1. The Question/Problem
Concerns about population and workforce ageing have led to calls for employers to implement policies and practices targeting the recruitment and retention of older workers and for individuals to extend their working lives. Yet relatively little is known about the working lives of older people, especially those working beyond 'normal' retirement age. Older worker labour force participation in Australia is low compared to many other OECD countries and comparatively few employers have developed a strategic response to the ageing workforce. Despite legislation, age discrimination remains entrenched in the workplace especially with regards to recruitment. This study explores the case of an organisation which actively recruits older workers and examines the experiences of these workers, seeking to understand why they continue working and what working in later life means to them.

2. The Method
The research is based on a qualitative study of older sales representatives working for an Australian organisation. Most of these workers are approaching or have passed 'normal' retirement age of 65, with the oldest employee being 86 years of age. Data collection consisted of initial open-ended interviews of these, predominantly male, older sales representatives, some of their younger colleagues and members of the management team. Further data was collected over a period of two and half years via follow-up interviews, telephone calls and emails to probe for deeper or additional information. The respondents consisted of twenty eight individuals within the organisation, fifteen of whom were older sales representatives, and five of whom were members of the management team, but also themselves older workers (over the age of 45 years). The remainder of the respondents were younger employees. Data was also collected via participant observation of six of the older representatives accompanying them on sales visits for a day each. Four interviews were also conducted outside the case study organisation of which two were sales representatives and two were managers in similar size organisations to the case study organisation. Interviews were transcribed and follow-up conversations and observations were noted in a field journal. Respondents were encouraged to talk about their past employment experiences, their experiences seeking employment as mature age workers and their experience of working in later life, why they have remained in work and what it means for them, and what organisational policies and practices have enabled their continued participation in the workforce. Coding of interviews and field notes was facilitated using NVivo software to identify themes in the data which were explored through the lenses of masculinity and ageing theories.

3. Policy Implications
The research informs policies aimed at increasing older worker labour force participation extending the current focus on the economic challenges of population ageing to include a better understanding of individual experiences and needs of older workers and the reasons why they might be motivated to extend their working lives. The case study could also be used as a 'best practice' example of an organisation that recruits on the basis of merit and suitability for the job without regard for age.

4. The Findings
Recruitment of older workers in the case study organisation was not driven by workforce ageing concerns. Rather at start-up management recognised the value of the experience and well-established customer relationships of older sales representatives in allowing the company to get off the ground quickly while minimising training time and costs. The mature sales approach of these older representatives provided a good match with the older tried-and-tested products that the company specialises in turning around. Driven by the success of the company this evolved into a more deliberate and proactive policy of recruiting highly-experienced sales representatives and the development of policies and practices adapted to the needs of these older workers. This involved close scrutiny of practices typical of the industry resulting in considerably streamlined processes and these employees being afforded considerable flexibility and autonomy. These policies have in turn been extended to all employees in the organisation regardless of age, contributing to a high degree of employee loyalty. This approach has been championed by a key senior manager with strong anti-ageist views and concern for the loss of experience and skills as older workers are transitioned out of organisations.

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The older, male workers reported continuing to work in later life due to their passion for their work, the ability to continue making a contribution, recognition of their skills and experience and being valued as individuals by their organisation, with monetary gain reported as secondary to these reasons. Extending their careers beyond traditional retirement age enabled these workers to continue to construct masculine identities strongly related to work and career as they negotiated their ageing identities. While work remained the main site for the construction of their masculinity, they drew on ageing norms and successful ageing discourses rather than earlier held hegemonic ideals to construct what it meant to be an older man. They made comparisons with their younger selves, older non-working men and their future selves to counter the ways in which ageing threatened their masculinity, which is often assumed to diminish or even end after retirement. Part-time flexible positions enabled them to participate in activities associated with post-retirement such as volunteering, grand-parenting, travel and leisure activities without having to relinquish their work identity. They perceived themselves as offering a more mature, less aggressive sales approach, greater resilience and more customer empathy than their younger counterparts. Retirement was perceived by these men as a period of idleness serving to hasten the decline of old age. Stressing the importance of continued participation in work for both physical and mental health, they perceived themselves as ageing less rapidly, being more in control of their ageing and hence ageing more successfully than their retired age-peers. The findings suggest that opportunities for older people wishing to continue participating in meaningful work in later life can have positive ramifications for individuals beyond mitigating the economic challenges of population ageing.