



Speech by

**PETER WELLINGTON**

**MEMBER FOR NICKLIN**

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Hansard 21 October 1998

**ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT RETIREES, BLACKALL RANGE BRANCH**

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—IND) (7.15 p.m.): In September I was privileged to attend the inaugural meeting of the Blackall Range Branch of the Association of Independent Retirees. I am informed that the association had a signed-up membership of approximately 101 members for the inaugural meeting. I am further informed that the association is staffed by volunteers and is non-party political and non-profitmaking and speaks for retirees who feel disadvantaged by Federal, State and local governments and for retired or semiretired people who do not receive the full Government age pension.

I am informed that the aim of the association is to protect and advance the interests of retirees who have funded in whole or in part their own retirement. During the course of the meeting, favourable reference was made to the recent decision by the Federal Government to grant some pensioner health benefits to independent retirees from 1 January next year. Also specifically mentioned were the recent decisions by this Parliament to extend to Seniors Card holders—and hence to many self-funded retirees—the motor vehicle registration concessions previously enjoyed only by pensioners and to provide free ambulance service and transport from 1 January.

However, concern was also expressed about the benefit discrepancies that still exist between Government-funded pensioners and the 570,000-odd self-funded retirees who have invested their life savings prudently so that they can continue to support themselves. In particular, the meeting referred to the need for this Parliament to consider granting free drivers' licences for all Seniors Card holders, the pensioner concessions for local government rates to be extended to fully self-funded retirees and the eligibility age for Seniors Card holders to be reduced from 65 to 60 for persons funding their own retirement. In asking for those concessions, the Blackall Range Branch of the Association of Independent Retirees says that for far too long Australia has treated retirees in two distinct categories. It believes that the retirees and seniors who are able to support themselves and are still contributing to the nation's economy should be rewarded with lifestyle benefits at least equivalent to those enjoyed by publicly funded retirees. After all, the more self-funded retirees there are, the greater is the relief on public funds.

I am also informed that the inaugural president is Mr Bob Taylor; the vice president, Mr Reg Price; the honorary secretary, Una Robinson; and the honorary treasurer, Mr Robert Moran. I commend those matters to the attention of the House.

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