

# National Seniors

## AUSTRALIA

### ADELAIDE NORTH-WEST BRANCH

### NEWSLETTER

November 2024

Meeting at 1.30 pm on the fourth Wednesday of each month at  
Lockleys Baptist Church house, 244 Henley Beach Road, Underdale (parking at rear)

#### COMMITTEE

President .....	Brian Mibus (0417 887701)	Committee .....	Jeanette Molde
Vice-President ..	Trevor Molde (0417 838740)		Heather Dowling
Secretary	Kathy Hancock (0432 101372)		Jenny Mathews
Treasurer .....	Mavis Smith	Newsletter.....	Trish Mibus (0407 605091)
Activities Coordinator .....	Annie McCall		

#### 2024 / 2025 CALENDAR

DATE	ACTIVITY	AFTERNOON TEA
All dates are Wednesdays		
November 27, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – Wetlands – David Jarman	Kathy Hancock
<b>2025</b> January 22, 2025, 5.30pm	<b>Our first meeting for 2025 will be Dinner at the Alberton Hotel – Guest speaker from ACH A \$10 deposit for our January dinner will be collected at the November Meeting</b>	
February 12, 12 noon	Lunch – Outing – Botanic Gardens -- David Chihuly Exhibition (\$12 concession + lunch at the gardens.	
February 26, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – Allison Hicks, Genealogy SA	Kati Barancek
March 12, 12 noon	Lunch – Kent Town Hotel	
March 26, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – Mataan Dunning (Fiducian Finances)	Lucie Bray
April 9, 12 noon	Lunch/Outing – Apex Park – BBQ lunch. Bring a salad, sweet and drinks	
April 23, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – SA Police – Scams	Carole Smith
May 14, 12 noon	Lunch – TIROS	
May 28, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – Robert Beer – the Bee Man	Jenny Matthews
June 11, 12 noon	Lunch – Pallas Hotel, Semaphore	
June 25, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – MFS – Fire Service – safety	Heather Dowling

## Our October Guest Speakers were Sarah (Trainer) & Jess from Lions Hearing Dogs, with their dog, Misha.

- Lions Hearing Dogs started in 1980 after two Lions members went to Colorado and saw how they operated there.
- The members came back and purchased a block of land in Verdun.
- In 1982, their first hearing dog was given to a lady.
- In April this year, the 700<sup>th</sup> hearing dog trained in South Australia was given to a lady in Queensland.
- In the past, dogs were sourced from the RSPCA, but a couple of years ago labradoodle puppies were sourced from ethical breeders.
- The main breeds used are labradoodles, little border terriers and Tenterfield terriers, with Hearing Dogs breeding the labradoodles and border terriers and the Tenterfield terriers being sourced from breeders.
- The puppies stay at their kennels for 8 weeks, with lots of hands-on from staff. They also get used to noise as the kennels are on the corner of a busy road near a roundabout.
- At 8 weeks, they go to foster homes and stay with the volunteer/carer for 8 – 10 months, with Hearing Dogs paying all their expenses – puppy program, puppy food, vet, play toys, etc. Hearing Dogs now has their own vet.
- For the first month, the puppies attend puppy pre-school in Mount Barker where they are taught what you would teach your own dog.
- After 8 weeks, Hearing Dogs staff will visit the puppy at home fortnightly to ensure everything is okay.
- After a year they go back to the Hearing Dogs Kennels to build them up and take them out and about.
- The dogs are trained to work to 10 household sounds – oven timers, kettles, phones, etc. They are also exposed to things like cats, vacuum cleaners, etc.
- In the first stage, the dog runs to find where the sound is coming from, comes back to the trainer and touches them with one paw, then leads the trainer to the issue and drops.
- At the end of their training they have a public access test, where the trainer takes the dog to a shopping centre or similar, exposing them to lifts, stairs, food court, etc.
- If the dog passes, they are matched to one of the applicants. The trainer spends a week with the recipient to help them transition.
- The dogs are followed up for 3 months, with 3 visits a week to ensure they are hearing sounds correctly.
- There is currently an 18-month waiting list for a dog.
- Recipients can have other animals, but not another dog.
- Applicants for a hearing dog must have a severe to profound hearing loss, have an audiologist's report and a doctor's report.
- The dogs are mainly trained for inside, but they are also trained to respond to the phone and fire alarms outside.

