

# Australian Coalition '99

# 14

Edition

# National UPDATE

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Australian Coalition '99 is an IYOP initiative supported by the Commonwealth Government of Australia  
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## Stop Press! Goodwill survives in the Dandenongs!



Feature article by Helen Elliott

Things happen. Things might - but events don't. Events have to be made to happen. Most of us have made weddings, funerals and birthdays happen. Weddings in particular bring out some alarming characteristics in the nicest people. So here was AC '99's brief for Thursday 30 September:

Arrange an event to attract the attention of the national media that would focus on the release of The Body Shop's collated research about what ageing means to their customers. Simultaneously focus attention on the fact that 1 October was the day designated throughout the world to mark The International Year of Older Persons and all that entailed.

If you are reading this you will probably be mightily sympathetic to the issues in this brief. How very interesting, you are saying. How very significant. Absolutely - but imagine you are a journalist in a frantic newspaper office. Here's the scenario:

The fax machine never stops flipping-over with fresh press releases about celebrities, new products, news, books, films and general invitations to events both gorgeous and glamorous; your mail, delivered constantly through the day contains exactly the same

information plus some even nicer and more exclusive invitations to glamorous and highly sought-after events; your email is bursting with witty and salacious new knowledge; the television monitors flicker constantly above your head with news beamed-in in from all over the world; you check the international wires hourly to see what's happening in Timor, Bosnia or Pakistan as you also keep a running check on Gwynneth Paltrow's latest love. Is it Ben? Or is it back to Brad? And you keep firmly in mind that the general reader is more interested in Gwynneth, Brad and sport rather than Timor and Bosnia.

But at the very front of your mind is the directive sent by your editor about what news he (it will mostly be a 'he' and he will probably be around 40) judges to be significant 'news'. Mainstream media these days are constantly anxious about the way the young are not reading/watching/listening as they go about getting their information by other means. In direct proportion to the young leaving mainstream media in droves, mainstream media frantically tries to signal youth back to base. 'Older people and their issues' is neither an immediate attraction nor a high priority. In fact, in many cases it is seen as a negative.



'Seachange' actor John Howard with Delys Sargeant, Australian Coalition '99

So all we at AC '99 have to do is to get this media interested in what we happen to be doing because we know that if we seed ideas and start debate out there in the real world there is a possibility for change.

We can be artful. We know the media are only human and one of the things humans really adore is a party, a celebration. We'll start there. And isn't the fact of just being alive in spring a cause alone for celebration? So we began to incubate our cunning plan - a celebratory party in a heavenly spot with great company, great food and irresistible drink.

And it all had to be done with goodwill and a little more than the sniff of an oilrag. But it happened. This Event, 'A Toast to Life' happened. If you want to see this odd and lovely thing called 'goodwill' in action there are a few people you can store in your memory. Tesselaar's Tulip Farm at Silvan in Victoria not only gave us a site to rival paradise (paddocks and paddocks ribboned with tulips, a ravishing green lawn for the marquee and all the festivities of their Tulip Festival for gaiety) but Sheila Tesselaar gave more

in all sorts of ways than anyone could dream of - amongst a thousand other details, she even organized perfect little sprays for everyone who came.

Food and Desire Productions, thanks to Marcus Nielsen and Jill Murray, provided food that matched the tulips in perfection. One guest, the food writer Beverley Sutherland-Smith, asked for their Madeleine recipe. A few other guests were heard to say they couldn't leave the marquee to look at the tulips in case they missed more of this amazing food.

Lavazza bought their huge silver coffee machine, along with three of their staff who calmly and sweetly provided the 150 guests with endless steaming coffee, hot chocolate and cups of tea. Graciousness is an Italian gene. Domaine Chandon quietly came with boxes of their special sparkling and glasses to match - there IS no celebration complete without a glass of this Australian sparkling - and they also gave their services in designing the invitation. Berri Limited just delivered fruit juices and didn't even ask for acknowledgment.

Without wanting to sound like a rollcall, the event could not have been a success without the astounding generosity of AAP MediaNet, The Corporate Traveller, Allanby Press Printers, Paul Wilson, Brendan de Montignie and the Commonwealth Government that provides funding to AC '99.

And then there were the actors, Jill Forster, Alan Cassell and John Howard, all from the ABC's hit 'Seachange'. We asked if they would mind coming and saying a few words about what ageing meant to them. They accepted with extraordinary swiftness and grace - and waived any fee. John Howard was particularly courageous - he had to get up at 5AM to catch the plane from Sydney and then be back by late afternoon for an opening night on stage in Sydney.

Jill, Alan and John were each individually brilliant. And I'm not using that word loosely. Outside the rain drizzled and the marquee was packed, but no one shuffled, no one even coughed as the actors spoke from the heart. Jill Forster (how CAN she still be so beautiful? was a constant mutter); with a

certain hilarity in the case of John Howard who came in character from 'Seachange' as the cynical estate agent, and from experience with the witty and laidback Alan Cassell.

