



THE REAL OLD

The myths, facts and surprisingly good news about growing older in Australia today (if we can just end ageism)



About... EveryAGE Counts

EveryAGE Counts is an advocacy campaign committed to tackling the pervasive issue of ageism against older people so that, individually and collectively, we can all enjoy the benefits of living longer, healthier lives.

Our vision is an Australia where every person is valued, connected and respected, regardless of age and health. To achieve this, we recognise we must shift deep-rooted social norms, attitudes, behaviours and government policies. This is a long-term and complex task requiring a broad-based coalition of committed organisations, high-profile individuals and people of all ages and backgrounds from across our community. Together, we need to show ageism is real, who it affects, how it affects them and why it's a big problem.

Ageism against older people is stereotyping, discrimination and mistreatment based solely on a person's age



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EveryAGE Counts – a coalition-led campaign to tackle ageism against older people. Coalition members represent a diverse and growing range of major organisations and individuals, including the Australian Human Rights Commission, COTA Australia, National Seniors, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, the Australian Association of Gerontology and The Benevolent Society. A full list of members, including the Coalition Steering Group members, is on the website:

everyagecounts.org.au

The Real Old

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Why do we think older people are of lesser value than younger people?

We live in a society where youth is revered and old age feared. Every ad for an anti-ageing product says 'old is ugly'; every forgetful old-timer joke feeds a cruel dementia stereotype; every 'grey tsunami' headline suggests living longer, healthier lives is a natural disaster that will destroy everything.

Implicitly and explicitly, we've been fed the myth that young is better than old, since the day we were born. So, it's hardly surprising most of us say and do things that are a bit ageist from time to time - often without knowing it. And older people can be the most ageist of all. Hardly surprising, but not right.

Ageism has been called our last acceptable form of discrimination and it's far more widespread than most of us realise. Ageism is a huge problem for Australia, as it affects the confidence, quality of life, job prospects, health and self-esteem of millions. And it denies our society the many economic and social benefits that flow from the full participation of everyone. As you'll see as you read on, growing older in Australia today is pretty good for many of us, but it could easily be better or even great for most of us - if we can just end ageism. But how?

Why do we get it so wrong?

A good start is to blow a few absurd, outdated but widely believed myths out the water. Research shows that, currently, most people's feelings about age and ageing are almost entirely negative. Many struggle

to see anything positive in getting older, while, simultaneously catastrophising everything negative.

There are great times, great opportunities and great challenges at every life stage, and to overcome the challenges, we need help from families, communities and society, whether we're nine or 90. It's called life.

Discrimination on the basis of age is as unacceptable as discrimination on the basis of any other aspect of ourselves that we cannot change

No one's saying getting older is - or should be - a bed of roses. Some of us will become frail and experience cognitive decline; but not all of us and not nearly as many as the stereotypes suggest. Some of us will be lonely and grumpy - just as some 20-year-olds are lonely and grumpy. And there's no denying that older people are, by definition, closer to the end of their lives. But it's also true that many fear death less and are generally happier than in those younger decades.

If we're lucky, we'll all be older one day, and it can be an extremely satisfying and enjoyable part of our lives. If you are at a younger stage of life, one reason to get involved with ending ageism against older people now is that you'll also be ending discrimination against your future self. Think about it! ●



One of the most pervasive myths about ageing is that physical deterioration is inevitable. We tend to assume we'll all become frail and end up in a vinyl recliner in a residential aged care facility. Some of us will need that level of support, for sure, but most older Australians today are in generally good health and happy to describe themselves that way - even people who might rely on a bit of help to do some things.

We also tend to think old age is one age. Where did that come

from? 60-year-olds are as different from 80-year-olds as 20-year-olds are from 40-year-olds. Every decade is different, with its upsides and downsides.

Things such as physical strength and lung capacity naturally decline as we age, but if we look after ourselves, we may barely notice the changes. In fact, if we have the time, will and opportunity for better exercise, relaxation and sleep, our physical health may even improve as we get older.

A big misunderstanding

Most people also massively overestimate the number of older



Australians over 65 living in residential aged care

people in residential care. How many over 65s do you think live in aged care facilities? A half? A third? Try one in 20. As we get older - especially over 85 - the proportion increases, though it's still significantly less than most of us imagine and generally for shorter periods than in the past.

