

**WELCOME** – It was wonderful to see our members and guests participating in our “Be Seen in Green” themed meeting on 11 March to celebrate St Patrick’s Day. Congratulations to Julie Jermy who was selected as our first prize winner by our guest speaker, Rhiannon Koplick from Pres Care, and to Joy Scott as runner-up. Thanks to everyone who contributed items towards supporting the Care Kits For Kids Qld charity in March – these items are greatly appreciated.

## BRANCH MEETINGS

Our next branch meeting will be held on **Thursday 8 April 2021** in the Anzac Room at the Coorparoo RSL Club. This room is located to the right of the main foyer. Arrival will be at 10:00am for a 10:30am start with morning tea provided. The cost is \$6.00 per person. As the meeting will be just after Easter, members and guests are invited to join in some fun by wearing an Easter bonnet – use your imagination! A prize will be awarded for the best creation.

Our guest speaker will be Emily Gould, Community Resource Officer, Seniors Enquiry Line, to discuss scams targeting seniors.

We will continue to hold our monthly meetings on the second Thursday of each month with the remaining dates for 2021 being:

13 May	10 June
8 July	12 August
9 September	14 October
11 November	

## APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Best wishes to the following members who celebrate their birthdays in April:

Karin Chambers	Elsie Debney
Sophia Feulbach	

We hope your special days are made memorable by family and friends.

## CARE KITS FOR KIDS DONATIONS

As a branch, we would like to support this organisation through the donation of items to assist these children. Items, with suggestions listed below, can be brought to our monthly meetings and will be delivered to Care Kits For Kids. Most can be bought at discount shops, and not everything needs to be provided each month. Every donation will help Queensland children who are displaced through no fault of their own.

**April** – Underwear (sizes 12, 14, 16 or small men/women), socks

**May** – Biro, HB or coloured pencils, sharpener, eraser, ruler

**June** – Long pants, jackets, tops, beanies (all sizes)

**July** – Face washer, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush & cover

**August** – Hair brush, comb, bands, clips, baseball cap

**September** – summer pyjamas, girls crop top sizes 12, 14, 16

**October** – Reading book (all genres), small soft toy or doll (no buttons or beads)

**November** – Back pack, small lunch box

## MYSTERY BUS TOUR

38 members and guests greatly enjoyed the Mystery Bus Tour that Pat Will organised on Monday 29 March. Our morning tea stop beside the Coomera River at Hope Island was very pleasant, as was the drive through the Currumbin Valley to the Rock Pool, before heading back to the coast for lunch at the Currumbin Surf Lifesaving Club.

Thanks to everyone who supported our Easter raffle, and congratulations to the winners Kay (1st prize), Di (2nd prize) and Julie (3rd prize). Thanks to Julie Jermy for her assistance in selling the raffle tickets.

## ANZAC DAY COMMEMORATIONS

This ANZAC Day, RSL invites all Australians to unite safely, and honour and thank our nation’s veterans on Sunday 25 April 2021.

*Light Up the Dawn* was an idea which originated within the Australian community in 2020, and was supported and promoted across Australia in a year of great challenge and change. As the sun peeked above the horizon, the country stood united – in uniforms or pyjamas, wearing medals, poppies and sprigs of rosemary – to let Australia’s veterans know that their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Based on the tremendous community response to this initiative, the RSL will again help Australians come together in 2021, in their driveways, on their

balconies, or in their living rooms at 6:00am to commemorate Australia's deeply held ANZAC traditions.

The RSL South Eastern District website confirms that there will be a parade held in Brisbane between 10:00am-12:00pm, and will feature former and current ADF veterans and other groups that contribute to the Parade that make it the commemoration worthy of its heritage.

In 2021 the event will be restricted to comply with the COVIDSafe Planning requirements and relocated to become an invitation only event. Those veterans and citizens unable to attend are invited to watch the event on ABC TV, and be assured that the Parade participation and spectator opportunities will be reviewed closer to the event.

