

BARC Policy and Practice on Ageing Colloquium, Canberra, 4-5 July 2006

Introduction to Day 2 of the Colloquium

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Transcript and presentation slides

Thank you Keith – this is a time of transition from all the good ideas that have been raised today. There's some more specific discussions tomorrow about how we move ahead.

I'd like to start with some thanks for what has helped us to build this day, a little bit about the Network which is our base for going further (enabling these things) and then finally, a bit more specifically about tomorrow.

I actually think we're starting to build a community. A community of quite diverse and different parts, but with some common interests in research having some very productive tensions and at the start of that, I'd like to thank government, in particular the Office for an Ageing Australia, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the other departments for your willingness to collaborate with the Network. This is not always so easy for those of us who are researchers to appreciate as there is a risk to this as well as the opportunity, so I thank the government for that.

I also would like to thank our Network Management Committee and our Advisory Group. In fact the Network works as a collegial operation. I convene it, I do not direct it. We are a collegial operation and that's how we work. We have 50 core members at this point – this will be fluid and so it is a collaborative venture so thank you to all of you, in fact all of you here, for putting your time and your work in. We are expecting that you are going to be working very hard, for and with us, tomorrow as we start to plan ways to move ahead.

I should explain a little bit more about why the Australian Research Council (ARC) has decided to fund Networks as I understand it, and I thank Peter Saunders in particular for the provocative question about why don't we put the money into research instead of Networks. I think the point to say there is that the ARC and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) know they have helped specific pieces of research, but they've always found it difficult at times to explain to the government how that research is linked up applied somewhere and how researchers link up. They are sort of seen as silos or specific projects, one way or the other. The Network strategy was seen as a way to start to link things up. It is a big experiment so we'll have to see what happens. I would say though that the level of resources going in are not significant in terms of as an alternative to research. I believe, and I agree with the ARC and the NHMRC, in that it is seen as a means to build research and so this is the way we are going ahead.

I point out that it is not only the ARC and NHMRC that fund the Network but there are the core 7 universities who are partners. We have said "this is worth the risk, worth the gamble, we'll take a chance" and so we'll build with this.

I suppose the last part of the introduction is to invite you to join us with this venture. Think as I talk a bit about where we are going and about where you might join in or where you'd like to see something happen and the way to approach this is not to ask "what can the Network do for you", but to ask "what would you like to see and what could you lead, what could you contribute to" and then get in touch with the right person and move that ahead. That will be our focus.

Just a brief summary about the Network - One important point is that the Network is there to add value, not to duplicate or replace and so there is no worry about competition. There is only intensifying and building efforts. It is entirely a collaborative model in the way we are approaching it with the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG), with the Office for an Ageing Australia and other core partners which is absolutely essential.

Let me say very explicitly the Network does not fund research. It enables the building of proposals, the communication of research. It is everything up to and after but it is not the actual doing of research. It is the enabling of research and in particular enabling the improvement of research which is a value to inform actions for an ageing Australia. I'm not going to go very specifically through all these but you'll see that these are some of the themes that have animated and lay underneath much of the discussion we've had today about building the collaboration, the facilitating international research involvement. Australia does need desperately to be a part of the world in our research development to build capacities in excellence – there's a lot of attention to that in Australian universities and elsewhere but how can the Network build on that to go further, enable communication, involvement in key constituencies (what good evidence we've had and we'll start on that today) and also the translation of research.

To find out more about what we are up to, each of you have a little pamphlet in your pack on the Network, so please do look through that. It gives the people, the organisations and the objectives and so forth. And also, please do go to our website which will tell you more about what we've been doing and it will also have our Annual Report on what we have been doing. In terms of being fully operational it's really only been this year out of five years so we are now basically established, we are ready to move, we've already moved on some things and so invite your contribution to where we are going.

Now one of the things we recognised as a top priority was to support certain kinds of research development. As Fiona Lynch-Magor said earlier, much of the best research will be by individuals and that's fine, that's great, we wish to support it, it will happen, but the Network's part is to stimulate research of a kind that otherwise would not happen very easily. In particular this idea of larger-scale, multi-disciplinary research focussed on national priorities, multi-institutional, involving older people and with international collaborators.

