

Ending Ageism through Political Leadership



EveryAGE Counts Policy Directions

EveryAGE Counts is a broad-based coalition campaign to end ageism towards older Australians. It is a long-term commitment. We aim to shift narrow and negative generalisations about older age and older people, and the damaging impacts that flow from them, towards more realistic, fairer and healthier perspectives on ageing and later life.

To do this it is crucial we have our own policy positions to guide our work. We need to be clear about where and what the problems are and what changes we want to see in particular areas of life. Our policy positions help to guide our own work in the campaign – especially our advocacy and communications – but just as crucially, identify the priority areas of government policy in particular that we wish to influence.

Our priorities policy areas in the early stages of our campaign are:

- **political leadership**
- **work**
- **health**
- **aged care**
- **housing**
- **digital inclusion**
- **economic security and**
- **media representation.**

Our policy stance will evolve as the campaign unfolds and we turn our attention to specific expressions of ageism, and as we engage with opportunities within political cycles, such as elections, legislative programs and government inquiries.

Our policies will develop through the engagement and input of individuals, communities and civil society organisations; as a grassroots, social movement for change strengthens; and as the research and evidence base on ageism and the opportunities presented by an older population expands and deepens.

EveryAGE Counts is committed to the active involvement of diverse older Australians in all aspects of our campaign.

Our Policy to End Ageism through Political Leadership

Why this matters

Governments, political parties and politicians (at all levels of government) in Australia are in a unique position to lead a positive narrative and conversation around age-inclusivity, intergenerational interdependence and the intrinsic and social value of lives at all stages across the lifespan. However, political leaders are only at the earliest stages of taking up this responsibility. The EveryAGE Counts Campaign wants to support and work with our political leaders to step forward as champions of change on this important issue.

Increased longevity – much of which in Australia is lived in good health – is one of humankind's great success stories, and calls for innovation and flexibility in our governance, economic and social structures. Yet on balance, political responses continue to treat longevity and our ageing society as a crisis and burden, or at best a series of separate, disconnected policy problems to be solved. There are myriad opportunities offered by longer, healthier lives, but they are mostly overlooked by government and political party policies and programs operating from an outdated view of the population structure, the length of life stages and human capability across the lifespan.

It's time to change our approach.

Governments in recent years have taken important steps to protect the rights of older people (for example, through age discrimination and equal opportunities laws) and through individual portfolio initiatives aimed at responding to an older population and barriers to participation. However, these measures rarely attempt the crucial task of systemically tackling head on the ageist mores and attitudes that underpin discrimination and barriers.

The absence of a two pronged approach – to both the underlying ageism and its discriminatory manifestations – often results in the value and impact of initiatives petering out or not achieving their intended impact.

We call on our political leadership to take immediate and ongoing action to build on the strengths of our changing population now and into the future and to abandon the deficit model of ageing. While ageism has always harmed individuals, in an ageing society it also runs counter to the national interest, economically and socially.

What needs to happen?

EveryAGE Counts will collaborate with, support and encourage governments, political parties and politicians in Australia to:

- demonstrate leadership on challenging ageism and positively respond to the opportunities presented by an ageing society and increased longevity;
- drive a public conversation about ageing and ageism, promoting contemporary, positive narratives about ageing, older people in all their diversity and an ageing society;
- increase research and the evidence base and innovative measures built around the opportunities and benefits associated with an ageing society and longer lives, not just the challenges;
- advance whole-of-government action on ageing and ageism, ensuring policies and programs take an integrated, life-course approach.

Priorities for action

1. A National Agenda for Older Australians to improve economic, social, health and civic participation outcomes for older people, which

- is negotiated, developed and implemented across all tiers of government
- is co-designed with the diverse range of older Australians
- acknowledges and responds to the different ways ageism plays out as it interacts with factors such as gender, cultural and linguistic background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, disability and sexual identity
- draws on existing, significant government research and policy papers of the past
- takes an integrated approach to various aspects of wellbeing and participation and to addressing disadvantage
- creates a stronger culture in service delivery of enabling and empowering older Australians to counterbalance the focus on dependency and decline;

2. A broad, sustained public awareness and education campaign on ageism, which

- Aims to shift social norms on ageing and being older
- builds on recent government campaigns such as Long Live You;

3. Research and evidence

- That the Productivity Commission research the economic and social contribution made by older Australians within families, communities, the workforce and as tax payers, to provide balance to its inquiries and projects over the past decade which have focused on the costs and challenges of an ageing society;

4. A whole of government approach

- That governments at all levels maintain a ministerial position responsible for ageing and older Australians, which
 - has cross-portfolio responsibility, enabling a whole of government approach to ageing policy
 - leads the integration of a life course approach into policy and program development and implementation
 - speaks up against and responds to ageism, as well as age discrimination
 - builds policy responses on the opportunities and benefits offered by longer lives and not just the challenges.

¹ For example: Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians, Realising the Economic Potential of Senior Australians. Australian Treasury, 2011 www.epsa.treasury.gov.au/content/publications/grey_gold/downloads/grey_gold.pdf

² The Role of Standards and Innovation for Driving APEC's Silver Economy: An Issues Paper for the 2017 APEC Workshop on Standards and Innovation. APEC Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance March 2017 www.standards.org.au/news/release-of-issues-paper-to-support-apec%E2%80%99s-silver-economy

EveryAGE Counts Campaign

Ageism against older people is stereotyping, discrimination and mistreatment based solely upon age. It comes from negative attitudes and beliefs about what it means to be older and impacts on older people's confidence, quality of life, job prospects, health and control over life decisions.

Ageism has loomed larger in policy and practice as Australians live longer and our population ages. Longevity coupled with falling birth rates has resulted in steady growth in both the number and the proportion of the population who are older, giving rise to a public narrative around older people as a burden and cost to society.

The purpose of the EveryAGE Counts Campaign is to positively change thinking about ageing, to re-imagine getting older and to set the foundations for current and future generations to age well. To do this, we intend to work collaboratively and co-operatively with governments, political parties, employers, unions and community sector stakeholders, based on the strong engagement of diverse older people themselves.

At its heart the campaign respects and acknowledges the inherent worth of each individual and their right to choice, control and dignity regardless of their age or health.



The campaign is aiming for an Australia where older people:

- **are valued and their contribution is acknowledged;**
- **have opportunities to learn, grow and live purposeful lives;**
- **participate in work for as long as they want to;**
- **are visible and represented in media in all their diversity;**
- **are connected with their community and contact between generations is fostered;**
- **have a voice and are part of all major policy decisions that affect them;**
- **have equal access to goods and services and consumer protections when they need them;**
- **get the right care and support which maintains their dignity and autonomy when needed.**

To achieve this impact, the EveryAGE Counts Campaign is in for the long haul. We recognise that change can take time to grow and embed in individual and collective attitudes, interpersonal relationships, community behaviours, media representation, professional practices and government policies, programs and laws. We also recognise that it will only be achieved through collaboration between the generations and across different groups in society. The EveryAGE Counts Campaign wants to be a partner with and a supporter of governments, policy-makers, employers, unions, learning institutions, service providers and community groups to achieve a positive future for older Australians.

EveryAGE Counts is organising to build:

- **a national coalition for action;**
- **an active, broad-based social movement;**
- **effective advocacy and political engagement;**
- **a stronger policy, research and evidence base;**
- **powerful responses to structural ageism and discrimination;**
- **effective communications and marketing.**



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