



South Australian Debating Association Inc

## Inter A, Quarterfinals

*That we regret the idea that older people are inherently more wise or knowledgeable*

### 1. Type of Topic

This is an empirical, counterfactual debate. In this type of debate, neither team has “fiat”, which is the right to define the exact policy being debated, and the general assumption that whatever policy they propose is feasible. Instead, this topic asks teams to compare the world as it is against what it could be without the policy.

The best interpretation of this topic is “*That the world would be better if the idea that older people are inherently more wise or knowledgeable did not exist*”. Rather than using a model or countermodel, both teams need to use a *clearly reasoned argument* to illustrate what a world without the assumption that older people are more wise or knowledgeable would look like. This description is called the “counterfactual” and is essential to the debate. The two teams might disagree on what this counterfactual might look like and should use logical reasoning to establish why their counterfactual is more likely to occur. Then depending on their respective sides, teams would need to argue that this counterfactual is better or worse than the current world.

### 2. Background / Context

The idea that older people are inherently more wise or knowledgeable has been a common belief throughout history. It has given rise to many assertions that “with age comes wisdom”, as well as the term “elder wisdom”. This belief is rationalised by the thought that people accumulate knowledge and experience throughout their lifespan, and therefore older people have more knowledge and wisdom than younger people. However, this idea has been increasingly challenged as being an outdated and regrettable concept. Researchers and experts seem divided on the issue, with many stating that there is a very weak correlation between wisdom and age.

### 3. Specific Questions for consideration

- How would you define someone to have more knowledge and wisdom? How has the perception of knowledge and wisdom changed over time?
- What are some reasons why the idea of older people being more knowledgeable or wise is currently being questioned?
- What would society look like if the idea that older people are more wise and knowledgeable did not exist?

- What aspects of society have been influenced or shaped by the idea that wisdom comes with age? Are these impacts positive or negative?
  - How does this idea influence the way old people are treated?
  - How does this idea influence the way young people are treated?
  - For each of the above, consider behaviours at home, at work, during social activities, in the public domain, etc.
- In what ways can younger generations contribute to wisdom and knowledge in society? How is this different than older people?
  - Are there specific fields where younger people possess unique insight?
  - Are there any real-life examples where younger individuals made significant contributions based on their unique perspectives and knowledge?

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