**Old is beautiful project launches for**

**International Day of the Older Person (October 1st)**

In a world first this International Day of the Older Person (IDOP) a national project will be launched to combat ageism and build respect for older people.

Ageism has devastating impacts on older people and adverse effects our health care system, workplaces, the economy and our culture. Global research shows 1 in 2 people are ageist towards older people and ageism:

* costs around $63 billion annually in health care costs ([Global data](https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/60/1/174/5166947))
* costs $850 billion annually in workplace discrimination ([Global data](https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/info-2020/age-discrimination-economic-impact.html))
* costs $10.9 billion in financial abuse/fraud annually ([Australian data](https://www.commbank.com.au/content/dam/caas/newsroom/docs/Cost%20of%20financial%20abuse%20in%20Australia.pdf))
* can reduce life expectancy by 7.5 years ([Global data](https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-832261.pdf))
* underpins the Elder Abuse experienced by 14% of older people ([Australian data](https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-final-report#this))

The #OldisBeautiful project includes workshops for older people to explore what beautiful means to them – and to document their photo portraits for sharing on social and other media.

The project is an initiative of [Celebrate Ageing Ltd](http://celebrateageing.com/), a charity combatting ageism and building respect for older people. Pilot coordinator and Director of Celebrate Ageing Ltd Dr Catherine Barrett said:

*The workshops create uplifting spaces for older people to build a positive self-image by exploring what beautiful means to them. We call this ‘hair and make up for the soul’ because you can feel people’s spirits lift as we reclaim beautiful for all ages – and that influences what they take to the photo shoot.*

*We invited older people to participate to build their self-confidence and combat ageism in the community. It was interesting to see how many older women wanted to participate because they were concerned about body image for their grand daughters and wanted to role model the valuing of ageing and imperfection.*

The Victorian pilot is a partnership with [Elder Rights Advocacy](http://elderrights.org.au/), an organisation promoting the human rights of older Victorians, who recognise the role of the campaign in primary prevention of Elder Abuse. CEO Debra Nicholl said:

*The #OldisBeautiful project challenges the messages sent by the Fashion and Beauty Industry that we are less beautiful as we age – and of less value. This is an innovative way of building the confidence of older people – and educating the community about valuing older people and valuing our own ageing. These are important steps in primary prevention of Elder Abuse.*

Workshop participant and Patron of the project in Victoria Michelle Trebilco said

*I was very honoured to be appointed Patron of the Celebrate Ageing’s #OldisBeautiful project.  I celebrate ageing every day by dressing up in a range of styles and colours (my motto is Dress up for the hell of it, no event required) and taking long walks in the glorious Dandenong Ranges where I live.*

*I was also honoured to be a participant in the #OldisBeautiful workshops.  Participating in the workshops, meeting the other participants and hearing their views on what being beautiful means to them was indeed a privilege.  "Beautiful" to me means being happy and healthy.  I believe that if you are both, you project a radiance which is visible to everyone.  I also think "Beautiful" means being an individual and embracing your so-called "imperfections" such as wrinkly and saggy skin.*

Project photographer [Suzanne Phoenix](https://suzannephoenix.com/) said:

*#OldisBeautiful is an opportunity to create very real and powerful photographic portraits in a safe and supportive space. The portraits are not modified, there is no photoshopping or making faces black and white to highlight wrinkles. I relish the chance to make portraits where the person isn’t directed to portray any particular feeling or emotion, they can be whoever they want to be and show us what ‘beautiful’ means to them.*

The release of Project portraits will begin in the week building up to IDOP before the release of a series of urban street posters featuring Aunty Sherree Francis.

**More information**

* webpage: celebrateageing.com/beautiful
* Dr Catherine Barrett 0429 582 237 or [director@celebrateageing.org](mailto:director@celebrateageing.org)
* Debra Nicholl [debra.nicholl@era.asn.au](mailto:debra.nicholl@era.asn.au)
* Suzanne Phoenix [suzannephoenixphotography@gmail.com](mailto:suzannephoenixphotography@gmail.com)