

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

### *Statement by Minister for Seniors*

**MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Seniors)** [12.07 pm]: In 1991 the United Nations declared 1 October the International Day of Older Persons. This special day recognises and celebrates the tremendous wealth of experience, skills and wisdom that older people throughout the world contribute to the social and economic sustainability of their communities. In Western Australia, this international day is a precursor to BankWest Seniors Week, during which people of all ages and abilities are encouraged to celebrate the valuable contributions our seniors make, and continue to make, to our community. The week runs from 23 to 30 October.

Seniors are the fastest growing sector of our population and present us with huge opportunities and challenges. These opportunities and challenges were outlined and responded to in the government's five-year plan, "Generations together: A Progress Report of the Western Australian Active Ageing Strategy". An important initiative of the strategy, which I will launch shortly, is the active ageing scorecard. It will be a national first and has been developed in consultation with the World Health Organisation. It will provide benchmark indicators for measuring the status of active ageing in Western Australia's seniors. It will help us realise our vision that in 10 years, increasing numbers of seniors will be measurably healthier and more physically active and will be valued active participants in the work force and in community and cultural life.

There are more than 316 000 seniors in Western Australia, comprising 16 per cent of the state's population. By 2051 it is projected that there will be 952 000 seniors, comprising 33 per cent of the state's population. More than 225 000 seniors are WA Seniors Card holders and enjoy the benefits of state government concessions and statewide business discounts. Our seniors are a culturally rich and diverse sector and their contributions span all walks of life. Forty-one per cent of our seniors were born overseas and they share their special cultures, cuisines and history with us. More than 20 per cent, or some 67 000 people, are still in the work force, the majority of whom are in managerial and other professional roles. Forty-four per cent of Western Australians aged 55 to 64 and 30 per cent of Western Australians aged 65-plus are volunteers - as carers, mentors and community workers. An increasing number provide primary care to their grandchildren.

BankWest Seniors Week is a chance to highlight some of these contributions through our annual seniors awards, and to celebrate with the community in a range of activities, forums and events across both public and private sectors. A special Seniors Week supplement has been published in today's *The West Australian* and will be carried in seniors' newspapers, copies of which will be available at libraries and BankWest branches. I urge all members of the house to be involved in the week and to encourage their constituents to participate in "Celebrating Life", the theme of BankWest Seniors Week 2005.