

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of
Canberra**

**The Effect of Lifestyle Choices on the
Physical and Mental Health of Older
Australians: Successful Ageing**

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of lifestyle choices on the physical and mental health of Australians in the 55+ age group and the contribution of these lifestyles to successful ageing. It uniquely uses interviews with successful older Australians to identify the ingredients that contribute to their success. It also uses data from a recognised source to provide a qualitative summary of the attributes of all older Australians on the assumption that if successful lifestyles are to be recommended then older people must be physically and mentally capable of achieving them. Australia, in common with other countries in the developed world, is facing a changing demographic. Low fertility and increases in life expectancy both contribute to an ageing population.

Concern is expressed at the increase in the dependency ratio, i.e. the number of dependent people (under the age of 15 and over the age of 65) compared with the number of productive people in the workforce aged 15 – 65. In practical terms, there will be fewer taxpayers to fund increasing pension and health costs. The counter-argument that there are more people adding to the country's social and economic capital is rarely heard.

Research in ageing tends to concentrate around financial issues, using quantitative research which rarely involves older people. Research into the other aspect of ageing, the well-being of older people from the viewpoint of older people, is the subject of this research. Almost all research into ageing in Australia is done by younger researchers, whose knowledge of ageing often comes from issues raised in the literature, which in turn is written largely by younger researchers. In contrast, this research has been conducted by an older person, with the support of a group of older people.

The philosophy of the research is that the last stage of life, ageing, is often artificially separated from the rest of the life span by retirement, instead of life being treated as a continuum. This largely contributes to the phenomenon of 'negative ageing' and creates many of the 'problems' associated with ageing. Life expectancy has increased exponentially in the last few decades, creating an increased number of years in the period of life referred to as 'ageing'. Australia is not recognising this as a new phenomenon which must be addressed, both from the point of view of the individuals involved and the well-being of the country. In

addition, many of the old concepts of ageing, including frailty, dependency and senility, continue to be inaccurately applied to the new ageing population.

This research suggests that, as in other stages of life, most people have options in the later stage. The result of selecting correctly from these options can affect the quality of life, both physically and mentally, and hence the enjoyment of this final stage. It suggests that the Australian dream of a life of idleness and leisure beyond retirement age (55 for public servants) has downsides that are not usually acknowledged. Loneliness, high male suicide rates and dementia may well be among the unintended outcomes of inappropriate choices.

More positive life paths, tried and tested, are suggested in this thesis. Continuation with employment, either full-time or part-time, or the adoption of an alternative life plan are proved to be promoters of good physical and mental health in the later stages of life.

In all stages of life there is a need for a sense of purpose, and a need to feel part of the community and to have a role in that community, and these needs apply also to the later, ageing stage. The qualitative part of the research, interviews with outstanding older Australians, provides testimony to this.

Modern research into brain plasticity can make a contribution to successful and healthy ageing. It largely supports the outcomes of this research. Ways of tapping into the untouched talents and capabilities that older people possess, to enable them to find a purpose in life, can be assisted by use of modern technology to access ‘tribes’ – that is, people with similar interests. Ageing in the 21st century must be regarded as a valuable stage in life when older persons continue with established careers or embrace new careers and achievements; this can lead to the recognition of ageing as a contributing and rewarding part of the continuum of life.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter gives the rationale for this research, the descriptors used, an outline of the research, its aims and methodology, the contribution of the relevant literature and the structure used. The research investigates the contribution that the lifestyle choices of older people can make to their physical and mental health. It is a search for successful ageing.

1.1 Rationale

1.1.1 Background

Ageing of populations is acknowledged worldwide as a continuing demographic change, with consequences which must be addressed. The change has already greatly affected developed countries and is beginning to affect developing countries, the latter more rapidly ‘due to the rapidity of the fertility decline’ (Coast 2002, p.362). World Population Prospects (United Nations 2004 p22) suggests a more difficult problem. ‘Countries that grow old before they grow rich may face enormous challenges in providing for an increasing number of elderly citizens’. Many developing countries will look to developed countries for guidance for successful management of these changes.

Reduced fertility rates and increasing longevity create changes in demographic patterns, with the changes currently mainly affecting developed countries such as Australia. In 1901 the percentage of the Australian population in the 55+ age group, the subject of this research, was 8.7%. In 1951, 50 years later, it had risen to 17.3% and by 2001 it had risen to 22.0%. Even in the six years to 2007, it rose by over 2% to 24.3% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). The reasons for these increases are beyond the scope of this research, but the effect is twofold. From the economic perspective, it means that as time passes, there are fewer people in the work force to support the older age groups, many of whom require financial assistance to meet rising health and living costs. Accommodation costs of the elderly are also developing as a fiscal problem due to the large numbers involved. Secondly, the lives of these older people, particularly in terms of how they spend their time as this period of life increases, need consideration. It is this second aspect of an ageing population which is the subject of this research. The results could reflect positively on the financial consequences of an ageing population, including increasing the economic and social capital provided by this group, and creating a more satisfying later stage of life. This in turn could lead to reduced health and accommodation costs for older people.

This research focuses on the Australian situation although many of the issues raised are common to other developed and developing countries.

1.1.2 A new dilemma

As life expectancy in the developed world (and to a lesser but increasing extent in the developing world) increases, older people are spending longer in the ‘post retirement’ years; this is increasingly becoming an important stage of life. There is an awareness that financial planning is needed for the many decades involved in this but the complementary lifestyle planning is largely neglected. This thesis argues that the latter planning is equally as important as it involves both the physical and mental health of people in the later stage of life.

A number of choices are available to most older people and these were investigated for this study. An alternative choice – less widely acknowledged but with a greater opportunity for successful ageing – is also investigated.

1.2 Definitions and descriptors

1.2.1 Definition of lifestyle choice

There are a variety of choices available to people in Australia in the later stage of life, some of which are genuine choices, others are forced by circumstance. These include remaining in the workforce, full-time or part time, doing voluntary work, working as a carer (which may not be through choice), or following a new career, interest or hobby. All of them involve having a purpose in life including the status in the community which accompanies this choice. All of them should include planning for the future.

1.2.2 Definitions of physical and mental health

In the quantitative section of the research, the definitions of physical and mental health are provided by the database. In the qualitative section, physical health is regarded as the ability to lead a full and active life regardless of any physical impediments: mental health is regarded as being able to live in society and to make a contribution to that society, locally and/or to the larger society.

1.2.3 Definition of ‘older people’

The eligibility of retirement as a lifestyle choice established the lower limit of ‘older person’ in this research as 55+ years, the age at which public servants in Australia can retire. This is

particularly relevant in the quantitative section which looks at lifestyle changes occurring with the ageing process.

1.2.4 Descriptor of the ageing process

The phrase 'old age' has negative connotations, identified as a component of negative ageism, with the result that the term 'later stage of life' has been given preference in this thesis. This reinforces the philosophy that life is a continuum, and that increasing life expectancy has made this stage a valid and important one.

1.3 Outline of the research

1.3.1 Background

The original aim of this research was to investigate the effect of lifestyle choices, in terms of full time or part time work, or volunteering, or caring, the current accepted options, on the physical and mental health of Australians of retirement age, from age 55. This was to become the foundation of the research which began with an analysis of data relating to numerous aspects of older people's lifestyles. This provided a profile of the ageing which other research often fails to do.

The research focuses on the necessary ingredients for successful ageing in Australia – which can be fulfilled by having a purpose in life in its later stage. Firstly the quantitative picture of this age group was created in order to ascertain whether older people were physically and mentally capable of achieving this.

The quantitative results from this data set, the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, described later, indicate that members of this 55+ age group are largely fit and well. The exceptions may be people in the last two years of life when health care costs have been shown to rise and ill health conditions increase rapidly. Hussain et al. (2005, p.34) provide a reminder that 'The fact that the world's population is ageing is a triumph for the human race'. It is important that we also make it a triumph for individual older people. To achieve this, it is necessary to identify the numerous fields and aspects of human life, for this age group, which are necessary contributors to this triumph.

1.3.2 Breaking down the barriers

This research paper is breaking down an important barrier in the world of negative ageing, and in the field of research into ageing. Much of the research in this field does not include older people except as respondents to questions written by younger researchers. Both the quantitative and qualitative sections of this research are based on older peoples' opinions and experiences. In the quantitative section (using the HILDA database) an older person was involved in writing the questions used in the survey. Only the results of interviews with older people (aged 55+) were used.

The research has been instigated and carried out by an older person aged in her seventies, with assistance from other older people. This support group ranged in age from 56 to 91 years and were located in three different cities in Australia. Involvement included attending presentations, assistance with the statistics, and commenting on written documents such as the research format. The support group members are examples of successful ageing with commitments such as writing a regular church newsletter by the two oldest members, starting a PhD, tutoring young children with reading difficulties, saving the local hospice and other health provisions, acting as a carer and learning bridge and the cello. The researcher herself plans to publish her research findings, to investigate any connections between having a purpose in life and the incidence of dementia, and to take up painting.

The extensive involvement of older people makes this research unique among current studies in Australia. The thesis argues for the benefits of involving older people in research, including facilitating their own research projects.

1.4 Research aims

One of the major identified 'problems' of the 21st century is that life expectancy is increasing rapidly, initially among developed countries, and that this phenomena requires analysis as it is having a major impact on societies, both financially and socially.

This research investigates:

- A profile of what is meant by the term 'older Australians' in terms of physical and mental health and lifestyle which are relevant to this research. Much of the current research into older people fails to identify what is meant by this term, often not even specifying the age group involved.

- The current lifestyle choices available to older Australian people. This identifies and details the lifestyle choices presently available to people in this age group.
- The needs of older people which must be satisfied to achieve successful ageing. This brings the research in line with that of other age groups and identifies the requirements of, and possibilities for, successful living at any age, including the later stage.
- The extent to which the current available lifestyle choices can lead to successful ageing.

If the 20-year increase in life expectancy which has occurred, mainly in the last 40 years, had been a sudden increase, it would have been recognised as a new phenomenon and addressed as such. The gradual increase has created a situation where a ‘more of the same’ approach has been taken which is not adequately meeting the needs of contemporary ‘later stage of life’ participants and in particular is leading to an increase in age related dementia which may be an outcome of this approach.

The aim of the research is to examine and combine the current factors affecting the later stage of life, including the physical and mental capacity of older Australians, and suggest a more modern approach which includes knowledge of basic needs and capabilities of people at all stages in life and new advancements in understanding the functioning of the brain, and its needs, among the older group.

1.5 Methodology

Many aspects of this research necessitated the use of a mixed method approach. The major areas include identifying firstly the current lifestyles and physical and mental capacities of older Australians as a group, and their potential, and secondly the lifestyles of individuals in this group who are achieving optimal ageing. The first required a group assessment using a data base which met the requirements of this quantitative part of the research, and the second required qualitative analysis through interviews at an individual level and search of the literature.

The mixed method approach is necessary to meet the requirements of the different and diverse fields involved. It follows Hammersley’s (1996) identification of a complementary

approach which enables different aspects of research to be dovetailed. Bryman (2008, p606) points out that ‘the strengths of the data-collection and data-analysis techniques with which quantitative and qualitative research are each associated’ can be fused.

1.5.1 Quantitative analysis

This research focused on older people, a group which is often not even defined in terms of age. The age group selected for this research was 55 and over as this is the age at which public servants in Australia can take the retirement option.

Several data bases available, including those available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), were investigated but were not suitable as they failed to satisfy the research needs. The research project required data for the 55+ age group without any upper limit. It also required flexible age groups which could be subdivided into five year age groups which would indicate the influence of the ageing process on the various aspects of life analysed involved in the research. It also required a database which covered different aspects of life. The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey was selected as it most nearly fitted these criteria and had the additional benefits of having survey questions designed by a team which included an older person, and had responses given by older people, all of whom still live in the community. It also included a broad section of the community from all parts of Australia; the wave 3 interviews (2003) used in the research included 3532 households.

The major restriction with the database was that it did not directly question the type of lifestyle people were involved in and this had to be deduced from other responses. For the purposes of this research, lifestyle includes the many ways people in this age group occupy their time, including participation in the workforce, full time or part-time, acting as carers or volunteering. Included in the data used are issues such as the level of socialising, the amount of spare time they have, the extent to which they feel part of the local community and the extent to which their physical or emotional health interferes with their normal social activities. This provided a picture of the ways in which people in this age group spend their time, and their physical and mental capabilities. What was not asked in the questionnaire used was the extent to which they felt that they had a purpose in their lives, a difficult concept to define and a very difficult question to include in a survey but one which lends itself to qualitative research and was therefore included in this part of the research.

The HILDA survey is a recognised database and is a Commonwealth government-sponsored social science research project which has been collecting comparable data annually since 2000 and will continue to do so for several years with committed government funding. Data is used to identify changes in Australian families and the communities in which they live (Macklin 2008). Data from this survey is used by many international organisations.

Use of the HILDA database enabled the responses from approximately 3500 older Australians in the required age group to be used, people who were still living in the community, with the data mainly collected through a telephone survey which was enhanced by personal response questionnaires. In addition, weights were provided which enabled the results to be applied to the whole Australian population, including those in this age group. The means used to record the data is included in the quantitative data chapter of this thesis. An additional graphical comparison of the data over two different years (2003 and 2007) enabled potential trend lines to be identified.

The quantitative analysis provides an answer to the first part of the research by identifying the different characteristics of people in this age group and enables a profile of them to be established. It enables the current and potential physical and mental health capabilities of those approaching retirement age, and beyond, to be identified and additional information, such as participation in the workplace, permanent or part time, and involvement in caring or volunteering, and satisfaction with life to be obtained.

The statistical profile of this selected group of people shows extreme diversity, including in their physical and mental capabilities and their purpose in life and life satisfaction, across the different age groups. The responses were subdivided into the two main categories of 'lifestyle' and 'work/purpose', again based upon the research focus. The category of 'lifestyle' was further subdivided into the categories of background information, such as education levels and marital status, fitness and health, family and living arrangements and the financial situation of this group, providing a comprehensive and diverse profile.

1.5.2 Qualitative analysis

The research moved on to interviews with a small group of recognised older Australians who, at the time of this research, were continuing to achieve and who generously permitted the researcher to interview them. These people had a public profile which identified their purpose in life, a major ingredient of successful ageing. The advantage of this type of data collection

is that it fills in the personal gaps left by quantitative analysis through telephone interviews and questionnaires which have to have a very specific script to ensure uniformity. It enables the somewhat abstract concept of 'having a purpose in life' to be identified particularly as the interviewees were specifically selected for their diverse occupations and age groups.

It was important that recognised older people whose names often appear in the media, and whose work is well known, were interviewed to illustrate the research findings. A group of between seven and ten older people in this category was regarded as an acceptable sample size, particularly if they were from different professions, different racial groups, different ages and different genders were approached. The final acceptances from seven people included one female and one Aboriginal elder, with ages ranging from 59 to 83.

Acknowledging that ageing does not occur in a vacuum and is merely one stage in a continuous life, those involved in the interviews were asked to identify main events in their past, current and projected future careers and lives, showing continuity of purpose with other life stages.

This combination of research strategies, quantitative and qualitative, allows the strengths of the two methods to be capitalised upon and their weaknesses to be offset (Bryman 2008). This is particularly pertinent in this research as the characteristics of the group of older people being researched are rarely provided, although research acknowledges that they are the most diverse group in the community. The quantitative data was enriched by the interviews with individual Australians which put faces to the data, and in particular highlighted the importance of and the advantages of having a purpose at all stages of life.

1.5.3 The use of literature to supplement the quantitative and qualitative research

The qualitative and quantitative research moved from population studies to a study of specific interviewees. The gap between these two extremes was filled by literature from other researchers who had studied small groups who had achieved successful ageing through their community lifestyles or through a deliberate attempt to find a purpose. Research into smaller communities which had relatively large numbers of centenarians, and their approaches to, and factors affecting, their lives came from the work of Buettner (2008). In contrast Goldman and Mahler (2007) illustrated the different lifestyles chosen by individual Americans, some of whom continued with past careers or interests whilst others branched out into entirely new fields. In addition the careers of people across the world and across time who have achieved

in later life were used to illustrate the possibilities for this age group. This, together with the data analysis, assisted in identifying the ingredients for successful ageing, taking into account the changes occurring through the ageing process. The mixed method approach enabled the research to provide a broad angle lens view of older Australians and to focus on smaller groups and individuals, using the literature to bridge the gap between the two, to provide a more personal view of the ageing process, and helped to identify the attitudes and lifestyles which contribute to successful ageing.

1.5.4 The use of literature to identify the environment in which ageing occurs

Ageing does not occur in a vacuum and literature, including that from other fields, was used to identify the environment in which ageing occurs. These include the negative attitude towards ageing, including that of researchers who largely fail to involve older people in research, and other professionals who fail to recognise this growing cohort with its different problems and challenges. The literature identified the parallels between ageism, sexism and racism. Public airing of this concept, and recognition of it, will contribute to its eradication. The currently available lifestyle choices, identified in the literature, which may enable older people to achieve successful ageing are detailed. Modern technology also impinges upon the lifestyles of this group. The increased availability of connection with other people with like interests, through the information age, which can overcome the physical deterioration connected with ageing, is addressed through the modern concept of tribes. The needs of older people, particularly the need to have a place in society, status, is parallel to the needs of other age groups and at other times in the life cycle of older people.

Finally newly accepted brain research early in the 21st century reversed the accepted myth that ageing and a decrease in mental ability are naturally connected. This, together with technological changes occurring simultaneously, enables a revision of the aspirations available in the later stage of life to be identified. This is endorsed by contemporary literature on ways of fulfilling the need for successful and therefore satisfying ageing, including the two major resources necessary to achieve this, good physical and mental health. The need for good physical health is now accepted for all age groups, although less so for older people, but preventing brain deterioration is a newer concept, accelerated by the acceptance of brain plasticity which indicates that loss of brain cells can be compensated for by an increase in connectors between cells. This may be a way of preventing brain damage which is an

increasing problem as the incidence of Alzheimer's disease in the ageing community increases. A report by Access Economics (2009) estimates that within the next 50 years there will be 1.13 million Australians with Alzheimer's disease. The effect of this is enhanced by a multiplier effect when the number of family members affected and friends is included.

The combination of the methodologies, quantitative and qualitative, and a literature search, has enabled a broad picture to be painted of the capabilities and needs, both physically and mentally, of older people, particularly in Australia, and the lifestyles available to them to achieve successful ageing. Those currently leading physically and mentally healthy and successful lives, as shown by this research, bear witness to the premises upon which the research is built. This research, combined with contemporary literature and new technological developments have helped to identify the possibilities and ingredients for successful ageing in the 21st century and the obstacles in place which prevent the achievement of this, including the attitude of the community, professionals and researchers.

The research presents ageing as a new stage in life previously unavailable to most, in which older people can follow discarded and unfulfilled aims and ambitions from earlier stages of their lives, or follow new ones, or continue to pursue established ones, largely free of the obligations and commitments which often dominate previous parts of their lives. In this later stage of life, as in other stages, a purpose, ambition or goals are necessary and provide a reason for continuing to live and enjoying a rewarding and satisfying life. Older people have the same need for status in society, and fulfilment, as other age groups.

1.5.5 Thesis structure

The opening chapter introduces the research and details the aims and methodology of the research.

Chapter 2 outlines the literature field which includes an overview of the breadth and depth of fields which contribute to the study of ageing. It includes literature on negative attitudes towards the process of ageing, its promotion by the media, the reaction towards ageism through education by older people themselves, their exclusion from research and the inaccuracies resulting from this. It includes the contribution of innovation in brain research towards ageist attitudes and the need to rethink attitudes towards this aspect of the later stage of life.

Chapter 3 illustrates the research through descriptions of the lives of older people in the past, and older people today, whose lifestyles follow the recommendations in this thesis. It looks at two groups of successful agers.

Chapter 4 records interviews with older Australians who are already achieving successful ageing.

Chapter 5 details the quantitative analysis of the physical and mental capabilities of Australians in the 55+ age group, the subjects of this research, and their ability to meet the requirements of the research.

Chapter 6 applies the same methodology to the work scenario, paid or unpaid, which is an important component of successful ageing.

The final chapter summarises the research and the recommendations arising from it.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has explained the rationale for the research, the definitions involved, provided an outline of the research and its aims and explained the methodology used. The structure of the research has been outlined.

The next chapter discusses the literature relevant to the research project.

Chapter 2 Factors influencing ageing

This chapter looks at contributors to the areas of ageing research. It includes research directly addressing ageing issues, and research in contributory areas such as negative ageing, the different lifestyles available to older people and the new approach to this stage of life offered by research into brain function and mental health. The need for older people to have a purpose in life and how this can be achieved is addressed.

2.1 Overall research in ageing

The study of ageing, under its umbrella title of ‘Gerontology’, is a huge and diverse field. Ageing research is still in its infancy, compared with other sciences, in terms of being accepted, and this has a widespread impact. In *Gerontology, a Multidisciplinary Approach*, Minichiello et al (1992) divide the area into several different fields, biological, psychological, sociological, geriatrics, quality and caring. A later publication, *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing* (Johnson 2005), divides the subject into the body, mind, self, relationships, societies and policies. These sections are subdivided into 72 chapters, demonstrating this diversity. Within Australian research, Borowski et al. (2007) uses the different categories of health, Indigenous people, gender, ethnicity, employment, health policy, retirement income, housing, transport, aged care, politics, lifelong education, intergenerational relationships and the law, to investigate ageing.

Even within disciplines, ageing has many facets. Binstock and George (2006) look at ageing through the lens of social scientists covering 25 different aspects of the subject, including social structure, migration, social networks and health, gender, social institutions, society and the judicial systems. From the psychological aspect, Stuart-Hamilton (2006) looks at ageing by dividing the study into eight different areas, including the definition of ageing from this viewpoint, measuring intellectual change, memory and language, personality and lifestyle, mental illness and the future of ageing.

Nelson, editor of *Ageism* (2004), brings together several different aspects of the topic, from its origins, to its effects, to the means of reducing its effects in future. The 12 chapters in this book look at ageism from different fields of research, from stereotyping to its implicit nature; to the social-development aspect; its effects, including in the workplace, and how it can be reduced.

An alternate side of ageism has been investigated by Minichiello and Coulson (2005), who look at eleven different aspects of ageing, including its challenges and the experience of ageing. Vaillant (2002, p.4) looks at the positive side of ageing based on the Study of Adult Development at Harvard University which he describes as ‘arguably the longest study of aging in the world’.

An almost universal feature of any research in this field is that older people, the subjects of the research, rarely appear to be involved in the design of the research. They are merely respondents to research tools designed by younger researchers. If the older respondents are involved then this is not acknowledged. This topic, which is part of negative ageing and ageism, will be investigated further in this chapter.

The breadth and depth of the research areas is not surprising. The very different life experiences of older people, including civil and international war, either as participants or victims, famine, different educational opportunities, diet, heredity, migration, loss of loved ones that many have experienced, plus the different facets of the ageing process, both mentally and physically, all contribute to diversity of people and thus of research.

The breadth of this research is a reminder that the later stage of life is now a complete area in itself, not just an ‘add-on’ to what has gone before in previous stages, as it would have been when it covered a shorter part of the life span. It needs to be a defined and recognised stage in the continuum of life. Swan (2007, p.2) states ‘Developmental psychologists, for example, have tended to stop their research at adolescence and, disturbingly, little is known about development stages in mid- and late-life’. The goals and restrictions of earlier stages are identified but not those of the later stage. Many researchers are unaware that older people may have goals and ambitions (Denton 2008).

This research highlights the fact that many older people not only have goals and ambitions but that in doing so they also make a major contribution to the concept of successful and healthy ageing, and through their work they also contribute to the community and the wider world. They fulfil the traditional roles of elders. Studies of older people in different parts of the world and interviews with achieving older Australians described later illustrate this very positive aspect of ageing.

For this research many additional areas, such as aged care, had to be ignored, particularly as older people in such care largely have their lifestyles determined by their situation and often

also by their health condition. Ageing research specifically relevant to ethnic groups was also excluded, including Aboriginal people who still have a shorter life span than the rest of the Australian population. Each of these is a research area in itself. This chapter focuses on the literature discussing factors affecting successful ageing for older people still living in the community.

2.2 The negative environment in which older people live

The study of the negative attitudes towards older people appears to be a relatively new phenomena in that older people in the past were treated with respect, and their age was a positive attribute: they were revered as the ‘elders of the community’, as opposed to the negative view of ageing which currently appears to dominate developed societies. This could be attributed to the combined effect of increasing numbers of older people being seen as a threat to society, and the length of time now spent in the condition of ‘ageing’, with many older people not using this time for anything productive, i.e. just filling in time and being busy, thus being seen as a liability on the public purse. The contribution of older people to society is increasingly focussed on measurement of economic activity.

The world in which older people live affects their lives, particularly negative ageing which permeates attitudes towards this section of the population and influences older people themselves. This negativity has the effect of implying that older people are second class citizens which in turn is reflected in the attitudes in varying branches of health and in the apparent omission of older people in research in this field.

The literature describing the attitude of professionals and other groups to older people is also part of this scenario. Minichiello and Jamieson (2006, p.391) provide a contemporary description:

While the effects of ageism are a reality in the lives of older people, it is a new concept. Ageism reflects a deep-seated uneasiness on the part of the young and middle-aged, and is frequently internalised by older people themselves. Broadly speaking, ageism is a personal revulsion towards, and distaste for, growing old, disease, and disability, and a fear of powerlessness, uselessness, and death.

They further add that ‘an entire industry has been created around this misguided picture of old age, and using “compassionate” policy measures, a dependency status for older persons

has been socially constructed' (Minichiello and Jamieson ,p,392). Day (1991), referring to the American scene describes the attitude towards older people as a combination of social extinction and the obsolescence of self.

One area of concern in research into ageing is an awareness of this negative ageing which permeates, influences and affects the lives of most older people. Negative ageing was first defined by Butler (1995), with the concept later promoted by him. A second challenge to researchers was through the realisation that older people live in this world of negative ageing or ageism (Butler 1995). Butler defined it as 'systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old' (p35) and this has a huge influence on their lives.

In Australia, older people live in a world of negative ageism in which they are largely regarded by society as a burden and no longer useful. The work of those who are still contributing to society, such as those interviewed for this research, is largely overlooked. When asked what their plans for the future are those about to retire will often list activities such as golf, or playing computer games with no specific aims and this encourages this negative image. It assumes that they no longer have major ambitions to fulfil, other than small, temporary ones. They are no longer contributing to society, making it difficult for them either to feel a valued part of it, or to be viewed as a valuable part of it. They have lost their status in the community.

The recognition of the importance of, and problems associated with, public perception of the later stage of life was recognised by Laslett (1989 p vi). This research was undertaken over two decades ago, in the last century, yet is still applicable today. He lists six problem areas. Firstly, the lack of awareness of changes, both to individuals and the community, resulting from increased longevity. Secondly he acknowledges the difficulties of finding the means to support the larger number of people no longer in the workforce. Thirdly, he recognises the attitude and morale of most older people 'in the face of the stereotypes about their incapacity and lack of worth so deeply rooted in society at large'. Laslett's fourth issue is to 'give purpose to the additional years now being lavished on us all'. His fifth issue is the need to address dependency and decrepitude, a condition which could be less prevalent if older people can be encouraged to lead a more purposeful life. Laslett's sixth concern is 'with justice between age groups and generations'. The first two points are recognised as still persisting today. His third point on attitude and morale was the attitude identified by Butler (1995) and labelled 'negative ageism'. It is reflected in the descriptors in Appendix A. This

attitude is probably becoming more widespread as the increasing pace of modern technology and new inventions often leaves older people behind in a world which tends to be less valued, an attitude now being challenged by those concerned with the effects of this new technology (Powers 2010). The effect of such negativity on the morale of older people is reflected in the analysis which forms part of this research. Laslett's fourth point is reflected in the need for older people to have a purpose in life, or life plan or goals, identified in this research, as these additional years increase. Achievement of Laslett's sixth concern about intergenerational conflict probably depends on older people regaining the status they had in previous stages of their lives.

The issues listed by Laslett were raised nearly a generation ago but are still not being adequately addressed or even accepted. He recognised the persistence of outdated attitudes towards older people, in his words 'much of the accepted account of age and ageing is simply the persistence into our own time of perceptions belonging to the past' (p2). He pointed out that the extent to which the presumption that entering the later phase of the life course inevitably meant bodily decay and uselessness was inherited from the past. This applies to the 'conviction that quitting work meant admitting debility and welcoming restful inactivity' (p103). This is one explanation for the continuation of negative ageing attitudes. Increasing life expectancy adds to time spent beyond the retirement age, and is a comparatively new phenomenon particularly as modern medicine and improved living standards are contributing to the rapid increase in the number of years, and the increased health in this period in the life cycle, thus increasing lifestyle possibilities.

The ageist attitude is a complex problem. Wilkinson and Ferraro (2004 p353) comment on the more subtle ways it manifests itself in the social fabric.

From greeting cards to medical school, from advertisements to the workplace, it is clear that ageism is prevalent. A myriad of social, cultural, biological and psychological forces converge to shape ageism, and it will take a concerted effort on many fronts to peel back the layers of ageism that are woven into society.

Laslett (1989 p186) comments that 'the principle that becoming old is to a remarkable extent a socially created or induced condition related in a seemingly arbitrary way to the physiological state of the individual' and questions the authenticity of the concept. As old age

becomes an increasingly larger part of people's lives it is important to analyse the effects of such external influences upon it.

Braithwaite (2004) suggests that the greatest threats to the well-being of elderly people are those that are hardest to deal with: negative stereotyping, prejudice, stigmatising behaviours and self-held fears about the ageing process. She suggests that stigmatising behaviours, which she identifies as the perceiver's response to the information taken in through ageist labelling, are the most potent in 'driving people out of their communities, destroying their sense of self in the process' (p311). Palmore (1999), who had already raised the issue of ageism in *Ageism: Negative and Positive*, concentrated entirely on the concept, causes and concepts, institutional patterns and how it can be reduced. This area is still largely unrecognised in the community. He points out that 'Ageism also violates basic democratic principles' (p17).

Palmore's comment provides a reminder of the other two violators of democratic principles, racism and sexism. All three are costly. Older people have often already suffered from one or both of the previously recognised 'isms'. There are parallels and differences between all three but all have a negative effect on the group to which it applies.

These three 'isms' follow similar patterns; with one major difference that ageism does not have the same recognition in Australia, compared with racism and sexism which are widely accepted as illegal. Cuddy and Fiske (2004 p3) comment 'We disparage older people without fear of censure'. The Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians (EPSA 2011 recommendation 34) indicates that 'age discrimination laws need to be further enhanced to combat systemic age discrimination'. Elder abuse, as opposed to discrimination, appears more in the legislation and largely applies to aged care homes, omitting to give protection in the family home. In all states and territories it tends to focus on elder abuse as the wilful or unintentional harm caused to a senior by another person or persons with whom they have a relationship which implies trust. Levy and Banaji (2004, p51) add another dimension to this 'Ageism, unlike racism, does not provoke shame'. This ageist attitude towards older people provides the background against which older people age and are disadvantaged.

All three 'isms', racism, sexism and ageism, are based on prejudice, with the assumption that the targeted condition is not desirable. In all three cases the target group are treated as second-class citizens and regarded as a subordinate group. Both women and black people were originally regarded as having inferior intelligence, a condition frequently assumed about

older people today. All three are based on stereotyping with the assumption that all members of the targeted group have the same undesirable condition. All three biases are proving hard to eliminate. In all three groups members are treated as second class citizens, although this situation is now recognised with racism and sexism. All are based on stereotyping and all are proving difficult to eradicate.

The influence of sexism can be seen in the fact that the average woman's pay is still lower than men's pay and there is still inadequate female representation in higher levels in business and government. In March 2010 the CEO of the Business Council of Australia, in an address to council members, pointed out that 'Currently only 10.7 per cent of senior executive positions are held by women and just 2 per cent of CEO roles. Women chair 2 per cent of ASX 200 companies and hold just 8.3 per cent of board directorships'. In the case of racism, millions of dollars have been spent on Aboriginal health and education but there has been little improvement to show for it. Aboriginal life expectancy is still lower than that of non-Aboriginal Australians (ABS. 2012). Alcohol abuse and petrol sniffing are creating problems which result in violence and abuse. Any form of discrimination can prove costly and ageism is no exception. Lack of consultation with older people may be contributing to a disparity in terms of physical and mental health outcomes, compared with what could be achieved through consultation and involvement of older people. It also deprives the country of the skills of older people.

All three 'isms' are completely unacceptable. Bytheway (2005) comments that there is legislation in many countries intended to ensure 'equal opportunities' regardless of gender or ethnicity. Older people might wish for the same: there is plenty of evidence to support the case against ageism.

Ageism has one important difference from racism and sexism. Unlike racism and sexism, the domination achieved through ageism involves rescinding the opportunities and freedoms afforded in adulthood (Braithwaite 2004). The concept of ageism takes older people backwards to a more dependent part of their lives. The affects of it involve the loss of rights and privileges granted earlier in life, such as the right to be considered an equal. Older people in the workforce, for example, no longer have the same freedom to change jobs as their younger counterparts do, and as they did in their youth. Ageism tends to involve acceptance in a society built to meet the needs of younger people, as discussed later. The roles of all three discrimination groups are as inferiors but through different mechanisms.

Ageism is eventually universal and applies to everyone as they age. Sex and race are determined at birth but ageing is a category which, barring early death, everyone moves into later in life. Ageing is not as negative as the negative stereotypes of ageing suggest e.g. childish, feeble, and useless. These are not accurate descriptors of the large majority of older people yet these are often quoted by researchers and are among descriptors included in the list in Appendix A. Those who indulge in 'ageism', including the policy makers and researchers in society, do not seem to consider the parallels with sexism and racism and are often unaware of their own negative attitude.

Aiken (1989) found that the majority of studies showed that self-image declines in later life in most people. Research by Ryff (1991) showed that younger adults saw themselves on a path of self-improvement whereas older people saw the best as being behind them and a decline in front of them.

In this part of the research three aspects of ageism are considered in the literature. The first aspect is the methods by which it is conveyed to the community, including to the ageing themselves. The second aspect is the effect on the individual older person of these messages. The final aspect is the reaction of the ageing as a group to ageism.

Ageist attitudes are so embedded in the community that it is often difficult to recognise them. Pasupathi and Löckenhoff (2004, p204), after researching different aspects of ageing, suggest that 'ageing is not nearly as negative as the negative stereotypes of ageing might suggest' and 'in many cases, differential treatment of older adults reflects unfounded and negative assumptions about their competence'. This research has helped to shape this thesis which has set out to confirm Pasupathi and Löckenhoff's statement through the quantitative analysis presented later. Support for this position also comes from a range of studies.

Ageism is routinely conveyed in popular culture. When choosing a birthday card, for example, the majority of cards depict the additional year as a decline, indicating that progress towards the condition of 'being old' is regarded as unwelcome (Ellison and Morrison 2005). Such cards are accepted without question by the community. The fact that this assumes that old age is undesirable, and therefore implies a derogatory attitude to people in this state, is merely accepted, according to research by Ellis and Morrison (2005). Palmore (1999, p93) adds jokes and cartoons to the list of negative attitudes and quotes several studies which

‘reached similar conclusions: that most of this humor reflects or supports negative attitudes toward aging, and that positive humor about aging is rare’.

2.2.1 The roots of negativity

Hendricks (2005, p513) points out the moral economy behind ageing. He refers to scientific assessments which have ‘served to reinforce perceptions of abiding need, reflecting what older people have lost in terms of skills, ability and vitality’. Palmore (1999, p20) lists nine major stereotypes that reflect negative prejudices toward elders ‘illness, impotency, ugliness, mental decline, mental illness, uselessness, isolation, poverty and depression’. These parallel the words listed in Appendix A, indicating that these stereotypes still persist. This attitude towards older people is raised by Cuddy and Fiske (2004 p4) ‘Today in America, we no longer see our elders as sources of wisdom but as feeble yet lovable, doddering but dear’. The same authors point out that ‘Older people’s alleged incompetence lies solely in the eye of the beholder’ (Cuddy and Fiske 2004, p12).

The impression that older people are regarded as ugly is culturally linked. Palmore (1985) cites Japan, where silver hair and wrinkles are admired as signs of wisdom, maturity and long years of service. He also compares Japan, where it is polite to ask a person’s age as it is a source of pride and congratulations, with America, where it is regarded as a rude question as older age is regarded as a source of shame and denial. Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p252) takes this a step further with the reminder that ‘All older people are survivors’ and should be admired as such.

The descriptors of older people are reflected in the findings of Featherstone and Hepworth (2005). They found that in ageist stereotypes, older people are ‘caricatured as frail, forgetful, shabby, out-of-date and on the edge of senility and death’. They add that ‘the visible signs of the ageing of the body are not only externally displayed but have become regarded as manifestations of what is regarded in the Western tradition as a process of decline and loss’. Older people frequently point out that they feel no different internally from when they were younger; it is just the external cover which changes.

The workplace is particularly ageist with older workers having less support. In many instances, older workers no longer have access to workplace courses designed to update their skills. The attitudes which societies and employers have towards older workers are discussed in more detail in the chapter on Australians in the workplace.

Palmore (2009, p 7) points out that there are 'social and cultural costs of ignoring the wisdom and social support and cultural resources that are available from the millions of elders in our country'. He suggests that the cost of accepting ageist stereotypes is usually a loss of self-esteem and happiness. Another result is 'the fact that many elders fail to seek proper treatment for various medical and mental ailments because they think that such ailments are a normal part of aging'. He adds 'As a result, their ailments tend to get worse and multiply' (p104). He suggests that one of the costs of accepting negative stereotypes is a more rapid deterioration than would be normal in a more active and engaged person. He quotes the research by George (1985) in which it is alleged that those elders who continue to consider themselves middle-aged are more healthy, more satisfied with life, and emotionally well adjusted than those who consider themselves 'old' or 'elderly'.

In research into patronising speech with the elderly, Thimm et al. (1998) found that 'participants giving instructions to people of different ages tended to "talk down" to older people, although this was done less if it were emphasised that the older person was "competent", nonetheless, speech was still different from when providing instructions to a younger adult'. This attitude becomes internalised by older people. In a pamphlet distributed by the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS/ACT 2006) another dimension is added 'Older people are too often seen to be feeble, burdensome and irrelevant. Our words, gestures or actions – either overt or more subtle, can easily be interpreted by older people that they are not valued'. They comment that research in the western world should suggest that getting older involves being healthy, active, positive and productive.

Less obvious are attitudes towards the elderly in shopping centres. The elderly often become 'invisible' when standing in queues. 'Talking down' to older people, on the assumption that they have regressed to a more childlike condition, and the detrimental effect of this, can be found in the community including in shops, and also in some nursing homes. Minichiello and Jamieson (2006, p392) refer to one of the authors overhearing 'nurses in residential care facilities using language that has the effect of reversing the status of adults to children'. In other research, Featherstone and Hepworth (2005, p358) point out that infantilisation is 'regarded as a prime example of ageism and as such is damaging to the elderly's self esteem'.

Minichiello et al. (2005, p7) point out that 'At the popular cultural level we can easily interpret that ageing is not viewed as desirable' and quotes a number of examples of anti-

ageing products to illustrate this. A very popular and well-advertised cosmetic for women is 'anti-ageing' or 'anti-wrinkle' cream. This adds to the concept of wrinkles as being undesirable rather than as a sign of experience and wisdom.

The negative attitude to older people, with the implication that they are useless, inhibits acceptance of the need for goals and ambitions in the later stage of their lives. It also contributes to the lack of effective representation of older people in the political field. The incidence of such attitudes is reflected in the recommendation of the Ministerial Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians (EPSA 2011) that the Federal Age Discrimination Commissioner develop a community education and awareness campaign that identifies ageism and age discrimination and promotes positive images of ageing.

2.2.2 The reaction of the ageing community to ageism

Physical changes due to ageing have an effect through negative ageism. Matthews (1979, p21) studied the perceived public response to older women. The 'women refer to how old they feel in new surroundings, in interacting with strangers or in public settings where "all everyone seems to see is an old woman"'. The women say that among friends and in familiar surroundings, others see the person behind physical appearance. Matthews then adds:

These old women, however, do not respond passively to others and their social situations. They actively manage their bodies' visibility by reducing the number of situations in which they are likely to encounter individuals unfamiliar to them. They avoid social worlds where their ageing bodies might be the only salient signs of their identities.

She then points out other measures they take to hide their identity, such as not revealing their age and making cosmetic changes (which include dyeing the hair and facial surgery).

Another reaction to the negative ageing environment is for older people to isolate themselves from it. Older people may restrict their socialising to mixing with other older people, who they meet through older people's organisations, or living in retirement villages, thus enhancing ageing behaviour and attitudes. Golub et al. (2004, p277) suggest that 'age-related stereotypes are often internalised by the elderly and may affect their willingness to engage with younger people'. Palmore (1999, p111) points out that 'Age segregated retirement communities serve to separate elders from the prejudice and discrimination of younger people'. Avoidance of retail establishments which display negative ageist behaviour may be

achieved in extreme circumstances by older people isolating themselves in their own homes, doing shopping by phone and ordering goods through catalogues (Palmore 1999) and, increasingly, through on-line purchases. This isolation is mentally and physically unhealthy and may partially explain why older people may be found dead in their homes, often weeks after the event.

As two research projects which involved older people, quoted later in this chapter show, older people feel that they are no longer considered valuable members of society whose views are sought and respected, nor do they feel that they are encouraged to make a contribution to society.

Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p223) also points out that increased suicide rates among the elderly are mainly among white men, commenting that they 'are more accustomed to power and a high standard of living, and a loss of, or a decline in these, is too much for some individuals to cope with'. Minichiello and Coulson (2005, p54), show the extent of the problem, quoting male suicide rates as 30 per 100 000 for the 80+ population, 'a group of particular concern'. Mathers (2007) suggests that a contributing factor may be loss of physical attributes but for men in particular the status they had in the community through their work in the past is an additional loss. Australia seems to lack the more politically active groups of older people emerging in other countries (Walker 2006). A public rally organised in Melbourne early in 2009 was exceptional. It was not organised by either of the two main groups which purport to represent older people. It was triggered by older people brought together by poverty.

There is concern that as older people internalise the negative messages about ageing that are prevalent in the community, this acts to their detriment, with accelerated degeneration an outcome of this. Kite and Wagner (2004, p152) comment 'people's attitudes toward ageing might affect their own ageing process in a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy'. Palmore (1999, p7) adds that : 'There are personal costs of demoralisation, loss of self-esteem, loss of function, inactivity, and physical and mental decline that can result from negative ageism'. Minichiello et al. (2000) found that 'older people come to accept living with ageism by adopting a philosophy of 'not making waves', trying to 'get on with life' and ignoring unpleasant interactions'.

Levy and Banaji (2004, p67) comment: 'To our knowledge, the elderly is the only group that shows as strong negative implicit attitudes toward their own group as does the out group [the

young]’. This negative attitude of older people towards themselves is taken further by Stuart Hamilton (2006, p170) ‘might it not be the case that they [older people] come to think that everyone of their age is like themselves, and thus, the lower their opinion of others, the lower their self regard? Again, perhaps self-image and stereotypes are self-reinforcing, creating a vicious circle’.

Wiles and Wiles (2003, p 133), commenting on the effect of ageist attitudes on the ageing, quoted the Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Retirement which studied the effect of positive and negative attitudes to ageing on people’s lives. 660 people aged 50 to 94 were studied over 23 years. Each person’s view of their lives were rated as full or empty, hopeful or hopeless, and worthy or worthless. People with a positive attitude lived, on average, seven and a half years longer. These were the people who had achieved a positive attitude to their own ageing’.

