



## **ARC-NHMRC RESEARCH NETWORK IN AGEING WELL – WA STATE HUB**

### **REPORT ON WORKSHOP ON AGEING RESEARCH 3 OCTOBER 2006 CITY WEST FUNCTION CENTRE, WEST PERTH**

The above Network has been funded to facilitate inter-disciplinary research on key issues related to informing decision-making in planning for an ageing Australia. It aims to enhance the scale and focus of research activity related to ageing, stimulate innovation and support researchers to connect with others. Four thematic areas have been defined (Productivity and Economic Security; Independent Living and Social Participation; Healthy Ageing; and Population Research Strategies). More detailed information is available at [www.ageingwell.edu.au](http://www.ageingwell.edu.au)

Following an invitation to register their interest in the Network sent to all academics at each of the five WA universities (and a number of independent research groups), a WA Network 'Symposium on Ageing Research' was held on the 29/30 September 2005. A brief note about this Symposium is at Attachment 1. As can be seen, as many as 84% of attendees were planning to make further contact with other participants.

In order to further foster the networking and collaboration stimulated by the Symposium, a follow-up 'Workshop on Ageing Research' was held on the 3 October 2006. This workshop focused particularly on the Independent Living and Social Participation theme area. Based on contributions and feedback from the first symposium, a number of specific researchers were invited to participate, together with representatives from the areas of policy, providers and organisations representing older people.

As a guide to likely areas of interest under the Independent Living and Social Participation theme, participants were asked to refer to the Background Paper on this theme and the Workshop Summary, both from the Building Ageing Research Capacity (BARC) Colloquium, held in Canberra in July (now available on the Network website – see above).

A major aim of the Workshop was the formation of collaborative research groups to address previously identified broad research questions aimed at developing specific research proposals. A total of 20 people participated, including researchers, policy people and service providers.

Prof Duncan Boldy (Centre for Research on Ageing, Curtin University, and WA State Hub Convenor, ARC-NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well) welcomed participants, in particular Dr Matthew Carroll, Senior Project Officer of the Network based at the University of Sydney, and Prof Helen Bartlett, Director of the Australasian Centre on Ageing, University of Queensland, and Convenor of the Independent Living and Social Participation theme area, within the Network.

Duncan commented that there were a smaller number of participants than in the previous Symposium, in part because of the focus on a particular theme area, but also because attendance implied a 'serious intention' to participate in ongoing collaborative research discussions' (a stated expectation mentioned in the EOI to attend). The presence of representatives from the areas of policy and service provision, should help to ensure that research proposed has relevance to such worlds (and hopefully to older people themselves, though no representatives from organizations representing older people attended).

Matthew Carroll presented an overview of the Objectives of the Network, namely:

- 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.

Following this, he mentioned the Discussion Groups established at the BARC Colloquium, indicating that it was possible to join such groups via the Network website (where they are listed): [www.ageingwell.edu.au/net\\_operate\\_capacity\\_policy.htm](http://www.ageingwell.edu.au/net_operate_capacity_policy.htm)

As part of the Background to the Workshop, Helen Bartlett introduced the Independent Living and Social Participation theme area, making reference to the Background Paper mentioned above and in particular to the Research Questions suggested by this paper in relation to:

- The **Nature** of independent living and social participation (ILSP) – Attachment 2
- The **Determinants/ Facilitators** of ILSP – Attachment 3.

Dr Peta Williams (Research Fellow, Centre for Research on Ageing, Curtin University) introduced Workshop 1, which focused on the 'Identification of Research Questions'. Participants, who were split into two groups, were referred to the suggested questions listed in Attachment 2 (Nature) and Attachment 3 (Determinants/ Facilitators), related to the ILSP theme. In relation to these, they were asked to consider:

1. Are these the key questions?
2. Are there any others?
3. Which are the most important and/or need to be answered first?

Participants generally found it difficult to answer questions 1 and 3 as posed, but were able to suggest a range of important research areas/ issues/ questions. A summary of the main suggestions emanating from the report back session can be found at Attachment 4.

Following lunch, Peta then introduced Workshop 2, which focused on 'Making Research Happen'. Participants, who continued to work in two groups, were asked to choose a limited number of questions/ issues, preferably covering both the nature and determinants/ facilitators of ILSP, and for each question/ issue:

1. Identify the key components
2. Determine if one or more of these components can be turned into a well defined and answerable/ testable research question(s)/ hypothesis(es)
3. Identify an appropriate approach/ methodology
4. Identify what sort of skill/discipline/expertise mix would be needed in a research team to address the question.

A range of questions were explored by participants in their groups and a summary of those presented and discussed in the report back session, some developed further than others, is at Attachment 5.

In the final 'What Next?' session, Duncan Boldy made reference to the following:

- Feedback summaries of the day's workshops to be provided (part of this report)
- Encouragement of ongoing discussion/collaboration
- Consideration of further Network facilitation (Nationally, State Hub)
- Possible funding via network participants for Network support for workshops to bring together researchers from different disciplines and locales, in order to generate and/or progress innovative research ideas
- Network website [www.ageingwell.edu.au](http://www.ageingwell.edu.au)
- Network email discussion groups, as referred to earlier by Matthew Carroll
- Monthly email bulletins (sent to Participants and Associates)
- Enrol as an Associate Member of the Network.