That's not to suggest residential care is necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes it's the only real option and many people are well looked

Ageism at the doctor's

Have you noticed that when a younger person accompanies an older person to a medical appointment, the doctor sometimes talks only to the younger person, as if the older person wasn't there? It's a classic example of everyday ageism: disrespectful, patronising and harmful to the older person's self-esteem.



We will live longer, healthier lives than any generation in human history

If we are fortunate enough to enjoy longer lives and better health than ever before, why aren't we celebrating?

after and happy to be there. But, as the recent Royal Commission has brought into sharp focus, there's a lot that needs to be done to bring some facilities up to acceptable standards that provide the dignity and quality of life that residents and their families and all of us have a right to expect. One positive is that older people have said loudly and clearly that, in general, they prefer to receive any care and support they might need in their own homes. Fortunately, governments in recent years have begun to listen.

But 'frailing' is not failing

There's no denying that some of us will become sick, frail and no longer be able to live independently. But it's important for everyone – including older people themselves – that we don't see frailing as failing. We're all different, regardless of our age, gender, race, health or the situations we find ourselves in. We never lose our inherent worth as human beings, nor our need for and right to respect.



Our right to the best possible health care doesn't diminish with age

Continuing improvements in health care and disease prevention mean most of us now have an excellent chance of being in decent health well into our 70s and 80s. One in 10 of us will live past 95, and for many, the time spent seriously ill or with disability is likely to be

compressed into only the very final years or even months of our lives.

Next time you hear someone say that decline, deterioration and disease is the only road ahead, pull them up on it. It doesn't have to be ... and it probably won't be. ●

AS WE GET OLDER,



WE GET HAPPIER

It's official: our later years are more likely to be defined by peace, gratitude and fulfilment than by sorrow, dread and regret.

In a youth-obsessed culture, it may be difficult to believe that life gets better after 50. But the evidence is in and that's got to put a smile on your face.

It's called The Happiness U-Curve and it's been shown to hold true across countries, cultures and income levels. It shows that the happiest periods of our lives are when we're children (when the world is a giant unexplored theme park) and when we're older (when we know our way around and have been on every ride a hundred times). We tend to be least happy in middle age, when the weight of careers, raising teenagers, paying off a mortgage and measuring ourselves against others can really get us down.

But when we come out the other side of all that and enter our 60s and 70s, we've pulled through countless crises and the world hasn't ended once. A lifetime of experience makes us better equipped to deal with negative emotions, such as anger, envy and fear. Moreover, we are likely to have less social anxiety, more emotional maturity, greater adaptability and better overall wellbeing. In other words, we're likely to be happier.

Of course, if we find ourselves on the receiving end of ageist attitudes, behaviour and discrimination, it can seriously compromise the happiness of our later years. That's why the EveryAGE Counts campaign is so important.

Look on the bright side. If you're currently in your 40s and life is wearing you down, at least you've something to look forward to: being 70! ●

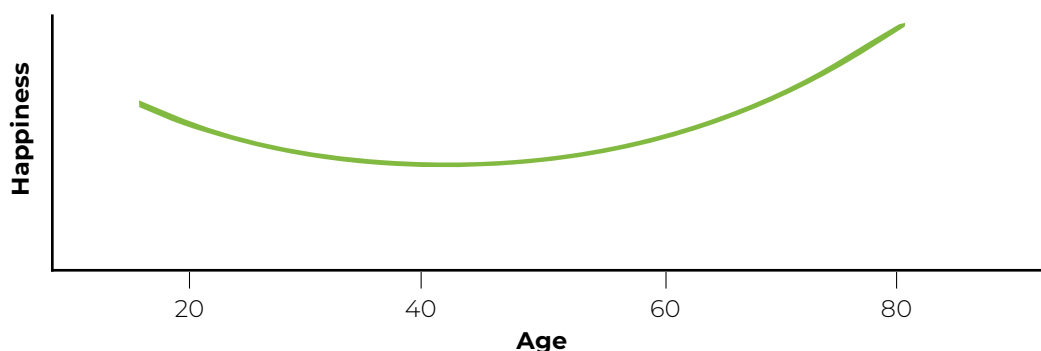
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That's not to say everyone who is old is happy, but the stereotype of ageing as an emotional horror show is the opposite of the truth


”

Jonathan Rauch

Author of "The Happiness Curve: Why Life Gets Better After 50"



We probably won't lose our marbles



Dementia is an insidious disease but we don't inevitably get it! Rumours of imminent dementia have not only been greatly exaggerated, they are making us question completely normal behaviour.