Foibles, such as memory lapses, which in fact affect all age groups, are given extra prominence among older people, and labelled ‘senior moments’. They are internalised and exaggerated by the older people themselves as an example of mental degeneration which in the past was widely considered to accompany ageing. The same memory lapses among younger people are accepted as part of the human condition and are a source of humour, not as a sign of a more sinister condition. The term ‘senior moments’, which is widely accepted by older people, appears to be an attempt by society to reinforce negative ageing. Buzan and Keene (1996, p63) also found evidence of this. They used the illustration of people being introduced to ten people and forgetting their names within seconds. They point out: ‘Older people often see this as evidence of their declining powers. However, the syndrome is just as common in the young as the old’. It appears to be part of society’s attitude of belittling older people, particularly their mental ability.

Research suggests that a negative ageing environment, such as that prevalent in Australia, accelerates the mental degenerative process. Memory performance tests on older people in China, in which they are still largely revered, showed better results on the same tests of immediate, learned, delayed and probed recall tasks than elderly Americans who live in a negative environment. Older Chinese adults performed similarly to the younger Chinese adult participants (Levy and Langer 1994). Driver (1994) takes the argument one step further by suggesting that brain activity in healthy people in their 80s is comparable to that of people in their 20s. This argument is supported by Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p128). He suggests that

‘many studies of ageing and memory may have exaggerated the size of memory loss’. In the study he refers to, he indicates ‘What was being examined was not the genuine memory skills of older adults, but rather the degree to which older people’s self-esteem can mar their performance’. Aiken (1989) reinforces this view stating that ‘the majority of studies find that self-image declines in later life with most people’.

Minichiello et al. (2005) cited Bytheway (1995, p14) on the consequences of ageism.

Ageism generates and reinforces a fear and denigration of the ageing process... ageism legitimates the use of chronological age to mark out classes of people who are systematically denied resources and opportunities that others enjoy, and who suffer the consequences of such denigration, ranging from well-meaning patronage to unambiguous vilification.

Negative ageism may affect health. Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p182) states ‘over the long term, exposure to persistent negative comments about ageing and older people may have a deleterious effect on health’. He cites raised blood pressure and other physiological measures of stress.

Jones (1993, p19) points out that ‘the wealth of experience of the aged must be used as an asset rather than having the aged generally characterised as a liability’. This is particularly relevant in the light of media publicity surrounding the recently released *Third Intergenerational Report* (Australian Treasury 2010). An ABC broadcast (*The World Today* 1-2-10) on the report pointed out that

With Australians living longer there would be more pressures on the doctors, medicines and caring for older Australians. Today a quarter of all total spending is spent on health, on age-related pensions and aged care. By 2050 it says these things will take up half of all spending.

Ageing has been transformed from a natural process into a social problem in which older adults experience detrimental consequences. The wider community is then deprived of the talents, knowledge and experience which older people have to offer. This has been the focus of the Ministerial Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians (May – December 2011) although the panel was more concerned with enhancing current arrangements.

The effect of this invasive negative ageing culture may explain why older people accept their passive role, just as many women accepted their role as second class citizens in the past. There were women, for example, who happily accepted their role in the kitchen and bedroom, and preferred that role. However there were many women who did not accept it and fought for equality for women. There are already signs that the baby boomers will not accept the current passive roles in defining ageing culture, as they argue for a greater role in defining their post retirement lifestyles.

Whitbourne and Sneed (2004, p260) maintain ‘assimilative processes such as denial are increasingly used in later adulthood to maintain self-esteem. There is reason to maintain that not all older individuals are able to withstand the challenges to identity presented by negative views of ageing in Western society’. Older people need to be empowered to believe in themselves in this hostile environment.

Part of the insidious nature of the negative ageing culture could explain why older people accept their passive, or non-existent, role in research in ageing, just as many women and coloured people accepted their role as second class citizens in the past.

This section has looked at ageism from the older person’s viewpoint. There are various sections of society which promote ageism.

2.2.3 The ageing population of the future

There is a need for communities and countries to come to terms with the fact that future populations will consist of a higher number of older people and the needs of this group will need to be met. The retail market will have to cater for the older shopper. As their numbers increase, older shoppers will be the norm. Shelves which are too high or too low will not be acceptable. Fashions will need to be appropriate and desirable for older people. Escalators will move more slowly and mobile phones will need to cater for the needs of older people, with larger buttons. ATMs and other self-service facilities will need to be ‘user friendly’ for older people with instructions available from other older people (Underhill 2009). This is already happening with University of the Third Age (U3A) courses available in digital camera and computer use. These changes, which are in the interests of providers, will make the world the ageing live in a friendlier environment.

The influence of the physical environment on older people is often unrecognised. Golub et al. (2004, p279) suggest that the environment is usually created for younger people and it is often an unrecognised detractor towards the ageing. They quote the example of car seats which were designed with younger people in mind. They point out that the difficulty older people have in getting in and out of cars 'does not mean that the 75-year-old is deficient when it comes to emerging from cars' although older people will often blame themselves for their difficulty. Current car seats were designed for younger users.

Underhill (2009, p137) points out the very different lifestyle experiences of future older people:

Future oldsters didn't grow up in the Depression or slog through World War 11; they came of age during the fat, self indulgent '50s, '60s and '70s. They weren't force-fed the virtues of sacrifice, self-denial and delayed gratification, nor did they absorb the quaint notion that to be old is to accept infirmity and inability stoically, as one's lot in life.

He suggests that the little old lady of 2025 will be 'buzzing around town in an Alfa Romeo'. He suggests that in future cars will have hydraulic lifts to accommodate the growing number of older drivers. He adds that 'thanks to improved health care, nutrition, fitness and cosmetic surgery, at seventy she'll look and feel like her mother did at fifty' (p138).

2.3 Lack of involvement of older people in research

One of the motivators for this research was, from the viewpoint of an older person, the inaccuracy of much of the current research which was not written from this perspective. The researcher is herself an older person who has had the support of other older people, both as groups and as individuals in three major cities in Australia. In addition seven prominent older Australians were interviewed and two of them continued contact with the researcher.

The composition of the major research groups into ageing in Australia suggests that they do not include older people in their research teams. Most research appears to have been written without such involvement. If older people are involved they are not given recognition. Without the involvement of this target group in research programs except as objects of study the country is missing out on or under-utilising much of the intelligence, knowledge and talent of this large section of its population. It means that research is 'outsider based' and

does not include the experience of those involved in ageing. Research groups which do include them report an extra dimension to the research. The Australian Research Council's policy is to give research grants to applications in which there is a partnership between researchers and the client group but does not enforce this. Unless client participation in general is enforced, and all research into ageing in Australia is participatory research (in the full sense of the term) older people will remain second class citizens, the cost of the ageing population will be higher than it needs to be and research will be of a lower quality than it would otherwise be. Two research papers involving older people (Narushima 2004, Tozer and Thornton 1995) are discussed later in this chapter with the second documenting the advantages to the research of such participation.

2.3.1 *Involvement of target groups in research*

The involvement of older people in research can take several forms as shown below.

Research participation

Research type/steps	Consultation	Hybrid	Collaboration
Research questions	externally set	agreed to	mutually determined
Research relationship	researcher directed	gatekeeper/ researcher negotiated	mutually beneficial reciprocity
Data analysis	pre-determined categories	arises from data	mutually determined
Meaning making	post-hoc researcher led	post-hoc researcher led	immediate co- construction & negotiated text

Source: Pamphilon et al. University of Canberra (2006). Unpublished.

Most research on ageing is on the left hand 'limited involvement' side of the table, rather than the participatory right hand side. The level of involvement tends to be determined by the

researcher at every stage. Often the only involvement of older people is reduced to answering a questionnaire designed by the younger researchers.

Researchers are reluctant to use the right hand format of the diagram as they feel that the control of the project passes out of their hands and they lose this control. The fact that collaborative research is more likely to result in more accurate and relevant results is not taken into account. Such research in ageing would also make such research more powerful through its uniqueness.

2.3.2 Improving current ageing research

Research into ageing needs to be accurate and relevant and this is more likely to be achieved if older people are involved in the partnership at all stages of the research.

If collaboration with stakeholders in research into ageing followed the right hand side of the table above outcomes in research would improve. Such collaboration would include older people's involvement in the research design, in writing the questionnaire or other research tool, analysing the data, and in designing and constructing the report document which is the outcome of the research. A review of research papers and projects suggests that either research is not being conducted with the collaboration of older people, or they are not being included in the research accreditation. Valid research would preferably either be done by the ageing themselves, as we would expect research into women's issues to be done by women for example, or, where older people do not have the necessary skills, in conjunction with experienced researchers. This would involve a collaborative relationship. Such an approach involves recognition by the researchers that they possess research skills, whereas the older people possess knowledge of ageing which the researchers themselves do not have, except perhaps at a second hand level, often based on literature written by other younger people.

2.3.3 The effect of ageism in research

Much of the current research is based on economic and statistical issues, ignoring the human aspect of the ageing process. This may be a result of the lack of older people being involved in research projects. This ignores the fact that by not including human issues, and by excluding older people from research into the ageing process, the economic and statistical issues are over-emphasised to the detriment of the 'well-being' issues.

Others have recognised this bias. De Vaus et al. (2003) point out that ‘much of the debate about ageing is still framed almost exclusively in terms of the financial cost of older people’ who tend to be portrayed as threats to the financial well-being of the country with their increasing need for pensions, accommodation and additional health costs. ‘The elderly have been painted as the winners and the younger people as the losers’ (de Vaus et al. 2003). This bias adds to the negative ageing environment.

Where there is research into the other aspect of ageing, the well-being of the elderly, it is also largely conducted by younger researchers with limited knowledge of older people. A research project undertaken by Bartlett et al. (all younger Australians) highlighted the unsatisfactory situation in research in this field. The characteristics of 161 students studying ageing for their Ph D degrees across Australia were analysed. More than half were under the age of 40. 4.3% of the students felt that older people in general do not contribute much to society.

‘Participants aged 40 and older were significantly more likely to have more positive attitudes towards older people’ (Bartlett et al. 2007). Only 57% of researchers indicated that they definitely intended to stay in the field of ageing research after graduating and these had a more positive attitude towards ageing. The most important reason for doing ageing research was given as ‘a desire to contribute to an under researched area’ (p189).

Recent events suggest that the tide of change is starting to flow. Researchers in the United Kingdom report that applications for research grants into ageing are now dependant on older people being involved in the research. All applications for research grants based on ageing have to involve older people, recognising that the exclusion attitude is detrimental to quality research. This has led to an increase in the training of older people for such a role (Phillips 2009).

It can be anticipated that such research will be more accurate than, and will investigate relevant new issues, compared with other countries such as Australia, which do not have such a policy.

Involving older Australians in research into ageing may have a number of benefits:-

- It is likely to result in more accurate research.
- It is likely to mean more relevant research topics.

- It is likely to give the ageing a status and role they currently lack.
- It may utilise the considerable talent and knowledge the ageing possess, both of the ageing process and skills acquired throughout life.
- It is likely to challenge current stereotyping of the ageing.
- It may give younger researchers a greater understanding of the ageing community and their needs.
- It is likely to empower the ageing and give them control over the ageing scene.
- It could add to Australia's social capital.
- It could add to the world's social capital if other countries do likewise.

This lack of involvement of stakeholders is acknowledged by Quine et al. (2006) citing the research of herself and Kendig (1999) in which she points out that the views of older people are not included, or not included fully.

An example of the previous UK attitude towards research in ageing is shown in the literature reporting on a major research program into ageing, the GO Programme. In this research there appeared to be only one reference to the involvement of older people. Holland et al. (2005, p51), in their research, inserted the statement that 'we wish to acknowledge here the generous contribution of all those older people and others who took part in our projects'. The itemised list of contributors indicated that all were employed in universities, or equivalent, with no specific reference to input from older people in a participatory role.

The arguments for, and advantages of, stakeholder participation are shown in a research project undertaken by the US Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (2006). There was an emphasis on community consultation in which the recipients were asked what they needed, rather than officials deciding on what they needed. There was an emphasis on research conducted by, for and with lay people. The researchers reported that in many instances lay people's involvement in research had had a profound impact on environmental health issues and social determinants of health'. Those involved in participatory research are aware of its advantages.

Exclusion of the ageing in genuine participation as partners excludes the only section of the population who have a genuine knowledge of the ageing process. This creates several problems. Firstly, issues chosen for research are selected by the researchers based on what they think is important, not issues which the ageing themselves regard as important, or are aware is important. This was also a comment made by the researchers in the UK Rowntree-funded research quoted below (Tozer and Thornton 1995). It also means that there is limited opportunity for issues, or aspects of issues, which are important to the ageing to be researched. This is a difficult concept to accept. As Cowley (1980) pointed out: 'Those self-appointed experts on old age knew the literature but not the life'.

Secondly, the methodology for the research, including use of a questionnaire, may be determined by the researchers. In this UK research project, the researchers had already written the questionnaire when the older people joined the research, and the questionnaire was revised on the advice of this group. This eliminated part of the inaccuracy which would otherwise have been included in the research.

Thirdly, involving older people in the data analysis ensures that aspects of the data which are important to older people are retained and given appropriate emphasis, again a comment made by the UK study researchers.

Finally, involvement of the ageing in the writing of the report and the conclusions ensures that the research has highlighted research which is important to the ageing, and to the ageing process. This will in turn improve the life and lifestyles of this growing percentage of the population, and therefore the national populations of which they form an increasing part.

The assumption that with ageing there is a decline in interest in the ageing condition is unsupported. Given the enormous amount of knowledge, experience and (in many instances) the academic qualifications that older people have, one explanation for the present lack of involvement of older people in research is the desire for control on the part of the researchers, a parallel action to men wanting control over women and white people wanting control over non-white people, features of the other 'isms'. In the UK research paper (Narushima (2004) p36), the comment is made that user involvement 'is seen as making research more relevant and a truer reflection of the experience of those it is about'. Again, their experience reflects this increased relevance and accuracy.

The final point is a reminder that current researchers will one day be members of the ageing cohort themselves. How will they feel about the current situation, with research done on their behalf, not with them?

2.4 Research which has involved partnerships with the ageing

The following research projects involved older people, with very different projects, and in different countries, which produced benefits for the research outcomes in both cases, and provided parallel comments from the older people involved. The positive outcomes, both for the research and the participants, indicate the value of this inclusion.

2.4.1 The Raging Grannies

Narushima (2004) studied the activities of self-labelled ‘grannies’ as part of her investigation into lifelong learning. This involved groups of ‘grannies’ who were involved in demonstrations about issues which they are particularly interested in, either as a group themselves, or with other groups, such as on the environment, women’s issues, nuclear power, and so on. They sang protest songs whilst wearing outlandish clothes and outrageous hats, which attracted media attention. Their motivation was to create a better world for their grandchildren.

The Raging Grannies formed in Canada in 1987 and has since spread to more than 50 cities there, and to cities in the USA, Greece and India. Thus when Narushima (2004) investigated them as part of her research, they were already established and she had to fit her research needs around their organisation. Her involvement not only produced research outcomes for her but also gave a voice to the grannies which older people rarely have. Comments from the grannies included ‘older women as being past, useless and not really being involved’ (p30). Additional comments were ‘part of what Grannynging does for me is that it makes me feel I can do things’ (p38), and ‘Nobody expects them [older people] to really do anything for society’ (p30). These comments reflect the very negative role society gives to older people, particularly in this case to women who frequently carry the double onus of sexism as well as ageism. Davidson et al. (2005, p86) adds the racist voice to this discrimination, referring to ‘a society which rarely harkens to the voice of older women and even less to those belonging to ethnic minority communities’.

2.4.2 *A Meeting of Minds*

The second participatory research project was conducted in York, UK by Tozer and Thornton (1995). The research aimed to discover what opportunities could be created for older people to have a say in the planning and evaluation of community care services. The inclusion of the older people as an Advisory Group was made following the suggestion of the funding body, the Rowntree organisation, although the UK National Health Service had been advocating 'user involvement' in research for some years.

The researchers commented that involvement of the older people had changed their attitudes to ageing research. One researcher, for example, reported previously tending to see older people as research material rather than as research partners. 'The priority concerns felt by the group sometimes challenged the researchers' assumptions about what mattered to old people' (p36). This reflects observations made above that researchers are usually younger people whose only knowledge of ageing is from research papers written by other younger researchers.

The comments made by the older people in this UK research reflected those of the Canadian group, and are rarely recorded in ageing research projects. 'It was a positive thing, you felt as though you were really involved in a positive productive exercise' (p6). Another comment was that 'We could voice our opinions. Elderly people aren't supposed to have an opinion' (p29). These again are examples of negative ageism, the role society thrusts upon older people and the internalisation of this by people in this group. It is also reflected in the comment by Goldman and Mahler (1995, p 42) who suggest that 'society often discounts the worth of an older person, dealing blows to their self-esteem'.

2.4.3 *Conferences as living literature*

As this is 'living' research, part of the literature which contributes to it is 'living literature' in that it comes from conference presentations and includes questions raised at such conferences, including those asked privately. During the course of the research, this researcher attended conferences on ageing in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Tamworth, Newcastle, Canberra, Ballina and Melbourne in Australia, and in Copenhagen, Beijing and Paris for international conferences. At all of these conferences the pattern was the same. The conferences were organised by younger people; most of the attendees and presenters were younger people, below retirement age, with only a few token older people in the audience

who played a very minor role. This is parallel to the dominant role of men at conferences on women's issues 100 years ago.

Presentations at conferences usually follow the pattern of the literature referred to above, with gaps caused presumably by lack of knowledge, and rarely any indication that older people's participation has extended beyond answering a questionnaire written by the researchers. At an Australian Association of Gerontologists conference in Tamworth, NSW, this researcher herself presented a paper on the need to include older people in research, only to be ridiculed by the President-elect of the organisation and her followers (Guy 2006). On two occasions at other conferences, other researchers presented papers on the need to include older people in research but this inclusion was restricted and did not follow the full participatory involvement described earlier in this thesis (Pamphilon 2006). In Beijing, a presentation by two leading Australian researchers on involvement of older people in research did not involve older people (Bartlett 2007). A member of the audience, herself heavily involved in 'hands on' work with older Australian Aboriginals, commented afterwards that it was all about control.

In the preface to the Third International Conference on Healthy Aging and Longevity 2006 (Weller et al. 2007) the comment is made 'Now, more than ever, a critical need exists for the development of appropriate policies so that aging is seen as a resource and not as an isolating and segregating experience', sentiments reflected in this research. There is no indication in the proceedings that followed that older people were to be involved in this policy making.

Rimmer (2007, p321) points out that cost is one of the reasons why older people do not attend relevant conferences. 'The cost of conferences on ageing issues and health issues is out of reach. The high conference fees, which employers gladly pay for their staff to attend, put them out of reach for older people. Only if a few subsidised enrolments are offered can some older people take part'. Contributions towards other costs, such as transport and accommodation will also be needed. The present lack of older people at conferences on ageing, either as presenters or audience, detracts from the quality and accuracy of the conferences, and the research they represent.

A personal question to the International President of the University of the Third Age at the International Conference on Gerontology and Geriatrics (Paris, 2009), indicated that this is one organisation which is moving towards having conferences on ageing run by older people. Greater participation by older people will raise the standard of such conferences. Hopefully

changing the format of these conferences will give preference to research in which older people have a heavy involvement. It is likely to result in more relevant and accurate papers being presented.

2.5 Counteracting ageism and negative ageing

Ageism needs to be acknowledged as violating ‘basic democratic and ethical principles’ (Palmore 1999, p7). If opportunities to present older people in a favourable light wherever possible are taken, then negative ageism will be less a part of the ageing experience. The comment by the then Minister for Ageing, Bronwyn Bishop, herself an older person, in her foreword to the publication ‘Inspiring, not retiring’ provides a positive image. ‘Older Australians are, and always have been, a treasured asset to our nation. They have helped shape modern Australia and they continue to make a significant contribution to society with a lifetime of skills, knowledge and experience to share’ (Office for an Ageing Australia 2005). This attitude of older people being valued does not seep down into the community, or among older people themselves.

2.5.1 The role of education in ageism

There appears to be an acceptance that learning is a lifelong process yet there is a reluctance to invest in education or training beyond the age of 55 (Engelbrecht 2006). One area which should be developed is that of lifelong education which she suggests has failed to materialise in Australia. Among the advantages she implies is that it could prevent premature decline, facilitate meaningful roles and encourage psychological growth. She also points out that a rethink of the traditional view of retirement has fuelled the need for educational activities that empower the older learner. She believes that education and training are seen as having a vital role to play in preparing consumers and educators to think differently about ageing, and in reducing ageism.

Rimmer (2007, p318) defines ‘continuous education as giving individuals greater opportunity and personal fulfilment’. She endorses a senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training Report (1991) which ‘recommended the benefits of learning for older people as a government responsibility’. This reflects the United Nations (1988) statement that ‘[e]veryone should have the right to grow and develop regardless of age’. Engelbrecht points out (p320) that

government is in danger of ignoring the larger dimensions of stimulating and cultural education courses that encourage older people to continue to utilise their abilities and skills in retirement. Involvement in such courses gives a feeling of independence and self-responsibility so important for retired people.

Sax (1993, p153) supports this view 'People now have a period in retirement equivalent to approximately one-third of their lifetime and many of them are looking for opportunities to undertake systematic study during this extra time'. He also argues that 'lifelong education is strongly encouraged'.

Halal and Liebowitz (1994), cited in Wiles and Wiles (2003), add an additional argument:

In a complex world of constant change, where knowledge becomes obsolete every few years, education can no longer be something that one acquires during youth to serve for an entire lifetime. Rather education must focus on instilling the ability to continue learning throughout life (p178).

Palmore (1999, p79) points out that '[our] general neglect of continuing education for older workers and retirees tends to hasten their obsolescence'. Blair (2005, p8) felt that in contemporary lifelong learning policy, 'there is omission of older people and their learning and educational needs'. She added that older learners have a 'belief that they had something of worth to offer'. Her own older students commented that 'we seem to be in an invisible area, anyone who is 55 up is almost in the invisible area', again the result of negativism in ageing. There is undeniable evidence that continued learning is beneficial and a necessary component of successful ageing. Featherman *et al.* (1990, p53) defined successful ageing as 'but one expression of a generic transactional process, namely, adaptive competence'.

Braithwaite (2004) commented on the attitude amongst employers that employing older workers is a waste of time and money. This is investigated further, and the assumptions discredited, in the chapter on work. The current world economic situation is likely to cause a continuation of this attitude.

In her research into later life learning, Narushima (2004) made the comment that 'ageing is not accompanied by a decline in political and social interest'. The older people who were involved in the participatory research projects described above commented that nobody expects elders to really do anything for society, and elderly people are not supposed to have

an opinion; this provides a reflection of the negative ageing which restricts older people's input into society.

The need for mental fitness, and ways to achieve it, are not as recognised to the same extent as the need to keep physically fit to enhance physical ageing. One of the few recognised provisions in this area include programmes such as the University of the Third Age (U3A), in which older people provide classes for fellow older people. There is criticism of these programs as providing little mental stimulation but often only providing 'time filling' and social outlets for members (Palmore 1999). The extent to which older people merely sit and listen without active engagement in such classes, is unknown. Within the U3A there is deliberately no assessment of the learning which is intended to encourage participation (in the sense of attendance) but this does not necessarily result in members actually engaging the mind in the subject presented. Manley (2003) lists a number of interesting and successful classes around the UK, most of which involve member participation. Even where this occurs, participation in three classes per week may only involve six hours of attendance for less than nine months of the year. This becomes very much a part-time solution to the full time problem of a having a purpose in life. The exception may be with courses where there is also external involvement, such as with choir membership or instrument or language learning, where the activity often continues beyond the classes.

Front covers of magazines and journals either for, or featuring, the elderly, often show older people engaging in physical activities, such as sky-diving, jumping out of planes or going on balloon rides but such activities only fill in a very small part of daily life for these people. Older people are rarely shown in mentally stimulating pursuits, in spite of the fact that many are, for example, following academic courses or involved in academic work, or running businesses, or contributing to the arts, thus providing a different type of role model.

Part of the problem is the negative attitude of older people themselves towards their ability to learn. Laslett (1989, p165) commented that older learners were frequently 'surprised as well as delighted when they find that they are able to tackle Greek grammar or computer programming, so tenacious are their unflattering beliefs about themselves'. They internalise the concepts of senility and memory loss which society maintains accompanies the ageing process.

The restricted attitude towards formal lifelong learning in Australia is reflected in the Australian Bureau of Statistics paper, 'Australian Social Trends 2000, Education-participation in Education: Mature age people in education and training'. This paper covers only the 34 to 64 age group. Older people are often regarded as 'not being worth the expense' and are often treated as invisible, as this paper does. The need for courses with mixed age groups is illustrated in the research of Hughes and Heycox (2006), who found that in their survey of 55 sociology students they had only 'about a 70% understanding of ageing issues'. Participation by older people in such courses, and the inclusion of the study of ageing as part of these courses, would be beneficial to both groups.

The downside of not providing opportunities for lifelong learning is that brain deterioration, which often accompanies ageing life styles, is not being addressed.

2.5.2 The effect of attitudes towards older people

George (2005, p295) states that 'individuals who view themselves as competent and worthy will tolerate and respond to stressful situations better, reducing the probability of negative health outcomes'. Australia and its older citizens have much to gain from addressing negative ageing. Ter Meulen and Ubachs-Moust (2005, p658) take this further: 'Social attitudes towards the elderly play an important role in the demand for care: a more positive status for the elderly in our society will result in a better health status and a decrease in the demand for care'. What has been acceptable in the past is no longer so. Fine (2007, p266) makes the point that 'As life expectancy increases and the epidemiological profile has changed, older people are ceasing to be a marginalised minority'.

Change can either be thrust upon older people or they can be in charge and direct it themselves. Kalache *et al.* (2005) points out that change must be older people-centred, stating that 'clear recognition needs to be given to the fact that Active Ageing policies should be based on the rights, needs, preferences and capacities of older people'. They must be written with the involvement of older people.

Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p173) adds another dimension to the debate on the ageing: 'It is generally active old age that is prized, where the older adult can still make a contribution'. This supports the suggestion that showing older people as being seen to be doing something with their lives will reflect an improved attitude of the community towards older achieving people, including older achieving Australians. Butler (1980) referred to 'institutional

practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older adults, reduce their opportunity for life satisfaction, and undermine their personal dignity'. This attitude has not changed in over three decades since Butler recognised it. It can be minimised if older people can be encouraged to accept the later years of life as a time of opportunity to pursue their talents, and are seen to do so. The World Health Organisation policy on active ageing (2004) asserts the 'right of all older people, in all residential settings, at home or in the community, to realise their potential for physical, social and mental well-being'. Improving the health of older people and encouraging active and positive ageing are recognised as worthy ambitions by all levels of government in Australia, but this is largely restricted to rhetoric, rather than action. These are the bench marks against which discussion of successful and healthy ageing needs to be judged. There need to be positive steps taken to assist older people to achieve this, including publicity given to the advantages of such a lifestyle. 'The goal should be to ensure that 'the so-called "disability-free" or healthy life expectancy is increasing by the same number of years as, or by even more than, the life expectancy' (Jeune and Christensen 2005, p90).

Throughout this research there appears to be a wide divide between those who apparently age successfully and are mentally and physically healthy, and those for whom ageing is not a desirable or pleasant experience. As life expectancy increases it could be assumed that the latter negative experience may become more prevalent.

2.5.3 The effect of retirement

At the point of retirement, retirees are faced with a sudden lifestyle change, from a life in which 40 hours of their week, plus travelling time, was accounted for at the start of each week, to having a week of largely unfilled time. For many it also separates them from the social connections which work provided. This is a particularly difficult time for men, and increasingly for women, who not only have a large amount of additional time on their hands but often have also lost power and prestige which went with employment. They have lost their primary identification through their jobs and careers. Filling in time with traditional activities such as gardening and housework can be a partial solution but it may not fill the vacuum of having a purpose in life, a reason for getting out of bed in the morning, a comment made by the centenarians (Buettner 2008). It does not compensate for the loss of status in the community which work provides. Those involved in a significant amount of volunteering, or carer responsibilities may be able to partially at least fill this vacuum but for the majority of

retirees productive filling of time is not only a major and unrecognised problem, but it may also last for decades. These are the issues which may be detracting from successful ageing, and physical and (in particular) good mental health. Someya and Wells (2008, p12) create a more optimistic view of the anticipated lifestyles of the *Dankai-Sedai* (Baby Boomers) in Japan, a country which has a longer life expectancy than Australia (Mathers 2007). They indicate:

The Dankai-Sedai will certainly be active in making their third lives useful and meaningful, through, for example, engaging in volunteer activities to compensate for community care shortages. The women in the baby boom generation are already active in their communities, organising non-government and not-for-profit bodies and various social activities.

This more optimistic approach needs to be incorporated into ageing in Australia. It provides a more positive attitude for older people to adopt.

Many employers refuse to accept that there is a long-term decreasing workforce, and that encouraging employees to remain beyond retirement age, perhaps through the inducement of shorter hours, and/or more flexible working conditions, may be beneficial to their own interests and that of their employees, and the national interest. Most employers assume that their well-trained, experienced employees will follow community attitudes and retire at, or before, age 65, with no attempt by most employers in Australia to dissuade them, or provide the opportunity for phased retirement, or even partial work, such as part time or periodic (Korczyk,2004). This argument is continued in the chapter on work.

Provision of such worker beneficial conditions would also benefit older workers. It would enable more of them to remain in the workforce with all the benefits attached to this, including having a purpose in life.

2.6 The advantages of being old

Palmore (1999, p161) lists the advantages of being old:

- Older people are more law abiding.
- Older people are likely to be more interested and informed about public issues, contact public officials more often and more often serve in public office.

- Most aged people serve society through maintaining or increasing their participation in voluntary organisations and churches.
- Most studies of older workers indicate that they perform as well as, or better than, younger workers.
- Wisdom comes from years of experience and maturity which suggests that older people are wiser than younger people.

The recognised wisdom of older people has long been recognised and formed part of the respect formerly given to older people by their communities. Cicero (106-43 BC) argued that years of experience more than compensated for the physical decline that came with advancing age (cited in Johnson 2005, p22). Society today still concentrates on the physical decline aspect of ageing, and assumes an accompanying mental decline.

Palmore (1999 p99) suggests that one cause of negative ageism is that 'Elders may also be perceived as having less of the important instrumental values, such as being ambitious, capable and independent'. Helmes et al. (2007, p120) point out that 'older adults may be viewed as less important as they are not seen to be economically productive members of society'.

This research argues that the attitude of older people to their state, particularly if they can be persuaded to view the later stage of life as an opportunity to pursue new achievements or continue with old ones, can contribute to making changes. Encouraging older people to have a purpose in life, a life plan or goals will change the perception of both older people and the ageing process. The years of experience will be recognised through their purpose, their 'instrumental values' will still be apparent and their new productivity, even if unpaid but contributing to society, will no longer be a reason to continue ageist attitudes. Such an activity will also provide older people with a status in this stage of life, a stage which needs to be seen as a time of opportunity and achievement, not decline. Enabling older people to be encouraged to believe in themselves and to achieve in this later stage of life will help to achieve this.

2.7 The influence of the media

Media attention seems to focus on the cost to society of the ageing of the population. Older people are frequently confronted with headlines focussing on this cost, with major expense items such as pensions and health care (both of which are predicted to increase as the population ages) having prominence. Government press releases frequently link Australia's future economic situation to the influence of the increasing costs of the ageing society (Australian Treasury 2010). The feeling of 'being a burden on society' is an inevitable outcome of this and again has a detrimental effect on older people's self esteem.

Encel and Ozanne (2007 p303) describe the reaction to the Australia's Ageing Society Report as hysterical. Under the headline 'Pickpocket Pensioners' they quote an article in *The Australian* published on 16 February 1994 which 'went on to claim that most of the savings of the young would go into consumption expenditure by their grandparents'. An editorial in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (7 February 1994) 'maintained that the baby boomers would become an intolerable burden on society as they grow older, threatening "a general sclerosis of Australian attitudes and culture"'. Buzan and Keene (1996, p13) suggested that governments worldwide are concerned about this group 'Will they become a drain on national and global economies - or a resource?'. Such attitudes persist over the decades. In a front page story in *The Canberra Times* (22-1-10), the Treasury secretary is quoted as suggesting that young workers will need to pay higher taxes to cover the costs of the ageing population, 'Generally, older people demand a lot more from governments, especially in health and aged care services'.

Representation of older people in the arts often reflects ageism. This group is under represented. Older people involved in the theatre in particular find it difficult to obtain appropriate work. Plays, for example, rarely involve older actors. Zebrowitz and Montepare (cited in Cuddy and Fiske 2004, p1), discussing the relatively few number of older people in television and films, found that: 'Older adults are more likely to appear in television and film as conduits for comic relief, exploiting stereotypes of physical, cognitive, and sexual ineffectiveness'. Palmore (1999) cited a study by Robinson and Skill (1995) which showed that only 2.8% of the adult characters on prime-time television were judged to be older than age 65 years, which is far less than the percentage in the community. One older writer Byrski (2009), who writes very popular novels featuring older women, comments 'We live in such a mediated world, everything comes to us through the media, so if you don't see lives like

yours explored in those forms then you feel invisible and you feel quite alone'. Two of the older people interviewed as part of this research, whose work is in the arts, quoted as part of their achievements the fact that they have survived in highly competitive fields.

The other side of the coin, the amount of social capital, and, in particular, the amount of voluntary and caregiver work, that older people provide to the community, is rarely similarly costed and published. Many older people form the backbone for organisations, including those agitating for social change in the community, and they also contribute as individuals.

The value of both social and human capital cannot be overestimated. Rowland (2007, p137) states 'just as policies enhancing social capital offer practical benefits for communities and families, so too may enhancement of human capital benefit individuals; both have potential to contribute to wellbeing and preventing or delaying aged dependency'. This reinforces the call in this thesis for older people to have productive lives and rewarding lives through having a purpose.

2.8 Health professionals are not exempt from ageism

Phillipson (2005, p503) questions the role of professionals who deal with older people, and asks 'Do they contribute to the experience of old age as a period of decline and loss of control?'

In discussing the American scene, which parallels Australia in many ways, Palmore (1999 p87) pointed out that '[h]ealth care is scarce because many health care professionals think older patients are ugly, unpleasant, demanding, difficult and unrewarding'. It is difficult to estimate how much of this translates to the Australian scene. This ageist attitude by the medical professions to their patients may be adding to health deterioration among older people.

The roles of the main health groups dealing with older people, such as medical specialists, show problems with their services. As people age, their needs change and their use of health services increases. An increasing proportion of patients being seen by doctors will be older people with different needs from those of the younger patients, and recognition of this would lead to more positive outcomes. The Australian Society for Geriatric Medicine produced a position paper on older patients in 2006. It recommended that 'all medical schools should ensure that students have specific training in the assessment and management of older

patients'. It also recommended that doctors have 'A positive approach to old age and to illness in elderly people together with an awareness of ageist attitudes and negative stereotypes'. Since many members of the profession underwent their training many years ago encouragement for them to upgrade their knowledge in this field will produce better outcomes.

Palmore (1999, p147) suggested that 'negative attitudes can interfere with the healing process. Patients may reflect the negative expectations, believe that improvement is impossible, and so lack the motivation necessary for recovery'. Research by Helmes (2007) in a project which compared older adults and General Practitioners' attitudes towards elder abuse scenarios, found that 'GP's tended to view all types of abuse scenarios as less severe, compared to the groups of older adults'. In a study of the use of support services in the UK one participant described her doctor 'we get on but he has a deathbed manner. I accuse him of ageism' (McKevitt et al. 2005).

In another, Australian, study which involved 604 psychologists, Koder et al. (2008) highlighted the 'importance of targeting attitudes in combating negative preconceptions regarding ageing'. They recommend training in which 'courses should address ageist attitudes in addition to factual and theory knowledge on ageing processes, and should continue to target attitudes through post graduate professional development'.

The geriatric branch of medicine is also aware of the importance of life plans. Michel (2008) raised the issue at the International Conference on Gerontology and Geriatrics held in Beijing in 2007. In discussing the dilemma of scarce health funding being spent on older people with a limited life span, as opposed to younger people with unlimited productive lives, he suggested that the first question the doctor should ask the older patient was whether they had a life plan. If they had, then more medical treatments can be done with them, if not there is little that can be done for them. Presumably people with a life plan (an alternative descriptor to having a purpose) were more likely to fight for their lives if things went wrong, leading to a more successful medical outcome.

All organisations active in the field of ageing health need to be aware of and address the very different needs involved.

2.9 The advantages of continuing to work

This section looks at the literature on the different lifestyles involving work and retirement currently available to older people in Australia, firstly in terms of work, including part-time, paid and unpaid, and secondly alternative living environments.

At age 65 (in some cases earlier) people usually have the opportunity to continue in the workforce or retire. For those who take the latter option, the stimulation of work and the part it played in their lives (particularly the social input) is no longer available. Equally importantly it also removes the status in society that work provides and which is a vital human need. The purpose in life, which work provided, has gone. The type of lifestyles currently available to older Australians in terms of work opportunities and living arrangements, using quantitative data from the HILDA database is thus an area investigated in this thesis. This research argues for older people to have a purpose in life, an answer to the question ‘What do you do?’. Increasing post retirement years create the possibility of continuing with dreams and ambitions fulfilled in earlier stages, which many already do, and also the possibility of creating new fields or pursuing dreams previously abandoned.

Research such as that by Cai and Kalb (2005) is based on the options of staying in the workforce or retiring, with the latter regarded as being unproductive, and does not address other alternatives. Retirement is a major event in a person’s life. Jones *et al* (1992, p225) pointed out that ‘there is often incongruity between perception of the self and the phenomenon of chronological age’ and ‘society sends strong messages that an older person is now different and outside the framework of productivity and community contribution’. Many older people, faced with filling hours that were previously allocated to work, often look for other alternatives. Research based on successful and healthy ageing, such as that of the study of centenarians (Buettner 2006) and of the Late Bloomers (Goldman and Mahler 1995), both discussed later, show how this life transition can be successfully negotiated through the development of a new interest or through the resurrection of an interest developed in an earlier stage of life, which can provide a purpose in the later stage of life.

The word ‘retirement’, and the concept it embraces, leads to the realisation that this may be a barrier to successful and healthy ageing. Without this word, life becomes a continuum in which the later stage of life can have a comparable and equally valuable role as the other stages. There is an implication by those who apply the word ‘retired’ to themselves that they

no longer have a recognisable role to play in the community and may even imply that they are a drain on resources. Jung (1933, p109) commented, many decades ago when longevity was not the issue it is today that '[t]he afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life's morning'. This reinforces the idea that the later stage of life presents itself as a period of achievement, preferably associated with choice.

Having a purpose in life and feeling part of the community are important elements of successful and healthy ageing and alternative lifestyles must take these into account. Ignoring retirement age and staying in the current job, thus retaining a sense of purpose, status and the community contacts which accompany participation in the workforce, is perhaps the easiest way of achieving this. Rosenman (2005, p136) commented 'Among the majority of older Australians their work is part of their identity and thus retirement was seen as a change or loss of identity and associated with lower self-esteem'. She quoted a remark made by a participant in the research that 'the more you work the younger you feel. The thought of leaving work is like waiting around to die'. Palmore (1999, p69) pointed out the disadvantages of the alternative of taking the retirement option 'retirement lowers the income and social status of elders'.

Butler (2005) suggests encouraging people to be trained to work longer or be otherwise productively engaged (e.g. volunteering). In these circumstances the good of the individual and of the state merge. He also cited the work of Bloom and Canning (2000) who estimated that a five-year advantage in life expectancy leads to from 0.3 to 0.5 increase in gross domestic product. This suggests that more appropriate programs are needed to encourage longer participation in the workforce.

More alternative work options for those who no longer wish to stay with their current employer, if made available, would enable a transition rather than a departure from the work scene. Compulsory retirement at 65 is no longer legal in Australia so no worker can be sacked from a job because of age. However the negative attitudes towards older workers may cause employers to use other reasons to cover this, such as downsizing. Encel and Ranzijn (2007) detail the problems of older workers, particularly those who have been retrenched. They also stress not only the loss of income but also of self-esteem.

Declining health, or family commitments, may place older workers in the situation where they are no longer able to fulfil full-time employment, in which case part-time or other options such as sporadic or seasonal employment, if appropriate, would provide another alternative. It is also argued that work with flexible hours, flexible start/finish times, and/or irregular hours or working from home, would provide a viable option for this age group. The very different needs of older workers is being recognised. The report *Australia to 2050: Future Challenges* (2010) stresses the need to keep older workers in the workforce but this will only succeed if the different needs of this group are recognised and provided for.

It is an advantage if older people who are intent on retiring have a choice of when this major event will occur, with the opportunity that this choice gives them to plan their futures (Quine et al. 2007). Such choice, and the sense of control which accompanies it, is also a hallmark of successful ageing (Ryff 1989). The alternative, no choice, is a risk factor for reduced well-being. Warren (2006) showed that being forced to retire is one of the negative factors associated with life satisfaction in retirement. Cutler (2005) further described retirement as no longer an event but a process, and in many cases a multiyear and multifactor decision process. It illustrates and symbolises the increasing complexity of the dynamic interactions among financial and gerontological processes. This makes it even more important that choice in the later stage of life be exercised judiciously. Those who do not have a choice of when they move on to this stage, through labour force downsizing or ill health, can still often choose the type of life style they intend to follow, as the Late Bloomers did (Goldman and Mahler 1995).

Voluntary work may replace paid work and may be more suitable in providing a purpose. The role of carer may also be an alternative, but often not through choice.

2.10 Lifestyle environments

Older people often have a choice in the environment in which they live as well as the way in which they spend their time. Provision of optimum opportunity to have a purpose in life with the status which is attached to this is desirable. The literature on this is not restricted to addressing the talents of older people but also people in the other stages of life. Frankl (2006, p73) believes that 'It is a peculiarity of man that he can only live by looking to the future' and 'Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life' (p99). At other stages in life the future is the next stage. Currently for most older people there is no future 'next stage', the

later stage is defined by society as the end of the track. This makes use of the word 'retirement', with its connotations of an 'ending', of even more concern.

Residents of retirement villages are often outspoken about the limitations of this lifestyle. Advertising tends to stress physical activities, such as swimming pools, to meet the needs of more active and physically capable retirees. These villages often have two disadvantages. Firstly, those living in them are tempted to restrict their contact groups to their older fellow residents, cited earlier by Palmore (1999), and secondly they are often situated away from the rest of the community, restricting interaction with other community groups and activities. Retirement villages which are sited close to amenities, such as shopping centres, libraries and community centres which are 'within walking distance', a physical activity within reach of most older people, are preferable. The opportunity to be able to walk to these facilities provides independence to older people, even when they lose the ability to drive, thus reducing the limitations created by ageing (Esteban and Rollo 2006). Many older people give up driving either voluntarily, or are obliged to do so through declining health. This creates a huge loss in independence and lifestyle and puts more dependence on walking and public transport. Where retirement villages are not located within walking distance of facilities older residents either have to use public transport or the retirement village's transport system, if available, or rely on friends for transport. In later years getting on and off buses and trains may be a hurdle, reducing mobility, creating a prison like environment. Isolation of villages from community facilities is likely to contribute to deteriorating mental health. Within villages there is evidence of conflict between residents, and between residents and management (Porter 2009).

Informal discussions with one retirement village construction company suggests that they have no choice over land- they have to build the villages on government designated land. Members of the public who are aware of the problem suggest that land allocated to these villages is of little value for other commercial purposes, and is often referred to as 'cheap land'. The problem lies with State and Territory governments who are unaware of (or choose to ignore) the fact that inappropriately sited land is likely to cause health problems (and costs) for residents and state budgets.

