

# Submission by a Worker – Inquiry Into the On-Demand Workforce in Victoria

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**Postcode: [redacted text]**

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## The prevalence and nature of on-demand work in Victoria

The Inquiry wants to understand the extent of and issues for the on-demand workforce. We welcome examples or case studies that illustrate the experience of individuals and the perspective of workers in the on-demand economy. The following questions are prompts for people working in the on-demand economy – you do not need to answer all of them or, if you prefer, you can say whatever you like at the end under ‘additional information’.

1. How frequently are you offered on-demand work in Victoria?

2. How much on-demand work do you do each week?

3. In what industries or regions do you work, when working for an on-demand business or platform?

4. Do you have another job and what kind of other job(s) do you have?

## The legal status of on-demand workers

The status of workers in the on-demand economy is a fundamental issue that determines how regulatory frameworks apply to workers. The answer to this question impacts on the rights and obligations of workers, platforms, businesses, consumers and the community. It dictates where a person might go for help or advice if something goes wrong and what remedies might be available.

A fundamental question that the Inquiry must consider is whether and how regulators are able to resolve the question of whether the laws they are invested with enforcing on behalf of the community apply to these arrangements and the extent to which users and workers are able to understand their rights and obligations and seek assistance if something goes wrong. The Inquiry therefore seeks submissions about the following:

5. How were you recruited and engaged to perform work?

6. Please outline how your work arrangements were put in place?

7. Did you discuss or negotiate the details of your work arrangement with the platform and/or the end user?

8. Do you decide how and where you work?

9. Are you free to provide the same services to more than one on-demand platform and/or client at the same time?

10. What do you do if you have a dispute or concern about your work? Where and from whom can you seek help in resolving disputes?

11. How is the quality of your work assessed? In what situations if any might you lose the right to obtain work via the platform?

### The impact of on-demand work for workers, including vulnerable workers

The impact of on-demand work on workers is multi-dimensional and complex. In considering the question of 'impact' the Inquiry wants to hear about the experience of individual on-demand workers, but also seeks to understand the broader impact of the emergence of on-demand work on both the on-demand cohort, but also workers in 'traditional' arrangements.

12. What and how are you paid?

13. Why do you engage in on-demand work?

14. How often do you participate in on-demand work? Is on-demand work some, most or all of the paid work that you do? Do you also work outside of the on-demand economy?

15. Do you experience any differences when you work under on-demand arrangements or 'traditional' arrangements?

16. Are there any training or development opportunities made available to you when you work with an on-demand business or platform?

17. How do you raise issues or concerns about your workplace arrangements? Do you feel confident to do this?

18. What happens when you are unable to work due to a physical or psychological injury, illness?

19. How are workplace injuries addressed if you are injured?

20. Are you paid superannuation?

21. What tax do you pay and how do you ensure your tax liabilities are met?

### Your views

An important consideration with regards the gig economy and its future significance is it might link to a longer period of a person's life spent in an income producing capacity.

Our superannuation and age pension system point as towards an income producing life that ends around 65 years of age, give or take a few years, followed by hopefully 20+ years of leisure.

A lot has changed since Aged Pensions were introduced in Victoria in 1900.

Longer lives is perhaps the most significant change. Males born in 1900 had a life expectancy of 51.1 years, women 54.8. Now there was higher infant mortality back then, which certainly pulled the averages down. In 1900, if you made it to age 65, on average you had another 11 years to live if you were a male, almost 13 for females.

Today a 65 year old is expected live almost another 20 years. 22 years for women. If the Age Pension age had kept pace with the improvements in our life span, we'd become eligible at age 73.

And medical research and advancement isn't stopping. The original age 65 for "official" retirement seems fairly arbitrary, but even if you assume this was right when it was established, and you appropriately adjusted it to age 73 for those at age 65 today, if you're in your 30, 40's or even 50's you will of course recognise that by the time you reach these vintages, your life expectancy will have stretched out even further.

Another important change, which links arms with increased longevity, is that for many of us in the work force, our daily activities are not physically taxing. Whereas once people had to retire because their bodies were worn out from years of physical labour, today, for many, our mental wellness is the only limiting factor.

Other trends have emerged. Bigger mortgages due to higher house prices, a function of recent low interest rates, has certainly changed the financial position of many Australians. Kids staying at home longer and thereby delaying their parents peak saving years. Larger student debts resulting in life events like buying a home or starting a family being pushed back.

All these changes means that a life model, with its foundations dating back over 100 years, of retirement in our mid 60's needs to be questioned and re-examined.

The gig economy is an important component in this re-think.