Have you heard the one about the old man who forgot his wife's name? Too many times. Years of memory-loss jokes, forgetful TV characters and thoughtless one-liners have created a widely-held belief that dementia is only a matter of time for all of us.

While a fear of cognitive decline is understandable, medical evidence shows it is way out of proportion to the likelihood. Dementia is not a normal part of ageing and it's far from inevitable. Dementia is a disease, an insidious disease, and those who live with it deserve our care, understanding and compassion ... not to be the punch line of hurtful jokes. While

it's true our risk does increase with age, dementia (including Alzheimer's disease) only affects one in 10 Australians over 65 and there are simple things we can all do, such as staying physically and mentally active, to reduce our risk. Looking at the best evidence, even when we get to 85 and beyond, seven out of ten of us won't have dementia.

Let's get some perspective

As Ashton Applewhite points out in her book, *This Chair Rocks - A Manifesto Against Ageism*, most forgetfulness has nothing to do with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia. It's simply the kind of forgetfulness that occurs at every age.

Some types of memory, such as 'semantic memory', stay the same or even improve as we get older. Word knowledge peaks in our 60s and doesn't markedly decline thereafter. Most of us will also maintain our intellect and creativity as we age.

We're not saying cognitive decline isn't a real and a serious issue that we all need to be aware of. But we are saying that we all need to stop thinking of memory loss as a natural part of ageing and stop putting up with harmful media stereotypes and disrespectful jokes. ●



“
When I lost my car
keys at college,
no one called it A
juniors' moment
”

Ashton Applewhite
Activist and author of *'This Chair
Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism'*

“When I'm older I want to be treated like an adult”

Sometimes we can be ageist towards older family members by assuming they're incapable of making important decisions for themselves. It's called 'infantilising' (treating someone like an infant). It's patronising, unnecessary and denies older people control over their lives. Make sure you involve older relatives in decisions that affect them and respect their point of view - even if you disagree. It's their life.



Let's talk about sex

It's normal, natural and not at all ek!

Most of us had no trouble ditching the ludicrous idea that sex is only for making babies. Now, we must do the same for the ludicrous idea that sex is only for under 40s.

The 'sexless seniors' myth is just that: a myth. Sexual desire and enjoyment don't diminish with age. Barriers to continuing a sex life in our later years are less likely to be age itself and more likely to be the challenges of finding a partner. Heterosexual women outnumber men from the age of 40 and by age 85, the ratio is two to one. Older people in the LGBTQI communities often face greater challenges and even greater stigma.

On a positive note, online dating is helping older people connect more widely and more privately than has previously been possible.

We have a life-long right to intimacy in all its forms

Over 60s are the fastest-growing sector of many online dating sites - places where ageism lurks in the profiles of daters of all ages. People lie about their own age; reject matches because of their age; and post old or retouched photos of themselves. It's all because of a stereotype that says old = unattractive.

Jokes and taboos about older couples' sex lives being weird or 'icky' can also cause older people to have conflicted feelings and guilt

about physical intimacy. We have to stop making people feel bad about something as important and natural as their sex lives.

Of course, there are plenty of older people who choose not to make sex a part of their lives, and that's absolutely fine too. No one of any age should feel deficient about choosing to abstain or not - so long as it's your choice.

