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AUSTRALIAN

OVER-50S MAGAZINE

Something

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Dodgy Hearing

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Indulgence Paleo-Style

Lemongrass & White
Wine Mussels

50/50? Don't Believe It!

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Kim Williams

"I would want to come back as a cellist or physicist"

50something

AUSTRALIA'S WIDEST CIRCULATING OVER-50S MAGAZINE



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executive diary



Michael O'Neill
CEO National
Seniors

The start of a year has a focus on anticipation of what lies ahead.

The fog of the past year and the haze of Christmas and summer holidays lifts and the new cycle begins.

Remember the anticipation of a new school year – whether as a student or parent – which class, which teacher, new school, new subjects, new friends – the list was endless. What seemed daunting at the time is now but a distant reflection.

For our sporting buffs the anticipation is of course about a new season, new hope, 'the long sought after premiership flag' is going to be ours this year – such optimism!

Or anticipating my golf handicap will improve, my garden will thrive more than it ever has or the most often anticipated: I will exercise more, eat better and be healthier!

We anticipate our elected representatives and governments will deliver a stable hand at the tiller and provide for the right balance, of change with certainty, to ensure there is confidence in the economy and the community.

And of course we have new ministers focussing on key elements of over-50s policy with Scott Morrison in Social Services, Susan Ley in Health and Josh Frydenberg as Assistant Treasurer (FoFA responsibilities). The unknown further carries the anticipation!

We should expect that proponents of change will mount their arguments with fairness for all as a central tenet. Too much of the debate of the past 12 months was lost in blame game targeting different parts of the community including the ageing.

Change in government approach and policy is inevitable and we would be foolish not to anticipate and engage with it. Some proposals will be confronting and will require consideration and developing understanding to judge them with an eye on principles of fairness and dignity for all.

Certainly with an Intergenerational Report, tax and federation papers, retirement income reform, as well as responses to the Financial Systems Inquiry and Competition Policy Review, one can anticipate a busy year!

All will hope the year ahead will be less confronting and the images of horror which so shaped 2014 will be, if not replaced, then be reduced in significance and complemented by a more positive outlook. In fact we should make more good news stories one of the goals for 2015.

One cannot close a commentary about anticipation without reference to the music of the same name, the Carly Simon hit; *Anticipation* – 'Is making me late, Is keeping me waiting...and these are the good old days' is famous but not quite the fit I hoped for.

Perhaps Alfred Hitchcock said it better: 'There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it.'

Bring on the bang, include some good news and let's make the most of it!



Seniors to launch Age Management Toolkit

Governments are increasingly encouraging greater involvement of older people in the labour force to not only ensure their skills and experience are fully utilised but also put the economy on a stronger footing as the population ages.

In line with this, National Seniors will launch an Age Management Toolkit on 20 February in Sydney to provide a 'one-stop-shop' of practical information for employers, supervisors, managers and human resource professionals.

The launch will throw the spotlight on Australian employers who already demonstrate best practice in this area – such as Bunnings – and the incredible contributions mature age workers currently make across the economy.

The Toolkit will complement government initiatives such as the \$10,000 Restart subsidy, introduced in 2014, for businesses that employ mature age workers aged 50 years or older who have been unemployed and on income support for six months or more.

Learn more about the Restart wage subsidy at www.employment.gov.au/restart-wage-subsidy

For information about the Age Management Toolkit launch email 50something@nationalseniors.com.au



Former News Corp chief Kim Williams is a brilliant, complex man who, at 62, has a whole lot more to give, discovers Rosemary Desmond.

The term 'Renaissance man' is these days often used to describe those who excel in a number of different fields. If you accept that definition, the multi-talented Kim Williams fits the description well.

Always a high achiever, by the age of 11 Williams had read the complete works of Charles Dickens and had been crowned national Lego champion.

As a classically-trained musician and composer, Williams also became a conscientious objector who refused to register for National Service in the Vietnam War.

He was facing jail when Prime Minister Gough Whitlam – who some years later was to become his father-in-law – abolished conscription in 1972.

In 2006, Williams was appointed a member of the Order of Australia (AM) but despite his long held passion for music and the arts, it was in management that he made his name.

The former head of Foxtel and chief executive officer of News Ltd (which later became News Corp) during one of its most challenging periods, Williams fell out with other executives in 2013 and resigned abruptly in August after less than two years in the top job. And despite their former close working relationship, he hasn't spoken to News Corp supremo Rupert Murdoch since the day he left.

You were headed for Sydney's Long Bay Jail after refusing to register for military service. Can you tell me about that?

I was a draft resister during the Vietnam War back in 1970 through '71 and '72 and I had a long correspondence then with my local member who was the then Prime Minister Billy McMahon. I was saved from going to prison by the election of the Whitlam government because I was going to jail on the (following) Monday for 18 months. But mum had invited the priest from the jail to come and see her and she was exhorting him to make me the leader of the prison band. She was a very, very good woman. But one of the first options Whitlam took was to cease all prosecutions against draft resisters and to rescind any criminal offences that people had under the National Services Act and to release all those that were actually in jail for non-compliance with that Act.

