



Talking Point

August 2020

Age: Everybody's business

A person's race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, economic status, or disability can all stand alone. However there is one fated happening that travels with each characteristic - age.

The most fascinating, brilliant, vibrant and creative mind will grow old. Hero or villain both will inevitably succumb to the vagaries of age.

Age does not discriminate. Human beings, on the other hand, have the proven and troubling capability to commonly discriminate against older members of our community.

If all of us are on the same inescapable journey of aging it begs the question why we allow some older members of our community to be subjected to disdain, neglect, abuse and disrespect.

Aging doesn't change the person you have been. Age doesn't erase a lifetime of trials and tribulations. Memories, losses, achievements, joys and sorrows remain a part of each one of us.

Every person on this planet has a responsibility to be forward thinking. To acknowledge and own the fact that age, and all that it brings, is a part of living.

We have a collective responsibility to ensure that every older member of our community is treated with respect, kindness and dignity. Had this been the ethos of our collective personal, professional and political selves, the dreadfulness that some older people have experienced over recent months would never have occurred.

COVID-19 has shone the light on the need for each and every one of us to have a long, hard look at how and why too many vulnerable older members of our society, through no fault of their own, have been forced to endure prolonged isolation or worse, a lonely and frightening illness.

As we move forward we have a choice. We either proactively protect the emotional and physical wellbeing of our older citizens, or we validate the common reality that we all too often fail to learn from history.

In this instance I hope as a society we will prove to be smarter than that.

Sarah Bolt, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

Equal Opportunity Tasmania

Phone: (03) 6165 7515

E-mail: office@equalopportunity.tas.gov.au