But if a healthy sex life is something you want, go for it... and enjoy it. Sex not only makes us feel alive, it helps keep us



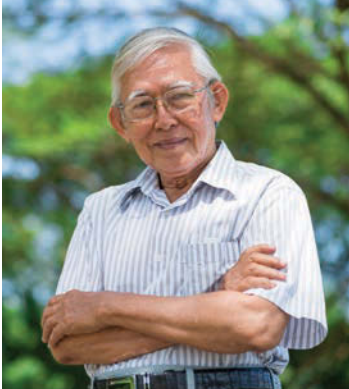
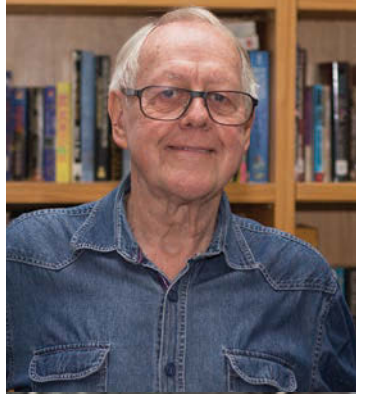
The generation that started the sexual revolution is today's fastest-growing group with STIs. While it highlights an urgent need for safe sex campaigns aimed at older Australians, it also suggests we're not all retiring our sex lives. We just need to make them safe sex lives.

alive. Studies show that physical intimacy is a reliable predictor of longevity. However, you may need to prioritise sex and consciously make it an important part of your life that you need to work at. Just like you may have had to do when you were the exhausted parents of young children. ●





All old people are the same, right? Wrong!



It's hard to imagine how this widely held belief took hold. Surely, different lifetimes of different experiences make people more different, not less. So why do we often lump all older people together in a big grey, Frail, Forgetful and Boring, basket? It's disrespectful and belittling to older people, makes younger people look narrow-minded. What's more, it denies our society the rich diversity of culture and life experience that most older people are very happy to share.



We also wrongly assume that older people can't handle change. Psychologist, Nancy Pachana as reported in the Queensland newspaper, *The Courier-Mail*, saw it very differently: What about all the changes older people have handled in their lives? she asked. The arrival of telephones, radio, TV, cars, computers, robots, vaccines, transplants, the Internet, two world wars, conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and others, the atom bomb, moon landing, Chernobyl, 9/11, natural disasters, the sexual revolution, racial equality, gay marriage, etc? The mere fact of being older means you have handled more change in the world than anyone else - and it's not a skill that disappears on your 65th birthday.



Older people are also likely to have dealt with more intense personal changes, such as relocation, tragedy and loss. Many of us, at all ages, decide we like things one particular way or another. We need to stop confusing people not wanting to have their worlds turned upside down with their ability to handle change. ●



We can stay in paid work (if ageism doesn't stop us)

Mention the concept of ageism against older people and most of us will start talking about problems with work!

While all the -isms still lurk in workplaces, discrimination based on gender, race, disability and sexual preference is at least heading in the right direction: south. By contrast, age discrimination in the workplace is everywhere; possibly even rising. Almost two-thirds of workers over 45 say they've experienced ageism and a third of employers admit to having been ageist. (We should at least applaud their honesty.)

A lot of older Australians don't have a choice whether or not to stay in paid work. Like many workers of all ages, it's often the only way to make ends meet. If we are fortunate enough to be able to choose whether or not to retire, we're damned if we do and damned if we don't. Keep working, and we're greedy geezers, taking jobs and opportunities from younger workers. Retire, and we're selfish bludgers, living off the efforts of others.

Ageism in the workplace comes from the same false belief as ageism everywhere else: that older people are of lower value than younger people and have less to offer. In the workplace it's not only unkind and unfair, it's untrue.

Swings and roundabouts

After decades in the workforce, we generally have more skills and knowledge than at any other time in our lives. Shouldn't experience be an asset rather than a liability? Many older workers have been shown to be better at complex problem solving, handling stress, writing skills and attention to detail.

Older workers don't have a right to special treatment, but they do have a right to equal treatment

Older workers tend to be more loyal, take fewer sick days and are generally more productive.. The maxim, 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' also needs to be put down. Older workers learn differently to younger people, but they definitely learn. Younger workers, on the other hand, might be faster, but may make more mistakes (so it probably evens out). Older workers might take longer to

Get work-ready

We don't have a right to employment just because we're older, and we shouldn't assume it's ageism if we don't get hired. Like jobseekers of every age, we have to prove we're the best person for the job. Entrepreneur and Airbnb guru, Chip Conley, has looked in depth at how we can all remain - or become - work-ready in our later working years. EveryAGE Counts coalition member, Dr Mike Rungie put together an excellent list of 'The Top 15 Practices for Becoming a Work-ready Elder', based on Conley's work, for the 2019 COTA National Policy Forum. Here's a taste of a few of them:

Commit to life-long learning

There are plenty of people out there who think you can't learn new skills and believe you think you already know it all. Prove them wrong.

