

# OPSO makes the community a VOW!

**The VOW project – the Voice of Wisdom – will promote the voice of the community to government and all political parties.**

The VOW project recognises the wisdom of the 20-20 Vision promoted by the Government. It will facilitate the community to not only visualise a preferred future, but it will also provide the processes to ensure that all policy resolutions are heard.

OPSO president Val French, AM, said that OPSO was bringing all sections and all ages of the community together in a series of Speak Outs, face-to-face interviews and specific-interest meetings across the state.

“We have already begun this process in June, with three Speak Outs as well as small group work,” she said. “In our interviews and small group work, we are asking that participants visualise their preferred future for their special needs, and then, thinking outside the square, compile resolutions to bring this about.

“The larger Speak Outs are devoted to a specific area of policy, for example, employment,

education, transport, health, housing, recreation family and community wellbeing, crime prevention and rehabilitation. We are again asking participants to visualise their preferred future, then, using the variety of expertise within the meeting, work towards policy resolutions.

“Most people are unhappy with consultation from above. No matter how sincere the intention, it is unable to reach the grass roots of the community. Our VOW project reaches the grass roots as well as traditional consultation base.

“It gives the young a voice, as well as the old, the middle years, people of all races, the able and the disabled.

“With the advent of an ageing society it is essential that we stop marginalising society, and work and plan together to ensure social and economic changes that will meet the needs of all. **“This is our ‘VOW!’”❖**

## Older People Speak Out



*OPSO news and information, Winter 2003*

### 2003 national & state Media Awards...

**Three thousand nomination forms will be distributed during the next four weeks calling for entries to the 10th OPSO Media Awards.**

These awards recognise excellence in the portrayal of



older people and their issues, through newspapers, television, radio, photography, newsletters and advertising.

The aim is to break down the stereotypes of older people held by the community – stereotypes that lead to elder abuse, mature

age unemployment and lack of self-confidence in older people.

A longitudinal study has showed that ageing positively can give you seven more years of life.

The awards encourage the community to view ageing positively for the benefit of all.

A nomination form is enclosed in this issue. **Use it, please!❖**

**The Media Awards function will be held at the Parliament House Annex, Brisbane, on NOVEMBER 20, 2003**

# Vietnam Vets veto social isolation

**With the support of Connect the Coast at Nerang, and a seeding grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs, half a dozen Vietnam veterans have started something which has taken off like the proverbial rocket.**

The group has set out to bring Vietnam veterans in from the cold and social isolation after their return from a fairly unpopular war.

From that beginning, this self-help, apolitical organisation now has 40 members who help not only each other, but also widows of the veterans who were their mates.

Neil Douglas, who runs Connect-a-Vet, says that a strong camaraderie keeps the veterans focused on helping people in need in the community.

None of these men are paid, but the sense of satisfaction they derive is worth more than cash.

Some drive the bus for Connect the Coast, with whom they work closely, bringing people in from remoter parts of the coast to join in the social activities on offer.

The vets themselves don't work all the time. They make sure they

find time for fishing, going to the movies, walking or keeping fit at the gym. "Besides exercising every day, I make sure I keep up my fitness levels by seeing a dietician regularly," Neil said.

As the group grows, it is becoming more structured and now, he says, "someone actually takes the minutes at every meeting." ❖



## Social isolation, a definition:

**Social isolation is generally accepted to be a state of low social participation with minimal social contact.**

It has become increasingly evident as people live longer through improvements in health care.

A useful way of limiting the social isolation of older people is to ensure the people affected are integrated into the community. Social integration depends on the availability of appropriate housing, personal support and access to recreational and social services.

Many such services by Home and Community Care, for example, which include Community Aged Care packages, home respite and visits by social workers, do not relieve the real burdens of personal security and loneliness.

Fears about personal safety often derive from isolation, which is in turn related to depression, loss of social skills and anxiety.

