



## WE MUST BE HEARD!

– *we need to be heard*

**TWENTY YEARS AGO Commonwealth Government research showed that seniors were not only not heard, they were denied a voice by both media and government. The Hawk government responded by appointing The Older Australians Advisory Council. This was the first and only fully comprehensive Commonwealth Council to represent both sexes and all walks of life.**

**Each State had an advisory committee and an appointed representative who worked directly with the Minister for Senior's Canberra Committee.**

**There were regular visits and input from the Prime Minister Hawke and Treasurer Paul Keating. We were given the facilities and funding to carry out our own research in each state to ensure the validity of our, and government, decision making.**

**This opened the door to the empowerment of Seniors.**

**In Queensland, we decided that if seniors were to change public and political attitudes, we needed a voice.**

**We approached the media and with their support and the ready support of the political parties, we established Older People Speak Out.**

**That was 20 years ago. Throughout that period, every government party in power has not only supported the OPSO Media Awards, they have also asked for – and actually listened to – our voice.**

**By launching our online newspaper we are hoping to give as many seniors everywhere the opportunity to be heard.**

**We are keen to accept your material either online or by mail. We are also available to speak to organisations and individuals to help them join us in speaking out.**

**Never before has it been so important to ensure that older people are given a strong voice. □**

– Val French

## A Message from the Minister

THE Older People Speak Out National Media Awards play a critical role in highlighting positive media coverage of older Australians.

The majority of older Australians live independent active lives. Their ongoing contributions to the community and the economy enrich our nation in so many ways.

Many members of the media – journalists, photographers, producers – capture the experiences of older people and understand the challenges they face and overcome. They recognise inspirational lives and inspire us through their stories and images.

Even so, too often older people are invisible in the media or portrayals are coloured by outdated ageist attitudes in media, the community or workplaces.

The Government has asked the Age Discrimination Commissioner to address media images that perpetuate age discrimination, age stereotyping and ageism, and to conduct research to feed into a media roundtable and communication strategy. This four-year project is being funded as part of the Government's response to recommendations of the Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians.

This work will complement the work of Older People Speak Out and I hope to see its effects reflected in future nominations for the Older People Speak Out National Media Awards.

The Government is proud to sponsor the Older People Speak Out National Media Awards. That this is the 19th year for the Awards is testament to Older People Speak Out's commitment identifying issues, running training and advocating to achieve real changes in the ways older Australians are portrayed in the media.

I congratulate the nominees and winners of this year's OPSO National Media Awards, and thank you all for helping to raise community awareness of active, positive ageing. □

– The Hon Mark Butler MP  
Australian Government  
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing

**Commonwealth Bank  
is proud to be a sponsor  
of OPSO's Life Times**



# The importance of social connections

SOCIAL INCLUSION is a goal which is aspired to by governments and society. It is important to remain socially included in a community and society for healthy ageing.

The opposites of inclusion, social exclusion and isolation, are constantly addressed by government and community policies to eradicate them and provide older people with the means to keep engaging and participating in all levels of society.

This report is the result of a one-year study into the views of older people in a community healthy ageing program, Skylarkers 60 and Better Healthy Ageing. Using a combination of literature reviews, a survey and focus groups, it explored the views of those that attend the program on social inclusion.

Though much is known about the problems of isolated or excluded older people, this study instead focuses on the views of social inclusion for those that do attend a healthy ageing program. Part of this was asking questions about eight concerns that have been identified in social inclusion literature as

potentially causing problems for older people.

The study argues that continued financial support of such programs is vital to social inclusion. Results from the study suggest that overall the participants that come to Skylarkers do feel socially included in society. This occurs mainly because of the ability to access the people or information to solve problems they are experiencing. The program is a channel for performing this function and as such can and does reduce or eliminate social exclusion and isolation of an older person.

Social inclusion is about having access to, and obtaining opportunities, to do four things. These are:

- participating in all levels of society, engaging with the community on issues of concern;
- remaining connected with family, friends and others; and
- most importantly – having mechanisms, information and channels to influence decisions about their lives.

The results suggest this is taking place in some to many areas of the participants' lives who attend Skylarkers. This is evidenced by the discussions in the focus groups where participants told how they negotiated any problems that arose in their daily lives.

Many had mechanisms, information and channels, such as other people, the program or even online contacts, which did help them solve their problems. This avoided social exclusion and isolation from other people, the community and society.

Access to human networks and information a healthy ageing program can foster feeling socially included in society.

The main recommendation arising from this report is to make sure Skylarkers is known as a socially inclusive place. This can be done through promotion on its website or flyers. The program does perform well as a socially inclusive one and this needs to be maintained.