And there was a certain swell of feeling that Kim Forte, who launched The Body Shop's research with an amusing and informative precis of what it contained should go on to a further career in acting. She has rather an instinct for holding the stage.

The morning was a grand success. We had as much media coverage as we could expect on radio and in the press and stories are continuing to flow. But for all of us involved, something more important than immediate media coverage occurred.

It had to do with the warmth, generosity and largesse of all those involved and those who attended. And those, too behind the scenes, Jane and Gwen who worked untold hours in the central office catching and stitching all the tiny unglamorous details together so that the entire fabric meshed together in one flawless fall.



The Body Shop team at Tesselaar's Tulip Farm

This is a hardnosed world where we are daily told 'you don't get anything for nothing, there's no such thing as a free lunch etc.' What happened in the organization of AC '99's morning tea in the Dandenongs to celebrate life at any age, was an absolute refutation of these casually cynical comments.

It was, in fact, exactly the opposite. It showed that given the opportunity, the human spirit wants to act with spontaneous kindness, generosity and a sense of putting back rather than taking out. Anyone who was there, at the top of the mountain, amongst the glory of those tulips might also have had a few seconds to glory in the immense privilege and mystery of being human - whatever age.

### International Day of Older Persons- 1 October 1999

If you would like to see how different community groups celebrated the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October 1999, have a look at our website, at: [www.vicnet.net.au/~ac99/stoppres.html](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ac99/stoppres.html) We will keep adding to it as we receive your material. And watch out for the next issue of 'Update'!

It's just a life I'm going through

**Melbourne 'Age' journalist, Danny Katz, attended the 'Toast to Life' event in Melbourne on 30 September 1999, and lived to tell the tale.**

I pulled up my pants and they just kept going higher and higher; my pants went higher then they'd ever gone before - they went past my hips, past my waist, past my belly, ALL THE WAY UP TO MY NIPPLES and I stood there in front of the mirror with my pants around my nipples and I thought to myself- Danny, this is not a good sign, this is a bad sign ...

This is a sign that you're getting old.

I turned 36 last week and all the getting-old signs are happening to me already. It's not just the pants around the nipples, it's the soup thing too: I never used to eat soup, I never understood soup - it's not a meal, it's not a drink, what is it? But now I'm eating soup for dinner - THAT'S A GETTING OLD SIGN. And I'm eating dinner at 4:30 in the afternoon - THAT'S A GETTING - OLD SIGN. And I'm listening to Ernie Sigley on 3AW - A GETTING - OLD SIGN - And I'm taking day-time naps, usually while I'm listening to Ernie Sigley on 3AW - GETTING - OLD SIGN. And I'm watching all those British detective shows on TV. Inspector Morse and Taggart and A Touch of Frost - anything that's got a fat old British crime - solving git in it and a scene where a copper grabs someone and says 'You're nicked'.

I'M DOING THE GETTING - OLD THINGS, THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, I'M OLD OLD OLD. But it's not all bad news because I found out that this is the International Year of the Older Person: It's MY year. And I heard there was going to be this big event at the Tesselaar Tulip Farm to celebrate the wisdom and vitality of elderly citizens - so I packed my thermos and grabbed my specs and wrapped a big woolly scarf around my goitre and headed off to spend a day with my fellow oldies.

The Tesselaar Tulip Farm is a pretty little place near Monbulk in the Dandenong Ranges that's done up like a Dutch town with windmills and wagons and rows of tulips everywhere; when you walk in, it feels like you're actually there - in a tulip farm near Monbulk in the Dandenong Ranges. And all the people there dress in traditional Dutch clothing; they wear clogs and lace and these little Dutch milk-maid hats - I wanted to blend in so I made myself a very authentic-looking Dutch milk- maid hat by folding some toilet paper into a little peak and wearing that on top of my head for the rest of the day. Everyone smiled and pointed and waved at me; I think they really appreciated me making a little extra effort to get into the spirit of the place.

Then I visited this big marquee set up in the middle of the farm; this was where the International Year of the Older Persons event was happening. I went inside and it was filled with people; old people, young people, all of them listening to a woman down the front talking about the richness and freedom and joys of growing old. She was saying that old age shouldn't be a time for people to get tired and frail, it should be a time for people to get healthy and confident and active again. It was a really good message but she was going on and on and it was making me feel a little tired and frail - so I sat down and that was better; I enjoyed the rest of the speech in comfort. Except for this annoying woman standing behind me who kept tapping me on the shoulder asking if she could have her wheelchair back.

After the speeches everyone had a cup of tea and we all chatted and wandered among the tulips; I got talking to a nice couple from Ballarat called Joan and Alan. We discussed all the big issues affecting older people today; we talked about the value and importance of family and friends, and we talked about the reality of death and how difficult it was to accept, and we talked about where Alan bought his Grosby men's casual shoes in pastel grey - he got them at Fosseys for only \$12.95 AND THEY CAME WITH AN ADJUSTABLE VELCRO STRAP - it was a very emotional experience and we were holding hands and hugging and crying.

