

CALL FOR MINISTER FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS GAINS SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENT

July 2024

Canberra, Australia – A pivotal motion calling for the establishment of a dedicated portfolio and Minister for Older Australians was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rebekha Sharkie, Centre Alliance Member for Mayo. The motion addresses the need for a comprehensive approach to the diverse needs of older Australians, beyond the scope of aged care.

Context and need

Currently, Australia has dedicated portfolios for women, youth, and the multicultural community, but the only existing portfolio focusing on older Australians is aged care. This, according to Ms Sharkie, is a significant oversight. "The minister would provide a conduit between government and the community, to better engage older Australians—on all matters that concern them, not just aged care. Aged care is the only ministerial portfolio that you could say is, technically, for older Australians. But we know that not all older Australians will have a connection with aged care in their lifetime", Ms Sharkie stated.

Support and opposition

The motion was seconded by Russell Broadbent, Liberal Member for Monash, who has consistently expressed concerns about ageism in society. "This motion is about older people, their place in Australia, respect for older people, living life to its full as an older person and older people being given the opportunity to participate actively within the confines of the nation," said Mr Broadbent.

Despite the compelling arguments, the motion faced opposition from Labor Members David Smith (Bean) and Dr Mike Freeland (Macarthur). Mr Smith attempted to redirect the focus back to aged care, which EAAA notes as directly corroborating the concerns raised by the motion.

EAAA's position

Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) applauds the motion and the dedication of Ms Sharkie and Mr Broadbent. EAAA Co-chairs, Sue Leitch and Diedre Timms, commented, "We are encouraged to see such passionate advocacy for older Australians in Parliament. Establishing a Minister for Older Australians would ensure their unique needs are addressed and their voices are heard in the policy-making process."

Looking forward

The 2023 Intergenerational Report highlights an expected increase in Australians over 65 in the coming decades. A dedicated Minister would play a crucial role in addressing the wide-ranging needs of this growing demographic. This role could significantly contribute to combating ageism and promoting positive ageing, fostering a more inclusive and respectful society.

Conclusion

EAAA urges the Labor Government and all Members of Parliament to seriously consider the benefits of establishing a Minister and portfolio for Older Australians. Such a move would not only improve the quality of life for older Australians but also benefit Australian society as a whole.

For further information, please contact:

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About Elder Abuse Action Australia

<https://eaaa.org.au/>

Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) is the national advocate for eliminating elder abuse. Funded by the Attorney General's office, EAAA aims to address elder abuse and protect the rights of older Australians at both the grassroots and macro levels.

EAAA believes in the rights of older Australians and our actions seek to eliminate elder abuse. Our campaigns, advocacy and policy development positively impact the lives of older Australians and their families, our communities and broader society.

We work with State and Territory bodies and authorities, sharing and coordinating information to develop a national understanding, framework, and response for elder abuse.

Our mission: Be a national voice for action that eliminates elder abuse

Our vision: A society that respects and values older Australians, and is free from elder abuse

Our commitment

- Social justice and the rights of older people
- Respect for difference and inclusion
- Community collaboration to eliminate elder abuse
- Accountability and integrity
- Evidence-based practice and research
- Innovation and forward-thinking.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. EAAA is committed to ensuring equitable and inclusive responses to end elder abuse for people with diverse characteristics and life experiences.