



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

New Inquiry: Older people and the law

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 20 September 2006

Chairman: Peter Slipper MP

INQUIRY INTO OLDER PEOPLE AND THE LAW

The House of Representatives Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is to investigate whether current legislative regimes are adequately addressing the legal needs of older Australians.

Committee Chairman, Peter Slipper MP, today announced an inquiry into older people and the law. "The Committee wants to know whether the various statutes are doing enough to deal with some of the legal issues that are important to older Australians".

"The Attorney-General has asked the Committee to look at six specific areas: fraud, financial abuse, general and enduring power of attorney provisions, family agreements, discrimination, and barriers to older Australians accessing legal services".

"Financial abuse is a particularly serious issue and is complicated by the fact that it can often be perpetrated by family members," Mr Slipper added. "Studies have suggested that older people are less likely to take legal action where abuse has occurred".

Mr Slipper indicated that the Committee will focus on those aged 65 and over in its inquiry. "At present, 12% of the Australian population is aged 65 and over, and by 2030 this is estimated to rise to more than 22%", Mr Slipper said. "There is a real need to ensure that legal concerns of this group are adequately addressed".

The legal framework is complex, with both Commonwealth and State legislation covering issues important to older Australians. Areas dealt with by Commonwealth legislation include social security, aged care, taxation and superannuation, family law, and anti-discrimination. State and territory legislation covers a range of issues such as wills and estates, health services, accommodation, delegation of authority, and competency. In conducting its inquiry the Committee will also consider the relevant experience of overseas jurisdictions.

Members of the public will be able to make submissions in writing to the Committee until 1 December. Public hearings will be held in early 2007.

For interview:

Please contact the Committee Chairman, Peter Slipper MP on (07) 5443 3555 (electorate office) or on (02) 6277 4975 (Canberra).

Or Mr Slipper's media adviser, Richard Bruinsma, on 0417 486 673.

For background information, including the full terms of reference and copies of submissions when they become available, please contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 2358 or visit the inquiry website at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/reports.htm>.

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