At the end of the day we were all best friends and a whole bunch of us went to the Clog Cafe to have a little snack before going home. I ordered some traditional Dutch pastries called Poffertjes but I didn't know how to pronounce them so I asked for Poofer Cheese and the young teenage waiter didn't scoff at me or smirk or embarrass me in front of my friends. He smiled and said 'Yes sir' and he went off to get my order. It was such a profound moment for me; it made me realise that getting old wasn't such a bad thing after all - as long as there was always respect and courtesy from the young'uns.

**Reprinted with kind permission from the Age and Danny Katz.**

## Senior women scientists honoured in International Year of Older Persons

Some of Australia's most senior women scientists, all of them over 75 years of age, have been honoured by Federal Minister for Aged Care Bronwyn Bishop at a special reception at Parliament House.

'In this International Year of Older Persons, it is fitting to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of senior women scientists for their work in a field where many, and women in particular, do not receive due recognition for their accomplishments,' Mrs. Bishop said.

'This event recognises women scientists like botanist Dr. Sophie Ducker AM, marine biologist Dr. Isobel Bennett AO, entomologist Dr. Elizabeth Marks, geologist Emeritus Professor Beryl Nashar, and microbiologist Emeritus Professor Nancy Millis AC MBE FTSE, to name a few.



Federal Minister for Aged Care Bronwyn Bishop with Dr. Isobel Bennett

'These outstanding women are pioneers and role models in a wide range of scientific disciplines through their work in research, teaching and publishing.

'The International Year of Older Persons is a time to recognise and celebrate the enormous contribution senior Australians make to our community in so many different ways.

'It is an opportunity to stimulate a cultural change in Australia so that we may progress towards a society where our senior people are respected and valued for their diversity, experience and contribution to our community.

'It is time to raise the profile of older women in our community and for them to be portrayed in a real way for diverse range of active and positive roles they undertake.

'It is difficult to single out any individuals from this exemplary group, but Dr. Sophie Ducker and Dr. Isobel Bennett, both now in their 90s, are outstanding role models who deserve special mention for their continuing work in botany and marine biology respectively.

'Both remain active volunteer researchers, teachers and speakers in their field. For example Dr. Bennett has not stopped working in her retirement and of her ten books, six have been written since she retired,' Mrs. Bishop said.

## Slim Dusty - our Senior Australian of the Year

Minister for Aged Care Bronwyn Bishop has congratulated country music legend Slim Dusty who has made history yet again, this time by receiving the inaugural Commonwealth Government Senior Australian of the Year Award.

The Prime Minister, John Howard, named Slim Dusty as Senior Australian of the Year at a national dinner, hosted by Mrs Bishop in Canberra on 30 September 1999.

'It is so fitting in this International Year of Older Persons that one of the nation's great role models, renowned for his capacity to bring Australians together in song, is our first national award winner,' Mrs Bishop said.

'Slim Dusty is not only an Australian icon, he embodies the Australian spirit-his compassion, link to the 'wide brown land', roguish sense of humour and intimate understanding of the Australian character combine to produce songs we can all relate to. In fact, just two months after major surgery this year, he released his 99th album and is planning to release his 100th album in 2000.

'I also congratulate our 40 Senior Australian Achievers who between them represent the diverse ongoing achievements and contributions of older Australians from every State and Territory.



From left: The Prime Minister, John Howard with the Commonwealth Government's Senior Australian of the Year, Slim Dusty and Federal Minister for Aged Care, Bronwyn Bishop.

'I am delighted with the enthusiasm and the interest that has been shown for this national award. More than 400 nominations from across Australia were received by the National Australia Day Council, which administered the awards on behalf of the Federal Government.

'The fantastic response from Australians around the country demonstrates that people of all ages were keen to express their admiration for the excellence of senior Australians they know.

'Indeed the overall response to the many Federal Government initiatives for this International Year makes it clear that senior Australians not only contribute enormously to our society, but that our community is keen to acknowledge and recognize their achievements.

'This Senior Australian of the Year Award is part of a much broader process to begin cultural change so that we progress towards an Australia which is truly a society for all ages.

'It gives me great pleasure to announce that the National Australia Day Council in cooperation with National Seniors Association will ensure that the Senior Australian of the Year program will continue beyond this year into the next century. 'Just as we annually have an Australian of the Year and Young Australian of the Year, we will now properly have an annual Senior Australian of the Year,' Mrs Bishop said.

## Liverpool City Council (NSW)

Thanks to a grant from the Liverpool City Council, the Liverpool Seniors Network has coordinated and organised an extensive program of IYOP activities.

The Historical Society organised displays from the early days of the surrounding area. Social workers from Liverpool Hospital organised a series of seminars addressing a variety of health issues. Collaboration with local police resulted in open days at health and respite centres and a safety display. Grandfriends Project organised visits to schools.