You bailed out of music administration early in your career...

I left music administration first to go the Australian Film Commission (AFC) which I ran for just under five years and then I went and set up Southern Star Entertainment which is the company that produced *Blue Heelers* and *Water Rats* and a number of other very popular programs and I went from there to the ABC. But when I went to the AFC it was a very significant change because I was running a

government statutory authority which was something with which I had no familiarity and I was about 39 and so it was a very steep learning curve for me.

If you could come back in another life, would you want to become a professional musician?

I would want to come back either as a cellist or as a physicist. The cello is my favourite instrument and the Bach Cello Suites are probably my favourite pieces of music in all of the literature for solo instruments. Music has captivated me for quite a long time because it is one of the most advanced areas of creativity in human endeavour. (In physics), people like Einstein and J. Robert Oppenheimer are real role models in terms of this curiosity and quest to discover and learn that drive many of the best elements in human history.

What was it like going from being one of Australia's most high profile CEOs to being out of a job?

That was a very abrupt and rather unwelcome experience but when you've been in a job where there is never enough time to get everything that needs to be done, done, to going to a position where you have literally nothing on your agenda it's a very abrupt adjustment. It takes some time to get used to it and to actually confront it. What I did was to take an office immediately and make sure I went there every day and got on with the job. I've no patience for self-pity in any way, shape or form and so I just started getting on with the next phase of my life.

I believe that you haven't spoken to Rupert Murdoch since you left News?

No, we haven't had a conversation since I left News. I don't think it's very surprising. Rupert and I had reached a point of what I would describe as 'irreconcilable differences'. He's the executive chairman of the company and so I offered a circuit breaker and said: 'Clearly you and I have a difference of agreement and it's an argument that I cannot win. I'm not going to change and you are not going to change, so it looks to me like I should go'.

And now are you looking to become a consultant or a board member?

I've been doing some teaching at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School and I've accepted several not-for-profit unpaid board directorships, I've accepted some private board directorships and I'm in discussion on a couple of other positions and I've done a bit of private consulting as well.

Do you think that in looking for work, your age is against you?

I think that in Australia, in marked distinction from places like the United States, people disqualify people above the age of 60 from a large number of roles. It is wholly impractical and deeply inappropriate for people in their later years who have had the benefit of a lot of experience and have lived through many trials and tribulations, both in life and in enterprise. In Europe and America, they would often be seen as being at their most valuable whereas in Australia they are seen as – not always – but they are seen as being disqualified. It is quite odd.

Do you feel in any way responsible for declining levels of News Corp's revenues?

I inherited settings that were on a very steep downward decline and required some fairly severe interventions and redirections. I make no apology for anything I did. The fact that the company has chosen a different path after I've gone does not seem to have redirected any of the outcomes they are experiencing. They are still experiencing a significant continuing decline that is affected by all digital technology.

Do you think newspapers still have a future or will people increasingly get their news from the internet and social media?

I think the public have voted with their feet in terms of having a marked

“ I've no patience for self-pity in any way, shape or form and so I just started getting on with the next phase of my life ”

preference for the immediacy that digital technology provides. There will be a continuing acceleration in consumption from digital media because it is immediate, it's always 'on' and always available and in many instances, it enables you to share it with your community of friends in a way that people find very attractive. Consumers are in charge now and consumers make those decisions and companies need to listen more closely to consumers and to understand their preferences.

You've been reported as saying that Coalition ministers bullied you. Can you name names?

I've always been someone that plays the ball, not the man, but in a couple of instances, back in the early 2000s there were a couple of memorably severe exchanges I had with ministers at that time. But the most colourful exchanges I had were with Labor during the Rudd and Gillard years. I had a memorably terrible relationship with (former Communications Minister) Stephen Conroy.

You were once married to Kathy Lette and she introduced you to her best friend Catherine Dovey, daughter of Gough and Margaret Whitlam (nee Dovey) who became your second wife...

When Kathy left me I was pretty devastated. Catherine was already a very close family friend and so we just continued seeing each other as platonic friends until about five years later, our friendship actually blossomed into a romance. Catherine was probably Kathy's closest friend, so there's a kind of weird circularity about the whole thing.

Do people throw the 'Kath and Kim' joke at you?

We've had it all our married lives but the person who prosecuted the joke more than anybody was dear Gough. When we were all together at public events, Gough would say: 'and of course, I am accompanied by my dear, dear, family – Cath and Kim', which used to make Catherine very cross.

cover story

Why did you have your personal genome sequenced by the Garvan Institute?

