

Media Release

**Shadow Minister for Ageing - Ms Margaret May MP**

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**AGEING: EVERYONE'S DOING IT! BUT AGEING ISN'T SEXY ENOUGH FOR RUDD**

Shadow Minister for Ageing Margaret May has questioned the merit of the 2020 Summit given that the biggest social challenge facing Australia and the world was overlooked.

Mrs May said: "Our ageing population and the challenges it is presenting is a critical issue impacting on every single Australian and yet it was overlooked by the 2020 Summit.

"The Government is going to great lengths to avoid talking and assisting older Australians but by ignoring the issue, the Prime Minister is putting all Australians' welfare at risk.

"My reservations about the 2020 Summit have been confirmed.

"When the Summit was first suggested I wondered how a new Government - learning the many things that are involved in running a country - could have enough practical knowledge to gain anything from a Summit so early on in its first year of office.

"This inexperience and the superficiality of the Government's intentions was most apparent when our ageing population wasn't even on the agenda.

"Everything else (other than climate change) pales into insignificance if we don't get the policy levers right for our older Australians.

"Older Australians currently make up 15% of the Australian population and by mid-century that proportion will rise to approximately one-third of our community.

"During this time, growth in the labour market will remain stagnant and with increasing life expectancies, this will have the potential to slow economic growth and reduce all Australians' standards of living.

"Older Australians also make up a valuable part of our volunteering sector and they save the economy billions upon billions of dollars. But more importantly they improve the lives of other Australians by their contribution of time and effort. The ageing of these volunteers will take millions of man hours out of volunteering as younger people are not so attracted to volunteering.

"Its abundantly clear that Mr Rudd does not appreciate the huge challenges our ageing population is presenting to Australia. But with funding cuts to aged care on the horizon, it is an issue that he will have no choice but to deal with.

"Again I'm not confident he's up to the task given his love of the nonsensical, his attachment to symbolism and aversion to making decisions and I firmly believe that the handling of our ageing population will be one of the most important issues on which he will be judged in a couple of years time", Mrs May said.