

**LOVE, LOSS AND LAUGHTER: SEEING DEMENTIA DIFFERENTLY
OFFICIAL EXHIBITION LAUNCH**

**FEDERATION SQUARE - YARRA BUILDING
CNR FLINDERS ST AND SWANSTON ST, MELBOURNE**

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**ITA BUTTROSE AO, OBE
NATIONAL PRESIDENT, ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA**

THANK YOU, MAREE.

I AM DELIGHTED TO WELCOME YOU ALL HERE TONIGHT TO THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF *LOVE, LOSS AND LAUGHTER: SEEING DEMENTIA DIFFERENTLY*, AN EXHIBITION OF BRILLIANT PHOTOGRAPHS BY AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER AND SOCIOLOGIST CATHY GREENBLAT.

I FIRST READ ABOUT CATHY AND HER PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE NEW YORK TIMES – I AM AN ONLINE SUBSCRIBER. JUST OVER A YEAR AGO A STORY TITLED “THE FACES OF ALZHEIMER’S” CAUGHT MY EYE...AND THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE STORY CAPTURED MY ATTENTION.

“THE PREVAILING VIEW OF PEOPLE WITH ALZHEIMER’S IS OFTEN A DEPRESSING ONE; THE PATIENT SLUMPED IN A CHAIR OR PARKED IN FRONT OF A TELEVISION SET... BUT A NEW BOOK AND PHOTO EXHIBITION IN NEW YORK SHOW ANOTHER SIDE OF THE DISEASE, ONE IN WHICH PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA CAN STILL BE ENGAGED, LEAD ACTIVE LIVES AND EXPERIENCE LOVE AND JOY.”

THE ARTICLE FEATURED A SELECTION OF CATHY'S PHOTOGRAPHS OF PEOPLE WITH ALZHEIMER'S. I WAS CAPTIVATED BY THEIR SMILING, HAPPY FACES. THEY WERE CLEARLY HAVING A GOOD TIME

BEFORE THE DAY WAS OUT I HAD EMAILED GLENN REES, CEO OF ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA, SUGGESTING THAT WE SHOULD BRING THIS MARVELLOUS PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION TO AUSTRALIA.

SO, WE PUT THE WHEELS IN MOTION...AND HERE WE ARE...AT FEDERATION SQUARE.

THIS EXHIBITION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT OUR SPONSORS NUTRICIA AND ELI LILLY. THE FUNDING HAS HELPED US GET THE EXHIBITION HERE AND HAS ALSO ENSURED IT WAS PROFESSIONALLY CURATED.

IT WILL BE IN MELBOURNE FOR A MONTH AND WILL THEN TOUR CANBERRA, PERTH, ADELAIDE, BRISBANE AND SYDNEY. TASMANIA HAD A SNEAK PREVIEW LAST MONTH WHEN WE HELD OUR NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN HOBART.

OUR SINCERE THANKS TO BOTH COMPANIES FOR WORKING TOGETHER ON THIS PROJECT WITH ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA.

MANY PEOPLE HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO MOUNTING THIS EXHIBITION BUT I ESPECIALLY WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXHIBITION CURATOR CLARE THACKWAY, ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA STAFF AND OF COURSE, THE 25 VOLUNTEERS WHO WILL SUPERVISE THE EXHIBITION DURING ITS TIME HERE IN MELBOURNE.

MOST IMPORTANTLY OUR SINCERE THANKS TO CATHY GREENBLAT FOR BEING SO FLEXIBLE IN RESPONSE TO OUR MANY DEMANDING REQUESTS IN GETTING THE EXHIBITION TO AUSTRALIA AND FOR BEING HERE WITH US THIS EVENING.

FROM THE MOMENT GLENN MADE CONTACT WITH CATHY SHE HAS GIVEN THE PROJECT HER PRIORITY.

NOTHING WAS TOO MUCH TROUBLE. CATHY EVEN AGREED TO ADD AUSTRALIAN CONTENT TO THE EXHIBITION AND SPENT THREE WEEKS IN AUSTRALIA TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS AND THEY ARE NOW A PART OF THIS FANTASTIC BODY OF WORK.

