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**OLD PEOPLE'S WELFARE COUNCIL
OF VICTORIA**

VICTORIAN COUNCIL ON THE AGEING

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

1955

OLD PEOPLE'S WELFARE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

Headquarters: 46 RUSSELL STREET, MELBOURNE, C.1 - MF 6380

OFFICE-BEARERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

For the Year Ending 30th June, 1955

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Patrons:

His Excellency General Sir Dallas Brooks, K.C.B.,
K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., K.St.J.
Lady Brooks.

Chairman:

Sir John Newman-Morris, C.M.G.

Vice-Chairmen:

Mrs. J. G. Norris, O.B.E., M.A.
The Hon. Sir Herbert Olney.

Hon. Treasurer:

Mr. D. R. Dossetor.

Joint Hon. Secretaries:

Mrs. W. H. Dobson.
Mrs. F. G. Tuddenham, M.A.

Hon. Minute Secretary:

Mrs. A. Marchant Penfold, J.P.

Executive Committee:

Mr. M. E. Atkinson, F.C.I.S.
Mr. H. Buchanan.
Mr. N. D. Carlyon.
Sir Giles Chippindall, C.B.E.
Mrs. D. R. Dossetor, M.B.E.
Mrs. G. F. Dyson.
Mrs. M. Ebeling.
Col. R. L. Elliott, F.I.H.A., J.P.
Miss M. Fitzpatrick.
Miss E. Harvie.
Mrs. N. S. F. Hedditch.
Mr. G. D. McKay.
Mrs. M. G. Pardy, M.B.E.
Miss L. Taylor.
Miss V. Tivey.
Mrs. D. C. Urquhart.

Hon. Solicitor:

Lt.-Col. A. S. F. Pond, O.B.E., E.D.

Trustees:

Messrs. Basil C. Caldwell, Frederick C. Read and
Brig. A. R. L. Wiltshire, C.M.G.

Director:

Mr. Randal M. White, M.A.

OLD PEOPLE'S WELFARE COUNCIL
OF VICTORIA

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE, 1955

The Executive Committee of the Council has pleasure in presenting its Fourth Annual Report.

It was with deep appreciation that the Council received advice that His Excellency the Governor, Sir Dallas Brooks, had graciously accepted our Chairman's invitation to preside at the Fourth Annual Meeting, and that he would be accompanied by Lady Brooks.

This very personal association of our Patrons with the work of the Council is a stimulus to worthy effort on the part of every member. It is also an indication of the increasingly important role that voluntary bodies are being called upon to play in partnership with the statutory agencies in both Federal and State spheres.

There is probably no area of social service in which the necessity for preventive and corrective welfare work has developed so rapidly and may be expected to remain more permanently as a community problem than the needs of old people. This is recognised by the Old People's Welfare Council which, since its formation in 1951, has called the attention of Government and civic authorities, as well as that of the general public, to the necessity of developing a concerted attack on the problem.

In this important task there is an increasing recognition on the part of both Commonwealth and State Governments of the requirement to finance approved schemes for the provision of accommodation for the various degrees of frailty and disability experienced by ageing people. This Council is warmly appreciative of what has already been done in this connection and of the planned approach by the Hospitals and Charities Commission to the provision of adequate and suitable facilities for the treatment of the healthy, as well as the frail and infirm aged throughout Victoria.

There are, however, aspects of community service for the welfare of old people that belong to voluntary effort rather than to State action. This has been recognised in Britain, where almost every Act of Parliament dealing with social service provides for a continuation of the work of the voluntary agencies. Where the extent of the work and the difficulty of securing adequate finance from voluntary sources require the granting of aid by the Government, the necessity for the closest possible liaison between the statutory and voluntary agencies is apparent.

It is, therefore, with much satisfaction that the Old People's Welfare Council has received from the Chairman of the Hospitals and Charities Commission (Dr. J. Lindell) an assurance of the Commission's wish to collaborate with it in its efforts to alleviate the lot of old people. In turn, the Council has conveyed to Dr. Lindell its sincere desire to co-operate with him cordially and effectively at all times.

The following is a summary of some of the more noteworthy events of the past year.