The media tends to promote the idea of retirement as consisting of long years of idleness, including overseas and domestic holidays, since they benefit from the trade, and therefore the advertising, that this produces. The sales of caravans, both new and second hand, have

reportedly increased with the increase in the number of ageing people. In Germany the “silver travellers” have become the most courted group of customers of travel offices’ (Naegele and Walker 2009). There are problems with this lifestyle. These ‘grey nomads’ often stay with other ‘nomads’ in caravan parks and have minimal contact with the towns they are visiting. They tend to mix with their own age groups. In some towns they are unpopular as they tend not to spend much money, but add to the strain on already over stretched health resources. The ‘grey nomads’, as portrayed in the media, tend to be satisfied with continuously wandering around the country. Such travels may become merely a time filler.

One attempt to redress this problem of lack of purpose among this group is the establishment of an employment register via a website to enable the grey nomads to move to areas where employment is available (Valenzuela 2009, p 178). This only appeals to a few of the nomads, those who are interested in continuing with work, usually physical. A project by Volunteering Australia to establish volunteer programs in selected country towns for the grey nomads, although giving them a sense of purpose, may also have limited response. Both of these projects, if taken up, have the advantage of allowing participants to mix with other, often younger, community members.

Continuously travelling overseas creates the same problems. It may provide a temporary purpose, and some mental activity but, if continued for too long, deprives travellers of connection with family, status and social groups at home. The problems associated with those who have a constant need to travel was recognised in Roman times ‘as if happiness always lay off in some distant city or resort’ (Seneca, cited in Campbell 2004, p36). The value and consequences of this lifestyle need to be evaluated as it grows in popularity.

2.10.1 Ageing at home

A newer, more acceptable, alternative for the later stage of life is to remain at home, with increasing government provision of assistance to achieve this (Home and Community Care Service). It means that older people can stay in familiar surroundings, often among familiar neighbours, and with established living routines. They have more control over their lifestyle and environment. This is only successful if such people have the necessary assistance available. Close proximity to children may also make a difference providing the important role of grand parenting. Involvement in the community, and increasing assistance to facilitate this, would help to prevent problems of isolation, and produce other benefits.

Encouraging older people to stay in their own homes, when possible, may be only part of the solution in later life. The need for good physical and mental health, and awareness of this is important. This can often be achieved through community contacts, particularly when they lead to the participant having a purpose in life. The importance of ‘tribes’, described in the next section, is an example of this.

2.10.2 Aged care

The option of moving into aged care is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is a large research area in itself.

2.11 Finding a purpose

As life expectancy increases, time spent in retirement increases, and decreasing physical involvement (as shown in the quantitative data analysis section of the research) ensures that paid work, either full or part time, may only be a temporary solution for most people. PRI (2005, p39) points out that ‘many workers of all ages rely on their workplace to encourage and support their needs for satisfying work, creativity, social status and social bonds’. Withdrawal from the workforce removes these.

The later stage of life often provides an opportunity to pursue goals which weren’t available in earlier stages when the family and financial responsibilities placed a restriction on activities, although some people were able to fulfil their goals and follow their talents whilst coping with other demands and they then continue them later in life. The seven older successful Australians interviewed for this research were all able to achieve this. For them, and for others in a similar position, retirement is not an option they have any desire to pursue. Physical limitations created by ageing may lead to partial retirement but this does not dilute their purpose in life. For others, such as the centenarians, their lifestyles were a whole of life package, with a status and purpose throughout. The ‘Late Bloomers’, who were obliged to retire for various reasons, found lifestyles which were self created through new found interests, often based on circumstance, or revisited old interests. The United Nations Principles for Older People (2002) includes ‘self-fulfilment’ amongst the goals listed in its framework.

Research into the goals and ambitions of older people is almost non-existent. The hopes and aspirations of people at all other stages of life can be identified whereas older people are not

expected to have such aspirations (Swan 2007). Vaillant (2002, p32), in discussing a talented late developer comments ‘the futures of the elderly matter, and they are interesting’. Another quote, from an older participant in this study refers to ‘the repeated innuendo that our futures no longer matter’. Friedan (1993, p87) pointed out that ‘to see age as continued human development involves a revolutionary paradigm shift’.

Even for those who recognise the need to have a purpose in the later stage finding it may be a problem. For those who are doing a job they really enjoy and can continue in there is no dilemma. For those who are looking for something to fulfil their needs, the supportive literature is not necessarily restricted to older people. A number of writers encourage people in all stages of life to find their purpose and meaning to develop their talents. These tend to be classified as authors in the field of motivation based on a change in lifestyle. Robinson (2009, p21), in referring to the population in general, refers to a new life or career as people having found their ‘Element’ which enables them to ‘connect with something fundamental to their sense of identity, purpose and well-being. Being in their element provides a sense of self-revelation, of defining who they really are and what they’re really meant to be doing with their lives’ and also ‘being in their ‘Element’ takes them beyond the ordinary experiences of enjoyment or happiness’. He describes ‘The Element’ as ‘the meeting point between natural aptitude and personal passion’. For people who find their element, ‘time passes differently and they are more alive, more centred, and more vibrant than at any other times’. His work, whilst applying to all age groups, is particularly applicable to people in the later stage of life. This is a concept particularly suited to retirees who are separated from the work environment and have time available previously committed to their work. This is a whole new approach when applied to ageing. The ‘Late Bloomers’ described in Goldman and Mahler (1995) echoed these comments as they reinvented themselves by taking up new hobbies or careers, or extended old ones, following official retirement. Goldman and Mahler (1995) also suggest how people can find their element. For older people who wish to, or are forced to, exit the workforce, retirement provides them with an opportunity unparalleled in previous stages of their lives. It provides the opportunity for a new and exciting fulfilment through a new purpose.

Another researcher in the field Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p95) suggests that ‘there is considerable evidence that engaging in creative activity (e.g. painting, writing, and so on) is

of considerable value to older participants, and is reported as enhancing feelings of well-being and general self-esteem’.

Yunus (2007, p196) also comments on the effect of empowering people ‘once Grameen borrowers grew in self-esteem they would readily express their opinions’. He lists roles in the community taken on by these people in Bangladesh who are among the poorest in the world. This can apply to older people who are currently overwhelmed by negative ageism. Yunus also believes that there is an ‘overblown image of a capitalist entrepreneur’. He adds ‘I believe that all human beings are potential entrepreneurs’ and that ‘many of us never get the chance because we were made to imagine that an entrepreneur is someone enormously gifted and different from ourselves’ (p207). This research contributes to the idea that older people can consider becoming entrepreneurs. They usually have the time, capacity experience and wisdom to do so. What they need is expert advice to enable them, they may also need government assistance.

This continues the idea of Robinson (2009) that people in all stages of life, including the later stage, should seek their natural aptitude and passion. He also argues in favour of people changing direction in life ‘For the most part, people seem to think that life is linear, that our capabilities decline as we get older, and that opportunities we have missed are gone forever.’ (p9). Further ‘Different capacities express themselves in stronger ways at different times in our lives. Because of this, we get multiple opportunities for new growth and development, and multiple opportunities to revitalise latent capacities.’ (p195). This reinforces the theory in this thesis that the post work period in people’s lives, rather than being a period of retirement, of exiting society, is an opportunity to revisit lost skills or discover new ones. One of the difficulties identified is for people to discover their ‘Element’ (Robinson 2009) or interest, or passion.

The almost defunct word ‘tribes’ is being reactivated in the modern technological world. It no longer means a group of people bound together by coexistence and cooperation in all aspects of life. The modern usage refers to ‘a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea’ (Godin 2008). With this new definition, tribes have a new importance particularly for older people looking for a new purpose in life. The concept of tribes provides a way of meeting the need to make the most of this later stage for those for whom group activity is important or necessary. It adds community involvement to this facet of successful ageing. Robinson (2009) devotes a whole chapter in *The Element* to ‘Finding

Your Tribe' and explains the importance of this in the modern world. The chapter opens with: 'For most people, a primary component of being in their Element is connecting with other people who share their passion and a desire to make the most of themselves through it'. Older people may need guidance in how to access others with similar interests. Connecting with similar-minded tribes people is much easier with improvements in worldwide communication and older people can find their tribes through search engines.

Godin (2008, p4) takes the concept of tribes to another level. The internet, which is becoming increasingly popular among older people, is merely the tool for connecting with other tribal members or those with a similar interest or 'element'. Having quoted Facebook, Meetup, Twitter, Basecamp, Craigslist and e-mail, Godin comments there are 'literally thousands of ways to co-ordinate and connect groups of people that just didn't exist a generation ago'. He argues for people to become leaders of their tribes which is an argument for older people to use all their experience, wisdom and knowledge to consider this method of finding a purpose in life. Godin further adds: 'The real power of tribes has nothing to do with the Internet and everything to do with people'. Russell (2008, pp80, 81) claims that 'Older users are the fastest growing group of internet users'. In her survey of older (55+) Australians, she found 'strong evidence from our data that the Internet significantly enhanced the ability of our participants to access the economic, social and political institutions and services of their community'. The DHCS/ACT (2006) document indicates that people over 55 years are the fastest growing group of internet users in Australia. The same research indicates that a survey of retirees under 75 years found 53% accessed the internet from home. This provides the opportunity for older people to connect with distant tribes, or establish their own through the internet if personal contact is difficult particularly for those with reduced mobility

The centenarians studied had a strong sense of tribe as they were all heavily involved in their communities. The Late Bloomers were involved with 'tribes' such as other members of their dance troupes, or with their communities through their work. The successful older individuals were involved in tribes through contact with others in their field of work.

Robinson (p136) quotes an interview with Jeffers (2006) who analysed 'the gnawing fears that hold so many people back from living their lives in full and contributing to the world. These fears include the fear of failure, the fear of not being good enough, the fear of being found wanting, the fear of disapproval, the fear of poverty, and the fear of the unknown'. For many older people, the fear of poverty is absent but many of the other fears are exacerbated

by the negative ageing environment. This creates additional hurdles which cause people to be less than who they really are (p139). Buzan and Keene (1996, p13) put it more positively: 'Many of those with more free time on their hands still passionately believe that they have it in them to achieve dazzling levels of performance'. This applies to all age groups, including those in the later stage of life.

Avoiding mental deterioration which too often accompanies ageing can also be satisfied by the approach of following your passion. Doidge (2007, p247) stresses the need to keep the brain actively involved, exposing it to novelty and new subjects. When taking on new projects, whether they are entirely new or an extension of an old hobby, these conditions are fulfilled

Other authors support the concept of ageing as a time of opportunity. Buzan and Keene in *The Age Heresy* (1996) restricted their research to one of the main misconceptions about ageing: the concept that contrary to public assumption, it can be a period of achievement. This is supported by Warnes' (1993) description in which he refers to 'ageist imagery' and the 'burden of old age' which, as he points out, do not reflect the abilities of older people 'to make a positive contribution to society'.

The benefit of having a purpose in life was also shown to be a major ingredient in the successful lives of the centenarians. Buettner (2008, p246), reflecting on the centenarians he studied, comments 'Purpose can come from a job or hobby, especially if you can immerse yourself completely in it'. The lives of these older people was community based with each having a role often designated at birth.

2.11.1 Definition of a purpose, goals, or aims in later life

Rowe and Kahn (1997, p2) suggest that 'An activity is productive if it creates societal value, whether or not it is reimbursed'. This provides a good definition of 'having a purpose in life' as it includes both paid and unpaid activities. Stressing that goals form an ongoing activity, Baltes et al. (2005 p54) define goals as 'states a person wishes to attain that motivate and organise behaviour over time and across situations into action sequences'. Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p180) quotes Madigan et al. (1996) 'Generally speaking, purposeful activity is beneficial to life satisfaction' thus highlighting the benefits of such activities.

Moving away from the existing known roles for the later part of life leads to two major new pathways. Firstly, the fact that people in the later stage of life have the opportunity to create a new life or career, as described above, as a more satisfying alternative to the perceived but unfulfilling life of leisure associated with retirement. Secondly, older people need to be persuaded that the former is a desirable option for them and need support in accessing this new path. Ferrier (2005, p15) suggests that ‘the ability to retire early to enjoy a more relaxed lifestyle is now, and is likely to remain, a goal of many Australians’. Little research is focused on alternative lifestyles, nor on the downside of this relaxed lifestyle, whether it is fulfilling and how participants cope with the lack of status in the community attached to it. The extent to which this contributes to the increase in disease connected to the brain, such as Alzheimer’s disease needs investigation.

The push-pull effect at retirement age suggests that people in less attractive jobs in which they have little personal involvement find the ‘push’ effect stronger as they feel less valued. A Norwegian study (Blekesaune et al. 2005, p7) found that ‘men with repetitive jobs, physical demands and low job autonomy were those more likely to be retired’. In contrast ‘occupations characterised by extensive training, low physical demands, and workers’ ability to control the nature and pace of their work reduced the likelihood of retirement’. The first option is tied in with the decreasing access to training for older workers.

2.11.2 Research into older people’s goals

Community opinion tends not to associate older people with having goals presumably based on the assumption that their lives are nearing the end. Research into this area of older people’s lives appears to be non-existent. When asked if any research was being done on the importance of older people having a purpose in life, Clayton (2009) said that there wasn’t but she was trying to persuade colleagues at Harvard University to compare the hopes and aspirations of younger and older people. Professor Mendelsohn, former director of the Florey Institute, was also asked, in a private conversation, if any research was being done on the effects of older people having goals in their lives. His response was ‘no there isn’t, but there should be because it is important’.

2.12 Modern theories on the ageing brain

The two areas of physical and mental health are interconnected but approaches to maintaining and improving them are very different. It is generally accepted that improved physical health

will lead to improved mental health. In addition, the way to good physical health is generally accepted to be through a good diet and exercise, as advertised by government health departments at all levels. The physical health of the ageing is largely mapped, with a new branch 'ageing medicine' emerging to recognise the different physical health patterns of older people as opposed to the younger age groups. The data obtained from the HILDA survey indicate that most older people maintain a good level of physical health and physical achievement until the last two years of life, which other research suggests are associated with decline and death. Emerging older people in future may enter this later stage of their lives in better physical health, and are more likely to continue established good physical health habits.

The path to good mental health does not appear to be as well defined, as indicated by the literature. Good mental health is less well recognised. In particular, mental illnesses, such as dementia and in particular Alzheimer's disease, are being experienced by an increasing number of older people. Access Economics (2009) estimated that by 2050 there could be 1.13 million people with dementia in Australia. That is a huge loss of productive, valuable lives and a huge cost to families and government, as well as providing a very frightening lifestyle for sufferers.

At retirement, the attitude towards the later stage of life, both in the community, and among individuals, as opposed to attitudes to other stages in life, appears to be inadequately addressed (Swan 2007). In both infancy and among teenagers there are the goals of self development and skill achievement, as pre-conditions for moving on to the next development stage. In early adulthood, the aims are to establish a career and a nest, the latter possibly with a partner. These are consolidated in middle adulthood. In later adulthood the goals move towards retirement, without any definition of what this may involve. It seems to be regarded as the end of the working life, and therefore productive life, with no thought for any purpose, self development or skill achievement in what are, for many people, the decades ahead. By not defining this latter stage, those who reach it are left without guidelines.

In addition to the ever changing definition of successful ageing new research in the large number of associated areas which contribute to this period of life are in turn moving perception forward in their understanding of it. One important area is the acceptance of brain plasticity in the 21st century which has completely changed attitudes towards the ageing brain. Knowledge that the detrimental loss of brain cells, with no way of replacing them or

compensating for them by setting up new connections between cells, was a myth has completely changed understanding in this field and altered research attitudes towards the ageing brain. The combination of the words 'old and senile' to describe older people is no longer appropriate. The accepted deterioration of the brain with age has been shown to be not inevitable and can be manipulated.

2.12.1 Past research into brain deterioration with ageing

Past research which indicated that people are likely to degenerate mentally with age is now being questioned. Often such research is based on a comparison between younger and older people and is based on a testing mechanism which younger people are familiar with, as part of their lifestyles, but which older people may have had no contact with recently, if at all. For some older people it may be the first time that they have used a computer mouse, for example. Other tests which involve a time limit often show that older people are less capable, yet when the time limit is removed there is little or no difference between the two groups. Cozolino (2008) suggests that with age fewer things become automatic, suggesting that different areas of the brain are used in executive and memory tasks, possibly explaining why 'Older adults perform as well as younger adults on some memory tasks but require more time' (p78). Testing, in all its various forms, is to a greater extent more a part of life for younger people than older people, thus giving younger people an advantage.

The more recently accepted research area, that of brain plasticity (Valenzuela 2009, Doidge 2007, Budge 2006), is suggesting that new fields of activity and possibilities for extending plans for a rich and engaged life can bring benefits to people in the later stage of life. The 21st century acceptance of this, challenging the old connection between age and senility, opens up new possibilities.

Other researchers challenge past acceptance of brain deterioration. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2005, p210) point out that 'even where there are age-based group differences in intellectual performance, there is extensive inter-individual variability for specific cognitive abilities within age groups'. In practical terms, they found that slightly more than half of the individuals in the later age groups have a comparable performance to a group of young adults on measures of both crystallised (accumulated knowledge) and fluid (creative and flexible thinking) intelligence. Rabbitt (2005) also makes the point that practice on tests can make a difference 'highly practised older people can be markedly more capable than unpractised

younger people' (p194). Poon (2005) found that in everyday problem-solving, centenarians performed as well as younger groups.

Rabbitt (2005, p192) points out that 'biological changes are not the sole determinants of cognitive status in later life and that models for cognitive ageing are inadequate unless they also include demographic, social and lifestyle factors'. He includes education, intelligent spouse, complexity of workplace environment and higher income in these factors. Having a purpose in the later stage of life could also be a factor in replacing the stimulants listed here.

The Alzheimer's Association (Budge 2006) is endorsing continued brain activity for older people. The activities recommended, such as doing crossword puzzles, only create a part-time solution and exercise part of the brain, and have been discredited as a means of keeping brain cells active and creating new connectors between them (Wiles and Wiles 2003). The work of Garibotta (2008) and Engelbrecht (2006), in advocating lifelong learning, follows the theme of keeping the brain active.

2.12.2 Brain cells during ageing

Recent research suggests the brain is more plastic than originally thought (Doidge 2007) and that intelligence also depends upon connecting links between cells within the brain, and that if these increase with ageing (through a mentally active lifestyle) then intelligence and mental ability could increase. Examples often quoted in this respect are of artists and musicians who created their best works in their later lives.

The concept of brain plasticity led the researcher to the work of various writers in the field, firstly those who encourage active use of the brain, such as Wiles and Wiles (2003) and Valenzuela (2009). Doidge (2007), an expert in brain science, advocates being involved in activities which can create new connectors between brain cells, to offset the loss of cells which occurs with ageing. The literature indicates that although brain cells are believed to deteriorate later in life, developing new connections between cells could offset, and at times, improve the functioning of the brain.

Other modern authors such as Cozolino (2008, p84) take the argument further 'the brain was designed to change. It continues to grow in an experience-dependant manner and has to be stimulated by environmental, relational and internal challenges'. The research by Garibotta (2008) on older brains shows that "Scientists found tissue damage was much quicker to lead

to memory loss in the less intellectually stimulated'. This referred to past stimulation but also 'the brain could be made stronger through education and occupational challenges' two conditions which this thesis argues for. Buzan and Keene (1996, p51) found that from evidence obtained through use of brain scanning, 'the healthy aged brain is as active and efficient as the healthy young brain' based on assessment of metabolic activity. Brain plasticity which this represents is a newly accepted field which has the potential to contribute to success in the later stage of life.

A major way in which new connectors between brain cells can be developed is through having a new purpose, career or hobby, particularly if there has been a loss of stimulation to the brain following retirement from work. New challenges help to stimulate and create new connectors thus helping to prevent the effects of loss of brain cells in later life, and possibly the increasing prevalence of dementia.

2.12.3 The relevance of brain plasticity

The research quoted above is supported by this newly acknowledged field of brain research, 'plasticity', which provides new light on, and questions, the acceptance of brain deterioration through loss of brain cells in ageing. Rosenzweig, whose work is described in Doidge (2007, p35) 'was one of the first scientists to demonstrate neuroplasticity by showing that activity could produce changes in the structure of the brain'. His experiments 'have shown that stimulating the brain makes it grow in every conceivable way'. Experiments on animals have shown that 'trained or stimulated neurons develop 25% more branches and increase their size, the number of connections per neuron, and their blood supply. These changes can occur late in life, though they do not develop as rapidly in older animals as in younger ones' (p43). Kandel, also quoted in Doidge (p218), showed that 'as we learn, our individual neurons alter their structure and strengthen the synaptic connections between them'.

Kempermann (2006), quoted in Valenzuela (2009), did similar work which supports research outcomes on the value of mental activity for older people. He experimented with ageing rats in an enriched environment – the survival of new neurons was increased more than threefold. This effect was specifically in the hippocampus where early Alzheimer's disease involves the loss of 'tens of millions of neurons' (Valenzuela 2009, p157). He also comments that the loss of brain cells isn't half as important as the loss of communicating pathways between them.

Keeping the brain active is particularly important with increasing life expectancy. Merzenich, quoted in Doidge (2007, p85), points out that ‘we’ve created this bizarre situation in which we are keeping people alive long enough so that on the average, half of them get the black rock before they die’. Doidge recommends ‘making a career change that requires you master new skills and material (p87)’. He suggests ‘To keep the mind alive requires learning something truly new with intense focus. That is what will allow you to both lay down new memories and have a system that can easily access and preserve the older ones’. He suggests that much of our lives consists of ‘mostly the replay of mastered skills, not learning. By the time we hit our seventies, we may not have systematically engaged the systems in the brain that regulate plasticity for fifty years’. This reinforces the concept that retirement from work can be the opportunity for a new beginning, with a new career, a new purpose, and new brain activity. This research area supports the adoption of a purpose, goals, and a life-plan in the later stage of life, on the basis that working towards these leads to increased brain stimulation, and the more stimulation to the brain the more connectors are created which can compensate for cell death. Buzan and Keene (1996, p51) describe the formation of links as generating ‘a more sophisticated bio-computer, with more connection points, and more potential, and also a greater ability to link bits of its knowledge together’.

The myth that brains degenerate with ageing can become self fulfilling. Many older people accept any perceived degeneration of their memories (‘senior moments’) as a fact of life accompanying the ageing process. Maintenance of physical fitness is easy to prescribe, with visible results, but it appears to be less so for mental fitness. Reduction in achievement times for top athletes as they age, suggests that there is physical deterioration which can be reduced to some extent through fitness programmes. Research into ageing of the brain suggests that for mental fitness the opposite may be true, that brain performance can be improved if new connectors are being formed. Research in the past has focussed on the decline in the number of brain cells to support the theory of the brain degenerating.

In its publication *Mind your Mind*, Alzheimer’s Australia continues the argument. ‘Healthy lifestyle habits may be protective against decline in thinking and memory abilities as you age. Brain-healthy lifestyle habits may also delay or prevent the onset of dementia’ (Budge 2006, p2). The same publication states ‘Our brain is our control centre for memory, emotions, learning and behaviour. Exercising or challenging the brain is thought to build reserves of brain cells and enhance brain cell connections, helping you to stay sharp’. Having a purpose

in life is more likely to exercise a greater part of the brain as more sections of it are likely to be involved.

The Alzheimer's booklet also states: 'Mental stimulation activates underused nerve pathways and connections, producing a kind of natural 'brain fertiliser' that strengthens and helps nerve connections'. Also 'The process of learning new information flexes the memory, and promotes brain growth' (p5). The need to keep the brain active is supported by Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p130) 'Again, it is possible that at least in part, lack of practise of mental skills causes some neural systems to decline through misuse'. Baltes et al. (2005, p54) comment 'A large amount of deliberate practice of skills, for instance, has been shown to be a key for any kind of expertise, physically or cognitive'.

Rimmer (2007, p332) argues along the same lines: 'In a society faced with an ageing population, in which dementia, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease are bound to become more common, the maintenance of mental function becomes increasingly important'.

This research looks towards future possibilities as 21st century acceptance of knowledge of brain behaviour can open new opportunities for successful ageing. The needs of the brain, particularly in the later stage of life, have recently been expanded by this acceptance of brain elasticity rather than the previously accepted automatic deterioration.

2.13 A purpose, including work, as the solution

The bias towards ageing can be overcome if older people take the matter into their own hands and adopt a purpose, life plan or goals, and lead successful, challenging and healthy lives, both physically and mentally. They also need to be aware that this is necessary and desirable for successful ageing. It may prevent the effects of loss of brain cells in later life, and the increasing prevalence of dementia. This new area of brain research supports the adoption of a purpose, goals, life-plan in the later stage of life, on the basis that working towards these leads to increased brain stimulation, and the more stimulation to the brain the more connectors are created which can compensate for cell death.

Valenzuela (2009) suggests that there need to be three essential ingredients to activities in later life, a social, a physical and a mental component. This research suggests that these three ingredients need to be combined with a sense of purpose in the activity, in order that it doesn't just become time filling, 'being busy'.

An NIH-funded study led by Butler, cited in Buettner (2008, p246) looked at the correlation between having a sense of purpose and longevity in a group of highly functioning people between the ages of 65 and 92. The study lasted for 11 years. They found that individuals who expressed a clear goal in life – something to get up for in the morning, something that made a difference – lived longer and were sharper than those who did not. This echoes the observation of Noelene Brown in the interviews with older Australians, who suggested that people who have something exciting to get up for are less likely to be disturbed by illness.

In discussing increasing longevity, Mathers (2007, p61), comments ‘it should be remembered that as long as people value the extra years of life (with their concomitant disability and morbidity) as more desirable than death, then those extra years are a net benefit to individuals and to society’. Having a purpose also appears to minimise the effects of disabilities.

Good mental health is recognised as important, and is encouraged through organisations such as the Alzheimer’s Association, quoted earlier, but ways of achieving it are more elusive. Good mental health is associated with good physical health and having a purpose in life may contribute to both. The negative aspects of ageing, such as dementia or suicide, are often not presented as an avoidable situation. A later part of this research was fuelled by, and extended to addressing, the increasing importance of dementia which disrupts the lives of older people. Snowdon (2002, p98) first raised the issue of prevention through an autopsy on one of the participants in his ‘nuns’ study who had shown no signs of Alzheimer’s disease in life but whose ‘brain tissue left little doubt that Alzheimer’s disease had spread far and wide’. His work showed that even when Alzheimer’s disease is physically obvious in the brain, it does not necessarily lead to symptoms.

2.13.1 Defining a successful later stage of life

Older people who find their work fulfilling, whether part-time or full time, paid or voluntary, and who ignore the retirement call, or find a substantial alternative, appear to age more successfully. Robinson (2009, p195) comments ‘[w]hile physical age is absolute as a way of measuring the number of years that have passed since you were born, it is purely relative when it comes to health and quality of life’. He refers to people ‘who are the same age chronologically and generations apart emotionally and creatively. The medical evidence supports this approach to ageing’. He also comments that human lives ‘are organic and cyclical. Different capacities express themselves in stronger ways at different times in our

lives'. This provides multiple opportunities for new growth and development, and to revitalise latent capacities.

Mental ill-health provides a very different picture of successful ageing. Older people are more prone to dementia, particularly Alzheimer's disease, which produces a very inferior later stage of life, not only for the patient but also for family and friends around the patient. It is also extremely expensive for the country, financially and socially. This mental aspect of ageing is the source of much research, particularly as deterioration becomes more prevalent, but the stress appears to be more on cure rather than prevention. Recent research suggests that participation in more complex activities is required. The sense of having a purpose in life and being a recognised member of the community, and the complex issues involved, may well provide a protection against mental ill health. None of the groups or individuals considered in this research showed any signs of mental deterioration; in fact they were all well in control of their mental fitness.

2.13.2 Rethinking society's attitude towards the later stage of life

This research suggests that continuing with the present idea in the community that retiring at age 65 (or earlier as the voluntary retirement age suggests) will lead to a life of endless idleness and pleasure providing a successful and healthy ageing, is far from the reality. Negative ageing, witnessed through suicide rates, particularly among older males, increasing levels of dementia, and loneliness among older people indicate that current approaches towards older age need to change. Blane *et al* (2002) identified four areas required for older people to achieve quality of life. These are (1) the need for control over one's environment; (2) the need to be free of unnecessary interference by others; (3) the need for self realisation which presumably involves coming to terms with one's strengths and weaknesses and talents; and (4) the need to enjoy oneself. The basis for this thesis offers fulfilment in these four areas.

There is currently an endless loop approach by society towards ageing. Older people absorb society's attitude towards them as second class citizens through negative ageism. This can only be changed if older people themselves show that this stage can be productive and enjoyable but this is harder to achieve if older people themselves aren't encouraged to adopt the self concept of potential achievers. Negative attitudes towards older people will persist if the elders fail to fulfil their role model as exemplars of successful and healthy lives. If older

people have a purpose and are still achieving then attitudes towards them will change. This concept needs empowerment.

Laslett (1989, p157) suggested that ‘withdrawal into the Third Age is hardly an appropriate description of a decision to direct your efforts henceforth to that which interests you most, in active co-operation with others with similar interests and outlooks’. The latter is reflected in the new definition of the concept of ‘tribes’. One of the difficulties is for older people who do not wish to continue in their work to find an alternative which meets their needs.

Personal satisfaction and improved mental and physical health are not the only likely outcomes of older people adopting a purpose in life. There is a multitude of projects that older people can become involved in, and succeed in, if given the encouragement to find their ‘element’. Many have the freedom, talents and opportunity to do so if they can be persuaded to use them. We tend to forget that those who designed modern technology, including advancements in medical science enabling society to live longer, are among those who are classed as ‘older people’ today. These people retain these talents and abilities and need encouragement to continue.

Minichiello and Jamieson (2006, p392) take an optimistic view. They believed that ‘the politicisation of ageism will result in a revolution of change in decades to come and will include a social agenda that equates ageing with happiness, wellness, fulfilment, respect and equality’. This research has identified the issues involved in this.

Those wishing to lead a different type of lifestyle have to contend with ‘dismissive interpretation of old age as a social construction, reflecting negative beliefs and attitudes about old age rather than any valid objective evidence concerning the quality of life of older people or their ability to make a positive contribution to society’ (Warnes 1993, cited in Featherstone and Hepworth 2005, p357). Society needs to be educated about ageing as a time of development and achievement, not decline.

The options canvassed here have a common thread: that of having a purpose in life. This thread runs through the lives of those who are ageing successfully, the four groups of centenarians, the Late Bloomers, and the older achievers.

2.14 Summary

This chapter has looked at the literature on ageing in general, the effect of negative ageing in the community and on individuals. The various ways in which ageism is promoted in the community are addressed. It has investigated the lifestyles available to older Australians and the effect of modern advances in the knowledge of brain function applicable to older people and which has the potential to change the attitude of older people and society towards the condition of ageing. The evidence from all sources points to the need for a purpose, with its associated community status, in this later stage of what is the continuum of life.

The next chapter looks at the lifestyles of older people who are ageing successfully.

Chapter 3 Older people whose lifestyles lead to successful and healthy ageing

This thesis is concerned with identifying lifestyles which contribute to successful and healthy ageing. This chapter identifies successful older achievers, past and present, across the world, and then looks in detail at two particular groups of people, centenarians in four parts of the world and retired Americans, who are achieving these aims, and investigates their lifestyles.

3.1 Identifying appropriate groups

The recurring theme throughout this research has been the identification of issues which lead to successful and healthy ageing, both physically and mentally. There are a number of outstanding older people and groups of older people throughout the world, who have achieved this in various walks of life. The criteria for selection is that people are over the age of 55 (the lower age limit for this research), and have successful lives, and healthy lives, and that they are still contributing to their communities. Older achievers both past and present are mentioned, followed by more in-depth descriptions of the lifestyles of two groups who fit these criteria. In the next chapter the lives of seven noted older Australians who are still achieving in later life are described.

The research into these groups suggests that having a purpose in life, as opposed to ‘being busy’ and filling in time until death, is the main ingredient for success in the later stage of life. Buettner (2008) describes this as ‘doing something they feel is either interesting or worthwhile’ (p19). Robinson (2009) would recommend both conditions.

The main option for many in later life is continuation with work: the obstacles and barriers to this are investigated later.

3.2 Older achievers of the past

Many people produce some of their greatest work in the latter days of their lives. In looking at people from the past, life expectancy must be taken into account as it may have been much lower than today, depending on the period. The music of Hildegard of Bingen, for example, written in the 12th century, is still performed and enjoyed. She started writing at 41 which would probably have been life expectancy at that time, and equivalent to a woman well into

her eighties today. Beethoven (*Grosse Fuge*), Shakespeare (*The Tempest*) and Michelangelo produced some of their best work towards the end of their lives. Verdi wrote *Othello* at aged 74 and *Falstaff*, when aged 80, the last two of his operas. Sinan, the Imperial architect of the Istanbul of the Sultans, created his crowning glory, the Edirne Mosque, when in his 80s (Buzan and Keene 1996). John Kenneth Galbraith, the influential economist, wrote his last economics book at the age of 87. Winston Churchill was in his 70s when he led Great Britain through World War 2. Groucho Marx was 65 when he embarked on a new career as a TV show host. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) presenter John Cargher presented the radio program *Singers of Renown* well into his 80s.

These contributions by older achievers are explained by Robinson (2009, p203). ‘Many writers, poets, painters and composers have produced their greatest work as their insights and sensitivities deepened with age. In any discipline where experience plays a significant role, age is an asset, rather than a liability’. He suggests that ‘maturity can be a genuine advantage, especially, for example, in the arts. Many writers, poets, painters and composers have produced their greatest work as their insights and sensitivities deepened with age’. Achenbaum (2005, p27), in discussing whether leadership positions should be occupied by older people suggests ‘The aged putatively have the requisite experience, having risen through the ranks, and the wisdom, having dealt with all sorts of conditions and personalities’.

3.3 Current older achievers

Present day achievers include Nelson Mandela, now in his 90s. When Mr Mandela speaks, the world listens. He is given accolades reminiscent of the days when older people were respected as elders, and he is treated with honour. He continues to work.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, aged 87, is also accorded respect which reflects the wisdom of her increasing years. She maintains good physical health, including riding once a week. She still follows a heavy work schedule. For example, according to media reports, in 2008, at age 83, she carried out 373 engagements in the UK (more than one a day) and 44 engagements overseas. This is in addition to working on State papers. The only concession she makes to her age is to arrange slightly shorter and less arduous foreign tours. She only takes a day off for Christmas Day and Easter day. Media reports also quote Pope Benedict, aged 86, still travelling around the world conducting mass and addressing his Catholic

followers. The Dalai Lama at 74 visited seven countries in 2009 and had at least one more in the planning stage.

Other older people who still continue to work include the film-maker Attenborough brothers (in their 80s), novelist P.D. James (92), musician Leonard Cohen (77), actor Michael Craig (81). Catherine Hamlin, an Australian gynaecologist, at 88 runs an obstetric fistula hospital in Ethiopia. She still operates once a week. Horse trainer Bart Cummings is still training Melbourne Cup winners (he has already won a record 12 times) at 85, winning two of the top races, and breaking records with his number of wins. The list of older achievers also includes painter Margaret Olley who died at age 88 and was reported to be still painting on the day she died, and woodworker Sam Maloof (92). At aged 75, Rolf Harris was invited to paint the Queen and continues working as a TV presenter. Actor Sir Michael Caine and singer Tony Bennett, both in their 80s, have no desire to stop working. Clint Eastwood, actor and film director, when asked about retirement in an interview to mark his 80th birthday, said he had no desire to do so as coming to work was easy when you love what you do.

At age 103, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch is probably Australia's oldest achiever. She still manages her farm, opening it frequently to charity groups and the public, and is engaged in well over a hundred philanthropic activities. She attended the opening of the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Recital Centre in Melbourne in 2009, named after her in recognition of her philanthropic work, particularly in relation to music. She laughingly suggested that she had too many things named after her.

Older people are adaptable to change. Quentin Bryce, at age 66 had a career change and took on the role of Australia's Governor General. Noeline Brown, one of the interviewees for this research, took on the additional role of Ambassador for the Ageing at the age of 70.

Other Australians who continue to contribute to the country, include Margaret Fink, 79, playwright, who comments 'old age is not a reality for most Australians. The spare parts industry is going great guns' and 'maybe too many consider anything after middle years as years to be filled in marking time, waiting for the 'Grim Reaper'. Some of my contemporaries seem to be in this boat'. Anne Deveson, 82, writer, suggests that we are now challenged 'to move outside the bounds of linear time in considering age'.

This list shows only the tip of the iceberg of older achievers. It includes people from a wide variety of backgrounds and a wide variety of careers. Many of them continue not only to

work but to produce outstanding work, later in their lives. Working into their 80s is not unusual and many of them have no desire to 'retire'. Rolf Harris suggested that 'retirement' to him meant going to bed and not waking up again. In particular, all of them are in good health, or are able to cope with physical health difficulties, enabling them to continue with their work. Margaret Olley, for example, was photographed visiting the pyramids in Egypt using a walking frame. The fact that they contribute to society, and are given accolades, well into what we describe as old age, suggests that they also have good mental health.

As these achievers approach 80 or above they all intend to continue to work. Due to the negative ageism which permeates many developed countries, the mental image of a person in this age group suggests a fragile person, possibly confined to a retirement home. Few think in terms of an active achiever who may be making a greater contribution to their country, and to the world, than a much younger person.

These older people challenge what we mean by age. Fitzgerald and Moor (2008) ask whether we refer to chronological, biological or psychological age as these terms produce very different descriptors of individual older people.

3.4 Specific groups of older achievers

The following is a description of the lifestyles of two very different groups. The first are centenarians who live in communities in which retirement is rare, including one community whose language does not have a word for retirement. The second is a group of people who took the retirement option and followed it with new careers. Having a purpose usually brings with it an involvement with family and/or community and this is addressed with these two groups.

3.4.1 *The centenarians*

The lives of centenarians are of growing interest. Their increasing numbers are largely due to the development of antibiotics, influenza vaccines, cardiovascular drugs anti-diabetics and modern anaesthesia and surgery (Jeune and Christensen 2005, p88), enabling them to survive many fatal diseases. The study showed that their lifestyles contribute to their longevity.

The 'Blue Zones' research (Buettner 2008) investigated the lives of centenarians living in areas of the world which had the highest number of centenarians. The title arose from the pencilling in on a map, by a demographer using a blue pencil, of areas of the world with the

highest percentage of centenarians. The researchers included people from the University of Minnesota, the National Institute on Aging, University of Illinois, Chicago. Also included in the study was the work of Dr Butler, President of the International Longevity Center, USA and Associate Professor Perls, from the Medicine and Geriatrics Centre at the Boston University School of Medicine.

The four areas studied were the Barbagia region of Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa in Japan; the community of Loma Linda in California and the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica. 'In each of these places we'll encounter a different culture which has taken its own unique path to longevity' (Buettner 2008, pxxiii). All the centenarians included in the study had had their ages verified officially.

In a study of ageing, centenarians are unique in that they are at the upper limits of the later stage of life. They are at an age at which both physical and mental health are at the extreme, yet neither were apparent in the centenarians studied. Buettner (2008, p103), the author of the book based on the research, points out:

It occurred to me that I was witnessing the happy limits of the human machine. I sensed neither the frailty nor the wistfulness of impending death but rather serenity - a certain satisfaction with a life now free of the ambition and commitments that dog younger years - a life achieved.

Having a purpose can be achieved through continuing with work, either full time or part time. This is the path taken by the centenarians who are still an integral part of their communities.

3.4.2 Health

All of the interviewees had physical lifestyles which would be a challenge to people a fraction of their age (Buettner 2008). They had only a fifth of the rate of cardiovascular disease of Americans and a third of the rate of dementia. In Okinawa, all but four of the 32 centenarians were functionally independent. In Sardinia, the rocky terrain and deep valleys meant that shepherding was the best profession. It was not stressful or strenuous but involved many miles of walking each day. This reduced bone loss and fractures.

Among the examples quoted in the study is 102-year-old Kamada, from Okinawa. She rises about 6am, eats breakfast (jasmine tea and soup with vegetables). Then in her role as *noro*, priestess, she goes to the sacred grove (about 200 metres away) to pray for the health of the

village. At noon she picks herbs and vegetables for her lunch. She naps in the afternoons, does some light gardening and then at about 4 pm she joins a group of old friends for *sake* and chat. She then eats a light dinner (fish soup, vegetables, spring onions, salad and rice) and is in bed by 9pm (Buettner 2008, p84).

Panchita from Costa Rica (aged 100) by 7.30am had: risen at 4am, said her prayers, fetched eggs from the chicken coop, ground corn by hand, brewed coffee using hand drawn well-water, made breakfast, split wood and used a machete almost as tall as herself to clear the brush around her house (p171). She walks a mile into town each week, once to attend mass and the second time to go to the market.

From the same area, Rafael, also aged 100, grew a garden, harvested his own corn and beans and kept livestock. He played the guitar, had a good voice and ‘fancied himself as a lady’s man’ (p181).

The major part of the diet of all the centenarians was the food they produced themselves, with little or no meat. The effects of climate change are moving people in developed countries to adopt similar lifestyles, which may have the same health benefits.

Many of the centenarians had religious beliefs and a philosophy on life. The advice given by one of them, a 107-year-old in Sardinia, was: ‘Life is short. Don’t run so fast you miss it’. Her lifestyle was described: ‘She stayed at home most of the day, venturing out to a nearby plaza some afternoons’ and ‘her loving serene demeanour attracted people. Children would make a point of visiting her on their way home from school’. (Buettner 2008, p249).

Good physical and mental health are connected (Doidge 2009). In the American Blue Zone, Loma Linda, Buettner (2008, p151) describes a 94-year-old who had decided to build an eight-foot high fence on one boundary of his property. Four days later he was working as assistant heart surgeon for an operation in a community hospital.

One important religious belief was ancestor worship. One of the centenarians in Okinawa had an altar dedicated to her ancestors in her house, at which she prayed on a mat perhaps 30 times a day. This frequent activity of springing up and down from the mat had given her ‘incredibly good lower body strength and balance’ (p103).

3.4.3 Purpose or goals in life

Buettner (2008, p227) sums up the centenarians he met. He writes ‘the world’s longevity all-stars not only live longer, they also tend to live better. They have strong connections with their family and friends. They’re active. They wake up in the morning knowing that they have a purpose, and the world, in turn, reacts to them in a way that propels them along. And there’s not a grump in the bunch’. He comments that ‘in every Blue Zone, centenarians possess a strong sense of purpose’.

Family can help to provide this purpose. In Sardinia elders are expected to help with childcare and contribute to the functioning of the household. They have strong self-esteem and a clear purpose. They love and are loved.

102-year-old Kamada’s life has already been described. Her purpose in the village is that of ‘*noro*, a priestess who communes with the gods and ancestors and serves as spiritual adviser to the townspeople’ (Buettner, 2008, p79). This is a job she takes very seriously.

All the centenarians described family as the most important thing in their lives - part of their purpose in life.

Okinawa people have a specific word for the sense of purpose, *ikigai*. In Costa Rica it is called *plan de vida* (Buettner, 2008, p190). Their sense of purpose is strong. They feel needed and want to contribute to a greater good.

Buettner’s work parallels that of Doidge (2009). The latter suggests that ‘purpose can come from a job or a hobby, particularly if you can immerse yourself completely in it’ (p246). The centenarians are certainly immersed in their lifestyles and communities.

The goals and lifestyles of the centenarians are very different from those of the western world where the goals of accomplishment, status and material wealth are highly revered and are often the purpose in life, and achieving these goals often takes up most of their time. Buettner (2008, p103), points out that this freedom from what he describes as the ambitions and commitments of the earlier stages of life in itself provides a serenity.

Poon (2005, p350) comments ‘when physical health, pathology (dementia), mental health (depression), education, social and economic support, personality, lifestyle, and other

concomitant factors are brought to bear, chronological age exerts relatively little influence'. Attitude to life, particularly when this includes purpose, is a more potent influence.

