

We The People

Program 127

Age Shall Not Weary Them



During the week 4CRB celebrated 30 years of transmission to a mature Gold Coast Audience. It's a remarkable story of success and I met with many listeners on open day at the station and it underpinned the important role the station plays not only with entertainment and information but in its ability to actually help create social cohesion. The listeners had this one thing in common and they were like a discordant but united family. I quietly asked myself if this was indeed the last vestiges of community before the ubiquitous texting and implausible computer games completely replace personal conversation and common sense.

I note with sadness that the older generation is now taking on the new role of a strain on the country's finances and government predicts the cost of an aging population may well be a burden too far in Australia. What a dreadful creeping social paralysis this is and the notion must be stopped in its tracks. It's a blessing and a privilege to grow older although I note these days most of us still feel and act young. Mature Australians have paid their taxes and raised families and made mistakes and overcome and now in retirement contribute around \$39 billion a year to the economy in unpaid work and that was an estimate from the Australian Institute of Family Studies in 2003. If the unpaid contribution of those 55 to 65 is included the national contribution is well over \$74 billion. I don't think you can measure the value of older Australians in dollar terms really but if you must then the value is enormous.

My concern is that the current chatter about the burden older people are having on the national accounts is beginning to create a divide between older and younger Australians where the younger folk may feel older Australians are receiving a disproportionate amount of public funds at the expense of the young. That is dangerous and wrong. In addition to the financial value of the unpaid work of older people it is also important to recognise the social importance of these activities. The unpaid labour of people can act as social 'glue' that helps bind society together. Much of the unpaid work of older people provides support that would be difficult to provide using market-based services. The sense that someone cares, the flexibility of the support provided by many unpaid workers and feeling that people are not doing things merely for financial gain, can all provide something additional to the simple financial contribution of the unpaid work. Apart from money we are also the repository of wisdom and that's a national library freely available and without peer. We are united and we are a vital part of Australia and we understand just how important peace and democracy are in these difficult times.

Now when it comes to value let us not forget the transfer of values and funds to our children which slowly builds the national living standard if the younger folk understand the basic tenet of, *look after the pennies and the pounds look after themselves*. We know true prosperity has frugal beginnings and requires common sense and planning and the ability to overcome adversity. These things are difficult while some younger Australians seem to expect to have everything now and pay later but we know that is the wide road to social destruction through instant gratification at high cost. This results in people becoming slaves to the money lenders and ultimately less happiness in their lives.

Finally it may come as a surprise to many and especially politicians that we vote. In fact 47% of the voting population are over 50 and that means we have growing power politically and politicians be warned that we will vote you out if you are not fair to us. I anticipate a cohesive mature generational voting bloc will spontaneously form soon and begin to tell government at all levels what's required. The smart politicians will act in advance while the slow of foot will perish politically. We older Australians have earned our place, we have done the hard yards and we expect to be helped as the years pass but still we return far more than we take. The system is skewed at the moment and not in our favour. From my view it's better to arrive by boat as an illegal immigrant than it is to age in Australia on the pension. Older Australians have good memories for the things that matter and a zest for life and that's why age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.

Until Next time this is Kent Bayley