again, this examination is preliminary in nature and it is not possible to judge the effectiveness of these policies in attracting and retaining older workers.

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