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Older People Speak Out
Promoting the value of older people

LIFE TIMES

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Housing options, choices and care *Should I stay or should I go?*

More and more people of today are faced with the question: *where am I going to live when I am old?*

Do you want to go on living in your own home?

How will you face:

- Loneliness
- Needing help with domestic chores like cleaning, cooking and house repairs
- Getting around and taking part in activities that add interest to your life.

The risk of becoming ill when you're alone is also a concern.

You may also face the situation where you have family members who could come and live with you.

Would this be compatible?

Think about it... We'd like to hear your answers.



Another option is to move out of home altogether and into an aged care facility. Here you have the advantages of security, meals, cleaning, activities and care.

What do you think?

How are you planning for your future?

There is growing concern that with an ageing population we must find answers to these questions. We invite readers to

send us their thoughts, options and comments.

Send your response to:

Older People Speak Out
PO Box 1037

Mount Gravatt Qld 4122

And we can keep the conversation going!



The eyes have it...

Most vision loss in Australia is caused by eye diseases. As you get older, you become more likely to get certain eye problems. The most common eye diseases include:

- **Cataracts** – a cataract occurs when the lens of the eye becomes cloudy. This prevents light entering the eye and results in poor vision. For more information, visit the [Vision Australia website](http://www.visionaustralia.org) (www.visionaustralia.org).
- **Macular degeneration** – damage to the macula, the part of the retina responsible for central vision and for seeing fine detail. If both eyes are affected, reading, recognising faces and driving may become very difficult. For more information, visit the [Macular Degeneration website](http://www.md.foundation.com.au) (www.md.foundation.com.au).
- **Diabetic retinopathy** – people with diabetes may develop a condition called 'diabetic retinopathy' which can lead to serious loss of vision. If you have diabetes, you should make sure that you have regular eye tests. For more information, visit the [Diabetes Australia website](http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au) (www.diabetesaustralia.com.au).
- **Glaucoma** – a condition where the nerve cells that transmit information from the eye to the brain become damaged. It is often associated with a build-up of pressure in the eye. For more information, visit the [Glaucoma Australia website](http://www.glaucoma.org.au) (www.glaucoma.org.au).

LIFE TIMES

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Web: www.opso.com.au/life-times

Look for our regular News Flashes and the Life Times newspaper editions on the OPSO website



General guidelines to improve memory

How's your brain feeling today? In addition to exercising your brain, there are some basic things you can do to improve your ability to retain and retrieve memories:

- 1. Pay attention.** You can't remember something if you never learned it, and you can't learn something – that is, encode your brain – if you don't pay enough attention to it. It takes about eight seconds of intense focus to process a piece of information through your hippocampus and into the appropriate memory centre. So, no multitasking when you need to concentrate! If you distract easily, try to receive information in a quiet place where you won't be interrupted.
- 2. Tailor information to your learning style.** Most people are visual learners; they learn best by reading or otherwise seeing what it is they have to know. But some are auditory learners who learn better by listening. They might benefit by recording information they need and listening to it until they remember it.
- 3. Involve as many senses as possible.** Even if you're a visual learner, read out loud what you want to remember. If you can recite it rhythmically, even better. Try to relate information to colours, textures, smell and taste. The physical act of rewriting information can help imprint it onto your brain.
- 4. Relate information to what you already know.** Connect new data to information you already remember, whether it's new material that builds on previous knowledge, or something as simple as an address of someone who lives on a street where you already know someone.
- 5. Organise information.** Write things down in address books and datebooks and on calendars; take notes on more complex material and reorganise the notes into categories later. Use both words and pictures in learning information.
- 6. Understand and be able to interpret complex material.** For more complex material, focus on understanding basic ideas rather than memorising isolated details. Be able to explain it to someone else in your own words.
- 7. Rehearse information frequently and “over learn”.** Review what you've learned the same day you learn it, and at intervals thereafter. What researchers call “spaced rehearsal” is more effective than “cramming”. If you're able to “over learn” information so that recalling it becomes second nature, so much the better.
- 8. Be motivated and keep a positive attitude.** Tell yourself that you want to learn what you need to remember, and that you can learn and remember it. Telling yourself you have a bad memory actually hampers the ability of your brain to remember, while mental feedback sets up an exception of success.

