

Media Release  
Shadow Minister for Ageing - Margaret May MP  
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## **OLDER AUSTRALIANS ABANDONED**

Shadow Minister for Ageing Margaret May said that actions speak louder than words and the Rudd Government's actions had fully reinforced her suspicions that as far as this Government is concerned older Australians don't count.

Mrs May said: "The first sign that something was amiss with the Rudd Government's priorities was when it would not commit to the pensioners' and carers' bonus earlier in the year which caused a great deal of anxiety in the community.

"This sense of insecurity was compounded when aged care was not an agenda item at the 2020 Summit and only one per cent of delegates to the summit were aged 75 plus.

"This rejection of older Australians is glaring given that they are a significant group of people who make up over 13% of the Australian population and over the next forty years this is projected to rise to 25%.

"Then two days before the Budget was handed down, the Government back-flipped on a cut to aged care funding because of prolonged pressure brought by Aged Care Associations, providers, families and myself.

"Forty per cent of providers are operating in the red and a cut to funding would have sent many providers to the wall.

"The situation is so serious that places have been under-subscribed in Western Australia and Tasmania and decisions are being made at the board level not to apply for further beds because of the increasing non viability of the sector with a number of providers closing down beds.

"For the Government to consider a cut to aged care funding in this environment should send a shiver down everyone's spine, because we're all ageing; we all have family members and friends who may enter an aged care facility at some time in their lives.

"Also the indexation has only been continued for one year. How can aged care providers plan for their future needs when they have no idea what funding they will receive in future?

"My question to the Rudd Government is why was a cut to aged care funding even on the table?

"It's a serious question that can't be allowed to go unanswered.

"Then on Budget night pensioners, carers and singles were overlooked.

“The Government has made its priorities crystal clear - if you’re not a “working family”, or for that matter, someone famous, then you just don’t count.

“Approximately six million singles and seniors have got news for the Rudd Government which is that Australia does not comprise only of “working families”.

“It’s about time the Prime Minister got over his obsession with “working families” and famous faces and governed for all Australians, paying particular attention to the frail and vulnerable.

“And the latest snub was earlier in the week when Mr Rudd launched his Australia Social Inclusion Board which has no identifiable representative of the aged community.

“So much for social inclusion, it’s all about social exclusion circa Rudd 2008.

“What is particularly galling is the verbal pollution we have to listen to under this Government.

“It says one thing and then does exactly the opposite – its social INCLUSION?? Policy is a classic case in point. The Social EXCLUSION Policy is a truer description.

“The ageing of our population is one of the largest social issues that Australia is facing.

“But the issue is not cutting through at this stage but it will as spending pressures in such areas such as health, age pensions and aged care are projected to rise due to our ageing population.

“The fall in GDP will equate to a fall in everyone’s living standards.

“The Government is missing the point along with many members of the fourth estate.

“The Rudd Government’s abandonment of older Australians is jeopardising their health and wellbeing along with their sense of being important contributors to society.

“We know that the health and wellbeing of older people also involves social inclusion.

“Yesterday when I was speaking to a doctor at an aged care facility, he stressed the importance of social interaction and the need to feel a valuable and worthwhile member of the community.

“The Rudd Government’s dismissal of older Australians is making them feel isolated, insecure, unwanted and unimportant when the exact opposite is the case.

“Mr Rudd does not appreciate the huge challenges our ageing population is presenting to Australia.

“It is a situation that cannot be allowed to continue because the health and wellbeing of our seniors is being threatened.

“Under the Howard Government, older Australians were always a priority. Under the Alternative Government older Australians will always be a priority. Under the Rudd Government, older Australians aren’t even on the radar”, Mrs May said.