

ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well 2005 Annual Report

1. Introduction

In September 2004, Minister Nelson announced that the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) had awarded a five year grant for the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well as part of the national Research Networks program. The Network of 50 Participants is led by a consortium of seven Universities including the University of Sydney, Australian National University, University of Queensland, Flinders University, La Trobe University, Curtin University and University of New South Wales.

In early 2005, the Network began its mission to foster multidisciplinary research on ageing of national and international significance. The Network has developed its programs and strategies through its Thematic Areas and Working Groups, State hubs, and research development and communication programs. Committees and offices have been established and core staff have been appointed.

This annual report summarises the Network's progress in terms of the objectives, programs, and milestones set in the original application (posted on our website www.ageingwell.edu.au). The report notes areas where responsibilities and activities have changed in response to emergent opportunities and other further developments. The Network is being established in close collaboration with the Office for an Ageing Australia (Department of Health and Ageing), the Australian Association of Gerontology (www.aag.asn.au), and other leading peak bodies concerned with ageing research and its applications.

2. Objectives

The ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well aims to increase the scale, focus, and capacity of Australian research to inform national efforts to respond constructively to an ageing society.

Over the course of 2005 we have confirmed the value of this aim and the more specific objectives of the Network, which are to:

- lead and facilitate collaboration in multidisciplinary, ambitious research projects that significantly advance knowledge in high priority topics for actions addressing an ageing Australia
- provide a focal point for Australian involvement in international research of excellence on ageing, including Australian contributions to international knowledge and the involvement of international research leaders in Australian ageing studies
- build capacities and quality in multidisciplinary studies on ageing through developing and mentoring new scholars, and by linking, supporting and inspiring established researchers to step outside their normal intellectual range to collaborate in new and sometimes risky ways
- promote efficiencies among researchers in making best use of existing data, expertise, funding, and other information and resources
- involve key constituencies (community, government and industry) with researchers in the two-way development of ageing research agendas and application of findings in practice and policy, and dissemination to the public.

3. Context

The Network pursues its research development objectives in the context of the 2003 National Research Priority Goal of “Ageing Well, Ageing Productively”. This goal concerns research to develop better social, medical and population health strategies to improve the mental and physical capacities of older people. More broadly, the Network aims to contribute to research building a knowledge base informing the implementation of the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia.

Since the award of the ARC/NHMRC Research Network grant, there have been two significant developments in the research environment for ageing.

First, the NHMRC and the ARC announced the Ageing Well, Ageing Productively (AWAP) research funding program. Network Participants made submissions suggesting improvements to the draft program announcement in late 2004. The final funding program, announced in mid 2005, invited applications for five year research grants addressing the theme areas of disease prevention and morbidity compression, maintaining economic and social participation, and approaches to care supporting independence and quality of life. The Network has aimed to ‘add value’ by supporting Participants in developing large scale, multidisciplinary proposals for the AWAP funding program consistent with Network objectives (see Proposal Development below).

Second, as part of the Australian Government’s Building Ageing Research Capacity (BARC) project, the Australian Office for an Ageing Australia and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare have invited the Network to collaborate in auspicing the ‘Policy and Practice Colloquium on Ageing: Informed by Evidence’, planned for July 2006 (see Future directions below).

In line with the joint funding of the Network by the NMHRC as well as the ARC, we also are aiming to involve more biomedical and medical researchers to join with psycho-social and services researchers in multidisciplinary collaboration and its applications to national priorities.

4. Central hub and communication programs

The central hub of the Network is administered in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney and it is co-located with the Centre for Education and Research on Ageing in renovated office space on the grounds of the Concord Hospital campus. Professor Kendig took up his appointment as part-time National Convenor in February 2005 and Ms Maria Sangermano as part-time Administrative Officer in May. Mr Chris Shanley and then Mr Bruce Shaw served as Acting Senior Project Officer and Acting Program Manager respectively. Early in 2006, Dr Matthew Carroll will take up an ongoing appointment as Senior Project Officer.

The Network’s **Website** has been improved and regularly updated by Mr Joe Stewart to facilitate communication between Network Participants and Associates; information on them is regularly updated. Network resources aimed at broader audiences are posted on the website of Ageing Research On-Line (ARO) in order to make them more available. The ARO is an initiative of the Department of Health and Ageing and is administered by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

A **Newsletter** was established and the first two issues were released in June and in November. They are posted on the website as well as distributed to all Participants and Associates. Additional information is circulated on an occasional basis. Paper and electronic copies of brochures have been produced and are being distributed for the Network; the Data Archive on Older Australians; and the Australian Literature and Grants Review on Ageing (see below). Posters and overheads have been prepared for Conference and seminar displays

The information activities of the Network are coordinated closely with other national resources on ageing. Items on the Network are included on an ongoing basis in the Newsletters of the Australian Association of Gerontology and Ageing Research On-Line Network news is reported on an 'as needs basis' in the Newsletters of Aged and Community Services and other industry and consumer organisations.

Throughout the year, the Network Convenor and members of the Management Committee have made presentations and led consultations aimed to strengthen links between the Network and key constituency groups. Presentations and consultations have been completed by the National Convenor and members of the Management Committee as per the following (in addition to theme and state activities reported below).

