



## THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

### Minister for Ageing

#### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **Marriage Increases Life Expectancy**

Marriage is helping Australians live longer, the Federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot said today.

New data analysis released by Mrs Elliot showed married male and female Australians live longer than life-long single people.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age-specific death rates in Australia per thousand per age group clearly shows that married people have lower death rates than non-married people in almost all age groups, for both men and women. (The data compares the rate of death per 1,000 for single people versus married ones.)

Data analysed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing shows the difference between single and married starts in the 40s and grows sharply in the 60s.

**The real spike appears in the 70-84 group with the death rate for single people almost double than married men and women.**

For men, the difference evens out after age 85 while married women over the age of 80 continue to have a greater survival rate than single women in the same group.

However, widowed males over 85 have the highest rate of death per 1,000, showing that once their life-partner dies, they often follow. It is 191.6 per thousand compared to 140.3 per thousand for married men in the same age group.

"It seems that longevity and marriage are directly linked and marriage is good for your health," Mrs Elliot said.

"Whenever I travel around Australia, I am continually surprised to meet couples who have been married for more than 70 years – it is simply marvellous and re-assuring.

"Our ageing population is to be celebrated and is re-shaping our society; Australians now have the second longest life expectancy in the world.

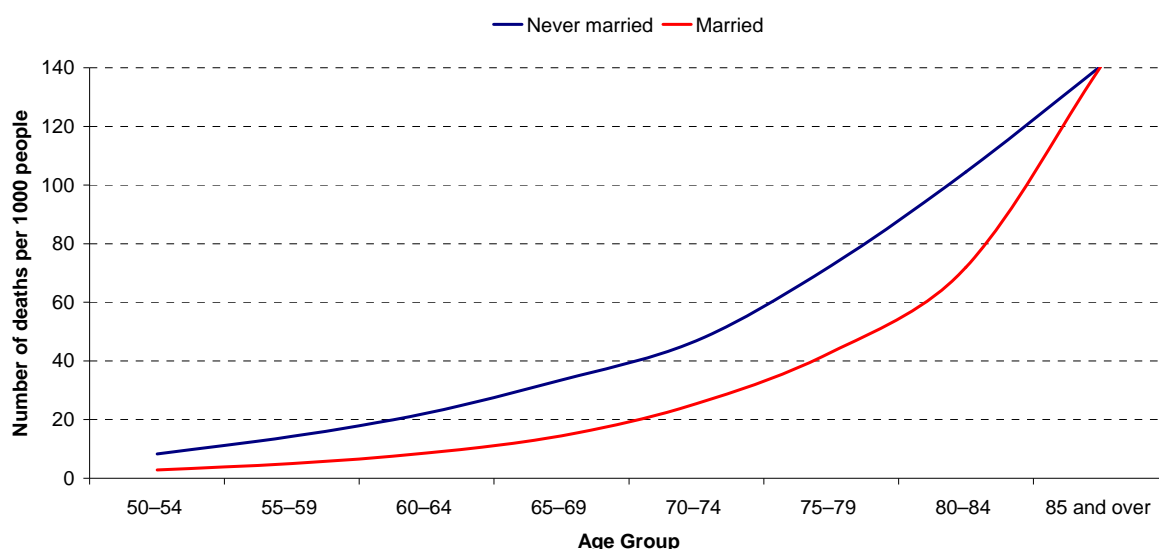
"Overseas studies have provided similar results on marriage and ageing and the link with longevity has been debated for more than 100 years."

Historically, one main explanation has been put forward. It is:

