



Townsville Community  
LEGAL SERVICE INC

**UNITED NATIONS OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING 9TH WORKING SESSION  
23-26 JULY 2018 - Day 1, Item 5**

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES (AUSTRALIA)  
*Intervention statement by Bill Mitchell***

I thank the Chair.

We endorse the Joint Position Statement of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons (GAROP). We are optimistic that the debate will continue to perfect our understanding and approach to the human rights of older persons.

Our vision is achieving rights, fairness and equality for our communities. Our member centres include specialist legal services for older persons from metropolitan settings to rural and remote communities. Our clients include vulnerable older persons, including those who suffer geographic and social isolation and older indigenous persons who suffer multiple, intersecting discrimination alongside historical trauma. It is these groups that need rights that are specific, nuanced and adapted, and ultimately crafted with life course and lived experience at their heart.

We remain firmly of the view that a new, multilateral human rights instrument is the most appropriate measure to enhance the protection and promotion of human rights. We recognise this is not the only method by which older persons might have their human rights interests protected. In 2015, Australia made a voluntary UPR commitment to have a dedicated section on the rights of older Australians in all relevant reporting and special procedure mechanisms. We note that several processes have come and gone without any significant display of this commitment.

Civil society has continued to raise the issue of older persons in reporting processes through shadow reports. Older women were considered by the recent Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, and in the concluding observations on CEDAW 3 days ago. We will continue to remind our Government about its commitment and work with them to keep an open mind about the options open to this Group under its mandate.

Human rights do require a broad range of responses, existing and trusted as well as new, dynamic norms. We encourage Australia and our all member states to participate in the discussion around normative content with a view to generating a superlative statement of those human rights. That is our job whatever form that statement may take at a later date. We encourage member states to commit to preserving the outcomes of that discussion in a form that captures the essential normative elements. The landscape of UN reporting is littered with neglected expert statements. Those older persons who have placed their trust in this process for almost a decade deserve more.

Thank you.

*William Mitchell for and behalf of National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC), Australia.*