## Flinders Council (TAS)

To celebrate IYOP, Flinders Council hosted and sponsored a lunch for all the Senior Citizens of the Furneaux Group of Islands. The invitation was issued via an advertisement in the local newspaper 'Island News' and through noticeboards on both Flinders Island and Cape Barren Island. The invitation requested that each participant bring along an item of memorabilia for a 'Show and Tell' segment. Seventy six senior citizens attended the lunch and guests were entertained by guest speakers relating their own experiences of growing up in the Furneaux Group of Islands.

## Gannawarra Shire Council (VIC)

As part of the IYOP celebrations, a gala cabaret ball will be held on 13 November 1999 with the theme 'Dancing Through the Ages'. Entertainment will be provided by bands and local performers who will showcase the evolution of dance. The Council hopes to attract party goers of all ages.

**For more information, contact the Community Services Department Tel: 03 5456 5207.**

## IYOP 1999 goes to the footy

Football is a major part of Australian culture and no more so than in Victoria (where we like to think it originated). Unfortunately, like most sports, it is usually associated with younger people.

In Victoria, AC '99 (the coalition of groups that have come together for IYOP) have been trying for some time to gain some acknowledgement and recognition for all the older people who are part of the football culture in Victoria. We were unsuccessful with the Grand Final but finally achieved a break through with the International Football Match on Friday, 8 October. Jo Capp, part of AC '99 Victoria's Media and Publicity committee, was successful in convincing the organisers to highlight IYOP during the match. Before the match and at every interval the following message was displayed on the giant scoreboard for all 64,000 attendees to consider:

**1999 is celebrating the International Year of Older Persons**

**What's that got to do with football?**

**Look around -**

- the Fans who've been there, good times and bad;
- the Leaders in the board room
- the Faithful who cook the meals and wash the jumpers

**Older people... the backbone of football**

Also shown at the same time was the Commonwealth Government's IYOP television advertisement that has been running for some time featuring the message 'never underestimate an older person'. Readers may have seen the community service announcement which features an older man and woman helping two young male truck drivers remove their hay-truck from where it has stuck under a railway bridge - the older couple using their experience and knowledge in ways that leave the young ones dumbfounded.

The footy audience reacted to both messages with delight.

## Active for Life older persons video

In the next two decades the proportion of Victorians aged over 65 years will grow from 12 per cent to more than 16 per cent. By 2041 it is estimated that 23 per cent of Victorians (1,230,000 people) will be over 65 years. Maintaining, enhancing and restoring good physical and mental health throughout life and into older age will become increasingly important as Victoria's population ages.

It will not come as any surprise to read that participation levels in sport and recreation activity have been found to decrease with age. In 1996, 87% of young people 15-24 years of age participated in physical activity at least once a year, compared to 62% of people over 65 years of age.

Each new generation of older people is healthier than the last and increasingly older people are recognising that physical activity can help them maintain mobility and independence. It can also decrease the risk of coronary heart disease, injury (particularly through falls and consequent fractures), non-insulin dependent diabetes and some cancers.

However, as only 40% of Victorians aged over 60 undertake regular, adequate physical activity there is still some work to be done.

The Active for Life Older Persons Exercise Video, which has been developed to mark the International Year of Older Persons 1999, will promote the positive gains and improved quality of life that regular, physical activity can bring. It will encourage the viewer to build on their current activities, such as walking or gardening, and aims to further improve their muscular strength, cardiovascular fitness, balance, mobility and general well being.

There are many misconceptions about ageing and one of them is that to grow older means to become frail. This myth perpetuates the 'go slow' approach to ageing, which can inhibit older people from participating in physical activity. Half of the changes that affect the way our bodies function between the ages of 30 to 70 are due to inactivity - the ageing process accounts for the remaining losses.

Date	Event	Organisation
1	Geriaction National Conference	Geriaction Conference Secretariat
1-5	A Uniform Standard of Living for Seniors Universally	Australian Pensioners' League of Western Australia (Inc)
1-6	Seniors Week	
3-4	'Long Lives on Screen' Film Festival	Kino Cinema
7-9	COTA National Congress - Older Australians: A Working Future?	COTA SA
9-10	'Long Lives on Screen' Film Festival	Electric Shadows Cinema
11-13	Annual Conference of the Continenence Foundation of Australia	Continenence Foundation of Australia
12-13	2nd Local Studies Conference	
14-17	Public Libraries Conference	Australian Library & Information Association
15-16	2nd National Nursing Conference	Ausmed Publications
16	'Long Lives on Screen' Film Festival	Cinema Centre
17	Australian Employers Convention	Jobs East
18-19	ACROD 1999 Annual Convention	ACROD
19	Consumer Health Forum	
19	Commonwealth Media and Advertising Awards	
19	'Long Lives on Screen' Film Festival	Mt. Vic Flicks
22	Crossed Lines	Consumers' Telecommunications Network
23-25	Retirement/Aged Care Housing Conference	Retirement/Aged Care Housing Conference
24	'Long Lives on Screen' Film Festival	The Regal Cinema
25-27	Education and Social Action Conference	Centre for Popular Education
29-30	The Science of Ageing	National Ageing Research Institute
30	'Long Lives on Screen' Film Festival	The Plaza Cinema
30	Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatry AGM & Clinical Meeting	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry
30	Geodemographics of Ageing in Australia Symposium	Ageing Symposium Secretariat

