

National Seniors

Australia

ADELAIDE EAST BRANCH

AE News – November 2023



A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT GEOFF HAYGREEN

2023 has been an interesting year for a number of reasons, not the least of these being the recent and sudden departure of Chief Advocate Ian Henschke, so soon after he was recently given an extension on his contract. So far, we are none the wiser about this turn of events. Ian has been a driving force in National Seniors' pursuit of a better deal for older Australians. He will certainly be "a hard act to follow" and will be sorely missed. It will be interesting to see how NSA continues the momentum in which Ian has played such a key and successful role.

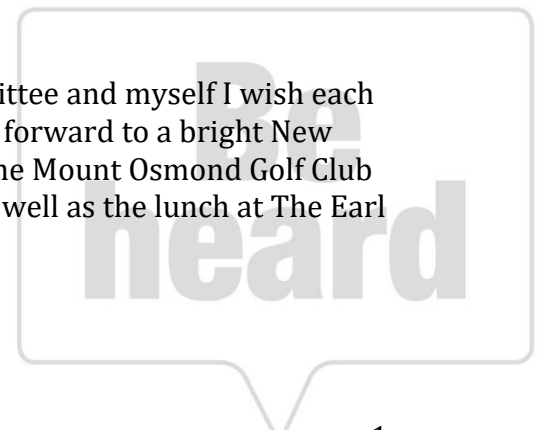
In other news of which you are undoubtedly aware by now, we have been informed by NSA that Chris Grice, Chief Operating Officer, has been appointed to the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Organisation.



I have covered much of the ground that I could have included in this edition of *AE News*, in my President's Report for the November Branch meeting. However, I am pleased to say that we have had a good year and have developed something special, in my view, in our Branch. I hope that this continues. I am grateful to each member of the Management Committee for the roles they have fulfilled and for their support of me in my role as President. I am also grateful to our hosts, the Kensington Gardens Bowling and Tennis Club for their generosity in allowing us the use of this facility for our meetings. Finally, I am grateful to you, the members for being such a great bunch.



On behalf of the members of the Management Committee and myself I wish each and every one a safe and happy Christmas and I look forward to a bright New Year. I also look forward to our Christmas lunch at the Mount Osmond Golf Club on Monday 18 December at 12 noon for 12.30 pm as well as the lunch at The Earl of Leicester Hotel on Tuesday 16 January 2024.



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A WORD FROM OUR EDITOR GARY BYRON

Notwithstanding that we have asked National Seniors about the recent decision to introduce Social Branches, including the authority to do so, the response received so far is largely rhetorical and, in particular, does not address the central issue that Social Branches do not fit within the current definition of “Branches” (nor what constitutes a “recognised branch”) as defined and described in the NSA Constitution. (See Rules 3.1 and 6.2.1(a)). Furthermore, there is no separate prescribed power in the Constitution to create NSA Social Branches. Nevertheless, the creation of Social Branches has been approved by the Board.

NSA has also released information and guidelines with regard to setting up the Social Branches.

In any event, while the intention of NSA is understood, it is to be hoped that this does not backfire by encouraging NSA branches to take the easy way out, with the result that “Branches” as defined and described in the Constitution diminish in number, while informal, social branches take their place. One unintended consequence of such a trend if it occurs, could well be to weaken the focus on, and member awareness, interest and support of, NSA’s core business. We await developments.

We are told that COVID-19 is spiking again with two new strains, one of them particularly infectious, having emerged. We are being urged to be meticulous about our everyday hygiene and to wear masks in crowded places. All good advice I would think.

As many of you are aware, I was initially due to have surgery on 27 November 2023 following which I need to recuperate for a period of 4-6 weeks. Nevertheless, I hope to attend our Branch Christmas lunch on 18 December. However, in the event that I do not make it to the lunch, I wish you a Happy Christmas and New Year and look forward to catching up again in 2024. (**NOTE:** My surgery was brought forward to Monday 20 November at the last minute so, by the time you read this, it will be well and truly over and done).

