



Hon Simon O'Brien MLC

Chairman

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Parliament House

PERTH Western Australia 6000

7th June 2016

Dear Simon

Your Ref:       Petition No 120

Thank you for the opportunity to present this petition on behalf of seniors in Western Australia and in support of this, I wish to add the following points:

- If you talk to seniors, listen to a radio station with this demographic, read letters from seniors, they all say the same thing – "We don't have a voice". In our petition, many people, who signed on the web have indicated their reasons for signing and these have a similar ring – we need a voice, a champion for seniors.
- While this and previous governments have had a Minister for Seniors, this Minister always has other time consuming portfolios such as Local Government and the staff for the seniors section is or has been as low as 3 people. Because seniors are not as vocal as other groups, they are just overlooked and when a government does have a great initiative such as the Elder Abuse Hotline, very few have the skills to find it as this age group are not as computer savvy as younger people.
- Seniors want a central place to go, a one stop shop. A lot of the issues affecting seniors could be addressed by current staff in different government departments, however they need to be moved under one umbrella to be available for seniors.
- Western Australia is too far removed from Canberra to receive any benefit from a person representing seniors federally.
- A good model to look at for WA is the "Older People's Commissioner for Wales". Wales may have an even larger percentage of seniors than Western Australia, however, they have a similar population and culture to us. It is very impressive to read about the achievements of this office in Wales for their older residents.

- To be the most effective, the Commissioner should be independent of government and appointed for 4 years with 2 years in the government term and 2 years into the next term. The Commissioner should have legal powers and should be involved in policy and as such would be a great help to the government in providing information not only about the problems seniors are facing but also what they want and what they need because there are serious problems that are getting worse and the number of seniors in this state is growing rapidly.

I would be available to the Committee at any time, should you wish to hear more, however a lot of our thoughts are available under the Wales model and I request that this be available to the Members of your Committee.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thomas JP BComm CPA LMusA

CEO/CFO Retirees WA