Location	Contact Details
Melbourne, Vic	Tel/Fax: 03 9890 2330 Email: <a href="mailto:fleminga@ozemail.com.au">fleminga@ozemail.com.au</a>
Pinjarra, WA	Tel: 08 9325 2988 Fax: 08 9221 1329 Email: <a href="mailto:aplwa@axxs.net.au">aplwa@axxs.net.au</a> Web: <a href="http://www.aplwa.asn.au">http://www.aplwa.asn.au</a>
WA	
Melbourne, Vic	Tel: 03 9650 2100
Adelaide, SA	Tel: 08 8232 0422 Fax: 08 8232 0433 Email: <a href="mailto:krichardson@cotasa.org.au">krichardson@cotasa.org.au</a>
Canberra, ACT	Tel: 02 6248 0851
Sydney NSW	Mr. Peter Schmidt Tel: 03 9347 2522 Fax: 03 9347 2533 Email: <a href="mailto:peter@contfound.org.au">peter@contfound.org.au</a>
	Jenni Woodruffe Tel/Fax: 08 9367 4759 Email: <a href="mailto:jenni@omen.net.au">jenni@omen.net.au</a>
Perth, WA	Tel: 08 9332 2900 Fax: 08 9332 2911 Email: <a href="mailto:promaco@promaco.com.au">promaco@promaco.com.au</a> Web: <a href="http://www.promaco.com.au/conference/1999/alia">http://www.promaco.com.au/conference/1999/alia</a>
Melbourne, Vic	Email: <a href="mailto:ausmed@ausmed.com.au">ausmed@ausmed.com.au</a> Web: <a href="http://www.ausmed.com.au">http://www.ausmed.com.au</a>
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Mt. Victoria, NSW	Tel: 02 4787 1577
Sydney, NSW	Tel: 02 9572 6007 Fax: 02 9572 6014 Email: <a href="mailto:ctn@bigpond.com">ctn@bigpond.com</a>
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Sydney, NSW	Tel: 02 9514 3843
Melbourne, Vic	Ms. Pamela Every Tel: 03 9387 4030 Fax: 03 9389 7148 Email: <a href="mailto:soa@nari.unimelb.edu.au">soa@nari.unimelb.edu.au</a> Web: <a href="http://www.nari.unimelb.edu.au/soa">http://www.nari.unimelb.edu.au/soa</a>
Laurieton, NSW	Tel: 02 6559 8077
Sydney, NSW	Mr. John Snowden Tel: 02 9640 0646 Fax: 02 9642 5652 Email: <a href="mailto:JSNOWDEN@mail.usyd.edu.au">JSNOWDEN@mail.usyd.edu.au</a> Web: <a href="http://www.ranzcp.org">http://www.ranzcp.org</a>
Brisbane, QLD	Tel: 07 3252 3856 Fax: 07 3252 4986 Email: <a href="mailto:rgsq@gil.com.au">rgsq@gil.com.au</a>

It is a fact that if older people engage in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, on a daily basis, they will improve muscular strength, balance, gait and reaction time. It can also help to maintain bone density especially in post-menopausal women.

Market research undertaken in 1996 by the Australian Sports Commission on barriers to participation found that opportunities for physical activity need to be convenient, easy to access, and accompanied by social interaction to make them sustainable. These factors become crucial in the older age groups.

The Active for Life Older Persons Exercise Video will provide sound medical advice for safe exercise practices as well as a range of exercise options available to older people in their own homes and local environment. A detailed instruction booklet will accompany the video and will include information on safe exercise, general healthy lifestyle options as well as contact details for exercise groups and organisations for older people to join. The booklet will give advice on how to get started and how to maintain an exercise regime. It will also address concerns about safety, injury and diet.

The Active for Life Older Persons Exercise Video aims to:

- Increase the awareness of older Victorians of the positive effects of exercise on their physical and mental health promoting the message that physical fitness can be achieved at any age.
- Produce a constructive and useful educative resource to illustrate simply how exercise can be part of day-to-day routines.
- Provide a tool for health professionals to actively encourage older people to partake in physical activity as a means of improving general health and well being.
- Assist the sport, recreation and fitness industry to better promote their services to older people.



The video and booklet will provide a tool for health professionals to actively encourage older people to partake in physical activity as a means of improving general health and well being. It will also be a useful resource for the fitness industry to better understand the physical activity preferences of older people and to better market their services to this group.

The Active for Life Older Persons Exercise Video was due for completion in September 1999. It will be a free product and will be distributed to General Practitioners, Community Health Centres, Pharmacies, the fitness industry and to older people themselves.

The video is a joint project between the Aged, Community and Mental Health Division of the Department of Human Services and Sport and Recreation Victoria.