PENSIONERS IN THE WORKFORCE

Members will have noted a win for National Seniors Australia, thanks to a concerted effort by National Seniors and in particular, its former Chief Advocate, Ian Henschke. Others have lent their support, it must be said, but the Government’s decision to enable pensioners to participate in paid work without impacting on their pension entitlements at all may now be one step closer with the recent increase in the cap on earnings. However, that is by no means the end of it, with NSA’s “let pensioners work” campaign, hopefully, still in full swing,

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In case you missed it, editorial comment appeared in The Advertiser on Wednesday 1 November, 2023, in part as follows:

“Treasurer Jim Chalmers in September announced measures designed to lure aged pensions back into the workforce, allowing them to earn more before they lose income support.

But more needs to be done to entice older people to stay longer in the workforce or return after retirement. This benefits both the worker, whose nest egg is bolstered, and the nation, which does not lose valuable skills.

Households across the nation are hurting financially. But older people, who have worked hard and paid their taxes, should not have to worry endlessly about running out of money in retirement.”

It seems that the idea continues to gain traction in the community.

A positive step forward indeed, but we have some way to go yet. For instance, Australia might want to have a look at what is going on in New Zealand. Peter Martin, Visiting Fellow at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University, (courtesy of ABC News on 25 October 2023), explains:

Australian pensioners can now earn \$227 per week without harming their pension, up from the previous \$150. Martin says, “The rules for older workers are very different in New Zealand. In fact, if Australia adopted New Zealand’s approach, we could have an extra 500,000 willing workers – a fair chunk of them paying tax.”

He goes on to say that 15.1% of the Australian population aged 65 and older are undertaking some kind of paid work, up from 14.7% a year earlier. By contrast, in New Zealand the proportion has just hit 26%, that is to say that more than one quarter of New Zealanders aged 65 and over are employed. NZ’s goal is said to be around 33.1%, which is the same as Iceland.

In explaining the differences between the two countries, Martin says, “One crucial thing New Zealand is not doing is annoying pensioners who work. Australian pensioners in paid work get called in for discussions with Centrelink, if it looks as though they are at risk of doing too many hours and going over the \$227 per week limit.” He goes on to say that pensioners who exceed the \$227 per week limit lose half of every dollar they earn, in a cut to their pension.

He says, “What’s different about New Zealanders is that they keep their pension; they don’t face a penalty if they work, and they simply pay income tax.” Furthermore, in New Zealand, the age pension (which is called superannuation) is paid to everyone of pension age. There is no income test or asset test. You get

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it because you are a citizen or permanent resident. Martin maintains, “Australia would not need to go as far as New Zealand to get the same benefit. We would simply need to ditch the pension income test in cases where that income came from paid work, leaving the asset test in place.”

He adds that it is likely that the proportion of older Australians who may currently operate on the “cash in hand” basis would shrink and the economy would benefit from the extra tax incurred on legitimate earnings. And chronic job vacancies would diminish.

INVESTMENT SCAMS

Much has been written and said about scams and the low-life perpetrators who prey on the community. Scams come in various forms, investment scams being one of them.

Investment scammers target your personal wealth by trying to convince you to invest in fake schemes and companies. Australians lost over \$200 million in such scams between 1 January 2022 and 1 March 2022, a 166% increase compared to the same period in 2021, according to Scamwatch. Investment scams accounted for most of these scams. I daresay that these figures are on the increase today.

Offers of sensational investment opportunities with high returns and low risk sounds great and too good to be true – are invariably just that. Glitzy investment seminars offering free advice, free food, free drinks are accompanied by a presentation of high-risk strategies and undisclosed fees and charges. Purchasing crypto currencies where the criminal holds your cryptocurrency wallet and bleeds you dry is another scam. Offering to help you recover funds for an upfront fee is yet another. And the list goes on and on.

