

Network: Global Social Initiative on Ageing (IAGG-GSIA)



A roundtable & public lecture at the University of Western Australia, in Perth

Health Wealth and Hearth: Law, Policy and Social Perspectives on an Ageing Australia

In February 2013 Professor Norah Keating travelled to Perth, Western Australia as a guest of the Faculty of Law and the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at the University of Western Australia. Although the main purpose of her visit was to be a keynote speaker at the Faculty of Law's roundtable forum: *Health Wealth and Hearth: Law, Policy and Social Perspectives on an Ageing Australia*, Professor Keating also delivered a public lecture: *Friendly for Whom? Rethinking Age-Friendly Communities*, addressed a forum organized by the Council on the Ageing Western Australia (COTAWA) and met with researchers from several universities and representatives from Seniors advocacy and research services.

The University of Alberta was also represented at the Roundtable by Ms Nicole Gaudet, a post-graduate student in the School of Human Ecology and Vice-president of Choices in Community Living Inc. Nicole presented a paper at the roundtable that considered Canadian approaches to retirement living, particularly continuing care facilities.

The Roundtable

The multi-disciplinary roundtable forum addressed one of the most important issues for law and policy makers across the globe: the ageing population. In summary, the forum focused on three of the most pressing issues for the senior members of our society: Health, Wealth and Hearth. An ageing population is a challenge to those in the health sector because of the demands of caring for elderly persons with mental and physical disabilities, as well as raising questions about appropriate measures at the ending of life. The changing demographic has ramifications for the financial sector, notably the way that institutions regulate credit and debt, and how the government will regulate increasing demands on various forms of welfare support. Further, financial concerns surround the significant pressure that can be placed upon seniors within the family context. Finally, an increased senior sector has implications for housing and planning policy, particularly in relation to aged care facilities and a growing problem of aged homelessness.

In 2012, Professors Eileen Webb, Meredith Blake and Robyn Carroll from the UWA Law School proposed that these important and highly topical issues be addressed through roundtable discussions between expert academics and practitioners from law, health, and the social sciences. After receiving funding from the IAS, the forum was scheduled and brought together 30 researchers, policy makers and practitioners with an interest in senior Australians.

Professor Keating's presentations

The public lecture was very well attended and Professor Keating's lecture was the subject of excellent feedback from the audience. In her presentation, Professor Keating spoke about her journey toward answering the question, 'age-friendly for whom?' To illustrate the tremendous diversity in both people and place, she drew on examples of communities such as retirement villages in rural Canada and high-density urban settlements in urban South Africa; and of active engaged older persons and those who are marginalized as a result of poverty and poor health. Professor Keating argued that an age-friendly community is one in which there is a good fit between the needs and preferences of older persons and community features and resources.

At the Roundtable, Professor Keating's presentation was titled: *A good place to grow old? - The social impact on housing*. The presentation caused a considerable amount of discussion amongst the group, particularly because the landscape for seniors in Western Australia and Alberta are, perhaps surprisingly, very similar and there were many parallels that could be drawn between the two jurisdictions.

Future collaboration and research

Professors Webb, Carroll and Blake hope the roundtable will be a springboard for future research. An edited book of papers from the Roundtable will be published and Professor Webb is collaborating with Professor Keating on *inter alia* research titled *Security of Tenure of the ageing population in Western Australia and Alberta – Is the law keeping pace with housing and accommodation issues affecting seniors?* and a journal article on the impact of assets for care arrangements.

Article sent by Norah Keating, Director of IAGG-GSIA

From left to right,
Front row: Ms Judith Abercromby (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare); Professor Norah Keating (University of Alberta, Canada); Professor Robyn Carroll (University of Western Australia) Centre row: Professor Lorna Fox O'Mahoney (University of Durham, UK); Associate Professor Meredith Blake (University of Western Australia); Associate Professor Aviva Freilich (University of Western Australia); Back row: Professor Eileen Webb (University of Western Australia); Ms Nicole Gaudet (University of Alberta, Canada); Ms Judith Allen (University of Western Australia).



An online seminar in New Zealand

The New Zealand Association of Gerontology organized an online seminar February 19, 2013 with 26 people across three cities, Dunedin, Palmerston North and Auckland. Visiting Professor Norah Keating from University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada and Director of IAGG's Global Social Initiative on Ageing (IAGG-GSIA) was invited to present initiatives related to the 3 priority directions for GSIA research; liveability, caring, and families.

Dr Keating opened the online seminar with the IAGG awareness that we are not doing as good a job as we might



in interacting around the globe on the big questions related to how older people are doing amidst family, social and environmental changes. She presented images and research stories from two communities in rural Canada, and an urban region in South Africa, as a way of showing the importance of the fit between the needs and resources of older persons and of their communities. She offered a re-conceptualisation of the notion of age-friendly communities. Rather than being about features which make communities inclusive and accessible for older people, age-friendliness of communities is dynamic; it is about addressing changes over time for

people and places. It is about ongoing changes to promote good fit for persons in places that are always amidst change.

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