

Friday, 16 March, 2007

□ A true privilege

It was with genuine regret that I today tendered my resignation to the Prime Minister as the Minister for Ageing. I did this because events of recent days have led me to the conclusion that this course of action is in the best interests of the Howard Government. It has been a true privilege to serve as a Minister in the Howard Government. I have assured the Prime Minister of my continuing personal support for his leadership and for the Government he leads. Further, I have committed myself to doing everything in my power to ensure the return of the Howard Government, and the continuation of the prosperity that Australia has enjoyed under John Howard's fine leadership.

□ Portfolio achievements

I have been particularly busy with the Ageing portfolio since the Prime Minister elevated me to the Ministry in January 2006. I have undertaken my portfolio responsibilities in both Queensland and interstate and have attended openings, conferences and other portfolio functions with my Coalition colleagues and the aged care industry in Perth, Broome, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Mildura, Kilarney, Adelaide and the Brisbane and Gold Coast regions.

Most recently, the Prime Minister and I announced the *Securing the Future of Aged Care for Australians* package. This package represents the last response to the Hogan report and the most substantial increase in funding to aged care in Australia. The \$1.5 billion package of reforms will ensure that the aged care industry can deliver quality, choice and affordability in care as Australia's population ages.

Legislative reform has also played a key role within the portfolio with successful amendments being passed through Parliament to:

- Establish a scheme for compulsory reporting of abuse;
- Include protection for people who make disclosures about abuse;
- Establish a new and independent Aged Care Commissioner;
- Introduced requirements for police background checks for aged care workers and certain volunteers in Australian Government-subsidised aged care services;
- Introduced more frequent unannounced inspections of aged care homes by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency; and
- Bring the treatment of gifting and income streams for aged care assets testing purposes into line with their treatment for pension assets testing purposes.

I leave the portfolio of Ageing in good shape, although in such a portfolio – as is the case in many others – the work is never finished. Sensible reform will continue. In this regard I wish the new Minister well. He or she will have my full cooperation and assistance if it is required and requested.

□ My sincerest thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have worked with me and given your professional and personal support during my time as the Minister for Ageing. I'm looking forward to continued service as a Senator for Queensland, working with you to ensure that the Howard Government secures a landmark fifth term.

I wish to thank the leaders of the aged care industry who have dealt with me in good faith throughout my time as the Minister. I also acknowledge the assistance and support of officers of the Department of Health and Ageing and my personal staff. And finally, may I thank my family and friends for standing by me throughout what has been a difficult episode of my life.

It has been an honour and a privilege to have served as one of John Howard's Ministers. The Howard Ministries, under the superb leadership of the Prime Minister, have enshrined for all Australians long-term prosperity and national security. I am proud to have been a small part of that process.

I will remain, of course, a dedicated and hard-working Liberal Senator for Queensland. I will continue to communicate with you on a regular basis through my SENTENEL, and I remain at your service as an elected representative. Please feel free to contact me if I can help you in any way.

□ Quote for the Week □ "Defeat is not defeat unless accepted as reality in your own mind" – Bruce Lee