- October, 2004 (after the Network announcement) – The Relevance of Research for Practitioners, Hal Kendig, keynote address to the National Conference of Aged and Community Services Australia (Hobart)
- November 2004 – An information session and consultation on Network plans, Hal Kendig and Barbara Squires, presentation to the Australian Association of Gerontology Annual National Conference (Melbourne)
- November 2004 – Key findings and issues in multidisciplinary research on ageing, Professors Luszcz, Richardson and Kendig, presentation to the annual meeting of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia (Canberra)
- April 2005 (after the Network commenced) – The Future of Ageing Research in Australia, Hal Kendig, opening address to the Australian Association of Gerontology NSW Rural Conference 2005 (Albury)
- September 2005 – Seminar on the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well, Hal Kendig, Centre for Education and Research on Ageing (Sydney)
- October 2005 – Opportunities for Local Government in Ageing Research, Hal Kendig, address to the annual meeting of the Local Government Association of New South Wales (Sydney)
- October 2005 – The NSW State Hub of the Research Network, presentation by Hal Kendig to the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee Meeting (Sydney)
- November 2005 – Collaborative Research Opportunities for Aged Care Providers, presentation by Hal Kendig to the Community Care Coalition (Canberra)
- November 2005 – Strategies for Collaborative Research with Aged Care Providers, presentation by Hal Kendig to the Australian Aged Care Alliance (Canberra)
- November 2005 – Overview of the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well, presentation by Hal Kendig to the 4th ANZAC Research Institute Symposium (Sydney)
- November 2005 – Information Session on Thematic and State Hub Approaches to research in the Network, Presentation by Chris Shanley, Barbara Squires, Helen Bartlett, Duncan Boldy and Hal Kendig to the 38th National Conference for the Australian Association of Gerontology – Exploring the Meaning of Ageing through Research, Policy and Practice (Gold Coast)

5. Theme and working groups

The Network has established four Theme areas in which we set research priorities and develop collaborative, multidisciplinary research efforts of importance for the well-being of older people and for an ageing Australia. The themes relate closely to the National Ageing Research Priorities, the Building Ageing Research Capacities (BARC) project, and key constituency groups. During 2005, each of the theme areas established working groups and began research development as outlined below.

Productivity and Economic Security

- labour markets for older workers
- employment and the macro economy
- retirement planning, income support, and asset management.

A Management Committee has been established with Professor Sue Richardson of Flinders University as convenor and Professor Peter Saunders of the University of New South Wales as co-convenor. Ms Anna Lane has been appointed as part-time project officer.

A planning workshop with key Network Participants and Commonwealth policymakers was convened in Canberra to explore priority research topics for priority proposals and for developing collaborations involving financial and other support from Government departments.

Professor Richardson and the Productivity Theme supported an AWAP Expression of Interest (EoI) and then work towards a full proposal on Productive Retiring led by Professor Graeme Hugo of Adelaide University involving seven Chief Investigators who are Network Participants (see Multidisciplinary research proposals below).

Independent Living and Social Participation

- aged and community care and social policies
- social participation and relationships
- information technology
- housing and service evaluation
- community access and transport.

A Management Committee has been established with Professor Helen Bartlett of the University of Queensland as convenor and Professor Duncan Boldy of Curtin University of Technology as co-convenor. Support staff are drawn primarily from the Australasian Centre on Ageing.

A preliminary scoping workshop with 10 participants was held in April, a scoping paper is nearing completion, and a working paper on data linkages was prepared on services research. When completed, the scoping paper will be available from the Network Website.

Professors Bartlett, Boldy, and other Network Participants in this theme area are Chief Investigators in AWAP grant proposals supported by the Network on Productive Retiring and Pathways of Ageing and Care.

Healthy Ageing

- determinants of healthy ageing
- cognitive competence and mental capacities
- physical activity and functional independence
- health behaviours
- managing chronic illness
- effectiveness of healthy ageing interventions.

A Management Committee has been established with Professor Colette Browning of La Trobe University as convenor and Professor Mary Luszcz of Flinders University and Professor Gary Andrews of the University of South Australia as co-convenors. A part-time project officer was appointed mid year.

A workshop on 'Interventions for Older People' brought together more than 30 leading researchers and health promotion experts to identify current knowledge and gaps, outline research directions, explore collaborative activities, and involve post-graduate students and emerging researchers. The opening address was given by Professor Marcia Ory, who serves the Network as an International Collaborator; she is an international expert in physical activity interventions for older people. It was agreed to develop collaborative grant proposals on 'Adapting to Driving Transitions' and 'Physical Activity Promotion in General Practice Settings'. A report on the workshop is available on the Network website.

Five students were assisted to attend the *First Biannual APS Psychology & Ageing Interest Group Conference: 'Informing Psychological Interventions'*, 4-5 November 2005 at Deakin University.

Professors Browning, Luszcz, Andrews and other collaborators in the Healthy Ageing theme are Chief Investigators in the Network-supported AWAP grant proposal Learning How to Age Well led by the ANU hub.

Population Research Strategies

- population projections and modelling the future
- data archiving and data linkages
- multidisciplinary analysis of existing Australian longitudinal data
- review of international survey literature relevant to Australia
- building international collaborations.

A management committee was set up in 2005, with Dr Judith Healy (RegNet Research School of Social Sciences ANU) as convenor and Associate Professor Kaarin Anstey (Centre for Mental Health Research ANU), Dr Heather Booth (Demography ANU), and Associate Professor Marc Budge (ANU Medical School) as co-convenors. A list of ACT members has been compiled, and a list of researchers who are interested in Population Research Strategies is accumulating. A part-time project officer, Ms Tanisha Jowsey, will be appointed early in 2006.

The ANU hub leads the Network's longitudinal research strategy, including efforts to increase use of existing longitudinal studies, enhance analysis skills, and explore new directions in Australian longitudinal research on ageing. As reported under Research Resources below, the Archive on Ageing was set up in 2005 at the Australian Social Science Data Archive (ASSDA) at the Australian National University. In addition, a workshop on longitudinal methods will be run at the ANU in July 2006 (see Research development programs below).

At the Australian Association of Gerontology conference, Associate Professor Kaarin Anstey presented a paper demonstrating the analysis of a particular issue, in this case self-reported health, by using data from three Australian longitudinal data sets. This was intended to demonstrate potential uses of an archive of important longitudinal datasets for improving the national understanding of ageing. Researchers were invited to seek further information about the Archive from an information booth.

Associate Professor Anstey is also leading 10 Network Participants in an AWAP grant submission Learning How to Age Well (see Multidisciplinary research proposals below).

