About the EveryAGE Counts Campaign

EveryAGE Counts is an advocacy campaign aimed at tackling *ageism*. It's an ambitious campaign spearheading a social movement with a challenging goal: to shift social norms (those unwritten rules of common thinking and behaviour) and positively influence the way Australia thinks about ageing and older people.

What is ageism?

Broadly speaking, ageism can be defined as prejudice expressed toward a person because of their age. It includes stereotyping, discrimination and mistreatment. While ageism can affect anyone of any age, the EveryAGE Counts campaign is focusing on addressing ageism relating to older people. In this context, ageism comes from negative attitudes and beliefs about what it means to be an older person.

As a form of discrimination, ageism has three key aspects:

- Prejudicial attitudes towards older people, including some attitudes held by older people themselves
- Discriminatory practices against older people, for instance in employment, insurance or health care
- Institutional practices, policies and behaviours that perpetuate negative stereotypes and undermine dignity – including language and representation in the media and cultural settings.

Why do we need a campaign to tackle ageism?

Ageism is not benign or harmless. It is a big problem because it impacts on our confidence, quality of life, job prospects, health, and control over life decisions.

It is pervasive but often hidden. It can distort our attitudes to older people and ageing and have profound negative impacts on our personal experience of growing older. The impacts of ageism can prevent or limit us from contributing and participating in our communities – socially, economically and as full citizens – and even impact our physical health and longevity.

As well as its individual impacts, ageism can also deny society the enormous range of benefits that can flow, economically and socially, from the full participation of older people.

What is the campaign's long term vision?

The EveryAGE Counts campaign vision is "a society where every person is valued, connected and respected regardless of age and functional health".

What does the campaign want to achieve?

The overall goal of EveryAGE Counts is to set strong, new foundations for current and future generations to age well. Toward this goal, the campaign seeks to:

- shift those deeply entrenched negative social norms about ageing and older people
- reimagine what it means to grow older and be an older person; and reframe our older years as a valid, positive and meaningful part of life
- drive a political and societal response to the *opportunities* presented by our ageing population.

How will the EveryAGE Counts campaign achieve its goal?

The campaign has to work at a number of levels over time to achieve its goal. EveryAGE Counts is built on a variety of social change activities, including:

- Advocacy, political engagement and public campaigning for policy changes and new policy initiatives [see Policy Directions to Challenge Ageism]

- Addressing specific structural barriers to participation for older people , for example, in particular settings where ageist policies or entrenched practices prevent access or equal participation (eg in workplaces, healthcare settings)
- Increasing the diversity and accuracy of representations of older people in media, arts and public discussion.
- Building a grassroots social movement so all Australians can be involved in the change they want to see
- Further research and policy development to ensure an evidence based approach.

What is the background history to the EveryAGE Counts campaign?

The EveryAGE Counts campaign was initially conceived by The Benevolent Society as part of its important campaigning and advocacy work.   In March 2017, The Benevolent Society (TBS) commissioned Urbis to undertake a three pronged research project focusing on understanding 'the drivers of ageism'. Via a literature review, and both qualitative and quantitative studies, this research provided a foundation of evidence to inform a campaign strategy and give the campaign the best chance of success.

The research was developed in consultation with an eminent external reference panel and an internal TBS project team. The reference panel, comprised of key stakeholders, policy and advisory experts and practitioners, who provided expert input, experience and guidance throughout the research phase. The research – *The Drivers of Ageism* – was launched in September 2017.

The research in full and in each part, can be downloaded from the EveryAGE Counts website at: A video about the research can be viewed at: https://www.everyagecounts.org.au/research

Key members of the external reference panel subsequently became foundational members, alongside additional organisations and individuals, of a new Coalition formed to develop, implement and collectively drive the campaign.

Under the joint Memorandum of Understanding, The Benevolent Society has committed to undertake secretariat responsibilities for the Coalition and its Steering Group for the first five years. The campaign will become a wholly independent entity by the end of the first five years.

About the Coalition

The campaign is led by an independent coalition of diverse organisations and individuals committed to achieving this important shift in the way we understand and experience growing older. [see Coalition membership list] The coalition will continue to grow beyond launch.

Who is funding the Campaign?

Funding for the establishment of the campaign has come largely from The Benevolent Society under a separate historical endowment expressly intended for advocacy and campaigning work, as part of meeting the organisation's social justice goals and strategic plan.

The Benevolent Society was successful in winning a substantial grant of $1.5 million over five years from the JO and JR Wicking Trust.   The campaign is extremely grateful for the support shown by the trustees and acknowledges that substantial elements of this campaign would not have been possible without this support.

The EveryAGE Counts campaign was formally launched on 11 October 2018.

www.everyagecounts.org.au