

# Another big platform for an old stager

## TRUE CAMPAIGNER

By Judith Ireland

A tax forum may not seem like the best place to have a party. But this was how Everal Compton celebrated his 80th birthday.

As an advocate for senior Australians in the workforce, Mr Compton was in Canberra practising what he preaches.

He attended the forum as the chair of the Government's advisory panel on the "Economic Potential of Senior Australians" – due to make its recommendations to Treasurer Wayne Swan in December.

During the morning session on transfer payments, Mr Compton told Mr Swan he'd like the birthday trend to continue.

"I am anticipating that you'll still be the Treasurer on my 90th birthday and you'll invite me to another tax forum," Mr Compton said.

The Brisbane-based Mr Compton is well known in political circles for his decades of advocacy, including 35 years with National Seniors Australia.

At the forum, Mr Compton pressed for tax incentives to keep older Australians in the workforce.

He noted that by 2050, there will be 50,000 Australians over the age of 100, with 85- to 100-year-olds making up the largest population group.

Mr Compton said that many older Australians wanted to stay in the workforce but face discrimination from employers and insurers.

"They want to contribute something to Australia, they don't want to be a burden on Australia," he said of older workers.



**WORKHORSE:** Seniors advocate Everal Compton, 80, at Parliament House yesterday. Photo: GRAHAM TIDY

"They are reliable, they are experienced, they turn up, they don't take sick leave."

Mr Compton noted yesterday afternoon that older Australians also had a responsibility to work, in order to pay for their increasing medical costs.

"The reason why we stay alive is that medical science is pumping pills into us at a faster rate than any other generation in the history of Australia," he said.

"That costs the nation an

enormous amount of money."

During his career, Mr Compton has lobbied every Australian prime minister since Gough Whitlam. He thinks Julia Gillard is doing a "good job" as prime minister but should get a fairer go.

"In all my life I've never seen a prime minister abused as much as she is. It's got to the point where it's gone beyond what is human."

He said that as a one-on-one negotiator Ms Gillard was "superb".

"She's still learning the skills of handling the masses out there. But I don't know whether there's too many politicians who ever learn the skills of handling the masses out here."

According to Mr Compton, the tax forum had been an interesting two days. "There was a lot of influential people there. Some good contributions were made. Some people were pushing political barrows of their own . . . but you find that in all things."