Working Groups in Special Interest Areas

The Network has made provision for establishing working groups directed at emerging research priorities and opportunities as outlined below.

Research on Aboriginal Ageing Working Group

In late 2005 the Ageing Well Network Management Committee recommended that the Network hub at the University of New South Wales, located at the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute (POWMRI), develop a National Aboriginal Ageing Well Research Network as a four year project. This focused research development effort will relate closely to a broader Aboriginal Ageing program being developed by the Australian Association of Gerontology. The two programs are led by Professor GA (Tony) Broe (POWMRI) and Dr Lisa Jackson Pulver (Muru Marri Indigenous Health Unit). A part-time research assistant will be appointed early in 2006.

This Aboriginal research initiative aims to build research capacities and large scale research proposals in collaboration with Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders. Work is underway planning a multi-centre, longitudinal, National Aboriginal Ageing and Health Study. The program will aim to compare health trajectories and outcomes in Aboriginal people with early disease and disability with those who are ageing well in multiple settings (urban, rural and remote). The objectives are firstly, to determine basic care needs and relevant support systems in relation to ageing and disability; and secondly, to determine life-long influences on successful and unsuccessful ageing with particular emphasis on the role of education (early, childhood and adult), employment, intergenerational support, housing and other social determinants.

Research on Aboriginal Ageing was included as a component of the AWAP proposal on Pathways of Care (see below).

Research on Aged Care Services Working Group

Opportunities for research on aged care and health services have emerged in new research funding programs through the NHMRC and the ARC as well as established programs such as The ARC Linkages funding program. In mid 2005 it was decided that responsibility for Network developments in this area would be most appropriately led by the central hub at the University of Sydney because this research is not encompassed very well by any one of the Network's four theme areas. The Group includes Professors Kendig (University of Sydney), Boldy (Curtin University), Bartlett (University of Queensland), Broe (University of New South Wales), Gray (University of Queensland), and Thomas (University of Sydney).

The Pathways of Care proposal to the AWAP research funding program was developed by this Network Working Group (see below)

6. Research development programs

Supporting emerging researchers

An important objective of the Network has been the support and encouragement of postgraduate students and early career researchers. This is reflected in the inclusion of early career researchers as Network participants and as investigators on research grant proposals as a mentoring and career development opportunity.

A core activity of the Network is support of the Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA) initiative established by Professor Helen Bartlett of the Australasian Centre on Ageing at the University of Queensland (UQ). This initiative has built up a national network of PhD students and operates an annual national conference. It liaises closely with the student section of the Australian Society of Gerontology.

On behalf of the Network a national survey of postgraduate researchers was conducted to map the spread of emerging researchers and identify trends within this group. Preliminary results of this show that: doctoral research on ageing is being conducted in many disciplines (20 different disciplines in this survey); there are many more females (82%) compared to the national PhD profile of 48%; students were significantly older (45% under 40 years) than the national profile (74% under 40 years); and students were keen to get more support and greater access to ageing expertise. This report will be completed in 2006 for publication and key findings will be posted on the Network website.

The Network has been a major supporter of the National ERA Conference convened by Professor Helen Bartlett at UQ with Mair Underwood (student coordinator). This event provided the opportunity for 59 postgraduate students in a range of academic disciplines from 21 Universities to present their research to an audience that includes other researchers, policy makers, service providers, practitioners and consumers. Professor Kendig was the Keynote Speaker at the ERA 2005 Conference. The theme of ERA 2005 was “The Diversity of Ageing: Pooling the Evidence”.

The ERA 2005 conference met the objectives for the day in terms of providing a forum for emerging researchers to present, submit papers for peer review and publication, and increase their knowledge of ageing research and conference organisation. ERA 2005 was a very useful networking opportunity for presenters and delegates alike. The audience was diverse, with representatives of older people’s organisations and all levels of government, as well as providers, practitioners, the media, academics, students and members of the public. The approach taken in organising the conference has deliberately involved students in planning the program, helping to review abstracts and papers, and organising and chairing sessions. All these activities have provided professional development for their ongoing role as researchers.

The post-conference evaluation revealed that everyone was satisfied with the quality of the presentations (with 50% very satisfied), the conference organisation (with 54% extremely satisfied), the conference venue (with 57% extremely satisfied) and the keynote speaker (with 45% very satisfied). Delegates found the diversity of topics presented (41%), the quality of the presentations (22%), and the opportunities for networking (17%) to be the highlights of the day.

As a result of the national emerging researchers survey and ERA conferences, a comprehensive database of emerging researchers has been established and this has provided a useful vehicle for communicating information about the Network and its activities. A listserv is planned to generate regular channels for communicating news and opportunities across the student network.

Planning for the development of a mentoring scheme is also underway, with the national emerging researchers survey providing a greater understanding of the type and extent of mentoring required. This was also identified during the ERA planning process which involved extensive advice and support to students on a range of scholarly and professional issues.

Workshop on Longitudinal Methods

With the leadership of Kaarin Anstey in the ANU hub, the Network is co-sponsoring, with the Australian Department of Family and Community Services, a workshop in July 2006 by Associate Professor Scott Hofer, Pennsylvania State University, with the assistance of Dr Lesa Hoffman. Associate Professor Hofer is an International Collaborator on the Network. This workshop for 30 participants will be held at the ANU and will focus on the analysis of longitudinal studies using multilevel modelling and structural equation modelling, and will contribute significantly to building Australian capacity in research methods. Priority will be given to Network Participants and their collaborators who are analysing Australian longitudinal surveys and contributing to the Network's activities.

7. Research resources programs

Archive on Ageing

As a core program of the Network the ANU hub set up the Archive on Ageing during 2005 at the Australian Social Science Data Archive (ASSDA) at the ANU. Stephen Gray was appointed as a half-time archivist with oversight by Dr Deborah Mitchell. The purpose of the Archive is to add value to previously funded research by making high quality data more widely available for further analysis. The Archive safely stores quantitative data (and in future also qualitative data) that relate to studies of ageing, documents and organises these databases in an accessible form, and promotes their further analysis. The rationale is that datasets are costly to collect, are funded mostly with public money, and many are under-analysed.