EXTENSION OF COUNCIL'S FIELD WORK

During the first four years of its activities on behalf of the aged, the Old People's Welfare Council has been loyally and unselfishly served by its Office-bearers and Executive. Some members have given generously of their time and money to address Municipal and Shire Councils in metropolitan and country areas, and have done much by their enthusiasm and advice to promote the provision of recreational clubs, meals on wheels, chiropody service, and other amenities.

Others, too, have undertaken unobtrusive but very valuable work in the alleviation of old people's needs. The addresses given to civic authorities have been with the object of forming public opinion as to the claims of the aged in the community and there is no doubt that the correspondence and addresses have done much to pave the way for the ready acceptance of further promotional work.

The extension of the Council's work has been made possible by a generous donation from the Sidney Myer Charitable Trust, which had already made available the funds required for Dr. Hutchinson's investigations. With this assistance it has been found possible to appoint a Director, together with a Secretary, and establish a city office.

Although this appointment was not made until mid-March, and much preliminary work has had to be done, new ground has been broken in the country and investigations are being made in a number of metropolitan and suburban areas. Informal meetings, preparatory to the making of surveys as to the needs of the aged and the eventual formation of Regional Old People's Welfare Committees have been attended by the Chairman and the Director in Castlemaine and Maryborough, and similar action is being taken in Bendigo.

Visits have been paid by the Director to Fitzroy, Northcote, Richmond and Hawthorn, while plans are in hand to expand the Council's activities progressively to Brunswick, Collingwood and other suburbs.

Addresses have been given by the Director to the Rotary Clubs of Maryborough, Hawthorn, Northcote and Brunswick-Coburg and he was one of a number of speakers at a meeting called by the Shire President of Warragul.

We are pleased to note this indication of the increasing scope of the Council's activities on behalf of old people, and take this opportunity of welcoming Mr. Randal M. White and Mrs. F. T. Rintel to our organisation.

SOCIAL SURVEY OF AGED PEOPLE

The survey conducted by Dr. Bertram Hutchinson, of the British Social Survey Department, was completed in 1953 and the results of that investigation were embodied in the book, "Old People in a Modern Australian Community", which was published by the Melbourne University Press in November, 1954. The survey conducted by Dr. Hutchinson arose from a preliminary examination of the needs of the aged by the Rotary Club of Melbourne, and was made possible by a generous donation from the Sidney Myer Trust and the co-operation of the Department of Social Studies of the University of Melbourne.

This investigation was the first of its kind in Australia, and the publication of the results affords an informed and authoritative basis from which to study further the needs of the aged in the various communities in our State.

The conclusions and recommendations made by Dr. Hutchinson have been summarised by our Joint Hon. Secretary, Mrs. F. G. Tuddenham, M.A., and will form the subject of study and report by Sub-Committees of the Old People's Welfare Council. Steps to promote corrective action, where necessary, will follow.

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS CO-OPTED TO EXECUTIVE

With the publication of Dr. Hutchinson's "Old People in a Modern Australian Community", the Rotary Club's project in this connection was brought to a conclusion. The Council invited members of the Melbourne Rotary Club who had been actively associated with this investigation to join its Executive. In this way, Mr. N. D. Carlyon, Sir Giles Chippindall and Mr. G. D. McKay have strengthened our Executive, and Mr. Randal M. White was appointed Director.

The desirability of maintaining the closest possible liaison with the Hospitals and Charities Commission has always been recognised. Practical effect was given to this, with the kind permission of Dr. J. Lindell, by co-opting Miss E. Johnson of that Commission to our Executive.

APPOINTMENT OF HON. SOLICITOR

The Executive unanimously adopted a resolution appointing Mr. S. A. F. Pond, member of the well-known firm of Solicitors, Whiting and Byrne, as the Council's Hon. Solicitor. We are pleased to record Mr. Pond's ready acceptance of this responsibility.

APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

In order to conform with the statutory requirements with regard to the registration of our Council, it became necessary to execute a Trust Deed and to appoint three Trustees.

In response to invitations extended on behalf of the Council by the Chairman and Hon. Treasurer, we were gratified to receive advice that Messrs. Basil C. Caldwell, Frederick C. Read and A. R. L. Wiltshire had accepted appointment as Trustees.

SUB-COMMITTEES

Sub-Committees of the Council are to be convened for investigating, discussing and reporting upon the findings published by Dr. Hutchinson, including the following:

Amenities

- Old People's Recreational Clubs, Restaurants.
- Visitors to relieve loneliness.
- Bowling Clubs, organised entertainment, cinema, concerts, transport trips, picnics, tours.