– Story courtesy of Skylarkers ©

## How to avoid those sneaky scammers

EVERY YEAR, Australians lose millions of dollars to scammers who bombard us with online, mail, door-to-door and telephone scams. Scammers are imaginative and manipulative and they know how to push your buttons to produce the response they want.

A new edition of *The Little Black Book of Scams* was recently printed and is a mine of useful information. Anyone interested can visit the SCAMwatch website at [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au) and apply for a free copy of the book.

Scams target people of all backgrounds, ages and income levels. Fake lotteries, advance-fee frauds, get-rich-quick schemes and miracle health cures are some of the favoured ways of separating the unwary from their money. New varieties of these scams appear all the time and can have a devastating effect on people and families.

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) recently released findings on cybercrime and seniors which suggest that the fear of victimisation in seniors may mean they are less likely to take up new technologies which may otherwise offer a number

of advantages, such as staying in touch with family and friends, or utilising online services provided by businesses and governments.

One of the best ways to combat this kind of fraud is to take measures to prevent being caught out in the first place. The golden rule is that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is, but there are others like:

- never send money or give credit card or online account details to anyone you do not know or trust;
- always get independent advice if an offer involves money, time or commitment; and
- only give out your personal details and information when it is absolutely necessary and then only if you trust the person with whom you are dealing.

These and other rules are noted in the *The Little Black Book of Scams* and on the website, together with an explanation of various types of scams, how you can protect yourself, what to do if you do get scammed and how to get help and report a scam. □

– Tony Townsend

# movie review

Sometimes to keep the magic, you need to learn a few tricks.



Meryl STREEP  
Tommy Lee JONES  
Steve CARELL

## Hope Springs

A new comedy from the director of "The Devil Wears Prada"

### Anne Ring reviews *Hope Springs*

EVEN EXPERTS CAN DISAGREE on whether a production is good, bad or indifferent. This would come as no surprise to anyone who has enjoyed watching Margaret and David going at it hammer and tongs over some of the movies that they've reviewed for their *At the Movies* show on the ABC.

So, this Occasional Reviewer is only going to propose a point of view about what I've seen or read, and has a particular relevance to older audiences.

And to kick off this column, we can't do better than to consider *Hope Springs*, the latest film over which Margaret and David disagreed so emphatically that Margaret only gave it one and a half stars, to David's four. In a Hollywood era where youth has been proclaimed king and queen, one point that they did agree on was that it's something of a miracle that a quiet little movie about older people in their 60s, and struggling with the problems of intimacy in their marriage, ever got made.

As Kay, Meryl Streep takes a huge leap from the glamorously aggressive Anna Wintour-like magazine editor of *The Devil Wears Prada* to a meek wife and part-time shop assistant wearing the sorts of clothes – frills and polyester ties at the neck – that neither Anna Wintour nor (I strongly suspect) Margaret would be seen dead in. And that pretty much sums up why Margaret took such a strong dislike to this movie. For her, the characters of Kay – and her paunchy and punchy workaholic husband Arnold (Tommy Lee Jones) – were just too boring, bland and inhibited to carry the movie. And she felt further let down because, in the third key role of the marriage counsellor, comedian Steve Carell wasn't at all funny, but – instead – played it as though he was holding "real sessions".

The thing is, though, that this is not actually meant to be a comedy. For many people, in fact, the sorts of problems that Kay was having – such as trying to express her need to rejuvenate her marriage, and her life, before time ran out – are ones that they can relate to. And, for whatever reason, David certainly found the characters and their difficulties "very interesting".

As a dedicated fan of both Margaret and David (and finding that I sometimes agree with one or the other when they disagree), I was quite curious to see which way I'd go with *Hope Springs*, and found myself most definitely in David's camp. It takes brave actors to portray the everyday, and to do so without turning it into some sort of joke; but, rather, to show how it is possible for elderly couples to stay the distance and be prepared (willingly or not) to tackle the sorts of hurdles that have to be overcome to reach another level in a relationship that has become stale, rather than just to abandon it.

And Streep and Jones' characters do so while being pretty much prepared to look their age, although not resisting the temptation to dye their hair (Kay's a scrappy blond, and Arnold's an inky black), but this is a separate issue (which I've had fun tackling in the book I'm currently writing about ageing, and which has a section dedicated to the Shakespearean question of whether to dye or not to dye).

All up, then, I wouldn't be surprised if this movie's take-home message about how to reignite intimacy had quite an impact on some of its audience, above and beyond – ultimately – being a feel-good movie on more than one level.

