

This submission is made in relation to the state of affairs faced by people in this country as they grow old.

The present attitude of society and government is to dismiss senior Australians with patronising comments and attitudes which seem to fall far short of offering respect and compassion needed to enhance this difficult stage of life.

Inadequate pensions, poor health care provisions, lack of freedom of choice to decide how they wish to live or die, shockingly low standards of Aged Care Facilities and unrealistic expectations, especially regarding finding work seems to be the order of the day. I have tried hard to think of one substantial factor in the public realm that would give growing old some positive expectation or ease the journey at a particularly difficult time of transition of life and I can't think of one.

Couldn't it be possible in a country that is as prosperous and generous at offering aid to other less welloff societies to ensure its own senior citizens are treated with the respect and compassion due to them, instead of the shameful way they are presently treated.

Couldn't changes be put in place so that the Government raises the bar and sets a standard which indicates these people are valued for the contribution they have made to this country and thereby lead the way to encourage a change of attitude that genuinely make the old and frail members of our society feel as positive as possible about the prospect of growing old and thereby maintaining some dignity.

Surely this could be done with enlightened thought and planning, with raised standards in care facilities, with appropriate health care and other services including adequate welfare payments and with freedom of choice about life and death issues, which might begin to re-establish hope and remove the fear and dread of growing old and begin to the re-establish the respect for our elders I was taught as a child.

Yours faithfully,  
Colleen O'Brien