



Community Legal Centres  
Australia

**OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING FOR THE PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION OF  
THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS**

**11<sup>TH</sup> WORKING SESSION – 29 MARCH - 1 APRIL 2021**

**STATEMENT BY COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AUSTRALIA (1 April 2021)**

I thank the Chair.

I come to you from the country of the Wulgurukaba and Bindal peoples and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

As always, the way forward is influenced by where we have been and where we still need to go.

**So, where have we been?**

Let's begin by comparing two important decades ...

We now have 10 years of Working Group Sessions. The exact same timespan as we expect to create outcomes from a decade of healthy ageing. Would it be acceptable to reach the end of that decade in 2030 without tangible improvements to the health and lives of older persons? I think not.

Why then have we have we allowed stagnation in this place?

And why would we continue to forgive such inaction going forward. Particularly in the light of the pandemic's obvious call to protect older persons' rights including that supreme right of the human being – the right to life.

We know the absence of an enforceable rights framework to combat ageism has had fatal consequences for older persons around the world. In every corner of the globe, older persons have suffered and died in silence and invisibility. We will grieve for them evermore.

Even through this dreadful time, which continues still, the mandate remains unfulfilled.

The 11 sessions of this group, the 2012 and 2021 analytical studies, reports of the Independent Expert and many intersessional and side events show where we have been and what we have learned.

What they cannot explain is why we are still back there – in past, ignoring the voices of older persons

Older persons have told you:

- They are our voices and our rights
- Older people matter
- Keep our dignity
- No more unequal treatment
- And now, in their words, and in the end a very simple message “it's about rights”

It isn't up to us to take away that hope, that resolve, that need, that destiny. Rather it is our role, this Group's mandate, and our collective job to answer that call.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights reminded us that the "Secretary-General has leaned into this conversation for the first time, calling upon this Working Group to accelerate efforts to develop proposals for an international legal instrument."

She noted, the necessary demonstration of that commitment is a concrete roadmap towards the fulfilment of its mandate.

### **To the way forward**

This session is not called the way backwards – it compels us to move towards satisfaction of the mandate in a meaningful way.

The Way Forward is clear. It requires immediate and decisive action.

We echo the calls to create a sub-group of the Working Group to assist the Working Group during the intersessional period to achieve its mandate.

I thank the Chair