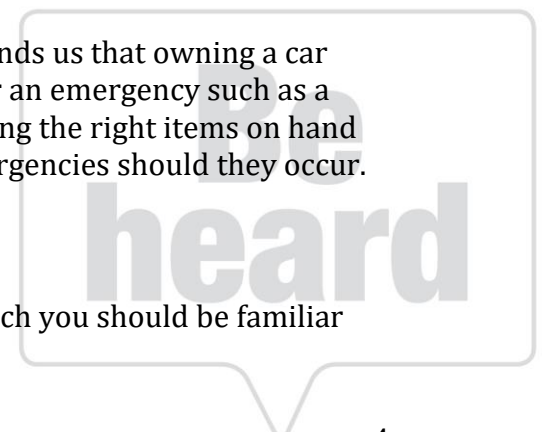
Promises of high returns and low risk; cold calls from investment companies; payments requested to be made by bitcoin, gift cards or other payment methods, and being asked to download an App that is not on the official Apple or Google Play app stores, are all “red flags” that should make you wary. Never has it been more important to keep in mind that well-established warning – “buyer beware!”

ITEMS WE SHOULD CARRY IN OUR CARS

National Seniors Australia Roadside Assistance reminds us that owning a car comes with great responsibility and if you encounter an emergency such as a breakdown it is important to be well prepared. Having the right items on hand in your vehicle can assist you to deal with these emergencies should they occur.

Some useful items suggested are:

- Your vehicle user manual, the contents of which you should be familiar



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- A basic tool kit containing in particular, items such as jumper leads, a spare tyre, a jack, a tyre-pressure gauge, tyre lever and window cleaner
- A small hand-held torch (or if not available, the torch in your mobile phone), spare torch batteries or charger as applicable
- In case of an accident, a high viz vest and reflective hazard cones or triangles to place on the road adjacent to your car
- A first aid kit
- A fire extinguisher
- Portable phone charger and/or a fully charged portable power bank
- Other items such as a blanket, a hat, sunscreen, a small amount of cash, etc.

National Seniors Australia Roadside Assistance advises:

“The best-case scenario is that you never have to use any of them but in the unlikely event that you have an emergency you will be well prepared.”

National Seniors members receive 10% off Roadside Assistance. Roadside Assistance includes 24/7 call centre and emergency support, as well as call outs, emergency fuel, and help with lost or locked keys. If you have a breakdown at any time, they can assist you.

For more details check this out on the National Seniors Australia website.

ALMONDS SHED KILOS

An interesting article on this topic was published in “The Senior – SA” on 1 February 2023 at page 26. It says, “Weight loss is never an easy nut to crack, but a handful of almonds could keep extra kilos at bay, according to new research from the University of South Australia.”

Examining how almonds affect appetite, researchers found that a snack of 30-50 grams of almonds could help people cut back on the kilojoules they eat each day. The research found that people who ate almonds lowered their energy intake by 300 kilojoules (most of which came from junk food) at the subsequent meal. Given that overweight and obesity is a problem in Australia, the results of this research provide valuable insights for weight management.

Dr Sharaya Carter said, “Our research examined the hormones that regulate appetite and how nuts – specifically almonds – might contribute to appetite control. We found that people who ate almonds experienced changes in their appetite-regulating hormones and that these may have contributed to reduced food intake. Almonds are high in protein and unsaturated fatty acids, which may contribute to their satiating properties and help explain why fewer kilojoules were consumed.”

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THE DECLINE OF THE HUMAN RACE

Conventional wisdom suggests that over population is creating serious problems for the human race. “Not so!” say some economists. In an article by James Rickards of “The Daily Reckoning”, on 3 November back in 2021, he says that the decline won’t be because of starvation or an inability to produce enough food. He states: “That threat has been discussed at least since Thomas Malthus articulated in his 1798 book, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. The Malthusian view was that population grows exponentially and agricultural output grows in a linear fashion (if at all), so it was just a matter of time before the population’s needs exceeded the available food supply, and humans would begin a period of mass starvation.”