As I see it...

“Keepsakes” of World War I... *an exhibition not to be missed*

By Maida Lilley

In this, the centenary since the ANZAC tradition was forged at Gallipoli, it is fitting that a comprehensive exhibition at the National Library of Australia should be mounted through the records, writings and early photographs of those involved – be they official war reporters, historians and photographers, governments, politicians, commanders and, especially, the forces on the ground, at sea and in the air, together with their contacts from home.



Looking back over 100 years must be really difficult, particularly for younger Australian of today, used as they are to having the world-wide-web (www) at their fingertips and even on their smart phones. As an 80-year-old discussing the displays with an elderly volunteer at the information desk and in-depth with the middle-aged volunteer exhibition guide on a very quiet, wet day in January, when luckily I was the only visitor with the guide at that time, we found that I could offer first-hand WWI stories. Stories that had come to me direct from my late mother, born in Jericho in western Queensland in 1900 when Queen Victoria still ruled over the British Empire.

(continued page 3)

Old Bird's Eye View of the World – on housework: *still playing as a woman's world?*

I was watching a show on television the other evening. And the point about it being evening is significant. It is also relevant to note that it was a rerun of M*A*S*H. So, not specifically a show for women, and not at what is still conventionally deemed a housewifely time of day.

And, being a commercial station, there were interruptions for commercials. Not taking advantage of the breaks to get a cup of tea, or a glass of red, I watched them. And one turned out to be a domestic cleaning product spruiked by an animated (as in CGI'd) male, a 'Mr Muscle', who was surrounded by a bunch of animated (as in lively) women. And these women became increasingly excited as Mr M revealed the marvels of the kitchen cleaner that he was demonstrating.

Meanwhile, I too was marvelling. But not in a good way. Having lived through, and benefitted from, the various feminists' movements of the 60s and the 70s, and the progressive changes since, that have been heading towards greater equality at home as well as work, how could it be that I was seeing something like a replay of the Stepford Wives in 2015? And not for the first time, either.

And granted, yes, I have seen the statistics that show that – overall – more women than men still

shoulder the greater burden of domestic activities at home, even when both also have other day jobs (and, between ourselves, may I say more fool them).

But I have also seen three husbands (of my three daughters) doing their fair share of such activities,

not to mention the statistics that show that more men are doing more around the house.

And then there are the figures on the rise of single member households, and what is noteworthy there – as reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2010 by Adele Horin – is that 'new data shows the face of the solo householder is increasingly middle-aged and male. Men in their 40s and 50s are the fastest growing part of Australia's living-alone population due to more never having married, and many more getting divorced but not living with their children.'

So, isn't it time that the commercial media played catch-up, and routinely added at least a sprinkling of males to their ads for domestic products? And not just as the demonstrators? But as another step in turning the never-ending work of domesticity into another area of equal opportunity? There are a lot of women who'd buy that.

Anne Ring © 2015



“Keepsakes” (Continued from page 2...)

My mother's life course was radically affected when she, the fourth daughter of her large Queensland family, was dispatched to Sydney to support a fragile aunt – her mother's sister who succumbed to 'mechancholia' when one of her sons, said to be a family favourite, did not return from the war

Reflecting over the comprehensive displays as we slowly perused letters to and from home, diaries kept so regularly and meticulously, embroidered samplers, typewritten official reports, faded photos from concealed (banned) cameras, drawings – even cartoons – items that must have helped combatants keep sane amidst the horror of their actual situation, was very moving. Beside these personal mementos were official Australian governmental letters with some from noted journalist Keith Murdoch and war historian Charles Bean and photographs on glass by young Frank Hurley. Perhaps the most impressive item was a massive diary – the work of General Sir John Monash – promoted in the field and honoured by King George V – at last an Australia successfully commanding our Australian troops.