## AGED CARE ROYAL COMMISSION – 10 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE FINAL REPORT

They say a week is a long time in politics. But the last two years of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety must seem like a lifetime for those left waiting for home care or stuck in substandard residential care.

Yet, there is reason for hope. That hope comes from the thoroughness of the Final Report and from the courage of the Commission to chart a new course for aged care. Here is a high-level summary of some of the key recommendations for change.

1. **Universal right to quality care** – At the centre of the Final Report is a call to end the rationing of care. The Commissioners want the government to throw out the old Aged Care Act and to replace it with a new paradigm where there is a “universal right to high quality, safe and timely support.” It’s a recommendation that’s long overdue.
2. **Governance structures** – This recommendation relates to the redesign of governance structures, either by way of a new independent Australian Aged Care Commission, or by restructuring and strengthening the existing Department of Health. Whichever path is taken, it must result in better oversight and control over aged care services to stop maltreatment and mismanagement.
3. **Inspector-General of Aged Care** – a third important recommendation is the creation of a new Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care to monitor the implementation process and the governance system. This new body and role will be critical in policing the system to ensure problems are identified and quickly rectified, regardless of which governance model is adopted.
4. **Dementia care** – The report recognises the need to put dementia care front and centre in any new system. With more than 50% of aged care residents living with dementia, this move is vital. The call for compulsory dementia training will be critical.
5. **A co-ordinated system** – The report also calls on government to integrate each of the disparate parts of the system to create a new streamlined and coordinated model in which transition between service elements is much simpler and easier. This includes a single comprehensive assessment process.
6. **Care finders** – Commissioner Briggs has recommended introducing independent care finders, whose job will be to help older people, families and carers access services in their local community. With so much confusion about where to go for help, this innovation will make the system less impenetrable.
7. **Home Care Packages** – Home care also gets a strong mention, and rightly so. There is a call to remove the waiting list for Home Care Packages by the end of the year, and for a maximum waiting time of one month from time of approval. It’s ambitious and will require significant investment to recruit and train new workers – a call National Seniors has made in its Budget Submission.
8. **Funding Boost** – there is a call for increased funding for residential care in the short term to ensure adequate resources, and for the adoption of the new funding model to better allocate these precious resources.
9. **New Revenue** – The commission has called for the introduction of a levy to raise the funds required to implement reforms. Provided this is the fairest and most efficient way to fund these improvements, National Seniors has called on all parties to support a new model to generate the revenue required. It is disappointing that the Commissioners did not specifically recommend a new Home Care Loans Scheme to help older people fund additional care and support at home. However, it is hoped that this is being considered for the upcoming Federal Budget.
10. **Staffing** – Probably the most important part of the report was the focus on staffing. Many people have advised time and time again that it’s staffing quality and quantity that determines care outcomes. That’s why the recommendations to establish a national registration scheme for personal care workers (with minimum qualifications and requirements); increase staff wages and remuneration to

attract and retain quality staff; and most importantly, mandate minimum staffing requirements in residential care (with staffing hours reported on a quarterly basis).

Many of these recommendations are quite contentious, and have been rejected by government in the past, so National Seniors will be watching this closely in the lead up to the government's formal response.

There are many more recommendations, and little time to waste. If the government is serious about aged care, it needs to get cracking with implementation. To support this, the Final Report has provided a clear timeframe and guidance for implementation covering the next five years. Without it, we risk drifting out to sea. A situation we cannot accept.

While the five-year time frame for reform means some older people won't live to see significant changes occur, National Seniors is cautiously optimistic the Commissioner's blueprint will show some immediate results as we work towards this once in a lifetime change.

## **PENSION INCREASE BACK ON TRACK?**

Last September there was much consternation and disbelief from pensioners when the regular indexation of pension payments yielded a big zero. With inflation and wages growth flatlining in response to the economic crisis brought by COVID-19, there was no increase in the pension, despite the cost of some essentials continuing to rise.

