

Media Release

JENNY MACKLIN MP

**Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs**

Abbott insults pensioners

Tony Abbott has insulted pensioners by saying that he does not see their issues as central to political debate.

This is a stinging slap in the face for Australia's four and a half million pensioners at a time when the Opposition is feigning interest in pension issues.

If Mr Abbott finds the needs of pensioners, Australian families and Indigenous Australians boring he should get a new job outside of politics.

On a *Daily Telegraph* blog today, Mr Abbott says he wants to move from the shadow Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio because it is not at the centre of political combat and he wants to be closer to the '*main action*'.

Mr Abbott has shown his complete lack of interest in his job as the Coalition's advocate for pensioners, carers, people with a disability, families and Indigenous Australians.

If Mr Abbott is shifted to a different portfolio, it will show that Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull agrees pension and other portfolio issues are not important.

Mr Abbott's admission yet again exposes the Coalition's pension proposal as a cynical stunt that has nothing to do with supporting pensioners and everything to do with political opportunism.

The Liberal pension proposal is a short-term political stunt that will leave 2.2 million married age pensioners, carers, widows, veterans and disability support pension recipients out in the cold.

The Liberals had 12 years to fix the pension system properly, including last year when the Howard Cabinet voted against raising the base rate of the pension.

Unlike the Opposition, the Australian Government is determined to give pensioners security and get this right for the long term.

While Mr Abbott longs to be somewhere else, the Government is taking concrete action to improve the lives of all Australians through a comprehensive program to improve the pension system for all Australians, close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and support Australian families through child-centred family policies.

Daily Telegraph Blog

Tony, I read a report in The Australian saying Julie Bishop is definitely going to be taking the Treasury position and Tony Smith will be kicked out of education. Do you think there's any chance you might be moved into one of these portfolios? It would be great to see you opposite Julia Gillard in one of these roles. I really enjoyed watching your debates together on channel 9 last year.. they were great and you 2 made fabulous sparring partners! As a Liberal voter, I'd like to see someone actually challenging Gillard again and I think you're one of the few who has really successfully been able take her on in the past. Best wishes.

liberal voter of creswick [\(Reply\)](#)

Thu 18 Sep 08 (07:10pm)

I've really enjoyed my time as shadow minister for families, community services and indigenous affairs. It's an important portfolio which needs a senior person. It's not, though, the centre of political combat and I've sometimes rather wished I was closer to the main action. The composition of the shadow ministry is entirely in the leader's hands and he will pick the team that he thinks will best assist the Liberals to win the next election.

Tony Abbott
Fri 19 Sep 08 (10:23am)

Date: 19 September 2008

Contact: Jessica Walker 0430166633