I was gripped with a desire to spend much more time to really absorb the range of carefully preserved materials. Probably a single visit cannot allow one to give the close attention such an exhibition deserves. It was noticeable how quickly some visitors passed over the often detailed exhibits. Could it be that the title, 'Keepsakes', really only applied to the very personal family parts of the display and not the wealth of governmental, political and military official information shown in some detail? Keepsakes are more personal treasures or remembrances found – often tucked away and almost forgotten – on the top of spare room wardrobes or even in attics in older homes lived in over a lifetime by elderly survivors of that time (1914-1918). They may be cleared out when old people pass away or when homes are sold or renovated – not valued and often just discarded.

As I sat nearby resting, the volunteer I'd chatted with when the information desk was quiet, approached me at the end of her shift to speak of how she felt about their timely exhibition of World War I.

“Your generation will be the last to have actual memories of the ‘war to end all wars’ as it was called. No one write letters any more”, she said quietly. I nodded assent.

In defence of the e-book

By Anne Ring

Don't get me wrong. I love physical books, those hard copies that you hold in your hand, turning real pages, and then – depending on how good a read it was – adding it to your bookshelf, or to the pile for the charity box. But yesterday, when I read an article denigrating the e-book, by another hard copy lover, I found myself disagreeing with just about everything she said. Which, for a techno-luddite like myself, was a bit of a surprise to find myself doing. Because while I read a lot of what you could call real books, and am a loyal supporter of libraries, and of big and little book stores (both for myself and as gifts, especially to kick start the joys of books for young readers), I've come to realise that – over the past few years – I've been upping the ante with e-books, to the level where I probably consume more of them than those produced on paper.

And there are two main reasons for that. The first arose from the fact that we're in the happy position of being able to travel a lot. And in the past (progressively dimly remembered now), I used to have to haul a sufficient number of books to cover the time we were away, and without the strength to shed them as I finished them, unless they were too awful to keep. So, that added significantly to the load I was carrying. And then came iPads. Whose wonderful range of potential resources include book apps (or whatever they're called). And instantly, my load has become amazingly lighter, with just one hard copy book needed for those times in the plane when electronic equipment has to be shut down.

The second, and more pervasive, reason for my switch was domestic. Being a fowl married to an owl, I couldn't read in bed in the early mornings, because the light would wake up the sleeper. Until reading from a black screen with white letters provided an alternative. And the rest, dear Reader, is history. I can, and now most enjoyably do, consume e-books galore without having to leave the comfort of my bed.

So, what is the case presented by the prosecutor of e-books, and can it be countered by a defence arguing for the acceptability of both forms of text? The article by Naomi Baron is provocatively entitled *'The case against e-readers: why reading paper books is better for your mind.'*

She starts, however, by acknowledging what I can fully agree with, that they do have some benefits, like the convenience of being easy to carry and compact, and that they can be great for holiday beach reads. Against these, she stacks the 'abundant complaints about eye strain and headaches when using screens,' and 'the appeal of a hard copy' for the many people



who 'prefer print for reading both for pleasure and for school or work,' for reasons that range from the aesthetics of a book to the ease of annotation. But, she argues, 'the real nail in the coffin for electronic reading is concentration.' The bulk of the people whom she surveyed 'said they concentrate best when reading a hard copy. The explanation is hardly rocket science. When a digital device has an Internet connection, it's hard to resist the temptation to jump ship: 'I'll just respond to that text I heard come in, check the headlines, order those boots that are on sale.'

Right there, my learned opponent shows seriously scrambled thinking. While starting off talking about the specifics of e-readers (that is, devices that only store e-books), she herself has jumped ship to talk about the diversity of functions of an iPad or tablet. And taking that wider resource first, as I noted at the beginning, that was my appliance of choice; and that was specifically *because* it does have so many useful additional functions, which add up to major convenience for a traveller. And whether travelling or at home, I personally enjoy being able to shift between functions so handily. If something that I'm reading about puzzles me, I can turn to Google for more information about it. If I suddenly remember that I need to email someone, I can. And if I've had enough of a book (or it's getting just too tense for the moment), I can play scrabble against the machine, or read up on the news of the day.