The Archive currently provides online access for Network members to 50 studies (89 separate data sets) of interest to researchers in ageing. For most (unrestricted) datasets, users can view study information and variable frequencies, access questionnaires, related reports and a list of related publications, and analyse data online or download the dataset in a variety of file formats. Network members also have access to the full ASSDA catalogue, comprising approximately 1,500 datasets. Access is provided (via a web browser) by the NESSTAR system, a data distribution and analysis system developed in conjunction with the UK Data Archive.

The Archive on Ageing NESSTAR server is available at <http://ageing-well.anu.edu.au>, and the main ASSDA NESSTAR server is available at <http://assda-nesstar.anu.edu.au/webview/index.jsp>. The Archive on Ageing is currently restricted to Network Participants and Associates. The main ASSDA server is available to all researchers, once they have registered.

Emphasis is being given to longitudinal data sets. The following ageing-related longitudinal studies have been or will shortly be deposited with the archive:

- The Australian Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ALSA), Waves 1 to 7
- The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, Waves 1 to 3

- Negotiating the Life Course, Waves 1 to 3
- The Sydney Older Persons' Study, including 10-year follow-up.
- The Health Status of Older People Survey, 1994-1997

All Network Participants have been invited to register as members with the ASSDA Archive on Ageing. Twenty-one Network members are currently registered with the Archive. The Archive continues to approach major ageing related studies, with an emphasis on longitudinal studies for inclusion in the Archive. Researchers who have obtained ARC grants for ageing related research will be approached for the same purpose. In addition, people who have recently completed PhDs in the area will be contacted, both to promote the Archive and to suggest that they deposit their data.

In order to promote the Archive, booths were set-up at both the Emerging Researchers in Ageing and the Australian Association of Gerontology conferences in November 2005. Demonstrations of the use of the NESSTAR system to search for data and to analyse data online were given to approximately 50 people. There was also a poster presentation on the Archive at both conferences, and hand-outs on using Archive data and on depositing data with the Archive were distributed. Twenty researchers registered with the Archive at the AAG conference.

Australian Research Grant and Literature Inventory on Ageing

The Network sponsored the University of Newcastle's Centre for Research and Education in Ageing (CREA) to develop this database, which focuses on the priority theme areas of the Network: healthy ageing, productivity and economic participation; independent living and social participation; and population research strategies. This work was led by Dr Lyn Parkinson and Professor Julie Byles.

The scope of the review included journal articles, books and book chapters, and reports and grants. Selection criteria included any publication that addressed one or more of the priority theme areas; the work was undertaken by Australians and/or within Australia; the publication was research based and conducted on humans; and it was published and/or undertaken within the period 1999-2005. The Review included research grants funded by the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council.

After identifying a total of 6,885 citations, 3,599 of these were selected for further review. Of these, 2,176 citations (including 359 grants) met all the selection criteria and were included in the final database.

This inventory is available on the Ageing Research Online (ARO) website (www.aro.gov.au). The Network's database supplements the ARO inventory of research on ageing. All Network members are encouraged to submit and keep up-to-date entries for themselves on the ARO website, and to use this valuable resource to find out what research has already been done in their areas of interest.

8. Multidisciplinary research proposals

A major responsibility for the Network is to stimulate and support research proposals that can respond to the urgent need to develop Australian and international knowledge on ageing. Proposals will always be led by Participants from their Universities because the Network itself does not conduct research. Flexible resources are available for bringing together Network Participants, other leading researchers, and constituency groups to identify priority research topics and develop collaborative proposals on national significance.

The Management Committee has agreed that priority for Network support will be given to strong teams of Participants (and their collaborators) whose proposals fit the Network's core objectives:

- Multidisciplinary, large-scale, national, and high quality proposals involving several or more Universities across the States.
- An emphasis on a Network theme or working group area with strong involvement of constituency groups including representatives of older people.

Participants who have research ideas that fit these criteria are encouraged to explore them with other Network Participants and the relevant theme or working group Convenors. The Network will facilitate collaborative research into ageing funded through mainstream sources such as the ARC and NHMRC. The Network also will consider alternative sponsorship and co-sponsorship arrangements to facilitate collaborative research into ageing.

In 2005 Network Theme and Working Group convenors have given priority to supporting proposals for the NHMRC/ARC *Ageing Well, Ageing Productively* research funding program. After seeking input from our Participants, the Network supported the submission in September of three first stage Expressions of Interest (EoIs) led by convenors and key participants. After the EoIs were short-listed, the Network then invited all Participants to consider applying for Network support to develop full proposals if they had EoIs that were on the short list and met the criteria above. The three EoIs supported by the Network were on the short list and each of the teams summarised below began efforts to submit full proposals due mid January 2006.

Learning How to Age Well from Australian Longitudinal Studies of Ageing

The Network's Population Research Strategies theme supported a proposal led by Associate Professor Kaarin Anstey from the ANU involving key Participants from the Healthy Ageing theme and other methodologists from the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) and AIHW. The aim of the project is to draw on substantially enhanced longitudinal data sets in order to identify factors capable of preventing disease and compressing morbidity – and thus increase years of active and engaged ageing. The focus is upon conditions that significantly contribute to the burden of disease. This innovative and interdisciplinary study engages Network Participants and collaborators in pooling existing studies, thus adding value and building upon experience, as recommended in the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council 2003 report. Findings on modifiable disability would then be used to model the health futures of the baby boomer and older generations.

Productive Retiring: The Interactions between Health, Economic and Social Participation and Place

The Network's Productivity and Economic Security theme at Flinders University supported this proposal led by Professor Graeme Hugo from the University of Adelaide. He has led a multidisciplinary team of Chief Investigators from six universities to study the complex and multi directional nexus between health and wellbeing on the one hand, and economic and social participation on the other, including the potentially powerful effects of policy on this nexus. Inter-related projects would conduct research on determinants of paid work, unpaid work and voluntary contributions, attitudinal barriers and facilitators of participation, geographical dimensions, and relationships between health, disability, and social and economic participation.

