

Joan Stone AM



Joan has flourished in her *'third age career'* working as a volunteer, board member and chair on a range of age advocacy and aged rights groups. She has been an influential voice for the development and direction of the policies and design of retirement villages. From life as an evacuee in the Blitz of London, new migrant to Australia and living in a rural community, Joan has always contributed to her community. Joan received a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her volunteer work with retirement villages in 2020.

EARLY LIFE

Joan grew up in Tottenham North London on the school-grounds where her father was the caretaker as the youngest of 5 children. Her life and education were interrupted when World War II and the Blitz saw Joan evacuated to Wimblington in Cambridgeshire where she was billeted with an elderly couple in a tiny cottage. One of her brothers was evacuated to a town called March only three miles away but as it was a railway yard it was nearly as dangerous. After the Blitz, Joan returned home and started secondary school, but the war meant she had a very disrupted education. Joan achieved a scholarship to Pittman's Business College for two years to study shorthand, typing and English. London was suffering through rocket raids at this time and dire shortages of staff due to the war. Pittman's placed Joan in a job in the St Paul's business area where all other staff were retirees who had returned as the younger people joined the forces. As the office junior, Joan did shorthand, the switchboard etc for the rag trade, which was dealing with wartime shortages and rations.

Joan made friends with a local lift girl, who introduced her to her brother in the Royal Marines. They married at the end of the war and had a daughter a year later. With the terrible post war housing shortage, the family shared two rooms south of river in Clapham with his parents, an area that had seen heavy bombing during the war. Six years later Joan's second daughter was born. Joan worked through all of this time and after her husband finished his 10 years' service with the Royal Marines, he found it difficult to settle and the family couldn't get housing, so they applied for migration which took a couple of years.

In 1962 the family were offered a place in Australia and after 3-months' notice were offloaded in Port Adelaide and taken to Pennington Migrant Hostel. They loved Australia right from the start and her husband found employment at Chrysler building the new Valiant while Joan worked in a temping agency in Adelaide.

The family bought into a small flat in Windsor Gardens with a scheme that saw part of their rent going towards a house deposit. Joan's daughters went to Gilles Plains Primary and onto Windsor Gardens High. Joan is proud of her daughters and the successes they have had in very different career pathways and very different interests. Her elder daughter followed an academic path and the younger went to work initially with horses and later completed her Bachelor of Arts and worked in the prison system. Joan's husband finally settled down and became a skilled boilermaker. He also enjoyed his hobby of photography including developing and taking photos for the Marching Girls' Association.

Joan worked in a range of secretarial roles, often as the manager's secretary at businesses including Simpson, Rheem, and Peter's Ice Cream. The family bought Scottish terriers for the girls and ended up breeding and showing dogs including a champion long haired dachshund in a national competition. They also drove across the Nullarbor in a combi before the roads were completed and had many adventures.

In the 1970s, Joan and her husband did a tree change and bought an old cottage between Robertstown and Eudunda, with an acre of land and orchard and started to do it up. Unfortunately, soon after, her husband was diagnosed with lung cancer and died at 54 leaving Joan to manage the cottage. Once the local community knew she was a trained secretary, Joan became busy volunteering with the CWA, Hospital Auxiliary and other community organisations but couldn't find employment locally. Her younger daughter married someone she met locally, and Joan kept a horse at her cottage for her along with a couple of coloured sheep. Her older daughter had bought her a spinning wheel and so Joan set up a local group to spin their own local wool and create specialty yarns.

CAMPBELLTOWN CONNECTIONS

After her older daughter remarried, they were concerned that Joan was living in an isolated area as she was ageing. They helped her to find a house in Campbelltown where she felt an immediate sense of belonging. Joan was 60 and had to make new contacts and a new life. She initially tried the CWA, but it was not the same in the city and so started volunteering, initially at the Julia Farr Centre. Joan did some evening classes including woodwork, nutrition and dancing. At the dancing class, met her second husband. After 6 years together at Magill, the couple decided to move into a retirement village in Rostrevor 1991. Joan is now the only original resident in the village. Joan enjoys the closeness to the Hills, the local walks and sense of connected villages in Campbelltown. Joan is still involved in the Campbelltown Library Book Club after many years and enjoys the robust conversations.

As her retirement village is walking distance to the library and the activities of the Council, Joan is able to participate easily and loves the responsiveness of the council and that they ask for residents' advice, provide services and take on feedback. Joan sees the issues of housing density and the subsequent on-street parking as creating concerns into the future. She believes that there is a need for some streets to have only parking on one side to maintain the character of the area and ease of movement.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Joan fully retired from her volunteering roles at 90. At that time, she had been the chair for 15 years of Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) and was still on the Council of the Ageing (COTA) board and the SA Retirement Association Residents Board (SARVA).

Joan has flourished in her 'third age career'. As a member of COTA she heard about SARVA so went to a meeting leading to her being on the committee for 15 years as a member, Vice President and President. This work led her to roles with the COTA board and their policy committee and promoting the need to look at regulations and policies in retirement villages. As Chair and board member of ARAS for 15 years, member of the Seniors Information Service/Catalyst for over 10 years and chair of the local village residents committee, Joan has frequently represented these groups, attending meetings and conferences with industries building aged care facilities regarding their design and legislation. She has been an influential voice in developing policy directions and consulting and speaking at retirement villages to understand the needs. Her actions have contributed to significant changes in the aged care industry for example, reducing the cap on what people have to pay to exit villages.

Joan was runner up as Senior SA of the Year and received a Member of the Order of Australia in June 2020 presented at Government House for all of her years of volunteering in the area of retirement villages and aged rights.

REFLECTIONS

Joan believes that her life has been fortunate and that the key to life is to just keep on going, there is always a reason to keep going and to try another day.

She sees success as being able to do something you are proud of and the satisfaction that you can do something that was a challenge or beyond what you thought you could do. She believes that there is always something you can do for somebody else if you so choose.

Her advice to young women is to be prepared for difference between what you expect and what is available, don't expect things to fall into your lap, but go looking for opportunities and be open and accepting to what is around you.

“You get more out of volunteering than you give.”