



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Parliamentary Seniors Advocacy Group**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 22 September 2011**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b>	Thursday, 22 September 2011	<b>Source</b>	House
<b>Page</b>	11266	<b>Proof</b>	No
<b>Questioner</b>		<b>Responder</b>	
<b>Speaker</b>	Irons, Steve, MP	<b>Question No.</b>	

**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (09:30): I rise to inform the House of a new parliamentary seniors advocacy group that I have established with the member for Shortland, the Parliamentary Friends of Seniors and Ageing. The member for Shortland and I decided to form the group as a response to Australia's ageing population and the challenges that this has brought to the nation. We both sit on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing and it became clear to us through this work that a parliamentary friends group was needed to explore in detail the multitude and complexity of issues to do with seniors. I am pleased to say that PFSA is a bipartisan group. I hope that all members and senators will get involved in proceedings over this parliamentary term and beyond. We have now been recognised by the Speaker as an official parliamentary group. I thank the Speaker for that recognition and for his support for the organisation.

On Tuesday we scheduled our first meeting and I am pleased to say that we were honoured to have the Council on the Ageing attend. COTA spoke about important issues, such as housing security for seniors and its response to the Productivity Commission report. The meeting was a success. I thank the members who attended. It was a great way to kick off proceedings for our parliamentary group.

One of the areas that I am particularly keen to take action on and explore with the PFSA is the aged crisis in Australia. There is a shortage of beds. The government funding model and demographic pressures caused by the ageing population put pressure on the industry, which is teetering on the brink. I have taken a particular interest in this issue in my electorate of Swan, which has many aged-care facilities, such as SwanCare in Bentley Park and Southcare in Manning. I held an aged-care industry forum that was extremely well attended by executives from across the local area, as well as a seniors forum with the member for Mackellar at Bentley Park that sought the views of seniors on this issue.

The message that I took away from these forums is that seniors worry about aged care and want to know that their future is secure. At the same time, the industry is struggling. The issue of bonds is a controversial one, but it is an issue that desperately needs to be looked into. I know from speaking with stakeholders in my area that bonds are a real issue and have been since about 1998, when the Howard government first mooted them for high care. I see now what is happening to some of the high-care facilities in my electorate. Funding by banks has been withdrawn. So they have to reclassify themselves as low-care centres so that they can get bonds so that they can survive and keep the wood in the door. This is an issue that will be faced by many governments and it is something that we need to look at carefully and take action on.

The Productivity Commission report into the restructuring of the aged-care industry was released by the government on 8 August. As yet, the government has not responded to that report. There are 58 recommendations, too many to discuss in the time that I have left. In conclusion, I hope that the House will welcome the establishment of the Parliamentary Friends of Seniors and Ageing.