Access to community services alone cannot adequately fill the gaps in people's lives caused by social isolation. The solution requires much more – recognition of the problems suffered by isolated people and the will to help them solve their own problems. ❖

## Social isolation gone FAST... Betty's story

**At 72, Tom and Betty moved to the Gold Coast from Adelaide, leaving behind their extended family, but within six months of moving into their highrise home, Tom had a stroke which left him totally incapacitated and forced to move to a nursing home.**

Betty herself had a chronic breathing disorder, suffered depression and was at risk of agoraphobia. Besides this, she had never learned to drive, which made visiting her husband by cab a very expensive exercise, as both were on age pensions.

Having received a copy of Connect the Coast's newsletter, she rang them and was brought to the group's next meeting by one of their support

workers. As her involvement with the group flourished, she became more outgoing and made several friends.

The Frail Aged Special Transport (FAST) co-ordinator then assessed Betty as being eligible for volunteer support so, for the cost of a small donation, the volunteer now drives her to the meetings and to visit her husband. Betty and the volunteer share an interest in theatre which she is now able to enjoy without the financial burden of transport costs.

Betty obtained information on computer classes from Connect the Coast and Home and Community Care, and now has the skills to keep in touch with her family. She also goes to Breathe Easy classes at Community Health and will soon take up golf again.

"I'll never be able to thank Connect the Coast enough for making my life worth living again," Betty said. ❖

By Anne Ring

As a card-carrying member of OPSO, and a dyed-in-the-wool supporter of its work in promoting images of ageing that are positive and realistic, it was particularly exciting for me to meet a woman who could be its patron saint.

I have to admit that ever since I'd first read about Catherine Bradfield, just a few weeks earlier, I had had hopes of that. But, after over 60 years of cock-eyed optimism, even I had learned not to pin too much on my expectations.

Nevertheless, when you find out about a woman in her 90s who has just digitally self-published her second book of adventures around the world, you do have to wonder whether you just might have lucked onto the ultimate example of inspirational ageing.

The first thing about Bradfield is how easy she makes it to interview her, by welcoming you into a life that is not only rich with experiences that she has sought out, but also with events that both test and hone the character.

Born in 1910 in England (just after her family's return from South Africa), she talks vividly and with great affection about the father she had for only a few years before he died at Gallipoli, and much of whose love of writing, nature and animals she inherited.

And about her young, brilliant and impecunious mother (who earned but – in the way of those times – was not awarded a Cambridge degree), and the struggles she had in bringing up her three children on an isolated farm, until her death from cancer when Bradfield was just 19 years old.

Then there was Bradfield's own desire to go beyond a conventional life, job and marriage, and – instead – to see the world, which she launched herself on forthwith and with no formal qualifications, as she describes at the start of her first book.

Within the first few pages she shows how character is destiny, as she covers her experiences in pre-war and anti-Semitic Germany, and her efforts to help escaping Jews while being open to the positives of German life and culture.

The second thing about Bradfield is how similar her attitude to life is now, in her 93rd year, to that of herself at 19. And, as I had hoped before meeting her, but had schooled myself not to put words into her

# Anti-anti-ageing: Through an adventurous view of life



mouth, the secret of pro-ageing lies in that attitude: an independence of spirit and ability to recover from what life throws at you, combined with the capacity and desire to keep on learning, and growing, and seeing life as an adventure with new experiences at each staging post. Not that she talked about it as pro-ageing.

She simply demonstrated it in her approach to her life now. A time when she feels less anxious, less judgmental (of herself and others), and happier, she says, than when she was only 60 (which was mightily reassuring to the 61-year old scribe who was suddenly feeling more like a stripling than she had for many years). Bradfield had always written, but hadn't felt that she was good enough to be published.

Now, the favorable reviews that she's been getting for her two books (the first written in her 80s) are helping her to revise that opinion. And six years ago, when writing on her typewriter started to feel old-fashioned, she took on the computer, which she can now use in a somewhat haphazard fashion and with gaps in her confidence that she calls on more clued-up neighbours to fill when necessary.

