

Older People Speak Out



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PROMOTING THE VALUE OF OLDER PEOPLE

THE CHANGING WORLD OF FAMILIES

Once upon a time extended families lived together.

The “maiden aunt” helped out, looking after babies and young children, often preparing delicious meals – which was a tremendous asset to any family. Mum and dad could go to work, enjoy their sports and social activities knowing the children and in fact the whole household was cared for.

These days, children often leave the family early - living in a shared student accommodation, living with friends or in an apartment on their own.

And so we face the question as mum and dad grow old: What do we do about Mum and Dad?

So we gather together the family clan and this question is asked. The answer in many cases is, what about a retirement village?



The fact is that mum and dad are often safely cared for and in general can be said to live fulfilling lives. However, it is still up to the children to keep in touch, and visit their parents and take them for outings and for a change of scenery and where possible on holidays.

In this modern society we must not forget to care.

Val French
OPSO President

Lifetimes

Promoting Positive Ageing

February 2016

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These come in many shapes and sizes. Some provide simply, accommodation. These can be single units, double units and free standing cottages. Others also provide numerous activities to give residents a reason to live. Many years ago, I and a colleague were appointed by the Federal Government to go unannounced to nursing homes and assess the whole situation for example accommodation, food, activities, staff performance and caring procedures. There was a range of Government standards that had to be met. If they continually refuse to meet the standards they would be in danger of being closed down. Such regulations still apply today.

When Silence Is Not Golden

The best women's magazines often tell us that the average adult female never feels more comfortable than when she is in her own kitchen. Likewise, the average adult male also has his 'lair;' but in his case, it's the shed, which is why one of Australia's most well-known hardware stores more closely resembles, in its layout, a well-organised shed rather than a departmental warehouse. (Of course, when statistical research figures tell us that the 'average Australian family' comprises 2.4 children, I have to question whether being 'average' is actually possible).

But the concept of the male 'lair' – the backyard shed – arose at the first National Health Conference dedicated to men in 1995, when the problem of the apparent inability of men to openly discuss their mental health and wellbeing was raised.

Thus was born the 'Community Shed,' where men could share several varieties of tools, pursue their interests, pastimes, and hobbies, learn new skills or hone those they already had, and simply spend time with other 'blokes.' The first shed was opened in Lane Cove, New South Wales in December 1998, partly to combat such illnesses as depression, caused by men being left alone in late age, often needing to downsize their accommodation, and consequently losing their beloved sheds. Today, Mens' Sheds can be found in many countries throughout the world, including New Zealand, Great Britain, and Ireland.; Australia can proudly boast to having more Mens' Sheds than there are MacDonald's fast-food outlets or more than nine hundred sheds.



At Greenbank RSL Sub-Branch Mens' Shed, you can find lathes, bench-saws, bandsaws, paint-spraying equipment, hand-tools of every shape and type – and helpful, friendly men with the skill, experience, and knowledge to help the new 'recruit.' If woodwork doesn't take your fancy, there are also leatherwork and pyrography classes (pyrography: using a soldering-iron type tool with variable heat control to burn patterns or pictures into leather or wood), computer and a photography classes - for the newcomer as well as the more experienced user of each – and, given time and the required space, the shed may someday venture into metalwork.

continued

Managed by an elected committee, the shed's primary concern has always been promoting and fostering an environment where males can feel free to discuss their problems without the fear they'll be ridiculed or looked down upon.

The other major concern is safety: on joining the shed, each 'inductee' will be taken through a short lecture on the safe use of equipment and Greenbank's rules on using each tool following training in the correct use of a piece of equipment before it is put to work. After all, a length of hardwood isn't the only thing a high-speed saw blade can slice through.

But far from being a place of intensive labour and 'sweat,' there is a camaraderie and relaxed atmosphere in the shed; a friendliness and willingness to assist when needed; and an eagerness to tackle any task thrown their way by outside organisations or individuals, who often turn up with jobs you probably never expected to see, such as a thousand small, white wooden crosses – part of seven thousand to be situated near the French village of Pozieres later this year, where that number of Australian troops laid down their lives in battle a century ago.