Get a mentor, be a mentor

Having a younger mentor shows willingness to learn. Share your experience too – just avoid telling smug 'In my day...' war stories.

Work on your 'tech' skills

You don't have to be digital wizard to hold down a job in a modern workplace. Plenty of people of all ages aren't. But we all need to adapt to change and keep learning the skills needed to do the job.

Have an elevator pitch

Being able to explain what you do and what you're looking for, in a few crisp, confident sentences, speaks volumes about your employability.

Look the part

Don't try to dress like a 20-year old, but do put appropriate effort into your wardrobe and physical appearance. Whatever your age, first impressions matter.



In the 2015 movie, 'The Intern', Robert De Niro plays a 70-year old widower who goes back into the workforce as an intern at an online fashion site. His wisdom, wit and wherewithal ensure he's soon making his mark on the business and making friends too. Photo by François Duhamel - © 2014 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. and Ratpac-Dune Entertainment LLC.

recover from workplace accidents – but have fewer of them. Swings, meet roundabouts.

To be clear, we're not saying employers should discriminate against younger workers – that would be ageist! We're just saying all workers should be treated equally and hired, fired, promoted and rewarded based on their ability to do the job, not

their birth date. A workforce built on honest conversations, rather than stereotyping, is better for everybody.

Employing older workers is not just the right thing to do, it's a good business decision. Diverse workplaces, where lived experience is valued and collaboration is encouraged, are more creative. The best of them foster a culture

where older workers mentor younger workers (in areas such as leadership), and younger workers mentor older workers (in areas such as IT). We need to help employers build the tools and resources they need to reap the benefits of fully-integrated age-diverse workplaces.

It's the law, stupid

Another reason not to discriminate against older people is because it's illegal. Current laws are not as clear as they could be and not enforced as they should be. Job ads are often cynically written to exclude older jobseekers: 'We're looking for a high-energy, fast-learner', is code for 'We're looking for a young person'. It's age discrimination for sure; just difficult to prove. A key objective of the EveryAGE Counts campaign is to work with governments, employers, unions and industry bodies to eliminate ageism and age discrimination in the workplace and in employment practices. ●



When we're older, we play a vital role in the **economy**

Despite a barrage of evidence to the contrary, the popular narrative of the past 20 years persists in saying that extended lifespans equal economic disaster... sigh.

GREY TSUNAMI WARNING: Run for the hills! There's a huge wave of resource-devouring monsters towing caravans, about to bring Australia to its knees.

False alarm. It's not true. When we're older, we not only contribute to the economy, we're a vital part of it. And when we do leave the workforce – either partly or fully – many of us see it as an opportunity to 'give back' and contribute to society in new and different ways.

Contribute as unpaid helpers and volunteers

Almost half of 65 to 74-year-olds provide unpaid help to someone outside their own home. Sometimes a friend or neighbour, sometimes a family member. One in four couples with children under 15 rely on grandparents for at least 15 hours of childcare a week.

One in three 'retired' people do volunteer work through organisations such as charities, hospitals and churches, most of which couldn't provide essential community services without their help. A quarter of all older Australians support someone else financially, often a younger family member struggling with the cost of accommodation or education.

Australia's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) doesn't currently include the true value of the millions of hours of unpaid and volunteer work done by older Australians. If it did, economists suggest it would offset the total cost of the Age Pension - the single largest item in the national budget.

Contribute as consumers

As we get older, we're also vital to the economy as consumers. Domestic tourism would collapse without older travellers. Far from being technology-avoiders, over



A third of all over 65s do at least a day's voluntary work every week

65s are the fastest-growing group of online shoppers. Hopefully, not just because some retailers have a habit of making older people feel invisible.

So what's to be done?

