



Age is no BARRIER



These remarkable centenarians are loving life

IT'S one of the world's most exclusive clubs but money, celebrity or social connections won't get you on the membership list. To gain entry to this club you just have to be very, very old. If you haven't received a telegram from the Queen, you're too young to join.

And, with centenarians representing the fastest growing demographic both in Australia and around the world, membership is certainly booming, as *The 100+ Club*, a new ABC doco that takes a peek inside the remarkable lives of three Australian centenarians, reveals.

There's 102-year-old Ruth who, despite the fact that she is practically blind, is on a mission to break her own world records at the 2010 Australian Masters Athletic Championships in Perth; 104-year-old versatile performer Olive, determined to get back up on stage despite bowel cancer; and 102-year-old author Dexter, who rides motorbikes around his grandson's Outback property.

But, despite their vigour, those in the 100+ Club know that death is always a part of life, as evidenced by the sad death of Olive, just one day before a private screening of the doco for friends and family.

It's a hard fact but one that all of the centenarians

readily accept.

"When you're 100, you're not far off the grave," Dexter says. "I'm well (now) but things can happen."

"It's day-by-day," agrees Ruth. "I've never been sick in my life but I've just had a pacemaker."

But, determined not to let a small thing like heart problems get in the way, sporty Ruth – who has had a lifelong passion for athletics and represented NSW in hockey – is on a mission to participate in the 2013 Masters in Geelong.

"I'm back to exercising now and will start training in September/October," she says. "I'm going to keep going. I'll be there at the next Masters."

In fact, Ruth's dedication would put people half – or even a quarter – her age to shame.

"If you're going to do those things, you have to make yourself fit," she insists. "It's never been a burden to me because I love doing it. I really think I was born with a gift and the gift was athletics – but it was my choice to use it."

And, while former cattleman Dexter still enjoys zipping around on his motorbike, he is just as happy exercising his mind. A keen historian, he first took up the pen at the age of 87 and has since produced several books, many about the early settlement of the Kilcoy area where he lives. He is currently writing his fifth book – *After 100*.

"I do enjoy life," Dexter says.

***The 100+ Club*, Sunday, 6.30pm, ABC1**



GOING STRONG: Dexter and (inset) Ruth, both members of the 100+ Club