Just 11 months ago she took up residence in a remarkable communal household, where she is the second oldest in a group of residents, each with their own bedsitting room, ensuite, and adjoining garden area, and a shared living room, dining room and other facilities, with a housekeeper and a cleaning service, and an optimal combination of independence and shared living, just down the road from a shopping centre. She is still an enthusiastic walker, after many years of walking her dogs, and looks fit, lively and a glowing example of positive ageing.

As with any stage of life, of course, this one has its challenges.

**continued next page**

*The second thing about Bradfield is how similar her attitude to life is now, in her 93rd year, to that of herself at 19.*

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**One-Way Ticket: A way to see the world**, by Catherine Bradfield, 2nd Ed, 1997, The Pentland Press Ltd, County Durham.  
**Open Return**, by Catherine Bradfield, 2002, published digitally by the author.  
Both books are available from the author @ Abbeyfield House, 75 Wakefield Gardens ACT 2602.

**from previous page**

All the people now closest to Bradfield are much younger than she is, as those who were her peers – including the husband she married late in life after being a co-founder of a chain of motels in Canberra and elsewhere – have died.

And it turns out at the very end of the interview that, belying her appearance; there have also been some specific physical losses to contend with.

Not only does she have a hearing problem (which

was not apparent during the interview), but she only has sight in one eye, and that is fading, so the day will come when she will no longer be able to do her beloved reading.

But then, she says, and this – in many ways – was the coup de grâce confirming her credentials as a potential patron saint, she will be able to spend more time thinking about things, and she has so much that she would like to have more time to think over. ❖

# Just say 'NO'

*By Catherine Uhr*

*When gambling is really SCAMbling,  
losing your money is the only sure bet...*

**The Office of Fair Trading's campaign, Scamsmart, is designed to give you what you need to just say no when you are at risk of being parted from your hard-earned cash.**

If you don't know all you need to know about a product or service, at best you are gambling on the fact that it will work out and you'll be better off.

Scambling means you will lose no matter what! The trick is to distinguish between certainty, gambling and plain bad scambling.

This campaign provides you with all you need to know to stop yourself from scambling, which is as futile as stuffing marshmallows into your moneybox.

**Certain activities put you at high risk of scambling:**

- Talking to strangers on the 'phone at night;
- Responding to Internet offers;
- Accepting prizes which you are told by mail you have won when you don't recall entering a competition;
- Buying goods or services from shopping centre malls or at your front door without doing your homework.



Too often, casework solicitors like me first see a client when their money is already riding off into the sunset – like Genna, a single mum relying on Social Security who spent \$5000 she didn't have by using her credit card to buy horserace betting software from the Internet.

Genna was gambling on the fact that she would recover her initial outlay and start making money. But it wasn't gambling – it was scambling – and the only sure winner she had was the loss of her money.

Sue and Fred were phoned at home one night and promised the opportunity of owning their own home sooner. They were offered a sure-bet plan and an opportunity to refinance their home. The added incentive was an equity-style facility. It wasn't until the afternoon of the day they signed the contract that they started to realise that the figures in the plan didn't add up. The interest rate on offer was higher than their existing rate and the fees, and charges and set-up costs for their new \$150,000 loan were going to be \$10,000.

George received a scratchy in the mail which revealed he had won holiday credits. The catch was that he had to pour out money to use them and he found himself entering into a 70-page time-share purchase that he didn't want and couldn't afford.

I don't want you to think George, Sue, Fred or Genna were simply victims who were scammed. The hope for them and for all of us, and the concept underlying the Office of Fair Trading's timely campaign, is that my clients were active participants.

