



# Mature-age workers vital for our economy

Overcome the skills shortage by using staff already on the payroll, writes

**LAUREN AHWAN.**

**M**ATURE-AGE workers could help Australia's skill shortage as long as employers recognise their value. Mature-age workers already have the skills needed in their chosen industry but can also play a vital role in teaching newer workers, providing significant cost savings to bosses who would otherwise need to resort to external training. Council of the Ageing SA chief executive Ian Yates says employers traditionally place a higher premium on retaining younger staff. "But these (mature-age workers) are already trained," he says. "As the (skill shortage)

situation worsens, mature-age workers, out of necessity, will be in demand. "There may even be situations where companies will pinch other people's mature-age workers to pass their experience on to the younger (workforce)." About two-thirds of people aged 55 to 64 years are in work. But as the first Baby Boomers reach pension age this year, the Government is braced for a workforce exodus. To counter this, it is encouraging seniors to keep on working. University of South Australia Centre for Human Resource Management Professor Carol Kulik says the

benefits of retaining mature-age workers are significant. "Organisations should consider offering practices likely to appeal to mature-age workers," Prof Kulik says. "For example, does your business provide opportunities for mature-age workers to be mentors to junior staff?" "Mentoring can leverage mature-age workers' experience." June Romeo, 62, recently took on a role as Wyatt Holiday Program Aboriginal holiday co-ordinator with aged-care company ACH Group. June believes that her age helped her secure the position, which involves liaising with Aboriginal elders to or-

ganise their travel, accommodation and respite care. "I believe that my age is an asset as I have a lot of experience and can relate to my clients on a personal level," she says. "I have always worked and haven't even considered retirement. I want to keep working for as long as I can." ACH Group innovation and development general manager Jane Mussared says that aged care is a popular choice for mature-age workers. She says the company valued the experience that mature-age workers brought to their job as well as their genuine interest in older people.



As the (skill shortage) situation worsens, mature-age workers, out of necessity, will be in demand



June Romeo, centre, with ACH Group colleagues Diana Pisaniello and Stacey Kafkakis