

The Federal government's recent ministerial reshuffle produced a stand-alone Assistant Minister for Ageing. Who is she and what should she do?

The new Assistant Minister for Ageing, Kate Thwaites, has the job in front of her to represent the interests of Australia's 4.2 mill. people aged 65 and over. That number swells to 9.5 mill. people aged 50+. All of us are ageing which makes Ms Thwaites' job even more confronting. The creation of an Assistant Minister for Ageing Portfolio comes after lobbying by NSA and Independent Federal Member for Mayo Ms Rebekha Sharkie, and comes well into the government's current term, which has been notable for not having a dedicated minister for older Australians. Previously to Ms Thwaites' appointment to a dedicated ageing portfolio, the government's emphasis was on aged-care through cabinet Health and Aged care Minister, Mark Bowen. Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ged Kearney and Aged Care Minister Anika Wells. Those ministers retain their jobs. NSA welcomes the creation of a dedicated Ageing ministerial position, even if at a junior level and outside cabinet decision-making. NSA CEO Chris Grice says the appointment is recognition that older Australians need to be better represented in federal government. He said the issues facing older Australians are many and touch on multiple ministries and portfolios, far beyond aged care. "It's a timely appointment. According to the 2023 Inter-Generational Report, the number of Australians aged over 65 will more than double, and the number aged 85+ will more than triple over the next 40 years. We need to plan for this impact and opportunity now," Mr. Grice said. Aged care is just one of many issues facing older Australians. Many also experience ageism, elder abuse, poverty etc.

"Representation is about ensuring the social, physical, and economic contribution of all older Australians are understood and reflected in good public policy," Mr. Grice said. "Australians support the economy and society in many ways as they get older, they also have specific needs. A successful Minister for aging will understand this diversity and be able to communicate this to their colleagues and to the wider public, ensuring better outcomes. Mr. Grice said this was an opportunity to "give millions of older Australians a stronger say within government", adding that the portfolio was a step in the right direction and very welcome," "NSA looks forward to working with the Assistant Minister to ensure this growing cohort has both the support and recognition it needs and deserves," he said. Having a dedicated voice in government through a stand-alone portfolio and minister has been a long-standing advocacy of NSA. We believe it best serves the needs and values of older Australians, which are far broader than just aged care. "Importantly it is an opportunity to change the narrative around older Australians to view them as the builders they have the potential to be, rather than a burden they are too often portrayed," Mr. Grice said.

Among other matters, NSA would like to see Ms. Thwaites address the barriers facing seniors who want to go back to work, concern about the rising cost of living and access to dental care, homelessness among older people, elder abuse, and lax consumer protection for seniors in retirement villages. NSA looks forward to working with Ms Thwaites and will continue to work closely with other Parliamentary friends of NSA

National Seniors

AUSTRALIA

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Branch Diary

Guest speakers

19th. Aug. Oberammergau Passion Play Talk

16th Sept. Scams Alert (Michael Bamton) (AGM)

21st. Oct. Bangers and Mash (entertainment)

18th. Nov. Christmas Lunch -- Windsor Hotel

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