

# Determinants of community-based social participation amongst older people: The 'Ageing well in Wanneroo' Project

Dr Julie Dare <sup>1</sup>, Dr Celia Wilkinson<sup>1, 2</sup>,  
Professor Ruth Marquis<sup>1</sup>, Professor Rob Donovan<sup>3</sup>  
Amberlee Laws<sup>3</sup>, Helen O'Sullivan<sup>4</sup>



Project funded by Healthway



- <sup>1</sup> Edith Cowan University
- <sup>2</sup> National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University
- <sup>3</sup> Curtin University
- <sup>4</sup> City of Wanneroo

**AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY**

**50<sup>th</sup>**  
**AAG**  
**CONFERENCE**

University of Western Australia

**08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017**  
**CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology



[https://www.google.com/search?as\\_st=y&tbm=isch&as\\_q=older+people&as\\_epq=&as\\_oq=&as\\_eq=&cr=&as\\_sitesearch=&safe=images&tbs=sur:fm#cimgrc=DNUb7PQZGuBizM:&spf=1509845642864](https://www.google.com/search?as_st=y&tbm=isch&as_q=older+people&as_epq=&as_oq=&as_eq=&cr=&as_sitesearch=&safe=images&tbs=sur:fm#cimgrc=DNUb7PQZGuBizM:&spf=1509845642864)

“Keeping healthy as you age is not just about being physically active. It’s also about maintaining your mental, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing”

(Department for Communities, Government of Western Australia, 2015, para. Seniors on the go).

**AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY**

**50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE**

Assessed using the 5-Item De Jong Gierveld  
Loneliness Scale

**08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017**  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

## The setting

### City of Wanneroo

- 685 square km in Perth's northern suburbs
- culturally and socioeconomically diverse population (n=189,000)
- 13% of the population aged 60+ years (18% in greater Perth)



## Research Questions

- (i) What are the socioeconomic, cultural and individual barriers and enablers to older people's (60+ years) participation in community-based programs in the City of Wanneroo?
- (ii) What are the characteristics of programs which are likely to promote social engagement and sustained participation among older people at risk of social isolation?

# Mixed Methods Research Design

- Exploratory and explanatory sequential mixed methods research design (Creswell 2014), incorporating 4 stages:
  - Audit of community-based programs either designed specifically for older people (60+ yrs), or with a large proportion of older participants (n=58 participating organisations, 138 individual activities)
  - **Stage 2: Four focus groups (n=16) & individual interviews (n=19) ; mean age 71 yrs ; diverse SES**
  - Stage 3: Quantitative survey (n=373)
  - **Stage 4: semi-structured qualitative interviews with survey respondents screened as lonely\* and with a history of non-participation in community-based group activities (n=14) ; 6 M, 8 F ; mean age 66.5yrs ; diverse SES**

\* Assessed using the 6-Item De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale

AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY

50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE

08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

## Results, Stage 2 (4 FG (n=16) & interviews (n=19))

### Theme 1: Friendship and Function

- Respondents placed significant value on social opportunities and support provided through group activities:
  - “the people make it fun, the activities we do just make sure we turn up on time!” (Lois)
  - “this [craft group] is my free support group” (Maria)
- Social engagement dependent on skilful facilitators:
  - “one of the facilitators was good at helping people to meet each other, doing ‘pairing-up’ activities” (Louise)

AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY

50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE

Assessed using the 5-Item De Jong Gierveld  
Loneliness Scale

08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

## Results, Stage 2

### Theme 2: Availability and Accessibility

- General perception of limited programs available in the local area:
  - “community facilities up here are pathetic” (Colin)
- Program scheduling:
  - “if it’s not in the ‘a.m.’ it’s not happening - I might need a nap in the afternoon!” (Barry)
  - “evening programs too difficult to get to” (Louise)
  - pros and cons of short-term and ongoing programs
- Transport:
  - limited public transport an issue for respondents who could no longer drive, or restricted their driving
- Cost issues:
  - preference for ‘pay as you go’ payment options



<http://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/News/Article/808862/elder-fitness-program-gets-results/>

