

# Andrew Stoner MP

Leader of The Nationals - NSW | Shadow Minister for Roads | Shadow Minister for State and Regional Development  
Shadow Minister for Ports | Member for Oxley

28th February 2011

Dr Sonia Laverty  
Older Women's Network NSW  
87 Lower Fort Street  
MILLERS POINT NSW 2000

Dear Dr Laverty

Thank you for your letter dated 3rd January 2011 regarding the State election issues affecting the Older Women's Network. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I enclose a copy of the NSW Liberals & Nationals response to the issues raised by The OWN.

Thank you again for your letter.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Stoner MP  
Leader - The Nationals (NSW)



## **Response to Older Women's Network**

In response to the Older Women's Network (OWN), you have identified a number of key concerns regarding the challenges, rights and opportunities for older women.

The information you provided was most useful and the statistic quoted from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) identifies older women in NSW (those over the age of 45) as half the adult female population is formidable and deserving of recognition in public policy.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to continuing and working to strengthen the Office for Women in the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet.

### **Ageism**

In relation to ageism in the workforce, the NSW Liberals & Nationals share your concerns and the need for strategies to address this issue.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals is in a position to ensure the NSW workforce is non-discriminatory and that people are employed on merit. We are strong supporters of public accountability and believe the Keneally Labor Government's secrecy and consistent misrepresentation of policy outcomes has been a hindrance in driving reform and policy changes that would improve people's lives.

Public sector employees are subject to a code of conduct which requires them to treat members of the public and their colleagues fairly and consistently in a non-discriminatory manner with proper regard for their rights and obligations.

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will require all NSW Departments and public sector employers to act in accordance with the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act. We will require Departments to provide training for their employees to ensure that they are aware of their obligations under the Act.

As a part of our five point action plan, the NSW Liberals & Nationals will restore accountability to government and give people a real say on issues that affect their lives. We are confident the measures we are announcing over the course of the campaign will ensure the needs of older women will be a matter of public record and lead to improved outcomes.

## **Affordable Housing**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will accelerate land release for more affordable housing.

This will be achieved by targeting the release of 10,000 blocks by Landcom over four years to make it easier for families to buy a new home. All profits raised from this land release will go into the New Homes Infrastructure Trust dedicated to local urban infrastructure like water, sewerage and roads.

The new initiatives complement the practical and positive plans to address the housing affordability crisis in Sydney, including:

- Repealing NSW Labor's \$429 million 'Homebuyers Tax' on property purchases;
- Providing a Regional Relocation Grant of \$7000 to encourage 'whole of NSW' growth and take the price pressure off Sydney's housing supply; and,
- Extending stamp duty concessions to Empty Nesters who are over 55 years old.

In relation to homeless and housing strategy, this is a difficult issue for state governments to address alone. There are many facets to homelessness, including the access of women to work and retraining when they return to the workforce after raising a family. We will ensure that government agencies work together to address homelessness, especially in assisting older women suffering economic disadvantage.

The Shadow Minister for Women Pru Goward MP will be making announcements relating to policy in the coming weeks.

## **Violence against Women**

**Domestic violence is often a hidden problem that in older women has often been preceded by years of abuse. Homelessness amongst older women is often a result of domestic violence following years of coping with the situation to try to keep a family together.**

Domestic violence remains a serious issue for both women and men in NSW.

In 2009 there were almost 26,000 domestic violence related assaults reported in NSW. NSW lags behind much of Australia in its response to domestic violence. It is uncoordinated and inconsistent.

Labor has failed to provide the adequate resources to recent legislative amendments in the area of domestic violence to ensure they have any effect. As a result, women in NSW seeking to escape from domestic violence deal with an uncoordinated and uncertain system, looking for court supports, refuge, counselling for themselves and their children and of course, appropriate housing.

**The NSW Liberals & Nationals is particularly sensitive to the needs of these women and intends to make helping them a priority.**

## Health

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to developing health policy with the needs of women, including older women, in mind.

We acknowledge that a gendered approach to health best delivers outcomes for women, and will work to improve the evidence base to inform the development and funding of women's health initiatives and programs.

## Volunteers and Carers

The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe that those who care for children and the elderly receive appropriate support and benefits - regardless of their gender and age.

In relation to home and community care, a NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will deliver more personalised disability services, delivering 'choice, voice and control' for people with disability and their carers and families to manage their own social care needs.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals do not subscribe to the 'one size fits all' approach that is supported by the NSW Labor Government when it comes to the delivery of services to people with disability.

Our plan will be guided by six principles for reform and systemic change and informed by consultation with the disability sector:

1. **Non government organisation viability and sustainability:** capacity building in the non-government sector that provides the services to people with disability is critical to addressing any gaps or duplication in service provision that exists across NSW. Addressing workforce development, infrastructure and service gaps will be key to the success of the roll out of individualised funding packages in NSW.
2. **Building opportunities:** support for the empowerment of individuals and families to enable them to get the most out of personalised service opportunities.
3. **Outcomes led and evidence based:** accurate data and information collection about the likely take up of individualised funding packages will be assessed prior to the programs implementation.
4. **Comprehensive and transparent stakeholder engagement:** a consultative process between service users, providers, peak sector bodies and government will be undertaken to guide the implementation.

5. Regional emphasis: funding ensures the ongoing sustainability of services, particularly in rural and regional areas where there are currently service gaps.
6. Clear political leadership and direction: reasonable and clear expectations about the pace of change will be provided to assist service providers and users to achieve a seamless transition to any new arrangements.

## Transport

In relation to transport, the NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to improving public transport and making it accessible for all commuters, especially for less mobile commuters – through an Integrated Transport Authority and Community Transport amongst our positive and practical plans.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to an Integrated Transport Authority that will ensure the improvement in the delivery of public transport services by better co-ordinating different transport modes, and enabling more efficient delivery of major transport infrastructure projects. This will include responsibility for transport planning including the development of workable transport interchanges, deliver better co-ordination between transport modes, and put commuters first by providing more accessible real time information about services and ticketing.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will give the Community Transport Program (CTP) a much-needed boost to help the transport disadvantaged.

We will:

- Increase funding to the Community Transport Program (CTP) by \$12 million dollars over four years;
- Establish a “one stop shop” for CT providers to improve communication, efficiency and reduce unnecessary administration costs;
- Establishing an appropriate driver accreditation framework to ensure CT providers can enhance their services and ensure utmost safety of volunteers, employees and clients; and
- Ensure appropriate data collection so that proper assessment is made on an ongoing basis of unmet community transport needs in both health and non-health related services.