

## **Australia - National Statement**

### **UNGA73 Third Committee**

#### **Item 28 (a & b): Social Development**

#### **Interactive Dialogue with Independent Expert on Enjoyment of Human Rights by Older Persons**

**Statement to be delivered on 2 October 2018**

Thank you Madam / Mr Chair

Older people may face challenges and Australia is committed to upholding their human rights and dignity.

Australia is firmly committed to protecting and promoting the enjoyment of human rights by older persons. We see great value in states coming together to discuss how the international human rights system can better address the issues facing older persons.

We believe that forums such as this should focus on seeking new and innovative ways to mobilise the extant body of human rights protections for older persons. This is the most efficient way to protect the rights of older persons, whilst avoiding additional pressure on the already overstretched international human rights architecture.

Australia has taken important steps to invest in the aged care sector and improve support for older people to enable them to continue to live independently in their own homes.

Our investments take a human rights based approach to ageing; recognising the right of all persons to adequate housing, so that they can live in security, peace and dignity.

With this in mind, Australia has developed, and continues to refine, a strong suite of policy and legislative measures to protect and uphold the rights of older Australians. We support the empowerment of national human rights institutions to emphasise the human rights of older persons in international discussions. This is vital to raising awareness of both the issues faced by older persons globally, and the challenges faced by states in implementing and monitoring universal human rights protections for the benefit of older persons.

Australia recognises that older people should be guaranteed their independence and autonomy to live life as they wish. This is supported through increased investment in in-home care options for older Australians as part of a set of services offered to older Australians who require care services.

This investment includes specific measures to improve the provision of mental health support, more comprehensive palliative care to older Australians in residential care, and targeted investments for people living with dementia.

Australia is also committed to multi-sectoral partnerships such as our new *More Choices for a Longer Life* package. This initiative aims to improve the overall health and wellbeing of older people through increased levels of physical activity, involvement in sporting teams, and increased participation in community groups.

Part of this package supports national sporting organisations and non-government organisations to develop and implement local, community-based activities which promote physical activity among older Australians.

Through another multi-sectoral partnership known as the *Better Ageing Grant Program*, we encourage sporting organisations and physical activity providers to focus on older Australians.

Sadly, Australia has experienced first-hand the tragedy of the abuse of older people within our aged care sector; a tragedy that reflects the human rights abuses that older people face all too frequently around the world.

Australia acknowledges that more must be done to protect and promote the human rights of older people, particularly older Indigenous Australians who experience heightened vulnerability.

Australia has recently indicated it will establish a Royal Commission into the aged care sector. This Royal Commission will look at the quality of care provided in residential and home aged care to senior Australians. It will also include young Australians with disabilities living in residential aged care settings.

Australia is also committed to quality and safety reforms in the sector. For example, legislation to establish a new *Quality and Safety Commission* is currently being debated by the Australian Parliament, new more consumer-focused standards are being implemented, and changes to the way accreditation services are undertaken have also recently been reformed.

**Word count: 585**