

Ageism - and - Wisdom of the Elders

A Policy Statement for The New Liberals

“We contain all the ages we have ever been.” Anne Lamott

Ageism:

According to leading speaker and writer on Ageism, Ashton Applewhite, Ageism is “the relegation of older people to second-class citizenship.” Or, more formally and succinctly: “Discrimination on the basis of a person’s age.”

She adds, as doctors have put it: “If you’ve seen one eighty-year-old, you’ve seen one eighty-year-old.” (So, hold that thought for a moment or two.)

“All ~isms - eg ageism, racism, sexism - are socially constructed ideas. Like all discrimination, ageism legitimises and sustains inequalities between groups, in this case between the young and the no-longer young. Different kinds of discrimination - including racism, sexism, ageism, ableism and homophobia - interact, creating layers of oppression in the lives of individuals and groups.”

Ashton Applewhite favours terms such as “youngers” and “olders” for age is a continuum - there is no young/old divide. One is always younger than some and older than some.

Evidence from the recent Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety has already quite clearly revealed a degree of bullying, callousness and cruelty. This is shocking in its revelation - though common enough if we are honest - to the very culture of institutions - gaols, (boarding) schools, foster care, and the military.

We also know that those in institutional care are only a tiny proportion of all olders. Most aged citizens live independently - as couples or singles - of which a sizeable number rely to some degree or other on government-subsidised assisted-living-packages with carers or registered nurses coming to their homes and/or complemented via Meals-on-Wheels delivery.

And then there are the homeless. The Aged homeless. And nation-wide an appalling lack of public housing - and a homeless sector reliant on charitable NFP organisations to provide care.

All of us have had some close personal experience with at least one if not more than one of these contexts and we know in any event, that these are matters we

will all face ourselves one day, or that will be faced by our next generation. And so much more dire if the economic means are limited.

So as a political party The New Liberals will ensure that treatment - in or outside of care, in terms of employment, of social welfare and housing, of aged pension/superannuation provisions, and of medical health will be the best in the world.

Wisdom of the Elders (aka Olders):

SMH May 30-31, 2020 - Letters-to-the-Editor. Joan Brown of Orange. "Over decades hundreds of Herald letter-writers have used their diverse skills and knowledge to offer advice, criticism, praise, sometimes a dose of humour at our government's policies, action or inaction. Some of these writers have a far longer experience of the real world than a raft of politicians, while lacking their power. At a time when normal rules no longer apply (Covid-19), how powerful would it be to draw together the collective wisdom of these elders in a virtual forum similar to the present national cabinet."

At the time I read this I had been ruminating on the idea of a Council of the Elders (cf with the proposal contained in Uluru The Statement for the Heart - of a Council of First Nations Elders charged with reviewing and approving any Federal legislation with any impact on First Nations peoples). The Council of Elders could be brought together, in whichever way suited them, on a regular basis, and selected as members, based on a formula that stressed choice, experience and learning - a kind of Living National Treasure. They would not be 'captains of industry' or former politicians. But storytellers, writers, nurses, teachers, doctors, engineers, in fact anyone who cared to pass their wisdom to the next generation.

Jim Kable