Housing

- Co-operation with State Housing Commission.
- Special requirements for the aged.

Domiciliary Help

- Home-help schemes, housekeeper service, meals on wheels, heating, clothing, chiropody, library, shopping.

Health

- Medical advisory panel.
- Hospitals, half-way houses, home bedridden, transitory ill-health, disorders common to special circumstances, home nursing, provision of spectacles, hearing aids, mechanical aids.
- Need for trained occupational therapists.

Homes

- Statutory inspection of homes conducted on a commercial basis for profit.
- Advisory service on accommodation other than institutions.

PLANS FOR NATIONAL CONVENTION

The Council is preparing to sponsor a National Convention of organisations devoted to the welfare of old people. Interviews have taken place between our Chairman, Sir John Newman-Morris, and our Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Norris, with Mr. McMahon, Minister for Social Services, and Mr. F. H. Rowe,

Director-General of Social Services, in this connection, and it is understood that the secretariat for the occasion would be provided from within that Department.

Negotiations are proceeding to bring out from England a distinguished geriatrician to be the guest speaker. A definite announcement will be made when the plans are completed.

GIFTS OF FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

With a view to conserving the donation from the Sidney Myer Trust for the extension of the Council's field work, it was decided to seek gifts of furniture and equipment for our new office at 46 Russell Street.

The following generous gifts have already been promised:

Desks, Board table and chairs—Anderson's Pty. Ltd., Prahran.

Typewriter—Geo. Raitt & Co. Pty. Ltd.

Electric radiators—Oliver J. Nilsen & Co. Pty. Ltd.

Filing cabinet—Sands & McDougall Pty. Ltd.

Floor coverings—Greig Bros. Pty. Ltd.

Curtains—Payne's Bon March Pty. Ltd.

By the time we take over our new offices it is anticipated that gifts to cover our remaining requirements will have been received.

As we wish to avoid the soliciting of donations from the general public it will be appreciated that gifts in kind, such as are recorded above, are exceedingly valuable in our work.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The usual audited statement of receipts and expenditure will be presented by the Hon. Treasurer at the next annual meeting of the Council.

EMPLOYMENT OF OLDER MEN AND WOMEN

Correspondence was exchanged with the National Advisory Committee on the Employment of Older Men and Women, London, and with Lady Reading, Chairman of Women's Voluntary Services, London, with a view to securing information as to the situation in England with regard to this problem. As a result, we are in receipt of the Reports of the National Advisory Committee on this subject, which provide a useful background for study of the situation here.

STATE CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL WELFARE

Our Vice-President, Mrs. J. G. Norris, made a valuable contribution to the discussion in a session on "Planning for Community Service", when she presented a paper on the topic of "The Aged" at the State Conference of Social Welfare in October, 1954.

She suggested that, simultaneously with the making of suitable provision for those aged people who, through poverty or infirmity, cannot lead independent lives, research should be undertaken to ensure that those now approaching old age may not suffer any of the avoidable miseries which are now the lot of that social group.

Accommodation for the various degrees of frailty and infirmity is an urgent matter, and the necessity for a study of these special needs is being met by the establishment of the geriatric department within the Hospitals and Charities Commission. This has already led to plans for the provision of a geriatric unit at Mount Royal. Accommodation for old people who are healthy and ambulatory is a need for the general community to fill on a well-planned basis.

The question of employment for people beyond the generally accepted age for retirement was discussed by Mrs. Norris at some length with the suggestion that investigations should be made into the possibility of devising a more flexible system in Australia.

"With modern research and methods," concluded Mrs. Norris, "each succeeding generation of people, as they grow old, must assuredly be better armed to face the exigencies of age, better equipped to retain independence, and more secure in the knowledge that they are a necessary and important part of the community."

ADDRESS BY Dr. R. A. KERN, M.D.

On March 24th an address, "Our Growing Responsibilities to the Aged in Our Midst", was given to a general audience at the B.M.A. Hall, Albert Street, Melbourne, by Dr. R. A. Kern under the auspices of the Melbourne Permanent Post-Graduate Committee.