THE THEME *LOVE, LOSS AND LAUGHTER* CAPTURES THE ROLLER COASTER OF THE JOURNEY OF DEMENTIA PERFECTLY AND HOW WELL CATHY'S PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE POWERFUL EMOTIONS DEMENTIA CREATES.

AS A FAMILY CARER I HAVE FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF THE TRAUMA THAT COMES WITH A DIAGNOSIS, THE DETERMINATION THAT FOLLOWS TO GET ON WITH LIFE, THE DESPAIR THAT INCREASES AS DEMENTIA PROGRESSES AND ALSO THE HUMOUR THAT IS SHARED IN EVERY DAY LIFE.

WHAT I REALLY LIKE ABOUT THIS EXHIBITION IS THAT IT HELPS SPREAD THE MESSAGE THAT PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA REMAIN FIRST AND FOREMOST HUMAN BEINGS, AND SHOULD NOT BE DEFINED BY THEIR CONDITION.

INDEED THE IMPACT OF DEMENTIA IS UNIVERSAL. WORLDWIDE THERE ARE 36 MILLION PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA TODAY AND THE NUMBER IS PROJECTED TO GROW TO 115 MILLION BY 2050.

GLOBALLY THERE IS A NEW CASE OF DEMENTIA EVERY FOUR SECONDS. THAT IS EQUIVALENT TO 7.7 MILLION NEW CASES OF DEMENTIA EVERY YEAR – THE SAME SIZE AS THE COMBINED POPULATIONS OF SWITZERLAND AND ISRAEL.

THIS REPRESENTS A HUGE TO CHALLENGE TO THE WORLD'S HEALTH SYSTEMS. THE CURRENT TOTAL COST OF DEMENTIA WORLD WIDE IS ESTIMATED AT US \$604 BILLION PER YEAR AND IS PREDICTED TO INCREASE EVEN MORE QUICKLY THAN THE PREVALENCE OF DEMENTIA.

FIGURES OF THIS MAGNITUDE ARE DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND...BUT TRY THINKING OF IT LIKE THIS. IF DEMENTIA WERE A COUNTRY, IT WOULD BE THE WORLD'S 18TH LARGEST ECONOMY – RANKED BETWEEN TURKEY AND INDONESIA.

THE COST OF DEMENTIA IS NOT ONLY A CHALLENGE FOR THE DEVELOPED ECONOMIES OF THE WORLD. ALREADY 58 PER CENT OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA LIVE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

BY 2050 THIS PERCENTAGE WILL RISE TO 71 PER CENT WITH THE FASTEST GROWTH IN THE ELDERLY POPULATION TAKING PLACE IN CHINA AND INDIA, AND THEIR SOUTH ASIAN AND WESTERN PACIFIC NEIGHBOURS.

AUSTRALIA HAS MUCH TO SHARE IN THE REGION DUE TO THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE IN THE LAST 10 YEARS AND THAT INCLUDES MAKING DEMENTIA A NATIONAL HEALTH PRIORITY.

ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA IS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE INTERNATIONAL ASIA PACIFIC REGION. WE BELIEVE IT'S IMPORTANT TO SHARE WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS OUR DEMENTIA RESOURCES IN INFORMATION, AWARENESS, TRAINING AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT.

WHEN YOU LOOK AT CATHY'S PHOTOGRAPHS YOU WILL SEE HOW DIFFERENT CULTURES AND COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD EMBRACE DEMENTIA IN ALL SORTS OF WAYS – FROM PAINTING AND MUSIC THERAPY IN JAPAN, INTERACTING WITH ANIMALS IN THE USA AND AUSTRALIA TO CHANTING IN INDIA.

THESE EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT SHOW THAT LIFE GOES ON AFTER A DIAGNOSIS OF DEMENTIA AND THAT PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA CONTINUE TO HAVE NEEDS FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE SAME WAY AS OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.

FROM ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA'S PERSPECTIVE WE HAVE MUCH TO LEARN FROM CATHY'S PHOTOGRAPHS – AND THEY COULD NOT COME AT A BETTER TIME.

