



Older People Speak Out
Promoting the value of older people

LIFE TIMES



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Don't take your eyes off the budget ball

A swift and determined response by OPSO along with other seniors, social services and local government organisations successful convinced the Queensland Government last fortnight to reverse its plan to scrap pensioner concessions.

It was the only sensible decision the Government could make, or face the prospect of seniors marching in protest and raising our collective voice at the ballot box. So while common sense prevailed on that occasion, it is a reminder that we must be ever vigilant and be prepared to stand up for our rights.

Even with concessions, the rising cost of basic services such as water and electricity will impact seniors.

An analysis of the State Budget by the Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS) found that the proposed increase in electricity concessions is equivalent to the average increase in electricity bills expected from 1 July. However, as the fixed charge is

increasing by 66%, these concessions may still not be enough to help low consuming households facing escalating electricity costs before they've even switched on a light.

The water subsidy for pensioners in south-east Queensland remains but it has not kept pace with rising water prices. Public transport fares will increase, although not as dramatically as in previous years. Add this to the list of cuts and additional service fees announced in the Federal Budget.

Our politicians have woken a sleeping giant and should remember that the 600,000 seniors in Queensland will not be taken for granted.

Have your say. Tell us what you think by emailing opso@zipworld.com.au or mail to PO Box 1037, Mt Gravatt Qld 4122. Or get in touch with your local MP directly and tell them what you think.

– Val French

Taxing times – beware of identity thieves

The Australian Tax Office (ATO) is reminding taxpayers to be wary of scams this tax time as fraudsters become more ambitious in their efforts to dupe the individuals of their personal information.

Since 1 March 2014 the ATO has seen a spike in reports from the public of email and phishing scams from 9,368 to 11,344 compared with the same period in 2013. *Phishing* is the attempt to acquire sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication.

Remember, your personal information is the key to your identity. Protecting it is as important as locking your front door each day. Here are some tips to protect your information:

- Never share personal information, such as your TFN, *myGov* or bank account details on social media
- Change any electronic passwords you may have shared with family or friends
- If you use a tax agent, make sure they are registered by checking at www.tpb.gov.au/onlineregister

If you think your TFN has been stolen or misused, call the ATO on 1800 467 033 (8am–6pm, Monday to Friday)

LIFE TIMES

Editorial Team

Editor: Val French AM

Web: opso.com.au/life-times



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Tips for a warmer house and body this winter

We spend more time indoors during the cold and dark months of winter, It is also the time to keep tabs on our energy bills. **Here are some tips for staying warm, saving money and keeping healthy this winter.**

1. Close off any rooms that are not in use

Furniture can't feel the cold so why waste energy heating areas that you're not using? Close internal doors and also seal up cracks and gaps using weather stripping around doors and windows, gap filler for cracks in the walls and even a simple "door snake" for the bottom of the door.

2. Let the sunshine in during the day

If you have any north facing windows, open up the curtains during the day and let the sun heat up your house for you. Open windows for fresh air during the day, but close them before the sun goes down to keep the chill out.



3. Install insulation in your house (or top up old and thinning insulation)

A well-insulated house can use as much as 45% less energy, which means that insulation pays for itself in cheaper bills.

4. If you can't heat the room, heat yourself

If you can't insulate your room or block draughts, it will be hard to heat the whole room. You can keep warm and well by having regular hot drinks and at least one hot meal a day. Wear

several light layers of warm clothes rather than one bulky layer that may restrict movement.

5. Stay hydrated and keep active

Even in the cooler months it's important to stay hydrated. Water is best to keep your skin healthy, flush out toxins and ward off winter ails. Try to get into a routine of getting out and doing some exercise and maintaining blood circulation.

Seniors and public transport – What do you think?

My name is Val French and as a member of the Government's Advisory Committee on Public Transport I am asking seniors again to give me your views on public transport.

Are you happy with all aspects of public transport? Transport to the city? In the suburbs? Travel costs? Problems faced during the trip? Other problems?

As a senior I am well aware of the problems, but I would like to have the support of all of you who face these problem.

I have the regular opportunity of passing this information on to the appropriate people.

- Val French

Promoting the value of older people.

Phone: 3219 2572

Postal Address: P.O. Box 1037

Mt Gravatt Qld 4122

Email: opso@zipworld.com.au

Watch the Website: www.opso.com.au

Aged care and the family home

From 1 July 2014 some significant changes to our residential care and home care system will take effect. They will impact on everyone associated with confronting and making care decisions – older people and their families, not to mention their advisers.