Pathways in Ageing and Care: Approaches, Innovations, and Outcomes

This proposal was developed by the Network's working group on aged care services led by Professor Hal Kendig from the University of Sydney and six other Network Participants from four other Universities. The broad aim of the program is to provide a comprehensive, consumer driven evidence base to inform policy development and delivery of Australian aged care services. The research plan applies the concept of 'care pathways' through later life to better understand the natural history and determinants of needs for care; risk and protective factors in maintaining capacities; opportunities for interventions; and consequences of service use (or not) for quality of life among frail older people and carers as well as costs to government. Components of the study include Aboriginal ageing, community and residential care, data linkage, and assessment. The research would be conducted in collaboration with policymakers, service providers, and consumer groups.

A National Small Area Database Resource

Professor Ann Harding from NATSEM at the University of Canberra led a successful ARC Discovery Project Proposal *Opportunity and Disadvantage: Differences in Wellbeing Among Australia's Adults and Children at a Small Area*. (\$750,000, 2006-2010) The Convenors of three ARC Research Networks – Professors Stimson (Geographical Systems), Kendig (Ageing Well), and Stanley (Future Generations) – serve as Principal Investigators and Network members and will have access to this valuable information resource.

9. Visitors

The Network aims to bring several international collaborators to Australia each year - in association with other national organisations related to ageing where possible - and to link them to priority developments in our theme areas and working groups. The aim is to better connect Australian research to leading edge research overseas, including cross-national comparisons, and to make visitors to Australia more widely available to researchers and key constituencies. The Network has developed a protocol to guide us in sponsoring visits of international collaborators to Australia. Two international collaborators visited in 2005.

The NSW hub organised several seminars delivered by Professor Jacqui Smith, Deputy Director from the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, a world authority on longitudinal research in ageing. Professor Smith visited Sydney with support from a NSW Expatriates award and the University of Sydney. In September she presented a seminar on 'Aging Differently: Potential and Limits, Findings from the Berlin Aging Study (BASE)' and in December she presented a seminar on 'Determinants of Successful Ageing: The Research Evidence'. These seminars were well-attended, with more than 50 and 100 attendees respectively, and links to the presentations with audio commentary are available on the Network Website.

Professor Marcia Ory, Director of the US Active for Life program, visited Professor Browning at La Trobe University. During her visit she presented an address and contributed to the Health Interventions workshop organised by the Healthy Ageing theme (see above). She also presented an address "Translating research into practice: Results from the US Active for Life Program, Texas US" for a public seminar at the University of Sydney (a link to this presentation is provided on the Network website).

10. State hubs

State-based activities of the Network aim to facilitate information exchange, collaborative proposal development, and joint seminars linking researchers from different disciplines and universities to government departments, service providers, and organisations for older people. The State activities are organised flexibly depending on local priorities and opportunities, and they serve as delivery points in the national delivery of Network services.

Western Australia (WA)

The Network's state activities have been led by the inaugural events organised by Professor Duncan Boldy, State Convenor, at Curtin University. In association with the WA Division of the Australian Association of Gerontology, a Symposium on Ageing Research in WA was organised in September 2005. The aim of the symposium was to identify opportunities for new and imaginative research connections. The symposium committee, chaired by Professor Duncan Boldy (Centre for Research into Aged Care Services, Curtin University) included Professor Alan Bittles (Edith Cowan University), Dr Janine Calver (Data Linkage Unit, WA Health Department), Professor Leon Flicker (University of Western Australia), Dr Barbara Horner (Curtin University), Dr Gill Lewin (Silver Chain Nursing Association) and Dr Chris Toyo (President, WA Division of AAG and Edith Cowan University).

Thirty six presentations were given on a broad range of research topics. Professor Helen Bartlett spoke about the emerging researchers program and Professor Hal Kendig discussed the objectives and core programs of the Network. The symposium was evaluated highly by the 50 attendees as providing an important opportunity for information sharing, networking and forward planning. A report on the Workshop is available on the Network website.

New South Wales (NSW)

With the UNSW hub now devoting its efforts to research on Aboriginal Ageing, the national hub at the University of Sydney has assumed responsibility for NSW state activities of the Network.

The NSW activities of the Network were launched in 2005 with the two public seminars presented by Professor Jacqui Smith to Participants, Associates, and key constituencies (see above). In October Professor Kendig made a presentation and held a consultation with the NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing. In December a planning meeting was convened involving 11 participants, including representatives from the NSW Office on Ageing, Australian Association of Gerontology (NSW), Aged and Community Services NSW, the NSW Council on the Ageing, and Network Participants and Associates representing Universities in the State.

The Network is organising a symposium on rural ageing, led by Professor Victor Minichiello (University of New England), for the NSW AAG Rural Conference in Tamworth in March 2006.

Queensland (QLD)

An Advisory Group comprising researchers from several Queensland Universities, state government and National Seniors Association has been formed to guide the Queensland State Hub activity. The first workshop initiative is planned for 27 April 2006 with over 30 researchers in ageing presenting from across the state. A report on the workshop will be available on the Network website.

Professor Bartlett has made several informal and formal presentations about the Network and its goals at the AAG Queensland Division, to UQ colleagues and postgraduate students, and to industry stakeholders and collaborators in Queensland.

Additional activities within Queensland have revolved around mentoring and supporting postgraduate students and contributing to the theme area of independent living and social participation. These are both discussed elsewhere in this report.

South Australia (SA)

Professor Mary Luszcz, SA State Convenor, presented an update on the Research Network to a one-day symposium organised by the *Healthy Ageing Research Cluster*, which spans the three South Australian universities. The meeting, held in October 2005, was attended by approximately 50 academics, students and stakeholders in government. A number of students made presentations and an award for the best student presentation was given.

