



***The Examiner* newspaper**

## **Embracing the Wisdom of Time: Celebrating the Ageing Journey**

By CRAIG CHADWICK\*

As we approach the 25th annual Seniors Week in Tasmania (October 16-22, organised by COTA Tasmania) and the UN's Older Persons' Day earlier in the month (Oct 1), we should reflect on the significance of these events and shed light on an issue that often goes unnoticed - ageism. Ageism, the discrimination, and stereotyping based on a person's age, is a pervasive problem that affects individuals of all walks of life. However, these upcoming celebrations provide us with an opportunity to embrace the remarkable journey of ageing and to challenge ageism.

In a world that's constantly chasing after youth and vitality, we tend to forget the beauty and wisdom that comes with growing older. Each wrinkle, silver hair, and experience etched into the lines of a person's face tells a story of resilience, strength, and perseverance. Ageing is not a decline; it's a journey filled with milestones and achievements that deserve recognition and celebration.

One of the remarkable aspects of ageing is the accumulation of wisdom. Throughout their lives, older people have amassed a wealth of knowledge that only time can give. This wisdom isn't just about book smarts; it's about life lessons, problem-solving skills, and a unique perspective that can only come from living through various stages of life. In celebrating the ageing journey, we honour the important value seniors bring to our communities as mentors, advisors, and guides.

Senior community members play a pivotal role in the community. However, the experience is they are far too often ignored and that's to the community's detriment. Take for example in the workplace, and in providing advice to government, business etc. Too often, older people are not afforded the opportunity to be involved because their capacity to do so is judged negatively by their date of birth, not on their potential to contribute. And in preserving our cultural heritage and passing down traditions to younger generations too often seniors and their contribution can be ignored. Older people are the keepers of stories that might otherwise be lost in the relentless march of time.

The ageing journey is marked by newfound freedoms. Retirement doesn't just signify an end to work; it symbolises a new chapter filled with opportunities to explore passions, hobbies, and interests that might have taken a backseat during the hustle of a busy career or raising a family.

Let's also not forget the vital role seniors play in fostering a sense of community and belonging. Many older adults are actively engaged in volunteer work, offering their time and skills to make the world a better place. And more would continue in paid work if age discrimination was not the huge problem it is today in our workplaces.

The ageing journey means acknowledging the immense contributions that seniors make in a vast range of ways and in everyday life. Their important roles should be celebrated not ignored or passed over.

As we embrace the positives of celebrating the ageing journey, it's also vital we address the issue of ageism head-on. Stereotypes and biases against older people often result in unequal access to healthcare, job opportunities, and social inclusion in everyday life.

By promoting Seniors Week through an extensive program of events and recognising older people on the UN's Older Persons' Day we are taking a stand against ageism, showcasing talent and participation, and advocating for a more inclusive society where everyone's contributions are valued, regardless of age.

Events such as these provide us with an invaluable chance to shift our perspectives on the ageing journey. We are all ageing, and isn't that a wonderful thing?

Let's come together to celebrate the vibrant tapestry of life that unfolds with each passing year. Let's embrace the opportunities as part of growing older, and let's stand united against ageism, and ensure every individual's journey is acknowledged, respected, and celebrated.

*\*Craig Chadwick is Tasmanian CEO of COTA (the Council on the Ageing)*

*Photo: Craig Chadwick COTA Tasmania CEO*

*Breakout Box:*

### **Seniors Week: events for everyone**

AN extensive range of activities and events has been planned for Seniors Week throughout the State next month (October 16-22).

Conducted by COTA Tas (Council on the Ageing) the week is designed to shine a light on all the opportunities available for older Tasmanians to help them thrive and embrace new challenges as they continue the journey of life.

From learning the basics of golf, croquet, boules, tai chi, and soccer, through to aqua aerobics, there is plenty on offer for everyone no matter their fitness level. There are sessions about caring for your inner self, staying active through exercise, health information on specific topics, guided walks, museum and art gallery tours, film screenings and information about advanced life and estate planning.

The Seekers Keith Potger will be up close and personal and getting toes tapping. There is a range of experiences for everyone to try such as Suminigashi ink marbling, ukulele playing, and drama sessions to name just a few.

The program happens daily throughout the week statewide. For more information about Seniors Week in Tasmania go to: <https://cotatas.org.au/programs/seniorsweek/> or pick up a copy of the Seniors Week Guide at your local Post Office, Library, Neighbourhood House or elected members' offices across the State.

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