## Results, Stage 2

### Theme 3: Competing Responsibilities

- Many respondents keen to participate in group activities, but busy lives left little spare time:
  - “[family commitments] leave me with very little time to engage in other activities... and I don’t have the flexibility to be able to commit to programs which run at set times” (Maureen)
  - “I would participate in programs if I could find ones that interested me and fitted around my family responsibilities” (Susan)

### Theme 4: Changing of the Guard

- Demographic transitions:
  - “traditional pursuits such as bingo which may be popular with older generations will not necessarily be relevant to baby boomer retirees. Community programs targeting older people need to anticipate the changing needs of ‘young old’ groups” (Colin)
  - existing membership of ‘traditional’ seniors programs (e.g. Senior Citizens clubs) declining due to illness, shifting demographics & competing priorities (e.g. babysitting grandchildren)

AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY

50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE

Assessed using the 5-Item De Jong Gierveld  
Loneliness Scale

08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

## Results, Stage 4 (interviews, n=14)

### Theme 1: Dimensions of loneliness

- [My] son “pops in every Thursday, [and my boyfriend] takes me out every Thursday and Friday, [the] lady next door who comes in for coffee every Friday morning [and I have a] lunch date with another couple every other Sunday....People just ring up out of the blue - ‘we are going to IKEA, would you like to come?’ I was taken to [coastal town] recently with another couple’ (Nora)
- “I still miss [husband]... I still get lonely. Some days about 4pm, you think that’s the end of the day. You suddenly think, I wish the phone would ring or someone come” (Nora)

AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY

50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE

08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

## Results, Stage 4

### Theme 2: 'There are no facilities in this area'

- “I would really like him to join a men’s shed but there are no facilities around here. There is one in Wanneroo and one in Yanchep but nothing in this area” (WA10009, Female)
- “There may be some [activities] in Wanneroo but it would be further for me to go” (WS10005, Female)
- “We are just on the very edge of City of Wanneroo so isolated from there. If I wanted to go to a gym I would go to City of Stirling in Balga or I’d go to City of Swan in Beechboro. I wouldn’t look at Wanneroo. It’s like this little pocket has been forgotten about. Yes, but it is too far away to do things” (WS10004, Male)

AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY

50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE

08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

## Results, Stage 4

### Theme 3: Competing Responsibilities

- “I take my grandchildren to school each morning because my daughter-in-law doesn’t drive, that’s the two from Alexander Heights. The one from Balga – her mother and father drop her off when they go to work” (WS10005, Female)
- “Yes, I used to play badminton but because of my shifts I gave it away because I was missing so much. It was only social so it didn’t matter if I came and went or whatever but in the end I thought I’m only here every now and again so I gave it away....Then I joined a walking group but it was the same thing. Because I could only do it sometimes I gave that away. Even though they said it doesn’t matter but I felt uncomfortable just turning up the odd time, even though people understood” (WS10008, Female)
- “For work I leave home at 6.15 and get home at 4.30. So there’s the day gone. I am 70 and I do run out of steam” (160514.0056, Male)

AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY

50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE

08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

## Recommendations for local government and community-based organisations

- Support community-based organisations and older residents to develop *local* innovative activities relevant to a diverse cohort of seniors
  - consider strategies to increase availability of activities in outer urban areas (e.g. liaise with other institutions to use existing infrastructure (i.e. school facilities))
- Encourage flexible attendance, scheduling and payment options, and consider embedding opportunities for social interaction (e.g. scheduled tea breaks, pairing activities)
- Include measures of social engagement as an outcome when evaluating programs targeting older adults

AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY

50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE

08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

## References

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Department for Communities. (2009). *Seniors on the go: Your guide to a healthy, happy life.*

Retrieved from

<http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/Documents/Seniors/SO95%20Seniors%20on%20the%20Go%20A4%20v6.pdf>

Haslam, C., Cruwys, T. , Milne, M., Kan, C., & Haslam, S.A. (2016). Group ties protect cognitive health by promoting social identification and social support, *Journal of Aging and Health*, 28(2), 244-266. doi: 10.1177/0898264315589578

AGEING:  
THE GOLDEN  
OPPORTUNITY

50<sup>th</sup>  
AAG  
CONFERENCE

08 - 10 NOVEMBER 2017  
CROWN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology