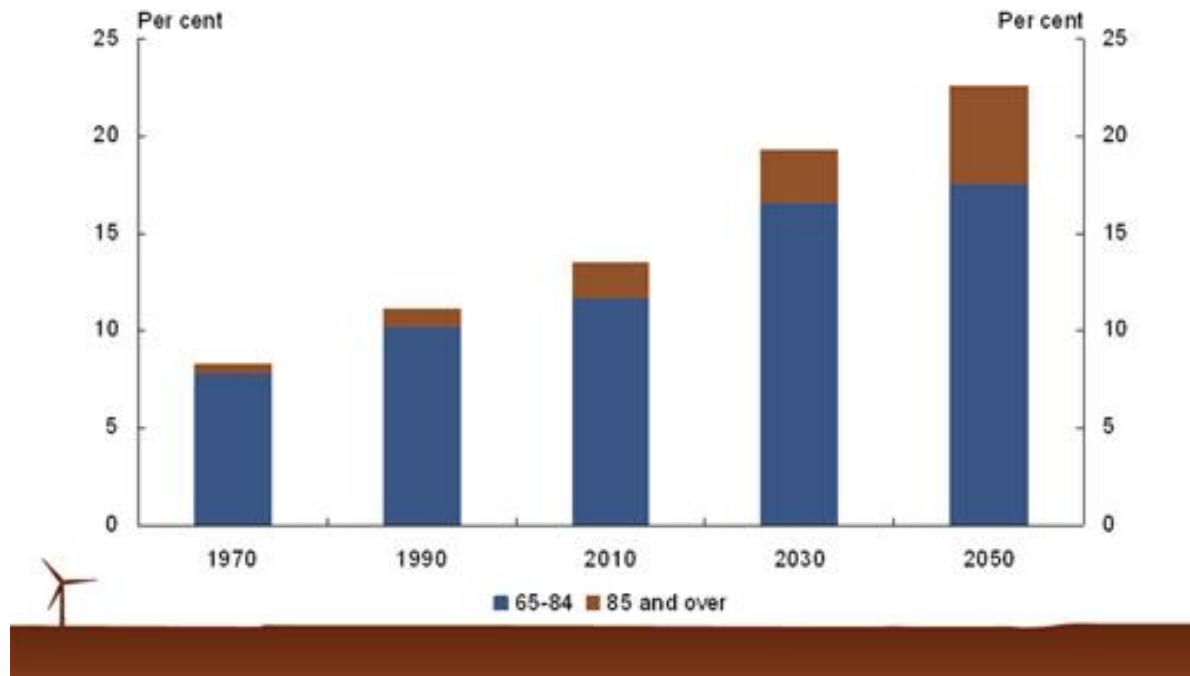


Hearing the **ROAR** of a rights-based long life

How many are we talking about?

Population projections (not incl. recent migration):

Proportion of the population aged 65 and over



Ref: Swan, W. (2010) *Australia to 2050: Future Challenges*. Launch of the Intergenerational Report. 1 February. Canberra

Ageing – a worldwide phenomenon and policy challenge

Global policy leadership:

- WHO Active Ageing Framework (2002)
- Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (2002)
- United Nations EGM on Ageing (2007)
- United Nations EGM on Social Integration (2008)
- United Nations EGM on the Rights of Older Persons (2009)

United Nations focus on ageing

- **Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing-Adopted 2002**
 - ▣ Development of effective age-specific policies
 - ▣ Mainstreaming of older people into all aspects of development and policy making
- **UN EGM on the Rights of Older Persons (2009)**
 - ▣ Ensure basic economic security, access to health care, right to participate in decisions affecting their lives.
 - ▣ Confront media use of stereotypes re older people.
 - ▣ Encourage countries to protect the rights of older citizens through effective laws and monitoring systems

Do we support the Madrid POA?

- ▣ Australia's commitment to the Madrid goals

BUT ...

