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,

Dr Catherine Barrett  
Director, Celebrate Ageing Ltd  
E: director@celebrateageing.org  
P: 0429 582 237  
W: celebrateageing.com

Kate Swaffer  
CoFounder, DAI  
kateswaffer@infodai.org  
0419 820 206  
dementiallianceinternational.org

Yumi Lee  
CEO, OWN NSW  
ceo@ownnsw.org.au  
0431 142 079  
ownnsw.org.au

Craig Gear OAM  
Chief Executive Officer, OPAN  
craig.gear@opan.org.au  
0410 695 659  
www.opan.org.au