

MEDIA RELEASE

Why do we fear getting older?

28 September 2017 – Our fears about ageing prevent us from ageing well, but those fears are based on falsehoods. This was the major finding from new [research](#) released today by Australia’s first charity, The Benevolent Society.

Urbis was commissioned to undertake the research, [The Drivers of Ageism](#), to understand what makes us fear ageing and older people.

Speaking at the launch were The Benevolent Society CEO Jo Toohey, writer and broadcaster Jane Caro, and Dr The Honourable Kay Patterson AO, Australia’s Age Discrimination Commissioner [[see bios here](#)].

Dr Kirsty Nowlan, Executive Director Strategic Engagement, Research and Advocacy at The Benevolent Society, says, “We need a radical rethink of attitudes towards getting older because we perceive older people as frail, less involved in life, confused and non-productive.

“At The Benevolent Society, we’ve always campaigned and advocated for older people to age well and live their best lives. It’s time to change thinking and behaviours about and towards older people.

“We worry about being a burden as we get older, we fear loss of independence. But this may not be the reality for many of us. What the research shows is that many of our views about older people are based on outdated myths and stereotypes. At The Benevolent Society we aim to change those views so older people continue to stay engaged in work, community and political life.”

[Ageism](#) is negative attitudes and stereotypes about older adults and discrimination based on their age. Adds Dr Nowlan, “We will endeavour to change policies around ageing; we want people to **NOT** perceive older people as a burden, particularly a financial one.

“As a result of this research, we plan to launch a campaign next year addressing the social and policy impacts of ageism, called EveryAGE Counts. We’ll want to drive new conversations and a

national agenda for older Australians, including a federal Minister for Older Australians.” (*more quotes from Dr Kirsty Nowlan [here](#)*)

The research study includes qualitative research encompassing focus groups with both older and younger members, a national online survey of 1400 people, and a comprehensive literature review on the drivers of ageist attitudes and an analysis of past social campaigns to drive attitude and behaviour change.

See the key findings from the research [here](#).

People’s attitudes towards their own ageing are primarily shaped by their personal experiences and the level of contact they have with older people. People tended to have more positive attitudes if they had a personal connection with older people, like in the workplace or the family.

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For interviews with Dr Kirsty Nowlan or with people who have experienced ageism, please contact: Melanie King, Manager Media Relations & Public Affairs, The Benevolent Society

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*****All documents and media information available [here](#)***

About The Benevolent Society

The Benevolent Society is Australia’s first charity, working as a catalyst for social justice and change for over 200 years. The Benevolent Society advocates for a better life for all Australians and provides quality services in the areas of Family Support, assisting older people, and Australians with disability. We help people age well and live a healthy life, staying in their homes wherever possible.

For more information, please visit www.benevolent.org.au, on Facebook/[thebenevolentsociety](#) or on Twitter - [@BenevolentAU](#)