We need to put the ageist stereotype, that older people are a burden on our society, out to pasture. Older people do contribute, want to contribute and can contribute a lot more – if ageism doesn't prevent them by marginalising or dismissing them. We can remain a country that prevents millions from fully participating in our society or we can modify our systems, attitudes and behaviours to create a fairer, stronger, more economically resilient and prosperous Australia. It shouldn't be a hard choice. ●



Ageism denies society a huge range of benefits that can flow economically and socially from the full participation of older people



How low can we go?

Ageist comedy & media stereotypes

Ageist humour is an important issue - and a tricky one. Calling out jokes for using belittling stereotypes can send eyeballs rolling and have you called out as the fun police. But we need to start doing it, nonetheless. Humour both sets and reinforces our values; it defines what's acceptable in our society and what's not. If we accept racist jokes, we accept racism; likewise, sexism, homophobia... and ageism. Not every joke that mentions age is ageist, but plenty are. Look for those that use lazy stereotypes, belittle or patronise, and are likely to make older people feel bad about being themselves. Think of ageist jokes the way you think about other discriminatory jokes, and you'll never accidentally tell one again.



In most newsagents, you'll find racks of birthday cards with one-liners about memory loss, failing eyesight and erectile dysfunction. Some are very clever, genuinely funny and it's tempting to dismiss them as harmless fun and even to buy one to give to an older friend or relative. Before you do, ask yourself if you'd feel the same way if the butt of the joke was someone of another race or a person with a disability? In a small but real way, every ageist birthday card says 'old is bad, young is good'. We really need to move on from this.

Marketers beware

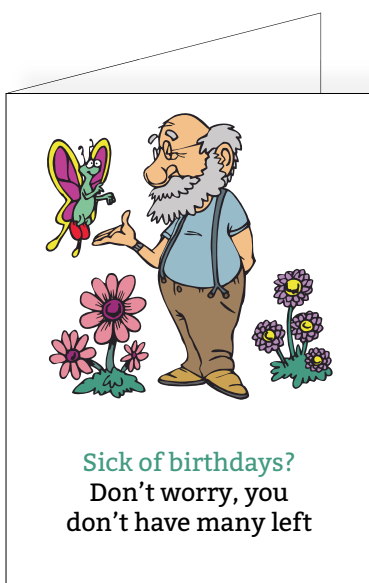
Advertisers also need to raise their game; not just so they stop using clichéd ageist stereotypes, but so they stop shooting themselves in the foot. Older Australians have enormous spending power and – shock, horror – they don't just buy dentures, funeral plans and cruises. Many older customers are now actively rejecting brands that misrepresent or caricature them and their lives. Lazy, ageist marketing will soon become a very dangerous strategy. EveryAGE

Counts hopes to work with advertisers and their agencies to develop new guidelines for more accurate and positive portrayal of older Australians.

Think about It: representation of older people in the media colours not just how others see 'old people' or being older, but how we see ourselves as we grow older. People over 65 represent around 13% of the population but only 2% of prime-time characters in movies and on TV.

Sick of ads with white-haired clichés befuddled by technology? We are.

Even when older characters do have major roles, they often reinforce stereotypes of 'old' meaning slow, frail and forgetful. Small wonder, then, that so many older people see themselves as invisible and irrelevant. ●



An Australia without ageism

We are currently an age-centric culture where ageism is both widespread and ubiquitous. It hides in plain sight, subtle, unnoticed, accepted. We need to change that.

Most of us don't like it when we see racism or sexism, but we don't even blink when we see ageism. In fact, we're all guilty of being ageist – often unintentionally or with entirely good intention; but that doesn't make us bad people.

It's not easy to undo deep-rooted beliefs we've been exposed to all our lives. By the time we're older, we've had a lifetime to internalise and accept stereotypes and prejudices against older people. Chances are, we've never heard them challenged. Defeating ageism is not about raising an army, it's about raising awareness. Awareness that ageism is real, showing who it affects, where, when and how we'd all be better off without ageism, individually and collectively.

Without ageism, we will all have more positive views about age and ageing, which has been shown to improve not just quality but quantity of life. As well as measurably better health, mobility and wellbeing, positive views of our own ageing mean we will live an average 7.5 years longer ... and have a reduced risk of dementia.