### Medic Alert Dog Program

- Dogs are trained for people with Type 1 diabetes. They go through smell training to pick up highs and lows.
- They are trained to react to the owners command to retrieve the Hypo kit in the home and place it on the owners lap.
- If they are given the command 'Get help', they will go to the closest person.
- If their owner is unconscious, they are trained to activate an emergency button.

### Sight Reaction Program – New

- This program is for veterans with PTSD.
- Dogs are trained to pick up signs from their owner and will put their head on the owner's lap or jump up. They are also trained to push an emergency button and to retrieve.
- There has been an 80 – 85% success rate for this program.

There are currently big development plans for the Verdun property. The current facilities can host 24 dogs at a time, including quarantine kennels. The redevelopment will allow for 30 dogs. Last year 35 – 36 dogs were trained, but they will be able to put out 100 dogs a year with the new facilities.

It costs \$40,000 to train and deliver a dog, but is free of charge to recipients. As a Lions project, Lions pay a large percentage of the cost, with individual clubs contributing, some bequests and merchandise sales.

## Minister for the ages: new voice of older Australians

***National Seniors has long advocated for a dedicated Minister for Older Australians. A ministerial reshuffle has delivered a welcomed Assistant Minister for Ageing but does this appointment go far enough?***

*Extract from National Seniors 'Branching Out', Spring Edition 2024*

It has been a feature of the current Federal Government that while Australia has dedicated portfolios for women, youth, and the multicultural community, there has been no dedicated Minister for Older Australians.

While previous governments have had portfolios that focused on the broader interests and concerns of older people, the Albanese government has a focus on aged care with no more than three MPs with aged care in their purview. Mark Butler is the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Anika Wells is the Minister for Aged Care, and Ged Kearney is the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care.

Understandably, there is a strong focus on aged care, given the recent royal commission, and that aged care is the fourth most expensive program in the Federal Budget (\$36 billion in 2024-25). But none of these ministers could be said to holistically represent the growing demographic that is older Australia.

Other matters of concern to older Australians and their families such as social services, retirement income, discrimination, elder abuse, homelessness, cost-of-living pressures, cyber safety threats, and financial and digital literacy, are spread across a range of portfolios and government departments even though some, such as superannuation and Age Pension, have significant impacts on older people.

Most state and territory governments have ministerial responsibility for older people. So why not in the federal sphere? Under previous governments, older Australians had a ministerial voice.

It has been a long-standing advocacy commitment of National Seniors Australia that the needs of older Australians are far broader than aged care and should be represented and managed by a dedicated Minister for Older Australians.

In July, following a cabinet reshuffle, we welcomed the reinstatement of a dedicated seniors assistant minister.

The Prime Minister gave the job to Kate Thwaites, Member for Jagajaga in Victoria. She has the title of Assistant Minister for Social Security, Assistant Minister for Ageing, and Assistant Minister for Women. Mr Butler, Ms Wells and Mr Kearney retain 'aged care' in their ministerial titles. So, it could be argued the interests of older Australians are better served by having four ministers with responsibility for older people in their title.

### **National Seniors welcomes new minister**

In July, National Seniors supported Independent Federal Member for Mayo, Rebekha Sharkie's call for a Minister for Older Australians. Ms Sharkie is a co-chair

of the Parliamentary Friends of Seniors. Ms Thwaites' appointment followed National Seniors' lobbying, including a meeting between Ms Sharkie, National Seniors Chairman, Ross Glossop, the Prime Minister, and the Member for Kennedy, Bob Katter.

