



## THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

### Minister for Ageing

#### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S POSITIVE AND ACTIVE AGEING PLAN

The Federal Government has committed to a greater focus on positive and active ageing – as part of its social inclusion and reducing social isolation agenda.

Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot today convened a high level meeting with three figures in the field to draw on their ideas and experience in this area and to expand the Government's agenda for ageing in Australia.

“This is about social inclusion and valuing the knowledge and experience of older Australians and tapping into their wisdom,” Mrs Elliot said.

“It is also about ensuring older people are connected to the community. Older Australians are still contributing to our society, but it is about choices.

People over the age of 55 contribute the most hours of volunteer work - contributing an estimated \$75 billion per annum in unpaid caring and volunteering activities. More than half of this is being contributed by people over 65 years.

Labor force participation rates for people aged 50-59 years increased from 61 per cent in 1984 to 71 per cent in 2004.

In Newcastle, there is a 100 year-old practicing solicitor and the hospitality sector has been employing older workers in various roles. Other groups are also examining ways to retain older workers.

Mrs Elliot met with:

- Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity's Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for Age Discrimination, **Elizabeth Broderick**, whose organisation handles about 110 complaints in this area a year;
- Aged Care Commissioner, **Rhonda Parker**, who is an expert speaker on positive ageing, was Adjunct Associate Professor at the Centre for Research on Ageing at Curtin University of Technology, Perth and a former chief executive officer of Positive Ageing Foundation of Australia Inc.); and
- Australia's first Ambassador for Ageing, **Noeline Brown** – who was appointed earlier this year by the Australian Government.

“The Government is committed to working with people with this level of expertise,” Mrs Elliot said.

“Australia faces major challenges with its ageing population as well as many opportunities - taking a positive attitude towards ageing is a responsibility of all Australians.”

Mrs Elliot said, 87 per cent of women aged 75 years and over do not need help with daily tasks such as washing, dressing and preparing food.

“The Rudd Government is committed to helping older people maintain their independence while staying connected to the community.

“I encourage older Australians to recognise the benefits associated with participating in community life, regular exercise and recreational activities.

“We as a community, families, as people of all ages, and in the workplace - need to work to encourage participation and remove the barriers that prevent older Australians from healthy ageing.”

Mrs Elliot said the Government is working to provide opportunities for older Australians to maintain their contribution to the community, throughout their lives.

“Our meeting discussed the social and economic advantages of participation in the workforce, both voluntary and paid, for them and the broader community.”

Mrs Elliot said the Australian Government was responding to the challenges of an ageing population and the impact on our society.

“This is about drawing on the wisdom and experience of older Australians, harnessing their know-how and celebrating their contribution to our nation,” Mrs Elliot said.

Australia’s population is getting older; we now have the fourth longest life expectancy after the Japanese, Swiss and Icelanders.

About 13 per cent of our population - some 2.8 million people is aged 65 years or older. This is expected to rise to 18 per cent by 2021 and to 26 per cent (around 7 million people) in 2051.

The number of people aged over 80 years will almost double over the next 20 years and currently, there are 2,860 Australians over the age of 100. This is expected to increase to 78,000 by 2055.

In response to this changing demographic, the Australian Government is investing in aged and community care. Over the next four years, funding for aged and community care will reach record levels of more than \$40 billion - with \$28.6 billion of that on residential aged care alone.

“No government in Australian history has spent more on aged care and community care than this one. We are proud of our plans for aged and community care,” Mrs Elliot said.

“This is about planning for Australia’s future and the challenges of the 21st century. We are meeting those challenges.

“We want to ensure that older Australians can live independent lives and age in their own homes, but also have the option to enter aged care homes if they need to,” Mrs Elliot said.

**For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280**



**Left to right:**

- Rhonda Parker - Aged Care Commissioner
- Justine Elliot – Minister for Ageing
- Noeline Brown – Ambassador for Ageing
- Elizabeth Broderick - Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity's Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for Age Discrimination