Without ageism, we will be hired, fired and remunerated based on our ability to do the job. That's all. Experience will be seen as an asset, not a liability. The year of our birth will be irrelevant. Workplaces will benefit from greater diversity; younger workers will learn from older workers and vice versa. And, with four generations in the workforce for the first time, flexible hours and intergenerational collaboration will bring new

opportunities for those at both ends of their careers and new productivity for employers.

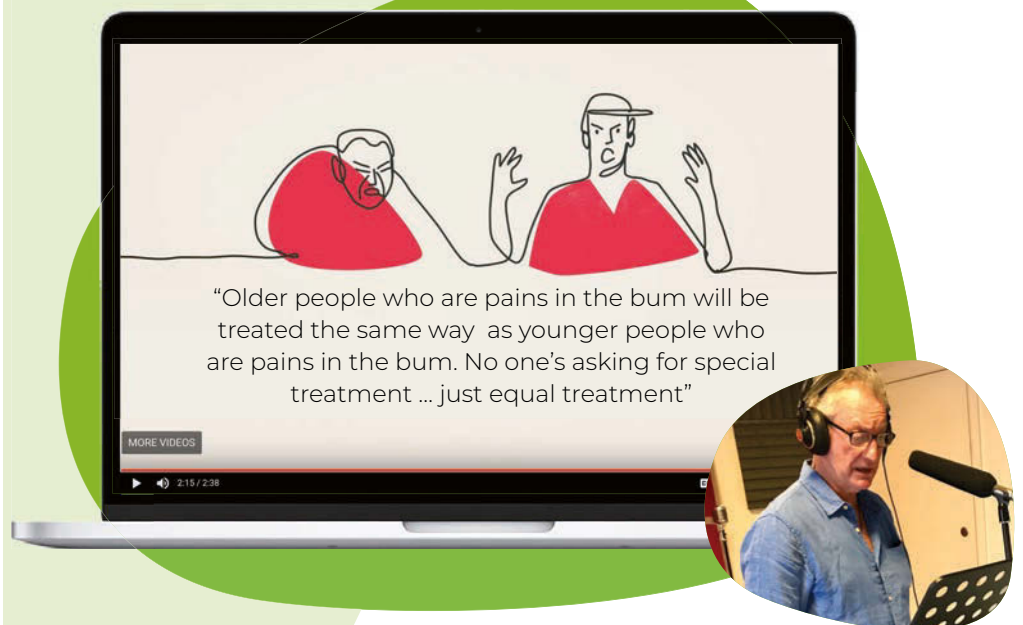
Without ageism, we will question ageist stereotypes whenever we see (or think) them: assumptions that all old people are the same; that frailty, cognitive decline and dependence are inevitable; that old = sad; wrinkles = ugly; and that being older automatically makes us of lesser value than younger people.

Without ageism, we won't be made to feel invisible in shops, on transport or at the doctor because of our age. We won't be called 'fogeys', 'sweet old dears' or 'good for our age'. Getting

older will be seen as a natural part of life, an achievement to be celebrated; not a problem to be fixed.

Without ageism, we'll be a more inclusive society, where more of us can participate fully and enjoy longer, healthier, happier lives. An Australia without ageism will benefit older Australians today, our children, our grandchildren and our own future selves.

Every day, every one of us wakes up a day older. Let's commit to making ageism a thing of the past, so we can all lead the best lives possible at every single life stage. ●



Imagine a world without ageism – the video

EveryAGE Counts has made a short animated video on what an Australia without ageism might look like. It explores how ageism is so common that, most of the time, we don't notice it – in the workplace, in health care and in everyday life. But maybe we would notice if it wasn't there. Narrated by iconic Australian actor, **Bryan Brown**, it's well worth a couple of minutes of your time and we'd love you to share it with friends and family on your social networks too. You can watch the video at everyagecounts.org.au

How you can help END Ageism

To quote a well-known shampoo: 'It won't happen overnight, but it will happen'. Ending any deep-rooted discrimination takes not just a society-wide approach, it takes time – usually many years. There's still much to do to end discrimination based on gender, race, disability and sexual preference, but encouraging progress is being made. We need the same for ageism. Here are three ways you can help get discrimination based on age moving in the same direction.