Fast forward to March 2021, and it would appear inflation and pensions are back on track for an increase - a relief to many concerned about the quality of their lives in retirement.

The fortnightly base rate for the aged pension rose by \$8.40 for singles to \$952.70, and by \$12.60 for couples to \$1,436.20. These rates include Pension Supplement and Energy Supplement which are payable to all pensioners in Australia.

It comes as the last \$250 stimulus payment was due to drop into the bank accounts of five million Australians from March as part of the Federal Government's Economic Support Program. According to Social Services Minister, Senator Anne Rushton, "For pensioners alone those four payments over the last 12 months total \$7 billion."

Many have used the extra money to purchase much needed goods and services, helping keep the economy rolling and supporting a better standard of living. The increase in the pension will be no different, and this extra is welcomed.

As the peak consumer body representing older Australians, National Seniors is acutely aware of the sentiments of older people. They hear time and again that the pension is not adequate. That's why they continue to call for an Independent Pension Tribunal to set the pension rate as part of our Fix Pension Poverty campaign.

It's also why they continue to call for an increase in rent assistance, and have done so as part of their 2021 budget submission. They know that renters are the ones doing it hardest. The final report from the Retirement Income Review made it clear that renters did not receive enough income to meet an acceptable standard of living.

The big issue is the ongoing cost of renting, which undermines capacity to purchase other essential goods and services. With a lack of affordable rental housing, including private, public and community housing, some older people will live in poverty. In a country as wealthy as Australia, that seems wrong.

The idea that most older renters are bludgers, who haven't worked hard enough to purchase their own home, needs to be challenged here. It's simply not true, and is going to be a growing phenomenon in the future as house prices spiral upwards and home ownership rates tumble downwards.

Evidence suggests that home ownership will drop dramatically in the future. Grattan Institute modelling estimates the share of over 65s who own their home will fall from 76% today to 57% by 2056. With home ownership crucial to wellbeing in retirement, that's a real worry. It's another reason why National Seniors is also calling for better housing for older Australians, including stamp duty concessions for seniors and basic accessibility design features in new housing.

## **VACCINE ROLLOUT UPDATE**

Phase 1b of the vaccine rollout began on Monday 22 March. This phase enables six million vulnerable Australians, including those aged over 70, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged over 55, and other healthcare workers to get the jab.

Vaccines will be administered through over 1,000 GP clinics, supported by 100 Commonwealth centres. While GP clinics are reportedly being inundated with calls for bookings, please bear in

mind there will be enough vaccine for everyone in due course.

**Given the high volume of enquiries, it's important to only contact them about the vaccine if you are eligible. There is no need to panic if you miss out this week on getting the vaccine. Practices are working hard to make sure everyone who is eligible will receive it in due course.**

The federal government advises Australians eligible for Phase 1b will be able to find a vaccination provider through the new national vaccination information and location service located at the Department of Health website. By completing the **Vaccine Eligibility Checker** this will enable people to locate their nearest general practice providing General Practice Respiratory Clinic vaccinations and link through to their online booking system or phone number to make the appointment.

Appointments on the service finder will increase as general practices establish their systems and vaccine supply. More appointments will become available as more clinics come on board.

People will still be able to book their vaccine appointments directly at a participating general practice – as they do now, for instance, to get a seasonal flu vaccine.

**The best approach however is to contact your GP to find out what arrangements they are putting in place. You do not have to make the appointment online if you do not want to.**

If your GP practice is not delivering the vaccine, then you can ask them who they recommend, rather than cold calling other practices. GPs may have already made arrangement for their patients. If you have any questions about the vaccine, ask your GP.

A consent form needs to be signed for the vaccine, and it may be worth getting a copy of this prior to the vaccination date so you can view and complete in advance.

### **The Flu vaccine season is also imminent**

It is important to receive all your vaccines at your GP if possible so your vaccination history can be tracked. This is to allow enough time between receiving the Flu vaccination and the COVID-19 vaccination.

