

**Australian of the Year 2013
Acceptance speech**

**Federation mall
Parliament house,
Canberra**

January 25. 2013

Ita Buttrose AO, OBE

Prime minister...everyone...

This is one of the proudest moments of my life. I am truly honoured and conscious of the fact that I am following in the footsteps of many distinguished Australians.

But how wonderful to be honoured for doing something I've thoroughly enjoyed doing for most of my life – being a journalist and working for causes for which I have a genuine passion and commitment.

And I intend to keep on doing more of the same.

As Australian of the year I want to promote a more positive approach to ageing; to tackling what I perceive as ageist attitudes in our society.

I also want to encourage people to adopt preventative health strategies especially in relation to chronic diseases such as dementia, arthritis, macular degeneration and diabetes...that affect so many Australians as they grow older.

I believe preventative health strategies need to begin in childhood and followed all through life.

Two years ago I took on the role of president of Alzheimer's Australia with the aim of beating dementia.

I know, along with hundreds of thousands of Australians, what it means to care for someone with dementia.

I know from meeting many people with the disease what it means to the person with dementia to feel devalued and to have no purpose in life from the moment of diagnosis.

We can beat dementia. We can remove the stigma and sense of shame that comes with a diagnosis, if we increase community understanding of dementia, provide better quality care and give hope to the future by research.

Of course this will require greater investment in medical research and in the way Australia practises and decides funding for our research community.

We can beat dementia if we confront it the way we have tackled HIV/aids, cancer and heart disease – as a community.

There is much to be done but none of it is impossible.

If during my year I can contribute a little to achieving a more positive approach to ageing, delivering on Alzheimer's Australia's Fight Dementia Campaign and putting the spotlight on medical research I will feel...I may have, in some small way... lived up to the honour I have been given today.

My best wishes to you all for Australia Day 2013.

Thank you all so much.