1

Take the EveryAGE Counts pledge

We want every individual and organisation to sign a pledge to end age discrimination. You can do it online at everyagecounts.org.au or in person at an EveryAGE Counts event. You can even sign the pledge on the back of this magazine and take a selfie to share widely to #endageism. It's a small thing, but to borrow the words of Kev Carmody and Paul Kelly, "From little things, big things grow".

Call out ageism whenever you see it

Most ageism is more thoughtless than malicious and often said with entirely good intentions: referring to a neighbour as a 'sweet old dear' for example; or making decisions for grandpa so he won't have to stress. Both seem harmless enough, but they're disrespecting and devaluing people, simply for being old. If you see or hear something you think is ageist, don't launch an attack; start a conversation to help raise awareness that ageism is real, is all around us and it diminishes people's lives. Here are just three examples of everyday ageism:

Assuming older people are bad drivers

On balance, experience makes older people the most careful and safest drivers on the road. They have fewer accidents than almost any other age group.

"You look good for your age" Even when said as a compliment, it's based on a false assumption that people of a certain age should look a certain way. We're all different and we look the way we look at every age.

Anti-ageing Why aren't we as appalled by anti-ageing creams as many people are by skin-whitening creams? They're both saying that your natural skin is a problem that needs fixing. Skin can be many different colours and textures; tight, loose, lined, smooth. How can a natural state be wrong?

Keep your ageism radar finely tuned and point out examples to your friends and family. You can find some great examples and conversation-starters at yoisthisageist.com

Get involved

Make ageism a cause that's important to you. Local groups promoting the rights of older people and ending age discrimination are starting to appear all around Australia. Find out what's happening in your area at everyagecounts.org.au

Write to your local council or MP asking for more intergenerational spaces in your area. It's well-proven that there's no better way to break down the attitudes that underpin all discriminations than to bring different groups together, so they get to know, understand and relate to each other.

If you want to set up your own consciousness-raising group, there's a great PDF on how to do it called "Who me, ageist?" You can download a PDF copy at thischairrocks.com

This is the beginning of the end of ageism



Ageism against older people is, ironically, a form of discrimination that is rather young. You need only go back a few generations to find a time when the older members of our society were valued, respected, even venerated. In many cultures they still are. This alone should give us confidence that not discriminating against people because of their age is both possible and natural.

There's no reason our older years can't be some of the best – or the best- of our lives.

We can also take confidence from progress that's been made in other areas of discrimination. When I see TV shows, movies and ads from the '70s and '80s, I'm shocked and encouraged in equal measure at how far we've come in the portrayal of women, people of colour and the LGBTQI community. (I confess, I am still shocked

occasionally but at least, these days, I am no longer the only one objecting.) There's still more work to be done in all these areas, but at least they're heading in the right direction. Now we must set age discrimination on the same path.

I'm grateful to have been involved with EveryAGE Counts since its inception. To be a part of ending a deep-rooted discrimination - which prevents millions from participating fully in society and is our last acceptable form of prejudice, is a privilege and something we can all be part of, whatever our age.

As this booklet has shown, we are growing older in incredible times. Many of the myths about age and ageing simply aren't true. Many of us will live longer and healthier lives than any previous generation. There's no reason our older

years can't be some of the best – or the best- of our lives. I am 62 and I am having a blast!

So, please go to the EveryAGE Counts website, get behind the campaign to end ageism, sign the pledge and let's work together to create an Australia without ageism.

Jane Caro AM

Author and social commentator
Founding Coalition Member,
EveryAGE Counts campaign



The EveryAGE Counts Pledge



I pledge

'I stand for a world without ageism where all people of all ages are valued and respected and their contributions are acknowledged. I commit to speak out and take action to ensure older people can participate on equal terms with others in all aspects of life.'

everyagecounts.org.au

Adding your name, or your organisation's name, to the EveryAGE Counts pledge is a simple but powerful thing you can do right now do to show you believe in a fairer, more equitable Australia: a place where everyone is valued, respected and has the opportunity to participate fully in our society. Not only will it help your voice be heard, it helps EveryAGE Counts show the grassroots support we need to help end ageism.

Sign the pledge now at everyagecounts.org.au

Share your pledge on social media and tag it: #endageism



@EveryAGECounts



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