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OPINION PIECE

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GRANDMA IS MOVING IN

Make the spare bed, find the hot water bottle and be prepared for a Golden Girls movie marathon because grandma is moving in. Aged care is in dire need of reform in this country and if we continue to ignore the crisis, ignore the need for urgent reform, then the spare bedroom next to the kids' room is soon to be grandma's new aged care facility.

Aged care in Australia is in crisis. Aged care providers know it, as do senior Australians, industry groups, the unions, nursing staff, the Federal Opposition, the Greens, one Labor Senator and 922,000 Australians who watched the recent 4 Corners investigation into aged care neglect.

The economy is important, very important, but are we really so wrapped up in dollar signs, red balance sheets and negative growth predictions that we have lost interest in important social policy, in providing world-class care to Australia's aged and frail?

We all need to start talking more about aged care and with a rapidly ageing population we need to get the tonsils into gear now! If aged care continues on its current path, with hard-working aged care nurses drastically underpaid, aged care providers flirting with bankruptcy, long waiting lists, an inadequate quantity of help at home programmes and a failed Complaints Investigation Scheme that has little interest in protecting residents from aged care neglect, then aged care in Australia will undoubtedly collapse.

Think about the alternative to a world-class aged care sector, of a failed aged care industry brought to its knees by a government that lacks the political will and vision to ensure its survival.

Without nursing homes who looks after grandma when she has dementia? Do you have a spare room? A spare bed? An extra seat in the car? The money? The medical skills? The time to provide the high level of care that is necessary? Without a world-

class aged care sector families across Australia will be forced to provide the type of care that is more than likely well beyond their means.

Aged and frail Australians deserve world-class care that is delivered by world-class aged care facilities. We need to start taking the challenges of an ageing population seriously, address the needs of an industry on the verge of collapse and start talking about aged care! If we don't support the aged care industry your home becomes the aged care facility and you become the nurse.

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