Because it is only when we realise that we are active participants that we can exercise a choice – get a Scamsmart Kit from the Office of Fair Trading and... JUST SAY NO! ❖

**Phone 13 65 80 30**

“Wow, I'd love to go to China! When's the trip leaving?” Stella exclaimed excitedly. An avid traveler, she'd been to Turkey the year before and had spent many years tripping to faraway places – Istanbul, Kathmandu, Scandinavia, Romania – not the regular jaunts. She was only 70 when she got hold of the China idea!

This was no everyday, organised trip. No four-star hotels, and no pampered guided tours. Stella was taking on the challenge to go somewhere unknown to her and many of her friends, live there for four months and teach English to Chinese children in middle school somewhere on the outskirts of Zibo in the Chinese province of Shandong.

She didn't know she'd be living in a second-rate hotel room half an hour's walk from the Shanlu school – and that she would walk that distance four times daily, five days a week.

Each morning at 7.30am from August to December 2003, Stella turned up faithfully at the school where she was employed to teach English to some 115 middle school students over four different classes.

“I lost a lot of weight walking and it was very hot when I first arrived,” she told me.

This reality had slowly come to fruition since first hearing about the opportunity to teach English in China, six months previously.

She'd waited patiently for the departure. Packing, unpacking, repacking, deciding which clothes she was going to need over three seasons – late summer, autumn and early winter in northern China. It was a hard combination to put together when her limit was only

# A faraway place

By Anne Carlsson



26 kilos to fly with JAL, Brisbane-Tokyo-Beijing.

Before dawn one morning in early August, I saw Stella off. She seemed undaunted. If she had any misgivings they were well hidden. She was quiet and had only one other person traveling with her.

My next contact with Stella was via email. After three days traveling overland from Beijing, she had taken up her contract with the Shanlu school.

Stella fell in love with the children she taught. She was happy at the school and was respected and warmly welcomed by the head teacher and staff.

“I made good friends with a couple of the teaching staff who worked closely with me,” she smiled. “I was often invited to join the families of some of the students for meals and social times.”

In the four months Stella was in Shanlu and apart from her daily teaching, her extracurricular experiences were enviable.

“I had my first contact with other English-speaking teachers at McDonalds in the city,” she laughed. “Would you believe that

McDonalds there is like an embassy. English teachers often met there.

“Also, every Sunday, at a café called The English Corner, English

teachers were treated to a free meal and Chinese students would come along and sit in on conversational English. They paid for their meals but got extra English lessons free,” Stella explained.

“I buddied up with a young Chinese girl whose father asked

me to spend time with her for her English tuition. She proved to be of great benefit when I went shopping because she was able to interpret for me and sort things out with the shopkeepers.

“Her parents eventually took me to dinner at the Hotel Zibo – an incredibly ornate and palatial work of art. I felt like a celebrity dining there.”

Stella said she was invited out to a meal with the head teacher of the school and his family, and she liked that too. She said he was a very nice boss to work for.

“There was an old Chinese lady who sold toffeed sweet potato. I'd pass her everyday and she would like me to buy her food. I did and it was delicious. I'm sorry that I didn't get to say goodbye to her when I left. I guess she would have soon realised I'd gone – because I would greet her daily,” Stella said, the memory of the old lady flickering in her eyes.

“The locals would love to look and stare as I walked down the street,” she mused. “That was easy to remedy,” she added, “Just a smile and the stares turned to hundred of smiles – that was lovely.

“The kids worked hard. They're at school six days a week from early morning to early evening. They worked so hard, I tried to make my classes fun and make it easy on the children. They got their English, but in a relaxed and easy fashion.

“This is a trip I would recommend to most – not necessarily a sight-seeing jaunt, but an adventurous experience with a most delightful culture, a memory I'll keep forever with many stories for my 14 grandchildren.”❖

***“They paid for their meals but got extra English lessons free.”***

**“Before answering your questions about my changed lifestyle, I'd like to tell you what brought it about,” Betty Ritchie said.**

“My husband David worked on an Australian overseas aid program in Tonga for two months, and exactly a week after arriving home, he was dead. He was 72, a couple of years older than me, and his sudden death was a great shock. We would have been married 50 years the following month, and I learned after the funeral that the best man and bridesmaid at our wedding in Scotland had planned a surprise visit for the celebration.”