Dr. Kern, who is Professor of Medicine at the Temple University School of Medicine, Philadelphia, covered a wide range of the growing problems of the aged as a social group. His address was of intense interest to the medical faculty and to laymen and was memorable for the obvious warmth of the speaker's feelings for elderly people as individuals claiming our assistance, rather than as impersonal members of an anonymous group. The address has been widely acclaimed and has been recorded by the Post-Graduate Committee for re-playing by Branches of the B.M.A. throughout Victoria. We express our sense of gratitude to Dr. Kern for his address and to the Post-Graduate Committee for their sponsorship of this noted geriatrician.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN — AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE

The welfare of old people formed the topic of an interesting and informative discussion at the Australian Conference of the National Council of Women, which was held in Adelaide last October.

It was suggested that each State Council should encourage the promotion of a co-ordinating body to develop concerted efforts for old people in all States. This, in turn, should lead to the establishment of a National co-ordinating body.

Miss Gibson, Australian President, commented on the fact that the State Councils seemed to be of one mind in this matter, and spoke of the value of united effort on behalf of the aged.

It is interesting to recall that the National Council of Women was responsible for calling the meeting which resulted in the formation of the Old People's Welfare Council of Victoria, in 1951.

GOVERNMENT AID FOR HOME HELP SERVICE

The Council welcomes the inclusion in Mr. Bolte's policy speech, as reported in the press, that his government would extend the home help service to assist elderly people and that immediate investigation would be made into the desirability of grants to approved elderly person's clubs which provided amenities and meals.

This is a sphere of activity in which the Old People's Welfare Council is particularly interested and would be pleased to co-operate with the government in carrying out its plans.

GREENVALE

From the Hospitals and Charities Commission we hear the good news that the State Government will make Greenvale Tuberculosis Sanatorium available for the accommodation of old people.

The Commission's plans envisage Greenvale as a modern geriatric unit of at least 280 people, and sufficient land to allow for further extensions in the building of flats and cottages. Here will be found low beds, non-slip floors, hand rails in bathrooms and pull-up bars in toilets; lounge rooms with easy chairs and pictures; sun porches, and dining rooms with tables seating four.

Planning throughout, in fact, will be such as to foster the natural desire to have friendly, intimate, sociable surroundings, in which all can be happy and none feel unwanted or overlooked.

AGED PERSONS HOMES ACT

The purpose of this Act, which came into operation as recently as 16th December, 1954, is —

“to encourage and assist the provision of suitable homes for aged persons, and in particular homes at which aged persons may reside in conditions approaching as nearly as possible normal domestic life, and, in the case of married people, with proper regard for the companionship of husband and wife.”

Previous services and benefits were designed to alleviate ill-health as possible the greatest cause of hardship amongst elderly people. The Aged Persons' Homes Act is aimed at alleviating the hardships imposed by inadequate or unsuitable housing. It achieves this by providing for grants to eligible organisations towards the capital cost of homes for aged people, having regard to the above-mentioned purpose of the Act.

It is noteworthy that collaboration between the Commonwealth Government and voluntary agencies is actually written into the Act. The Minister of Social Services (the Hon. W. McMahon) said, in the course of the debate —

“We look forward to the day when the principle of Government assistance to self-help and voluntary effort will be more widely accepted; meanwhile, we lay the foundation to what must be a more personal and fruitful approach to one of the

As we go to press, it is encouraging to learn of the £209,000 Federal grant to organisations building homes for old people, this State's share being £41,365.

MENTAL HEALTH FEDERATION

We learn, with interest, that the Mental Health Federation of Victoria proposes at an early date to make representations to the incoming Minister for Health and to every member of the State Parliament, that both intellectually handicapped people and the aged should be housed in separate hospitals to the mentally ill.

The present unsatisfactory situation has, it is recognised, arisen from the lack of suitable accommodation for aged people with failing memories and similar handicaps, but not requiring treatment for mental illness.

We have no doubt that this request will receive the sympathetic consideration of the Minister and the continued attention of the Hospitals and Charities Commission.

BEQUEST

Our Chairman was recently approached by a citizen, who intimated that he would like to make the Old People's Welfare Council a beneficiary in his estate and this was at once arranged with his solicitors. This method of ensuring that the work of the Council on behalf of old people will be carried on is commended to all our readers for immediate consideration and instruction to their legal advisers.

C. L. G. TUDDENHAM,
A. T. DOBSON,
Joint Honorary Secretaries.



