

Tuesday May 17, 2005

## **AGE CONCERN'S RESPONSE TO THE QUEEN'S SPEECH**

Age Concern's Director-General, Gordon Lishman, said:

### **Equality Bill**

"The Government's renewed commitment to creating the Commission for Equality and Human Rights is a big-win for older people. For the first time ever, older people's rights will be recognised and we will have a real chance of beating ageism. New legislation to outlaw ageism in the workplace comes into force next year and the Commission must be up and running quickly so people have somewhere to turn to for advice.

"We also want to see a duty placed on public services to promote age equality. Older people are the biggest users of public services but they routinely suffer shoddy, second-class treatment simply because of their age."

### **Draft Pensions Bill**

"The Government has shied away from radical reform and merely tinkered with the existing system for too long. A complete overhaul of the pensions system is now absolutely critical if future generations are to avoid poverty in retirement.

"The Government has some tough choices ahead but compulsory saving into a private scheme is not the way forward. If increased compulsion is necessary, the fairest way to achieve it would be through the state pension system.

"Raising the state pension age past 65 would be a huge betrayal for lower income groups and should not be considered as part of reform. The Government must steer clear of any funding options which penalise the poorest."

### **Incapacity Benefit Bill**

"We support the aims of this Bill but the devil will be in the detail. Many older people want to get back into work but the system must be flexible enough to accommodate individual health needs and circumstances. Those who are unsuccessful in finding work should not be penalised - everyone should have access to a decent income."

### **Regulation of Financial Service Bill (equity release)**

"Many older people are 'asset rich cash poor' and increasing numbers are turning to equity release as a way of raising some extra cash. Legislation to regulate home reversion plans will offer much-needed protection to thousands of homeowners."