

Executive Moves



After fifteen years, chief executive David Deans announces his retirement. Ever wondered what makes him tick? He spoke to Sarah Saunders.

Even if you don't read your magazine, you've probably seen David on Seven's *Sunrise* the morning after the federal budget announcement, or heard him discussing mature age employment on Radio National. Or if you're in Parliament House during question time, you may have noticed him, sitting in the same seat – top row centre aisle – day in, day out.

For fifteen years David Deans, 67, has been the face of older Australians – quiet, measured, steady as you go, Felix to chairman Everal Compton's Oscar. Hailing from Western Australia, David was a founding board member of Later Years, the forerunner to National Seniors in the 1970s. He rejoined the organisation as chief executive in 1991, leaving behind a career in property.

Under David's stewardship membership has increased from 36,000 to almost 300,000 and financials are strong. More than that, National Seniors has emerged as a powerful voice for older people both here and on the international stage.

But this issue heralds the end of an era: David will retire in September. Ever wondered about the man behind the organisation? Here he is.

You've been CEO, lobbying on behalf of older Australians, for 15 years – was this something you ever imagined yourself doing?

My interest was in politics and policy, and when I became chief executive in 1991 I focused specifically on ageing issues. In 1991 I couldn't have told you what the level of age pension was; I can now. It was an interest I had and I've been lucky that it was part of my job. Lobbying, though, is only part of a chief executive's role.

What was your vision for National Seniors when you started out?

My aim was to make it the largest organisation in Australia which we achieved many years ago. Now it's a matter of it being not only the biggest but the best in the benefits and services we provide our members.

What's been your greatest challenge?

In a management sense, allocating my time to the different areas of responsibility: working with my people, lobbying, doing policy work, growing the business and ensuring our financial viability.