- **The flu shot cannot be given within two weeks of a COVID shot.**

- **The two COVID shots need to be three weeks apart.**

Because the effect of having the flu shot close to the COVID shot is unknown – it's important to get both through your GP to ensure they are adequately spaced. While it is a bit of a logistical exercise, GPs are factoring this into their planning.

## **FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES!**

A five-year-old boy went to visit his grandmother one day. Playing with his toys in her bedroom while Grandma was dusting, he looked up and said, "Grandma, how come you don't have a boyfriend now that Grandpa went to heaven?"

Grandma replied, "Honey, my TV is my boyfriend. I can sit in my bedroom and watch it all day long. The religious programmes make me feel good, and the comedies make me laugh. I'm happy with my TV as my boyfriend."

Grandma turned on the TV, and the reception was terrible. She started adjusting the knobs, trying to get the picture in focus. Frustrated, she started hitting the backside of the TV hoping to fix the problem.

The little boy heard the doorbell ring, so he hurried to open the door, and there stood Grandma's Minister. The Minister said, "hello son, is your Grandma home?"

The little boy replied, "Yeah, she's in the bedroom bangin' her boyfriend..." The Minister fainted!

## **EARLY WARNING RINGS ALARM BELLS FOR HEART DISEASE**

It's a major killer of older Australians and new research suggests we should look outside the heart.

The build-up of calcium in a major artery outside of the heart could predict future heart attack or stroke, a new Edith Cowan University led study has demonstrated. The study, published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, could help doctors identify people at risk of cardiovascular disease years before symptoms arise.

Analysing 52 previous studies, the international team of researchers found that people who have abdominal aortic calcification (AAC) have a two to four times higher risk of a future cardiovascular event. The study also found the more extensive the calcium in the blood vessel wall, the greater the risk of future cardiovascular events. People with AAC

and chronic kidney disease were at even greater risk than those from the general population with AAC.

Calcium can build up in the blood vessel wall and harden the arteries, blocking blood supply or causing plaque rupture, which is a leading cause of heart attacks and strokes. The factors contributing to artery calcification include poor diet, a sedentary lifestyle, smoking and genetics.

Lead researcher Associate Professor Josh Lewis from ECU's School of Medical and Health Sciences, and Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellow, said the findings offer important clues for cardiovascular health. "Heart disease is often a silent killer as many people don't know they are at risk, or that they have the early warning signs, such as abdominal or coronary artery calcification," he said. "The abdominal aorta is one of the first sites where the build-up of calcium in the arteries can occur – even before the heart. If we pick this up early, we can intervene and implement lifestyle and medication changes to help stop the condition progressing."

Associate Professor Lewis hopes this discovery will lead to more people understanding their own risk of having a heart attack or stroke. "Abdominal aortic calcification...can signal an early warning for doctors that they need to investigate and assess their patient's risk of heart attack or stroke.

The Heart Foundation's Manager of Clinical Evidence, Amanda Buttery, welcomed the study. "The researchers found that evidence of abdominal aortic calcification in patients with no known cardiovascular disease may indicate that a more comprehensive cardiovascular risk assessment is required, including blood pressure and cholesterol testing or a Heart Health Check," Ms Buttery said. "The findings are promising, and the Heart Foundation would like to see more research in this area.

## LISTEN UP! TIPS ON BUYING A HEARING AID

Did you know 3.6 million people suffer from hearing loss and over 1.3 million people are living with a preventable hearing condition? What if it's you?

Many older Australians experience some form of hearing loss, so finding the right hearing aid is important. There are many ways to improve hearing health, especially if the symptoms are recognised and treated early. This is important because hearing health can impact on health and wellbeing, including risk of dementia and cardiovascular events. Yet, it's

not always easy buying a hearing aid. Unlike broccoli, it isn't something you buy every day.

There are plenty of expensive hearing aids out there on the market, offering bells and whistles like blue tooth, omnidirectional microphones and other mod cons. So, it's extremely important to do some research and shop around before making a purchase.