Feedback forms were included in the workshop folder and a total of 9 were returned. A summary of these responses is provided at Attachment 6. It is pleasing to note that 8 rated the workshop as either 4 or 5 (out of 5) in terms of meeting their expectations and all but one was interested in being a member of an ongoing collaborative research group. A range of topics/areas were suggested for such a group to pursue, with the most promising perhaps being:

- The meaning of 'place' and its relationship to independence
- Determinants of social isolation and how to increase social participation/connectedness.

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## ATTACHMENT 1

### NOTE ON 'SYMPOSIUM ON AGEING RESEARCH' – PERTH 29/30 SEPTEMBER 2005

The ARC-NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well (WA State Hub) in association with the WA Division of the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) held a 'Symposium on Ageing Research' on 29/30 September 2005, in Perth. The broad aim of Network State Hubs is to facilitate information exchange and collaborative research proposal development at a State level. The aim of the symposium was to identify opportunities for new and imaginative research connections.

The symposium committee, chaired by Professor Duncan Boldy (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), Assoc Professor Barbara Horner (Curtin University), Dr Gill Lewin (Silver Chain Nursing Association) and Dr Chris Toye (President, WA Division of AAG and Edith Cowan University).

36 short presentations were given by the 60 participants, broadly categorised according to Network theme areas as:

*Independence & Social Participation (12);*  
*Healthy Ageing (13);*  
*Productivity & Economic Security (6); and*  
*Other (5).*

Specific presentation titles and slide presentation themselves, are available via the Centre for Research on Ageing website:

[www.cra.curtin.edu.au/partners/WAStateNode\\_Sept05Symposium.html](http://www.cra.curtin.edu.au/partners/WAStateNode_Sept05Symposium.html)

In addition, Prof Hal Kendig (University of Sydney and National Convenor of the ARC-NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well) presented an overview of the Network, and Prof Helen Bartlett (University of Queensland and Network Theme Convenor) presented information about the Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA) activities. Considerable time was allowed for discussion, reporting back and networking.

An evaluation form completed by over 50% of participants indicated that the symposium had been a useful network opportunity (100% of respondents) with 84% planning to make further contact with other participants.

## **ATTACHMENT 2**

### **INDEPENDENT LIVING & SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**

#### **WORKSHOP 1 – Identification of Research Questions**

##### **The NATURE of independent living and social participation**

Research is needed to determine the characteristics of independent living and social participation. What constitutes a life lived independently and with social participation? What constitutes quality of life at different ages?

The Background Paper suggests the following questions:

- What do older people perceive as successful, optimal, productive, active ageing?
- What constitutes quality of life throughout the lifespan and in later life?
- What do quality of life, independence, and social participation mean to older people?
- What is the relationship between ageing in place and independent living and social participation?

To what extent should ageing in place be supported and under what circumstances?

- How much variation is there among older Australians in the attitudes, desires and needs with regards independence, social participation and quality of life? For example, do older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds differ?

## **ATTACHMENT 3**

### **INDEPENDENT LIVING & SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**

#### **WORKSHOP 1 – Identification of Research Questions**

##### **The DETERMINANTS/FACILITATORS of independent living and social participation**

Research is needed in order to identify the determinants/facilitators of quality of life, independent living and social participation. In particular aspects of the social environment that support Independent Living and Social Participation must be identified. In addition, those strategies that are most effective at establishing levels of independence and social participation that are of optimum benefit to older Australians should be identified.

The Background paper suggests the following questions:

- How does the context in which older people live influence independent living and social participation?
- What is an optimal lifestyle that maximises quality of life for current and future older people?
- What is the connection between the micro (e.g. experience) and the macro (e.g. infrastructure) when it comes to independent living, social participation and quality of life?
- What comprises “age friendly” or enabling environments?
- Which contextual factors (social networks and attitudes, societal and institutional structures, infrastructure and build environmental, economic factors) affect quality of life, independence and social participation of older people?
- How can the independent living and social participation of older people be facilitated?

## **ATTACHMENT 4**

### **WORKSHOP 1 – IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **RELATED TO THE NATURE, DETERMINANTS AND/OR FACILITATORS OF ILSP**

##### **SUMMARY**

Suggestions regarding important research areas/ issues/ questions:

##### **Nature**

- Meaning of ‘independence’; recognition of its limits – financial, physical, cognitive
- Importance of ‘control’; also privacy
- Importance of ‘choice’ – relationship to cognitive ability and information
- Importance of Independence related to Choice and Control; rather than to need for ‘care’ and/or place of care
- Independence v interdependence – relationship to ‘security’
- Why ‘Independent Living’? Why not just ‘Living’? (as more important than ‘Independence’)

