



### Contact Email for May 2018

Writer's BLOCK. I have made a couple of starts on this month's Email, only to get a few lines then say, 'Nah, I don't want to talk about that'. So I sit here with an empty page with nothing to fill it. I have been writing these emails since September 2011 and have always found something to say. Although looking at what I did say became embarrassing when I discovered how many times I have used the same illustrations.

This takes my mind back to my school days when my essays would be about as long as the above paragraph. But since going out into the world I have found that I have done nothing much beyond writing books, papers or lectures where I could sit down and produce them with relatively little effort. But not today! Is it because I am getting old? I will be 86 this year. I have been retired for 22 years and I am about to undertake a new study of retirement and ageing. Wow, I can tell you about that.

Over the years I have researched and written quite a bit about ageing and retirement and I am about to do some more research in this area. We all know retirement is what you do when you get old. Well, yes and no. In the past, many societies allowed men and women to decide when they were too old to continue working. What happened to them after that varied considerably. Nomadic tribes usually moved on leaving the retiree a poignant figure gradually disappearing in the distance, knowing they would soon die. Sedentary populations tended to allow the old to continue working until they were ready to stop. Then, with great respect, allowed them to retreat into the family home and do chores they were capable of. From the 16th to the 19th centuries, Europe generally followed this pattern. However, we need to remember that before the 20th century, in any population, a significant number died before the age of 20 so that only a small proportion of the births would reach 65.

If you lived past 20 you had a good chance to live past 65 but even then there were a lot who would not make it. War and plague brought a lot down, and there were diseases which could end your life before you made 65. So, even with bigger numbers going past 20 there were still a lot of hurdles which would prevent a lot of those who lived past the age of 20 from reaching 65. Thus, even though the number of people living past the age of 20 had increased, the number of those living beyond 65 was still small. Although significant improvements were made earlier, many things happened in the 20th century to allow a much greater number of people to live through childhood and continue living past 70.

However, we need to contrast this with the dichotomy that has grown up between the cultural expectations of the need for everyone to work and the fewer number of people required to do the work, and in some cases fewer people willing to do the work. The development of new technologies, from the 20th century on, has allowed the necessities of life and more to be produced with fewer and fewer members of the community being involved. This downsizing of the work force still continues. With these technologies came the fixed retirement age, (65 for Men, 60 for women) and the old age pension. Introduced in New South Wales and Victoria in 1900, Queensland in 1908, and throughout the rest of Australia in 1909. What continued on was an assumption that retirement brought the end of life. In Japan, the retirement age was 65 and life expectancy was 66. Since the end of the Second World War, life expectancy, in many countries, has drifted out to the 80's and 90's. So that retirement means release from the control of an employer, but signals that you may have 15, 20, 25 years or more to fill in somehow.

There, it is 1.15pm and I made it. I ain't dead yet. *Alan Scott*, Continuing Education Officer