

17 December 2020

COTA Tasmania

Letter in response to TasNetworks' Marinus Link RIT-T Supplementary Analysis Report

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to TasNetworks' Marinus Link RIT-T supplementary analysis report.

COTA Tasmania is the peak body advocating for the rights, and understanding the needs of, older Tasmanians. The development of the Marinus Link will have significant implications for Tasmania's ageing population now and into the future. This letter focuses on the opportunities of Marinus Link in supporting older workers. However, we recognise that heating and cooling are essential to older Tasmanians' health and that those on fixed incomes are particularly vulnerable to electricity price rises. Maintaining or reducing electricity prices is crucial to supporting older Tasmanians and we acknowledge that TasNetworks is working to ensure that Marinus Link does not financially disadvantage Tasmanians.

TasNetworks has stated that Project Marinus could provide significant economic opportunities in Tasmania's North West both during and after construction of the Marinus Link and associated energy projects. This includes supporting local industry and government to identify gaps and opportunities in skill development to increase employment.

COTA Tasmania encourages TasNetworks and their partners to consider strategies to reskill, employ, and retain older workers (aged over 45 years) as part of Project Marinus. We are keen to be part of these discussions as the Project progresses and encourage TasNetworks to view our Work45+ website (<https://work45plus.org.au/>), which provides resources to older jobseekers and employers looking to recruit and retain older workers.

COTA Tasmania has worked with the Cradle Coast Authority and the Burnie City Council in recent years on mature age job seeker programs and we are keen to continue to provide input where possible.

Workplace ageism is prevalent in Australia and significantly impacts the capacity for older workers to remain in and re-enter employment. COTA Tasmania is aware of Tasmanians in

Patron

*Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner,
AC, Governor of Tasmania*

their 40s feeling that they have been discriminated against in the workplace because of their age¹. Jobseekers aged over 55 spent an average of 68 weeks looking for work in 2015, compared with 30 weeks for jobseekers aged 15 to 24². Disturbingly, one in three employers have admitted that they will not consider recruiting people aged over 50 years³. The barriers to older jobseekers are greater than ever in the current COVID-19 environment as people across a wide range of ages and sectors have lost work. We acknowledge that it is important that people of all ages are employed but are particularly concerned for older workers at this time, particularly with the introduction of well-meaning but potentially ageist Federal Government policies that encourage recruitment of younger workers.

While there remain a number of questions regarding the delivery and future success of Project Marinus, COTA Tasmania is dedicated to continual engagement with TasNetworks and Marinus stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes for older Tasmanians.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Leitch', written in a cursive style.

Sue Leitch

CEO
COTA Tasmania

¹ COTA Tasmania (2015) *COTA Tasmania Submission to Willing to Work: National inquiry into employment discrimination against older Australians and Australians with disability*, Hobart.

² Australian Human Rights Commission 2016 (2016) *Willing to Work: National inquiry into employment discrimination against older Australians and Australians with disability*, Sydney.

³ Australian Human Rights Commission 2018 & Australian HR Institute (2018), *Employing older workers: Research report*, Sydney.