

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

Statement by Minister for Seniors and Ageing

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Seniors and Ageing) [12.17 pm]: I rise to inform the house that 1 October marked the International Day of Older Persons. International Day of Older Persons was designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 1990 with the understanding that an ageing population brings challenges and opportunities. For 31 years, this day has been an opportunity to acknowledge the important contributions that older people have made, and continue to make, to the community and to raise awareness of the unique issues facing older people.

The theme for this year is digital equity for all ages, which highlights the importance of digital inclusion and literacy for older persons. This year's theme is particularly appropriate as we move towards a more digitally connected world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The year 2020 was especially challenging for older Australians who were isolated from their support networks and did not necessarily have the digital literacy skills to maintain important connections. But our older people took on the challenge and showed incredible resilience. Aligned with this year's theme was the release of the *Digital strategy for the Western Australian government 2021–2025* in June 2021. The strategy outlines how the state government is planning to increase digital interaction with the community through four priority areas, one of which is digital inclusivity. Through the strategy, the McGowan government is committed to ensuring no-one is left behind as we move further into a digital world by removing barriers to access it.

The International Day of Older Persons is also a time to raise awareness about age discrimination, also referred to as ageism. The Australian Human Rights Commission found that 43 per cent of people aged 65 years and over have experienced age discrimination, which refers to how we think, feel or act towards people based on their age. These are very concerning figures. For older people, ageism is an everyday challenge that can affect their employment, access to social services and events, and their self-image, and includes calls made previously by members opposite for my early retirement! Only as a whole community can we work together to make WA inclusive and respectful for people of all ages.