**For more information contact Ms Keryn Negri, Department of Human Services  
Tel: 03 9616 8233.**

United Nations Association (NSW) holds IYOP symposium: 'Building a bridge of values: a dialogue between the young and old'

The following is an excerpt from an article provided by Taylor Dong, IYOP Program Convenor, UN Association (NSW). The symposium, held on 18 September 1999 in Sydney, was funded by a grant from the Ageing & Disability Department of NSW and used an intergenerational theme to align perspectives from the youth and the experiences of older people.

The interactive forum raised many pertinent questions for the six youth and older panelists, offering their unique and valuable insights and perspectives on particular issues, including raising awareness of how similar older people are to youth in terms of both being classified into similar stereotypes. These stereotypes are often propagated by the media, exposing to the public the view that both groups are a social and economic burden, with distressing suicide and unemployment rates. If age no longer is considered as a feeling of pride, but as a threatening aspect of a person's life, this will add much stress upon an individual whom is susceptible to such negative attitudes.

It was agreed that age should be seen as a continuum, and not as distinct age classifications where people jump from one to the next. In this sense, life should be viewed as a journey where we are all at different stages, but the end is the same for all of us. Older people are in a valuable position to play the important role of imparting their knowledge of the process of living life to the youth. In turn, youth should take in mind the wisdom of their elders' experience of life when they eagerly rush through, making their own mistakes and learning the lessons from their own unique experiences.



Heather Johnson (Chair AC99 (NSW)) addressing the UNNA 'Building a Bridge of Values'. Other panel members include (left to right) Jack Zinn (Older Men: New Ideas), Sue Tan (United Nations Youth Association) and Allan Doohan (President, United Nations Youth Association).

More programs where the two generations could meet are needed, as there is phenomenal ground for progressive contact to be made to strengthen the bridge that already exists between them. Sue Tan (UNYA), youth

panelist, strongly emphasized the need to break down cultural and age stereotypes through personal interaction at a deeper level, and forming relationships as reciprocity will follow with understanding.

Among the other older panelists were Heather Johnson (COTA, AC '99) and Elspeth Browne (Consultant Social Worker). Michel Santry (international sculptor/artist) gave an impressive tour into his lifetime's work and trials, emphasizing the need for our youth to have appropriate opportunities to attain a sense of accomplishment in society through strong work ethics and eliminating age barriers which fuel discrimination and dissent amongst the Australian people.

### Australia's Family Heritage Project

The National Seniors Association has established a strategic alliance with the State Library Victoria to develop 'Australia's Family Heritage', a national project to celebrate IYOP. The 'Australia's Family Heritage' project aims to encourage every older person resident of Australia today to document the details of their own family heritage, working back to their first families who chose to immigrate (or who were transported) to Australia. The project would therefore celebrate all the 'unsung heroes' who have helped develop this country. If supported to its full potential, 'Australia's Family Heritage' could become an international project commemorating IYOP. In this age of technology, any recorded family history can be digitised to take the records into the future. Family heritage can either be recorded in written form or inputted into the 'First Families 2001' national database on the Internet at:

<http://www.firstfamilies2001.net.au/>

Libraries throughout Australia are aware of the project and have been asked to give assistance to people wishing to access the 'First Families 2001' website, being managed by VicNet and supported by Vic Multi-Media and the State Library of Victoria.

**For more information, contact Helen Matthews, National Seniors Association  
Tel: 03 9620 1311 or Fax: 03 9620 1399.**

'Old enough to know better ...  
Too Young to resist' - U3A Launch  
IYOP Book

'We cremated Aunt Jane today. I do hope she was dead.' Carol Price has a great talent for grabbing a reader's attention. But she's in good company, in an anthology of writing by members of Sydney U3A. All people over 50 no longer working full time - but still living full time - they have produced a book which is full of surprises.

Phillip Adams writes in the foreword, 'This book contains poetry and prose that is as powerful and poignant as anything you could hope to read - the work of sensibilities that have been intensified by experience.' And certainly the writing reflects the whole spectrum of life. But the real story here is how the book grew from a casual idea to a splendid reality.

Part of a world-wide movement which gives mature age people the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences, Sydney U3A offers its 5000 members choices from about 200 courses which include art, languages, science, literature, music, history - the list goes on!

Last year, leaders of the creative writing classes had a meeting where they exchanged ideas, material, had group discussions and looked at possible future projects. Maybe a book? With 1999 declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Older Persons, why not a book to celebrate the occasion!



The Sydney U3A Book Committee relax in front of a poster of their book, 'Old Enough to know better... too young to resist'. (From L to R: Jim Manser, June Lynn, Lorna Clayton, Donna Manser, Jim Dowell.)

'I'm glad I didn't know how much work it would involve when we first started', said Lorna Clayton, who volunteered to be Book Coordinator, adding, with a huge smile, 'but it was worth it.'

With a target publication date of August, the Book Committee swung into action. The Rules and Conditions of Entry had already been established. Work could be poetry or prose, fiction or non-fiction. No entry over 1000 words. Maximum of two entries per person. Assessment guidelines had been drawn up, with each piece of writing being assessed at least twice. No writing would be assessed by someone who knew the writer. Entrants were expanded from members of the creative writing groups to any Sydney U3A member.