More widely, on the basis of the 22 films currently showing in Sydney, one would have to ask whether the demographic tide might in fact be turning in filmland. Including *Hope Springs*, four of these movies have old people in the lead roles (the others are *And if We All Lived Together*, *The Way*, and *Expendables 2*). And, in addition, there are five movies in which old people have strong roles (*The Sapphires*, *Bernie*, *The Bourne Legacy*, and *The Dark Knight Rises*). All up, that's just over 40 per cent of movies on at the moment, which has got to be saying something. And – having seen all but one of these – I can vouch for the eight I've seen, as good viewing in various ways. Maybe I'll just have to grit my teeth and go and see *Expendables 2* as well. After all, as pointed out by Paul Byrnes of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the collective age of the four 'senior' mercenaries adds up to a very respectable '260 years, give or take a few fudged birthdays'. And, as this is Number 2 of the series, and a third is in the pipeline, enough people must be finding something to like about old action men strutting their stuff. □

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# What is *Life Times*?

... a few words from the editor

WE WOULD FORMALLY like to welcome one and all to OPSO's new newspaper.

I say 'newspaper', but it is actually an e-newsletter – a digital copy that is laid out so that it can easily be printed and disseminated to those who do not have access to a computer or printer ... or because most people simply prefer to read 'hard copy'.

We are aiming to make *Life Times* a fortnightly publication, but will occasionally publish extra issues if any urgent news breaks.

This newspaper is an ambitious undertaking, but we believe it will provide unprecedented currency on issues affecting older people. We invite anyone (regardless of age) who has a newsworthy item to submit it for publication. You can either send it via email to [opso@zipworld.com.au](mailto:opso@zipworld.com.au) or 'snail' mail it to:

The Editor  
PO Box 1037  
Mt Gravatt  
QLD 4122

We hope to add both regular and occasional items such as

surveys, cartoons, crosswords and the like. As you can see from this first edition, we have included a range of news issues and a movie review. Our aim is to be a regular newspaper, but with a focus on issues concerning older people.

We also welcome suggestions for articles and photos – or any item that you feel may be interesting. We are interested in your likes and dislikes and will take any issues seriously as we hope this publication will take active strides towards a stronger voice for seniors.

We also hope to attract advertisers – our readership will be considerable – and nationwide. As it is in PDF (ADOBE Acrobat's *Portable Document Format*) it will include hyperlinks to your business – accessible when read on a computer. Ad rates will be supplied on request. Advertisers will not only benefit themselves, they will be supporting this essential forum for older people.

Again, thank you for reading this, our first offering – we aim to get bigger and better. □

## S-plates for seniors – not just silly, but dangerous

By Anne Ring

THE CALL for S-plates for seniors has become something of an annual event.



Whether it's from an irate mum, a media personality, or a self-styled road safety expert who hasn't read 'Let Miss Daisy Do the Driving' (the NRMA's 2008 report on the relative safety of older drivers compared with younger ones), someone has witnessed instances of problem driving by an older person, and got onto the S-plate bandwagon. This, for those who haven't come across the notion before, is the compulsory slapping of a warning S-for-Seniors plate onto cars driven by drivers over a certain age, with the proposed age ranging from 65 to 85.

The most recent proposal to identify older drivers in this way has come from a television program which backed up its call for such plates for the over-65ers with some highly emotive reporting. And, in so doing, roused the ire of the online Knitting and Crochet Forum, which not only raised concerns about how identifying older drivers in this way might result in their getting 'harassed by the younger generation', but also had some counter-suggestions of their own. These included "D" plates for drunks, "I" plates for idiots, "R" on the plates of those who have deliberately used their vehicles as weapons during Road Rage, "T" for the idiots who are texting while driving, and 'perhaps a gold star award for those of senior grade who've been skilled enough to survive this long'.

What no-one has raised is the very serious and risky possibility that identifying older drivers in some way would put them seriously in harm's way, by making them easy targets to be followed home to be attacked and robbed by people with a criminal intent and looking for vulnerable prey. □

## Grandparents Day

By Tony Townsend

GRANDPARENTS are very fortunate people – whenever a child is born, so is a grandparent. Grandparents share their life experiences, their culture and their history and are there to listen and discuss things – so that often the bond forged with grandchildren is greater than that with parents.

There are some grandparents who are not so fortunate – their love is open to exploitation, and some may even have to take responsibility for bringing up the grandchildren, while others are denied any relationship with their grandchildren, although these are in the minority.

The very special position that grandparents hold in the family was recognised when Queensland designated the first Sunday in November as Grandparents Day – Sunday 4 November 2012. Other States are slowly following Queensland's lead but, of course, they are choosing different days! Hopefully, one day we may even have a National Grandparents Day.

This is a day for families to celebrate these wonderful people. Grandparents Day is for all grandparents whether living close at hand, in need of special support, or separated for some reason. OPSO is also organising a school competition for children to write about their grandparents.

In Queensland, let's really get behind Sunday 4 November – and whatever day has been chosen for other States. □

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