If you would like more information, feel free to call John Robinson at the Greenbank RSL Sub-Branch Mens' Shed on 3806 6086 6am-midday any weekday except Thursday.

RESEARCH:

Wikipedia, Mens Sheds, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Men%27s_Sheds, downloaded 9 Jan 2016.

Website, The Mens' Shed Story, <http://www.webcitation.org/5d9DA9Ofj>, downloaded 9 Jan 2016.

Greenbank RSL Sub-Branch Mens' Shed Newsletter, p3 'The Unknown Soldier, I. Foster, 9 Jan 2016.

OPSO Management Committee - Setting Goals for 2016

During February the OPSO Management Committee was hard at work reviewing their goals for 2016. Val French opened the meeting by saying "we are not an old people's organisation; we are there for all people." The Committee discussed several key focus areas and emphasised the importance of continuing work on the prevention of Elder Abuse, poverty, depression and social isolation. OPSO will continue to advocate and promote positive ageing through the Media.



Marjorie Green facilitates the Goal Setting for 2016 with the OPSO Management Committee.

Age no barrier to starring roles



Images from www.dailymail.co.uk

In the face of the youth culture that is constantly being highlighted as dominating the mass media, it is good to find in current local television programming that there is a burgeoning range of series built around interesting older characters, often in action-packed and witty stories, and – more often than not – with the shows being detective stories, police procedurals or social dramas.

Martin Shaw (born in 1945) plays a British police detective in the Inspector George Gently series (started in 2007, and up to Series 7 in 2015), where he is the seasoned policeman and mentor to a young, up-and-coming colleague. And in a similar role as a British detective chief inspector and mentor, Brenda Blethyn (born in 1946) plays Vera in the “critically acclaimed – and hugely popular – crime drama” of the same name. According to The Telegraph, in a 2012 interview, Vera Stanhope is “a well-upholstered Geordie woman of a certain age. She is ‘big, fat and ugly’, says Blethyn, who wears her hair limp for the role. ‘and you also let this lot go,’ she continues, unflexing a set of jowls you wouldn’t normally notice.” The series started in 2007, and Series 7 is scheduled for 2016.

Meanwhile, over in the USA, despite its reputation as overweeningly youth oriented, there have been a number of television series that make old/er people look good without disguising their age. A shining example is Ted Danson (born in 1947), who has moved far in time and appearance from his early TV roles to play white-bearded grandfather and pragmatic sheriff Hank Larsson in Series 2 of Fargo, in 2015. Playing another leading role in that series is Jean Smart (born in 1951), as the dangerous matriarch of a crime family.

Stalwarts Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin have made a success of their series as abandoned wives Grace and Frankie, which started in 2015, and has been renewed for a third series in 2016.

And picking up on the transgender issue that has come increasingly into the public eye, Jeffrey Tambor (born in 1944) stars as a troubled male who is finally able to publicly realise his female self, Maura Pfefferman, in the award-winning series Transparent, which commenced in 2014 and has also been renewed for a third series in 2016.

It is heartening to see this evolution on television, and one would have to ask if it has been fuelled by the rise of the baby boomer market and its desire for shows that have relevance to its ageing members with their substantial purchase power.

Aged Care Complaints Commissioner

The Aged Care Complaints Scheme has been replaced by the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner who is now responsible for resolving concerns about aged care services that are funded by the Australian Government, including services provided in the home.

If you have a concern about aged care, it is best firstly to let your service provider know about your concerns. This can be the fastest and most effective way to find a solution. However, if you don't feel comfortable speaking with your service provider, or if your complaint hasn't been resolved, you can contact the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner at <http://www.agedcarecomplaints.gov.au> or phone 1800 550 552. The website has further information and factsheets.

This article is from Seniors Enquiry Line: see www.seniorsenquiryline.com.au or phone 1300 135 500 for more details.

Annual Membership for OPSO is now due. If you would like to become a member of OPSO, you can download an OPSO Membership Form from <http://www.opso.com.au/get-involved/become-a-member/>

The Annual membership fee is only \$10. If you are paying by Direct Bank Deposit please return your form by email to info@opso.com.au If you are paying by cheque or money order please send your completed form to:

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OPSO gratefully acknowledges the support and advice of all our sponsors.

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