A database of researchers interested in *Healthy Ageing* in SA is being compiled. The recent appointment of a project officer to support activities of the *Productivity and Economic Security* Theme and the SA hub will facilitate other activities to be undertaken in the future. An inaugural SA Forum announcing the Network is scheduled for March 2006.

Professor Hofer, who is presenting the workshop on longitudinal methods in the ACT (see Research development programs), will also present a workshop in Adelaide in July 2006, in conjunction with the Australian Psychological Society's Psychology and Ageing Interest Group.

Victoria

The Victorian hub co-sponsored Professor Bob G. Knight, Professor of Gerontology and Psychology, University of Southern California to talk on "Mental Health and Older People: an International Perspective" in November at La Trobe University.

A meeting was held in November 2005 with 10 participants, including key researchers, representatives from government policy, the Council of the Ageing (COTA) and the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG), to discuss networking in Victoria and collaborative grant activities. A key outcome of this meeting is a planned Forum on translating research to practice in August 2006 in collaboration with the Victorian Departments of Human Services (Aged Care Branch) and Infrastructure, AAG Victoria, and COTA.

As part of networking with the Victorian State Government, Associate Professor Colette Browning will give an invited paper at the Conference on Transport, Social Disadvantage and Well-Being sponsored by the Department of Infrastructure in Melbourne in April 2006

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

While the ACT does not operate a State hub, the Population Research Strategies theme at ANU works to facilitate communication among researchers at the two Universities, members of the AAG, and policymakers in Canberra, and a meeting is being planned for early 2006. A list of ACT members of the Network has been compiled, and a list of researchers interested in Population Research Strategies is being compiled.

Tasmania

The Network Management Committee has invited Professor Rob White at the University of Tasmania to serve as State convenor for Tasmania, to form a State Management Committee, and to plan 2006 activities.

11. Governance

The administering organisation for the ARC/NHMRC grant for the Network is the University of Sydney.

As part time National Convenor, Professor Hal Kendig has overall responsibility to the granting bodies for the activities of the Network. He works with the Management Committee in leading, initiating and facilitating research development, and fostering collaboration and excellence across the Network. He represents the Network at national and international forums; liaises with senior decision makers in ageing and potential funders; and has responsibility for central hub activities such as communication programs.

The Network's central office is administered in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney, and it is located in refurbished accommodation located with the Centre for Education and Research on Ageing based at Concord Hospital.

As of 2006 the Network's full time Senior Project Officer will be Dr Mathew Carroll. Ms Maria Sangermano serves as part time Administrative Officer.

The Network's contact details are:

Address: ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well
c/- Centre for Education and Research in Ageing (CERA)
Concord Hospital C25, Concord NSW 2139
Phone: +61 2 9767 8338
Email: ageing.net@fhs.usyd.edu.au.

The Network's website (www.ageingwell.edu.au) provides information on Network programs and serves as a portal to national and international resources on ageing.

Management Committee

The Network's national Management Committee is responsible for the general directions and major decisions related to the activities of the Network.

The Management Committee plans overall strategies at a national level, facilitates collaboration across the Network, oversees the overall research program, oversees the national hub functions, approves discretionary resource commitments, makes policy decisions on behalf of the Network, leads national research coordination and advocacy, and carries accountability responsibility to the ARC, NHMRC, and other funders.

The Management Committee is comprised of Theme and State Convenors and the Chair of the Network Advisory group. Members are:

- Professor Hal Kendig, Research Professor in Health and Ageing, the University of Sydney (convenor)
- Professor Helen Bartlett, Director, Australasian Centre on Ageing, the University of Queensland
- Professor Duncan Boldy, Centre for Research into Aged Care Services, Curtin University of Technology; Professor of Health Policy and Management, School of Public Health

- Professor GA (Tony) Broe, Scientific Director, Ageing Research Centre, Prince of Wales Hospital, the University of New South Wales; President, Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG)
- Associate Professor Colette Browning, Associate Dean Research, Faculty of Health Sciences, La Trobe University
- Dr Judith Healy, Senior Fellow, Regulatory Institutions Network, Research School of Social Sciences, the Australian National University
- Professor Mary Luszcz, Professor of Psychology and Gerontology, Flinders University
- Professor Sue Richardson, Director, National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University
- Ms Barbara Squires, Director, Centre on Ageing, the Benevolent Society; Immediate Past-President, Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG); convenor of the Network's Advisory Group.

The Management Committee met five times during 2005 in February, June, August, September, and November. At these meetings the Committee discussed a range of issues including:

- The composition and role of the Advisory Group
- Membership – including ways to encourage additional members and the possibility of a review of the Participant Member list and the setting of eligibility criteria
- State and Research Theme hub activities – including setting the directions for the events held in 2005
- Promoting large-scale multidisciplinary research collaborations meeting the Network's criteria – including supporting three AWAP submissions
- Communications strategies – including the format of the Network Newsletter
- Consideration of potential international visitors for 2005 and beyond
- Discussion of future directions for the Network

Advisory Group

Governance of the Network is strengthened by a national Advisory Group comprised of senior representatives of government, consumer and industry groups. The Advisory Group's members have responsibility to represent the views of their constituencies to the Network and advise on collaboration in setting research agendas, conducting research, and disseminating and translating research into practice, policy, and public awareness.

The Advisory Group members are:

- Ms Barbara Squires, The Benevolent Society (Chair)
- Ms Fiona Lynch-Magor, Assistant Secretary, Office for an Ageing Australia, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing
- Mr Greg Mundy, CEO, Aged and Community Services Australia
- Mr Glenn Rees, CEO, Alzheimer's Australia
- Mr Ian Yates, Joint Chief Executive, COTA National Seniors Partnership
- Professor Hal Kendig, the University of Sydney (Network National Convenor)

The Advisory Group met once in August 2005. The main focus of the meeting was to introduce members to the purposes of the Network and to set out the responsibilities and opportunities for the Advisory Group. The three Network supported AWAP submissions were discussed and the group provided valuable input on the need for a carer/consumer-focused rather than service-focused research and the need to translate research into policy and practice. The members agreed to act as conduits for information about the Network to through their respective newsletters, conferences etc.

