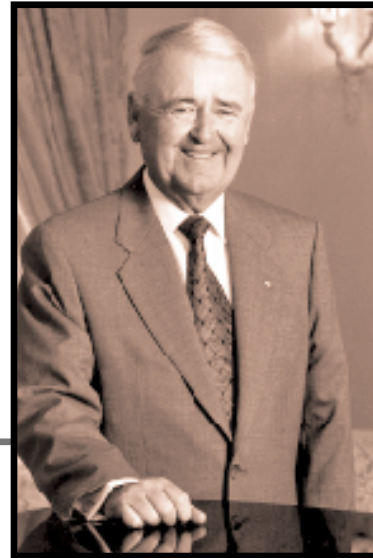




A message from the Governor-General



Government House
Canberra ACT 2600

I am delighted to send a message of thanks and goodwill to all associated with the International Year of Older Persons.

In a message of support at the beginning of the International Year, I urged Australians of all ages to help us celebrate, value and encourage the achievements of older people in our society and to support their independence for as long as possible.

There can be no doubt that the International Year has been an outstanding success in terms of raising the awareness of all of us to the importance of older people within the international community. To no small extent, that success is due to the tireless efforts of the workers of the more than 1,200 non-government organisations and groups across the nation who have, both in the lead up to and during the International Year, worked towards making Australia a more age-friendly society.

I congratulate each of you and offer my very best wishes for the continued long-term benefits of this International Year.

Sir William Deane

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia



A message from the Minister

I am pleased to congratulate Australian Coalition '99 (AC '99) for their work in raising awareness of the 1999 International Year of Older Persons (IYOP) and for establishing a network of more than 1,000 partners in the business and community sector to help celebrate the diversity and richness that older Australians bring to our community.

In preparation for the International Year, the Federal Government recognised the importance of involving the community at all levels in the planning and implementation of activities for Australia's response to the Year. AC '99 received more than half a million dollars from the Federal Government specifically to promote and co-ordinate non-government involvement in the International Year as well as to provide a link between the Federal Government and the community.

AC '99 has made an important and substantial contribution to the success of IYOP in Australia. We have received international recognition for the value of this partnership between the Government and the community which aimed to ensure the widest possible involvement of the community.

During 1999, the Australian community celebrated and acknowledged the valuable, ongoing contribution to society of our senior Australians. Australians started the process of cultural change by challenging negative stereotypes of older people and building partnerships between government, community and business organisations to meet the needs of older people more effectively. I am pleased to say we have been successful. Already there has been a positive shift in community attitudes towards older people and ageing but we have a long way to go.

Our challenge for the 21st Century is to continue the momentum of the 1999 International Year of Older Persons and build a society in which we can all look forward to ageing positively as valued, respected members of our communities.

To achieve this objective, the Federal Government is developing a National Strategy for an Ageing Australia. I invite you all to participate in its development by responding to the discussion papers that have been widely distributed.

With Government, the community and the corporate sector working together, I believe we can create a society in which old age is a time to be enjoyed not endured.



Bronwyn Bishop, MP

Federal Minister for Aged Care



The Chair's address

April 2000

The Year of 1999 could probably go down in the records of UN designated International Years as outstanding in a number of ways.

There was a high sense of ownership in the International Year of Older Persons by older people themselves who were engaged in the planning, decision making and an enormous range of activities throughout 1999. The Year was also marked by the involvement of groups and individuals of all generations asserting a rich multi-generational society.

The success of the Year is attributable to the degree of honorary work undertaken at national and state level. Countless individuals and organisations contributed their time and expertise to aid in the planning and coordination of 1999 with generosity and commitment to ensure a successful year.

The outcomes of the Year have in most areas exceeded our expectations. Already there is strong evidence of valuable initiatives being sustained that will benefit a great number of older people and many organisations and groups as a consequence of IYOP. However it is clear that much work still needs to be done, and in particular, there is a need for a much greater support for basic research into relevant aspects of ageing.

It is noteworthy that AC '99 was established and commenced planning in 1995 for the NGOs' IYOP program. While many people saw this as premature action, the progress made in the first three years provided a solid framework for the IYOP program implemented in 1999. The project relied on the generosity of many organisations and individuals during the formative years, in particular the grant from the Sidney Myer Fund in the first half of 1997 and donations from several national partner organisations. The Commonwealth Government's funding of AC '99 National from April 1998 – April 2000 was instrumental in AC '99 fully achieving national, state and local community outcomes for IYOP.

As the International Year evolved, the pressures exerted on the tightly run national secretariat shifted to address broader issues that were not key priorities within AC '99's initial charter. It was inevitable that the focus on some areas would diminish with an increased focus on others. For example, in the absence of a national awareness campaign in the first half of 1999, the AC '99 national secretariat increased its collaborative work with the media to increase the recognition and value of older people through a range of innovative strategies. Further, it was inevitable that with limited resources for the Year, sacrifices were made including less direct work with national partner organisations as the state AC '99 secretariats and state jurisdictions became more active and collaborative. It also became necessary for AC '99 National to respond directly to numerous queries from the community at large.

A significant number of national and state business and media organisations recognised the significance of IYOP and made their generous contributions to the Year in various ways. Yet there is a pressing need for a longer and stronger commitment from more Australian businesses through their active engagement in addressing the longer term issues of ageing and older people in the workforce.





I am optimistic that the raised consciousness which seems to be emerging that we can view and value ageing as a lifelong process will reduce negative prejudices towards both young and old on the grounds of age. There is considerable evidence that positive outcomes of IYOP will be sustained and built upon. Many of the initiatives, connections and partnerships established during IYOP have a strong promise of being sustained into the future with likely success.

I value and deeply appreciate the quite remarkable assistance provided to the committee coordinating the work of the AC '99 secretariat and by so many individuals and groups throughout Australia and overseas.

I wish to thank Council on the Ageing for its generous contribution and key role in IYOP as the national auspicing organisation of this non-government initiative.

We are grateful to the Commonwealth Government of Australia and the Ministers responsible for IYOP, for funding of the project from April 1998 to April 2000. In particular we have appreciated and welcomed the support of The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, MP, and the collaborative relationship with the Office for Older Australians.

There is a wealth of development and strength of commitment to the future. We can anticipate with more confidence as a consequence of this Year a truly age friendly society in an Australia for all ages, into this new century.

Delys Sargeant AM
Chair, National Coordinating Committee
Australian Coalition '99