



### NATIONAL SENIORS AUSTRALIA CONGRATULATES 2025 SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

27 January 2025

National Seniors Australia (NSA) congratulates 2025 Senior Australian of the Year, co-founder of Wheelchairs for Kids, 84-year-old Brother Thomas Oliver (Olly) Pickett AM for his work providing free adjustable wheelchairs and occupational therapy expertise for children in developing countries.

Since its inception in 1996, Wheelchair for Kids – made up of more than 250 retiree workshop volunteers, with an average age of 74 years, has gifted more than 60,000 custom-built wheelchairs to children in more than 80 countries.

NSA Chief Executive Officer Mr Chris Grice said he is delighted Mr Pickett's 26 years of service has been recognised, as well as the service of Wheelchair for Kids' 250 senior volunteers and 550 people from aged care and community groups who sew covers for wheelchair soft supports, and crochet rugs and soft toys.

"Mr Pickett's well-deserved recognition not only demonstrates the importance of his life-changing work, but it also demonstrates the importance of experience as seen through his leadership of the development of a world-first low-cost wheelchair design that grows as the children do," Mr Grice said.

"Although age brings with it experience, it can also bring a perception of being past a use-by-date. Too often, older Australians, despite their experience, are portrayed as problems instead of solutions. The ageing population is seen as an impending cost as opposed to a potential opportunity.

"The number of people aged 65+ is expected to grow by 2.35 million by 2041, and those aged 85+ expected to grow by almost 750,000 over the same time. We need to plan for this impact and this opportunity now.

"Mr Pickett, and indeed the Senior Australian of the Year award, is a timely reminder that older people contribute in ways that can't be measured. Without these builders and their experience, Australia simply wouldn't be what it is today."

It is a philosophy at the heart of and inspiration for NSA's [Experience Matters](#) campaign – a campaign designed to change the perception and portrayal of older Australians; to promote the importance and impart the benefits of knowledge, wisdom, and insight gained during a lifetime of experience.

"Mr Pickett and the hundreds of senior volunteers behind Wheelchairs for Kids embody and exemplify the very essence of NSA's [Experience Matters Campaign](#) and with it, the potential of an undervalued cohort," Mr Grice said.

"We congratulate Mr Pickett and those who work alongside him once again on the positive difference they are making to the lives of children around the world, and the example they set to all Australians that *Experience Matters*."

To learn more about NSA's Experience Matters campaign please visit [here](#)

**Media enquiries Media & Corporate Communications Manager Anna Townend 0488 047 380**