3.4.4 Other ethnic groups

Older people, including those who have migrated to Australia, may bring specific patterns from their homelands. Among Australian Vietnamese grandparents, quality of life is enhanced by caring for grandchildren (Vo-Thanh-Xuang and Liamputtong 2003). Similar results were obtained from a UK study in which six factors were identified as affecting the quality of life of ethnic older people living there: having a role to play, support networks, income and wealth, health, having time and independence (Grewal et al. 2004). This is reinforced by another UK study (Davidson et al. 2005 p96) 'Across all the ethnic groups, women spoke about having a purpose in life as being a central element in them feeling that they were active social participants. Purpose refers to having a clear set of roles or functions to perform and, for those whose family lived nearby, it was frequently the main source of their feelings of social involvement'.

Many of these factors are examples of the importance of having a purpose in the later stage of life and of having family/community attachments recommended in this research.

3.4.5 The Late Bloomers

Humans throughout every stage of the continuum of life need a purpose or goals for a successful and healthy life. The different goals throughout the earlier stages are referred to elsewhere. The later stage of life produces different aims. Those who remain in a job they enjoy can find that 'continued employment meets deeply felt inner needs that have nothing to do with dollars' (Goldman and Mahler 1995, p142). They suggest that 'having a job is a constructive way to maintain a full, balanced and satisfying way of life' (p146).

For those who are disillusioned with their current jobs taking on a new career or hobby can fill the void and enable them to achieve a happy and productive life. This is the path taken by the 'Late Bloomers' (Goldman and Mahler 1995). This group includes those for whom continuing with the job they had during the working part of their lives which provided their purpose, is no longer appropriate or available, and who are in the specific situation of having lost the benefits of being part of the workforce. The authors of the book which uses the term suggest that 'by late bloomer, we simply mean anyone who defies the notion that his or her best years are over, someone who responds to the later stage of life not as a crisis but as a

quest' (Goldman and Mahler 1995, p xv). They later add 'when people hold positive attitudes and strong beliefs, their energy reservoirs and potential for change appear virtually inexhaustible (p xvi)'. They believe that 'too much of the positive stuff about ageing has been kept hidden, while the so-called drawbacks of getting older have received far too much attention (p xviii)'. Their focus in their research is to concentrate not on the limitations of ageing but on constantly expanding horizons. Their focus is on positive ageing, not negative.

For many older people, one of their aims is to leave the job they are doing as soon as possible upon reaching retirement age, or the age at which they can retire. The work they are doing no longer gives them satisfaction. The Late Bloomers suggest a solution to this.

The 'Late Bloomers' research is based on older people who either retire and adopt a new career, or adapt the career or hobby they had earlier in life to meet the different circumstances of later life, or change to a completely different experience. The concept also has parallels to those people of any age group who find themselves in their 'element' (Robinson 2009), usually by also having a change of career or finding a career that essentially utilises all their skills and passions at any age, including in the later years of life.

In his foreword to *The Late Bloomers* (Goldman and Mahler 1995), Dr Dychtwald, President and CEO of Age Wave, commented: 'The antiquated view of maturity as a period of stagnation and decline must be replaced once and for all with the reality that the latter part of life is an exciting time of growth, productivity and newfound pleasures'. This is particularly relevant as life expectancy increases creating a longer 'later stage of life'. His philosophy parallels that of Robinson (2009), who used the term 'finding their element', which he defined as 'what they as individuals really want to do to fulfil themselves'. He also echoes the work of others in his comment 'the way their mental *and* physical health often improve dramatically soon after they discover how they really want to live'.

The rest of this chapter details examples of this and illustrates the variety of ways in which older people have found ways of discovering their purpose, or goals, or passion or a fulfilling way of life, or 'element' (Robinson 2009). Examples are from the study of the 'Late Bloomers' (Goldman and Mahler 1995).

Achieving a purpose later in life can be either through continuing with previous work, including in a part time or casual role, by continuing with a former hobby, by finding a 'tribal' group with similar interests (Godin 2008), or by chance, or by a combination of these.

One example is provided by The Majorettes of Horni Lhota, (a tiny former mining Czech village of 600 people), a group which evolved from a seniors dance class (Goldman and Mahler 1995). The group perform up to three times a week in retirement homes where they dance for free. They are booked for over a year ahead.

The connection between mental and physical health appears in other 'Late Bloomers' stories. One person had achieved the rank of school district official handling over a quarter of a million dollars a year. A series of heart attacks and not entirely successful heart surgery led to retirement from his job. His family persuaded him to follow a long-held ambition to take a law degree (at age 67). Following graduation he found a job he wanted with less than 25 hours work per week and the ability to take long vacations. He now works as a victim's advocate. He looks forward to a society in which people are evaluated not on age but on what they can accomplish. He said that the fear of risking something new had previously held him back. This limitation is also recognised by Susan Jeffers, cited in Robinson (2009).

Retirement from the workforce usually hits men harder, mainly because in the past many had executive jobs, and on losing their jobs not only do they have time on their hands but they also lose their sense of belonging, prestige and power. One highly ranked executive quoted in the Late Bloomers (Goldman and Mahler 1995) was forced to leave his job through a mandatory retirement policy. He moved from being special assistant to the company president, negotiating multimillion dollar business deals, to being without a job. For almost two years he 'spun into a dark spiral of depression' (p29). He felt he had lost his identity: who he was. He retreated to his family's cabin in the forest where he found peace and a new role. He now collects contributions from large companies for organisations which preserve or restore bird and animal habitats.

Not all the Late Bloomers are executive men. One retired chef was reluctantly persuaded by a neighbour to attend a beginner's tap dancing class. He was overweight, and a bachelor, shy with the opposite sex. He accepted his neighbour's invitation to attend because, as his neighbour pointed out to him, he had nothing better planned for the afternoon. He found he enjoyed the exercise and companionship of the dancing. Within a few weeks he gave a solo performance in a big variety show at a senior centre. He lost 20 lbs through six months of jogging, cycling and dancing, took on the role of male model for clothes for older men, and had a non-speaking role in a movie. He also made many new friends. He became a Late Bloomer by seizing an opportunity.

Late Bloomers are of either gender. One 67-year-old lady took up writing, a desire she had suppressed in order to raise her family. She wrote her first novel which became a best seller and was made into a film. Another late bloomer, a retired nurse, turned her hobby of restoring antique furniture into a part-time business.

The issues of physical and mental health are not inhibitors. The 'Late Bloomers' are so immersed in their new lives that ill health in any form is not a prohibitor. Ill health can be turned around. A career diplomat suffered from severe arthritis and high blood pressure and was given as little as six months to live. Constant travelling had denied him the companionship of pets. To fulfil an ambition he bought a run-down farmhouse. The constant activity of looking after the animals eased his arthritis. A year later he had renovated the farmhouse and turned it into a bed and breakfast inn which he ran himself. The guests provided social contacts and he threw away many of his medications. He also acted as counsellor at the local hospice.

Goldman and Mahler (1995) suggest that there are reasons why people don't try different achievements in later life. 'The responsibility of making a choice is always yours' (p12). They suggest that people must take responsibility for their own lives and recognise that it is within their power to create change. It is important to recognise that choices may be limited but by focussing on a goal that is realistic and important to them, people make the first big step toward accomplishing it. It is important not to cling fearfully to the past but to accept change and encourage growth (p19). This is a theme repeated by other writers. Susan Jeffers, cited by the above authors, refers to the fears that hold people back from achieving their full potential. These fears include those of failure, of not being good enough and disapproval.

There are examples in Australia of people finding a new purpose, including the disabled. Jones et al. (1992) cited the example of a gentleman in his 70s who had lost two fingers in his left hand, had arthritis and chronic pain, suffered a stroke which affected his right arm and had knee surgery. He felt that attendance at a rehabilitation day hospital frustrated him, took away his self esteem and his control over his life. He discharged himself and trained himself to use a one handed technique enabling him to do renovations and make toys, and produced a video to educate others.

The Late Bloomers are examples of success in later life. They confirm that entering the later stage of life is not a move toward the end but can be a move towards a new career and a new

beginning. The later stage of life opens up new freedoms and new opportunities that are worth embracing. All of the Late Bloomers contribute in various ways to their communities.

The world of negative ageing in which older people live devalues them and tends to dull their creativity. The Late Bloomers show that this does not have to be the case.

3.4.6 Parallel groups

The success of the Late Bloomers depends on the ability of older people to find a satisfying and purposeful life. They have the advantage in this selection in that they are usually aware of the 'retirement' deadline, either compulsorily or through choice. Other groups faced with a drastic change in their lives find themselves in the same situation, but often without warning. A recent edition of the Beacon magazine (2009) showed how resourceful people can be when faced with, in this case, the life threatening disease of breast cancer. This can disrupt family life, including those of families with young children. Over 65% of these cancer patients had become involved in new, creative outlets; from journaling to journeying, from music to mosaic, often in their case in addition to disruptive and unpleasant treatment obligations.

Similarly, those who are unexpectedly disabled, particularly through accidents or following hospital procedures, suddenly have new lifestyles thrust upon them. Yet many of them adopt new, successful lifestyles which take into account their new disabilities.

3.5 Summary

The chapter began with an acknowledgement of the work of older achievers, both past and present. The lives of centenarians, those who reach the ultimate successful and healthy lifestyle were then investigated. These are people who continued with the work they have been doing throughout their lives. In contrast, the 'Late Bloomers' engaged in a new lifestyle, either through choice as their current work was not satisfying them, or they were forced to make a change through compulsory retirement or through ill health. Members of these groups are leading successful and healthy lives. All of them have a purpose and are connected with their communities.

The next chapter looks at older Australians who are achieving in their later years.

Chapter 4 Australian older achievers

Continuing with the theme of older people who are ageing successfully, this chapter describes the lives of seven well-known Australians who participated in the research through interviews, giving in-depth accounts of their successful lives. The chapter is based upon the transcripts of those interviews.

4.1 Methodology

A number of older Australians whose names frequently appear in the media or who are professionally well known, were approached to take part in an interview. Interviewees from a variety of fields were selected. The nature of the research was explained to them.

4.1.1 Sampling

The total number of people approached was 14, with a non-response rate of one, an artist who was to die three years later, age 88, having almost completed preparations for another exhibition of her work. The sample was nine males and five females. It was intended that between seven and ten respondents would be an appropriate final sample size, particularly if a range of careers and ages was included.

Of those who were unable to be involved, all gave the reason that they were too busy. Tom Keneally, for example, one of Australia's top authors, at age 73, was finishing two books, moving house and planning a trip to Antarctica. This is not the public image usually associated with a 73-year-old. In a letter explaining his commitments, he passed on his thanks for being considered for the project and wished it every success. This was also the attitude of others who had to decline due to heavy workloads.

The final number of participants was seven, with six males and one female. The gender imbalance may reflect the lack of opportunity available to women in this age group who would have liked to have pursued a career when they were younger but did not have the opportunity. This is reflected in the outcome of the education opportunities available to older people in their youth. One of the participants is Aboriginal.

4.2 Background to the interviews

4.2.1 *Information given to participants.*

The interview procedure and forms were approved by the University of Canberra Ethics Committee prior to contacting the potential interviewees. Each participant was provided with a 'Request for Interview' form, a 'Participant Information Form', a copy of the topics and, at the interview, a 'Consent to Interview' form (all shown as appendices), with a copy of the topics. Each interviewee was informed that the interview would be transcribed and returned to them for corrections, amendments or additions. The corrected versions would then be used for the analysis. This procedure was followed.

One interview was held with each participant with the length of time involved dependant on the interviewee. Each was given sufficient time to respond to the questions asked. Interview times ranged from less than an hour to almost two hours. Two of the interviews were conducted in their studios, one in his office, one in his home, two in their hotels and one visited the researcher at work. The time taken to review the transcript varied with some listing major changes only to one person who made many changes to his responses. Changes only reflected grammatical alterations.

4.2.2 *The interview process.*

The topics given to the interviewees were: -

- **Topic one:** A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure.
- **Topic two:** A brief description of the work you are currently involved in.
- **Topic three:** A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve.

The topics were chosen by the researcher, based upon the research. They had two objectives, firstly to give the interviewees the opportunity to provide a 'whole of life' portrait of the continuum of their lives, including their future plans. Secondly, the topics were sufficiently open-ended to place minimal restrictions on the interviewees. This was also important as each person was from a very different career pathway and this format allowed for these differences. In addition, it enabled each participant to tell their own story with minimal

intrusion from the interviewer, except to provide support and encouragement in the telling of their story.

The order of the topics was not strictly adhered to in any of the interviews. Often discussion of future plans, for example, would ignite memories of earlier work.

Where the interviewees raised issues particularly relevant to this research, such as retirement, community involvement and the physical effects of ageing, these are recorded at the end of each interview.

4.2.3 Participants in the interviews.

The participants, their field of work, and their ages at the time of interview (2008, except for Mick Dodson who was interviewed in January 2009) is given below. Their ages were obtained from a web search.

- Professor Michael Dodson, age 59. Director, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, and Professor of Law at the Australian National University. Australian of the Year, 2009. Public speaker.
- David Stratton, age 68. Film critic and author. Public speaker.
- Malcolm Mackerras, age 69. Psephologist and writer.
- Noeline Brown, age 70. Ambassador for the Ageing. Actor. Radio show participant. Public speaker.
- Bruce Petty, age 79. Political cartoonist and author. Public speaker.
- Peter Sculthorpe, age 79. Composer and author. Public speaker.
- Professor Sol Encel, age 83. Sociologist and author. Public speaker.

The stories of the participants are presented in this chronological order.

4.2.4 Supplementing the interview material.

Prior to each interview, information about the participant was obtained from a web search. In one case, David Stratton (Stratton, 2008), the biography he had written was also read. *The Stolen Children: Their Stories*' (Bird 1998) was read before and after the interview with Mick

Dodson, to give background to his work on 'the Report of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families'. Noelene Brown (Brown, 2005) gave the researcher a copy of her out-of print biography which was read after the interview. The researcher also travelled to Sydney to see her perform in the show mentioned in the interview. In addition Malcolm Mackerras provided copies of his newspaper publications both at the interview and with the return of the amended transcription of the interview. Copies of four of Bruce Petty's books were also read after the interview. Similarly, Peter Sculthorpe's autobiography and a biography of him by Graeme Skinner (2007) were read after the interview, and the researcher travelled to Melbourne to hear the performance of 'Rites of Passage' he referred to. In addition, Peter Sculthorpe continued an ongoing email correspondence with the researcher, which included updates of his work. Sol Encel did likewise and also read the thesis before submission. The generosity of all the participants was outstanding, particularly as they all lead very busy lives in the public arena. All ended the interviews with the invitation to the researcher to contact them again if they could be of any further assistance.

4.2.5 Overview of the interviews

All but one of the participants were over the traditional retirement age of 65, most of them well over this age, and could therefore have retired. The exception was Mick Dodson who, as he pointed out, had 'outlived, almost, the life expectancy of Aboriginal men. Statistically I should be dead'. In 2007 Mathers estimated that there were only 4000 Australian Indigenous people above the age of 75.

This continuing involvement of the interviewees in their careers, in many cases long after the accepted retirement age, reinforces a second theory arising from this research: that retirement can create an unnecessary barrier in the continuum of life. The impression the interviewees gave was that they would keep on with what they were doing for the foreseeable future but were prepared to slow down over time. None considered complete retirement. For all of them, their past work is largely continuing in the present and will continue in the future. Noelene Brown has added her new part-time role as Ambassador for the Ageing to her past, present and future work as an actor. Some have adapted their lifestyles to meet the restrictions caused by ageing, such as a reduced work load. Sol Encel and Malcolm Mackerras have both relinquished their formal teaching ties with the University of New South Wales but both are continuing with their academic careers, researching and publishing.

All the interviewees were encouraged to talk about what they had done in the past, in addition to the achievements they were proud of. In some of the interviews, past achievements were taken to be first recollections of their entry into their chosen profession, for others past achievements and past work blended together.

Telling their stories not only reveals how the careers of each person started, leading them to eventually reach the top of their chosen profession, but it often also provides a glimpse of the history of Australian society at the time. Each has made, and continues to make, a major contribution to Australia's history.

The future was of particular interest to the interviewer. Older people are often not asked about their plans for the future (ABC 2008), on the assumption that they have no future. It is important that older people have a purpose in life, which the interviewees all had, and therefore it is important that they be given the opportunity to describe their plans and ambitions for the future. This thesis argues that the continuum of life should not be interrupted by retirement, but rather modified to meet changing circumstances, particularly physical health, to achieve successful and healthy ageing. The interviewees all fit into this category. The question of retirement was often raised by the interviewees, not the interviewer. This is a reflection of the community attitude that as people age it is expected that they will retire; the two conditions are regarded as inseparable.

For all of the interviewees their futures are a continuation of their present commitments and many of their plans for the future had already been described in the earlier part of the interview.

None of the interviewees, apart from Sol Encel, reported any physical health problems. Sadly Sol was to die two years after the interview. The fact that they were all leading very active lives at the time of the interview, and all were making outstanding contributions to Australia, (in many cases at international level) attests to their mental good health.

4.3 Analysis of the interviews

This thesis is based upon the premise that the lifestyle choices made in the later stage of life can determine whether this stage of life can be successful and healthy, or a time of decline. The interviewees were selected as they are all prominent citizens who have achieved success.

For all of them, life is a continuum and their past work continues into the present and will continue in to the future.

The topics were designed to show the continuity, throughout their lives, of the work of these older Australian achievers i.e. their purpose in life. The first topic used the word ‘achievements’ which was expanded to include awards during the interviews. Awards represent community recognition of the work of its citizens and their contribution to society. There were different attitudes among the interviewees towards the bestowing of awards as public acknowledgement of their work and achievements. It is important to stress that those interviewed are the elders of our society and the presentation of awards to them is an acknowledgement that not only are they at the top of their professions but that they are our older role models.

One of the basic anchors of human beings is their connection with family, community or home (in the sense of a physical place they connect with), or a combination of these. These were topics which were raised by the interviewees as part of the conversation. None of the questions specifically referred to either family, community or home but each interviewee brought some combination of these into the interview. This indicates that these anchors are important to them, as they were shown to be important to the centenarians in the Blue Zones and the Late Bloomers. Community volunteer work was raised by some, usually in relation to another issue, and this was included.

This paper argues that ageing is merely another stage in life, differing little from the other stages, particularly if the artificial barrier of retirement is removed. Some of the differences and challenges which do occur in this later stage were raised by the interviewees.

The interview details which follow are based on the transcripts of the interviews. It is hoped that this approach will allow their voices to be heard. Each of them is a part of Australia’s history.

4.4 Mick Dodson

4.4.1 Topic one: A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure

The first question proved to be a very difficult one for Mick and highlighted one of the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal thinking, in that the latter tend to think in

terms of family and people, rather than as an individual person. He felt that he had not achieved anything, as what were regarded as his achievements had been done with a team of other people. He said he had often been lucky to be chair of the committee or group that had achieved it.

Mick responded to this topic by saying: 'To talk about my achievements is a bit inaccurate. People don't achieve things on their own, they achieve it with others. Anything worthwhile I have achieved is because of others'. When he was asked whether he meant family or colleagues or both in his referral to others, he replied 'All of the above. You know I find it almost impossible to talk about these things. I have difficulty remembering things because of that'.

He mentioned that it would be easier for him 'if the question were framed differently' and he was invited to change it to fit his different approach to his lifetime work.

Throughout the interview Mick's responses suggested that this lack of personal identification with the work he had been involved in, in the past, and with current work, made recall difficult. His response, when invited to change the question was, 'I think the things I've been involved in that have given me the greatest satisfaction have been working, for example, in the Northern Territory for almost ten years as a Senior Legal Advisor to Aboriginal claimants for land under the Northern Territory Land Rights Act. And it's not so much the work, although the work was exciting, rewarding and fulfilling, the most pleasurable thing, if that's the way to describe it, was seeing the joy, particularly of the old people, on the day the titles were handed back by the Minister. Knowing that you had had a part to play in that achievement, and it was really their achievement. They are the ones who gave the evidence, they are the ones who fought, they are the ones who were originally dispossessed. They, it's really their achievement that I had a hand in'. He continued: 'And others. I wasn't the only lawyer working out there. There were other lawyers working out there, there were anthropologists, archaeologists, there were site recordists, there were historians, plus the people themselves. Plus a huge number of logistical support staff. So that's one thing I think has been amongst the most rewarding things I've done'.

When asked what achievements from the past gave him pleasure, Mick responded that in addition to his work on Native Title,

There are two other things that I've been involved in that were essentially heart breaking, heart breaking and didn't give much pleasure. I don't think pleasure is the right word here. It's more like rewarding or satisfaction. They've been working for almost two years as Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. It's really hard to call it an achievement. Being part of that was tough emotionally, even physically. And horrible in lots of ways. And the same could be said for being one of the Commissioners in the Inquiry into the Stolen Generations.

He described that as tragic. But:

...to see the apology last year, and knowing it came from the work we did ten years before, gave me a great deal of satisfaction. And what was, and again pleasure is not the emotion, the satisfaction, the reward if you like, was knowing finally, that publically, the government had vindicated the life experiences of these people. That was what gave me the greatest satisfaction, and knowing that I had a part to play in that, as one of the Commissioners. Again it wasn't just me, there were twenty two commissioners involved, there were dozens of staff, there were literally hundreds and hundreds of Aboriginal people who spoke to us, and without them, and the stories, we would have had no report. We would have had no apology. And in lots of ways that was perhaps the most satisfying thing, because I think it's got the potential to change the country, and particularly change the relationship between Indigenous Australia and the rest of Australia.

Mick's ongoing commitment is to Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, and to Indigenous people around the world. He accomplishes this through his work at the ANU, both as Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies and as Professor of Law. His position with the United Nations takes his work to world level.

One award Mick was willing to talk about, and which he said he treasured the most, was the National Aboriginal of the Year Award, a shared award, for his contribution to the Stolen Generations work. He said 'I find that hugely satisfying because that's recognition from my own people for the work we did on that. And the other awards, I'm just too embarrassed to talk about them as I don't think I deserve them'.

Mick said he had knocked back awards. He said 'I really think very, very, very deeply about them, getting awards. I really had angst over getting the AM. I talk to my family and friends

about whether I ought to accept them. I don't think I am an awards type person'. His delightful sense of humour came out as he added 'And you don't, most of them, you don't have any say. You can say "No" but it comes out of the blue because other people, who are ghosts it seems, nominate you'. Mick laughed as he said 'And that makes you a little cranky sometimes but I shouldn't get cranky about that, I think'.

Mick's involvement with the movement to get the federal government to say 'Sorry' was only revealed in his comment regarding the award he was granted following his involvement.

Mick is such an unassuming person it was very difficult to get him to talk about any aspect of his work. The interviewer felt that the interview only scratched the surface of his life. The idea that what he did was in conjunction with many others and therefore he couldn't take credit for it seems to permeate his thinking and affects his recall. For example, when faced with the question of past achievements Mick said 'I'm not very good at talking about this stuff' and this seemed to be a problem throughout the interview unless a specific project was brought to his attention. He gave the impression that whatever he did was tied up with many other people and he regarded it as a joint effort, not attributable directly to himself.

He made one particular comment 'One of the things I really like doing in my present work is being chair of the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. That's a great Institution and I've been there for a long time, almost twenty years, and been chair there for ten years and that's, that has been one of the most satisfying things I've done'.

4.4.2 Topic two: A brief description of the work you are currently involved in

Mick described his current role as 'the Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies and as a Professor of Law in the College of Law, both at the Australian National University'. He said:

The academic side of things I really enjoy. I particularly enjoy supervising honours students. They really stimulate me because unlike us old fuddy duddies their minds aren't cluttered up yet so they tend to be pretty clear thinkers, strangely enough. And I enjoy that. I get a great deal of satisfaction. I just got a call this morning from a prospective employer for one of my former honours students. To see them getting opportunities.

He had been at the ANU for seven or eight years. He said that:

Like most of the academic staff, I like the collegiality here. I like the terms of employment. The flexibility of that. We professors don't comparatively get paid very well but a lot of things make up for that. And part of it is what I have just spoken about. The satisfaction of having access to bright young students, who've got great ideas and really stimulate you intellectually. And we also, you know, our Centre does some very interesting work that is exciting and interesting. It's new ground. Cutting edge if you like in all sorts of fields, including history, anthropology, archaeology, law.

Mick was very enthusiastic about his University work.

And we have an outreach program which we do on behalf of the University to promote our credentials on Indigenous Studies. We work with the community. We work with other Institutions. We run events. We have a dialogue with the Diplomatic Corps on Indigenous issues, because we are in Canberra and it's the capital city. We have international scholars coming in and talking about Indigenous issues through the Diplomatic Corps, which is a good program we've managed to establish with the Diplomatic Corps. We have prominent speakers in here to lecture. We run exhibitions. I like the niche, if you like, which the centre has in the life of the University. And no-one else would do what we do, which complements what other people do.

He also described other work he was involved in:

I serve on a number of different boards. I did some work with the Victorian Government last year trying to look at alternatives to Native Title. It's still an ongoing process but it was getting agreement on a report between government, between certain stake holders and the Aboriginal people of Victoria. It was a pretty massive achievement. Again that was a whole team effort. I was just the guy who was lucky to be chairing the committee that did the work. And I serve on the NSW Judicial Commission which I find very rewarding, and it keeps me in touch with my profession. Although I'm here at the College of Law, that's a different aspect of it. I'm involved in some work on leadership with AUSAID which I find rewarding, in the Pacific'. When asked about the travel involved with this he said 'We had a couple of overseas trips and on top of that we've had two meetings, I think, in Australia. And in our Centre we've some research work for AUSAID which I find rewarding, in the Pacific.

Another of Mick's roles is that of co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia.

It's good to see how such a small organisation is achieving so much. And particularly getting these Reconciliation Action Plans in place. Finally getting other Australians to say "Yes, we are going to do something about this. Let's engage with Indigenous people. Let's give people jobs. Let's set targets for ourselves. Let's incorporate, include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in what we do. In what our business does, or in what our University does, or in what our Government Department does, or what our mining company does. Whatever". That's, I think those RAPS, or Reconciliation Action Plans, have the potential to really transform the country, and to reach true reconciliation and actually make a huge difference in the socioeconomic outcomes. To actually do something about the disadvantage, and the disparity of outcomes, between Aboriginal and Islander people and the rest of the country.

4.4.3 Topic three: A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve

Mick responded to this question by saying 'I don't really have any grand plans for the future'. During the discussion which followed this also turned out to be an understatement.

In discussing the work of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies, of which he is Director, he said

Our Centre does some very interesting work that is exciting and interesting. It's new ground. Cutting edge if you like in all sorts of fields, including history, anthropology, archaeology, law'. When asked if he could call on that expertise for his own research his response was 'I get very little time to do much research. My research generally consists of doing a paper for a conference which is often in a hurry. I am looking forward to a sabbatical when I can sit down and do something I want to do'. He added 'I've already got some thoughts on what I might do'. When questioned about the timing of this he said 'I think 2011 is the earliest I'd take it. I'd need I think two years to wind down from other stuff I'd want to do.

He explained further that 'I really can't take it sooner, because I've got another two years to run on my United Nations work. So if I've got that out of the road then I can think what I might do. I've had some overseas offers to spend my Sabbatical in different places, or part of

it. There are some things I want to do at home'. (When asked, Mick said 'home' meant Broome, his traditional country, where his people come from.)

When asked if going overseas meant lecturing he explained 'I'd probably be doing a bit of both, a bit of writing, research and writing. I think there's a book in there that I need to get out'. He said that the book would be

just something semi-academic. I'd really like to write about our Native Title claim, and Broome, and do a sort of social/legal history of that. And I think there's a book in it. Some of the characters might come in to it. But I thought I might do it in a year. I thought about it eighteen months ago and I'm still thinking about it. The book plan is in my head somewhere.

After his sabbatical, he would return to the ANU where he has tenure, unless 'the Government offers me a great overseas posting or something! I expect to retire in this job'.

When asked whether he would still be involved with the United Nations when his current position finishes in two years, Mick said he would still be involved. 'I'll still go to meetings and major conventions with other organisations that go there to these meetings. I expect I'll get a role to do some of that but I can be a little more selective I think'. He said that for the next two years, until his current position with the United Nations finishes, he would be involved with that and his work at the ANU. Two days after the interview Mick was named Australian of the Year 2009. From previous comments, and from some of his statements reported in the press later, it became apparent that he had accepted the role as it gave him an opportunity to further the cause of the Aboriginal people, rather than accepting it as an accolade to himself.

Early the following year Mick accepted the position of joint chair of Australian Studies at Harvard University.

Retirement

Mick said he has tenure at the ANU. 'I expect to retire in this job' and added 'For the future I don't think I'll ever retire. I think I'll probably slow down'. He also said 'I need to slow down a bit' which he explained as 'Well I won't do as much. If I retire I'll still be doing things, you know'. Mick commented that he did not contemplate retirement as he was still in good health. 'My health seems OK and as long as I'm healthy enough I'll continue working

but not at the pace I am now'. When asked if there were things he could drop he said 'Yes, I will. I've given some people some notice already. I've just overstretched these things'. Part of this reduction might have been in anticipation of the extra duties his role as Australian of the Year would carry.

Physical adjustments

In discussing reducing his workload, Mick said 'I'm finding the travel a little harder each year'. He added 'I'm just getting older I guess. I just don't like it'. Mick said that the problem with his work with the United Nations was the travel.

The workload's not that heavy. It's just there's a lot of travel. I did six overseas trips last year and I've already done one this year, for the year coming up. I've got another one in six weeks, then another one six weeks after that. So I'm spending two to three months overseas. But that's good, rewarding work. I like that work. It's not the work that gets me down. I like the work. It's great. It's the constant travelling.

Contribution to the wider world

Apart from the considerable contribution made through his committee work, Mick spends much of his time presenting papers and is involved in conferences. His work load has increased following his 'Australian of the Year' 2009 appointment. At the end of his year in this role he said (in a television interview, ABC 2010) that he had not spent one weekend at home during the year.

Family/community

Mick's family followed him around in his work 'they've been very good about that'. Although they had moved to Canberra about eight years previously he still referred to Broome as 'home'. When questioned, he said, 'That's my traditional country. That's why it's home. Where my people come from'.

Commentary: Aboriginal groups, the original Australians, still retain the title and role of elders, and sacred knowledge is passed on to those deemed worthy of being the recipient of such knowledge (Kartinyeri, 2008). Burgoyne (2000) also acknowledged this and included the contribution of older people when talking about her own Mirning culture 'older people were respected because they contributed to the community. Aboriginal men or women always showed respect for an elderly person, regardless of their culture'. Mick would be an elder of

his people, and would be very aware of the sacred position he holds and of his obligations to his people and to all Indigenous people.

4.5 David Stratton

4.5.1 Topic one: A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure.

The common theme throughout David's life has been his interest in films and early in his career this led to an interest in censorship. He was very involved in having Australia's censorship laws modernised, with, as he stressed, the assistance of others.

The other major achievement which gave him pleasure was his role in helping to establish the SBS television station. He was programming the feature films and presenting 'films I was able to bring to an Australian audience that they would never have had a chance to see otherwise'. He added:

I was just able to program. I was given a very free hand to program films. I was able to program some of the greatest films ever and the fact that it was a multicultural network and therefore the films could be shown in the original language with subtitles was an added bonus. I wouldn't have done it if I couldn't do that.

David was part of a weekly film review program established on this television station but later it was transferred to the national television station. He was particularly concerned about the introduction of commercials on SBS: 'I find that an intolerable situation because we were trying to create almost a multicultural network which would be really state of the art and you don't interrupt movies with commercials'. He said that he and his co-presenter had moved the film review program because 'we could see the direction it was going and it became more and more intolerable to stay there'.

One of David's past achievements was his acceptance of a request from the University of Sydney to establish a film course at its Centre for Continuing Education. The original course ran for five years and has since been extended to a ten-year course, which was the course current at the time of the interview.

One of his past achievements was being asked to write ‘as film reviewer for *Variety*, which is a very prestigious trade paper which has excellent film reviews’. He wrote for the reviews for 20 years before resigning to reduce his workload.

Recognition of David’s work is through the appreciation of his work by his audiences, including his students. He has helped to turn what was a non-mainstream, but very popular, form of entertainment into a recognised industry and profession.

David has also written three books, the latest published in 2008.

4.5.2 Topic two: A brief description of the work you are currently involved in

The work David really enjoys ‘what I enjoy doing most, to be honest, more than anything else, what I like doing most’ is the film course he was asked to run at the University of Sydney.

David continues to be part of the well-established weekly film review program on national television. He mentioned that the ratings for this program were higher than ever and the program was likely to continue. It is a very successful partnership and David felt that if either he or his fellow presenter wanted to pull out, the show would not continue.

At the time of the interview, David also was writing a weekly column for the Australian newspaper, sharing the film review section with another critic. He also was engaged in a weekly afternoon radio broadcast which he did by telephone from home.

Part of his work as a film critic involves attending yearly film festivals in Europe. He particularly mentioned Cannes and Venice. These are very much part of his work but he also mentioned that they also involved ‘meeting friends and colleagues’.

4.5.3 Topic three: A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve

Much of David’s current work he expected to continue doing in the future. His particular interest was with his film course at the University of Sydney. The current ten-year course would finish at the end of that year. After the interview, he was meeting with university representatives to arrange to begin another ten-year course (which would finish when he

reaches 79 although there was no mention of this). Although some of the work of the previous course could be incorporated into the new course:

It will be a little different next time. I mean it won't be the same. One of the things is new material becomes available, as more and more films are rediscovered or restored and something like that from the past. There's more material to come out. Funnily enough when we started the course in 1999, I don't think there were any DVD's then and now it's all DVD's, so it's changed a lot.

He said that he was re-working everything they had done before so he was hoping it would be a success. He mentioned that some of his current students were sad that their ten-year course was coming to an end and were planning to re-enrol for the new one.

David mentioned that one of his students wanted to collaborate with him on writing a book about the ten-year course that had just finished. He agreed that it would be a big book 'and I'm not sure how practical it would be but we'll see'. When asked if it could be televised instead, he said the cost would be prohibitive. 'Absolutely prohibitive. They charge huge amounts of money just to allow you to use clips. In a university, in a teaching context, you don't have that problem but once you try to televise it, it would be prohibitively expensive'.

He was also planning to write another book which he described as a 'self history' book.

His weekly television program is likely to continue. 'At the moment I don't see any signs of that stopping. As I say, the ratings for that are better than ever at the moment so I am sure the ABC will keep us going'.

Retirement

David was just about to sign up for another ten-year film course at Sydney University, which he thoroughly enjoys doing, so that the question of retirement was not raised, although he had talked about slowing down.

When asked if he would be able to spend more time at his home in the Blue Mountains (which he loves) if he gave up some of the travelling, he replied, 'I don't know what I could give up really'. At another point he said 'I would actually like to do a bit less work to be honest' and then pointed out that he had not been home for ten days. If the ABC stopped the *At The Movies* show, or if he or his co-presenter decided not to continue doing it, he would

not need to go to the European film festivals but as he had already pointed out, this was unlikely to happen. If it did, he would concentrate on his work at the university.

Physical adjustment

David was aware of his huge workload. He had already given up contributing to *Variety* magazine and no longer attended the Hungary and Berlin film festivals. He had mentioned hoping to do less and when asked to expand on this, he said:

Well, I mean I have already started. When I decided about five years ago I just wanted to do a little bit less, *Variety* (the magazine he wrote for) was the easiest thing to give up. So I resigned from *Variety* and at the same time I decided to stop going to the Berlin festival. So I have given things up, *Variety* and going to Berlin, but somehow it doesn't seem to have made much difference as I seem to be as busy as ever.

Part of David's work involves attending film festivals, particularly in Europe. In another effort to contain his workload, David had also stopped attending a film festival in Hungary which was held the week before the Berlin festival. 'In a way I miss not going to Berlin because I used to enjoy that, but it's OK'. When asked what was different about the Berlin Festival he said: 'It was winter. It was cold. Every film festival is different'.

The publication of his autobiography (Stratton 2008), his third book, involved a lot of publicity appearances which he would not have in future. 'Publishing a book this year has been a lot of work. I've had a huge amount of promotion for it so I won't have that next year anyway'.

Contribution to the wider world

David was also involved in the public speaking circuit. At the time of the interview he had been in Perth for the weekend 'doing a couple of seminars at the university there' and the following week he was going to Byron Bay for a Writers Festival, followed by a trip to Brisbane for a seminar. He also passes on his knowledge through his broadcasting and his course at the University of Sydney. David has also published three books, one a biography, with another in the pipeline.

4.6 Malcolm Mackerras

4.6.1 *Topic one: A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure.*

Malcolm's response was 'My past achievements really in a way are summed up in that citation for the AO'. He was quite happy to let the citation for his AO speak for him. 'What it says is (I've forgotten the wording of it), I have helped to educate the public about different systems of government, that I have made a significant contribution to debates about electoral systems, and I have actually influenced the making of electoral systems, and then it finished off by saying "and to education"'. He added 'so I don't value myself, I just let other people say what they think about me and that citation for the AO really does that'.

One specific major achievement discussed with Malcolm was the pendulum, which is a diagram showing the predicted parliamentary seats in any election and is used to predict the outcomes of forthcoming elections. Malcolm owns the patent on this. 'It's mine. It's my invention. I love it. I love it because it is my invention and I get paid for it'.

Malcolm is also a renowned expert on elections and election issues and his work on this is frequently published in the press.

Malcolm has retired from his position as Associate Professor in Australian Government and American Government studies after 40 years at the Australian Defence Force Academy. He explained that he had remained as an Associate Professor because he had failed to get his PhD which 'had the effect of making it more difficult to get an academic job'. He explained 'I tried to get an academic job essentially on my publications really, and my reputation as a teacher. I then got the academic job, got tenure, then I was promoted to senior lecturer, then I was promoted to Associate Professor and I thought to myself well, it really doesn't matter that I didn't get a PhD.'. The lack of a PhD had affected his career in that he had not risen to the rank of professor and on retirement he was not an Emeritus Professor. This role would have provided him with unlimited access to his own room at the university, with book space.

Malcolm described his main work as

teaching Australian Government and American Government for 40 years pretty much, so I've certainly learned how to compare and contrast the Australian political system with the American political system. I think it's clear from the citation (for the AO) that

people think I'm interested in teaching these many, many differences. But I've also taught other differences too. For example, I've taken a lot of interest in New Zealand which is a country I think is interesting to compare with Australia. Just as the United States is an interesting country to compare with Australia, so is New Zealand in a different kind of way. But I've also in my American teaching taught the students quite a lot about Canada because I have deliberately included Canada with the United States of America, just as I deliberately included New Zealand with Australia. When I taught Australian politics I also taught quite a lot about the politics of New Zealand and I actually took a sabbatical leave in New Zealand in 1986, so I keep up my interest in New Zealand.

He summed up his past work: 'my main interest has been elections but comparative government and political history have been important interests'. Elections have been the centre of his teaching. 'Pretty well everything I have published in the academic literature is about elections'. He continues to write newspaper articles.

Malcolm regularly used to appear on television panels analysing elections, particularly national elections, and was very much the public face of election analysis, but he said he hadn't done this for about 15 years.

4.6.2 Topic two: A brief description of the work you are currently involved in.

Malcolm brought some of his recent published newspaper articles with him to the interview.

When asked about his previous appearances as an election analyst, he said:

I'm occasionally on things. For example, the SBS program is doing a thing on The Howard Years, rather like the ABC. You've probably noticed the ABC one shows no commentators, no academics, no spin, which is another way of saying no commentators, no academics and lots and lots of spin. The SBS one does have academics, it does have commentators and I'm one of the academics.

He described his current life:

I write lots of articles for newspapers and I certainly get lots of articles published, although I'm rejected quite a lot. Although in recent times I suppose it is fair to say I've

now learned the kinds of articles that will be published and the kinds that won't. Once you've learned that you don't bother submitting articles of the kind that you know from experience won't be published.

He explained that '[his] articles are mainly in the *Weekend Australian* actually, more than the *Canberra Times*', adding that 'I have more published in the *Canberra Times* but the *Weekend Australian* pays so well. It gives me more of an incentive. I put a lot of work into that [*an article in the Weekend Australian he had brought with him*] but it gives me more incentive'.

Malcolm is very particular about the accuracy of articles he submits, using one of his articles on a recent election as an example. 'By the way, one of the reasons for my delay offering it for publication is I prefer not to write until I can state what the results are, I deliberately waited until I actually knew the results which meant you have to wait twelve days, I think it is, before I write anything.'

He explained his work further, using two of his articles in the *Weekend Australian* to illustrate his point. 'Those two are typical articles of mine. A lot of work goes into both of them, and in both cases the information I give is correct. I give information in that article which nobody else has thought to give, namely the fact that Hillary Clinton actually got a slightly bigger vote in the primaries than Barack Obama.'

He said he wrote articles for newspapers 'partly for pay and personal satisfaction. A mixture of personal satisfaction and pay'. He added

My slight complaint with all these things. I often think that with these kinds of articles I am writing about one-twentieth of what I could actually write but then of course that's newspapers for you. And newspapers want punchiness and shortness. While in the case of *The Weekend Australian*, they do want the kind of information that you don't get anywhere else, and ideas that other people won't have thought of.

4.6.3 Topic three: A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve

Malcolm was asked what plans he had for the future apart from writing newspaper articles. He said that although he had indicated the possibility of a book in one of his articles,

I say this is going to become a book but the truth of the matter is I didn't really feel in the mood for it. What I do intend to do is to offer that article as a chapter in a book which I'm going to offer to Michelle Grattan who does books on Prime Ministers and things, and I think it will be published in that form. What I do is write academic work but it's not likely to be a book really. It's likely to be a chapter in a book edited by somebody else and I probably will for the rest of my life spend a lot of my life and spend a lot of my time thinking what I can get published that is academically serious, but not book length type of thing really.

Malcolm referred to one of his articles.

You see, that article there could be a book. I could write an article with information on all 26 prime ministers. In fact I say in this article that it's actually modelled on a Canadian book. I have also been invited to write entries for, for example, a very recent publication called *The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics*, one of these huge things, *Oxford Companion to the High Courts*, Oxford this and that. In the *Oxford Companion to Australian Politics* I've had a couple of entries in that, but mind you, I'm one of about 50 academics. Look, what I think I will probably do for the rest of my life is I'll make myself a bit of income with a fair amount of journalism, but I'll also still keep up my self-perception as still being an academic by getting occasional chapters in books. But I can't really see myself doing the Magnum Opus that I promised in that article.

He explained the implications of being a visiting Fellow at the Australian Defence Force Academy. 'Well, it means nothing more than I can use their facilities and I am, along with other visiting Fellows, allowed to go into a room they have for visiting Fellows, where you use their computer and you have a filing cabinet and all that sort of thing. It means you can continue to be an academic, as it were, and use their facilities while not getting any income, because I am a retiree living on superannuation and there are about ten such people.

Retirement

When discussing his future plans and goals, Malcolm said:

Well, basically I intend to be semi-retired rather than retired, for the rest of my life. I think a lot of academics are like that, though it's not universal. The thing about the

visiting fellow position that I have, quite a lot of academics just give it all away completely and go down the coast or something like that, but I think a significant number of academics are like me, they think look this is the only thing I am good at, why just go fishing or why just play bridge, when you don't feel useful in any way, do you? It's better to be semi-retired, rather than fully retired, and still do work.

I can go to academic conferences. I still go to academic conferences by the way. I can volunteer to do papers. Basically I'm keeping myself as an academic, and I might as well do this for the rest of my life, there's nothing else for me to do, I can't think of anything else I would do.

When asked if he was enjoying doing it, he said: 'As for my plans, look I don't think notwithstanding what I have said that I'm going to bring out a Magnum Opus'.

Malcolm said he would do other things he was invited to do:

I mean, I'll give you an example. There's an organisation called Constitution Education Foundation of Australia and they've asked me to judge essays. I'm not the only one who has been asked to judge, and I will in the next fortnight receive essays by these entrants to this competition so I'll spend four or five days marking essays.