I was invited because of a pre-existing (medical) condition and an existing relationship with the Garvan Institute. It was fascinating. I think genomics will change the whole course of medicine in a way that people haven't even begun to understand, let alone contemplate, because it will mean that instead of medicine being geared to one approach for everybody, it will be about personalisation in the nature of health care particularly in the way in which drug doses for people are calibrated to their individual biochemistries. It will mean that people are able to calibrate the way in which medical therapies are delivered that are actually uniquely relevant to each and every individual patient. It will also mean the most amazing financial benefits in terms of getting costs in health care down. It will be the biggest revolution in health care since the advent of antibiotics.

Are you contemplating converting to Judaism?

Spirituality is something that is very prominent in my aspirational needs. I have always been a very keen student in matters of religion and philosophy and of the various mainstream faiths, the one that I have quite a personal resonance with is Judaism. And some of my genome has conditions that are only related to the Sephardic Jewish community. It's fascinating.

At 62 what now for Kim Williams?

I intend to be a substantial policy advocate for the disadvantaged in education. I intend to be an absolutely indefatigable advocate for the importance of music from the earliest outset in education. I intend to become an increasingly vocal advocate for issues attaching to the elderly because I think the two great minorities in our society – and who are in many ways voiceless – are the very young and the very old. ■

Read his book *Rules of Engagement* by Kim Williams, RRP \$49.95



Power Plays Bruce Hawker, Bob Carr and Kim Williams

“When we were all together at public events, Gough would say: ‘and of course, I am accompanied by my dear, dear, family – Cath and Kim’”



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Friends in Need



Inspired by a bush poem, National Seniors members have banded together to raise \$50,000 for farmers battling against flood then drought. Casey-Ann Seaniger sets out to discover more.

Ten years of drought, three years of damaging floods and recently, another two years of drought has left the southern Queensland community of St George facing some of its darkest days.

With three quarters of the state drought-declared and rainfall at historical lows in many areas, life on the land in the Balonne Shire is a mere semblance of what it once was. In the town of St George, 600kms south-west of Brisbane, shelves in the local shops are bare, pubs are closing down, school student numbers are dwindling and the local community organisation is concerned about the deteriorating mental health of many farmers fighting for their livelihoods.

But far from the cities where social media movements like the #putyourbatsout and #ridewithme campaigns have taken off, lesser known random acts of kindness are being delivered by an unlikely group.

Inspired by a poem by bush poet Gary Fogarty, volunteers at the Calamvale branch of National Seniors decided to lend a hand to their drought-stricken counterparts in the country and began collecting donations of non-perishable goods.

“It made you feel a bit ashamed when you’d sit and have your morning coffee in the city,” said National Seniors’ Calamvale branch president Graham Brewer.

Dan Baldwin from the Forest Lake branch joined in with fundraising efforts, along with other National Seniors’ branches, the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association and many individuals.

During 2014, the group managed to raise a staggering \$50,000 worth of food, toiletries, Christmas gifts, school

stationery, toys and vouchers to spend at local businesses in St George and surrounding communities.

Brewer and Baldwin delivered the goods and stayed with the locals on their properties for days on end.



Community Spirit Volunteers pack donations for St George



Goodwill National Seniors members gather goods for drought affected communities

“They are the heart and soul of this country and they are doing it real tough,” Brewer said. “They are embarrassed too but they also hold an immense pride.”

“The two-minute handshake has become a thing around here, they just don’t want you to let go,” Brewer said. “That’s the feeling out here at the moment.”

Baldwin says he saw tears rolling down the faces

of farmers when they received a little message on their hamper basket which showed their city cousins were thinking of them through the hard times.

Robyn Furhmeister, volunteer drought coordinator of government-funded information and referral service Care

Balonne, has lived in the region for 40 years and says the situation is dire.

“Our community is really hurting, there are no reserves left,” she explains. “The banks are moving in and taking over properties. Unless there is some rain soon, some properties are just not going to survive.”

Furhmeister recalls stories of older ladies having to boil flowers to use as scent because they haven’t been able to afford deodorant for six months.

Many families are also struggling.

“Lots of parents can’t afford to put on labour so their children are coming to school tired because they are getting up before daylight to help mum and dad before they come to town,” Furmeister says.

Care Balonne worked with the National Seniors branches to distribute the funds to those most in need in seven shire communities.

She said the support had helped restore their faith in the community spirit.

“In 40 years, we’ve had a few donations but nothing at all like this ever before.

“It’s not just the donations, it’s their willingness to stay out and spend time with the locals on the land as well as the generosity. We’ve never seen anything like it.”

While government assistance is available for drought-affected communities, money has been slow to trickle into individual households due to government red tape.

In December, Agriculture Minister, Barnaby Joyce, announced the \$100 million Drought Recovery Concessional Loans Scheme program for farmers affected by the drought and the mid-2011 disruption to live cattle exports to Indonesia.

Furhmeister says it’s simply not enough.

“All the succession planning to retire and move off the lands and let their sons take over – well there’s no money to do that. We need people not to forget about us.”

But while the struggles of the farmers go on, the compassion brought to this community will be long remembered. ■

To donate to the drought relief appeal contact Graham Brewer on 07 3273 3721 or email bandgbrewer@bigpond.com