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Older workers boost to state

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BEING home to the nation's oldest population is far from a burden for South Australia.

Instead, demographic and economic experts say it actually presents an opportunity to drive the state's economy and remedy the current skills shortage.

They also argue that it may become the norm for South Australians to work until they are 70, provided that they are afforded tax breaks, and undertaking part-time and less physically demanding work.

But fostering attitudinal change is crucial to embracing the economic benefits of a mature-age workforce, as outlined in the Intergenerational Report. Adelaide University geography Professor

Graeme Hugo said governments had only recently changed from a negative perception of an ageing workforce to seeing opportunities that exist.

"This is not just good economically for the country, all the research points to it being good for the people as well," he said.

"Keeping them actively engaged, albeit at a less intense level, really is productive in terms of self (worth) ... so it can be a win-win for the economy and older people."

With one third of South Australia's workforce projected to approach retirement within the next 10 years, Professor Hugo says significant policy change has to occur now, rather than when the crunch comes.