However, he goes on to say that Malthus was wrong on both counts. In fact, he says, that productivity has soared while population has levelled off. “The battle to feed the planet was won long ago.” There is more than enough food produced for everyone on Earth. Rickards says, “Any remaining pockets of starvation or low nutrition are due to political corruption or war. They are not due to overall shortages. There is plenty of food.” War, pandemics and natural disasters can cause temporary downturns. There is a much simpler explanation, he says, best explained in Walt Kelly’s 1970 *Pogo* cartoon: “We have met the enemy and he [sic] is us.” Humans are the reason for the population decline. “We are not having enough babies” says Rickards.

In mathematical terms, the replacement number is 2.1, that is to say, that each couple needs to have, on average, 2.1 children to maintain global population at a constant level. Rickards says, “A birth rate of 1.8 is below the replacement rate of 2.1. This means that your population is declining. It may be ageing also, as the existing population lives longer and newer births neither replace the dying nor lower the median age.”

While the mathematics explained by Rickards may well be correct, the central issue is much more complex. It is obvious that a lack of uniformity in the distribution of wealth; varying cultural, social and political conditions around the World; lack (or otherwise) of opportunity to do well, and other variable factors means that the “average”, even by definition, is not a suitable indicator that the decline in the birthrate and its impact, is by any means uniform. Comparisons between first world countries, developing countries and third world countries would demonstrate this fact. Inequality in many aspects of life is endemic. The study of averages necessarily includes extremes at each end of the spectrum, as well as variables right across the spectrum – whether it be the birthrate or anything else, including access to wealth, food, opportunity etc., or as Aristotle says, the things that help provide us with “the good life.”

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THE MOON

In the August edition of *AE News* we noted that Saturn has a total of 145 moons orbiting the planet. The Earth has one.

Our moon is drifting away from us at the rate of about 40 mm per year. That is not so significant you may think, but it adds up over time. Billions of years ago, the moon was much closer to the Earth than it is now. Earth days were much shorter then. Two and a half billion years ago Earth's days were only 17 hours long. The numbers are changing because of the tides. As the tides slosh backwards and forwards against the land they function as a brake, slowing down Earth's rotation on its axis. Tides in the land contribute to the effect, as do tides in the lunar landscape. That makes the days longer. To keep the motions of the Earth-moon system in balance, the moon has to move further away.

If you look at the moon through a telescope the wealth of detail is amazing. Mountain ranges and craters are clearly visible. These and the dark volcanic plains tell compelling stories. (Source: 'Starwatch', the Advertiser, Friday 27 October 2023 at 'News', page 57).

THE LAST WORD

Jock, a canny Scot, walks into the office of private bankers, Coutts and Co., in the Strand in London. He asks to speak to the Manager. He tells the Manager that he is going abroad on business for three weeks and needs to borrow five thousand pounds. The Manager tells him that the Bank would be happy to oblige but as he is not a regular customer of the Bank, he would need to provide some modest security for the loan.

Jock opens his sporran and takes out a set of car keys and documentation relating to a new Ferrari parked out the front of the Bank and hands them to the Manager, saying, "Will this do?" He also produces the log book and after a phone call by the Manager, everything checks out. The deal is done. The cashier hands over the five thousand pounds and the porter drives the Ferrari into the Bank's secure underground car park for safe keeping.

Over lunch the next day the Bank Manager tells his colleagues the amusing story of how this simple-minded Scot secured a loan of five thousand pounds, offering a Ferrari worth more than one hundred thousand pounds as collateral. They all have a good laugh as they sip their port after a pleasant meal.

Three weeks later Jock returns, and repays the loan of five thousand pounds plus interest of twenty pounds. The Bank Manager says, "Sir, we have been very happy to do business with you and this transaction has apparently worked out

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well for both of us. However, I am a little puzzled about it because, while you were away, I checked you out and found that you are in fact a very wealthy property investor. Why is it then that you would need to borrow five thousand pounds from the Bank for three weeks?”

“Simple”, says Jock, “Where else in London could I securely park my new Ferrari for three whole weeks for only twenty pounds and still find it safe and sound when I returned?”



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