JUST THREE WEEKS AGO I LAUNCHED TWO REPORTS – ONE ON “DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY SOCIETIES – THE WAY FORWARD”, THE OTHER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A “COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT SYMBOL – CREATING DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY ORGANISATIONS”.

BOTH PUBLICATIONS SHARE A COMMON THEME WITH THIS EXHIBITION – NAMELY THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT FOR BOTH THE PERSON WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR FAMILY CARERS AND THE REINFORCEMENT OF ONE OF KEY PRIORITIES TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO THE SERVICES WE ALL ENJOY IN THE COMMUNITY. BY BEING HERE THIS EVENING, YOU ARE HELPING US DO JUST THAT.

A NATIONAL POPULATION SURVEY IN 2011 FOUND THAT 44 PER CENT OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVED THAT PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA ARE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST OR TREATED UNFAIRLY, 22 PER CENT OF THEM SAID THEY WOULD FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE SPENDING TIME WITH SOMEONE WHO HAD DEMENTIA.

A PILOT STUDY LAST YEAR SHOWED THAT APPROXIMATELY ONE QUARTER OF THOSE SURVEYED WOULD AVOID SEEKING ASSISTANCE FOR MEMORY PROBLEMS.

AND 60 PER CENT INDICATED THAT IF THEY RECEIVED A DIAGNOSIS OF DEMENTIA THEY WOULD FEEL A SENSE OF SHAME, WHILE NEARLY HALF SAID THAT THEY WOULD BE HUMILIATED BY THE DIAGNOSIS.

NO ONE SHOULD LIVE IN SHAME BECAUSE THEY HAVE A MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS OF DEMENTIA.

COUNTRIES, SUCH AS BELGIUM AND THE UK, HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD BY DEVELOPING DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES BY ENCOURAGING CITIES AND TOWNS TO DEVELOP SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT ARE DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY.

THESE CAN INCLUDE WALKING GROUPS, CHOIRS, SCHOOL PROGRAMS, VISITS TO ART GALLERIES, WORK PLACE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS, THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND IMPROVED STREET SCAPES...TO ASSIST PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA, TO MAKE THEM FEEL VALUED MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES.

THE RELATED CONCEPT OF DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY ORGANISATIONS IS DESIGNED TO MAKE SURE PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES WE ALL ENJOY.

OUR VISION IS THAT ORGANISATIONS THAT DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY ORGANISATIONS WILL TRAIN THEIR STAFF AND DISPLAY A SYMBOL SO THAT PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA CAN BE CONFIDENT OF ACCESSING THE SERVICES THEY NEED.

I'M THINKING OF ORGANISATIONS LIKE CENTRELINK, BANKS, RETAILERS...ART GALLERIES FOR INSTANCE.

***LOVE, LOSS AND LAUGHTER* BUILDS ON OUR AIM TO DEVELOP A SOCIETY WHICH ACKNOWLEDGES DEMENTIA AS A CONDITION PEOPLE CAN LIVE WITH, NOT SOMETHING THAT SHOULD ISOLATE THEM FROM EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES THAT WE ALL ENJOY.**

WE'VE HAD A VERY POSITIVE RESPONSE TO OUR GRASSROOTS PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION, WHICH IS RUNNING ALONGSIDE CATHY'S PHOTOGRAPHS.

**IT IS TERRIFIC TO SEE THE COMMUNITY GETTING INVOLVED BY
SUBMITTING PHOTOGRAPHS TO BE DISPLAYED HERE OF A LOVED ONE
LIVING WITH DEMENTIA. THE PICTURES WE HAVE RECEIVED ARE VERY
MOVING, AND I WISH TO THANK EVERYONE WHO SUBMITTED
PHOTOGRAPHS.**

**I HOPE YOU WILL ALL ENJOY THE EXHIBITION. BE SURE TO TELL AS MANY
PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TO COME AND SEE IT.**

**MY THANKS AND CONGRATULATIONS AGAIN TO CATHY – I HOPE YOU ARE
AS PLEASED AS WE ARE WITH THE EXHIBITION BEING IN AUSTRALIA.**

THANK YOU.