And the entries poured in. They were funny. They were outrageous. They were gentle. They were cynical. Eccentric aunts appeared, (whatever happened to uncles?); grand-parents from the past who lived extraordinary lives, silly siblings and tender memories of relationships. But there were no 'poor little me' stories, no 'cute little old lady' or 'victims of our times' tales.

Finally it was off to the printer and 5 September saw the official launch at the NSW Spring Writing Festival, with Professor Fred Ehrlich, one of the NSW Premier's Ambassadors for IYOP sending it on its way. Much rejoicing, much celebration and smiles of satisfaction from everyone involved!

And the success of the book? Yes, it's gratifying to be included in the Calendar of Events for IYOP and it's an achievement to see one's work in published form. Yes, it's great that it's already gone into a second printing. But now, bookish offspring who have smiled indulgently at Mom's or Dad's or grandparents' creative writing classes are making comments like, 'But this is a real book and it's fascinating stuff. It's really good! Can I have a copy?' And that is success!

**'Old enough to know better ... too young to resist' is available through selected bookstores or by order through Sydney U3A, Suite 102, 15-17 Young Street, Sydney 2000. Tel: 02 9252 2033**

## Older Australians - A Working Future: 'The Changing Nature of Work and Retirement in the 21st Century'

The position of older workers in the workplace of the future is just one of the topics to be explored in the upcoming National COTA Congress.

Older workers are a valuable resource that is often underutilised in today's corporate environment, where they are encouraged to take early retirement and targeted redundancies. It is well documented that by the year 2015 mature/older workers (workers over 50 years of age) will make up about 34% of the workforce. It is no longer economically viable to view the oldest workers in the company as the most disposable. We know that older workers bring a wealth of skills and qualities to the workplace that are equally valuable as those of their younger co-workers. Employers consider older workers to be dependable, to make sound decisions, and to produce high quality work.

Negative stereotypes of older workers (particularly those related to mental and physical decline) are common throughout the Australian workplace. These stereotypes however are not supported by available evidence. For example, a 20 year study of people aged 60 to 80 years found that memory and intelligence did not diminish over this period. Research has indicated that older workers are interested and satisfied in their work and that they fit in with younger workers. It has also shown that people of all ages can demonstrate desirable qualities such as assertiveness, drive, innovation and adaptability. Older workers possess the mental energy, commitment and sheer determination to push the boundaries.

The challenge for Australian companies is to restructure their employment policy and practices to take full advantage of maturity, know how, dependability and experience of their older workers. If companies want to maintain their competitive edge in the global economy they need to build a diverse workforce where the value of older workers is recognised and utilised.

An exciting range of eminent keynote speakers will discuss these issues at the Inaugural National COTA Congress 'Older Australians: A Working Future?' to be held in Adelaide from the 7-9 November 1999. The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop will open the Congress and provide the Introductory Address, followed by Dr. Don Edgar who will set the framework for the Congress during his presentation Where do older Australians fit in the workplace of the 21st century? Emeritus Professor Sol Encel will introduce one of the strands through his presentation on Older Workers - The Myths and the Reality. Strategies to improve workplace productivity through effective human resource management and training techniques will be presented by Neil Stevenson and Professor Mark Wooden. Professor Graeme Hugo, Dr. Adriana Vanden Heuvel and Dr. James Juniper will provide insight into the forces shaping the social and political environment and the labour market of the 21st Century.

**For a congress program and registration form, contact COTA (SA) on 08 8232 042.**

## Stop Press! ABC Swings on 21 November

On Sunday 21 November 1999, ABC Television will broadcast 'Swingers', an observational documentary featuring the musical legends of Sydney's swing era. Follow the story of The Shaw Nuff Swing Band and their regular Sunday gig at the Maroubra Bowling Club. Meet Jim, the 73 year old bandleader and Lee, Australia's Jitterbug and National Dance Champion for 17 years from 1947 to the early 1960's. Negotiating the ups and downs of health, romance - and horror of horrors - the loss of the gig, these Swingers respond to life's challenges with vivacity, humanity and joy.

'A Celebration of Life' - Melbourne Concert Hall: 7 November 1999

A major concert is being organised by The Life Planning Foundation of Australia, to celebrate IYOP. This exciting event will be held at 2.00 pm on Sunday 7 November 1999 at the Melbourne Concert Hall. The concert will be hosted by Jocelyn Terry and will include performances by the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir and the Australian Girls Choir. Renowned organist, John Atwell will also be performing.

The Life Planning Foundation of Australia is a non-profit community organisation, that has been catering, for 26 years, to a distinct and growing segment of the community - active people aged 50 years and over. The Foundation is the parent body to 23 Life Activities Clubs through the Melbourne metropolitan area as well as clubs located in Bendigo and Ballarat in country Victoria.

