

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo: 12.01am Thursday January 26 2012

'Life. Be in it.' Norm returns for Australia Day Honours

Community health campaigner and the heartbeat behind 'Life. Be in it.' character Norm, Dr Colin Benjamin will receive an Order of Australia on Thursday as part of the 2012 Australia Day Celebrations.

Champion social worker and health advocate for the prevention of preventable diseases, Dr Colin Benjamin will be honoured in the Australia Day awards with an Order of Australia medal.

Dr Benjamin has been nominated for an OAM for his outstanding service to the community for his work with 'Life. Be in it.' and his roles within social welfare and business organisations.

Dr Benjamin has spent most of his career campaigning to change Australians' attitudes towards obesity and chronic disease, and is renowned as the current voice of Norm – the iconic Australian anti-hero brought to life in the 1975 Victorian Government-funded 'Life. Be in it.' campaign.

The highly successful 'Life. Be in it.' campaign was adopted by the Federal Government in 1978 and was instrumental in changing Aussie's attitudes to exercise and healthy eating in the late 70s. When the Commonwealth Government withdrew funding for the project in 1983, Dr Benjamin has maintained the self-funded community company Life. Be in it. Australia, and established it as a charity in 2007 to 'support' Norm and continue the important health messages of the 'Life. Be in it.' campaign.

"Since in 1978, our main aim has been to develop and deliver healthy active lifestyles, leisure and recreational activities that promote the prevention and control of chronic disease and thereby improve the physical and emotional wellbeing of all Australians," says Dr Benjamin.

Like father like son

Dr Benjamin's award will see him follow in the footsteps of his father, social campaigner Eric Benjamin, who received his Australia Day Award 23 years ago in 1988.

"I am honoured to receive this award and hope to continue working with 'Life. Be in it.' and other Australian organisations to promote active lifestyles and the importance an active lifestyle has on preventing chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease and cancer."

To celebrate this honour, Norm will be making a special appearance at the Australia Day celebrations at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl in Melbourne.

-ENDS-

Norm and Dr Benjamin are available for interview on 0418 148 491 or AH: (03) 9482 2870

About Dr Colin Benjamin

Dr Colin Benjamin has had a long and varied career in the public sector and appointments in the not-for-profit community sector, including Director of the Victorian Council of Social Service. He has been involved with the 'Life. Be in it.' campaign since its inception in 1975 and been the Director General of Life. Be in it. International since 1993. He has also held the roles of Co-chairman of Life. Be in it. Australia since 2007. He is the Director of the Life. Be in it. Health Promotions Institute and is a Director of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers.

About 'Life. Be in it.'

For thirty five years, 'Life. Be in it.' has been offering active, fun and creative experiences that encourage people to "Live more of your life and be more active". The organisation's vision is to "Make Life Worthwhile", and promote healthy active lifestyles, leisure and recreational activities that promote the prevention and control of chronic disease and thereby improve the physical and emotional wellbeing of all Australians.