Malcolm discussed the volunteering work he does at Old Parliament House. 'They wrote to me, and they advertised in the paper, that they were having courses. You have to be trained. Anyway about thirty of us went on this course to teach us how to be guides'. He added, 'because I have more knowledge than the others, the Prime Minister's Unit have asked me to write four, if you like, academic type articles to put on in their system and in fact even that is going to be in one of those interactive things that they run'.

Physical adjustment

Malcolm has already reduced his workload by retiring from his university lecturing position.

Family/community

Malcolm made a reference to his wife in that when he retired, she had worried that his publications might not keep him busy enough and had suggested the volunteering role to him. He also referred to the distinguished family he was born into. All the brothers in the family were high achievers with three of them still living and achieving. 'I think of myself as being

the third living son of my parents, and of the three living, my brother, Sir Charles Mackerras, is plainly the most distinguished because he has a knighthood, Companion of Honour and he's a companion of the Order of Australia, and then there are two others remaining, my twin brother and I, well we both have AO but my twin brother is Emeritus Professor'.

Malcolm's volunteer work at Old Parliament House, and his continuing writing for the press, and in academic publications, is his contribution to community.

4.7 Noeline Brown

4.7.1 Topic one: A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure.

Noeline listed her first achievement as having 'been a working actor for nearly fifty years in a profession that is notoriously difficult and has a great attrition rate'. Her second achievement was 'achieving a good marriage, so far, well over thirty years'. She was also proud of still having good relations with the remaining members of her family, and with her recent appointment as Ambassador for Ageing.

Later in the interview, Noeline mentioned that she was also very proud of being a good cook and hostess because life skills are very, very important to her. 'To be able to have my wide circle of friends around me and look after them is important'.

Noeline commented that 'awards are nice but I think people's love and respect are fantastic awards. They are much better than things like Logies and bits of plastic'. She did mention later in the conversation that she had done 'a play just before Christmas last year at the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney which won several awards'.

Like David Stratton, Noeline had been involved in a battle to improve conditions when she was younger – in her case, to improve the situation for actors in terms of wages and conditions, including residuals. When the interviewer commented that so much of what older Australians have contributed in the past is now just accepted, Noeline commented: 'Yes, because no one is aware of history. Nobody realises that things haven't always been there. And that's the point that I was making about things like residuals and getting a decent wage, getting a decent living away from home allowance and that sort of thing.'

She had also at one stage become involved in politics, although as she said, not heavily.

When Paul Keating lost his seat I joined the Labor Party as soon as I could. I had always had connections, I suppose, especially through my father who worked as a Union rep. We all thought politics was boring as children but as we got older we changed. I'd been fairly political I suppose during the Vietnam War. We demonstrated, trying to save our boys from going overseas. We weren't paint-throwing, horrible people. We generally supported; we didn't think it was fair that someone could have their date of birth pulled out of a hat and then go off to war. So from that time I suppose I have been political'.

When another politician, Gough Whitlam, Prime Minister, was removed from office by the Governor-General at the time, she felt it was a huge blow to the Australian democratic system and became part of the 'Artists for Democracy' group.

Noeline had seen major changes in her profession since becoming a professional actor in 1962. She said that she had missed out on the early transition from radio to television 'but I certainly saw it. When people looked so wrong. Their voices didn't match their appearance. I remember laughing like a drain because people with beautiful voices were very ordinary people indeed, but that was the magic of radio'.

On the question of live audiences, when asked about early television she responded:

Yes. And some still do. Some radio shows still have live audiences. I do a thing called *Thank God it's Friday* which is in Sydney and they have an audience every Friday. Great fun. And we did a show called *The Naked Vicar Show* in the mid 70s and that was done before a live audience, a couple of hundred people with a band and everything and that was very late to do a show like that because they were very 40's, 50's, they would have died out, probably in the 50's. But I didn't know much about it because I was on stage and didn't watch very much in those days.

When the question of her out-of-print biography arose, Noeline said:

It does tell all the stuff about the early days. When I was first asked to write the book, write my life story, I didn't think I'd have anything to write about. I've just been an actor and that's about it. I'd worked in a library when I was young but then I started to write what was turning out to be a social history of Sydney, of the theatre, and the art

world and I became absorbed. This book was this big and I had to immediately erase a lot of stuff and get back to me so I would be in the book.

4.7.2 Topic two: A brief description of the work you are currently involved in.

Much of Noeline's work at the time of the interview was related to her role as Ambassador for the Ageing. This was a Federal government appointment. She described her role as Ambassador as

a work in progress. I go along to many functions all over Australia. I can't begin to tell you how many there are in my schedule. I printed it off the other day, from the first day and it's 65 pages long. So it's an enormous amount of work.

She commented: 'They also want me to represent them as an ageing Australian because I'm certainly part of the demographic. I did a play just before Christmas last year at the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney which won several awards'. This theatre used to be a 'theatre in the round' which Noeline had played in before it was modified. On bringing back memories, Noeline's sense of humour emerged.

Just getting on and off the stage was the biggest challenge. You had to hang on to other actors. Close your eyes and look for little bits of glow tape. It's still hard, still hard to get out of there. But it's a beautiful space for both actor and the audience.

On one of her engagements as Ambassador, she was invited to give a seminar in Western Australia, in the Margaret River district. She was working with one of the chefs on an ABC food program and at one stage they shared the podium which she described as 'a lot of fun. He said "Put your hands up (there were about 300 people in the audience), how many grow your own vegetables?" Three quarters of the people in that audience put their hands up. That's a good thing'. She went on to explain her support for this activity for older people.

That's such a good thing. It's not only the freshness of the vegetables, not only saving all sorts of emissions of flying food across the world but you know how fresh those vegies are going to be, but it's also the physical exercise and the mental one, planning for the future, giving things to your friends, making sure your neighbours have your left over Brussels Sprouts which you can't eat.

Noeline spent quite some time explaining her philosophy on this and went on to describe how she had opened a community garden at a nearby school which was a joint effort between the students and older people. 'That's a fabulous thing for older people as well because they cross pollinate with younger people. So it's not only the growing of vegies and all that stuff, they are learning about each other, telling their stories. It's terrific. '

In addition to her work as Ambassador, she is still a working actor, doing 'plays, radio, television, whatever they ask me to do'. She regularly participates in a drive time radio program which has the highest rating. Noeline's description was that 'it's just a comedy show where we just play silly buggers. It's great fun'. She mentioned that it was 'different from being Ambassador for Ageing when I'm probably supposed to be a bit serious most of the time, not that everybody wants me to be, they want me to be me as well'.

When questioned about television, she said she had been in a show called *Dancing with the Stars* which she said she felt was a tremendous achievement.

I was 68 years of age and being thrown around by a young man half my age. Seriously thrown around, like above his head. Amazing and I'd had a laminectomy a couple of years before, or a few years before, and I thought if only my surgeon could see me now!

She also did a film a little while ago, about the same time as a lot of theatre and *Dancing with the Stars* called *Razzle Dazzle* 'which was all about ballroom dancing, children dancing'.

She intended to continue with these in addition to her work as Ambassador.

When the role was offered to me, they encouraged me to remain working as an example of what we can do as older Australians, I suppose. I think they thought that was a good thing. They didn't want me to give everything up and stop my real life.

She also said

I didn't want to stop being who I was. I felt it was better to be part of the active ageing group, still involved in the community which I do with my charity work and volunteering, still working to earn my keep and doing what I can to promote positive, healthy, active ageing. I thought it was a good blend.

As Ambassador for the Ageing, Noeline was very knowledgeable about the ageing process and had a personal interest in it. For example, she felt strongly that people should have the opportunity to age at home wherever possible.

She also showed concern about people who retire and then spend their lives travelling around Australia by caravan, a group known as 'the grey nomads'. When it was mentioned that they tend to put stress on the medical facilities of the small towns in which they stay, Noeline commented:

They are, and they do not spend because they are eking out the money, the ones that I know. The cost of petrol is making it worse. But they cook, they don't go to restaurants, so it's not as if they are spreading money. The good ones, the ones who are doing well, in my opinion, are the ones who are taking their skills around and there are also the ones who are doing a bit of fruit picking and vegetable picking. That's helping the economy. Some of them are actually taking their skills and helping people.

She added that even if they move on they are 'Just meeting the same people, other caravanning folk' and agreed that they were likely to be mixing with their own age group.

Noeline also agreed with comments about badly sited retirement villages in which the residents are all in the same age group and who are dependent on others providing transport when they lose their licences 'They are stuck there'. Discussion then centred on 'the bitchiness that goes on there'.

The interview turned to the question of what people should do in retirement. Noeline's comment was 'You really have to start before you are old' so that older people could keep on doing what they were already doing. 'Don't stop. And that's what retirement means to some people. Stopping. Stopping a lot of things. Stopping planning'. Noeline turned to the financial aspect of retirement.

I suppose they might think of it from the retirement pension point of view because they have been putting in to their super for so long they would be financially OK when they retired. Not always so. I mean the market goes up and down and so does your retirement, your retirement benefits.

In discussing the wisdom of older people, she said ‘I don’t think you want to hear any of that “in my day we used to have to lick the carpet clean” or any of that stuff’. She qualified her criticism.

I think you’ve really got to do it honestly. You know you have to say this was definitely a better way of doing this. I’m sure that there are, they’ve discovered skills that older people have and they are asking them back into the workforce because they’ve lost those people with abilities’. She added “I think that’s going to happen with older Australians. It’s probably more a male thing than a female thing.

4.7.3 Topic three: A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve.

When specifically asked about the future Noeline said ‘I’ll still be Ambassador for another couple of years as that’s a three-year program. I’d very much like to do a bit of travelling with my husband because I’ve done a lot on my own’. Having said that she didn’t want to spend her time travelling, Noeline said ‘I want to be a participant in life, not an observer. So I’d rather not just take photographs of the world, I’d rather be in the world and hopefully change it in some way’.

Noeline took time out from her role as Ambassador the following year to take part in a season at the Ensemble Theatre. The researcher attended a performance of a show which ran for seven weeks, with eight shows a week. There were only two members of the cast which meant that Noeline was on stage for the whole of each performance. It played to a sell-out audience with many performances booked for weeks ahead. She returned to her job as Ambassador for the Ageing 12 hours after returning home at the end of the season. Noeline was 71 at the time.

She has already published her biography, which has sold out, and plans to write another book ‘I’d probably like to write the social history of Sydney in the 50s, 60s and 70s’. It would include ‘Food, restaurants, where people congregated, pubs. How you weren’t allowed to go into pubs. Six o’clock swill. All of those things. So it would probably have to be from a fairly personal point of view, but I think that’s the way to sell a book’. She added, ‘It would be Sydney, because Sydney was my life, so it would be growing up, in almost the centre of Sydney, we lived almost inner city, and the changes in that particular area because that includes immigration and the change of diet - all sorts of things’. She added ‘The death of

certain theatres, and the closing down of the wonderful theatres that we used to have' would probably also be included. 'So it's as big as I want to make it'.

Retirement

Noeline was adamant that she would continue working. She said that as self-employed people, she and her husband had never considered retirement and they would both continue working. She referred to retirement by saying 'Well, I'm shocked at the thought of retiring. I've probably never given it much thought because it was never an option for me or my husband. We've always been self-employed in risky businesses'.

Physical adjustment

Noeline was very aware of the need to keep physically fit. She was concerned that her new role as Ambassador for the Ageing could challenge her fitness. 'In the last few months there's been a lot of sitting down in aircraft and sitting down at functions. It's something I'm not used to and my level of fitness is not what it was so I have to get fitter'. She stated:

I think I might have to bite the bullet and go to a gym, because working with weights is what really seems to be good for your brain as well as your body. I thought I'd take a skipping rope with me wherever I go.

Family/community

Noeline mentioned that 'Volunteering is another thing I do a lot of. I'm proud of the work I've done in that area'. She mentioned two charities she is involved with, the Actor's Benevolent Fund, and she is also patron of an organisation that looks after children with disabilities, and their families. She was at the time chair of the Benevolent Fund but would be stepping down after five years. She said it would be very hard to hand over the reins. When asked how she got involved she said that another actor had mentioned going over to the apartment of an actor who was in hospital to clean it up for him and she had volunteered to help.

Family, home and community are very important to Noeline, even though her work, particularly as Ambassador, took her away from home a lot. Her husband's work also takes him away 'As long as there's someone at home to look after the dog we don't mind'. She mentioned that she lives a half hour drive from a small Australian country town 'so it's really in a rural community, very small and we do a lot of looking after each other. A lot of us in

our area are around the same age group, but some of them are getting quite ill so there's a bit of neighbourly to-ing and fro-ing just checking on each other'. She commented on living in an area whose residents are ageing. She is encouraging them to accept the idea of 'ageing in-place'. "I keep telling people who say that they'll have to leave their community, look how many people in our age group live in this road'. She suggests 'We are able, because of the strength of numbers, to acquire services'. She suggested to them that if they needed someone to come and clean their houses because they can't do it, a cleaner would be much happier to do the road, some half a dozen houses, than to do just one'. This type of enterprise will also enable them to stay together longer as a community.

4.8 Bruce Petty

4.8.1 Topic one: A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure.

When asked about his achievements Bruce said: 'just being able to make a living at this peculiar business I think is a sort of achievement. It's pretty fragile skills that I think I have, just drawing'. He added 'I thought I could do it and the fact that I managed to survive this long with such a strange area of the art world, or the media world, I think that's something. I don't know whether I'm proud of it but I'm pleased and surprised a bit, but you can do it. And every now and again you do a drawing or a piece of art that is better than you intended. Those moments are always good. And the odd acknowledgement I suppose.

Bruce also cited going to London and having drawings accepted for Punch magazine as one of his achievements 'At that time Punch had a bit of a profile and anything overseas sounded ok when I was in my twenties. Any achievement overseas sounded OK'. The other achievements he mentioned were 'getting a political cartoon position was good. That was on the Mirror in Sydney, and then The Australian and then on The Age. I was quite pleased about that because politics at the time was, well it always is, it depends where you are'.

When asked about awards Bruce said 'Well you get letters from people sometimes. You get awards in this business. I haven't had many. I've had a couple, quite good ones. I suppose the Academy Award would be the best. Any acknowledgement from your peers I think keeps you in business and keeps you believing you can do stuff'. At another point he mentioned the advantage of getting awards 'When I got that award, the Oscar, that gave me another couple of films I probably wouldn't have got any other way'.

Bruce had a very interesting past due to the 'fringe' nature of his work. He had started out working in his father's orchard 'for a few years which was good but I wanted to do something else'. Following this,

I went to this animation place and could draw a bit and learned how to do it. You know I was just doing tracing, tracing what the animator was doing but I learned how to do it and I liked the people.

This led to

a bit of advertising and a bit of design work and a book publishing place. Then I went to London with some little cartoons and sold stuff to *Punch*, *New Yorker* picked up a few, came back here, kept sending drawings over to *Punch* for a few years, got a political cartoon job, in between, little films but not in a continuous sort of way.

He added

I still like that area but I couldn't make a living out of film. Nor do I know enough about it. I just know what I want to say, what a cartoon would say, and see whether it can. So there's a big experimental component in just about everything I do which I think is good.

He described the work he took with him to the UK as

a very strange set of drawings and art work which I expected to make a living from. A lot of it was hugely pretentious and silly but this area of satire seemed to be a place for me and so that was determined there I suppose.

The political side of Bruce's work asserted itself at this point.

Like in Russia, there'd be lots in Moscow, there'd be lots of animations on bureaucracies and how crazy they get to be if you are not careful. They knew about bureaucracy because that's what it was - a huge bureaucracy. So they didn't mind their artists doing it. We wouldn't do it here. We didn't. We assume our bureaucracies are magic, or we used to think they were. They were kinds of pillars of equity and so on.

Bruce appeared to have regrets about limited opportunities in his field when he commented 'So animation sort of figured quite a bit in my professional sort of spectrum but its such a

difficult territory to get funded and to get shown and a lot of people don't like animation which surprised me'. He added, 'So that's a bit disheartening'.

Bruce did not seem to recognise his ability. He described himself as

not really a good artist. I really just constructed the whole thing in a way you know. It was one area. I didn't have any academic positioning so this was one area I could see I should try and that was timing really I think. I had limited anatomy skills so that sort of drawing was in vogue at the time. James Thurber was doing very simple little outline things. Ronald Searle was scribbling away and they were beautiful, and Felix Tapolski was doing terrific things and you couldn't detect how he did it and so you thought there must be some, maybe you can do it with just a motion or will or something. Obviously they were terrific artists and I've never felt, I've always felt very lucky, very lucky to still be in the business, based on what I know about drawing itself.

Earlier in his career, his lack of scholarship also worried Bruce. 'I worked in a studio for a while. I hadn't read much or I hadn't read or looked at much except for what we were asked to look at you know, Rita Hayworth and Gary Cooper in the movies. I knew Tom and Jerry and the news was interesting if it was crazy enough'. Apparently the other people in the studio were avid readers and Bruce tried to follow them when they recommended books such as *Catcher in the Rye*. 'I think I read some of it mostly because they read it. People you liked did stuff so that's why you did it'.

Bruce went on to talk about a different field of work.

And then there's just documentary film. Documentary is a territory for telling stories as well telling complex and rather conceptual ideas, which are usually left to thick books and writing. The idea of turning some of those into film that people might find more acceptable, that's interesting too. So I've had a go at documentary, usually with a kind of satirical component to them to try and keep the entertainment factor. Pretty high profile.

Bruce later referred to the many books he had written.

4.8.2 *Topic two: A brief description of the work you are currently involved in*

Bruce described his work as a political cartoonist.

The satirical, what we do in a newspaper is just a still frame, showing a moment from which you unravel what happened before and what's going to happen next but you've got to really turn that into those elements yourself. So that's what you've got to, that's what people like doing I think. They like a puzzle. I think people like "What's this person saying?" and when you see a square in a newspaper cartoon, you know, "I've got to work this out. This has got two messages". You know there's one straight one and there's one underneath, or probably if you've done it properly, there will be.

He contrasted this to animation.

But animation lets you do a little bit before and a bit after so it gives you, it gives you another set of puzzles to solve. But you expect when film comes up it will have an ordinary beginning and something will go wrong and you'll be presented with a predicament and you, and then the film will tell you something you either believe or not. So that's another way of doing what you do in the one drawing, it seems to me. And documentaries do it, novels do it, fiction films do it so that's the way we communicate apparently. I mean you just get facts; it seems to me, you just get a big list of facts which are accurate and demonstrate a huge inequity but you know it doesn't work. You've got to tell a story about it, or something, or be oblique, or attack it from an angle or look at it from another perspective or through a different lens but just to say this is wrong, these people are guilty, it just doesn't work. I don't know why that is.

Bruce spent 'a couple of days a week' working on his weekly cartoon for *The Age* newspaper and freelanced the rest of the time. This included writing books and promoting them. He travelled, giving public talks using illustrations drawn on an overhead projector.

He summed up his current lifestyle: 'That's all I do. Work, you know, I just work or talk to people or something. But I don't know whether that's the right mix. I don't know the right mix but I'm just pleased I can, I can pretend I've got something important to do. I mean there's plenty'. Bruce showed how his mind is continually ticking over with new ideas by saying

The way the world is now; this media-linked global stuff is now a huge puzzle, that's a bit different to what it used to be. I think it is. You know, you think about all the weapons technology, just on that issue, for instance, if you focused on that it would just be utterly depressing. Because weapons are pouring out of our country into countries that don't like us particularly. I don't know what we think that is going to do. So all those areas, not only those but the personal ones and the general impatience and carelessness around, particularly in a country as lucky as this one. Fortunate and rich as this one. You know, the story of kids and education and so on. I mean there's little golden bits in them but basically some stories are just terrible. So what I mean is there's plenty of stuff to draw and comment on if you're in that business and I'm sort of on the edge of that business, right on the edge now because you've got to shout with a whole lot of other people now. There's a lot of shouting going on and most of its negative I think, but it's clever and negative which I think is a big trap. There's brilliant, brilliant forces saying the wrong, saying ordinary things and repetitive things. As I said before, trying to find the people who aren't just repeating the same thing over and over and try to find people to say things differently and imaginatively. Who's going to tell you where to look, who do you trust to tell you where to look? You could call it fascinating but it's depressing.

4.8.3 Topic three: A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve

Bruce was continuing with his weekly cartoon in *The Age* newspaper.

I'd sell drawings if I could and every now and then people want a drawing. This free-lancing is pretty hard. So the pattern of my week is a couple of days doing the cartoon or thinking about the drawing that I have to do for the paper and the rest is just the logistics of surviving, you know. And trying to get a film. You know the last one we did took about four years, maybe more. It started in 2003, finished 2007 which is crazy, you know. They're not big budget, they're the lowest budget film. It would be nice to have a big one but my sort of work will never attract that sort of money. Even the ABC and SBS are pretty reluctant to use anything as chancy as my sort of thing, which is fair enough. I know what they are on about, they've got to survive and all that.

He also said that

there probably is a way I have to start thinking about ways to present things, satire, so that commercial television would want it, which they do, you know, if it's good enough. There are beautiful satirists in this country and they do think of ways to explain their view of the world. That would be a new learning curve for me though, I think.

He was also thinking about doing another book 'It'll just be a book. I've done several books on money, just fantasy books, but they don't sell very well'. He added 'There's a collection at the moment out which I think will sell a few. It's got etchings in and some early *Punch* things. I hope it sells a few'.

Bruce expanded on his view of himself and the changing world.

I don't know what will happen, it's the personal view that is really the key. I think the professional thing I can bluff away the way I've always done it. Just fake a kind of skill and understanding. It's quirky understanding, or a quirky interpretation of what's going on. Which might survive another few years but there's a lot of other kids doing terrific things. And that should happen. In fact most people want to get their stuff from YouTube, and the net, and Google and everything and that's a big mystery, who wants what from where now. Who wants to watch for how long, no-one knows? Newspapers don't know quite what they used to know. So it's a sort of plateau for me at the moment I think. I mean it would be nice to do some stunning thing, you know, but I'm not. Other people, like Mike Leunig does brilliant things all over the place. John Spooner on *The Age*, I mean Bill Leak, they're terrific people, they do, they've got idiosyncratic minds and I think in this business and I think the missing bit for me are the new ideas, you know. Read books with terrific titles and there's only two pages you really want to read. I haven't got time. I read too slow anyway.

Physical adjustment

Bruce did not specifically mention retirement but did suggest that even with the physical deterioration likely to accompany ageing, he would be able to continue working. 'Publishing is something I can sit at my desk even if my knees go which they probably will or something else goes. You know that's the way of this business. It's just your head and a bit of neuronal stuff down to your arm and your drawing pen and so that's a huge plus'.

In terms of health, he said 'I get tired. The future I don't think about too much because I'm reasonably fit and I don't do too much. I don't test anything too much'.

He also said 'at the moment I'm OK but I've probably got some terrible thing imminent. Just what happens, from nowhere. You just don't know from day to day but we are sort of, we are just constructed so we don't, you know most of the time you don't factor that in at all'. The question of his health had been brought to his attention as 'I've got to do my driving eye test now. I'll probably get it alright but only just I think. I drive carefully and I hope everyone else does. I mean I'm lucky in being able to sit at a desk and draw'.

Contribution to the wider world

Bruce said that he did not do as much public speaking as he used to but would be making a presentation in Melbourne the following week 'about that little book, to promote the book of cartoons'. He mentioned 'I'll do an overhead projector so I'll draw as well as speak' thus demonstrating his work, as well as speaking about it.

His books remain in print and he produces new books. He will continue to draw his weekly political cartoon in one of Australia's leading newspapers, *The Age*. In August 2009 and in March 2010 Bruce appeared on the ABC's *Insiders* program, sharing his considerable expertise as a political cartoonist with a nationwide audience. He also had an exhibition of his work at a gallery in Sydney in March 2010.

Family/community

Bruce asked if the interview was on a purely professional level. When reassured that it could be about other matters, he referred once or twice to his children. 'Now my son Sam is in films, Joe on the edge of it'. He had also included them when asked what he was proud of from the past.

I mean I'm sort of leaving out the children and all those moments, which probably outweigh anything professional, and still do, you know. It's not an achievement, but it's just what happens and I think they are all terrific, and just reflect on what's going on in the world today and so they figure pretty much in just general day to day contentment which is not easy to get.

Bruce's friends were being overtaken by illnesses connected with ageing at the time of the interview and he raised the issue. He commented that he was reasonably fit and did not do too

much. His friends' health problems had caused him to think about the future, although 'you know most of the time you don't factor that in at all'. He added 'I think I'm lucky I'm able to sit at a desk and draw'.

Bruce mentioned the loss, and threatened loss, of his friends.

The sad thing is my friends are having heart attacks and strokes. That's the worst thing at the moment for me. A really good journalist friend has had a stroke and another one, my best mate, has had a huge [one] -- he's on all sorts of life support. I don't know what's going to happen to him'.

Bruce had earlier commented 'The usual things happen at my age. Your friends contract, the people you know disappear or live in other parts of the world or something'.

4.9 Peter Sculthorpe

4.9.1 Topic one: A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure.

When asked about his past achievements, Peter responded

I always regard my most precious achievement as having been a teacher at the University of Sydney. And having helped so many young people find themselves through music, find their own music and help to make better lives for them. I feel very proud of so many of my students.

A search of Peter's website provides an indication of the world wide recognition of his work and the number of years his career has spanned.

Peter's memories went back to his days as a student and influenced his own time as a teacher. He found a particular teacher who had a profound influence on him.

He was not a composition teacher as much as a friend who helped show me the way. He gave me the key of the door. And I think because of that revelatory experience I wanted to do the same for others, so I spent my time at the University of Sydney trying to do more than teaching music, trying to help my students fulfil themselves as human beings.

But music is more than music. It's about what the music is saying, what the voice inside is writing about. In a way, music is just like the outer shell, and it was finding

somebody who could help me with everything beyond just writing down the notes, the practicalities.

When asked if from that point his music really changed, Peter replied:

Yes. I had a scholarship to go abroad. My father didn't ever understand what I was on about, in my work, and although he believed in me, he certainly didn't want me to have a career in music. Being a father he worried about financial security and so I decided that I'd go to Oxford to get a PhD because I thought, 'Well, he will understand that, a doctorate'.

Peter didn't finish his PhD.

Sadly my father developed prostate cancer. He was only 60 and I returned to Tasmania. After his death I wrote a piece in his memory and that piece still endures. In fact, recently it was put on the National Registry of Recorded Sound by the National Film and Sound Archives and there's a book being written about it to be published in England next year.

He added, 'I think it was my first really good piece' and said it was partly because of the mentoring and 'perhaps more importantly, because of my father's death'. He did not return to England. Peter added: 'So therefore deep grief helped bring about the best piece I'd written to that date.'

Peter listed as his 'most precious achievement as having been a teacher'. When questioned how this compared with the many awards he had been given, his response was "Oh, far beyond awards, absolutely. In fact, I never really think about awards'. But he added, 'It's nice to receive them. Not that I'm not grateful'.

Peter mentioned that he has had his biography published.

4.9.2 *Topic two: A brief description of the work you are currently involved in.*

Peter is very conscious of the power of music and opened the interview by illustrating this. He spoke about an encounter with a sufferer of Alzheimer's disease. He set the scene by explaining that the incident occurred 'in November 2006 and my *Chorale Requiem* was

performed in the Opera House'. A well-known Australian who had developed Alzheimer's disease was there

and at the interval she saw me and she came up to me. We had a hug and a kiss and then she began to talk about the piece. She talked so beautifully and so coherently one would never have thought that she was quite advanced with Alzheimer's disease. We had a lovely conversation and then her minder came up and she sort of turned around and saw her and then suddenly she drifted off into Alzheimer's. She didn't really say goodbye. She just drifted away. I was so thrilled about the way this demonstrated the power of music. It made my night.

He then went on to say

I had another different experience with music that year. I was made a patron of the National Choral Society for Older Persons and there was a gathering at Newcastle. They all met on Tuesday and they rehearsed for a big concert on Saturday afternoon. I went up to Newcastle on the Friday and I seemed to hear the same story from almost everyone. They said as one grows older, one loses confidence. They all said they arrived (in their own words) feeling that they didn't have any confidence and they didn't know whether they could sing or even be part of this. That was Tuesday and by Friday they felt confident, not only with singing but with moving around, about being more active. On Saturday afternoon they gave the most wonderful concert and it was a full house. They sang their hearts out. Again, the power of music. When they got together and started singing.

Peter's comments reflect the emerging recognition of the power of music and its influence on the mind, and his awareness of this (Storr 1997).

Peter is very interested in the ageing process. After discussing the non-existence of so called 'seniors moments' and other effects of ageing, he said 'Well, I can tell you another story'. He went on to describe his handyman.

He's Hungarian and he's had his mother-in-law living with him and his wife for about 12 years. She refuses to learn English so they have to speak Hungarian in the house. She's now 91 or 92. She's been on a [walking] frame for at least 18 months. They couldn't get Social Services help because she refused to become an Australian citizen.

But last September I think they managed to get some sort of pension. She argues with her daughter all the time and she isn't a happy woman. Last week they got her into a nursing home for Hungarians, out past Blacktown somewhere. She has a lovely room. It's a lovely place, lovely people. She didn't want to go but she's made friends there. The view she had from (her son-in-law's) house was of a trellis but she has a beautiful view, palm trees and garden, where she is. They have activities and within a week she's not using her [walking] frame anymore. I think that's like a miracle.

Peter said that forgetting people's names as part of the ageing process would not be a problem for him as he had always had this difficulty. He recalled that when he was in business with his brother, he often could not remember the names of people when they wanted to charge items to their accounts.

To continue the conversation about his music, Peter was asked if he always tried to get to performances if his music was being played. 'No, I try not to, only because there are so many pieces. If I went all over the place for performances, I'd never write any more music'. He added 'I have difficulty really in not going because people don't always understand'.

When asked to explain the way he worked, Peter said

Well, basically it's to do with getting the right idea for a piece. Finding out what I am saying and often I do it with writing, writing words, writing about the piece, in order to find out what the piece is. When it's all together in my mind, then I'm off and you know I'll write day and night. If I have a nice letter from somebody like you then I'll be explaining that we could meet in a month or six weeks.

When asked if he concentrated on one piece at a time, he said 'Yes, although over the past year I've been writing another book, and I've been doing that while I've been writing music. I only ever write, spend time on one piece at a time'. In response to a question about whether he wrote the piece completely in words or just the backbone before he started writing he said 'the backbone in words but after I start writing it often changes. It doesn't stick to what was in my mind but I need something to jump off from'. He mentioned his piece *Song of the Yarra* which he was working on for its Melbourne premiere. This researcher attended the performance of this and the final composition was very different from his initial thoughts outlined in the interview.

When asked about being given commissions to write his music, Peter replied

I've often said I wish I didn't have commissions and then I could write just what I wanted to write, but I'm not sure that always works. I think one needs a bit of pressure. I think it was my 17th string quartet that the person who commissioned it wanted it months and months early. I knew very well that the players wouldn't look at it until a week or so before the performance and if they had it months and months beforehand they'd still never look at it. But the person who commissioned it still wanted it early and I couldn't become involved with it. Somehow the adrenalin wasn't flowing because it seemed a false deadline. As the deadline approached I began to get more steamed up about it and then I was writing furiously. It was done on time but I couldn't seem to do it when there was a false deadline. The adrenalin needs to be running.

Peter was asked if he was keen to hear the music played by the group it was written for, Peter replied 'I knew how it would sound although one tends to revise a little, a little bit, but yes I was keen to hear how it sounded'.

When asked if he ever refused a commission, he said

When I was younger I'd eagerly say yes to everything and often I'd said it too much and I'd get myself into trouble because I couldn't always deliver. But for some years now if a piece isn't the kind of piece I want to write I say 'no'.

There are also types of groups Peter prefers to write for.

I like homogenous groups you know, like a string orchestra or a string quartet. I mean an orchestra itself is quite homogenous because it is divided into families and I treat the families as families, but works for a mixed group like violin, clarinet, piano, percussion, double bass with a whole lot of instruments with very different timbres, those kinds of works don't interest me very much.

When asked if he was free to write his own music if there were not enough commissions, he replied 'There are always plenty of commissions'. When asked further about the freedom to write his own music, he said 'there is always enough freedom', adding that

writing music is about choosing, you're making choices. You've got to choose what will carry you into the next bar and the more choices that you can make beforehand; the

easier the piece is going to be to write. To be completely free is difficult because there are too many choices.

In response to a question about whether he felt he was moving forward with each new piece, Peter said

Every now and again. I think every composer's output is uneven, and often with a new piece I feel it's not quite up to what it should be but I complete it because one can't give of one's best all the time. Somebody said the other day that my music seems to get better and better. Why is it? Well I suppose if it didn't I'd give up!

Peter laughed at this comment. When asked about reports of his goal to write the perfect piece of music, he said 'Yes, that's right. But if I did I'd probably stop because where would I go? So I hope I don't write it. I want to be close to it'.

Peter is involved in a project to write music for the centenary of Gallipoli. He explained:

The centenary is in 2015 and I have contributed my part which was called *Thoughts of Home* for harmonica and string quartet. A Turkish composer has also done his part and this year a New Zealand composer and I think a Canadian composer contributed to it. Then in 2015 all the pieces will be put together like a Gallipoli symphony.

He added:

I wrote my piece with the idea of a young underage soldier on the ship approaching Gallipoli, just quietly playing away on the mouth organ, yearning a bit for home, but fairly contented. Then he has moments of fear about what might lie ahead, but he soon puts the thoughts out of his mind.

Peter digressed to say, 'Looking back, I can't believe that during the Second World War, I wanted to put my age up so I could go to war. And that was the feeling here. I can't believe it now'. He returned to the music 'And so I was thinking almost of myself going to war and thinking it was going to be a grand adventure'. He agreed that many of the young men who did this also saw it as a chance to travel overseas, 'make friends and so on'. He was asked further about the co-ordination of the different parts of the Gallipoli symphony, and whether later contributors listened to the parts already written.

They can do. I listened to the Turkish piece that was done, so that my piece sounded as if it grew out of it but that wasn't necessary. I tend to think like that whereas other composers want a completely new start.

Peter said his piece 'has had performances since then because it can be done on its own'.

Peter spoke further about the way he got ideas for his compositions, illustrating his thoughts with reference to string quartet number 16 which was a private commission. He wanted to write something which the person who had commissioned it was passionate about. The person and his wife had edited a book of letters about people in detention. Peter's compassion showed. He described the letters as '... heartbreaking. I mean many of the letters are just heartbreaking and so I wrote a quartet that was inspired by these letters'. He said that in writing a piece for this person,

the choice of what I was going to do was already made for me. So I think with any future commissions that particular circumstances will help dictate the kind of work that I write. Some composers just write what they want to write and that's that, but I tend to think of other people. Maybe it's part of having been a teacher, or something, but I always like to do this. I don't like to impose my will on others. I like it to flow in some way.

4.9.3 Topic three: A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve.

Peter made it clear he intends to continue composing music. His work is timetabled by the commissions he accepts. When asked about his future he said 'I'm always so busy in the present. The only worry I have about the future is will I be able to finish my Melbourne piece in time!'. Peter commented 'if composers don't die early like Mozart, they tend to live long lives, and get better all the time'.

Retirement

Retirement was not even on the horizon for Peter. He works according to commissions offered, which he chooses to accept or not. This way he can determine the amount of work he does. Music is such an important part of his life that it is inconceivable that he would ever cease composing.

Physical adjustments

Peter made no reference to his health but he could only follow his very rigorous schedule if he were in excellent health. In a presentation given later in Canberra during his 80th birthday celebrations, he mentioned that life was very hectic. He said that if he survived the hectic weeks around his birthday he felt that he would live for a very long time afterwards!

Contribution to the wider world

Peter frequently gives talks about his work at conferences, and his music is regularly performed throughout Australia and the rest of the world. He continues to compose and two of his new works, *Song of the Yarra* and *Chaconne* had their world premiers in 2009. The premier of a piece written for an Australian music festival occurred in April 2010.

Peter mentioned one part of his volunteer work as part of a story he was telling on the power of music. He mentioned that he had been made ‘a patron of the National Choral Society for Older Persons’, mentioned earlier in this chapter. I suspect it was only the tip of the iceberg of his contribution in an unpaid capacity, as he is very committed to promoting music, and its power.

Family/community

Peter’s family were and are very important to him and mention of them tended to be interspersed with other comments throughout the interview. His father’s death whilst he was at Oxford was the first family reference. Peter was, and is, very close to his brother. ‘Well, I was once in business with my brother. We owned a sports shop, in my twenties when I couldn’t earn a living through music’.

Peter had also been very close to his mother. She had ‘always said if she were incapacitated she wouldn’t want to be around’. Following a hip operation at 93 she had to use a walking frame. Peter added ‘Of course I was nursing her in her last year. She decided it was time to go and she refused to eat’. He completed the story by saying ‘But it was wonderful having her at home with lots of friends around. It was a beautiful way to go’.

The conversation turned to the desirability of having a purpose in life during the later stages. Of his sister-in-law he said ‘Her garden is so beautiful. I mean there are roses all year round and I think that’s certainly a purpose in life. She’s so proud of the garden. (And) she just loves biography’. He also expressed concern about his brother. “I just hope my brother is

alright. Maybe bowls will be the salvation as he now plays in tournaments and they travel, and I'm sure he's probably on the committee and all that'. Peter said he worried about his brother's future.

Peter also made a comment about the lack of confidence of older people, in this case older participants in a choral group of which he is patron. 'I went up to Newcastle on the Friday and I seemed to hear the same story from almost everyone. They said as one grows older, one loses confidence'. They felt that they couldn't achieve what they had planned to do. Singing together helped them to restore their confidence.

4.10 Sol Encel

4.10.1 Topic one: A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure.

Sol regarded as the most rewarding the comments from former students 'they tell me what a difference it's made to them, sociology, and the fact they had contact with me'. He added 'An awful lot of them are women who came back to study in middle age and had careers they never dreamt they could have before'. When questioned about his particular reference to women students, he said 'the ones I am referring to have mostly been women, because on the whole men went to university from school, so they didn't have that kind of life history at all'. His comments fit in with the educational profile of older women, obtained from the HILDA database. He repeated his pleasure in 'the response from former students who come and tell you what a difference I, or the discipline, has made to their lives'.

Again on the question of his past achievements, he said,

I suppose having written or edited books which have had some influence, that's been I think very important. Being productive and getting some sort of feedback from the people who use what you have written, that's the most important thing. More important than awards or fellowships and things like that.

Sol travelled overseas during his earlier academic career.

Yes, well, I've had some very rewarding experiences. These were all study leaves and I spent three of my study leaves at the University of Sussex where I worked in a research centre called the Science Policy Research Unit which is still there. That was a very

agreeable experience and I contributed to their work and stayed in touch with a number of the people there for quite a long time. I also spent a semester at Harvard as a visiting fellow. I wasn't expected to do anything but I participated in all their seminars and discussions. Also the last time I was teaching overseas was at Vassar College in the United States back in 1984. I did a semester's teaching there and that was also very interesting and some of the students were particularly bright and interesting people.

Sol is often given the title, 'Father of Australian Sociology', which he doesn't accept. 'It's an exaggeration. I wasn't the first professor at the University of NSW in any case'. The first professor was Morven Brown, and Sol succeeded him when the chair became vacant in 1966. 'So I can't accept the title of Founding Father'. He did admit that 'certainly I produced, together with my late friend Alan Davies at the University of Melbourne, the first real textbook of sociology in Australia. That was in 1965'.

Sol referred to his membership of the New South Wales Ministerial Committee on Ageing (MACA) which is an ongoing commitment on his part. 'I was on it first of all in the 1990s and I then produced several research reports which are published by the committee, one on the problems faced by older women in the workforce. "Gendered ageism" is the term I use which I borrowed from a British sociologist'. He also referred to a published paper on age discrimination which was based on the records of the NSW Age Discrimination Board'.

Sol referred to a book he had written earlier.

This book, published shortly after I retired from teaching was discussing the link between more and more women in the paid workforce and pursuing careers, which has gone side by side with increasing political involvement. I want to take that a step further and discuss the extent to which women are taking leading roles, Prime Minister, President, Governor General and so forth.

This work is described in a later section in this chapter.

When asked if there were any other awards, accolades which he looked back on with pride, Sol replied 'I don't think so. You know I'm not someone who approves of awards. I've been offered awards several times and declined them every time'.

4.10.2 Topic two: A brief description of the work you are currently involved in

Sol's work had been slightly curtailed by his immobility following surgery a few weeks before the interview 'I've got to find ways of doing my work much more readily at home'.

One area of continuing involvement is his membership of the NSW Ministerial Committee on Ageing (MACA) in a project 'dealing with older people staying on in the workforce. I hope to ultimately write it up in the form of a publication which will be issued by the committee'.

When questioned about the committee, he said that they had a very small staff and were in the process of upheaval following the recent state government elections. 'There's a very strange decision by the State government to move the office for Ageing to the north coast of NSW'. This was of concern to Sol with his reduced mobility. When asked about the workload membership of the committee involved, his response was:

Not a great deal. Of course I keep getting reports and reading their papers but the committee only meets half a dozen times a year, a one day meeting, so that's not a very great expenditure of time but obviously there's a lot of research to be done, background material and the committee gets involved in other activities too.

Sol has a long and continuing involvement with this committee.

One of the big things we did this year was to have a forum on the role of grandparents in family life. That's a joint project between the committee and the Council of the Ageing and I was asked to be chairman of the working party which organised this forum and which is producing a report about grandparent carers. We raised this issue of grandparent carers actually originally with the Bureau of Statistics. The first survey of grandparents, of families in which grandparents were taking on the role of parents, was done at our urging. So I would count that as an achievement. Because of our lobbying the Australian Bureau of Statistics agreed to include specific questions in their family survey for that year and thus produced the figure of 24,000 families in Australia which were headed by grandparents. I think the figure is an underestimate. I think there was under-sampling involved in that survey, so I think it's more like 30,000, which means we are talking about something like 50,000 children. And that's a large number of children and a large number of families. So I think we've succeeded in raising the

profile of this issue quite considerably because before that no-one had really taken any notice of it’.

Sol referred to a topic he had written about before and which he intended to return to in the future. In response to a comment about women being invisible in Parliament, Sol replied

I don’t think women are as invisible as they used to be. If there are degrees of invisibility, they are certainly more visible. I’m particularly interested in the fact that there are so many examples of women becoming heads of Government and Heads of State and that’s the particular aspect that interests me.

One of the difficulties with the interviews was trying to categorise the participants’ lives into past, present and future. This happened with Sol when he said

Well, I think in general, the sort of issues raised in the book we produced last year, *The Longevity Book*, the policy issues are going to be important and I was raising those sort of questions in the talk I gave in Canberra last week. The economic situation means that a lot of people will be abandoning the idea that you can retire early and sit in the sun, or go travelling or whatever. In order to maintain a decent lifestyle they will need to go on working, well into their 60s or even into their 70s. The difficulties attending that are enormous and in fact I’m just looking at the literature on that. The report I’m writing, the MACA report on workers, I’m just doing a literature review at the moment and you can see the same story being repeated over and over again – that society needs older people to stay on in the workforce but the obstacles to doing it are enormous. You can hear the same song in report after report in the last 20 or 30 years.

In reply to the comment that it applies to men and women, but more so to women, he replied: ‘Yes. So I would hope one can keep raising this issue and getting governments to address it seriously’. This is another issue Sol will be continuing to pursue into the future.

4.10.3 Topic three: A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve

Sol spoke about his university work. ‘The other thing I’ve done, of course, is working at the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of NSW., where we also have a project about carers, including grandparent carers, which is financed by the federal government [FACSIA].’ This again is a continuing commitment on Sol’s part.