The Meeting of Generations National Conference, Sydney Convention Centre, 15-16 November 1999

The Meeting of Generations is not another talkfest. It is a unique opportunity for older and younger people to communicate and generate action around their common and diverse goals. The Conference will encourage the development of shared visions and put a strong emphasis on building partnerships to achieve longterm community-based solutions.

Another important purpose of the Meeting of Generations is to generate ideas that will contribute to strategies for older people and young people at all levels of government.



Discussion and debate will focus on three basic questions:

- what are the positive lessons that we have learned and should take with us into the new century?
- what are our aspirations for the next century, notably the hopes of the younger generations?
- how do we get there from here?

**For information about the Meeting of Generations program or general participation, contact: Gail Le Bransky  
Tel: 02 9367 6826, Fax: 02 9364 6923  
Email: gail.lebransky@add.nsw.gov.au**

'Reluctant Retirees' - A New Cabaret Show by the Grey Panthers

The Grey Panthers is a well established group of older adults who have entertained Darwin audiences over the past 12 years. Many of these women are long term Territory residents and they have such wisdom to share with you and a willingness to continue learning right through the 'third age'. You may have seen them in Old Spice Cabaret, Healthy Wealthy and Wise and many events around Darwin. Now come and see these dynamic women in 'Reluctant Retirees'.

'Reluctant Retirees' is devised by the women and addresses issues relating to age, work, change, choices, personal beliefs, identity, dignity and respect. The cabaret performance presents a range of societies views on 'the retired' in a society that glorifies its youth. It looks at truths and myths, and the opportunities awaiting retired people. The cabaret is directed by Merilee Mills with Assistant Director, David McMicken.

Preview: Wednesday 10 November - 2.00pm  
Premier: Thursday 11 November - 7.30pm

Other performances:  
Friday 12 November - 2.00pm,  
Saturday 1 November - 2.00pm, 7.30pm

**For more information, please contact Mandy Carlton at the Tracks Inc office, Darwin  
Tel: 08 8924 4414.**

## News from the Secretariat

Available for your reading pleasure!

'Seniors in Cyberspace - Older People and Information' is a definitive review just published by Council on the Ageing (Australia). It provides answers about the information needs of older people, how they find out about services; how to promote services and present material better. Best approaches to disseminating information are discussed and examples of current information services described. The paper also focuses on seniors' attitudes to new technology, and how they use computers and the Internet. It describes innovative programs currently operating to help older people make the most of IT, and outlines future scenarios. Senior surfers are one of the fastest growing groups on the World Wide Web and the paper highlights the development of some relevant sites.

**For more information, contact the author, Helen Scott, COTA's Information Manager on 03 9820 2655. This publication is available for sale at \$10.00 each.**

### The Body Shop Body Image & Ageing Campaign - research results

To commemorate IYOP, The Body Shop provided, in each store around the country, a comment book for customers, visitors and staff to record their response to the statement: 'In my life, ageing means to me...'. 7,300 entries were collected between April and August 1999. The major points of interest to emerge from the responses have been presented in a broadsheet flyer.

**For single or multiple copies, please contact AC '99 (National)  
Tel: 03 9820 4463, Fax: 03 9820 4247  
Email: ac99nat@cota.org.au**

## Rotary International Promotes Opportunities for Older Persons

Today's service organizations are developing programs that not only meet the economic and medical needs of the world's ageing population, but also those that meet their social and psychological needs. Rotary International is a volunteer service association with more than 29,000 clubs in over 160 countries. With a diverse membership of 1.2 million business and professional leaders, Rotary has long espoused the importance of developing projects in partnership with older persons rather than expressly for them.

Rotary clubs are also helping older adults by sponsoring PROBUS clubs for retired and semi-retired adults (55 years and older). PROBUS, derived from the words PROfessional and BUSiness, enables older adults to remain productive and active members of their communities after retirement. The clubs provide social interaction, as well as opportunities to participate in mentoring and vocational training programs. With the help of individual Rotary clubs, PROBUS clubs are now established throughout the world including Australia, South Africa, Canada and the United States.

Through projects like these and other community programs, Rotary encourages inter-generational activities to promote healthy interaction between young people and older adults.

**To find out more about Rotary, visit the website at <http://www.rotary.org> or contact Martha Davis, Community Programs Section, at [davism@rotaryintl.org](mailto:davism@rotaryintl.org)**

## New Partners

### **National Heart Foundation of Australia**

Contact: Ms Anthea Green  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tel: 02 6282 2144  
Fax: 02 6282 5147  
Email: [Anthea.Green@heartfoundation.com.au](mailto:Anthea.Green@heartfoundation.com.au)

### **Osteoporosis Australia**

Contact: Ms. Gillian Leach  
Executive Director  
Tel: 08 8379 5711  
Fax: 08 8379 5707  
Email: [gillianleach@bigpond.com.au](mailto:gillianleach@bigpond.com.au)

### **Homeshare**

Contact: Ms. Carmel Hurst  
Tel: 03 9523 9418  
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Council on the Ageing (Australia) is the auspicing organisation of Australian Coalition '99 (National).

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