To help, consumer organisation Choice has a guide to buying hearing aids which is useful. Choice says that while you need to think about price, there are other considerations to keep in mind. *"While price is important, remember that you're not just buying a product – you're entering into a service relationship."*

This is because most hearing aids come packaged with an after-sale care service to ensure your hearing aids continue to perform as they should. These packages differ across the hearing aid market, so a little research will help in identifying the type of after-sale care you might receive.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your hearing you need to first establish if there is a problem, and then work out the extent of the problem. The first step in checking your hearing could be to take a short and simple test, which can be performed online or through an audiology clinic.

A second step would be to visit your regular GP to ensure that any hearing loss isn't from simple wax build up or an underlying illness.

Another step would be to visit an audiologist for a comprehensive diagnostic hearing test. Many audiologists offer these tests for free, which in theory sounds good. But you have to remember that audiologists also sell hearing aids and the free test, like many others, is offered in the hope of securing a purchase. If you want to shop around, you may not be able to take the results of a free test to another supplier, so it pays to go in with your eyes wide open.

Many audiologists may also offer a free trial period, so it might be worth exploring this option to get a feel for the product. However, it's important to read the fine print and know what you are getting before you agree to a free trial. You should only do this if you feel comfortable in saying no if the product doesn't live up to your expectations.

It's also important to remember that hearing aids may feel a bit strange at first and take some getting used to, even the really good ones. There are plenty of stories of people who purchase expensive hearing aids, only to leave them unused in their

bedside draw because they hate the way they feel. So, please keep this in mind.

The important thing, as with all consumer products, is to not feel pressured into purchasing a hearing aid unless you are happy with the cost and quality of the product, and the after-sale service which is being offered.

## TRY WALKING – IT’S FUN

If you’re interested in getting out and about with like-minded people, Walking for Pleasure Brisbane group is welcoming new walkers to join one of their guided walks. Established in 1988, the group currently offers several different walking areas and times:

- Brisbane and surrounding shires Walks - Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday – 8am & 10am starts (all accessible by public transport)
- Monday Afternoon Walks - 3.30pm
- Evening Walks from South Brisbane – 15 circuits 5:30pm Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday on rotation
- Toohey Forest Walks – Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings
- Saturday Early Morning Walks – times and locations listed on their website

For guided walk details or more information visit the website [www.walkingforpleasure.com](http://www.walkingforpleasure.com); Email: [w4pbrisbaneinc@gmail.com](mailto:w4pbrisbaneinc@gmail.com); or call 0457 197 664

## COVID-19 OLDER PERSONS SUPPORT LINE

Don’t forget, if you need information and/or support as it relates to the current COVID-19 pandemic, there is a National Seniors Australia support team dedicated to members, so please call **1300 877 626** to speak directly to the team about your concerns.

## BRANCH CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries please contact our Secretary, **Graham Tienan**, on Mobile 0407 736 453 or email [nsacoorparoosec@gmail.com](mailto:nsacoorparoosec@gmail.com).

## SMILE

Some Easter jokes for all the family:

- Christmas comes before Easter in one place only – where is it? The dictionary!
- What happens if you fall in love on Easter? You live hopplily every after.

- How can you get ready to eat Easter eggs? Lots of eggs-ercise!
- Where should you look for treasure on Easter? Wherever eggs marks the spot!
- What’s the best type of jewellery to gift on Easter? A 14-carrot gold necklace.
- How can you speed up buying Easter dinner groceries? Use the eggs-press lane!
- What’s one way to make Easter easier? Put an “i” where the “t” is.
- What music does the Easter Bunny dance to? Hip-hop.
- What’s a bunny’s favourite type of book? One with a hoppy ending!
- What do you call the Easter Bunny the day after Easter? Eggs-hausted!
- What’s a forgetful bunny called? Hare-brained!
- When does a bunny throw a tantrum? When it gets hopping mad!
- Why would a bunny wear a hat? When it’s having a bad hare day!
- Why couldn’t the duck work for the Easter Bunny? He kept quacking the eggs.