Betty and David migrated from Scotland in 1948 and, 10 months after settling in Brisbane, their son Blair was born. Within the next seven years, two daughters, Barbara and Susan, were born.

Like most young migrants, they were eager to make a better life for themselves than was possible in post-war Scotland.

“Our first years were quite a battle, especially for David studying for his degree at night while working as an electrician” Betty said. “But it was eventually worth the effort, because as he graduated from tradesman to consulting engineer, our accommodation went from a single room, in what had once been a red-light district, to a large house in a 'better' suburb.”

A large house that, after her husband's death became a large problem. “David suffered ill-health for years before and after retirement,” Betty said. “So I hadn't much money when he died. When plumbing and other maintenance bills began gobbling up what little I had, I decided I couldn't afford to live in the house with the age pension my only income.”

When Betty discussed her situation with daughter Susan and her husband, John, they proposed she sell up and build a flat underneath their two-storied timber house.

### **‘A brilliant suggestion’**

“It was a brilliant suggestion,” Betty said. “Sue and John's living area is a couple of metres above street level with the children's bedrooms, lounge and bathroom on the floor below with laundry and office. As the land slopes considerably, there was plenty of space for my flat beneath that.

“It wasn't long before Susan had de-

# A change of pace – and space

By  
*Betty  
Ritchie*

signed a flat and had an estimate of costs from the builder who'd built their office and knew the problems of extending a pole house. We figured that, after paying for the flat, I'd have money for emergencies, and airfares to visit my other children and their families.”

In spite of warnings from well-meaning friends that Sue and John 'might go bankrupt', 'sell their house', 'move to another state' and even more pessimistically, 'they could die', Betty had no problem using her money to build a flat that would eventually belong to Susan and John. While acknowledging to her friends that anything could happen, she refused to dwell on the possibilities.

### **Happiest period**

However, it proved to be the beginning of the happiest period of her life, but she wouldn't know that until much later!

“After the builder finished and left, Susan took over. She built bookcases, put up timber blinds, built cupboards, and while I was away for a few days' holiday, extended my kitchen divider to give me more storage space, and tiled the bench-top with slate.”

Betty could access her flat through a garden gate but, because of three dogs intent on making their escape, prefers using the front door that leads directly into Susan and John's lounge. So far, there hasn't been a problem.

“It's like admitting friends to my private art gallery,” Betty said. “Not only do my paintings hang on the lounge room walls but on all of the walls leading down to my flat.

“The flat is simply a long rectangle, with structural poles and furniture defining various areas.

“A wide verandah, stretching its full length, is partitioned off by a lattice wall at one end to make a painting studio and at the other there's a lattice door that leads into the back garden.

My kitchen is small, because I seldom cook.”

When she first moved into the flat she microwaved meals or opened tins, until Susan told her she shouldn't eat so much 'rubbish'. Now, if she doesn't eat with the family, her dinner is brought down to her, often by John, a tea towel draped over his arm, calling as he descends, 'meals on wheels, grandma' or 'silver service, madam'.

Betty says she still eats 'rubbish', but rarely, as Susan is an excellent cook and John does a mean barbecue!

“I enjoy so many bonuses living here – a handywoman within shouting distance who, with her fully equipped tool kit (which her husband thoughtfully augmented), can do most things a handyman can! John, besides playing at being a waiter, always answers my calls of distress when my computer is making mayhem or worse, threatens to self-destruct!

“Grandson Roland, also a computer whiz, is usually very helpful, except when I'm competing with his girl friend for attention.

“21-year-old Melinda, an inspiration to family and friends alike during her second battle with cancer, makes great bolognaise and sweet potato pies, among other delights; but is easily upset when I simply can't eat enough for two grown men at one sitting! And 11-year-old Meagan has lately mastered the art of making terrific pancakes, so I'm seriously considering slipping a few simple recipes between the pages of the hundreds of books she reads, hoping to lure her to the stove!

