

Mark Butler MP  
Minister for Health and Ageing  
Parliament House, Canberra

22/02/2024

Dear Mr Butler

We are writing to applaud the Albanese Labor Government's [announcement](#) of more than \$103 million being invested in pilot programs to support victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence – and to seek clarification of a life stages approach to working with victim/survivors.

As you are no doubt aware the [National Plan to End Violence Against Women and their Children 2022](#) takes a life stages approach for the first time. This explicit reference to older women is the start of a long journey towards supporting older women, and particularly people living with dementia, who experience family violence at home and in care. We believe a significant barrier to a life stages approach includes the commonly held **myths** that:

- family violence is not an issue for older women or people living with dementia because they don't report it
- old age is a protective factor against sexual assault
- sexual assault of older people is only an issue in aged care
- family violence declines as older people 'mellow'
- family violence is less harmful to older women and people living with dementia
- family violence and sexual assault services do not have a role in supporting older victim/survivors.

We hope the Primary Health Networks running the pilot programs understand the importance of a life stages approach – and are inclusive of older women and people living with dementia. The Networks have an opportunity and, we believe, a responsibility to reach out to older women and people living with dementia who are victim/survivors to provide them with support.

Yours truly,



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