Sol was about to embark on a new research project.

I'm now working on a proposal to have another look at age discrimination, especially against older women, and professional older women, in conjunction with a friend at the University of Western Sydney, and we're just in the process of putting together an application for a research grant from the National Seniors Association.

He pointed out that the MACA project would have to be finished in the next few months and the other would have to wait to see if the application for funding was successful. (In a later communication Sol said he had been given the grant, but not as much as they had hoped for).

During the interview, it became obvious that many of the issues Sol was involved in would be continuing issues in his life. Listening to Sol talking about the issue of grandparent's rights, it became obvious that this is one social reform which is likely to happen because he has no intention of abandoning it. The MACA report he was writing on older people staying on in the workforce rather than retiring was a topic which he continues to pursue and which also has international implications.

Sol commented

In terms of future plans, I am seriously thinking about going back to a topic which I wrote about before, before I was concerned about ageing, and that was about again, the role of women in public life. At the moment I'm seriously thinking of making a proposal to a publisher about a book on women in politics, which I think is a topic of increasing interest. There are more and more women taking leading roles in politics and I think that's a topic I'd be interested to research and I hope produce a book. I'm particularly interested in the fact that there are so many examples of women becoming heads of government and heads of state and that's the particular aspect that interests me. It's different from what I did before. The book, published shortly after I retired from teaching, was discussing the link between the fact that there are more and more women in the paid workforce and pursuing careers, and this has gone side by side with increasing political involvement. I want to take that a step further and discuss the extent to which women are taking the leading roles, Prime Minister, President, Governor General and so forth. And teasing out the differences between their careers and those of men. Obviously there's a wide range of differences. Typically, as I see it, women enter politics later and they get different sorts of jobs. The question is, do they adopt different

sorts of policies? That's a hotly debated subject and it's one of the things I want to look at. There are spectacular examples like Benazir Bhutto, and the woman who's become president of Liberia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka. The number is actually now very large and just to make a list of them and catalogue them would be a considerable effort so that's the way we are going to start. Once we've looked at all the ones that are around, who've been around since the mid 60s, is a good starting point. What characterises them, what are the differences between them and the differences between them and men, will also become critical. This proposed book about women as leaders will make a tremendous contribution to world governance.

(Sol later found an American publisher who was willing to back the project.)

Contribution to the wider world

During the interview with Sol there was no mention of the voluntary work he does but he did comment on helping students with their work. When asked if he would be willing to have a look at the interviewer's thesis his comment was:

Yes, of course. It's a pleasure. I mean I take this, it's a natural role for me. You don't stop being a teacher just because you retire from full time teaching. So I do this sort of thing. At the moment I'm helping another mature age woman student with her thesis on a totally different topic and it's very gratifying when people want you to look at their work.

In spite of his temporary lack of mobility, Sol still travelled around the country presenting papers about his research at conferences. He also was frequently writing papers, both as a result of government request or through the award of grants. He was also planning to write the book on female leaders, and was editor of books, as described earlier.

Physical adjustment

Sol made a brief reference to the fact that following his operation, 'I'm dependant on other people, especially my wife of course and I don't want to be dependent on her'.

Sol had had major back surgery between agreeing to be interviewed, and the interview taking place. The operation had required several weeks in hospital and he was still attending the hospital as an outpatient for hydrotherapy and physiotherapy and was about to begin exercise classes, at the time of the interview. He pointed out that the operation had not affected his

mental capacity, a problem associated with ageing and operations, as the anaesthesia can often cause mental deterioration among the elderly. His concerns were with his reduced mobility, but exercising was improving this.

It means getting around is much more difficult. I can't just, you know, call a taxi or walk down to the bus stop and catch a bus and go in to the city to a meeting. So my attendance at meetings will be much more circumscribed than it used to be'. He added, 'Same problem getting to the university'. He commented 'I've got to find ways of doing my work much more readily at home'. When asked if he was worried that his reduced mobility was causing him to cut back on what he could do, he responded: 'It's one thing to be worried, it's another thing to be depressed. Under no circumstances do I want to be depressed'.

When asked about his final level of fitness, he replied 'I don't know. I have to work on it. I hope it will improve'. He had had a couple of months of hydrotherapy and physiotherapy and was about to start exercise classes. He added: 'But mostly you have to do it yourself'.

Sol said he had not joined any organisations concerned with lobbying about disability and so on. 'Of course if I wanted to I'd have the same problem. It involves going to meetings and having discussions with people and getting out and about. It's difficult'.

At the time of the interview, Sol could still find humour in his reduced mobility. In discussing the need for people to remain in the workplace longer with an increasingly ageing population, he said: 'The other side of the story is that as people live longer and longer, they become subject to disability. I can tell you. I have an inside view of that'.

Sol's mobility approached his pre-operative level within the following year.

4.10.4 An issue raised during the interviews relevant to this research

In the workplace, older workers are often challenged for work by younger workers. Two of the interviewees, Noeline Brown and Bruce Petty, commented on this competition. Both work in the artistic world and both had listed among their achievements their ability to survive in the very competitive world they had chosen for their careers. Noeline was specifically asked about complaints from older actors that there were few parts for older people.

Oh, look it happens. You get fantastic roles. I played the part of Florence Foster Jenkins last year at the Ensemble. A brilliant part. It was a dream of a part. All singing, all dancing. It was hilarious. I've never worked so hard preparing for anything in my life. So that's come to me. I've got a play coming up soon, had the movie, television. I've been, you know, maybe I'm an exception. It seems there have been some roles for older people coming up but not enough, not enough'.

Referring to the artistic world in general, Noeline referred to an older group she was aware of

There are groups of dancers too. I think they were all about 80 or even older and they used to dance with Todd McKenny. I forget what they called themselves but they did a lot of work around clubs. High kicking, fantastic, tap dancing. It was a great, great act'. She added 'But that's the thing about acting, you have to make your own chances. Kids these days, there are so many actors and so few opportunities. They (older people) create their own opportunities. I remember there was a group in Melbourne who did this too, older women's circus, which was fantastic'.

Bruce Petty was working in a very competitive environment which is undergoing huge changes, with the threat, as he mentioned, from outlets such as YouTube, and which may not survive.

When asked about his future work, Bruce commented

More film I suppose than drawing, because I only do one (political cartoon) a week for the Age now, which was their decision and I think that's right. You know they've got young arts people coming and other cartoonists. They want various voices in the paper. So that's sort of good in a way. It means I've got to sort of think a bit and work out a film that someone might buy, rather than one I just want to do.

4.11 The interviewees as role models and their continuing contributions to Australia and the world

4.11.1 Their purpose in life

None of the interviewees gave the impression that they felt they had done anything special in their lives. Malcolm Mackerras said that until he got the letter requesting an interview, he had not felt that he was an achiever.

All of them were from very different fields and went into great detail to explain their work which was often foreign to the interviewer. The details they gave of both current work and/or future plans have been presented in this chapter.

The research has indicated that there are two main contributors to successful and healthy living. The first is a sense of purpose in life. This tends to translate into work in its broadest sense, at least in Western communities. The second is feeling part of a community, which can include family. Noeline Brown made reference to the other benefit of having a purpose in life. 'It makes you so resilient. If things go bad, and your health's not good, you haven't really time to think about that because you've got this really interesting thing to do'.

The effect of stress, or lack of it, was included in the Blue Zones research, although research on older workers suggested that some stress may form a beneficial challenge (Blekesaune and Solem, 2005). The subject of stress, and overwork in particular, was raised voluntarily by some of the interviewees. They were all in a position to manage this.

This research proposes that older people need to have a purpose in their lives and with this comes status. This purpose will involve plans for the future rather than a one off enterprise. All of those who participated in the interviews satisfied these criteria and all were leading successful lives and were being given the respect and recognition that they deserved by their country.

This paper argues that life is a continuum and this is reflected in the lives of those interviewed. Even though they are all in the category of 'older people', they are all making an immense contribution to Australia and the world. They are all passionately interested in the work they are involved in and spoke at great length, describing this passion. Far too often older people, and their involvement and contribution, are overlooked simply because they are older people. The concept of 'elder', encompassing a huge accumulation of knowledge and wisdom, has been lost, and with it the positives this status contributes to the community. The interviewees provide evidence that this word should be resurrected, particularly in the face of such tremendous achievements. They provide further examples of the benefit to the country, and the world, of older achievers, who continue to enrich the world instead of taking the conventional path of retirement from the productive world.

From the point of view of the researcher, it was a privilege to be allowed into the lives of these outstanding older people, and to be allowed to have a glimpse into lives which are part

of Australian history. The lives of these older Australians show how successful and healthy the later stage of life can be when it is filled with a purpose. All of the interviewees had disregarded retirement and treated their lives as a continuum, obtaining enjoyment from their achievements. All of them had faced up to the physical challenges of ageing by cutting down on their workload and, in the case of Bruce Petty, being aware that he might have to adjust for this later. The oldest of the interviewees, Sol Encel, had major surgery some weeks before the interview. He subsequently concentrated on trying to recover the fitness he had had before surgery and was gradually moving towards this. Sadly he died two years later. He was still working on his research projects on the morning of his death. The generosity and quality of life of all of these very successful older Australians is reflected in the fact that although they all led extremely busy lives, at the end of each interview I was invited to contact them again if they could be of any further assistance.

The interviews with these outstanding older Australians reflects the fundamental basics of successful ageing identified in this thesis. None have, nor have contemplated, retiring completely although they are aware of the physical effects of ageing and are able to adjust their work accordingly. All are achieving in this later stage of life, most by continuing careers they had started much earlier in life, and, in Noeline Brown's case, taking on an additional new role. All had also taken on additional roles as authors or were contemplating this. All are aware of their need for family and community involvement. Without them and their work Australia would be a much poorer country.

4.12 Summary

This section has illustrated the tremendous contribution that the seven people interviewed have made to Australia, and to the world, in the past and six will continue to make in the future. They are outstanding role models. All of them have a purpose and status in their lives and are connected to their communities. They illustrate how successful the later years of life can be and how the community, including on an international level, can benefit from the contributions and work of older people.

The next chapter investigates the quantitative aspect of the research which moves from individuals to the national scene of older Australians.

Chapter 5 Quantitative analysis: methodology and results

This chapter describes the methodology and results for the quantitative part of the research. It outlines the methodology applied to the statistics to present the results in graphical form. The results are analysed in terms of five categories; background including education, fitness and health, family, finance and work/use of time. This provides an overall view of this age group of the population, including their capabilities. The policy implications of the results are identified.

The database chosen provides a profile of older Australians from an analysis of the data. The original analysis is initially for the whole 55+ population and then by gender, followed by a comparison with data available four years later. Questions with a low response rate are presented first followed by the main data. The final section of the analysis, 'Work and Use of Time,' is addressed separately in the next chapter as this is the subject of a more comprehensive study and is a particularly important part of the research.

The data base chosen for the research is the unit record data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The HILDA Project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (Melbourne Institute). The findings and views reported in this paper, however, are those of the author and should not be attributed to either FaHCSIA or the Melbourne Institute.'

This HILDA database used (2003) involved approximately 3532 respondents in the 55+ age range, providing a large sample size, adding to the accuracy of the research. In addition the panel which devised the questions used to collect the data included an older person (private conversation with HILDA researchers 2005). The questions utilised for the present research were selected by the author, with regard to current research questions identified in the literature search, and using questions of interest to a study of older people. This creates a profile, or definition, of older Australians. The database provides self reported information on various aspects of older people's lives, which provides an insider view of the way older people personally view themselves in terms of the questions asked. The database was

initiated in 2000 and data is collected annually, with only slight variations in the questions asked. Data for the year 2007 became available during the research and a similar analysis was made of this data to identify any changes and trend lines between the comparable graphs among the different age groups over this four- year interval, identifying data which could be valid for a number of years and identifying data which may change among cohorts in future.

The data analysis in five-year age groups identified those areas of ageing which change as people get older, and those which appear to be unchanging, thus enabling policy makers to anticipate the needs of this group over time, particularly in terms of physical need.

This older age group is very diverse. The different life experiences of older people create a population that differs enormously as people get older. Laslett (1989) noted that older people are more varied among themselves than any other group of younger adults. Davidson (2005) echoes this comment, pointing out the huge diversity including in chronological age. Not only do older people bring very different life experiences to the ageing process but these also affect the way they react to this later stage of life. An American survey found that the reality of old age is often quite different from the usual expectations about old age (Americans Discuss Social Security 1998).

The changes that occur after age 55 are as wide and varied as those that occur before that age. It is important that both types of changes are identified and that an accurate profile of Australia's older people is available. This is a research project on ageing in Australia and is restricted to Australian data. The ageing experience in other countries may create a very different profile.

5.1 Database selection criteria

The selection of questions to be used in the research, their subsequent subdivision into topics, the retention and collapsing of the age groupings and responses where necessary, and the methodology used for the data analysis and the production of tables and graphs contribute to a unique database. The database selected had to accommodate these requirements.

5.1.1 Nationality and age group suitability

The age group selected for the research is 55 years and above. Public servants in Australia have the option to retire at 55 years and this established the lower age of the research range. This restricted the choice of database as several, such as those available through the

Australian Bureau of Statistics, did not cover the entire age range, with many having a top code of 75+ years. The purpose of the research was to investigate the effect of lifestyle choices on the health of older people, and is based on the assumption that a major event in the lives of this group is retirement, which may or may not be voluntary. A database which included this event was desirable.

5.1.2 Subdivision suitability

The age range required was from 55 to over 90 years to cover the lifespan following possible retirement, with the ability to subdivide the data into age groups. This criteria created barriers in database selection as some databases did not include the old old aged (those aged 80+), and some did not provide for division into suitable age groups.

5.1.3 Data suitability

The research aimed to include issues such as lifestyles, and the feelings, and community involvement, of the selected age group, as well as the physical and mental capability of this group and this required a database which covered a wide range of investigative questions.

5.1.4 Access and manipulability

Some databases were difficult to access, such as the Social Science database at the ANU, in terms of passwords, and also in ease of data manipulation. SAS data programming facilities were available at the research centre and the database selected was required to accommodate this.

5.1.5 Comparison of available databases

Relevant Australian Bureau of Statistics databases were investigated initially. Although they had relatively easy access they covered different age ranges, and the subdivisions required could not be applied to all the databases available. The Mature Age Persons Statistical Report, for example, defined mature age persons as 45-64 year olds (ABS 2005b).

Other Australian current longitudinal studies were also investigated but rejected either through difficulty of access, difficulty of manipulation of data, or gender emphasis, such as the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (Lee et al. 2005).

5.1.6 Selection of the HILDA database

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) databases are a reputable source of data on Australians. They were selected for the analysis as they fitted the selection criteria most closely. They included single age groups from age 55+ to age 90, above which they were clustered to 92+ years. They supported the use of SAS for analysis and provided easy access.

The HILDA survey is conducted annually amongst a group of Australian citizens using an initial group of households, with the addition of new household members, and the removal of people who move out of these households. Using the 55+ age group selected, the survey data involved 3532 people which provided an adequate sample size. The survey covers a large cross section of people, both geographically and socioeconomically. The initial surveys only included people in private residences. It involved several hundred questions of which many (approximately 80 questions) were felt to be relevant by the older researcher to this research. Responses are collected through face to face responses and a self-completion questionnaire, the latter with a lower response rate. The HILDA survey organisers also provide person weights to enable the data to be adjusted to represent the whole Australian population.

A web search suggested that a general data base of numerous characteristics of people for the 55 upwards age range in Australia is not available apart from the HILDA research, although there have been investigations into specific problem research, particularly in the field of health. These include housing assistance, a state of ageing report restricted to South Australia and retirement aspects for older women (www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda). Users of the HILDA data set, the most extensive and appropriate for this purpose, had not applied it to a comprehensive analysis of all older people. Other published material on aspects of ageing in Australia, including papers presented at conferences, frequently either fail to mention the age range involved or the number of participants involved in the data or do not have a statistically significant number. The data analysis which was undertaken for this research appears to be unique for Australia.

The data for the year 2003 was selected as the most recent at the time, and it specifically addressed the question of retirement. The data could also be sub-divided to provide a gender comparison. The 2007 Wave 7 data available later was analysed using the same methods to provide possible trend information compared with the 2003 data.

5.2 Selection of questions and classification of the responses

5.2.1 Selection of questions

The database includes the responses to a very large number of questions many of which, such as child care arrangements, were not relevant to the research. Questions which were felt to be relevant and of interest, which contributed to the lifestyles of these older respondents, were selected by the researcher, a member of the age group being researched. The choice was also influenced by the literature reviewed for the research. Items referred to by other researchers, such as the amount of socialising, were thus included.

5.2.2 Classification of questions by topic

81 questions were initially selected as being relevant to the research by the researcher. Several were later rejected as unsuitable for further analysis in terms of specific age groups, particularly where small numbers were involved. These included those who had moved in the previous year, which only involved 185 people. A limited analysis of these questions is provided at the beginning of the data analysis.

The questions from the database were chosen by the researcher to reflect the lifestyles of older people. These include the general situation such as education, general health, place of residence and lifestyle, and also, physical fitness and health, family and living arrangements, assessment of their financial situation and finally their use of time. A comparison of the data as it applied to the different five year age groups within the selected age range was created. This enabled a pattern of change due to ageing, where relevant, to emerge.

To enable a more cogent analysis, the questions have been divided into 5 researcher generated sections, based on the questions selected.

The five sections are:

1. *People characteristics* which were subdivided into four parts – background information, general health, residence and lifestyle.
2. *Fitness and health*
3. *Family and living arrangements*

4. *Financial situation*

5. *Work/ time use*

The purpose of these sections is to provide a snapshot of different aspects in the lives of the 55+ age group and indicate their physical and mental health and their lifestyles. Comparison of the different age groups can provide tentative information on how the situation may change in future.

The first section provides an overall sketch of the group, such as education levels and marital status, followed by analysis in particular areas of their lives which included general health, location and an overall picture of their lifestyle.

The second section is on fitness and health, analysing this aspect of ageing and the extent to which older people realise the importance of fitness in particular to their lives.

Section three focuses on family and living arrangements in detail. These details provide the basis for older people's lives and their security in terms of family support. It may provide them with status within the family.

Section four concentrates on the financial situation of older people, the sources of their income and the extent to which it meets their financial needs. The data here is the least reliable in current terms as it was collected before the world economic crisis occurred. Two factors to offset this should be taken into account. The federal government provided a pension increase in 2009 which may have compensated to some extent for a deteriorating financial situation, and it could be assumed that once the crisis is over older people may return to the situation reflected in the data, particularly those with investments.

The final section focuses on how respondents occupy their time, which includes full-time or part-time work, caring and voluntary work. This includes those in retirement. This is particularly important as staying in the workforce, as opposed to retiring, appears to be a good option for many, provided the conditions under which this could occur are appropriate. The analysis identifies the percentage of people in each age group participating in these different activities.

5.2.3 Analysis of questions by age group

Each question has been analysed by age groupings. The cohort group was divided into 5 year groups, as this provides an acceptable number of groups, each with a relatively small age span, taking into account that the participants are likely to undergo huge changes in both physical and mental health and capability over the total life span accessed in the data. The first age group is 55–59 years, with subsequent five-year subdivisions up to 90+, the last group. The groups have been chosen to allow for any effects of ageing on lifestyle to become apparent as the respondent groups age, with age groupings covering a comparative short period of each life span. To analyse each year cohort would produce an excess of results and would not indicate variation between groups during the ageing process. A ten year age range would produce fewer results and would cover a large life span and many lifestyle changes in the group. There is wide variation between a 70-year-old and an 80-year old. Five-year age groups have been chosen as this provides a manageable number of groups and an age variation between groups to enable any changes to be apparent, and to allow the entire desired age range to be included.

5.2.4 Classification of questions by gender

The data was later also analysed by gender to ascertain gender differences in ageing. Few differences were found and these are included at the end of each of the question results.

5.2.5 Trends in results over a four-year period

Towards the end of the research, the 2007 data became available and analysis of this enabled the stability of results over the four-year time period to be visually assessed, and any trend lines to be identified. Again these were few and are included at the end of the initial results.

5.2.6 Justification for this type of research

All the questions have been answered by older respondents and provide a portrait of their own view of these different aspects of their lives. In addition, an older member of the HILDA research staff was involved in writing the questions. The research is focused on older people, specifically from an older person's point of view.

As the research data is entirely based on the responses of participants to the questions in the survey it may not correspond to officially collected data. For example, their responses to the question on physical fitness is likely to differ from any medical assessment of them, which

may be based on the existence of conditions such as a disability or chronic disease. This research is more interested in how older people feel about themselves and hence their attitude to life, which is likely to be a major factor in affecting the quality of their lives. This, in turn, is likely to affect their longevity and good health.

5.2.7 Initial analysis

The initial analysis created a frequency table of age groups by the different criteria being investigated. Cell counts were then reviewed. Age groups with a cell count below 10 (below 5 for the male/female analysis) were collapsed with adjacent rows or columns as necessary to bring the number of cells up to a statistically significant number for analysis. An exception was made to this in situations where it was deemed appropriate to retain the values; for example when it was felt that the age of people with these characteristics was significant in terms of the purpose of this part of the research. The size of the confidence intervals in these instances indicates that the data did not have an appropriate level of statistical significance. This particularly applied to the older age groups where a decision had to be made to omit data specific to these groups by including them with a younger age group, or retain them with questionable accuracy. The decision was made on a question by question basis with the researcher deciding on the importance of the data. The question had to be asked whether it was important to have inaccurate data on the 90+ age group, for example, or lose this specific data by collapsing it with a younger age group. The outcome depended on the relevance of the data in the researcher's view.

The same principal was applied to the different response ranges. In some cases, where responses could vary from 0 to 100, these were generally collapsed to groups of 10 responses. The inspection of cell counts was then followed as above. This had more variation as attempts to divide numbered responses evenly resulted in too many small cell counts. Thus in at least one instance all negative responses were grouped together. With some questions, responses which were entirely in agreement with the question, or were entirely in disagreement with it, were retained as a single category, if these were felt to be significant responses. Responses were also classified to give results which were meaningful in the context of the research. For example, distance away of first child was subdivided into (i) walking distance, (ii) short drive, (iii) longer drive, (iv) within Australia and (v) overseas. This gave an indication of the ease with which these children (and any grandchildren) could communicate and exchange visits with their parents (grandparents) if they wished to do so.

The frequency tables also enabled the existence of missing values to be identified and investigated. Missing data was checked. Small deviations from the sample size of 3532 were identified with responses (1) not applicable, (2) don't know, (3) refused or not answered (4) invalid multiple response, (5) value implausible, (6) unable to determine value. In addition missing responses could fall into the categories (1) not asked: question skipped due to answer to a preceding question or (2) no self completion questionnaire returned (223 respondents). The latter group was the only one of significant size and did not affect all questions. It was analysed separately to establish that it was not significantly different from the rest of the population by testing measures such as the mean age, sex, education level etc, and therefore their failure to respond had not affected the results.

5.2.8 Data applied to the Australian population

Application of responding person population weights, supplied by HILDA, enabled the frequency table to be converted to Australian population data. The total results were then checked against the ABS population figures for that year (2003) to establish accuracy.

5.2.9 Using STATA for confidence intervals

The data was stored in a SAS data file which related to the final age grouping, 55+ etc for each category. The next step was to convert each file of the HILDA data to comma separated values and export it to STATA for further analysis. This involved using the Jackknife procedure (with 30 values) with the appropriate (-2.045) constant multiplication for the appropriate 29 degrees of freedom applied to the data. This enabled the appropriate standard errors for each category of the variable to be calculated. Finally the data was transferred to an Excel database for construction of a graph, with confidence intervals inserted for each age group, and each category, of each variable. This produced a population based table of values and confidence intervals for each question response for each age group. Excel was then used to convert the table items into percentages and draw column graphs with confidence intervals. Final graphs were produced with age groups shown horizontally and population percentages for each variable vertically.

5.2.10 Gender and trend analysis

The complete analysis was then repeated for each gender for each variable and the results compared to identify any differences between the genders in the ageing process. This was then repeated for the 2007 data to identify any emerging trends in the data.

5.2.11 Data production

The following tables and graphs have been obtained for each variable.

1. The initial frequency table showing initial cell sizes and groupings prior to any cell collapsing.
2. The frequency table in its final form after cell collapsing.
3. The frequency table produced by STATA with confidence intervals and the percentage form of the same table, after applying weights supplied with the database. This produced Australia wide data.
4. Column graphs for the different variables, with confidence intervals, with the age groupings on the horizontal axis. These are presented in the thesis text.

5.2.12 Data interpretation

The results produced in the analysis were based on cross sectional data and were not used to predict what was likely to happen to each age group as they progressed upward through the age span. In particular, effects within each variable with a particular age group may have been attributable to events which had occurred within the life span of that particular group. Changing birth rates, effects of war and wartime conditions, changing attitudes towards personal health and so on, were all factors which would have influenced the different age group responses considered in this study.

This thesis argues for a new approach to ageing, encouraging the view that in the continuum that is life, the later stage of it, beyond retirement age, is as important as the previous stages. It argues that it should be productive in the sense of there being a purpose, rather than merely filling in time until death. This raises the question as to whether the inherited impression of older people as being ‘doddering but dear’ (Cuddy and Fiske 2004, p4) is accurate or whether in fact older people are capable of fulfilling the requirements for having a purpose. The analysis in this chapter covers the areas of background or people characteristics, fitness and health, family and living arrangements, and financial situation.

5.3 Questions with a low number of responses

This section details questions which did not receive a sufficient number of responses to allow analysis by age group. The questions are grouped in the categories outlined previously.

- *Background characteristics.* Respondents who had changed their place of residence in the previous year. There were only 185 responses to this question.
- *Financial situation.* Only 55 people had gone without meals and 75 had been unable to heat their homes. 73 had had help from a charity.
- *Work/use of time.* Only 46 people had changed their job in the previous year. 39 people were looking for work. Only 39 people had had difficulty getting work because of a disability, with the same number citing age as the reason. 242 were not working because of illness and the same number did volunteering. Only 88 people had stopped work since the last survey.

5.4 Results of the full data analysis of each section

The final graphs for each question used in the research are given here. The percentages are percentages of the whole Australian population (in 2003) for each age group. The analysis is designed to provide a definition of what is meant by 'ageing' and to provide a 'where we are at' picture of the ageing population. If research into ageing is to be successful then it is necessary to establish what this very varied and diverse group of people is achieving, and what they are capable of achieving and their state of health and physical capabilities.

All responses are given by older people themselves, with an older person involved in writing the questions, and an older person analysing the results and writing the conclusions, thus fulfilling the participatory criteria for this part of the research. The responses provide information on how older people view each question as it applies to them. Responses, for example in relation to health, may thus differ from officially collected statistics. How people feel about themselves and their lives, is more likely to motivate the way they conduct their lives, and the outcomes of this, rather than applicable official statistics.

The full data analysis was followed by a gender analysis and later 2007 data was used to ascertain any trend lines emerging. Identified differences following these analyses are shown following the appropriate graph.

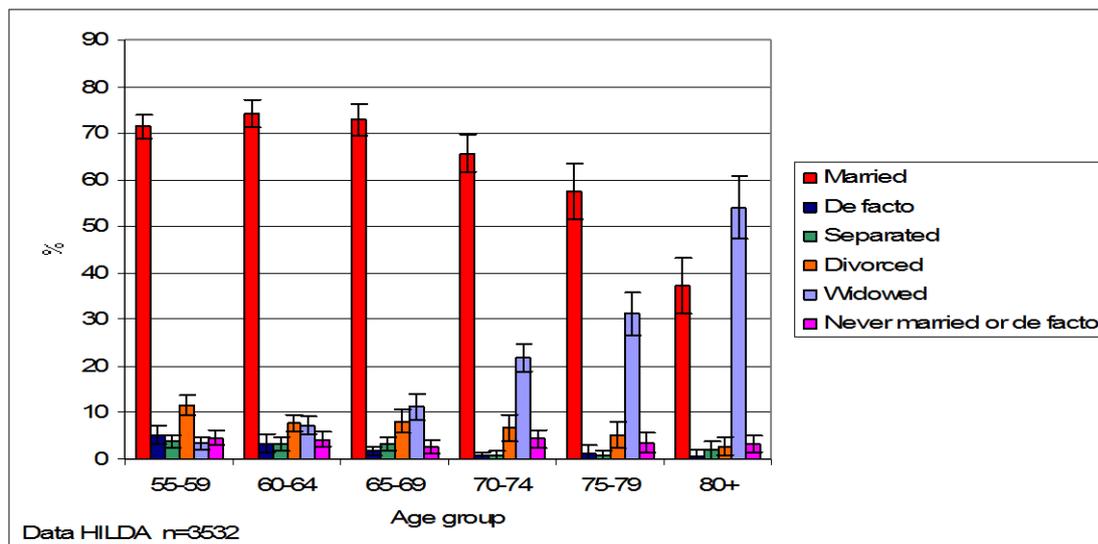
5.5 People characteristics

This section was subdivided into four areas of background information which included marital status and education level achieved, general health, residence and lifestyle. It was designed to provide an overall background picture of the 55+ age group.

5.5.1 Marital status and education level

This section includes responses to these two questions which are two of the major contributors to the lifestyles of older people.

Figure 1: Marital status by age group.



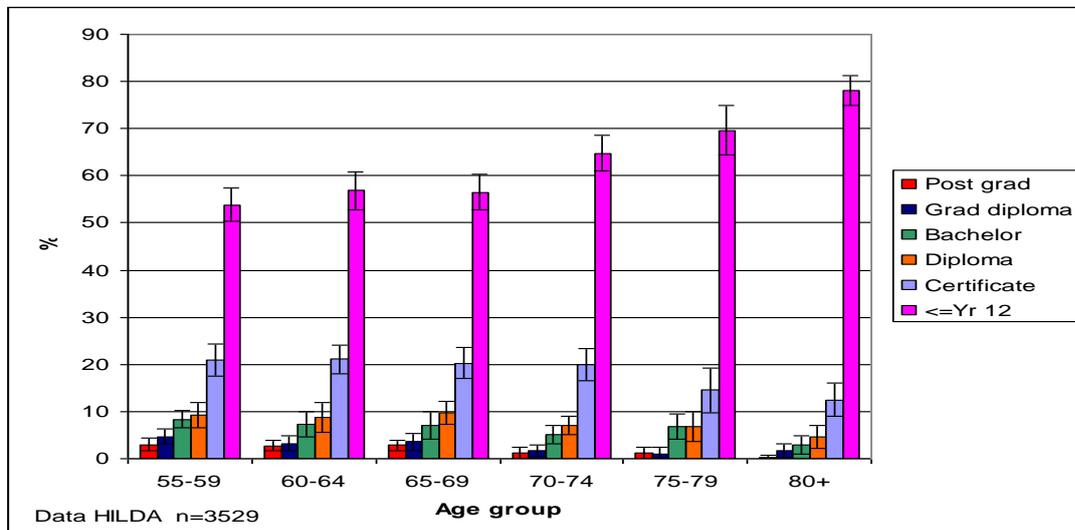
As expected, the married state is the prominent feature up to the 80+ group when widowhood takes over. De facto rates are higher among the younger ages as this lifestyle becomes more socially acceptable, and is likely to increase as today's younger people move into the older age groups. The divorced state is also significant with the percentage gradually increasing amongst the younger old. This figure is likely to continue to increase in future as divorce is easier to obtain, and the stigma which would have been attached to it earlier in the lives of the older people is disappearing.

The state of 'never married or had a de facto relationship' appears to apply to a steady percentage of the population. The evidence suggests it may increase among younger generations in which case this part of the population will need to rely on friends for support

as they age. Those without children, or whose children have moved away (Figure 34) will be in the same position.

Gender differences. In all age groups, more women were widowed. In all age groups except 60-64 years, more men were married.

Figure 2: Education level by age group.



Six categories were created for this variable from several pages of questions. Categories used were as shown. The category <= Year 12 is dominant throughout and increases with the older age groups, reflecting past lack of access to qualifications, particularly for women. The other categories indicate a gradual fall with increasing age. The pattern shown here will not be maintained in future as a greater percentage of younger people are entering universities or taking up trade apprenticeships, the latter particularly amongst the female population.

Borowski and McDonald (2007, p27) provide a reminder that the baby boom generation who will begin to retire in very large numbers in 2011 ‘will have lived through vastly different events’. They ‘will have reached school age during the post war expansion of education that saw much higher proportions of students proceeding to later high school and tertiary education’ than those who preceded them.

Gender differences. Educational opportunities were less accessible for older women. In all age groups, more men had certificate qualifications, whereas more women only had year 12 or lower education.

2007 data trends. Comparison of the graphs indicated that fewer people had \leq year 12 qualifications in the 55-59 age group as would be expected with increases in school leaving age.

Policy implications

The data can provide information for estimating future requirements for both residential and home care for the elderly. Older people with partners are more likely to be able to cope at home longer, but may need home support.

The lack of qualifications among older Australians suggests that more than lip service should be paid to lifelong education, with Government encouragement given to older people to fulfil unsatisfied ambitions and contribute to the community through additional education.

Research suggests that the incidence of Alzheimer's disease in particular increases with lower education levels. It also indicates that those who have a purpose in life (Robinson 2009) are more likely to have a happy, successful and mentally and physically healthy older age. One way to have a purpose is for older people to achieve educational accomplishments denied to them earlier in their lives, as shown by the data, to enable them to fulfil their potential.

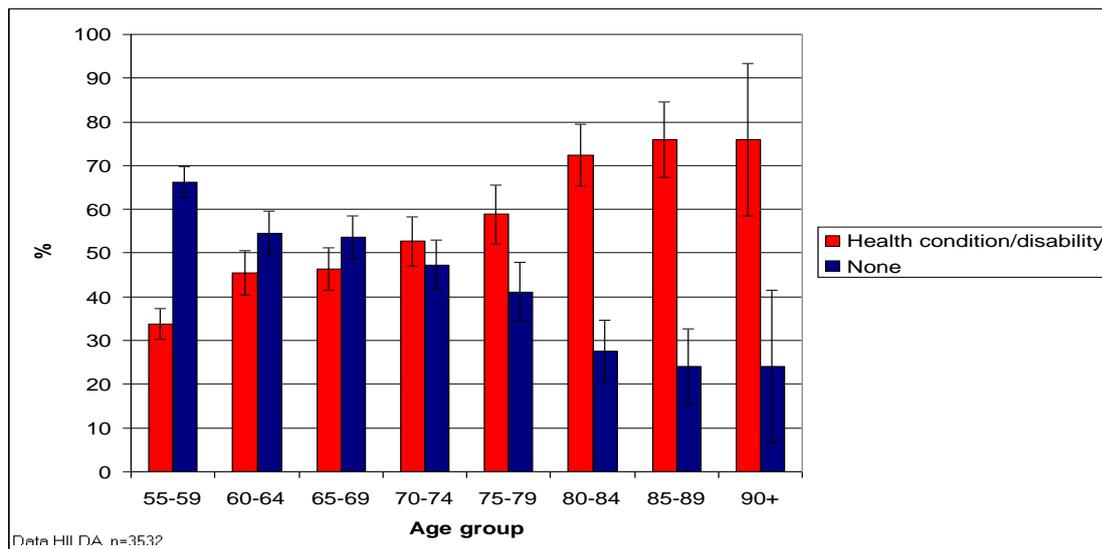
Section summary

The two items included in this section indicate a picture of long-term change. The present data will not be reflected in future generations. The percentages in 'partnerships' rather than marriages is likely to rise. Older people in future will be better educated. Such changes need to be taken into account when considering the needs of ageing populations of the future.

5.5.2 General health

This section included the presence of a disability, participation in physical activity, and alcohol and cigarette use, which are four major general health indicators.

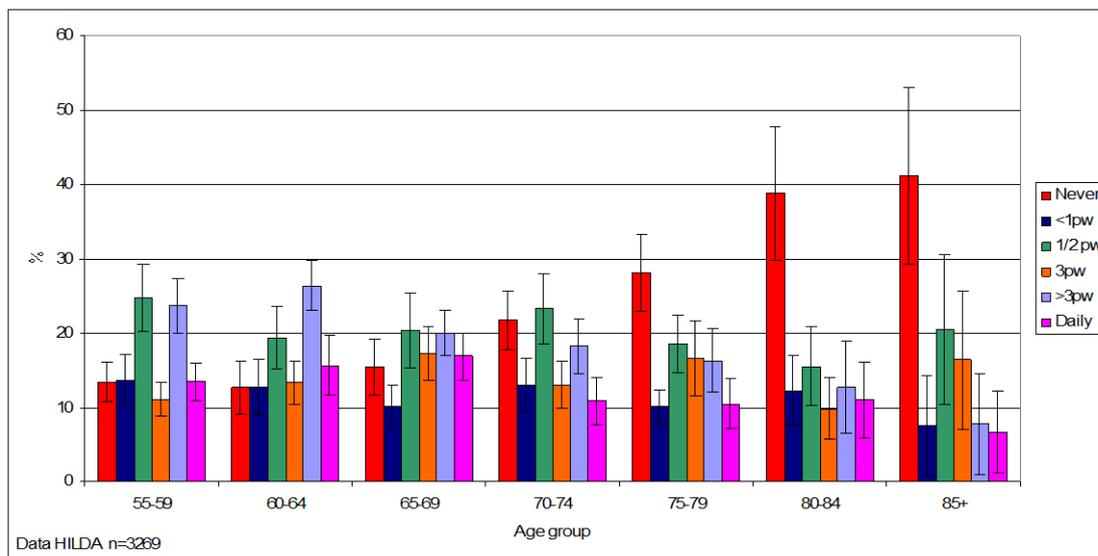
Figure 3: Disability responses by age group.



This question required a yes/no response to the question ‘Do you have a long term health condition, disability or impairment’. Approximately 34% gave a positive response in the 55-59 year age group, and this rose steadily to approximately 76% for 80 years and upwards. The increasing presence of such a condition is not unexpected given increasing frailty with age. The individual figures may decrease as the value of exercise in all age groups, particularly the ageing, is publicised. One of the problems in this area is the definition of disability. A condition which lasts for, or is likely to last, for six months or more, a popular definition, includes eye and ear problems which may be compensated for through the use of spectacles or hearing aids. A tighter definition is required. The extent to which the condition affected people’s lifestyles, such as the ability to work, has been further researched in the fitness/ health section.

Mathers (2007, p41) emphasises the effect of disability. ‘The impact of population ageing will be less important if disability is decreasing among older people than if it is increasing’. Research by Gitlin et al. (2006, p952) indicates that a multi-component intervention was shown to have ‘important clinical and quality-of-life improvements and reduced known risk factors for disability and falls such as home hazards, fear of falling, and functional difficulties. Also, experimental subjects showed significant improvements in areas of greatest difficulty at study entry, including bathing and mobility’. Appropriate professional assistance is beneficial both to older people and the country in terms of cost and contribution to society.

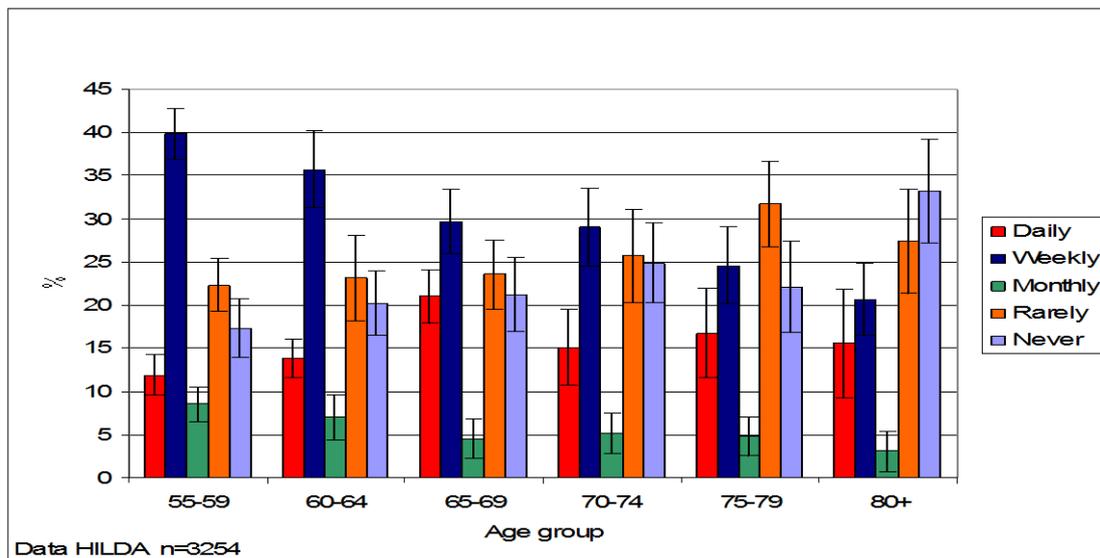
Figure 4: Physical activity by age group.



Two categories indicated change. One, not surprisingly, was the increase with age in the percentages who never exercised. This could have been due to the influence of declining mobility preventing exercise, and also recent publicity regarding the advantages of exercise, which probably has had more influence on the younger members of the age group who may be more aware of it. The second change was an overall fall in the numbers who exercised more than three times a week but not in those who exercised daily. Exercise was not defined and could have included items such as shopping and gardening.

Exercise can also have mental health benefits. Kramer et al. (1999, p418), cited in Wiles and Wiles (2003), investigated exercise among 124 adults, aged 60 to 75, who were not exercising regularly. Half of the group did toning and stretch exercises while the other did energetic walking for six months. The latter group recorded 'improved memory for mental activities such as planning, scheduling and working memory'. Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p32) suggests a more direct link between physical exercise, fitness and the brain. 'For example, a decline in the efficiency of the respiratory and cardiovascular systems will restrict oxygen supply and thus the energy for the brain to function'. He points out 'people who maintain a reasonable level of physical fitness appear in general to change less over time on indices of intellectual performance (p63). He also quotes research by Palinkas et al. (1996) who 'found depression to be significantly greater in obese older people' and 'increased exercise also appears to be beneficial to older depressed people'.

Figure 5: Alcohol consumption by age group.



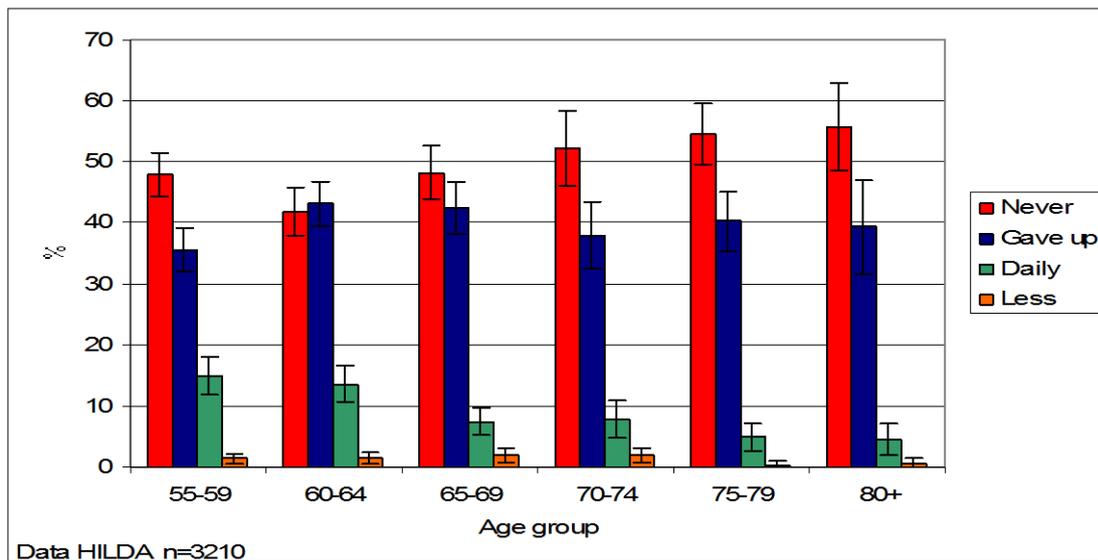
Many of the graphs produced in this research reflect the history of the times the respondents lived through. For many of the older old, drinking would have occurred either in the home or in hotels, in which women were often denied access to the public bar and were relegated to the lounge bar. The introduction of clubs, which had no such restriction and were more social venues, made alcohol consumption more accessible. The decline in the influence of the churches may also have contributed to the observed change in drinking habits among the younger old. The drinking environment is not identified. A daily glass of wine with the evening meal for example, may suggest an entirely different scenario from a weekly visit to the local club or pub.

In a New Zealand study Khan et al. (2006, p98) comment that ‘Suggested strategies for influencing alcohol consumption in older people might include health promotion and education about potential health outcomes, in the context of ensuring appropriate social engagement in later life’.

Gender differences. In all except the 60-64 and 75-79 age groups, more men drank daily. In the 60-64 age group, more men drank weekly. More females in the 55-59 and 65-69 age groups drank rarely, and above the age of 65 more women said they never drank.

2007 data trends. The 2007 graph suggested that there was a slight increase in the number of people who reported drinking on a weekly basis.

Figure 6: Smoking by age group.



Questions asked about smoking included ‘at least weekly’ and ‘less often than weekly’ which were combined to ‘less’.

This graph may also reflect the history of an era in which the respondents would have had their first introduction to smoking. For many years, in parts of Australia, women in particular who smoked were regarded as ‘fast’ and were therefore discouraged from doing so. This would have contributed to the large proportions who never smoked or gave up. The graph suggests that as people age they may smoke less regularly, if the current pattern with daily smoking persists. The long term effects of smoking are emphasised by Mathers (2007, p45). ‘lung cancer mortality rates for older women increased by 92% over the period [1981 and 2001], reflecting increased rates of smoking among women since the 1960s’.

Gender differences. In all groups more women had never smoked. In the 55-59 group, more men used to, or smoke daily, whereas more women occasionally smoked. In the 60-64 group, more men smoke daily, more women occasionally. In the 65-69 group, more men used to smoke.

Policy implications

Targeting older people through exercise programs, including exercise ‘within the home’ programmes, which are currently not being addressed, could help to produce a cost-effective increase in healthy outcomes, particularly among older age groups. Exercise facilities, according to personal need and preference, should not only be advertised and available for

older people, but travel assistance, when required, should also be provided. Current anti smoking programmes have a minor relevance to older people given their low rates of smoking but are still applicable and advertisements should be age inclusive.

Section summary

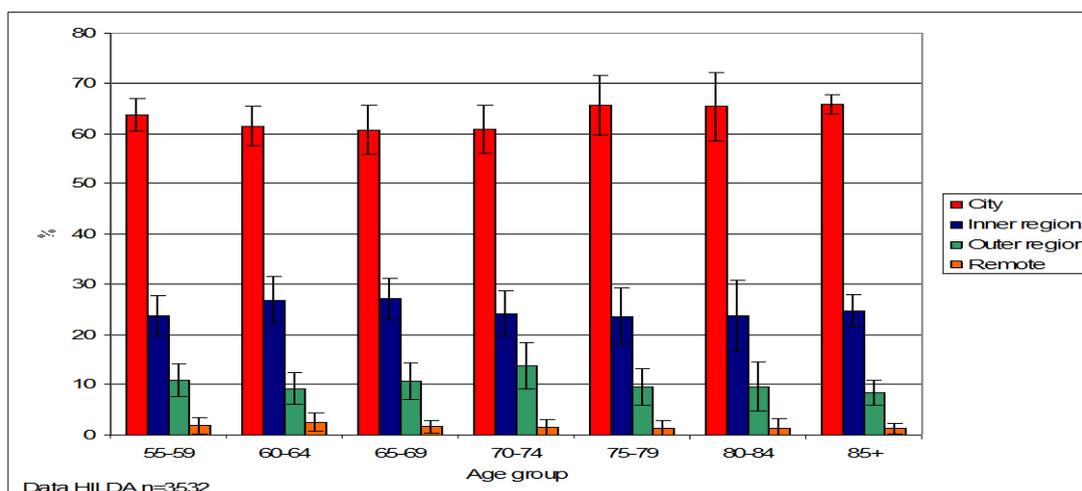
This section of the analysis particularly reflects the history of older old people. The early years of many of them would have involved the depression and the Second World War, in which the major contributors to health, such as quality food, healthy food, and alcohol, may not have been available. Many may also have served in various war zones, in which cigarettes could have been part of the daily food allocation, which could have contributed to ill health and disability.

Modern knowledge of the effects on health of alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking would not have been available at the time of onset of these habits, particularly with cigarettes. This contributes to a static picture of this age group, particularly of the older old, and is unlikely to be applicable to this age group in future.

5.5.3 Residence past and present

This section originally had three components; current location (city or rural), country of birth and recent move. The latter group had only 185 respondents and was therefore unsuitable for further analysis, and is included with other small data groups at the beginning of this section.

Figure 7: Location by age group.



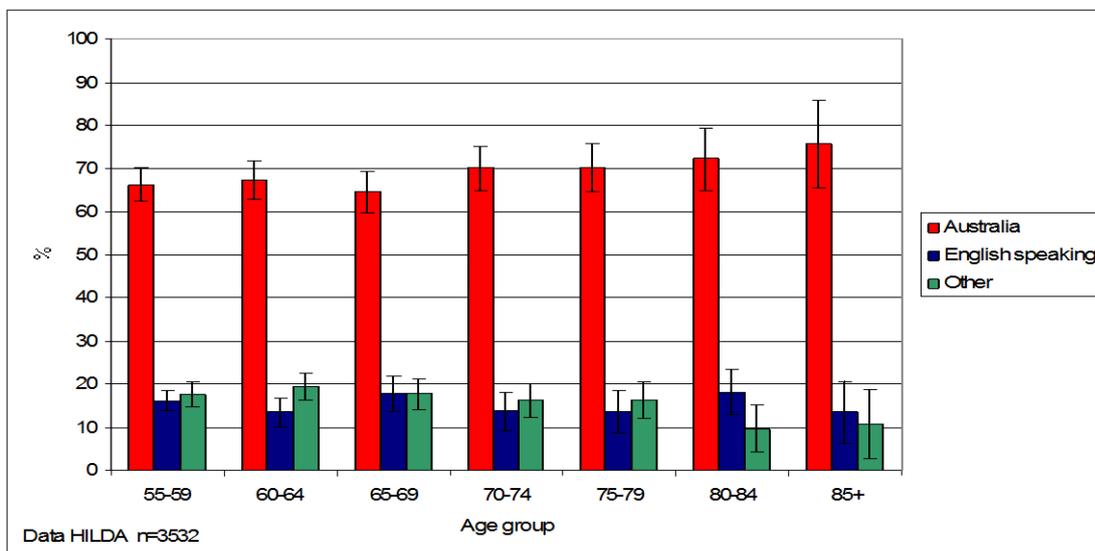
The data only applies to older people who are ageing at home. The salient feature of the graph is that the figures are consistent throughout the age groups. Combined with the data on

the number of people who had moved in the last year the implied suggestion is that people tend to age in situ or in nearby locations. This enables them to age in familiar surroundings with known support groups.

Byles et al. (2006) identified the difference in health care use between urban and other non-urban area women for which location data is useful. Minichiello and Jamieson (2006, p393) comment that ‘transport for medical services is one of the greatest difficulties facing rural and regional communities, especially as general practitioners become harder to attract and retain’. They point out that ‘this tends to discourage visits to doctors for ailments that may later prove more serious or difficult to treat’.

Gibson et al. (2002, p83) also found spatial inequity in the distribution of aged care services in Australia. There are ‘disadvantages accruing to those who live in rural and remote areas, including lower life expectancy, higher mortality, higher rates of hospitalisation, and poorer socio-economic well-being, as well as lower levels of access to health and medical services’. The stability of the percentages of older people in these areas, shown in the data above, should facilitate addressing these problems. This is also emphasised in the work of Borowski and Hugo (1997, p36) who suggest that an awareness of the distribution of older people is ‘important in planning the provision of services for them, especially since many in that group have low levels of mobility’.

Figure 8: Country of birth by age group.



There is little difference among the age groups. The data for each category remains consistent suggesting that the 'white Australia' policy change, which applied to non-European migrants, may not have had a significant effect among the current older age group.

Policy implications

The data suggests that current information on the location of older people is likely to remain unchanged as they continue to age at home, and can be regarded as fairly accurate data for planning future requirements, such as home care and other support for the older populations, in all locations, including non-city.

Similarly, the number of older people from non-English speaking backgrounds is fairly consistent (approximately 15% to 20%) and this is the group which needs specialist consideration in terms of meeting their needs. 'The proportion of persons 65 years and over is greater amongst the overseas-born population (17.7%) than for the Australian-born population (10.9%)' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). The lack of English language skills for many leads to greater reliance on their particular community group, and with increasing age, and ageing numbers, this is likely to become more problematic. Johnstone and Kanitsaki (2008, p110) suggests that in spite of 30 years of multicultural policies and programs 'older Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds are generally underserved by local health and social care services, experience unequal burdens of disease and encounter cultural and language barriers to accessing appropriate health care as they get older, compared to the Australian-born proficient English-speaking population'. They suggest that there is cultural racism. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Year Book 2005 states that 'older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds make less use of residential aged care services than the rest of Australia's older population'.

There is also evidence that nursing homes, in particular, are largely based on an Anglo Christian philosophy which may not provide a comfortable or familiar environment for people from other backgrounds, such as Muslim or Buddhist, or other ethnic language based groups. The demand for such residential care may increase in the immediate future but once established the data suggest it would be static. A detailed solution to the problem of ageing specific to ethnic groups, using clustering, 'locating together a small number of clients with the same ethnic background', to provide services for them, is given by Rowland (2007, p130).

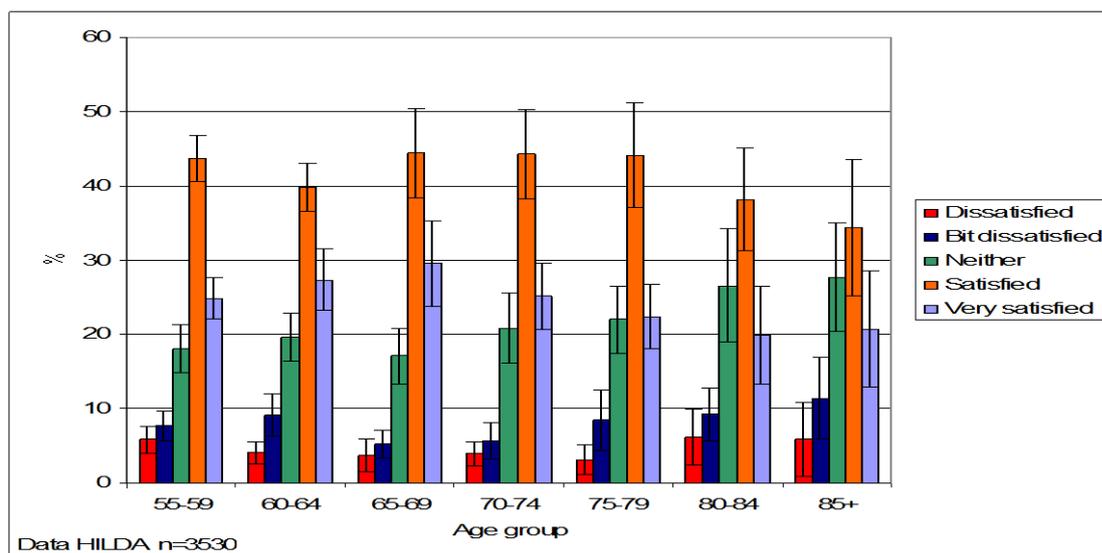
Section summary

The data suggest that there may be a consistency in the location proportions and ethnic backgrounds of people in the 55+ age group which should assist with future planning.

5.5.4 Lifestyle

This section includes health satisfaction, socialising, spare time, life satisfaction, feeling rushed, lonely, safe and part of the community. These are basic components in the lives of older Australians and are a reflection of their attitude to life.

Figure 9: Satisfaction with health by age group.

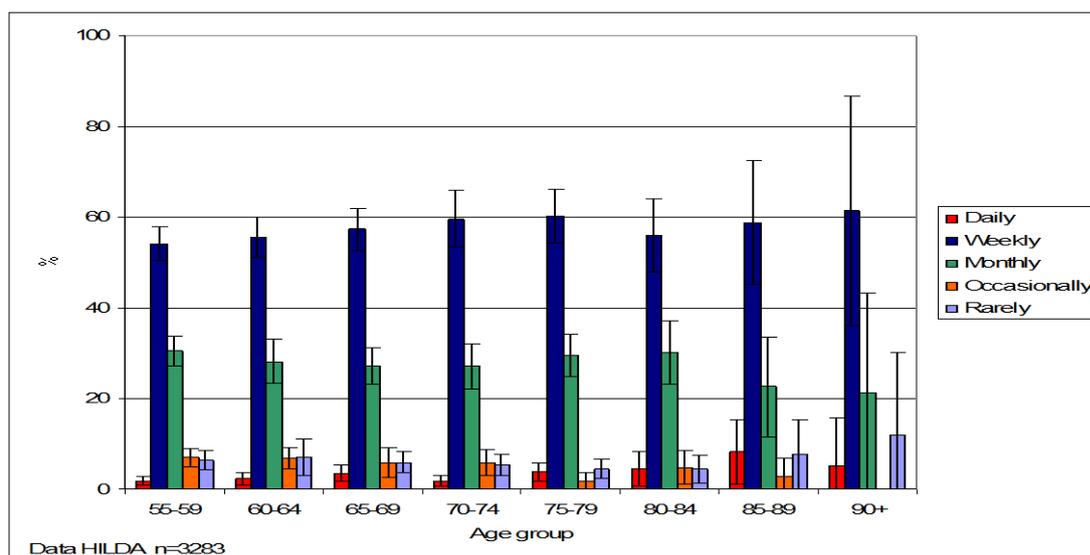


Respondents were asked to rank their satisfaction with their health on a scale of 0 – 10. These were condensed to six categories due to small cell sizes, with the first three (showing various levels of dissatisfaction) collapsed together, the rest paired. No significant change in satisfaction was shown in any category, suggesting a stable situation throughout the age groups. Few respondents recorded a degree of dissatisfaction and other studies suggest that respondents in the very dissatisfied category may be within the last two years of life (DeSalvo et al. 2006). The results shown here reflect the respondents' feelings about their health which is likely to affect their attitude to life. Walker and Hennessy (2005, p7) quote research which suggests that 'having to stay at home for health reasons increases by nearly three times the chances of having poor morale'.

In an Australian Bureau of Statistics publication *Australian Social Trends 1999*, the comment is made 'people's perceptions of their own health generally give a good indication of their mental and physical condition'. An earlier graph (Figure 3) indicated that people are more

likely to have a health condition/disability as they age, but this graph giving a stable response to the question of health satisfaction suggests that people come to terms with this, and accept it as part of the frailty of ageing. Victor (2005, p102) refers to one of the problems that arises with the health of older people: ‘Treatable illnesses are mis-ascribed by older people to the process of ageing rather than being the manifestation of “disease”. Consequently, older people do not seek appropriate treatment’. Gjonca and Marmot (2005) also pointed out that ‘women are thought to be in more frequent contact with health services and to be more health aware’. This did not show in the gender analysis.

Figure 10: Socialising by age group.



This data was in response to a question in which respondents were asked how frequently they got together with relatives /friends not living with them. Responses were consistent across all age groups except for the 75-79 age groups who reported socialising ‘occasionally’ less frequently than the younger age groups. The most common response for all groups was weekly, including for the 90+ group, with monthly the second most frequent response. This implies that most older people, including the old old, have a degree of involvement in the community.

Gender differences. Women in the 55-69 age groups were more likely to socialise weekly.

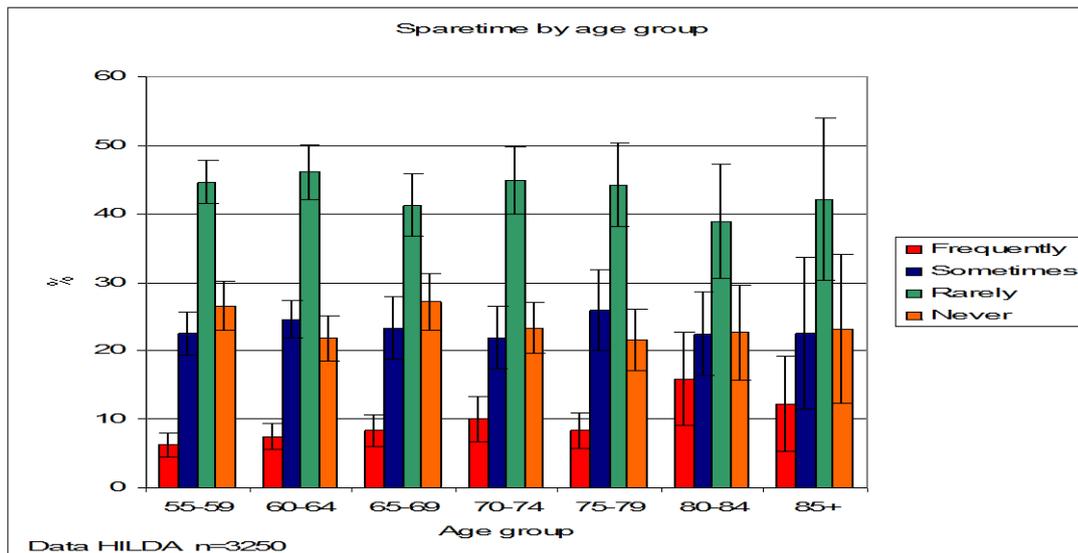
This question specifically referred to ‘getting together’ with friends etc and presumably excluded other forms of interaction and this appears to be a weakness in other research in this field which stresses physical contact. Other forms of communication, such as telephone and

email are also important in the lives of many older people, with email increasingly becoming a means of contact. It also has the advantage of being cheap and being distance independent which is particularly important for older people with restricted mobility, and those with interstate and overseas family. Many research projects fail to include these as a means of communication and socialising.

Several researchers have addressed the question of social networks and social connectedness with agreement that these play an important role in healthy ageing. Berkman et al. (2000, p103) highlight the importance of social networks. They argue that ‘networks operate at the behavioural level through four primary pathways: (1) provision of social support; (2) social influence; (3) on social engagement and attachment; and (4) access to resource and material goods’. Also different social roles provide ‘a sense of value, belonging and attachment’ (p107). Berkman, cited in Buettner (2008, p258), investigated social connectedness and longevity. Over a nine-year period she found that those with the most social connectedness lived longer. The type of connectedness was not important. This is duplicated in the comment by Sax (1993), also citing Russell (1986), whose research indicated that those with numerous social ties have lower death rates than those with fewer contacts. Wiles and Wiles (2003, p132) make similar claims: ‘People who participate in several social domains, such as family, friends, work, and other groups, have a variety of health benefits. They include better survival from heart attacks, lower recurrence of cancer and less depression’. Rowland (2007, p136) states that ‘social capital in the form of social and civic engagement and cooperation appears to bestow advantages of wellbeing and resilience on communities, as well as on individuals’. The social capital created by older people in their communities tends to be disregarded. McKeivitt et al. (2005) found that increased contact with others is most likely to improve self-esteem.

In its 2004 General Social Survey, the ABS found that ‘people born overseas, especially those born in other than main English speaking countries, were more likely than those born in Australia to have lower levels of social attachment’ (ABS 2004b). These groups are missing out on an important part of successful and healthy ageing. This thesis argues that connection with the community is an important ingredient of successful ageing and this should be facilitated, through assistance with transport for example.

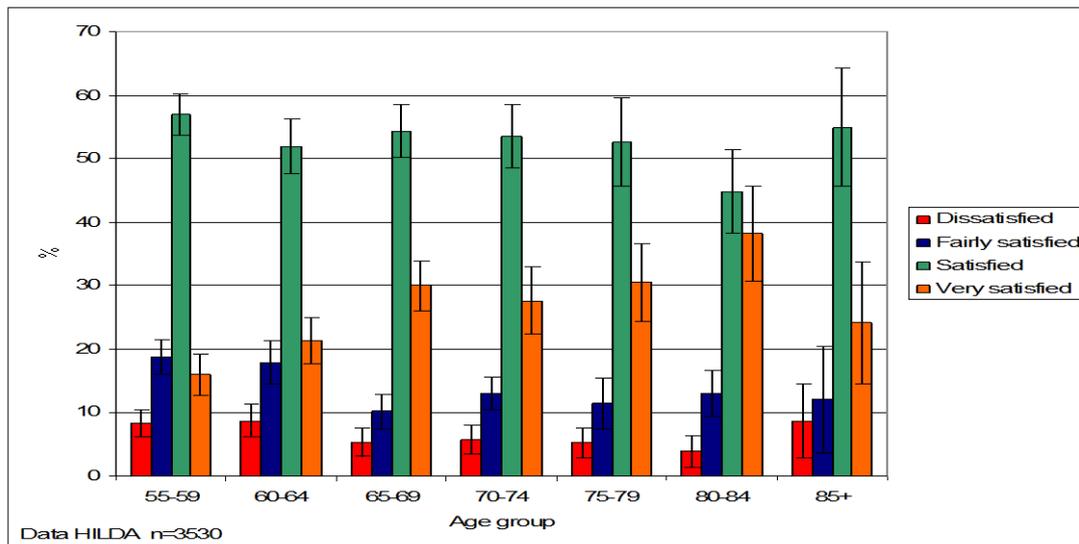
Figure 11: Spare time by age group.



This question addressed the issue as to whether older people ‘had time on their hands’ and implies that they may have been sitting at home in a state of boredom and perhaps depression. The respondents who recorded ‘always’ were around the 10% mark throughout the age groups and were very much in the minority. The data suggests that the majority of older people lead busy lives. The type of activities engaged in is not recorded and these could either be time-filling activities or activities connected with having a purpose, including those still in the workforce, shown in figure 52. The responses indicate that most older people are prepared to become involved and those who always have time on their hands should be encouraged and facilitated to become involved in a purposeful activity. The ‘Late Bloomers’ discussed previously have found a purpose in their lives which counteracts ‘having spare time’.

Gender differences. More men in the 70-74 age group said that they had spare time on their hands ‘sometimes’ and more women in the 75-79 age group said that they never had spare time.

Figure 12: Satisfaction with life by age group.

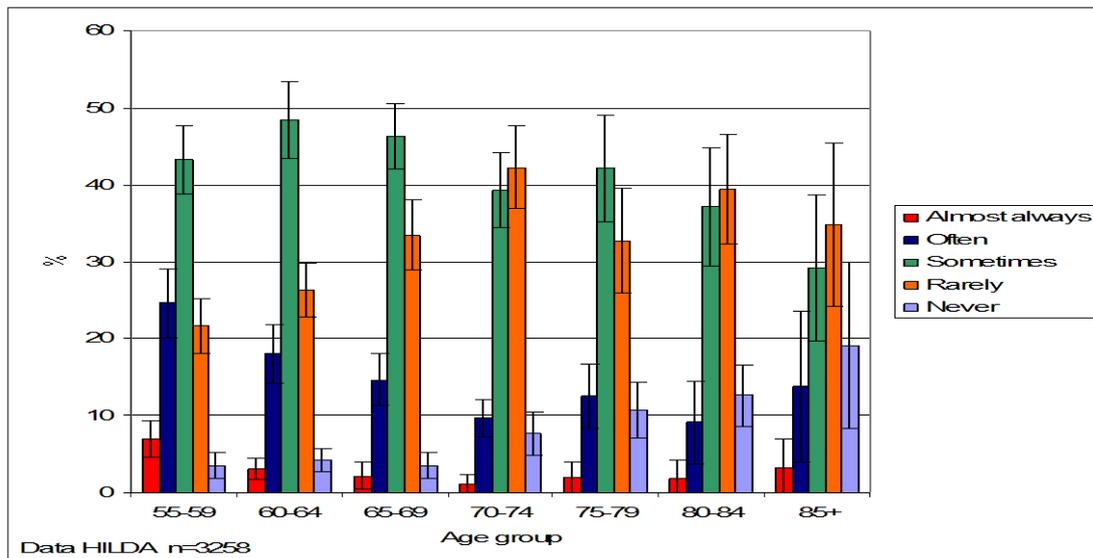


Respondents were asked to rate on a score of 0-10 their satisfaction with life. Small cell results in the lower values (0 to 5), resulted in these responses being classified together as ‘dissatisfied’, the other responses were paired except for a response of 10 which was isolated as ‘very satisfied’. Not only is the ‘dissatisfied’ response a minority response, it also covered more than half of the possible response scores before cell collapsing. This data suggests a high level of satisfaction with life among older people. Encouragement of older people to become more involved in projects which had a purpose, particularly among the ‘dissatisfied’, would improve the situation.

2007 data trends. In the 65-69 age group, fewer people recorded either fairly satisfied, or very satisfied with life. In the 80-84 age group, there was a fall in the ‘very satisfied’ response.

Whitbourne and Sneed (2004, p250) compared various research studies and found that, in spite of ‘ the existence of ageism and other negative social indicators associated with ageing, the majority of older adults maintain a positive sense of subjective well-being’. They describe this as the ‘paradox of well-being’. Madigan et al. (1996) make the point that ‘Generally speaking, purposeful activity is beneficial to life satisfaction’ which supports the argument in this thesis of the need to have a purpose in life.

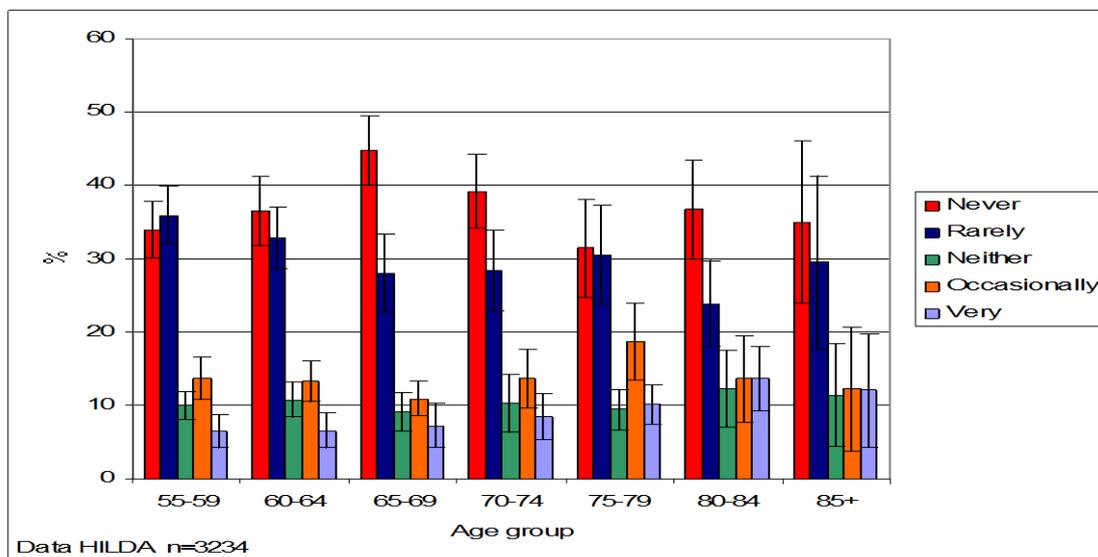
Figure 13: Rushed or pressed for time by age group.



Respondents were asked how often they felt rushed on a scale of 1-5. The ‘almost always’ and ‘often’ responses occurred most frequently amongst the younger age groups who may still be in the workforce and who may also be caring for younger and older relatives, or both. The latter group are referred to as the ‘sandwich group’.

Gender differences. Women in the 70-74 age group were more likely than men to feel rushed.

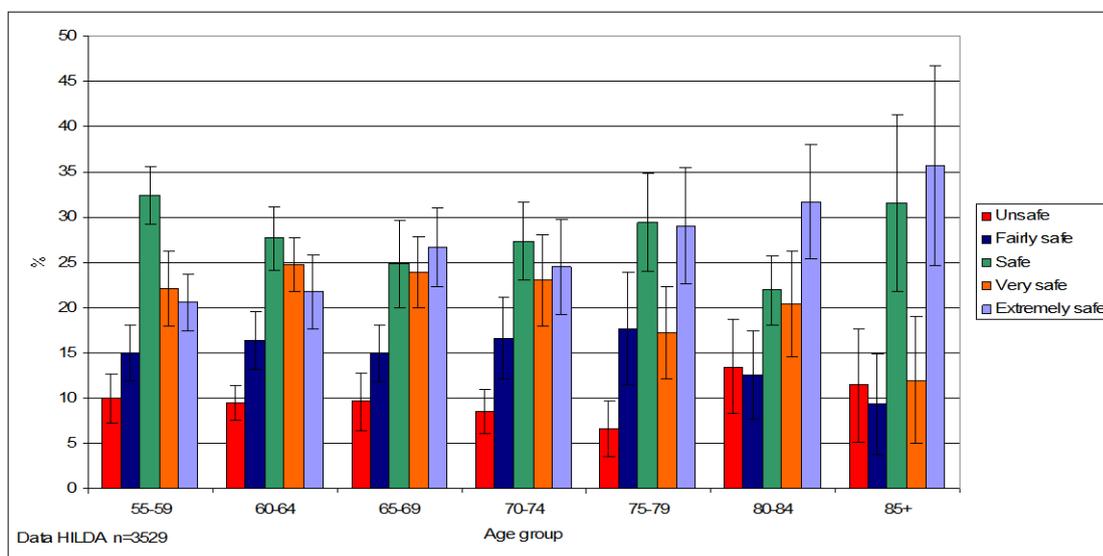
Figure 14: Response to ‘I often feel very lonely’



Feeling lonely was recorded on a scale of 1-7. Responses 2 and 3 were paired as ‘Rarely’, and responses 5 and 6 were paired as ‘Occasionally’. The data suggest that for the majority of older people, loneliness is not a problem, although for a substantial minority it is.

Research into loneliness by Steed et al. (2007) indicates that ‘the protective value against loneliness of social networks appears to be, in order of importance: friends, relatives, neighbours and children’. This again supports the argument for encouraging older people to become involved with groups with similar interests or become involved with new ones, as occurred with the Late Bloomers. Loneliness may be an indication of depression among older people. The neglect of this condition is of concern in the UK and Germany (Naegele and Walker 2009), which raises the idea of cooperation and research exchange and comparison, between countries with similar ageing populations. Isolation, which is allied to loneliness, is often linked with health problems or some form of disability (Victor and Scharf 2005).

Figure 15: Feel safe by age group.

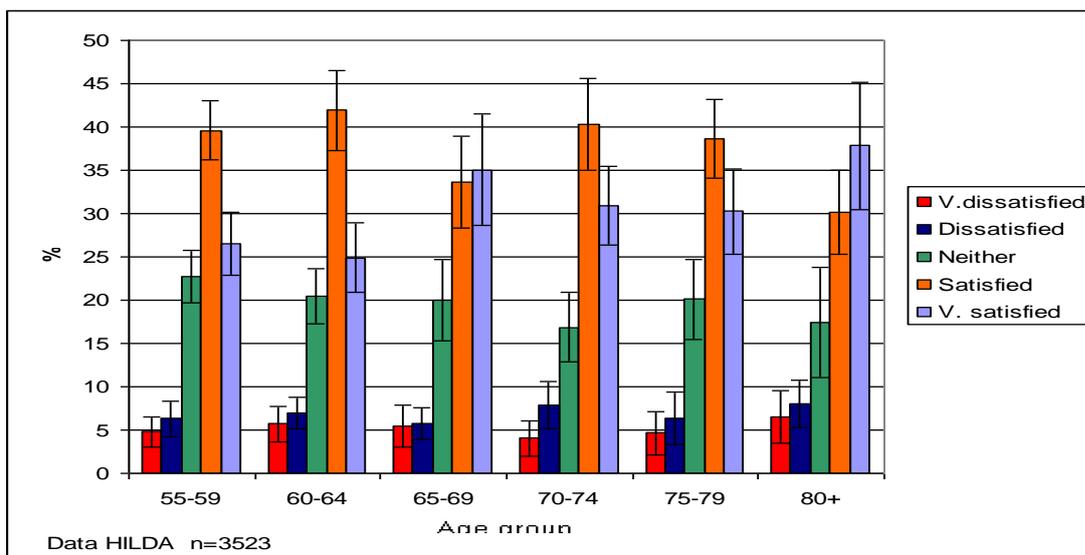


Responses were on a scale of 1-10. Negative responses 0-5 were collapsed due to small cell sizes and labelled ‘unsafe’. Responses 6 and 7 were paired and labelled ‘Fairly safe’. The data indicates that the majority of older people feel safe in their environment, with increased responses of ‘very safe’ among older people. This could be attributable to the fact that many of them have lived in their current neighbourhoods for many years and know their neighbours, and are known by them.

Quine and Morrell (2008, p75) suggest that the media may be at least partially responsible for the impression that older people are not safe. They cite Gilbert and Zdenskowski (1997) in

saying that while news reports provide an important source of information about crime they ‘are skewed in favour of unusual and horrifying events, such as violent crimes against older people’. They mention other studies which show that older people ‘are not overly concerned for their own safety’ which reinforces the data above. The importance of this aspect of the lives of older people is highlighted by Kirkwood (2005, p78) ‘In particular, a poor environment can reinforce a tendency for the older person to suffer social isolation, which in turn can exacerbate psychological and physical deterioration’. The development of ‘age-friendly’ cities may help to address this aspect of ageing.

Figure 16: Part of the local community by age group.



Respondents were asked to rate their degree of satisfaction with feeling part of the community on a scale of 0-10. Responses 0, 1 and 2 ‘Very dissatisfied’ were grouped and the rest were grouped in pairs (3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8, 9 and 10). Most older people are satisfied with this aspect of their lives.

2007 data trends. A comparison of the graphs suggest that the 65-69 age group recorded a fall in the ‘very good’ response.

Johnson et al. (2005 p2, 3) point out that ‘Australia appears to have high levels of social capital in comparison with other Western countries’. The benefits of this relevant to this research include ‘improved physical health, self-rated happiness and public safety’.

Whitbourne and Sneed (2004, p252) suggest that ‘Older people perceive their future time as limited, and therefore engage in a process of reducing the size of their social networks’. The data does not support this. Ter Muelen and Ubachs-Moust (2005, p661) suggest that

‘reinforcing social participation by the elderly will result in better health and probably less demand for care’. It will also help to combat negative ageism. ‘Observing elderly people carrying out a variety of social roles has been shown to override the more restrictive stereotypes of the past’ (Kite 1996). This supports the aim of this thesis that encouraging older people to have a purpose, and to be seen to be productive, will not only benefit people in this later stage of life but also the country. Ageing will be seen as a desirable state, thus promoting positive ageing. Browning et al. (2005 p53) point out that ‘the availability of social support can influence physical and mental health’. Again this supports the need for provision of transport to enable participation in social activities.

Policy implications

Self assessed health reflects in part the approach to life of older people, particularly their attitude at the start of each day. Policies aimed at improving this, such as promotion of exercise for improvement in both physical and mental health, will ensure better health outcomes, thus reducing health costs and improving life for older Australians. It is important for successful ageing that older people are not living in isolation, and provision should be made, in terms of venue and staff, for older people to have the opportunity to socialise, particularly if it is part of a productive enterprise. Socialising provides older people with the feeling that they are part of the community, a vital ingredient in successful and healthy ageing. Assistance with transport, if required, is a necessary part of this. In its General Social Survey, the ABS (2004b, p11) points out the importance of appropriate transport ‘Lack of access to transport due to problems of affordability, safety, availability, convenience, and appropriateness of the type of transport available can act as a barrier to people’s participation in the range of social, civic and economic activities of mainstream society’. Groups, including self supporting groups such as U3A (referred to above), and community groups, should be given assistance to organise appropriate activities, particularly meaningful and long term activities. It is important that initiatives for such activities come from older people themselves, with organisational support if necessary.

The Queensland Government has a specific, five pronged approach to reduce social isolation of older people, including increasing referral pathways, culturally appropriate volunteer services and falls prevention programs. This should be done in partnership with older people.

Older people who record a positive response to not having spare time on their hands, to socialising and to satisfaction with life could be less likely to require medical intervention

and are areas worthy of government financial and other investment, through the auspices of groups either run by older people, or in conjunction with them. The main aim should be to provide opportunities for older people to engage in appropriate activities, and provision made for contact with those who are not so involved. Lack of opportunity to become involved may be a problem. With larger and often anonymous communities as more people live in cities, and the decreasing influence of churches, which in the past provided social activities, the loneliness of older people, particularly those living as single people, may become an increasing problem. Positive responses to the loneliness question could have health implications. The data reaffirms the need to facilitate the participation of older people in the community. It suggests that when opportunities are available, older people will take the opportunity to become involved.

A major part of community involvement is the perception of safety. It is important that older people feel safe within their communities and are able to move freely within them. They are more likely to be part of the community and involved with it. The question needs further investigation to identify areas described by older people as 'unsafe', either geographically or within the home, and these should be addressed.

The Australian Local Government Association (2006) has produced guidelines for age-friendly built environments. The strength of their argument lies in the fact that cities which are age friendly are also friendly for other age groups. Feeling part of the community follows on from this and highlights the importance of encouraging older people to lead active lives which include community involvement. Knowledge of community groups which older people might wish to join should be freely available and circulated, together with contact details for the activity, and for transport assistance.

Section summary

The data presented here suggests that the majority of older people have a very positive approach to life. They are involved, and feel part of, the community. The results suggest that most of them do not have time on their hands or feel lonely. Although this latter group is a small percentage of the older population, this is the group that needs assistance, both in terms of physical and mental health issues, and also with the quality of life connected with this.

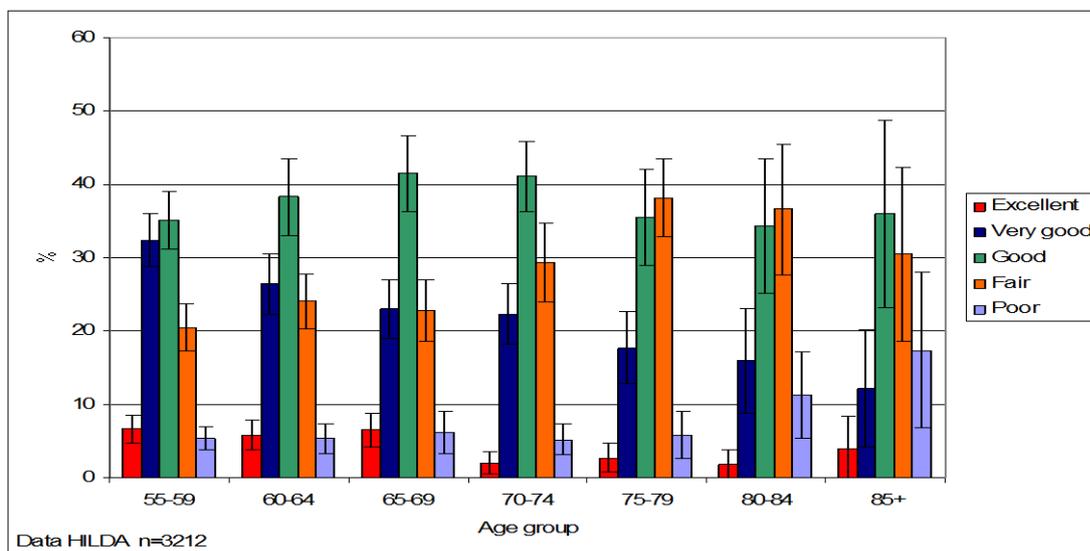
This thesis argues that for successful and healthy ageing it is important that older people have a purpose in life, or a life plan or long term goals. This question was not specifically asked in the survey and has only partially been answered in the available questions. Many older people, when asked what they do, respond with ‘I’m busy’ or ‘I’m very busy’ without specifying what is involved with this. The responses in this section suggest that many older Australians, particularly in the younger age groups whose attitude to retirement is still flexible, would be capable of adopting a purpose in life, including being involved in a community project, if this was presented as an option to just ‘being busy’.

5.6 Fitness and health

The questions in this section have been divided into three parts, differentiating between the different aspects of fitness and health.

5.6.1 Self assessed health and physical capabilities

Figure 17: Self assessed health by age group.



Respondents were asked to assess their health according to the categories shown. Other studies suggest that people who self assess their health as ‘poor’ on a general measure of self rated health had twice the risk of mortality than those reporting their health as ‘excellent’ (De Salvo et al. 2006). The majority of older people have a positive view of their health which will influence their attitude to life, and involvement with it. Self assessed health, or self-rated health, ‘is a key indicator of well-being’ (Anstey et al., 2007). This same study compared poor or fair rating with increased incidence of various health and social problems, and other

issues such as education level. Results from seven different Australian longitudinal studies were compared in their research.

This graph also needs to be compared with Figure 3 which showed an increase in the reporting of health conditions/ disabilities as respondents got older, which does not seem to be reflected in this graph. It suggests that as people age they accept increasing frailty and adapt to it, particularly those who are still living at home who are the focus of this study. There is a need to continue with a satisfying life, making any necessary adjustments for physical deterioration.

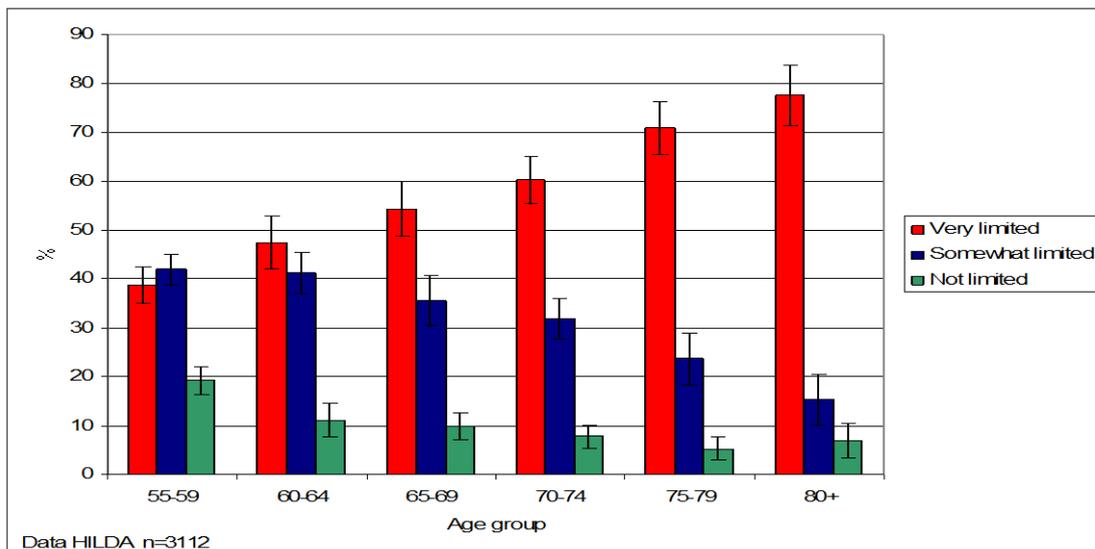
2007 data trends. The graphs suggest a move to a more positive response, particularly in the 75-79 age group.

In an earlier 2001 National Health Survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, also conducted among older people living in the community, quoted in Mathers (2007, p46), 'older Australians reported overwhelmingly that they had good, very good or excellent health'. This supports the data here.

It is anticipated that in future, as 'baby boomers are concerned about their health and will be healthier than their parents in older age' (Quine and Carter 2006, p4), together with medical advances, this picture will change, with more reporting better health.