“I know my new lifestyle wouldn't suit everyone. But I'd like to encourage more families to give it a go!

“It helps, of course, if you like and respect, even love each other, and probably works best if the older person wants, and is allowed, to retain as much independence and freedom as she wants.”❖

## Comment ...

**It appears there are conflicting views on what is in the best interests of a child caught up in a dysfunctional family.**

We have been told that Department of Families' policy is, wherever possible, the child be placed in the care of relative carers when neglect and abuse have made it impossible for the child to remain with the natural parents. This is regarded as in the best interests of the child as it is obviously less emotionally traumatic for a child to stay within the extended family.

However, some government field workers have recently expressed the view that they prefer to place children with foster carers rather than with relative carers, because the love between relative carers and the child makes it harder to re-unite parents and child.

Perhaps those who believe that the nuclear family is the best unit to care for a child have been unlucky enough to have been brought up without the security of an extended family of grandparents, aunts and uncles, and without the knowledge that no matter what happens, family members will take care of you and love you and keep you safe.

We have case after case of children returned prematurely to their parents, only to be abused again and again. Surely where a child is constantly abused the best chance of a positive outcome is to work with the whole family. The responsibility can be shared, with counselling support.

Returning the child to its parents is a useless goal unless there is careful planning to really ensure the

abuse will not recur. If an abused child is to be returned to the parents, there is surely less chance of the abuse being repeated if the extended family can be involved as an integral part of the process.

The Department of Families' policies support relative carers. It is a pity that some of the field workers dance to their own tune. ❖

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## Dear Editor ...

**I have just come back from a trip that was overshadowed by tensions engendered by a determined old man living in the past but still with a sharp intellect.**

The main problem, as I always suspected, was that he still held an open licence, and at age 93 was determined to prove to me that his skills honed by driving his racing car in the late '30s were unimpaired.

In addition he suffers from a disease which detracts from his ability to accurately control the operation of his extremities, ie, feet and hands.

The results of his so-called skills on the mountain road around the Great Lake and the Great Western Tiers were enough to cause me to miss all the scenery. My eyes were glued permanently to the road as I shouted at the top of my lungs the advisory speed on the signs on the hairpin bends as we roared up to them with tyres screaming and the car full of fumes from the almost melting brake pads.

Tom, of course, had his hearing aids turned off. He was unaware of my frantic shouts, as they, together with the sounds of squealing tyres, echoed around the misty ravines and cliff faces of that terrible descent.

Twenty-five .... Twenty-five!  
... slow! ... Fifteen! Fifteen!!  
Fifteen!! Whoa! Slow down you silly old sod!!

Suffice to say that when I was able to be in on an interview with his doctor, I made it perfectly clear to them both that on the drive back to Tom's home with a hopelessly loaded car and trailer, there was to be no argument about who was to drive.

Fortunately the doctor agreed and I got the impression that she was thinking she may have been a bit reckless in signing his medical certificate which had enabled him to have his licence renewed in the first place...

Signed,

*Survivor*

## The carer fell out of bed!

**... and this brought Community Health to the rescue**

**I have been looking after my now 92-year-old mother for many years. At times my own health is not so good and I had tried to get some assistance, such as Home Help.**

Of course Mum was adamantly against having help. "I do everything for myself and I don't need any help," Mum advised brightly when the assessors came to the house. The secret of my longevity is my homebrew. I have one bottle nearly every day and all my friends say it's very good beer too."

This is the only thing my incorrigible mother does – with a considerable amount of help from me I might add.

She has had this hobby of making Cooper's Lager for some 15 years and I try to help her maintain this hobby.

However, towards the end of last year I fell out of bed and was taken to

hospital suffering concussion and amnesia from a head injury.