The Network has actually supported three proposals that went through to the Ageing Well, Ageing Productively (AWAP) round. We very much welcome the establishment of the AWAP round. We wait to see what will happen with those proposals, along with everybody else who applied, but I'll say that this is an experiment in trying to build research of a kind that we haven't seen much of in Australia so far, which is using all those criteria and all of the participants were invited to get Network support to build in this way, and whatever happens with the AWAP decision making, we will be building on proposals that meet this criteria which is absolutely core to our mandate.

We are also going to be enabling international partnerships, building bridges, looking for co-funding with the National Institute on Ageing in the United States, some European possibilities, and also with the International Research Centre for Healthy Ageing and Longevity (IRCHAL) – it's good that we have John and Noah Weller here. They have an international conference in October where they bring in some of the best research minds (bio-medical and social-psychological) from around the world to their October conference. We will have a workshop trying to build value, build connections internationally for Australian researchers.

Just a few things that we have been doing so far – part of the operation, the idea of the Network, is as a service to the research community to enable things to happen more efficiently and add value to the field, so our research theme areas have been developing background papers and workshops are all going to be up on the web, some already are. I'm thankful to Julie Byles and Lynne Parkinson at the University of Newcastle – they put together a 'Grants and Literature Inventory'. Why does everybody have to go and find all this stuff yourself? It's there in place on the Australian Research Online (ARO) website. There's the Australian Data Archive which we'll hear more about tomorrow and that's so important to enable, for example, graduate students and others to analyse quality data that's already available. Every other country does this sort of thing with data banks, but Australia hasn't moved very far in this area, certainly not in terms of ageing. Methodological workshop – analysing longitudinal data – one of those will be next week. We also have international visitors at this conference. We have an annual policy conference and this is the first of those.

Now, one of the things were not talking much about this time, but the Network has tried to build on really good initiatives already underway and the Emerging Researchers on Ageing (ERA) initiatives led by Helen Bartlett at the University of Queensland was one of those. The Network has been very happy to embrace that to enable the good idea to spread further, for example, there will be the next ERA conference put on by the University of Sydney in November at the same time of the AAG meeting, so we want to pull value in there. That ERA conference can I say is excellent. If you know of anybody who might be interested, like a post-graduate student, I'd encourage you try to go. You can still put an abstract in if you do it this week and there are forms and so forth to apply outside. A number of other activities there, we're not going into as much as this particular colloquium but wanted to mention the value of this.

Now our objectives for tomorrow – these are the three of them.

- Increase the understandings and initiate partnerships

I agree with Helen Bartlett that we are well underway in the first day with this intention and I add that we really do need and require the active involvement in contribution and also to see the great barriers of serendipitous interaction. Many partnerships will build enabled by these sorts of meetings and that's just wonderful – they don't have to be Network activities.

- Identify directions for the Network

And, in particular, we want to discuss

- Options for Network actions.

So before you leave today, please pick up the background papers that we've produced which have laid out some issues, some ideas, some options, and bring your ideas please fully to the collegial discussion we'll have tomorrow.


Now what we have here is just a summary of what is going to happen tomorrow. Really what it is, is a schematic of the Network aims and activities and on the right hand side are what we call our core Theme Areas and building research agendas, building research partnerships (there are background papers for each of those), our Convenors and Co-convenors are here so which ever of those is of most interest please be a part of that and continue. On the left hand side we see some of the crucial research development communication processes that the Network can add value to in Australia and the consumer-led research (we will follow Helen Bartlett's comments and focus more of the session on how we can enable that more), dissemination and translation of ageing research (that's really a basic foundation for what the Network and our collaborators are doing. We want to explore this question of research consultancies which is so important – we don't have a good culture or a good understanding in many places about how solid, reliable, mutually beneficial relationships between government and researchers and how to build collaborative research with industry. So we see all this as important and we look forward to your contribution to them and also to add though we are not going into it this time where we have in effect a theme area on Aboriginal ageing led by Tony Broe at the University of New South Wales and we are also doing some more services and work on bio-psychosocial relationships.

So to start to round out this introduction, these are the sorts of goals we have for the next year and beyond: the building of collaborations, the larger scale effort, improvement of research development and communication. Much of what is happening in this national meeting will also happen at a state level where much of the grist of collaboration can occur with universities across state and with local and state industry and community partnerships. So this will all continue through the year.