National Seniors CEO, Chris Grice, says Ms Thwaites' appointment is recognition that older Australians need to be better represented in the Federal Government. He says the issues facing older Australians are many and touch on multiple ministries and portfolios, far beyond aged care.

"It's a timely appointment. According to the *2023 Intergenerational Report*, the number of Australians aged 65 and over will more than double and the number aged 85 and over will more than triple. We need to plan for this impact and opportunity now," Mr Grice says.

"Representation is about ensuring the social, physical, and economic contributions of all older Australians are understood and reflected in good public policy. Older Australians support the economy and society in many ways, but they also have specific and diverse needs.

"A successful Assistant Minister for Ageing will understand older people and be able to communicate their needs to colleagues and to the wider public, ensuring better outcomes.

"This is an opportunity for government to give millions of older Australians a stronger say within government.

"There is a misconception older Australians are living well off high inflation. However, pressures from rising private health insurance costs, and out-of-pocket expenses, rising living costs including rent, fuel, and grocery increases erode most of these gains.

"National Seniors Australia appreciated meeting with Ms Thwaites in Canberra in August, within only weeks of her appointment, and looks forward to working with Ms Thwaites to ensure this growing cohort has both the support and recognition it needs and deserves."

With 2021-30 declared the Decade of Healthy Ageing by the United Nations, and the proportion of older people expected to grow, Australia has the opportunity to plan for this impact.

Mr Grice says there's a need to change the way older people are perceived. While an Assistant Minister for Ageing is a positive first step, a Minister for Older Australians will ensure this growing cohort has a critical seat at the cabinet table.

"Representation is about creating a voice for their concerns to be heard."

## Issues for the Assistant Minister

### What should the Assistant Minister for Ageing do?

Among other matters, National Seniors wants the Assistant Minister to champion a range of issues facing older people, including concerns about the rising cost of living, access to health care and dental care, barriers to going back to work, homelessness, elder abuse, lax consumer protections for seniors in retirement villages, cyber security threats, and digital and literacy exclusion.

These are just some of the issues National Seniors members have raised which form key pillars of National Seniors Australia advocacy agenda.

### An Assistant Minister for Ageing should:

- Demonstrate the government's commitment to older people during a time of demographic change in which Australians are expected to live longer but with increased reliance on key services such as health and aged care
- Act as a conduit between government and the community to better engage with older people on matters beyond aged care, and enable a whole-of-government approach to policymaking for and with older Australians across multiple sectors and government agencies
- Ensure government services are accessible and inclusive for all including those who may not have ease of digital access or may be experiencing hearing or vision loss
- Champion our older Australians and shift the narrative of older people as vulnerable and in need of support (a "burden") to more positive aspects of ageing and the contribution older people make to the economy and society
- Reframe the current narrative to recognise that older people helped build our nation and continue to represent some of our greatest assets, rather than promote intergenerational competition or conflict.



**The Committee  
wishes everyone  
a Happy and Safe  
Christmas and  
New Year**

## Stradivarius Violins

The Italian violin maker Antonio Stradivari was a poor man. And yet his violins are now the most prized violins ever made because of the rich and resonant sound they produce. The unique sound of a Stradivarius cannot be duplicated. What may surprise you is that these precious instruments were not made from treasured pieces of wood; they were carved from discarded lumber. Because Stradivari couldn't afford fine materials, he got most of his wood from the dirty harbours where he lived. He would take those waterlogged pieces of wood to his shop, clean them up, and dry them out. Then, from those trashed pieces of lumber, he would create instruments of rare beauty. It has since been discovered that while the wood floated in those dirty harbours, microbes infiltrated the wood and ate out the centres of those cells. This left just a fibrous infrastructure of wood that created resonating chambers for the music. From wood that nobody wanted, Stradivari produced violins that now everybody wants.



**Adelaide North-West National Seniors Branch recently celebrated Christmas with a luncheon at the Lockleys Hotel**