

Press Release

June 15, 2005

Call for an *Age Friendly Society* in Ireland

The State's advisory agency on all aspects relating to ageing and the welfare of older people today appealed for the creation of an 'age friendly society' in Ireland. The call was made by the National Council on Ageing and Older People at the launch of two major documents on age-related issues by Séamus Brennan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs.

The documents: *An Age Friendly Society: A Position Statement* on the current and future status of older people in Irish society and *Planning for an Ageing Population: Strategic Considerations* were presented to the Minister by the Chair of the National Council on Ageing and Older People, Cllr Éibhlin Byrne.

Introducing the Position Statement on *An Age Friendly Society*, NCAOP Director Bob Carroll said: "While recognising improvements in the circumstances of older people, the Council is concerned at policy, planning, standard setting and services limitations affecting some older people at a time of dramatic improvements in the circumstances of the population generally. In asking itself why this may be so, it has concluded that we must look to society as a whole, to societal attitudes to ageing and older people."

"In this Position Statement, the Council makes an appeal for the development of an *age friendly society* in Ireland - an appeal addressed to every citizen irrespective of age, to the organs of the State, to public, private and voluntary agencies, as well as to communities of all kinds throughout the country," the NCAOP Director said.

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“It is an appeal to consider and agree *as a society* the respective roles that the State, enterprises, the family, the community and the individual must play in order to maintain and develop the independence, self-fulfilment and participation of older people in the years ahead. The Council hopes that this paper will be helpful in stimulating debate on the place Irish society accords to its oldest citizens and how this place is determined. Like other countries around the world, we must face up to the ageing of its population and identify the strategies needed to create an age friendly society both now and in the future,” he said.

“In calling for an *age friendly society* in Ireland, the Council does not seek preferential treatment for older people. Rather, it reiterates the UN call for *a society for all ages*. In such a society, parity of esteem with other citizens will be accorded to older people. They will be treated with equal dignity and respect by the organs of the State, as well as by their fellow citizens. Their independence will not be compromised by inequality of opportunity and their participation in the activities of society will not be denied by differential conditions of access based on age,” the NCAOP Director said.

“The Council believes that we are at a crossroads in terms of how our society determines and regulates its relationship with its older citizens. Vision and leadership are required to ensure that that we take the right direction towards the creation of a society that enhances people’s quality of life as they grow older, one that optimises opportunities for health, participation and security for older people and that recognises and values the vital contribution that older people make to their families, their communities and to society as a whole,” he concluded.

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