Among the changes, the family home (with some exceptions) becomes an assessable asset in determining your costs in aged care. Previously it was not. The consequence is that it will be crucial to obtain good legal and financial advice about what to do with the family home if you have to move into care. Needless to say this should be done before the move, not after. **By Brian Herd**

Old Bird's Eye View of the World

– on lessons from those who have left us

The people whom we love, and who've left us, also leave their bright shining light in our hearts and in our minds, and – sometimes – in our dreams. For a while, the sorrow that we feel at their departure overshadows that light. It takes time for the grieving ache to recede enough for us to understand... To understand what, exactly?

As a sceptic, it had always seemed absurd to me that there were people – even some as illustrious as Conan Doyle – who believed that it was possible to contact dead loved ones who had passed over to the “other side”. Gradually, though, in the intensity of my grief after my father died, twenty two years ago, I came to understand why people went to spiritualists, hoping to conjure up a presence that proved that the person who had died was still, somehow, with them. I, too, desperately wanted that: that at least my father's ghost could still be present, somewhere in my ether.

So, it was interesting to find, in Wikipedia, that Conan Doyle's belief in spiritualism had arisen out of exactly the same source: he “found solace” in it after sinking into depression as a result of a series of deaths in his family over several years, of his wife, his son, a brother, two brothers-in-law and two nephews.

Unlike Doyle, I didn't actually come to believe in that other world. But I did learn to be more understanding of what grief can do to your mind. And this has helped me to shift from sympathy to empathy as – with old age upon me – I reach out to support growing numbers of similarly aged family and friends who are having to confront the deaths of people dear to them.

My father's death had traumatic elements to it. But from a close friend I learnt that for some, it is possible to have as good a death as possible, and if that can be achieved, it means that not

only has the dying person made the most of the time left, but it leaves their survivors better able to cope with the loss. This dear friend had ovarian cancer, and managed six excellent years of living before a gradual decline that resulted in her peaceful death at home, surrounded by her family. In her six years she made sure that she got a whole lot of enjoyment out of her life, both from a range of must-do activities like swimming with the sharks at Ningaloo Reef, and from every day pleasures like walking her dogs, singing in her choir, and going to the movies; and all the while keeping close links with a vast number of family and friends with whom she was comfortable in conversations that covered everything from the mundane to her planned memorial. While she was alive, she made time stop. Since her death she has been sorely missed, and – at the same time – is talked about with warmth, love, and admiration at what she had taught all of us about living in the present.

Then, there is a much-loved cousin who opened my eyes to another way of being fondly remembered. She had a great love of

clothes, and a great reluctance to throw any of them out. So, after her death, there were many, many items to dispose of. And the way that she wanted to dispose of them was have her immediate family take what they wanted of them, and offer the rest of them to wider family members. The result is that there is a large group of us who – having found items that suit us very well – have the pleasure of remembering her each time we put one of them on. And quite often, at a gathering, we find that a number of us are wearing something of hers. While I have heard that some people would rather not do that, for all of us it is a lovely way of reinforcing our ties to her, and – through her – with each other.
(continued page 4)



So, that is something that I will definitely encourage my family to do with my possessions.

Finally, there is the lesson that 60-something writer Martin Amis learnt from the death of his friend, Christopher Hitchens, and which was reported in the British newspaper, The Telegraph. In his words, when asked about the death of Hitchens, he said: "when it's someone you have been best friends with for 40 years.

I actually despair of ever making much sense of it and I will die without making much sense of it. "But not all of it is terrible, that's the other great surprise. I always felt his love of life was stronger but what it seems happens is that when a very loved friend dies they make a gift of that love to you. It's now your responsibility to love life as much as they did. When you walk down the street it's almost your duty to take pleasure in what you see." *Anne Ring © 2014*

OPSO Media Awards 2013-14 People's Choice Entry Form

These awards are for the best ageing item published between 21 October 2013 and 15 September 2014

DO YOU THINK THE COMMUNITY GIVES OLDER PEOPLE A FAIR GO?

We invite you to help us identify the media that is portraying older people positively. You can do this by entering one or both of the following:

1. Collect as many quality media items (online, TV, radio, magazine, newspaper, newsletter etc.) over the last year (21 October 2013 – 15 September 2014) that show older people ageing positively - \$1000
and /or

2. Choose a media item from the last year (21 October 2013 – 15 September 2014) that illustrates positive ageing and in forty (40) words or less, tell us why the item should win an award - \$1000

The journalist/s responsible for creating the winning item will also be awarded a certificate and \$500.

