



Joint Statement of Solidarity - EveryAGE Counts and EveryChild

Together the generations can ‘flatten the curve’ by building intergenerational solidarity.

Have you noticed that in the age of COVID-19, we refer to specific ages more than ever before? We stereotype younger people as violating instructions to social distance and present all older people as ‘elderly’ rather than as a diverse group spanning at least 30 years. And that’s just two of the sweeping generalisations around age that have emerged with a vengeance.

We, the following organisations, dedicated to working with both younger and older Australians, believe that it is crucial during and beyond this worldwide pandemic that Australians strengthen intergenerational solidarity, connections and support.

We are already witnessing younger Australians reaching out to stay connected with and support older Australians in their communities and older family members who may be particularly isolated at this time. Older Australians, for their part, see these connections as a lifeline. In turn, overwhelmingly they are making their contribution to all of us through early, widespread self-isolation. We are also seeing the images of young Australians delivering groceries to older Australians, and the sign-up of hundreds of volunteers to the Care Army in Queensland, reassuring us that we are all in this together.

We all have much to be proud of in what we have achieved so far responding to the challenges of the virus, and we can especially celebrate the deepening awareness across all ages, all walks of life and diverse communities, that we are “all in this together”. Let’s talk about ‘us’, not ‘them’.

None of us is immune to the virus and all of us must continue to follow the advice of health experts to limit infections and stop the spread of the disease. This has meant enormous change in how we conduct our lives, including constraints on everyone’s freedom of movement. This is particularly stark for those susceptible to the worst impacts of the virus – older people and those with existing illnesses or compromised immune systems – who have been the first, collectively, to move into physical isolation in the home.

So many people have lost their livelihoods or have had to take a cut in work hours and incomes. Once again, we see intergenerational exchanges back and forth in areas like housing, cost of living and childcare to assist everyone to make it through this. We also see workforces with up to five generations in them on the front lines of health care, food provision and other essentials. In areas like medicine and nursing, retired professionals are re-entering work and are likely to join students in appropriate roles as part of the surge workforce in healthcare.

Without everyone, young and old, pulling together and following the health advice, our country would be in a significantly deeper crisis at this stage.

When we emerge from the pandemic, we need all generations to work together to ‘build back better’ to ensure that all Australians benefit from the post-COVID recovery.

An early recovery task post-pandemic will be to restore, extend and strengthen future life opportunities for all young people. The same applies to recognising the role and contributions of older Australians in all aspects of Australian society and strengthening the opportunities available to them to participate.

We also believe that this Australia of the future must undertake renewed efforts to ensure that discrimination against people on the basis age is not tolerated by any of us. We must never forget that in shaping the future direction of our country we are truly all in this together, and we must build our nation back better.

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EveryAGE Counts is a national coalition to tackle ageism faced by older Australians. For information about EveryAGE Counts and its members go to everyagecounts.org.au

EveryChild is a national advocacy campaign aimed at promoting the wellbeing of children and young people. For information about EveryChild and its members go to everychild.co