- ▣ Natural limitations on choice and access
- ▣ Political and bureaucratic uncertainty associated with responsibility and cost
- ▣ Health and welfare infrastructure in a state of flux
- ▣ Recent immigration policy changes not yet factored into planning for an ageing population
- ▣ Research focus on the needs of a small % rather than on hearing the views of those who are not ill or disabled
- ▣ Ageism marginalises, devalues and restricts participation

Inclusion of older persons in policy processes

Possible gains:

- Relevance, comprehensiveness, innovation, cohesiveness

Hurdles:

- Regulatory, health and academic interests
- Idealised conceptualisation of people over 65
- Ascribed roles for older persons that reduce demands for resources
- Ageism as an entrenched and legitimised limitation on the potential of older persons in society
 - The 'burden' myth
 - Intergenerational competition for employment and property
 - Language and communication silos

Overcoming entrenched ageism

Fundamental flaws in political thinking

- Government endorsed attitudes towards older people as an 'economic burden' on younger generations
 - ▣ Calculation of dependency ratio
 - ▣ Assumptions that this generation will have the same service and support needs as previous generations
 - ▣ Non-employed older people do not contribute to national capital

Government policy :

- Broad impact of Government Intergenerational Reports
- Encourage workforce participation by older people
- Acknowledge the rights of all people to access appropriate paid work

Older persons: *a force majeure*

Goals of the UN EGM on the Rights of Older Persons ...

- Ensure basic economic security, access to health care and right to participate in decisions affecting their lives
- Confront media on the use of stereotypes to depict elders
- Enact effective laws and systems to monitor protection of older citizens' rights
- Build 'hard law' at the international level to protect the rights of older persons (convention)
- Include older persons issues in the MDG review process

International discourse on ageing

National policy agendas...

- Ageing has status as a public issue in China, UK, Europe, Japan
- International consistencies exist on aged care service systems and structures – less consistency on policy goals for ageing

Recurrent themes across international borders:

- Ageing populations
- Increases in dependency of people in residential care
- Shifting trends in service approaches
- Gender balance in older aged groups
- Broader health and welfare system trends

Why should older people have a voice on social policy issues?

Because:

- Most public, regulatory and academic commentary occurs about older people rather than by them
- Patriarchal societies encourage older people to be acquiescent rather than assert their choices
- Silencing older voices reduces access to guidance by each generation who may be condemned to re-travel the same paths and perhaps repeat the mistakes of previous generations
- Long life shapes societies for the better

Policy issues identified by older Australians as needing their input

Major themes:

Maximizing independence of older people	Community and residential care services	Primary care services
Supportive neighborhoods	Health services	Employment, education and training
Housing	Law and order	Transport options

Perhaps it is time for a different view to emerge on ageing...

How?

- Make being excluded from society a discourse based on social disadvantage arising from inequities of access to mainstream participation
- Leave the current dominant discourse of projecting social burden based on demographic modelling, to service providers and regulators

'Voice' can achieve changes in national & international policy

- Westernised society and social movements have moved personal troubles to become public issues
- Overcoming low status and no resources, to gain political momentum and access to mainstream areas of study
 - **1960's** – women's problems **Feminist** movement
 - **1980's** – homosexual discrimination **Gay rights** movement
 - **1990's** – people limited by disability **Disability** movement
- **Discourse of opposition in reaction to dominant social norms**

An agenda to ROAR with ...

- Present ageing as a public issue NOT a personal one
- Manage intergenerational competition for resources fairly
- De-bunk predictions of economic burden and challenge media 'group think'
- Move the policy emphasis from 'aged care' to 'ageing'
- Research the value of life experience and social contribution
- Support the development of a UN convention on the rights of older persons – pressure your political representatives
- Don't tolerate older people being dismissed or marginalised
by **ANYONE - ANYWHERE!**

Thank you

The focus of social policy in Australia and other comparable countries has been on servicing the needs of older persons ...

Now hear the **ROAR**
of those who have successfully
achieved long life and demand a
full place in ‘**a society for all ages**’.