In the end this research Network is another means to a larger and longer-term end. We've had BARC now for 4 – 5 years and the Network will be going for 5 years. It's building and I think you have to see the Network very much as a means to bigger ends, it's not an institution in itself, but enables research which will continue beyond the Network. I think one of the most important is this idea of building this vision of ageing well, and I was reflecting about what the inference of research is and I think it has a lot to do with putting ideas out into the public, ideas that end up influencing (they are not power) they influence the direction of public thought and social thought and, in the end, make a difference in the lives of older people. We'll be building coalitions, we'll be doing advocacy for investing in research, suggestions which Peter Saunders raised (I think are very important ones to consider): "how can we enable early career researchers to continue with research in ageing - the career that they have started so far?" - a high priority for us; "how can older people provide a lead?" - terribly important for Australia and for the world; and a very important one here "how can ageing research become mainstream?". You'll note that we are not using this word 'gerontology' very much, but ageing research is a very wide and embracing phase that includes many disciplines (it's a multi-disciplinary field in the way we are working) and gerontology is one of the focal points for building that field and the Network is contributing, but we are also going to have a lot of work in main stream disciplines, main stream professions where they focus on ageing.

The most important question now is really up to you people, and that's "how do you wish to connect and contribute?". There are the workshops tomorrow and we look forward to your being there and contributing and we are also (tomorrow morning) going to start with a plenary discussion which will be a very brief set of interviews that Keith Suter will have with myself, Diane Gibson and Barbara Squires (the chair of our Advisory Group), but after that it is going to be an open discussion so your views, your thoughts, your suggestions, your comments, your criticisms, whatever, please bring them out in the plenary to help us gauge where the Network will be going over the next four years.

Thank you very much.



**ARC/NHMRC Research Network
in Ageing Well**

Introduction to Day 2
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BARC Colloquium
4 - 5 July 2006



1a. Ageing Well Network Objectives

- To lead and facilitate **collaboration** in multi-disciplinary, **large scale** ageing research
- To facilitate **international** research involvement
- To build **capacities and excellence** in ageing studies
- To **enable communication** among researchers in setting agendas, proposals, accessing data
- To involve **key constituencies** (community, government, and industry)
- To **translate research findings** to inform actions

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2




1b. Research Proposal Development Support (adding value)

- Criteria: large scale, multi-disciplinary, national priorities, multi-institutional, and involving older people & international collaborators
- ARC-NHMRC Ageing Well, Ageing Productively (AWAP) funding proposals strategy
- Enabling international partnerships (e.g.)
 - US National Institute on Ageing
 - Building the Australian-European Research Community (FEAST)
 - International Research Centre for Healthy Ageing and Longevity (IRCHAL)








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3



1c. Adding Resources for Researchers (value & efficiency)

- Theme Workshops & Papers
- Grant and Literature Inventory
- Australian Data Archive on Ageing
- Methodological Workshops
- International Visitors
- Policy Conferences

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1d. Network Activities / Support for Emerging Researchers

- Annual Conference for Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA)
- Mentoring scheme
- Workshops / Master classes e.g. grant writing / publication
- National and International networking
- Newsletter / website








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5



2a. Network Objectives for the BARC Colloquium

- Increase understandings and initiate partnerships in research development and communication
- Identify key issues regarding Network directions
- Discuss options for Network actions

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2b. Day 2 Workshops

<p>Morning Session - Research development and communication processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consumer-led research</i> • <i>Dissemination and translation of ageing research</i> • <i>Research consultancies: governments, universities and the public sector</i> • <i>Building collaborative research with industry</i> 	<p>Afternoon Session - Network / BARC research themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Productivity and economic security</i> • <i>Independent living and social participation</i> • <i>Healthy ageing</i> • <i>Population research strategies</i>
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7



2c. Network Directions for next year (and beyond)

- Many collaborations enabled by the Network
- Lead large-scale collaborative research programs in the Theme Areas
- Ongoing improvement of research development and communication
- Meetings of State hubs and National partners

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8



3. Big Pictures Ahead

- Building a Vision of Ageing Well
- Building Coalitions for Research Development
- Advocacy for Investing in Research
- How Can Older People Provide a Lead?
- Will Ageing Research Become Mainstream?
- How Do You Wish to Connect and Contribute?

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9