

Seniors Awards 2011

Premier's Award for Victorian Senior of the Year

Doug McColl, OAM 82, Warracknabeal

Doug is an outstanding contributor to the Warracknabeal community through his visionary leadership. He contributes as a volunteer gardener, fund raiser and historian. He was the inaugural secretary of the Warracknabeal Promotions Committee, and is a member of the Townscape Committee and the Warracknabeal Arts Council.

A dedicated member of the Warracknabeal Historical Society for over 50 years, Doug is an authority on local history and provides guided tours of the town and assists with genealogical research.

He was instrumental in obtaining equipment to retain permanent records of local newspapers, was an executive member of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies. For the last 35 years Doug has organised the annual Warracknabeal reunion at Ballarat allowing current and former residents to keep in contact.

An expert on native plants, he was instrumental in planning and promoting the magnificent Anzac Park garden and helped keep the town's garden beds in the main street alive during the recent drought. Bill is a valued member of the committee caring for Yarriambiack Creek and initiated and coordinated the local clean up Australia day event.

Doug's involvement in the Arts Council has contributed to many community projects including a stained glass window in the library, the *Little Yarns* book and the purchase and display of local art.

Doug supports the Woodbine community that provides services for people living with a disability and has received many local awards and commendations.

Doug's untiring service and dedication to the town of Warracknabeal was formally recognised in 1985 when he was awarded the Order of Australia.

Healthy and Active Living Award

Bill O'Connor, 79, Croydon

While living with the pain of rheumatoid arthritis, Bill has been a positive role model to thousands of people with similar conditions, encouraging and motivating them to take control of their lives and improve their health and wellbeing. Bill has been a volunteer with Arthritis Victoria for over 30 years as a warm water exercise leader, a better health self management peer leader and a community speaker raising awareness of arthritis and providing information and support. Admired and respected by his peers, Bill has received an Outstanding Service Award from Arthritis Victoria.

He has also volunteered with community health centres to develop and present falls prevention peer education training programs.

Bill is passionate about sport and fitness and has been a volunteer at Box Hill Athletics Club for over 30 years, coaching and mentoring children and teenagers in athletics and other sports

Veteran Community Award

Joan Gillespie, 73, Heidelberg West

Joan was nominated for this award by 12 Vietnam veterans who attend the weekly older veterans' psychiatry program at Austin Health. Her inspirational approach to life complements the clinical treatment program by lifting the morale of the group. The reason why she has been selected as the 2011 winner is best described by them.

"Every week I look forward to coming to Repat to have a chat with a lady who cheers most of the vets of all conflicts. I only know her as Joan, a shining light to all who know her"

Joan was recently recognised for her 20 years service as a volunteer at Austin Health. Joan and her dog Charlie volunteer five days a week. She does her great work from a motorised wheelchair and portable respirator – technology that freed her from 30 years' confinement to an iron lung.

The Veteran Community Award celebrates someone who is making an exceptional contribution to the veteran community and Joan is a very worthy winner.

Promotion of Multiculturalism Award

Helen Jurcevic, 64, Lower Templestowe

Helen has made an outstanding contribution to her community of Manningham. At the age of 60 she established the Women's Friendship Group, an initiative aimed at overcoming social isolation for older women. The multicultural focus of WFG has allowed women of different and diverse backgrounds to join together. The group has 29 nationalities represented and regularly has 200 women at its weekly gatherings. A member describes Helen's as being "a great example of what a person can do ... she gives me confidence and inspires me. She is a great example, a role model."

The prototype on which WFG operates is about to be used as a model for other municipalities tackling social isolation.

In 2010 Helen was recognised as the City of Manningham's Citizen of the year.

COTA Victorian Senior Achiever Awards

Ted Chisholm, 92, Warburton

Ted can reflect on a lifetime of community service but his most outstanding contribution to his community began when he was over 70. For 20 years he led a group of volunteers known as the River Crew, who have taken on the task of building and maintaining walking tracks, ramps, seats, picnic tables and lookouts on the Warburton stretch of the Yarra River. He retired from that role at the age of 91.

Ted is renowned for getting things done. He is a persuasive speaker, with a cheerful disdain of red tape and a remarkable ability to enthuse and inspire people.

He is a much loved and admired member of his community. At Ted's 90th birthday celebration the Mayor of Yarra Ranges aptly described him as a living treasure. Ted's grandson describes him as an inspiration to all of us and as a man of passion who always demands the best from himself.

