



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Fairfax Electorate: Aged Care**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 10 August 2017**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 10 August 2017  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** O'Brien, Ted, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (16:45): The health, safety and wellbeing of older Australians is paramount to the Turnbull government. On the Sunshine Coast, where my electorate of Fairfax is based, we have a disproportionately large population of mature-age Australians. You'll be interested to know that the most recent census said that in Queensland just over 15 per cent of the population is made up of people 65 years of age or older. On the Sunshine Coast and in my electorate of Fairfax in particular, it's 19 per cent. Having such a large group of seniors on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland is something of which I am enormously proud. It goes to show that our part of the world is, indeed, one of the healthiest places on earth. The Sunshine Coast has been providing and will continue to provide a way of life which is envied the world over. I am delighted to be able to represent so many seniors.

It is also why I decided earlier this year to establish a seniors advisory committee led by Carol Cashman. This committee helps me enormously. They ensure that any issues of great importance to Sunshine Coast seniors are placed on my radar and, through me, onto the agenda of our ministers. They also ensure that we receive feedback on government policy in relation to their impact on seniors and they also help run public forums. Only last Friday I was delighted to have the honourable Ken Wyatt, the Minister for Aged Care, with us in the electorate at the Living Choice Twin Waters Retirement Village. There we had a forum with over 150 seniors packing the hall of that fantastic retirement village. We ran an interactive workshop which ran for over 90 minutes. There were 18 tables and seven key topics under discussion, all around the area of aged care and health. Every single table workshopped the key issues of importance to them and then fed it back to the minister for the minister to respond to and take on board. This was key because it allowed the seniors within the Sunshine Coast area to express their view.

Let me, for the purpose of the House, mention some of the most common sentiments from that workshop last Friday. If there were common sentiments, they were around the need for simplicity, consistency, continuity of care, fairness in relation to contracts and greater accountability in governance. What I found, which should be of no surprise given the recent reports on the *Four Corners* program, was much emphasis and focus on retirement villages. Indeed, the No.1 issue raised across the tables was the power dynamic in retirement villages and a belief by some that it is unbalanced and favours the operators. There was a call for simpler access and consistency of care that is required regardless of living arrangements or stage of life. So we do have some issues here. As the minister rightly pointed out from his own experience and the advice he has received, the vast majority of seniors who are in aged care or retirement villages enjoy a happy life and are well looked after, but we as a government cannot tolerate any mistreatment whatsoever, particularly of our senior citizens. I want to publicly and in this House thank the minister not just for visiting my electorate of Fairfax but for taking the leadership he is taking, because, in order for us to coordinate an approach nationally—a lot of these issues are state and territory issues—we need the leadership of somebody like the minister to engage with those jurisdictions. He is also looking at the previous 2007 parliamentary inquiry report and the 2011 Productivity Commission report to identify short-, medium- and long-term recommendations to take this forward. We need to continue to put the wellbeing, health and safety of seniors at the top of our priority list.