12. Network membership

There are four categories of Network Membership.

Participant Members

The 50 Participants in the Network grant proposal are primarily senior researchers with a track record of research grants from the Australian Research Council and/or the National Health and Medical Research Council. The group also includes a small number of early-stage researchers who have been included to bring their perspective into the core network. The broad criteria for membership were prescribed by the ARC in its guidelines for Research Networks.

Participant Members are asked to contribute to the multidisciplinary, collaborative work of the Network's four thematic area groups and its special interest groups. They are encouraged to suggest to the appropriate convenor their ideas for new initiatives for the Network; and to take on responsibilities for leadership, mentoring and capacity-building in ageing research. In turn, Network resources are devoted primarily to supporting Participants in pursuing these responsibilities.

The multidisciplinary group of Participant Members has an excellent track record of research performance and extensive collaboration experience. They have close working relationships with key constituency groups and a wide range of disciplinary and methodological expertise. The full list of 50 participant members is in Attachment A (see page 20 below).

Associate Members

Associate Members are researchers and others who have an interest in the activities of the Network. Associate Members include a number of very experienced researchers as well as mid-career and early-stage researchers, postgraduate students and practitioners with an interest in ageing research. Associate Members are continually being added to the Network and they have access to the Network's information resources. They are kept informed of developments in the Network and are able to take part in many Network activities. There were 236 associate members at 31 December 2005. They are listed in Attachment B (see page 31 below).

International Members

The Network has a founding group of 11 International Collaborators who are interested in conducting research jointly with Australian researchers and visiting Australia. We will be adding leading international collaborators as Australian researchers build ageing research programs in collaboration with overseas researchers.

Organisational Members

This category includes organisations that are crucial to the application of research findings to action beneficial for older people, and they are well-placed to provide input of research directions and serve as collaborators in research. They are invited to register to be part of a mailing list of information as well as being available for advisory and consultative roles with interest groups.

In addition to the above categories of membership, information will be disseminated to individuals interested in ageing research through the newsletters of discipline, professional, industry, and community groups.

13. Finances

Attachment C (see page 31 below) shows the income and expenditure for the Network as a whole during the second half of 2004 and the calendar year of 2005. The ARC allocated a network grant of \$245,000 for the second half of 2004 and \$510,500 for 2005. However, the Network did not begin its operations until December and significant expenditure did not commence until mid 2005. As a result, the Network is requesting permission to carry forward funding each year until the Network's five years of operation are completed at the end of December 2009 (instead of June 2009).

To the end of 2005 the major item of expenditure for ARC funds was \$193,000 for Personnel Salaries and on-costs for the part time Network Convenor and administrative staff across the six partner Universities. An additional \$69,000 was expended on Shared Research Resources (notably for the data archiving and literature and grant review), \$61,000 for Bringing People Together (mainly workshops, conferences, and planning and coordination activities); \$24,000 for specific assets (including office furniture, computers, and equipment) and \$24,000 for building set-up, office supplies, and communication). The total expenditure amounted to \$370,000 and approval was requested for the carryover of \$386,000 of funding to 2006. The Network thus has resources for expanding the programs commenced in 2005.

In addition to the ARC funding, the core partnership of seven Universities have committed cash resources of \$205,000 per year. The Alzheimer and Ageing Research Foundation at the Centre for Research and Education on Ageing contributed \$25,000 cash to refurbish the offices where the Network central hub is located on the Concord campus of the University of Sydney.

14. Achievement of objectives of the Research Network and National Benefits

After eleven months of operation the Network had made significant progress towards achieving the objectives outlined in the original proposal.

In terms of leading and facilitating collaboration, the most notable achievements were the Network's support of the three AWAP proposals. Theme Areas, State hubs, and Working Groups also facilitating interactions that will lead to further collaboration among researchers and key constituency groups

The Network has promoted interactions with leading international researchers by co-sponsoring the visits of Professors Jacqui Smith and Marcia Ory. This will continue with several visitors in 2006 including the visit by Professor Scott Hofer for a workshop on the analysis of longitudinal studies.

The Network has also been actively involved in building capacities and quality through its focus on emerging researchers in ageing by supporting the ERA conference, conducting the National Emerging Researchers Survey, and developing a database of emerging researchers.

The efficient use of existing data, expertise, and resources has been promoted through the Archive on Ageing, which has been housed with the ASSDA, and the development of the Australian Research Grant and Literature Inventory on Ageing available through Ageing Research On-line.

Key constituencies have been engaged with the Network through presentations by the Network Convenor and members of the Management Committee to conferences, government agencies and community and aged care organisations. These engagements are facilitated by the national Advisory Group and State hubs. Planning is underway for the 2006 Policy and Practice Colloquium on Ageing (see Future directions below)

In addition, Network partners have established our governance and management arrangements; our theme and state hubs and core programs; and sound working relations with the Australian Association of Gerontology, Commonwealth and State Offices on Ageing, and other national and state constituency bodies.

The 2005 workplan for the Network has implemented the plans set in the ARC proposal with several notable developments. Additional activities, unanticipated when writing the proposal, include the focus of grant writing support on the three AWAP proposals; production of the Literature and Grant Review; the Aboriginal Ageing research initiative; planning for the Tasmania state hub; and collaboration in the 2006 National Policy Colloquium.

We have deferred implementation of the planned annual policy workshops so that these resources could be carried forward to the larger scale National Colloquium planned for 2006. Support for conference attendance will be focused on this event. We have concentrated our research skills enhancement on the longitudinal data analysis given its centrality to 'leading edge' research on ageing.