I will concede that for a student and their text books, hard copies that you can annotate are a *sine qua none*; but otherwise I personally am not a believer in scribbling in books. And more generally, if the book is totally absorbing it doesn't make any difference to me whether I'm turning hard copy or digital pages. To paraphrase Shakespeare, the print's the thing. And, happily, I can report the total absence of eyestrain or headaches in either form of reading.

Anne Ring © 2015

Awards from the past

from Val French

With all of the recent goings-on in politics recently, it made me recall thoughts of previous Australian Prime Ministers.

Like many readers, I find to reassuring to look at the past. This offers hope for the future. Such a re-look can be like finding old friends.

I had this feeling recently when I found my carefully recorded history of my years with Hawke and Keating.

Over a period of years, they opened their doors to seniors across Australia, offering us regular meetings at which we discussed the problems of older people and our solutions.

Different states had different solutions to suggest. In Queensland, we received funding to establish awards to encourage the public to recognise the contribution older people make to our community.

During 2015, *Older People Speak Out* will continue sending out this positive message.

The journalists and photographers across Australia are again invited to submit the best of their work that celebrates positive ageing.

Nomination forms are available on the OPSO website and on page 6.

Senior Australian of the Year

Congratulations to Jackie French, daughter of OPSO President Val French, who was named Senior Australian of the Year.

The prize-winning author has captured children's imaginations for decades with more than a hundred books in a variety of genres.

The 61-year-old dreamed up her first story idea at three years old, becoming an avid reader by age six despite living with dyslexia, and entertaining classmates and siblings with imaginative tales.

French was named the Australian Children's Laureate in 2014, a role of two years that involves encouraging children to embrace the transformational power of storytelling. It is a role she has embraced tirelessly, in addition to her advocacy for children living with learning difficulties like dyslexia.

French is also a director of The Wombat Foundation, which raises funds for research into the preservation of the endangered northern hairy-nosed wombat. The animals have been a fixture in her life for several decades.

Ahead of Australia Day, French called on her fellow seniors to volunteer in their own family or in the wider community, and to tell stories of their childhoods to keep spoken history alive.



As I See It... 'Little books' at the National Library of Australia

By Maida Lilley

A favourite place for me to visit in Canberra is the bookshop at the National Library. One recent Saturday I didn't get past the 'specials' table out the front as I waited to have lunch at their café with my daughter, who enjoys being a volunteer at the Library, now that she works in Canberra.

What caught my eye was the stack of "Little book of..." Banksias, Butterflies, Australian Wildlife, Weather – you name it – Cats, Dogs, Horses, Flowers, etc. etc. Although I live in a house full of books, I knew as I thumbed slowly through each of those still in print, that they were must haves. To my delight, I found each tiny chapter was a poem by a well-known Australian writer. There were favourites from my school days – Judith Wright to C.J. Dennis – and then poems from later graduate studies in speech and drama. Of course there was Henry Lawson, Kenneth Slessor and Les Murray, along with some Aboriginal verses new to me other than the works of Oodgeroo Noonuccal.

The full-page illustrations perfectly complement the lyrical language and appropriately feature well-known artists' works – names such as John Gould and Neville Cayley famous for their depictions of birds, Ellis Rowan's beautiful, botanically perfect gouache and watercolours of our native flora and photographs by such legends as Frank Hurley illustrating topics like weather in all its amazing diversity.

The Little Books were first published in 1999 by the National Library 'to interpret and highlight its collections and to support the creative work of the nation's writers and researchers' and were reprinted three times before being revised in 2012. As a retired educator, I found myself thinking that every school library deserves to contain these easy-to-hold, delightful to read, tiny treats. One wishes to immediately speak the verses aloud, as the words echo the emotive art works that bring the words to life - music to one's ears and those of listeners. What an introduction they could be to students of the world of Australian poetry and art. Realistically, they are too special to be allowed to go 'out of print'.



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for yourself by telling us in **50 words or less** why you believe a particular Media item is an excellent example of Positive Ageing.

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Entries close 2 October 2015

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