Peggy Cresp, 85, Doncaster East

Since the late 1990s Peggy has been a tireless worker for breast cancer. Diagnosed with breast cancer herself at the age of 72 she supports women and their families to learn ways to cope with the turmoil breast cancer can bring. The Breast Cancer Support group acknowledges her as inspirational in her volunteer role encouraging and assisting women to build confidence after a breast cancer diagnosis.

Peggy commenced volunteering in Mildura, assisting primary school children improve their literacy and as President of the Northern Mallee Older Adults Recreation Network, which encouraged older people to stay involved and active.

William (Bill) Jennings OAM, 85, Sale

Bill has made a significant contribution to Sale and the surrounding area over many years. Bill is a practical hands on man who took on cleaning to reverse the poor financial position of the bowls club.

He has been a strong supporter of the Central Gippsland Health Service, Cancer Victoria, the Heart Foundation, Sale College Chaplaincy and the Salvation Army. At the age of 85 Bill rises early and rides his bicycle to the bowling club where he regularly plays and helps other to keep active and involved by providing transport, encouragement and practical support.

Phillip Maisel OAM, 88, Caulfield North

A Holocaust survivor, Phillip has dedicated the last two decades of his life to videotaping testimonials of other Holocaust survivors and has developed the Oral Testimonies Project for the Jewish Holocaust and Research Centre in Melbourne. The project gathers and preserves source material and eye witness accounts and is a rich source of material for current and future researchers on the Nazi era.

Jack O'Connor, 82, Carisbrook

Jack is well know and highly regarded in the Carisbrook area. He has become a regular participant in the Aged Care training courses for mature age students and these students were responsible for Jack's nomination. A regular visitor to the local residential care facility, he provides the students with a valuable perspective on the wishes and preferences of older people in residential care.

Jack is a legendary fund raiser and is currently working with a group of the students to raise funds for the Oncology Unit at the Royal Children's Hospital. Despite being legally blind and recently losing everything in the Carisbrook flood Jack took on an insurance company on behalf of 15 residents and succeeded in getting work on their homes started.

Betty Parr, 88, Heathmont

Betty recently retired from some of her volunteer work but continues to encourage people of all ages to be involved in their community through volunteering.

Her Meals on Wheels role extended over 40 years and to many older people she was the welcome and familiar face who kept them in touch with their community. She has been a tireless advocate for people with a disability with a particular concern for vision impaired people. Recently she became the face of the Whitehorse Human Library initiative – aimed at strengthening the local community through conversation. Betty describes her volunteering experiences as humbling and rewarding. Those who have worked with her describe her as a dedicated and great contributor, as a role model of active ageing and as an inspiration to others.

June Solly, 84, Hopetoun

June Solly has put the small township of Hopetoun on the map as a haven for visitors. Her vision has resulted in a tourist residential complex, the Mallee Bush Retreat on the foreshore of beautiful Lake Lascelles.

She has been a tireless worker and fundraiser for the local agricultural show, Progress Association, Neighbourhood House and Country Women's Association and was responsible for the addition of modern amenities to Coorong Homestead. June shares her skills with children, youth and adults – teaching them to cook her famous cream puffs, jams and sauces.

Patricia Townsend, 71, Airport West

Patricia has been the driving force in transforming Hume U3A into a strong vibrant organisation. Forming partnerships with local organisations has brought mutual benefits including the development of the 'Learning Together' Strategy which is inspiring the community to embrace learning throughout their lives. Through a partnership with Dallas Primary School Pat has secured accommodation for the U3A and in turn the U3A presents a Citizenship Award to a grade 6 boy and girl and provides funds for a breakfast program for hungry students. Pat has supported a U3A tutor with Parkinson's disease to raise awareness of the condition in the community. Her dedication to raising funds for cancer research through Hume Relay for Life led to her having her head shaved in public in 2010 at Federation Square.

Don Tucker, 72, East Keilor

Like the other 2011 award winners, Don's volunteering began well before he was 60. However, since then his volunteer service to Holloway Aged Care Services has been outstanding.

He has used his administrative skills as a Board member to ensure that Holloway has become a viable and valuable resource for his community. His financial and project management skills have been vital.

However, his commitment to the vision of Holloway as a home-like environment has been his greatest contribution. His practical skills come to the fore – particularly in his care for the wonderful gardens. Beyond Holloway, Don's volunteering includes Moonee Valley meals on wheels, the Keilor East RSL welfare fund, and his established role as Father Christmas at community celebrations throughout his district.

He is described as quiet, humble and a great "behind the scenes" worker for his community and particularly for the older members of that community.