

BOOK REVIEW: 'IN PRAISE OF AGEING' BY PATRICIA EDGAR

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This review first appeared in the Law Society Journal, March 2014 Vol 52 No 2.

Edgar, Patricia, *In Praise of Ageing* (Text Publishing, 2013).

Number of pages: 254

What a fantastic book. The author, a well-known and well-respected writer, sociologist, film and television producer (and many other impressive roles) has written the most positive book on ageing that I have read. The book is not cloying, patronising or depressing. Instead, the author has presented us with an imminently readable and thoroughly researched book on a topic that is very close to many of us.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One examines a number of stereotypes and myths associated with ageing. For example, the author, with reference to research on obesity undertaken by Monash University, dispels the misguided belief that the aged and ageing are/ and will be a financial burden on the health system. The Monash research revealed that in a population of 23 million more than 17 million people are '...ranked as overweight or obese' with a cost to Australia of more than \$58 billion dollars a year! Not perhaps, a fact commonly known. However, unlike ageing, which none of us can prevent, obesity can be prevented. And yet, we are constantly reminded in the press what a burden older people are on society generally and the health system in particular.

Another myth perpetuated is that older people are no longer productive in the workforce. Here, the author provides a number of examples of older Australians who have continued to work productively well into their nineties. Furthermore, Edgar provides considerable evidence of the fact that so little credence is given to the unpaid work performed by carers and volunteers and cites the staggering figure of \$74.5 billion which can be attributed to the work undertaken by those '...caring for spouses and grandchildren and in other unpaid voluntary work'.

Part Two of the book is devoted to the stories of several people who have achieved remarkable success or personal goals well past an age where many in society would say they have 'reached their use by date'. I particularly liked the story of James Brierley who, having been a paratrooper in World War II, decided at fifty eight to take up skydiving – and at 89 is still jumping!

The book is dedicated to her parents who lived to 89 and 95 and in the author's own words '...were in excellent health until their final years...were good company...and lived independently...and managed with minimal assistance, without being a burden to the state or to their family.'

'Successful elders maintain belief in themselves and remain motivated to contribute to society.'

The author is living proof of this.

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