

LIFE TIMES

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Last call for OPSO Media Award nominations

Nominations to Australia's longest running awards for media coverage that promotes positive ageing close on 15 September 2014.

The awards are open to print, radio and television journalists and photographers from around the country and to journalism students who have had items published.

Members of the public can also nominate articles that they believe represent excellence in journalism and get to the heart of issues that concern seniors.

With a \$1,000 prize on offer, OPSO President Val French encouraged the community to nominate in the "People's Choice" category.

"If you've seen a photograph or read an article that really captures the notion of positive ageing, then you could win \$1,000," she said.

"The more we can encourage the media to report on the issues facing seniors, the more our policy makers must ensure that the voice of seniors is heard and considered."

The Awards entry process has now been simplified. Nominations can be emailed directly to opso@zipworld.com.au for judging.

Visit the OPSO website www.opso.com.au for more information.

The OPSO Media Awards were instituted in 1994 to recognise and encourage positive content about seniors' issues.

The first awards attracted 40 entries. Entry numbers have swelled over the years to several thousand from around Australia and from all forms of media.

Reminder: deadline for entries is 15 September 2014

Seniors Week celebrations highlight life and love

Seniors Week is recognised at different times in different States. This month, Queensland celebrated its Seniors Week (16-24 August), with a range of activities and celebrations. *Read Maida Lilley's Seniors Week report on page 4.*

Elsewhere around the country, the achievements of Australian seniors were also attracting headlines:



■ **Seventy-year-old Cyril Baldock** this month became the oldest person to swim across the English Channel. The life member of Sydney's Bondi Surf Club set off from England and arrived at Cap Gris Nez, in France, 12 hours and 45 minutes later. Baldock, aged 70 years and nine months, replaces Englishman Roger Allsopp in the record books. Allsopp was 70 years and four months when he took almost 18 hours to cross the Channel in 2011. Baldock will celebrate his 71st birthday in November.

"I haven't had that much fun in years," Baldock said after completing his marathon swim.

■ **The Tamil Senior Citizens Association (Qld)** celebrated Seniors Week with a cricket match in Brisbane. Association Vice President Kathiravelu Subramaniam said there were around 300 Tamil families in Queensland. He said the cricket match was an opportunity for new arrivals to meet and mix with families living in South-East Queensland.

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Old Bird's Eye View of the World

– on the dying days of the daily postal service

Will there come a day, perhaps in the not too distant future, when a child will point to the object in this photo and ask their parent: "What is that for?"



In the past several weeks, the move towards reducing weekday postal deliveries in Australia from five to three days has shifted from a possibility to a definite decision.

And I can see the rationale for that. It's true that the amount of mail that is being posted has become radically reduced, with most of it these days comprising circulars and bills; and even those are getting an internet option. Certainly, the days of communicating by letter are just about gone, increasingly superseded by email, and the varieties of social media.

And as far as emails go, I'm as guilty as anyone, in being seduced – by its speed and convenience – from my earlier life as an inveterate letter-writer. So, I shouldn't complain.

But I am allowed to feel sad about this thin edge of a wedge that might see mail deliveries going the way of telegrams (and only people above a certain age will remember the excitement of getting one of those!), with not only letters becoming a thing of the past, but possibly post offices too. And then, maybe, all we'll be left with is some sort of vestigial arm handling parcel services at scattered depots.

And so, perhaps as a last hurrah, my Canberra daughter and I have suddenly taken to writing each other letters and making the most of the efficiency of next day delivery while it lasts. As she wrote in her last letter, "Nothing beats getting old fashioned mail (and knowing it isn't a bill)."

Come to think of it, if we can get enough people thinking that (through broadcast emails, and tweets and blogs and Facebook and LinkedIn, of course), we might be able to turn the tide.

Anne Ring © 2014

Grandparenting: this means quality time

Many grandparents look after their grandchildren after school and in the school holidays. Others take care of the young ones while parents work. Some are bringing up their grandchildren.

These are special relationships that can be made to be really wonderful. Here are some ideas reprinted from "*Fun for the Frail & Frisky*" (OPSO, 2009) that provide an opportunity to exchange ideas, knowledge and attitudes to life - all part of an older person's contribution to developing the next generation.

- ❖ Make paints out of water and crumbled rocks when you go to the beach, and then brush or paint rocks or paper.
- ❖ Build the 'biggest castle, or car, in the world' sculptured in sand.
- ❖ Use your imagination and sheets, chairs, broomsticks etc., and make a pirate boat or a shipwreck on a deserted island. Act out the adventure and get the children to role play with you.
- ❖ Organise a party or mini concert with the grandchildren, to entertain themselves, or their parents.
- ❖ Read or tell stories. Children can look at TV at home; time with you is special.
- ❖ Read poems - make up part of a story or poem together and get them to finish it for you.
- ❖ Make toffee together.

Continued on page 3

As I see it... by Maida Lilley

Joe Hockey's faux pas – the cost of keeping a car

As one who has not hesitated to quote statistics published by the prestigious ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) to win a casting point at an important meeting, one has to choose the time when their correctness appropriately reinforces the good sense of the issue under discussion.

