



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

SENIOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS
Wednesday 11 October 2023

Acknowledgments

The Honourable Ingrid Stitt MP, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Commissioners, Councillors and Representatives from Local Government

Award recipients

Distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It's a pleasure to welcome all of you to Government House to celebrate the 2023 Victorian Senior of the Year Awards.

For 41 years, these awards have recognised the important volunteer work of senior Victorians in our community.

Some of you are being recognised for your contributions to the cultural and religious diversity of our State.

Others are being commended for your support of Veteran Victorians.

And some have been making efforts across the broad span of issues in our community.

All of you demonstrate the value, excitement and joy to be found in life, including later life.

We have a tendency in this State, indeed in this nation, to dismiss the value of those later years.

It is assumed that being a senior is to be finished with careers, volunteering or giving back.

Fortunately, many Victorians find the opposite to be true.

For them, life's later years are an opportunity to explore new areas of endeavour, or cultivate new interests and to grow their social network.

Perhaps no one better illustrated this than winner of the 2022 'Ageing Well Award,' Father Bob Maguire, now sadly no longer with us.

Having left his position at Saints Peter and Paul's Catholic Church in 2012, he decided retirement was not for him.

Instead, he continued his community work through the Father Bob Maguire Foundation, supporting Victorians experiencing homelessness and disadvantage.

When speaking about senior Victorians he referred to them as "*the wise ones*" and he was not alone in this perspective.

There is a well-known Mali proverb that "*when an old person dies, a library burns down.*"

It speaks to a belief that the elders of a community carry wisdom and insight that can only be gained through a lifetime of experience.

This sentiment is embedded in Indigenous cultures in Victoria where elders are revered as cultural knowledge holders, responsible for guiding their community.

It is important that we recognise and draw on the wisdom of senior Victorians and the positive impact they have on our State.

Life expectancy continues to improve. Between 1946 and 1948, life expectancy at birth was a mere 66 years. By comparison, a child born today is expected to enjoy an average of 83 years. Victoria will become older with the increase in life expectancy, but we must ensure it also becomes wiser.

These awards recognise and celebrate the opportunity this presents for all of us.

Congratulations to all of you being recognised today and thank you for the work that you do.

I'd now like to invite Minister Stitt, to speak.