It is a great pleasure for me to be invited to open this conference on behalf of the Board of South Eastern Sydney Local Health District TAKING THE STRESS OUT OF AGEING! STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY AGEING.

Professor Henry Brodaty is well known to you as the authority in Alzheimer’s Disease but today he is taking us into a new realm of discussion. Professor Brodaty was instrumental in the establishment if the Alzheimer’s Association here in NSW and I was privileged to assist Joan Simms, its first CEO. We have much to thank Professor Brodaty for, and we are privileged that he is working with our Health District to make our old age better for all of us.

Taking the Stress out of Ageing might be easier said than done. I am AGEING but I don’t feel old. My dear mother said this to me when I told her that she was to become a Great Grandmother, she did not feel old even though she was 82.

None of us feel old, though we know that it is harder to do the physical things that we used to take for granted, like working in the garden, going shopping, driving long distances, looking after our grandchildren now that our children are late having babies. Once grandparents were in their 50’s but now they are often in the 60’s and 70’s. Things don’t come as easily for us and we don’t cope as well as we used to, perhaps. We often need to contend with loneliness, the loss of a partner, financial worried and the uncertainty of how much we need to live on and how long will the money last and most concerning of all, how long will I live.

My father worried about this though he did live a wonderfully active life until he was 94. I can’t imagine what it must be like to lose one’s partner. As one ages, we become more dependent on each other, supporting each other through the ups and downs of illness, good things like travel. We depend on each other to get up and down the steps. My husband and I joke about overseas travel saying to each other, we won’t do this when we are old ……… but how old is old? Some people manage AGEING without any stress and some stress about AGEING.

We are all individuals and our lives have panned out for us in many ways and have shaped our thoughts, out concerns, our anxieties and our stresses.

Maybe, I have been fortunate in AGEING. I lost a child when I was young, my stress was overwhelming then so for me, and I can’t speak for others but nothing much can be more stressful than losing a child.

Activity, both physical and mental seems to me, to be important in helping the AGEING process, playing sport, tennis and golf or any form of physical activity, Bridge, crosswords or any form of mind game helps, I understand, and some take on University degrees. I was at a National Library function in Canberra last week and sat next to a gentleman who was 88 and had received his second Doctorate last year having completed his first when he was 33. Now he is indeed fortunate as he has good health. Some are not so fortunate.

Today, we may learn a few tricks about the AGEING process and how to manage all our worries. But most of all, companionship, support of a loving family and good friends make for a healthy life and we all need a healthy life in AGEING.
You must not feel abandoned, alone or frightened as this Local Health District has the services to support your needs and these services are available to you.

It is a pleasure to have so many people here to learn from the experts about how we can cope with the stresses that all of us encounter in our daily lives. Maybe, we will leave here feeling better than we did when we arrived.

I know you will enjoy Diana Fisher, a friend of my husband and mine for many years. Diana is full of fun, the best hostess to her great array of friends, for Diana, everything is possible and I know she always picks herself up, dusts off and gets on with it.

You will hear from her presently and I know you will be exhausted at the end of her presentation. Diana is a great enthusiast for life.

I am delighted to be here today and I would like to thank Professor Brodaty for inviting me to open this very important conference on Taking the Stress out of Ageing, Strategies for Healthy Ageing. I declare this conference open.

Thank you.