

WEAR PURPLE DAY – Jonathan O'Dea

Thanks for welcoming me into your congregation again. While I personally come from a Catholic tradition and would normally be with my family at our local church at this time, I welcome the opportunity to join with fellow Christians on this Respect for Seniors occasion.

Over the next 25 years the number of people aged 65 years and over is expected to more than double.

We should celebrate this; all their wisdom, their stories and advice, and the massive contribution seniors continue to make to our families and communities.

In our community, it's often difficult for seniors. As people get older they tend to lose close and intimate relationships. They can experience changes to their social life and independence because of physical and mental challenges.

Our society also focuses on the importance of work for self worth. This can further erode the dignity of many seniors as their retirement years are nearly as long as their working life. This can lead to isolation and low self esteem. It highlights why facilities like the St Ives Shed are so important.

As fewer people have the spare time to care for ageing relatives, a greater burden of care is being placed on governments. This can make seniors feel vulnerable, especially given that the needs of our rapidly

ageing populations have to compete with other demands on the limited financial resources available to governments.

As a community we need to foster a culture of care and respect for seniors. The NSW government is attempting to do this, in part by helping seniors stay in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

We are dedicated to helping seniors remain independent, active and healthy. We want to help seniors to stay in their own home so they are close to their family, friends and community, and not inappropriately or prematurely, admitted into residential aged care.

As a community, we need to focus attention on seniors, highlighting their contributions and reminding them of the important role they still play in our lives. We are currently planning services and preparing initiatives so seniors can continue to actively and independently contribute to their communities. Government importantly also works with organisations in this area like UnitingCare, headed by Harry Herbert, who is with us today.

In Proverbs 23:22, Solomon exhorts his son to "harken to your Father who begot you and do not despise your mother when she is old".

We should celebrate an age friendly society where diversity is tolerated and respected, and there is a "fair go" for everyone; a society where seniors can grow old with dignity and be proud of their life-long achievements and the communities they helped to forge. Thankyou.