##### **Determinants and/or Facilitators**

- Meaning of ‘place’ (e.g. as in ‘Ageing in Place’)
- Models of ‘Ageing in Place’ (large scale study), e.g. comparing models which emphasise, to a greater or lesser degree, integration or segregation
- Diversity (individual v group)
- Managing transitions, e.g. retirement; lifestyle changes
- Importance of integrating/ phasing (in/out) education, work, retirement
- Influences on lifecourse – related to expectations of older people and changes over time
- Age-friendly issues
- Importance of environment
- Social capital in retirement villages
- Older people’s perspective on ‘Barriers’; relationship to changing cohorts – importance of longitudinal studies
- Issues for older people with an intellectual disability (and other people ageing with a disability)
- Issues for disadvantaged groups
- Social isolation (and evaluation of possible interventions)
- Universal design (costs v benefits of providing; older people, developers,..)
- End of life decisions
- Role of volunteers and volunteering
- Role of technology (related to ‘independence’); smart houses

## ATTACHMENT 5

### WORKSHOP 2 – MAKING RESEARCH HAPPEN

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS, COMPONENTS, METHODOLOGY AND SKILL MIX

##### SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS

###### Broadly related to ‘Nature’

1. Question:

What do older people want from their community/place?

Components:

What are the factors that influence what people want from ‘place’

- related to ethnicity, health, gender, family network, ..

How does ‘place’ affect independence?

Development of a living model to inform policy and service provision.

Research Question:

Is there a relationship between independence and place?

Methodology:

Mixed – start with qualitative

- focus groups, individual interviews.

Requires sampling across broad range of housing

- public, retirement village, hostel, etc.

Identify the dimensions, then test them.

Development of validated Australian measure of independent living which will be different from activities of daily living (ADLs).

Skill mix:

Social and behavioural scientists

Service providers

Government, including local

Translators etc for CALD groups

Older people groups to provide input to spectrum of places to be explored.

2. Question:

Why to some people age better than others, i.e. the nature of dependency

Components:

Identify the key differences between people referred for home care and people in the community.

Research Question:

What factors, in addition to ‘dependency’ (definition) account for any difference(s)?

Methodology:

Ideally double blind RCT.

Pragmatically will probably have to settle for less.

Skill mix:

Similar to Question 1.

## **Broadly related to ‘Determinants/Facilitators’**

### 1. Question:

What is the impact of transitions in later life on social isolation?

#### Components:

Identify key transition points.

Identify key risk factors leading to social isolation

- e.g. lack of family network or wider social network, gender, ethnicity, ...

Identify coping mechanisms which could inform policy solutions

- government, service providers, local community, ..

#### Research Questions:

What are the key transition points?

What are the responses to transitions in later life?

What responses increase/decrease or have no effect on social isolation, as a result of transitions?

#### Methodology:

Mixed

- meta analysis of existing work
- qualitative (focus groups)
- already have existing measure of social isolation

#### Skill mix:

Social and behavioural scientists

Service providers

Government, including local

Translators etc for CALD groups

Older people groups to provide input into discussion of transition points, etc.

### 2. Question:

How can older people be made more independent/socially connected?

#### Components:

Importance of ‘age-friendliness’.

Social isolation and loneliness not the same.

Use of direct and/or indirect questions for measurement

How to identify/interview socially isolated/lonely people?

Use of volunteers/trained interviewers etc.

#### Research Questions:

How can groups of older people be better facilitated to help each other (i.e. related to promotion of ‘self/peer management’, ‘connected communities’, etc.)?

What makes peer groups effective?

#### Methodology:

Varied but including case studies

Peer groups as an intervention.

#### Skill mix:

Not specified, but ‘multidisciplinary’.

3. Question:

What are the uses and benefits/limitations of technology?

Components:

Slips, trips and falls – use of technology to identify most common reasons.

Use of surveillance – relationship to ‘making lives better’.

Helping people/carers to manage at home for longer.

Research Question:

How acceptable to older people is the use of various technologies at different stages of people’s lives (e.g. level of ‘dependency’)?

Methodology:

Not specified

Skill mix:

Technologists

Behavioural/social scientists to help tease out the whys related to uptake and usage rates, in a real life context.

## ATTACHMENT 6

### SUMMARY OF RESPONSES VIA FEEDBACK FORM

1. To what extent did the workshop meet your expectations?

	Not at all				Fully
Rating	1	2	3	4	5
N=			1	7	1

2. If not 'fully', why not?

- More participants, e.g. Retirement Village reps, academics
- Unable to get as specific as planned
- Facilitator at table to focus discussions would have assisted the group I sat with
- Had hoped that would end up with a research question and a group working on it
- Not quite focused enough

3. Are you interested in being a member of an ongoing collaborative research group aimed at developing specific research proposals?

Yes = 8                      No = 1

4. If 'Yes', please indicate Topic/Area:

- Independence v Interdependence
- Independence and place
- The meaning of place
- Models of care and transitions
- Social isolation
- Social participation/ isolation/ community and social connectedness
- Use of technology (surveillance/smart housing) for measurement and provision of positive ageing
- Intellectual disability and old age: residence, daily activities, transitions
- Health effects related to participation.