Send your entries, including your name, address and phone number to:

People's Choice OPSO
PO Box 1037
Mt Gravatt Qld 4122



The aim of Older People Speak Out is
Justice For Seniors through the promotion of Positive Ageing.

We are an all-volunteer organisation, apolitical in outlook and we work with the Media and Government at all levels to advocate without fear or favour on behalf of seniors to resolve issues affecting older people highlighted through our research. We are active in the community promoting Positive Ageing by example, by action and by education.

Language and older people

– getting it right

Most people want to be regarded as individuals; you only have to look at the streets full of different front fences – no two are alike.

Yet members of the media often refer to older people in terms of old-fashioned stereotypes or as an homogeneous mass.

At the same time, the language they use to describe older people is sometimes derogatory and/or discriminatory.

In the rush to meet deadlines, it is easy to rely on old-fashioned clichés and stereotypes.

Here are some hints on using appropriate language:

- use ‘issues’, ‘concerns’, ‘challenges’ instead of ‘burden’ and ‘problem’
- use ‘older person’ rather than pensioner because the latter discriminates on the grounds of income. Older people also regard the words as stigmatising
- use the term ‘older person/woman/man’ not ‘granny’, ‘grandmother’, ‘grandfather’, ‘geriatric’, ‘gerry’
- use chronological ages only where it is relevant to do so
- use ‘older people’ rather than ‘the elderly’ or ‘the aged’
- use ‘older people with disabilities’ rather than ‘the frail aged’
- avoid judgements like ‘he was 60 but still fighting fit’
- remember that lumping 55 year olds in with 85 year olds is like saying that a baby and a 30 year old are in the same age group
- never assume that poor health, senility or a nursing home are inevitable consequences of ageing
- talk in terms of what people are doing rather than in terms of how old they are.

Words to avoid

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| • Pensioner | • The ageing |
| • Independent retiree | • The aged |
| • Grannies | • Aged people |
| • Dears | • The elderly |
| • Problem/burden | • Geriatric |

APPROPRIATE IMAGES

Dos ...

- Include positive and active images of older people. Avoid caricatures and stereotypes of older people
- Depict older people in all aspects of life, including non-traditional roles. This includes older people as volunteers, paid workers, athletes, artists etc, and not only as grandparents or “bingo players”
- Include positive representations of older women, older people from visible minority groups and those with disabilities



Don'ts

- Avoid identifying the person's age if it is not necessary within the context of the material
- Avoid stereotyping that depicts older people as being all alike
- Avoid depicting older people in non-traditional roles as if their involvement in a particular activity was extraordinary
- Avoid stereotypical statements about the living and working conditions of older people
- Avoid depicting older people's success as being out of the ordinary

Downsizing not a priority

Most seniors are reluctant to downsize to smaller residences, with an increasing number of older Australians preferring to live in homes with at least three bedrooms, according to new research.

The National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre (NSPAC) study of 2,000 National Seniors' members aged over 50 years examined the proportion of seniors who downsized in the past five years, or who were considering downsizing in the future, and the motivating and discouraging factors affecting their decision to downsize.

Only one quarter of people living alone in houses with three or more bedrooms were considering downsizing.

Of those seniors who had downsized in the past five years, 43% had moved into a three bedroom house, compared to only 17% who had moved to an apartment/unit.

Michael O'Neill, National Seniors chief executive, said the results showed seniors had a strong preference to remain in larger homes.

"Policymakers talk of seniors downsizing and freeing up family-sized homes but it seems older Australians aren't so keen to do so," Mr O'Neill said.

"Considering the lack of policy incentives to downsize, and the strong emotional attachment all

Australians have to their family home, these findings are hardly surprising."

The factor that discouraged the most people from downsizing was that it would "take too much effort" (44%), especially for people aged over 75 years.

The cost of stamp duty was reported as a disincentive by 33% of people; and only 28% of homeowners on the Age Pension said the previous federal Labor government's proposed pilot scheme to encourage downsizing, which has since been scrapped, would have influenced them to move.

Mr O'Neill said it was clear there were still too many disincentives for seniors to downsize.

"There have been no real measures to encourage seniors to downsize," he said.

"Policy interventions to reduce financial barriers such as cuts to stamp duty and a commitment to address the lack of age appropriate housing in Australia could increase people's incentive to downsize."

He added there was also a growing need for seniors to keep spare living space available to provide care for grandchildren or parents.



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