The Network's activities aim to have a national and international scale, quality, multidisciplinary collaboration, and constituency engagement that could not have been achieved without support from the ARC/NHMRC Research Networks program. We believe that these efforts are well-directed but it is too early to assess their impact or their national benefits.

15. Future directions

In 2006 the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well will be moving ahead in building on the structures and programs that commenced in the 2005 foundation year. The directions outlined below will be assessed and refined by the Management Committee with input from the Advisory Group early in the new year. We will continue to collaborate with other organisations that share our commitment to multidisciplinary research development in ageing and its translation and application.

Priority Outcomes to be achieved in 2006

By the end of the year we plan to have achieved the following:

- Intensified activities and progress in the directions set for our core theme areas, working groups, and State hubs:

State and Theme hubs will meet in develop directions for the year and beyond. This will be carried further in the Network component of the BARC Policy and Practice Colloquium where there will be workshops focussing on the Research Theme Areas and inviting involvement from Colloquium participants in a discussion of future directions which will be continued at later State and Theme meetings. It is expected that clear directions for further action will be determined in 2006.
- Increased involvement of Network Participants including more initiatives led by those who have not been very involved to date:

Participant Members will be invited to take a more active role including having their attendance at the BARC Policy and Practice Colloquium supported by the Network. A Research Proposal Development Strategy will be developed to streamline requests from Participant Members and others seeking support for large-scale multidisciplinary research or for proposals relating to promoting research development and the use of research resources.

An ongoing review of the current list of Participant Members will be commenced to ensure that only those researchers actively involved in Network initiatives are considered as Participants.
- Promoted use of the Archive on Ageing and the Literature and Grants Review:

Both resources will be promoted at all Network events and further consideration will be given on how best to add value to them to ensure that they are utilised including workshop discussions with input from users including key representatives from research, government and practice.
- Increased quality and quantity of resource materials on ageing available on the Network or ARO Website (including resources developed in 2005 as reported above).

The timely loading of materials will be ensured and stronger links will be developed with other key websites including the ARO, AAG, and others.
- Improved communication with Network Participants and Associates:

A communications strategy will be developed, including a shift from bi-annual newsletters to monthly email bulletins. Links will be developed with other Research Networks in order to determine and implement best practice procedures for communications.
- Enhanced approaches to mentoring and research development:

Helen Bartlett from the University of Queensland will lead this initiative in line with her work with emerging researchers. Discussions will take place identifying and implementing best practice procedures for mentoring.

- Enabled more collaborative research with government, industry, and consumer groups:
 These themes will be considered at the BARC Colloquium and ongoing working groups will be set up to continue discussions and inform the directions set by the Network. One likely direction will be the publication of best practice guidelines for these types of collaborations.
- Explored large scale, adventurous research proposals with international collaborators:
 Opportunities for international collaboration will be explored by the Theme and State Convenors at multiple international conferences throughout the year and through the support of key international visitors. We will also explore the possibility of international funding, including possible submissions to the National Institute on Ageing in the United States and other possibilities in Europe.
- Extended the scope of our multidisciplinary efforts to involve more biomedical researchers, and also more researchers who to date have worked within mainstream disciplines and professions:
 A key initiative will be collaborating with the International Research Centre for Healthy Ageing and Longevity (IRCHAL) which will be bringing key international researchers and clinicians to their conference in late 2006. Following the conference, IRCHAL and the Network will jointly convene a high level workshop to develop research collaborations on bio-psycho-social determinants of healthy ageing and longevity.

Planned Activities for 2006

Over the course of 2006, each Theme area will be widening its involvement with Participants, completing scoping papers, and initiating new research directions. State hubs will convene meetings that communicate Network directions, receive feedback, and facilitate state-level collaboration. The 2006 Conference for Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA 2006) will be offered in Sydney in November. The Network has been asked to deliver an invited symposium at the Annual meeting of the Australian Association of Gerontology.

The central hub will explore establishing working groups on rural ageing and bio-psycho-social research; encourage additional visitors; and explore international initiatives. We also are planning to produce working papers to be presented for consideration at the National Policy Colloquium as outlined below. Further activities will be developed in response to emergent opportunities and priorities.

Policy and Practice Colloquium on Ageing: Informed by Evidence

This Colloquium is being planned collaboratively by the Australian Government – the Office for an Ageing Australia, AIHW, and other Australian Government departments – and the ARC-NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well. The 50 Network Participants, policymakers, and other key constituency groups are being invited to this important event for better connecting research to informed policy development and professional practice. The Colloquium will be convened in Canberra on 4-5 July 2006 and its objectives will be to:

- discuss how research aligned with the National Research Priority Goal of Ageing Well, Ageing Productively can best inform policy and practice;
- assist policy-makers, researchers and other stakeholders to come to a consensus regarding the setting of priorities for actions in relation to identified areas of need for an ageing Australia; and

- increase engagement by a wider range of relevant policy areas in the development and use of the Ageing Well, Ageing Productively evidence base, including the current and future content of the Ageing Research Online (ARO) website.

The second day of the Colloquium will be devoted to the joint consideration by Network Participants and policymakers of the research priorities and activities of the Research Network and government. Scoping papers will be produced for sessions centred on each of our theme areas: Productivity and Economic Security, Independent Living and Social Participation, Healthy Ageing, and Population Research Strategies. Additional sessions and background papers will focus on key issues in better connecting research to policy and practice: consumer-led research (with the National Seniors Centre for Productive Ageing), Dissemination and translation of ageing research (with the AAG and AIHW), research consultancies between government and Universities; and building collaborative research with industry (with Aged and Community Services NSW).

Outcomes from the Policy Colloquium will be disseminated on the Network Website and be applied in Network initiatives over the remainder of the year.

Network Membership and Feedback

By the middle of the year the Network will be established to the point where it will be appropriate to reflect on activities to date and consult more widely on our performance, directions, and Participant base. Current Participants will be asked if they would wish to continue in the Network in the light of their involvement to date. Consideration also will be given to inviting additional Participants who could contribute to the Network's mission and benefit from our activities.