Thankfully, in the New Year, the staff of the Community Health Service were very helpful. A house-keeper now comes fortnightly and Mum happily accepts Meals on Wheels five days a week. Rails and a step were installed for her safety.

Whenever I point out that I am 63 years old, Mum tells me, "You're only a chicken yet." Nevertheless I suffer from serious sleep apnoea and apparently this was the cause of my falling out of bed. No, I don't drink! Perhaps Mum is the oldest woman who makes homebrew.

Anyway I greatly appreciate the very friendly and helpful people from Homecare Service who are very kind to my mother and me. ❖

# Just a bit of nonsense ...

By Maureen McCracken

**Anyone who knows me well is aware that I am a friendly type of person, but even for me there are limits.**

When during a recent visit to a shopping centre, a woman rushed up to me and gave me a hug – I was somewhat surprised! I was even more surprised when she addressed me by my name.

After a few more hugs and inquiries about the health of family members, it was obvious that she knew me very well.

The problem was I did not have a clue who she was!

I asked her a few searching questions such as “Still living in the same place are you? Or – how’s the family?”

Her replies of “Yes – still there,” and “Yes – the kids are fine,” did nothing to solve the mystery. So we parted, promising to have a catch-up over coffee one day at the “old place”, leaving me still in a state of confusion.

This is not the first time such a situation has arisen. In fact it’s becoming a frequent event. I was becoming very concerned about my mental health and suggested to friends it might be the beginning of “you know what?”

I’ve been reassured that they have also suffered similar embarrassments. We’ve come to the conclusion that some faces change more than others.

We are seriously considering forming a club called ‘Who Are You? – WAY’.

When we are greeted by strangers, instead of asking who they are, we can point to our club badges and they will know they need to identify themselves.

I wish I’d had one the other day at the funeral – I would have been saved the embarrassment of not recognising the lady who has lived next door to me for 20 years.

**WAY to go! ❖**



## NOTICE TO EDITORS

The material in this news-sheet is available for publication, providing acknowledgment is given to the source.

Dear editor...

## Challenge the valuations!

**Anthony Marx, a writer for The Courier-Mail, stated on March 1 that, “The legitimacy of thousands of Queensland property valuations has been thrown into doubt following a landmark High Court ruling last month.**

**“The court’s decision handed a powerful weapon to property owners planning to appeal huge increases in valuations mailed out this week.**

**“The High Court ruled on February 13 in favour of Sydney homeowner Anthony Mauriei, who argued on appeal that using only a few sales of vacant land in an established suburb to determine all unimproved values was ‘unduly selective’.**

**“Such scarce vacant land sales often sold at inflated prices and could not be considered a reliable barometer of true market values, the Justices unanimously concluded in a decision which sent shockwaves around the nation’s real estate industry.**

**“Queensland’s Department of Natural Resources uses the same system to determine unimproved valuations. And many of the 41 local government areas reviewed this year recorded a big spike in values as a result of the property boom, with residential valuations up 38 percent in Brisbane and the Gold Coast.”**

**An aged pensioner, namely myself, of Chermside West, considers if an increase of 38 percent is a big spike, then what is an increase from \$77,000 to \$131,000 – 71 percent?**

**It is absolutely arbitrary and over the top. Existing rates are a hardship for most pensioners and a further increase due to the 71 percent increase in valuation will increase that hardship.**

**I have appealed to the Department of Natural Resources for consideration and possible adjustment to the increase.**

**Another writer from The Courier-Mail, John McCarthy, wrote that last year the overall median house price in Brisbane, rose to \$256,000 – a growth rate of 28 percent.**

**A retiree of Bridgeman Downs said, “The Brisbane City Council will hopefully reassess its rating level of properties to conform with normal budget expectations, and not create a hike in rates.”**

**Well that’s it – we can only hope for the best. Trust them!**

*Reg McIntyre*

## ATTENTION DRIVERS

Contact OPSO on 3219 2572 for your RACQ Years Ahead Driving Program.

