



# Catholic Women's League Australia Inc.

Affiliated with World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations Paris  
NGO in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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**SUBMISSION TO:**                    **Committee Secretary - Dr Margot Kerley**  
**Standing Committee on Ageing**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Parliament House**  
**Canberra ACT 2600**

**SUBMISSION FROM:**            **Catholic Women's League Australia Inc. (CWLA)**  
  
**Authorised by PEG McENTEE OAM**  
**National President, CWLA**

## **About CWLA**

CWLA (est. in the early 1900's) is an organisation of 8000+ female members across Australia in urban, regional, rural and remote areas. In our objects we advocate promotion of spiritual, cultural, intellectual and social development of women and support the family unit. More than 70% of our members are over 50 years of age; all CWLA members and executive members are unpaid volunteers.

## **Terms of Reference**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Ageing will inquire into and report on long term strategies to address the ageing of the Australian population over the next 40 years.

**CWLA thanks the Standing Committee for the opportunity of public comment on the ageing issue.**

## **Themes addressed in this submission:**

- Community involvement
- Health
- Family integration
- 40 years from now

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## INQUIRY INTO LONG-TERM STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE AGEING OF THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION OVER THE NEXT 40 YEARS

### ➤ Community involvement

*As the aged population rises there needs to be an active absorption of retired people and seniors back into a workplace.*

CWLA suggests bringing the community back into people lives; this pertains to children through to the elderly. For example, a scheme where children (under guided supervision) visit the elderly in lonely, isolated environments; the elderly visit lonely or sick children through to adults; encouragement of cross communication of the aged with children, youth, young mothers and fathers, anyone in need of assistance. This promotes validation, assistance, activity and sharing, where the reward is not necessarily monetary but an exchange of good will.

Good will is the opposite of the "me generation" which is caustic and unproductive. If people rely on money and instant gratification the rewards are transitory and insignificant leaving the person wanting more. Benevolence provides for a more sustaining achievement for body and mind.

Too often the same tireless people volunteer. To attract a broader spectrum of volunteers, CWLA suggests providing incentives and recognition for those who participate in volunteer work such as vouchers: petrol vouchers or food vouchers - not money that can be spent on cigarettes and alcohol. Volunteers save the government heavy costs and should continue to do so in the future. Work, whether it be paid, volunteered or semi-volunteered activates the mind, energises, socialises and places the focus on others rather than "I am getting old and useless, poor me."

Redundancy and retirement does not mean the loss of an ability to work. CWLA recommends promoting contract/casual work, re-entering a workplace, re-skilling or multi-skilling of all adult ages. Work need not be full-time or paid, can be job shared, done from home via the internet. More internet and computer training could be provided. Being able to use a computer extends confidence and develops networking, productivity, research and provides avenues for the immobile and isolated. CWLA believes in being constructive all your life and that there should be less promotion on retirement perks such as holidays, hobbies and retirement homes - these are pleasures many cannot afford and when reality hits home people think they have nothing - depression often results.

CWLA feels management of money is a tool that should be taught from primary school age through to the elderly. The skill of saving and spending - not unlike learning a language - requires training and practice. Promote budgeting courses for all ages so people gain adequate financial skills to provide for the rest of their lives.

### ➤ Health

*As the aged population rises statistics show that people are living longer.*

CWLA suggests that while people place money into private superannuation, they could also contribute to a Government Superannuation fund saving money for a pension and health requirements in retirement.

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### ➤ Health continued

To cope with the rise in health problems there needs to be an increase in training medical personnel in aged-related health disorders such as cataract treatments, management of macula degeneration, dementia, osteoporosis, heart disorders and bone fractures. 2 out of 3 women and 1/3 of men over 60 years will suffer the effects of osteoporosis and numbers are expected to double in twenty years with an estimated cost of \$7.4 billion. Bone density tests and treatment should be available for people in this age group on Medicare and Pharmaceutical benefits. Intervention such as Vitamin D supplements and calcium replacements could be provided based on a T. score rather than waiting for a bone fracture to occur.

Together with the increase in the aged population there is an urgent need for health services. Services and facilities are currently lacking and will continue to decrease in the future unless there is immediate action. Waiting lists for elective surgery, the deficiency in hospital beds, post surgery care and home care are at an inadequate status for a developed nation.

### ➤ Family integration

*As the aged population rises families are the real winners.*

Grandparents have made a comeback: many parents are choosing their parents as caregivers over a childcare centre. In addition, many aged people are co-existing with their children as an alternative to unfamiliar accommodation. It is part of a swing back to the extended family and should be encouraged. Extended families - although not everyone's answer - is inclined to be a less costly solution. There are many approaches to family integration: granny flats or living nearby, utilising home help such as home nursing visits, food deliveries, socialising with family and friends and helping with child care and odd jobs. The rewards are being with family, saving money and working together.

### ➤ 40 years from now

*As the aged population rises 40 years from now there will either be a surplus of unproductive possibly aimless and depressed people or many avenues of work, interests and benefits for all.*

The World Health Organisation says that: "By 2020 more than 1000 million people aged 60 years and older will be living in the world, more that 700 million of them in developing countries." By 2042 the aged population will have increased significantly. In standard areas of living: accommodation, health, food, finance, education, transport and communication the world needs to gear towards 25% of the population being old. Without a doubt health care and community involvement are the primary issues to address now for the future. To avoid a massive drain on Government, health issues specific to seniors need to be categorised and promoted as an area of attention. Universities need to attract students in those areas of study so there is not a void as currently present in radiography and nursing in general.