



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

VICTORIAN SENIOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Tuesday 22nd October 2019

The Hon. Luke Donnellan MP, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers and Minister for Child Protection

Mr Gerard Mansour, Commissioner for Senior Victorians

Mr Mike Lescai, President Council of the Ageing Victoria

Award Nominees

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us this morning.

Tony and I are delighted to welcome you to Government House for the Victorian Senior of the Year Awards. Please forgive the scaffolding on the roof and tower, and that the beautiful Fountain Court will be off-limits today. As seniors, we probably all understand the necessity of running repairs and maintenance as we age!

But, to the topic at hand: the celebration of our Senior Victorians.

So often we talk about our ageing population and how it is rapidly growing.

In 2017, over 15% of Australians were aged over 65. Within just the next 40 years, the proportion is expected to grow to 22% of the nation's population.

Of course such a bulge in the number of older Australians has all sorts of consequences: for our system of health care and aged care, for our productivity and for the economy overall. But I think the conversation around ageing needs to change a little. At least, to broaden.

We need to reimagine the concept of 'senior'.

When life expectancy was so much shorter, so was our expectation of ageing: of who was ageing, and what ageing looked like.

When my parents were born, the average life expectancy in Australia was around sixty. When I was born, it had risen to about seventy. For a baby born today, it is more than ninety.

When we joke that 50 is the new 40 and 60 is the new 50 and so on, we are not really joking at all.

It means that, when we think of our seniors, it cannot be just in terms of what an impost on resources they - or we - may be, but in fact how we are such a terrific resource.

Senior Victorians have contributed to the workplace, the economy, communities and individual networks for decades. And we continue to do so.

We bring a wealth of skills, experience, knowledge and wisdom. Whether it be as paid workers, parents, carers, mentors or volunteers.

Throughout our travels across Victoria, Tony and I have seen firsthand the good work of our seniors. What a community asset!

Close to 40% of Victorians aged 65-85 contribute to our community as volunteers.

They contribute in the cities and the regions, in hospitals, Landcare groups, Men's Sheds, community organisations, sports clubs, arts and cultural organisations such as the museum, National Gallery of Victoria and the Shrine of Remembrance, as well as schools. Amongst other places.

And we must not overlook all those aged more than 85 who contribute as well.

And so we are pleased for the opportunity to thank all of the nominees with us today.

You can be proud.

We welcome the opportunity to highlight all that you do. You deserve recognition and, through you, we know that others will be inspired.

Thank you to the judges who have had the difficult task of selecting this year's winners from a very large field of Victorian seniors.

Which leaves me only to say 'congratulations' to all our Award recipients today.

You truly make our community stronger.

We hope that you all enjoy your time here with us today, and we look forward to meeting up with you shortly.

But first it is my pleasure to introduce Minister Donnellan to address us.