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Froniditha Care's Hippocrates Aged Care Opening

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Thank you for your warm welcome to this afternoon's opening of Froniditha Care's Hippocrates Aged Care Facility. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Awabakal and Worimi people, and I pay my respects to their elders past and present.

I extend the best wishes for your ongoing success from the Minister for Mental Health and Aging, the Honourable Mark Butler, who sends his apologies for being unable to attend. But as the Federal Member for Newcastle it is a special pleasure to be here to celebrate the realisation of what began as little more than an aspiration – a vision for a facility to cater for the ageing Greek community. Well that dream is now being lived out by the residents of Froniditha Care's Hippocrates Aged Care Centre.

I congratulate those people who persisted with this dream and made it a reality.

In September last year at the 'Aged and Community Services Australia Conference', Minister Butler remarked that "one of the truest tests of a decent society is how we treat our Seniors; those fellow citizens who, for years and years, worked hard, paid their taxes and raised families; and who, in their later years, need a bit of care and support from the community they helped build." This remains true today, particularly in consideration of those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

In August this year, the newly released Productivity Commission's report *Caring for Older Australians* concluded that Australians are leading longer, healthier and more prosperous lives. This means that over the next 40 years, the number of Australians aged over 85 years of age will grow from 400,000 to 1.8 million.

It is therefore our responsibility to act in this generation to ensure that care and support exists for older Australians, now and into the future - assisting them to age well, to participate actively within society, and to give them the confidence to age with dignity and security.

The Australian Government remains committed to ensuring access to aged care services by those who need those services, regardless of race, culture, language, gender, economic circumstances or geographic location.

People from non-English speaking backgrounds are one of seven groups of people who have been defined in the *Aged Care Act 1997* and the *Aged Care Principles* as people with unique needs, recognising that there can be barriers that reduce the capacity of individuals and communities to access aged care services and receive appropriate care.

The *Quality Care Principles* specifically include addressing difficulties arising for linguistically diverse communities, such as those here at the Hippocrates Aged Care Centre.

There are also additional initiatives intended to address the needs of older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds such as the *Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) Program* and the *Community Partners Program (CPP)*. Both these programs recognise the need for strong partnerships with communities, appropriate training and innovative service delivery to meet specific needs of people from diverse backgrounds.

For example, the *Community Partners Program's* core objective is to provide people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with access to aged care information and services and translation services, as well as to develop partnerships between communities, aged care service providers and hospitals.

The Department is providing almost \$5 million for this program this year alone, and in July this year the Australian Government announced funding for interpreting services in aged care homes. This invaluable initiative is benefiting people like the residents here.

In recognition of the unique needs of these unique groups, applicants applying for new places in the annual *Aged Care Approvals Round (ACAR)* are required to demonstrate how they will tailor their service to meet the particular care needs of people with special needs, including people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

So I outline these important measures to you today to emphasise that the Federal Labor Government is committed to recognising the importance of meeting those special needs. And because Fronditha Care's Hippocrates Aged Care Centre has been set up to implement service delivery in the very special way intended by the government.

I am delighted that here at the Hippocrates Aged Care Centre, 46 places have been allocated for priority access to care for culturally and linguistically diverse people, and 20 places have been designated specific priority for people from a Greek background.

In the 2011-2012 financial year, the Commonwealth Government has delivered over \$642,000 to Hippocrates Aged Care Centre, bringing the total government contribution since 2009 to over \$2.9 million. I am very pleased to be a part of a Government that has delivered this funding and to be part of the genuine partnerships that continue to be forged with the community here at the Hippocrates Aged Care Centre in Newcastle.

To tap into those partnerships and experiences, Minister Butler held a forum in our city to listen to the ideas and concerns of local people. I was not surprised to see several identities from the Greek community and this centre participating. At that forum aging with dignity, coping with dementia and having access to quality and appropriate care were central themes.

Last week as Co-Convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Dementia I joined Ita Buttrose, Chair of Alzheimer's Australia in a Fight Dementia Campaign on the lawns outside Parliament House. With 52% of residents in aged care diagnosed with dementia, any aged care policy reform must have dementia at its centre.

Access Economics estimates that over 269,000 Australians are currently living with dementia, with many facing over three years from symptoms to actual diagnosis. Nationwide, this number continues to grow by 1500 new cases each week. Fortunately our government is acting on this tremendous challenge that impacts on so many families.

The Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service has been established in each state and territory to help aged care staff and carers improve their care of people with dementia. Best Practice Guidelines for Clinical Care of People with Dementia from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have also been developed to support the delivery of that care.

But as is always the case with an ageing population more can and must be done.

Finally, it is an honour to be here at the official opening of Fronditha Care's Hippocrates Aged Care Centre. This place epitomises a distinctive kind of aged care facility, one set up with community compassion and concern and one that accommodates for the unique needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse community of the Newcastle region.

Aged Care centres such as these are helping to assist in the comfort and emotional wellbeing of people who have contributed much to our country. Our country would be diminished without the cultural influence that came with Greek migration to Australia. Australia is a place that has proudly drawn on the richness and diversity of many international cultures to enrich our lives and our nation.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be at today's opening. On behalf of the Australian Government and the Novocastrians I represent I congratulate and thank everyone who has contributed to the Hippocrates Aged Care Centre. I look forward to this centre continuing to play an invaluable role in the well being of the Newcastle community long into the future.