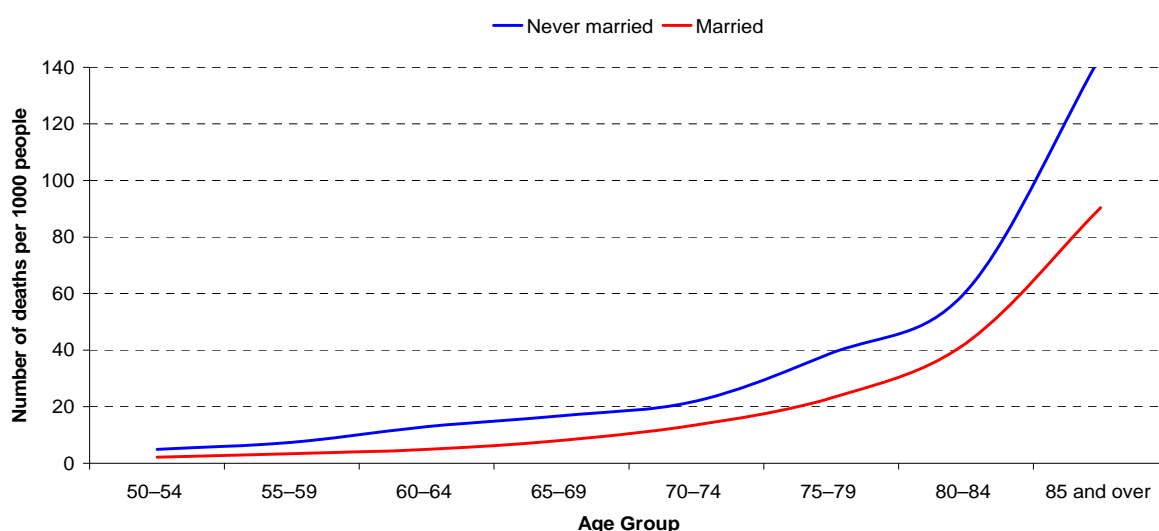
**Marriage reduces the risk of an earlier death as a person is less likely to participate in risky behaviour and more likely to nurture or "guardian" each other's health through promoting good diet and physical care.**

United Kingdom research showed that relative to being married, being never married in 1991 increases the risk of death between 1993 and 2000 by a remarkable 10.6 percent, being separated or divorced in 1991 by 9.4 percent, and being widowed by 8.0 percent.

### Age Specific Death Rates for Males, Australia, 2001



### Age Specific Death Rates for Females, Australia, 2001



### Deaths per 1,000 of the population -- Age-specific death rates (a), marital status, 2001 (b)

Age group	MALES				FEMALES			
	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
25-29	1.3	0.5	—	1.0	0.5	0.2	1.6	0.6
30-34	1.9	0.6	1.2	1.7	0.8	0.3	0.7	0.6
35-39	2.7	0.8	4.3	2.0	1.3	0.5	1.0	0.9
40-44	3.7	1.1	2.8	2.7	2.1	0.8	1.2	1.3
45-49	5.3	1.8	3.8	4.0	3.3	1.2	2.4	1.8
50-54	8.3	2.8	6.1	4.9	4.9	2.1	3.1	2.8
55-59	14.3	5.0	10.9	9.4	7.4	3.4	4.7	4.6
60-64	22.2	8.6	14.9	15.3	12.9	4.9	6.9	6.9
65-69	33.5	14.5	24.6	25.5	16.8	8.1	11.5	12.3
70-74	46.9	25.4	40.1	40.1	22.0	13.6	20.4	21.0
75-79	72.5	43.0	63.7	63.6	38.9	23.1	31.8	30.5
80-84	104.5	71.9	97.2	93.6	60.7	42.4	56.0	64.3
85 and over	140.6	140.3	191.6	147.4	144.0	90.3	135.4	132.7

Nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Deaths per 1,000 population.

(b) Estimated resident population (ERP) by marital status is only available for census years. As ERP by marital status is not yet available for 2006, 2001 age-specific death rates are presented.

(c) De facto marital status and not stated marital status have been pro-rated to the other marital status categories.

Source: ABS Causes of Death Australia 2006

This Australian marriage data comes on top of research showing that Australians now have the second longest life expectancy in the world at 81.4 years after the Japanese.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, using World Health Organisation 2007 figures for selected countries, report that Australian women have a life expectancy of 83.7 years and Australian men 79 years.

In addition, Women on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and Western Australia's wheat-belt near Perth have the longest life expectancies in the country and the world.

By 2045-2050, Australian men and women can expect to live five years longer than they currently do with women going from 83.7 to 88 and men going from 79 to 84.1 years.

By 2060, an Australian woman can expect to reach the age of 90 and by mid-century most Australians can expect – on average – to reach the mid-to-late 80s.

Currently, there are 2,800 Australians aged 100-years or over, and that is expected to increase to 12,000 by 2020 and grow to 78,000 by 2055.

Of the 2,800 centenarians, 75 per cent are women and a quarter are men. 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.

More than half of centenarians live in private dwellings with 27 per cent of men and 14 per cent of women living on their own.

There is also the new group known as the super-centenarians – people who reach 110 – emerging in Australian society.

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