It's simply a case of "think before you speak" and be prepared to take responsibility for possible adverse reactions from fair-thinking people.



Joe Hockey's unfortunate attempt to explain his petrol excise – on the poor not having cars or not travelling far – maybe factual but it rubs salt on the pain that pensioners, low-income car owners and those living outside the cities, face when they calculate the increasing percentage of restricted available budget taken up keeping a car for work and play in their community!

To be sure, he lives on Sydney's North Shore and represents that elite area in Parliament. He needs to think beyond that.

The Federal Treasurer obviously has little knowledge of, or real care for, the history of the lives of the many pensioners involved – born before or during the Great Depression, at school through World War II with fathers away for years at a time – not known on their return, limited high schools, no free universities or else full fees upfront, no paid jobs for women when married, no first home grants, no maternity leave, often no private phones and certainly no cars back then etc etc etc.

Having cars now, gives us independence and keeps us out and about contributing to Australia's economy which promotes our good health.

Fair go, Mr Treasurer. Get real. The condescension in your use of "poor people" – presumably for those of us with little money – was a patronising put down.

At week's end when the PM had returned from yet another overseas flight, he was quizzed about your massive faux pas. He said, "Plainly I wouldn't have said that!". Then – and only then – did you choose to try to explain that you really did care for the hurt you had caused. The damage had already been done and had been left to rankle – too little too late. You then over-compensated with an effusive apology that showed that you just didn't understand the problem.

Incidentally, a great number of us pensioners whom you choose to demean can look back on lives typical of their time. We all lived in the same world situation and we made good lives, fulfilling ones, for our family, community and nation. To label that "poor" is insulting.

Give us a fair go, older Australians deserve it.

More ideas for special time with grandchildren...

- ↳ Make wrapping paper with brown or white paper and post paint.
- ↳ Collect coloured pencils, pastels, water colours and paper, and take your grandchildren painting outdoors.
- ↳ Make play dough and work it together to make wonderful models.
- ↳ Make Christmas / Easter / Mother's Day / Father's Day cards together.
- ↳ Sing together in the car.
- ↳ Go hiking together.
- ↳ Cook together.
- ↳ Play hide and seek.
- ↳ Teach the child to sew, knit or crochet.



Ideas reproduced from "Fun for the Frail & Frisky", produced by Older People Speak Out, 2009

Élan Vital!

Maida Lilley reports on the Seniors Week celebrations of one group who still have their spark for life but need a new venue at which to shine...

For most of the lifetimes of today's seniors, French was the language of world diplomacy and was taught in many high schools. It was appropriate then that *Élan Vital* (vital spark of life) be held at the Metropolitan Senior Citizens' Centre in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, during Seniors Week 2014.

It took the gold medal among such Seniors Week annual celebrations enjoyed across Queensland.

The launch of the *90+ Club* saw 12 nonagenarians at a double top table of the six crowded ones at the brightly set up Centre (three or more 90+s had sent apologies). What a fitting way to honour the many aged persons still living in this very old part of Brisbane.

The Centre's constantly busy pick up and drop off bus had to make extra trips while some of the special guests were driven in by their – obviously elderly – sons. Two of the 90+ers actually drove themselves in as normally they come there as volunteers!

An air of joy and excitement was palpable as old and new members filled the room. Our well known regular volunteers served tea and coffee. Plates of suitably bite sized cakes, tarts and muffins were there to share at the crowded tables, set with posies of dainty pink rosebuds and white daisies – all later to be raffled. The buzz of animated catch-up conversations "haven't seen you since Christmas, etc" filled the room while a pleasing lady vocalist entertained us with the songs we all know so well. Isn't it strange how the words just come back to mind from the 50s and 60s?

Many of us moved about after morning tea, particularly to congratulate our 90+ group, all of whom were dressed in the best. One 94-year-old proudly displayed her latest fashion animal print skirt.

The hurried shuffle of a 97-year-old who had just come in and sat with friends, meant that she, as the oldest person there, was persuaded to move to the top table where an appropriately empty chair awaited her. At our table, we all found ourselves wishing out loud that we looked as smart as she did and we were only 70 or 80 year olds!

A few of the more adventurous, including a couple of ladies from Wednesday's Spanish Ladies' Group and two of the four official Centre workers, encouraged active oldies up to dance. There was even a short conga line!

Calls prior to the big day meant that members and friends had donated almost 90 raffle prizes. Of course, the intent was to have everyone win. One

of the major prizes was a personal safe donated by long time Brisbane business, H A Reed

Locksmiths, who until recently had been the Centre's nearest neighbour. Now we are counting the floors on the highrise being built on that busy corner.

The catered lunch was served by young, suitably attired family members of the Centre's workers. Yummy titbits were enjoyed with a range of wines, some non-alcoholic, and beer - all in the appropriate glasses of course, poured for us by our well-known volunteers.

The seniors of the Metropolitan Seniors' Centre felt really valued and thoroughly spoiled.

This special occasion is to be the last big day together there before we have to vacate the Centre and move elsewhere as the corner of Ann and Church Streets becomes yet another spot for the Valley's urban renewal progress. We'll take our memories with us and live to enjoy other times together.

