

# **Elaine Jackson Speech**

## **Hear Our Voice Senior's Policy Launch 25 September 2007**

I am pleased to be here today to talk to you about what it's like to live on the age pension.

For the past 13 years I have been retired, surviving on the age pension and there have been many times during these years that I have found it difficult to make ends meet.

Before retirement I was in the nursing profession for around 46 years. I worked as a general nurse for many years, and then for a time I worked in midwifery and the special care nursery. Prior to my retirement I managed a nursing home and then two retirement villages.

When I was growing up retirement was something we all looked forward to, thinking we could spend our leisure years enjoying ourselves, travelling and doing all those things we had put off for years.

It was also an era where you believed the Government would look after you when you retired, paying you back for all the years you worked and paid taxes.

Superannuation was mostly something only the wealthy knew about or subscribed to – it certainly wasn't something the vast majority of my generation thought about.

I did begin investing in superannuation in my 50s but when I retired I got back less than what I put into the scheme – the company collapsed and many people like me suffered financially as a consequence.

After I retired I realised that living on the age pension was not going to be easy. I soon became aware that what I had been anticipating all my working life, a retirement where I could enjoy the ending chapters of my life in carefree bliss, was in fact a time where I had little money to do anything I thought I was going to do.

I have always been proud of being Australian, and I still am, but I don't understand why our society doesn't seem to care that many older people are doing it tough.

My generation was brought up believing it was our right to be looked after in our retirement because we helped build this country and contributed greatly to our cultural heritage, so I don't understand that during a time when our country is experiencing strong economic prosperity that many senior Australians are struggling to survive.

I have recently been diagnosed with early stages of Alzheimer's and because I know what my future needs will be I am starting to look at nursing home accommodation. This is very expensive and I will have to sell my home to pay for this and I will most likely have to hand over every cent of my pension to pay for the rent.

This is very scary for people in my circumstances.

I am also saddened that I will not be able to leave my two children and my darling grandchildren with the financial legacy I worked hard all my life to get, and it wasn't easy for someone like me, a single parent who for many years earned a meagre wage helping others.

I have spent most of my life caring for other people and it's not right that in my hour of need I feel abandoned.

I am here today because I fully support the efforts of this wonderful new political party, Hear Our Voice. We need people like them in parliament, people who really care about what happens to people like me.

Thank you.