



**ATTORNEY-GENERAL
THE HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP
MINISTER FOR AGEING
THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP**

NEWS RELEASE

1 October

096/2008

Government strengthens protection for older Australians

Attorney-General Robert McClelland and Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot today announced that the Rudd Government will amend the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* to remove the 'dominant reason' test.

The current test means that a person's age must be the dominant reason for something to constitute discrimination under the Act. This is inconsistent with the other federal unlawful discrimination laws.

"Our view is that it is entirely unacceptable to give older Australians a weaker protection because of their age", Mr McClelland said.

"As Australia's population ages, it is important to remove barriers which prevent older people from fully engaging in the community. We have an older and more active workforce", Mrs Elliot said.

Despite the former Government introducing this test in 2004, a bipartisan report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs '*Older People and the Law*' recommended its removal in 2007.

The Rudd Government accepts this bipartisan recommendation and will amend the Act so that a person need only show that their age was one of the reasons they were discriminated against.

Its removal will harmonise the Act with other federal unlawful discrimination laws, and better align it to State and Territory laws. The Government intends to introduce the amendment into Parliament later this year.

This is another example of the Rudd Government's commitment to older Australians, including the investment of record funding in aged and community care. This includes more than \$40 billion for aged and community care; \$28.6 billion of that on nursing homes and hostels alone. In 2008-2009, \$2.2 billion will be spent on community care.

Today's announcement coincides with the International Day of Older People. Attached is further information about Australia's ageing population.

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Australia's Ageing Population

Australians now have the world's second longest life expectancy at 81.4 years – after the Japanese.

Australian women in some parts of the nation like the Sunshine Coast and agricultural areas outside Perth have among the longest life expectancy in the world.

About 13 per cent of our population (some 2.8 million people) are aged 65 years or older. This is expected to rise to 18 per cent by 2021. Within 50 years, the proportion of the population over 65 will have tripled.

Currently, there are 2,860 Australians over the age of 100 and that is expected to increase to 78,000 by 2055. Centenarians are the fastest growing age segment of the Australian population. Their numbers have increased by 8.5 per cent a year over the past 25 years.