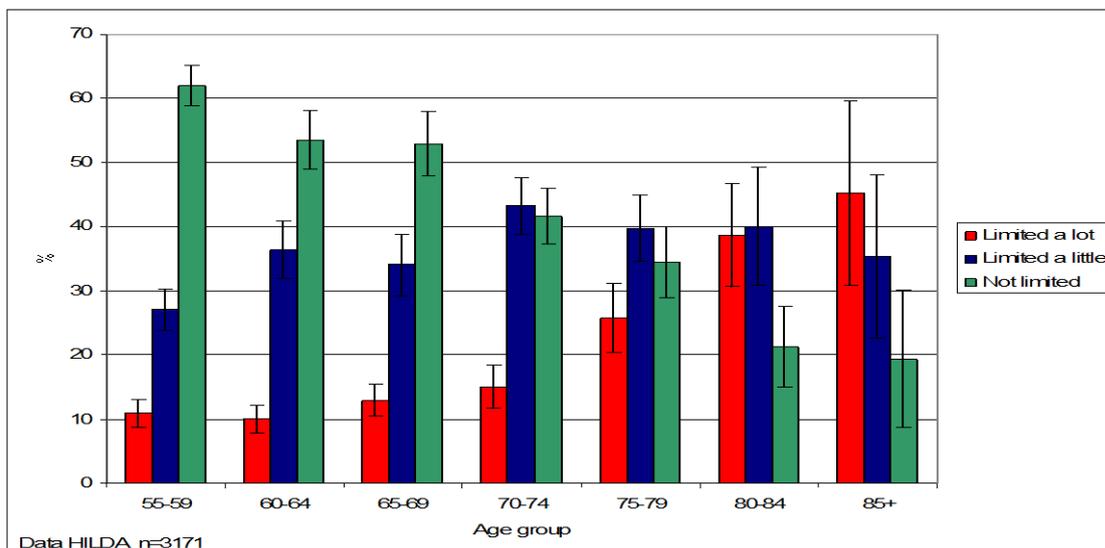
Rowland (2007, p138) reinforces the importance of healthy lifestyles 'Promotion of healthy lifestyles can be viewed as part of human capital development that benefits individuals'.

Figure 18: Ability to undertake vigorous activities by age group.



Respondents were asked to assess how capable they were of engaging in vigorous physical activities according to the categories shown. As anticipated, the number who regard themselves as physically limited increases with the frailty of age. There was no definition of ‘vigorous physical activities’.

Figure 19: Ability to undertake moderate physical activity by age group.



This is similar to the previous graph but referring to moderate physical activity, which again was not defined. The frailty associated with ageing is again taking a toll.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics paper on ‘The Health of Older People’ (2002) lists low levels of physical activity as a contributor to falls, which may lead to reduced mobility or death in older people.

Policy implications

Encouraging physical activity would be financially advantageous for the community in terms of health costs, and monitoring the encouragement of this would be beneficial both to the older people and the community. The questions should have been more accurately defined to provide a clearer picture. It is important that older people be encouraged to maintain good physical health. There needs to be more public awareness (with older people shown in the advertising) and easily available ways of achieving this, including fitness programs for use in the home. Health responses to such campaigns should be monitored regularly to assess their success, particularly in the negative ageing environment in which decisions tend to be made for older people, rather than with them, or by them. Activities such as gardening or shopping may have been included by some older respondents, but not by others. There needs to be more research into the field of desirable physical exercise, its definition and extent, among older people.

Section summary

These graphs provide an overview of the health of older Australians. Self assessed health is particularly important as positive responses indicate a willingness to get out of bed each day and tackle the day's activities.

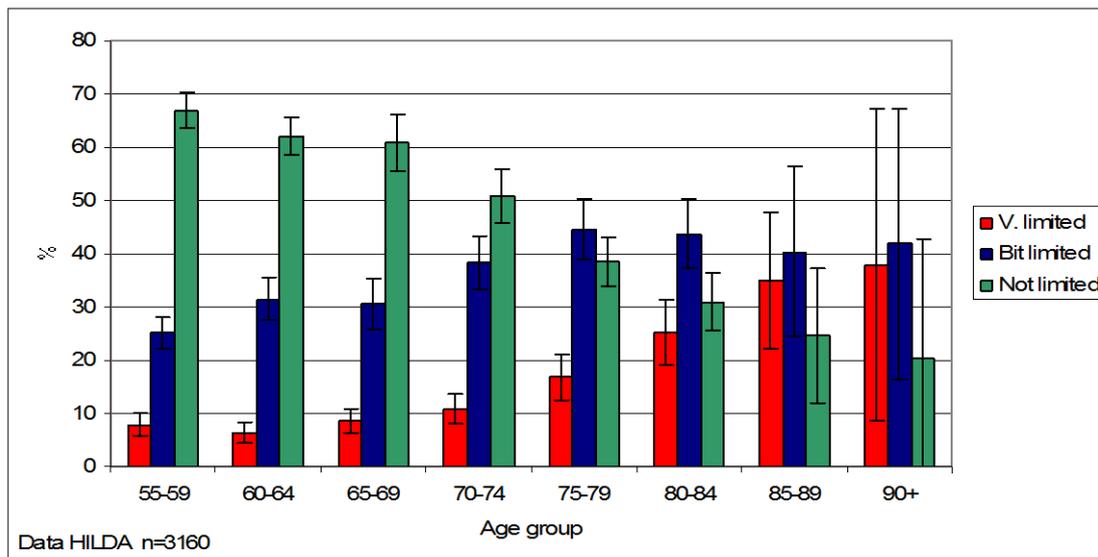
The latter two graphs suffer from lack of definition but reflect a positive attitude towards either vigorous or moderate physical activity, which tends to deteriorate with ageing as physical strength deteriorates.

5.6.2 Daily living and health limitations

The following graphs refer to restrictions, or otherwise, on specified daily activities, such as lifting groceries, climbing stairs, walking specific distances, and bathing and dressing oneself. They also include self assessment of physical activity and the extent to which health problems interfere with social activities.

The graphs give an indication of the perceived level of independence of older people in each category. Cell sizes were small for the older age groups but it was felt that it was important to get a picture of life for the old old, even if percentage values are not accurate and have to be referred to as 'some' people in the older age groups, rather than providing specific data.

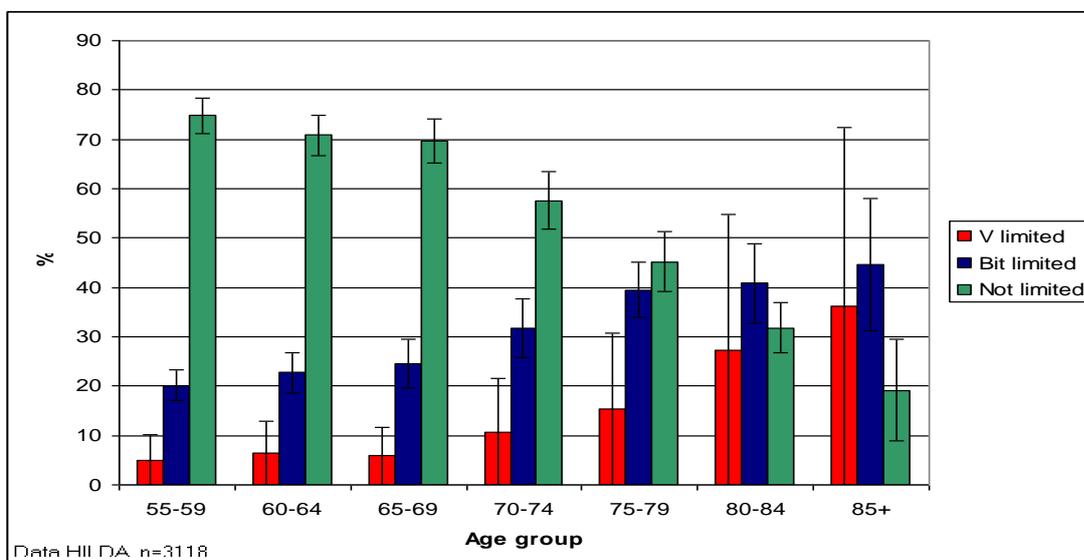
Figure 20: Ability to lift or carry groceries by age group.



The data reflects the ability to continue independent living. In some local government areas and in private aged care accommodation (not included in this data) those who no longer drive are able to use private, semi-public or public transport to go shopping. The ability to carry groceries gives even those who may be restricted in other ways a degree of independence if they have access to appropriate transport.

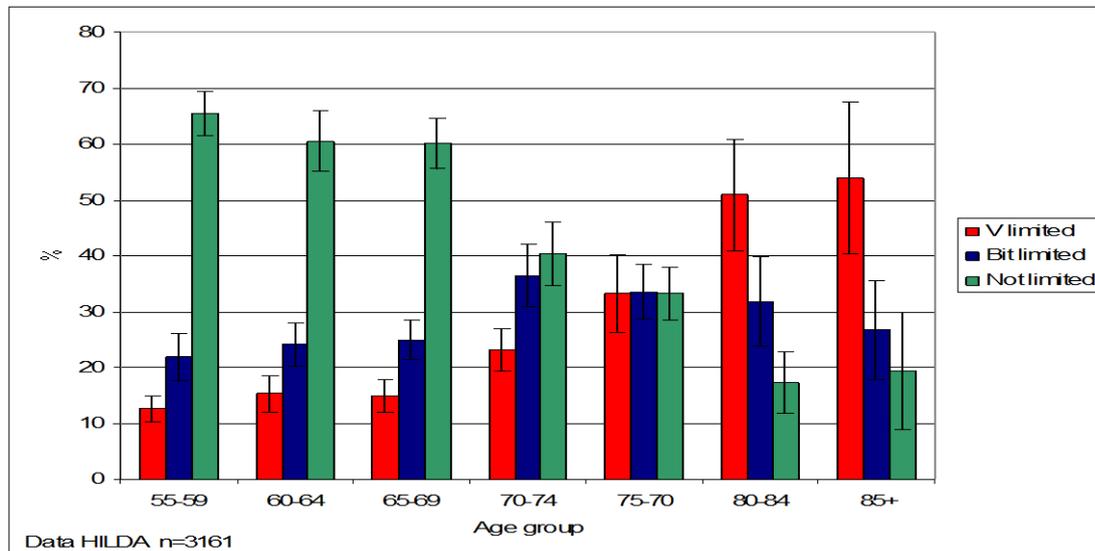
Gender differences. In all age groups, more men said that they were not limited in their ability to lift and carry groceries.

Figure 21: The ability to climb one flight of stairs by age group.



Again this graph reflects increasing frailty with age yet a significant number of 85+ year olds still report being able to climb a flight of stairs. Respondents were also asked to state their ability to climb several flights of stairs but for older people, using a lift would probably be more practical so this question was not pursued. The data again reinforces the idea that a significant number of even the old old are still quite mobile and capable of physical activity.

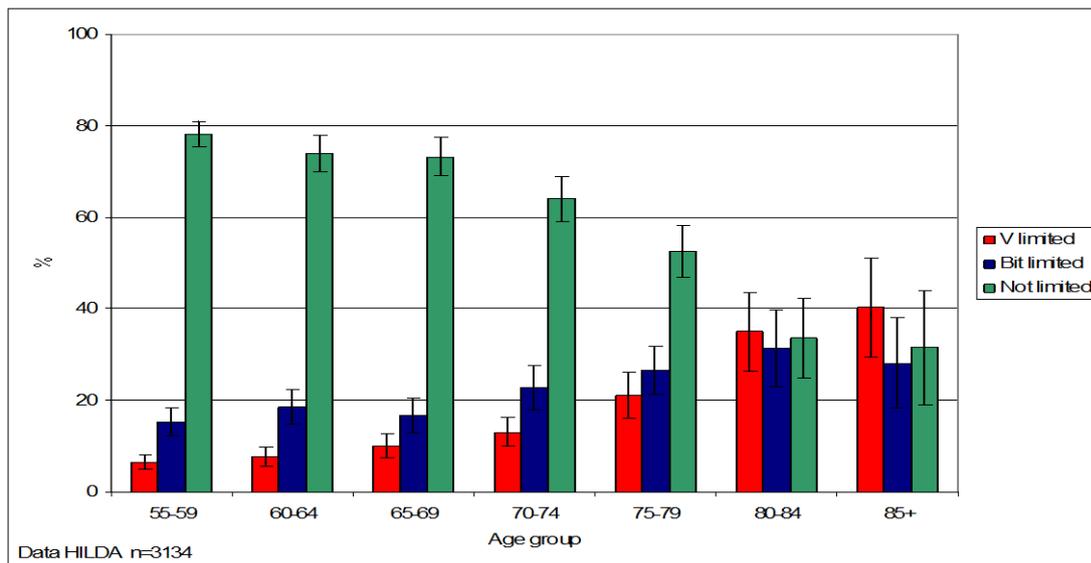
Figure 22: Ability to walk more than 1 km by age group.



These results reinforce the findings of the previous graphs. This question provided an insight into other activities which older people are still capable of achieving, even the very old. It is significant in providing support for those who wish to continue with independent living, and in terms of recreational activities available to older people. Many of the old old are still capable of walking a kilometre.

The benefits of walking extend beyond physical fitness. Wiles and Wiles (2003, p129) extol the benefits of walking, quoting research showing that people who walk at least 1.6kms per day are 'least likely to develop cognitive decline'. They suggest that this exercise 'stimulates the growth and survival of brain cells'. Mobility is important, particularly for older people. Holland et al. (2005, p49) cite 'shopping, working, socialising, using services, and giving and receiving support. Beyond the practical, most older people also relish the pleasures and challenges of life beyond the home and strive to maintain as long as possible their independence and ability to get out and about'. They also found in their research that 'poor morale became increasingly prevalent with worsening mobility' (p52). This stresses the need to encourage older people to maintain their physical health.

Figure 23: Ability to walk half a km by age group.

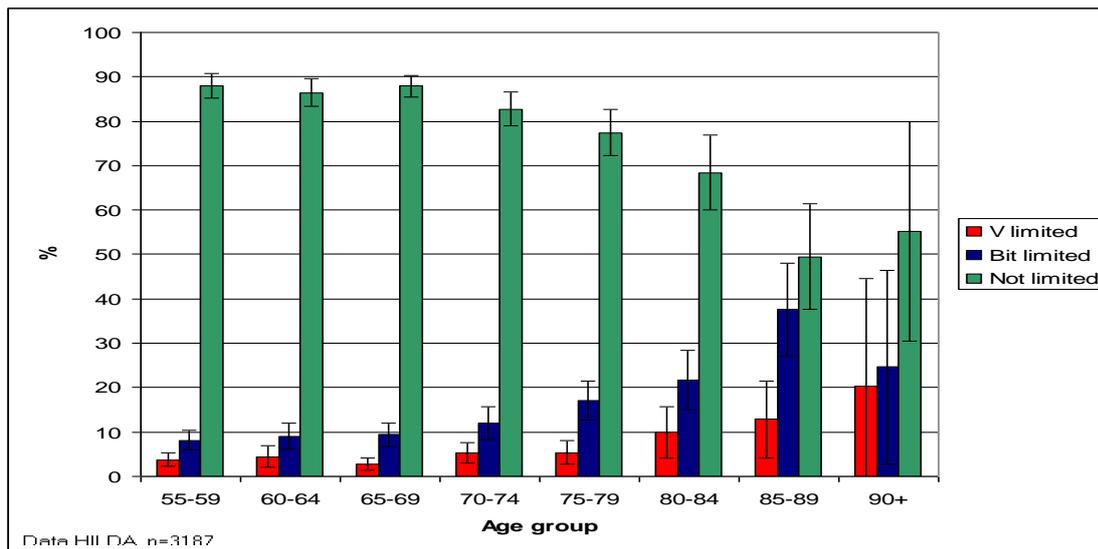


This question implies that except for those who are very limited, respondents would be able to participate in extended shopping trips, for example, and similar activities, even if they had to rely on public or private transport for access.

Availability of appropriate seating, at the right height and with support arms, for temporary rest in areas frequented by older people, both in shopping centres or in local government gardens and parks, for example, is also important (Jones et al. 1992). Underhill (2009, p145) suggests that for stores ‘having benches scattered through the store is both an act of kindness and guerrilla marketing’. He adds ‘any waiting area is a fantastic selling and communications point. Your audience is captive, ready to read any and all information you give them’.

Berry (2007, p241) point out that ‘Whether or not a person has access to an automobile, either as a driver or passenger, is a powerful determinant of mobility in countries like Australia’. Whilst accepting this, it is also important to enable people to use non-car mobility. He also points out that retirement villages ‘tend to be located in outer suburban areas of large cities’ and this can ‘radically reduce an elderly person’s mobility capacity’. The provision of appropriate transport has been referred to previously. Rosenbloom (2001, p378) maintains that ‘older people were increasingly likely to maintain their reliance on cars or walking. Walking becomes more important for the over-75-year olds’.

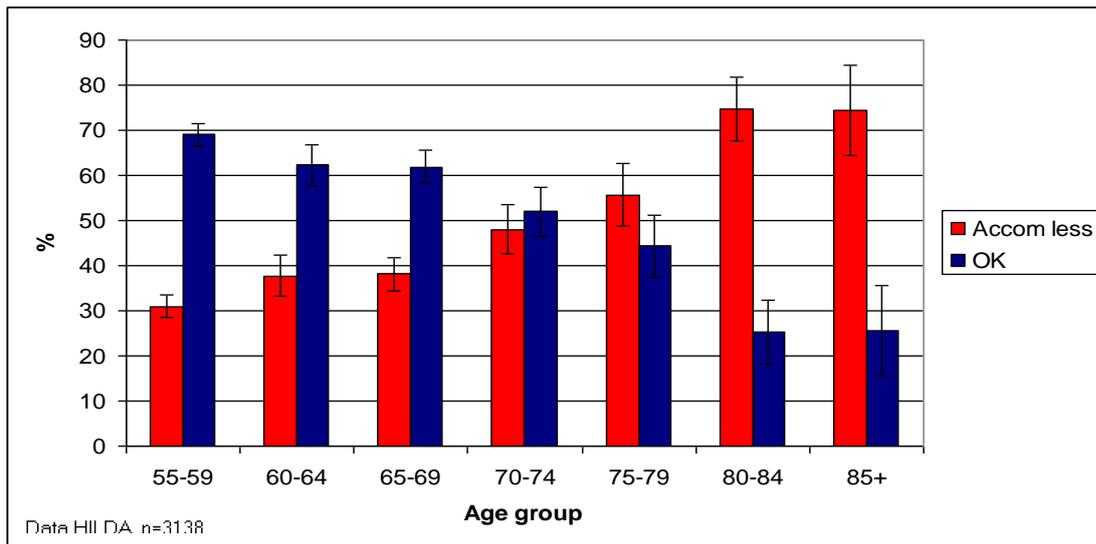
Figure 24: Ability to bath or dress oneself by age group.



This question relates to the start of the day for older people, and their level of independence. Those who can bath and dress themselves can begin the day when they wish to do so, whilst those who are very limited may have to wait until a helper, either a family member, or carer, or publicly provided assistance, such as home care, arrives. This takes away their independence and is likely to add to the frustration caused by increased frailty in ageing. As expected, the limitations increase with age.

In research into functional interdependence, Del Aguila et al. (2006) found that ‘utilisation of supplementary services (home-care) is a function of insufficient network capacity and constraints associated with residential location (neighbourhood)’. This also applies to utilisation of replacement services (day-care). The availability of assistance, and the awareness of its availability, can have a positive impact as frailty increases. This is particularly important as the move out of the family home is a major event for older people. They lose connection with their community and also their ‘sense of self-identity is altered by a move to a residential home, which is often seen as “living in someone else’s home”’ (Walker and Naegele 2009, p14).

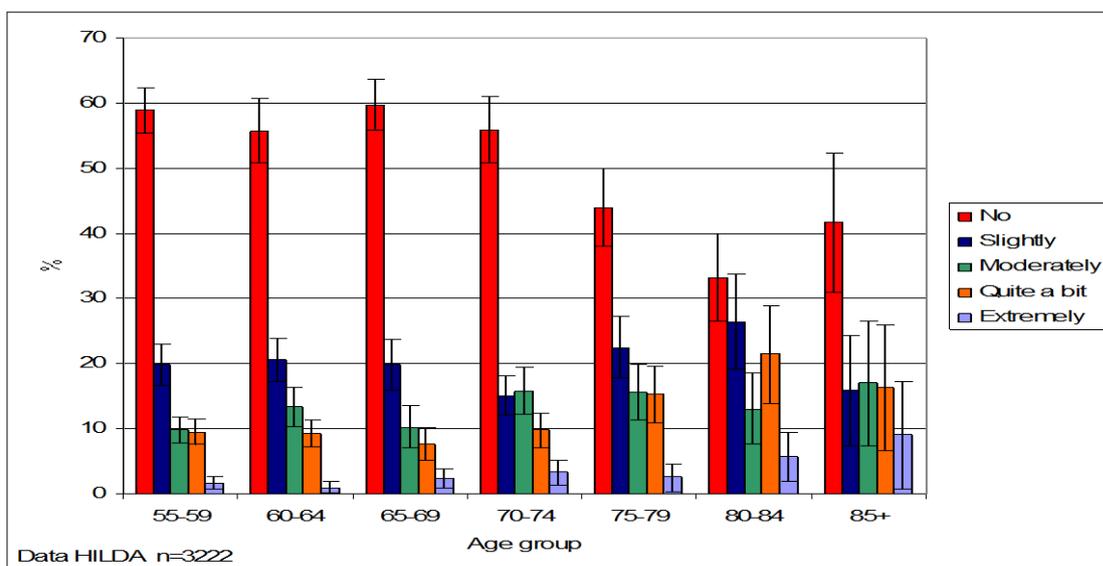
Figure 25: Accomplished less than would like physically by age group.



The graph illustrates the physical degeneration as a result of ageing and the frustration this can create. As people become more frail with ageing, activities they could perform when younger are no longer available to them. This is particularly true of household activities, such as house painting, changing light bulbs etc. This is reflected in the increased levels of ‘accomplished less’.

Gender differences. More women than men in the 55-59 age group expressed disappointment in their physical achievements.

Figure 26: Physical/emotional health interfered with normal social activities by age group.



Respondents were given the five categories shown to respond to this question. Some people in all age groups felt that their social life was affected to some extent by their health, with the figure rising to approximately 55% or higher for the 75+ ages.

As life expectancy increases the number of years of healthy ageing takes on more importance. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004c) publishes tables of 'Disability and long term health condition status'. What is more important is data such as shown in this graph which indicates the extent to which people's lives are affected by health problems, not the existence of problems. Problems such as eye and ear deficiencies may be corrected and have no effect. Even people with more serious conditions, such as diabetes, which is listed as a chronic disease, can cope with it and be able to lead normal lives

Policy implications

Assistance in the activities of bathing and dressing oneself is particularly important. The need for it is a valuable indicator and may signal an impending move away from home care to aged care accommodation.

It is important that aged care accommodation be built with easy access to shopping facilities, with provision of accessible transport facilities. Also other transport options, such as taxi tokens or that provided by community organisations, can assist those at home and requiring transport assistance, to maintain a degree of independence.

The graphs relating to carrying groceries, climbing stairs and walking reflect the physical attainments of even the old old. Policy should be to encourage older people to maintain these skills, either by ensuring access to shopping, libraries, community and recreation centres where they can be utilised, or by encouraging use through exercise programs such as neighbourhood walking groups or programs in fitness centres, or home fitness programs.

Physical degeneration through ageing, as indicated by comparison of sports results by age group, particularly in athletics, cannot currently be prevented, but easy access to physical fitness information, and assistance with participation, can slow it down, with obvious health (and health cost reduction) implications. Where such degeneration is inevitable, older people should have access to assistance. Maintaining older people in their homes should be public policy at all levels, and is increasing with widespread acknowledgement that this is a cheaper, and often more acceptable, option than residential care for older people. The presence of

assistance, as a right, is an important part of successful ageing. Acknowledgement and fulfilment of this need should help to reduce the frustration of physical impairment with ageing.

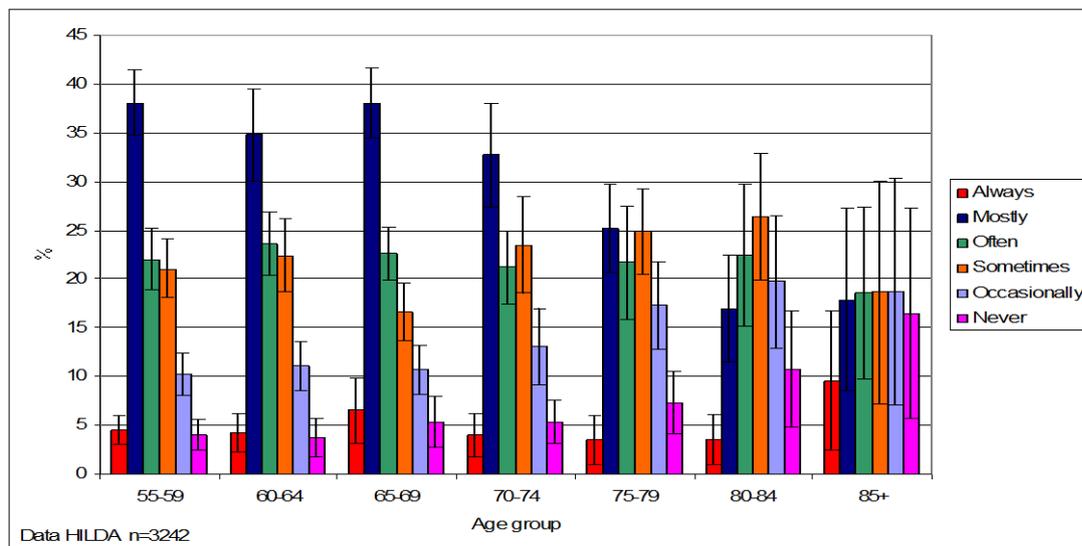
Section summary

This part was based on specific activities available to older people. It provides a positive view, with the acceptance that as people age they are more restricted in their physical activities. 'Older people' friendly environments can assist with maintaining physical skills. All towns and cities should be encouraged to become 'age' friendly.

5.6.3 Attitude towards life and health indicators

The following graphs, still in the field of health, refer to the state of mind of older people in particular areas. They assess the extent to which older people feel full of life, down in the dumps, calm and peaceful and tired. These are followed by the three measures of general health, mental health and any change in health over the past year derived from responses to previous questions and these provide a more professional assessment of physical and mental health, based on the responses of older people. Change in health provides a less subjective comparison of each respondent's replies compared to those given in the previous year.

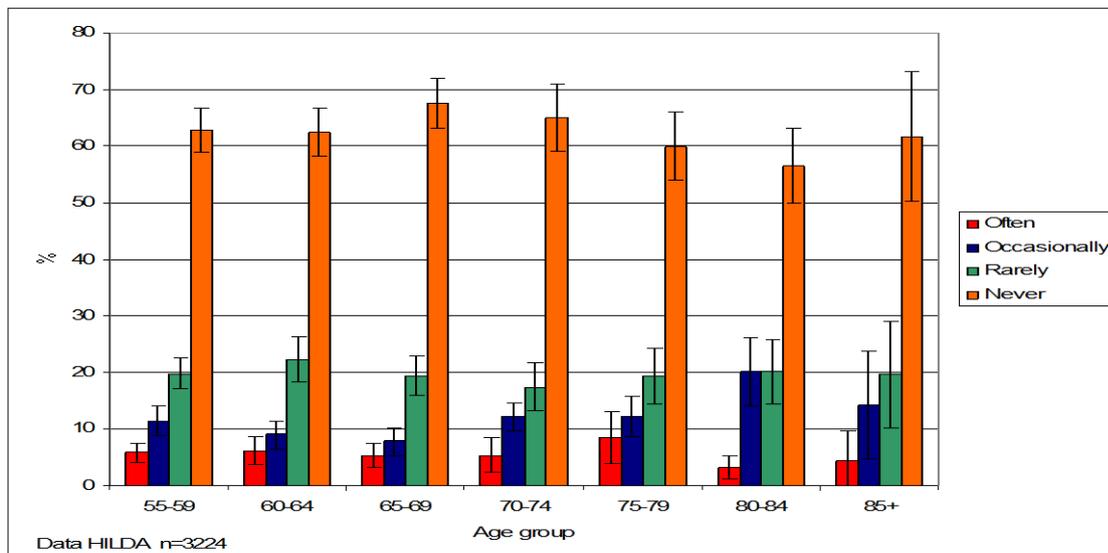
Figure 27: Vitality: Feel full of life by age group.



Respondents were given the six categories shown for their responses. The length of the confidence intervals is a reminder of the smaller size in the 85+ group. The two right hand categories suggest a problem for the old old in particular, as the data suggests that feeling full

of life appears to diminish with ageing. However even among the old old there are some who feel that they always, or mostly, feel full of vitality.

Figure 28: Mental health: Felt so down in the dumps nothing could cheer you up, by age group.

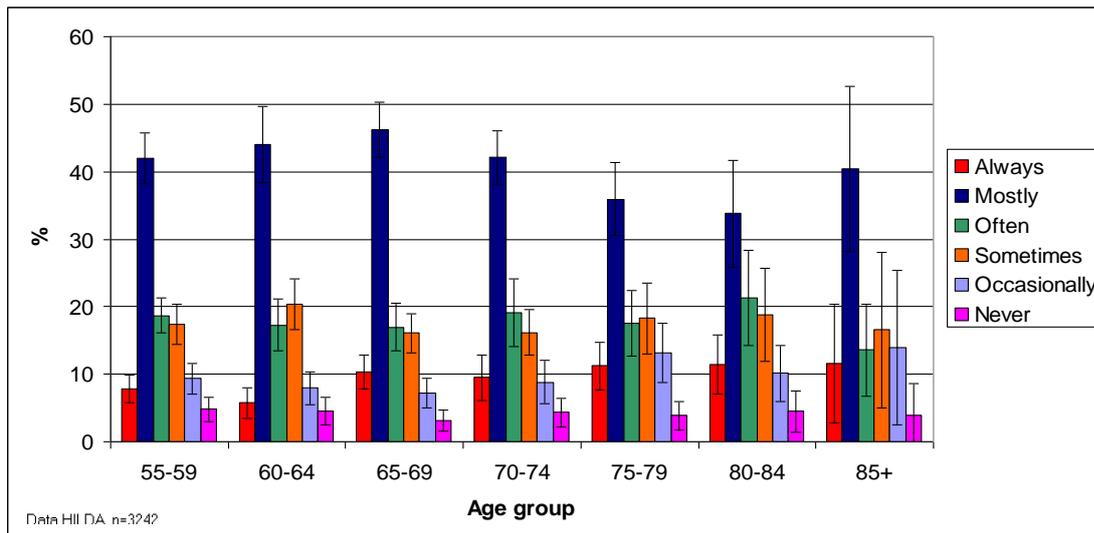


Respondents were given 6 categories for their responses. The first three, ‘all of the time’, ‘most of the time’ and ‘a bit of the time’ were collapsed to ‘often’ due to small cell sizes. Even with this combination, most older people do not record feeling depressed regularly, with over half in all age groups reporting that they never do.

This measure of depression is an important aspect of ageing at home and has been the subject of other research. Nguyen (2006), in research into the accuracy of depression screening, comment that depression is prevalent among community- dwelling elderly but is often undiagnosed. A more concerning result is the finding of Lewin and Calver (2006, p86). Their research suggests that ‘screening positive for depression was associated with lower service use’ which suggests a degree of isolation among sufferers. This emphasises the importance of the availability of information on services provided for older people living at home. There are health consequences associated with ignoring the problem. Epel (2005) showed that both prolonged psychological stress and the perception of stress are related to cell life and disease.

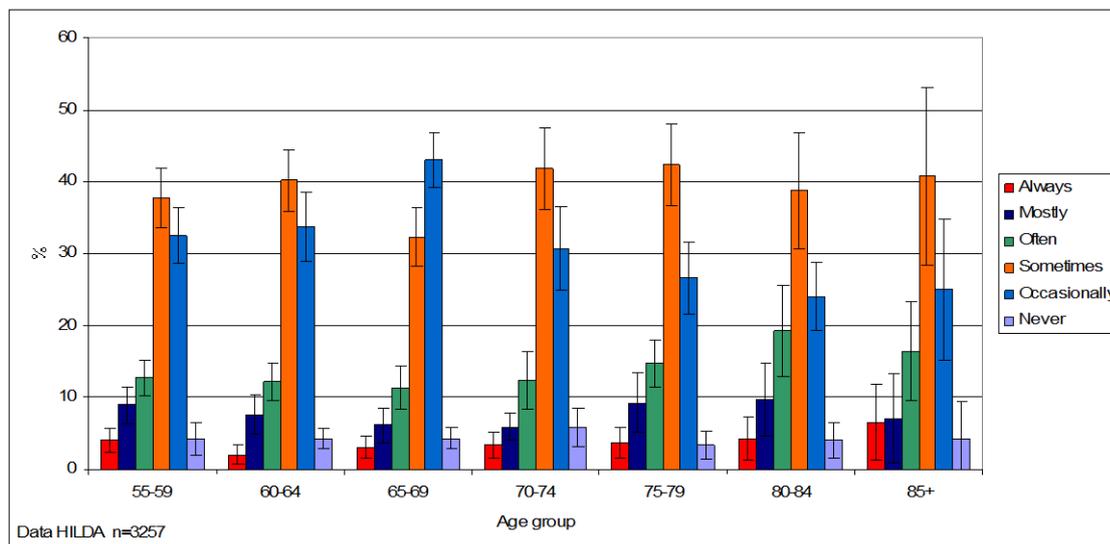
Even with these largely positive results, the extent of depression and suicide rates among men (Mathers 2007, p56) and among older people in general are of concern, and the availability and advertising of counselling and other services, and access to appropriate community activities, is of particular concern.

Figure 29: Mental health: Felt calm and peaceful by age group.



The original response categories have been retained. Results for the 85+ age group need to take into account small cell sizes, but for other age groups the figures are fairly constant. The responses in all age groups are mainly positive.

Figure 30: Vitality: Felt tired by age group.



The six categories available to respondents have been retained. Again the results are fairly consistent across the age groups with the exception of the 65-69 age group in which the 'sometimes' and 'occasionally' categories were reversed. This could be attributable to the fact that this is the age group affected by the 'retirement age' and its implications of 'getting old'. Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p25) defines the threshold age, the onset of 'old age' as being between 60 and 65. Getting tired more easily is regarded as an outcome of ageing and is probably related to increasing frailty. It may also be due to other causes and medical checks should be used to rule this out.

2007 data trends. There was a slight reduction in the number of 60-64 year olds who reported that they 'rarely', or only occasionally, felt tired.

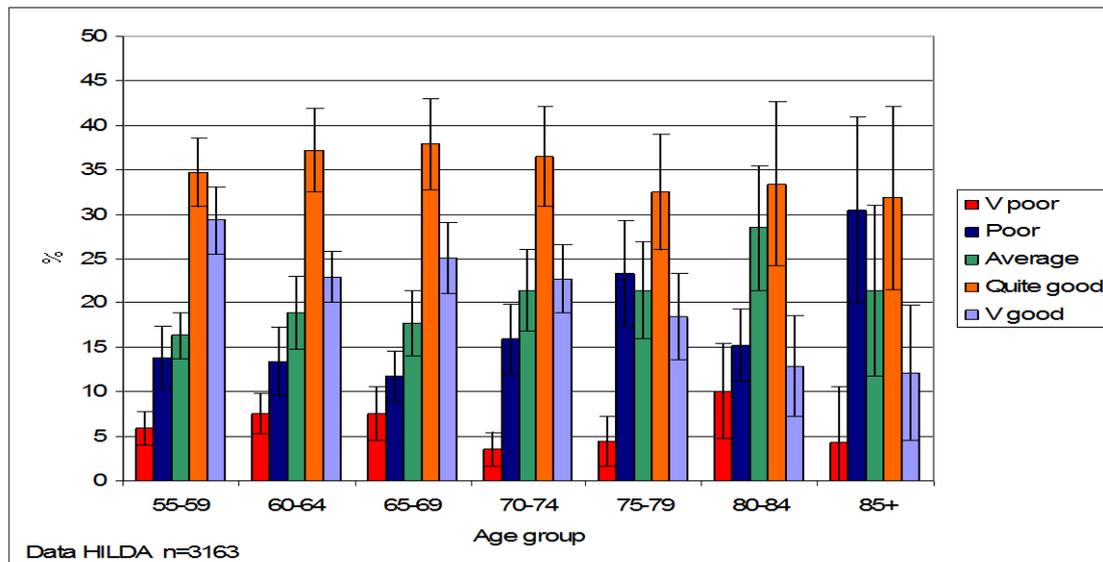
The need for people to have access to physical activities and community involvement if they wish is reinforced. Having interesting activities planned for the day is more likely to give people a feeling of being full of life. The effect of the community's attitude towards older people, and negative ageing, may affect responses such as feeling down in the dumps. Addressing negative ageing and ageism could improve the situation. Encouragement of continuation in the workforce or community, either by continuing in the current occupation, or by taking up a new goal or purpose, as suggested by this thesis, may affect these results. People who feel that they have a purpose in life are less likely to feel down in the dumps or tired, as they gain satisfaction from their activities.

The following three graphs are based on derived responses using items in Section A of the self completion questionnaire. The scales were created according to Ware JE, Snow, KK, Kosinski M, (2000), SF-36 Health Survey: Manual and Interpretation guide, Lincoln, RI, Quality Metric Incorporated.

Ten items were recoded as required, raw scale scores were calculated by summing across the items in the same scale; and these raw scores were transformed to a 0 – 100 scale. In accordance with the manual, a person-specific raw score was estimated for any scale for which there were valid responses on greater than or equal to half the items, the average being calculated and applied to missing data (HILDA, 2006). The results are based upon a professional analysis of the responses according to a scientifically accepted procedure.

For these graphs the original data categories 0 – 100 were divided into 0 – 20, 'very poor, 21 – 40, 'poor', 41 – 60, 'average, 61 – 80 'quite good' and 81 – 100 very good.

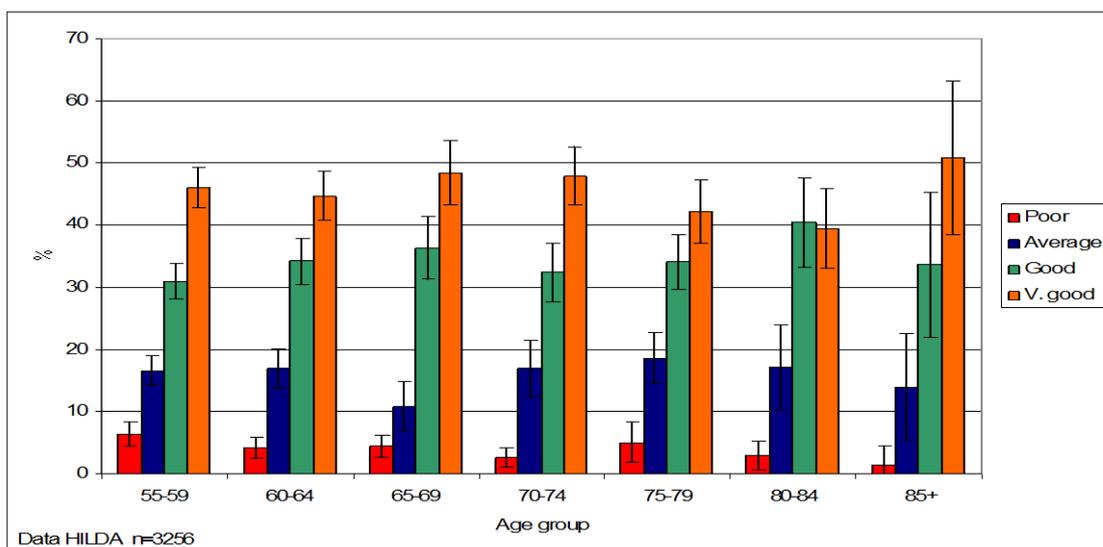
Figure 31: Derived general health by age group.



As mentioned with a previous chart, the lowest group are probably within two years of death. The highest column, very good, remains a consistent percentage until it begins to diminish at age 75+ but the ‘quite good’ category remains high. This presents a positive result for the general health of older people.

General health is a combination of many factors. It reflects ‘the interaction of numerous factors including genetic make-up, individual behaviours (such as diet, exercise or smoking), exposure to environmental and occupational hazards and the availability and quality of health care. Social factors such as gender, ethnicity and social class also have an important impact’ (Victor 2005, p95).

Figure 32: Derived mental health by age group.



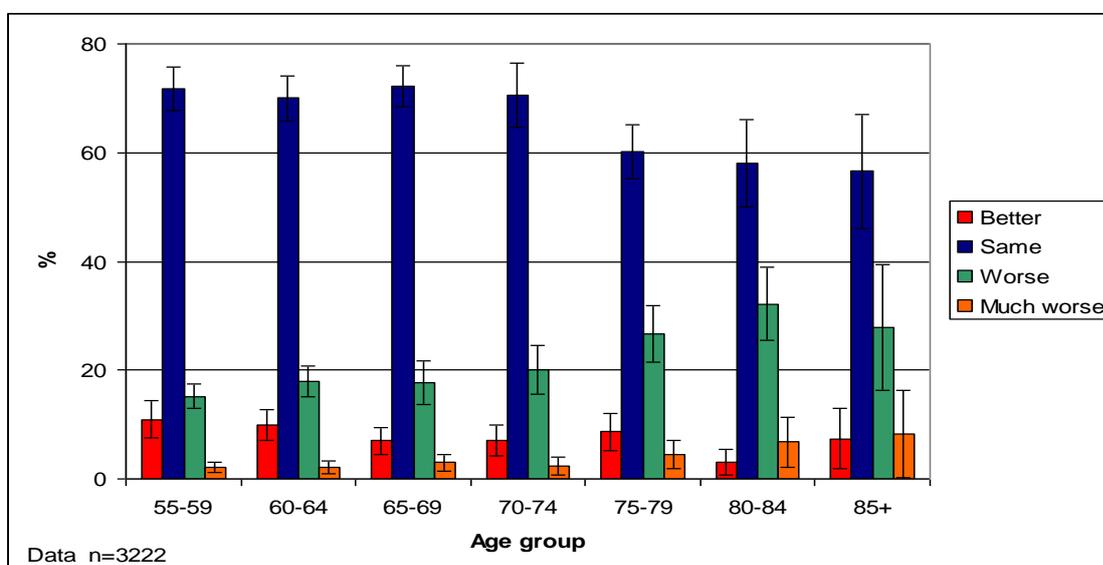
Small cell sizes resulted in responses 0 – 40 being collapsed to the ‘poor’ category. The rest were classified as 41 – 60 etc. The data suggests that the majority of older people have good mental health, with a small percentage with poor mental health, which decreases marginally with age.

For both of the last two graphs older people also have a variety of life experiences, such as war and migration, which can affect both their physical and mental health.

Policy implications

The need for good physical health, its encouragement and facilities for its promotion, and availability, have already been discussed. With mental health there are two aspects of this which, even where the percentages are small, have a huge impact both on the community and on individuals. These are depression and dementia. Home support for those with either condition is desirable. In terms of dementia an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2004) paper states: ‘to date there has been little progress in preventing or delaying the onset of dementia. Alzheimer’s disease shortens total life expectancy and men and women with the disease spend a greater proportion of their remaining life with more impairments than their unaffected age peers’. A search of research grants awarded by the Australian Alzheimer’s Association indicates that in spite of an Access Economics (2009) estimation of 1.13m Australians with dementia by 2050, there is still little emphasis on prevention.

Figure 33: Derived change in health in the last year by age group.



Responses here were based on derived reported health transitions compared with one year previously. Two response categories had small cell sizes resulting in the collapse of the top two groups 'much better' and 'somewhat better' to 'better'.

It would be expected that health would slowly decrease with age but many older people apparently have either a 'better' or 'same' outcome. This may differ from the medical diagnosis but assessment based on person responses to relevant questions provides a good estimate of their approach to everyday life.

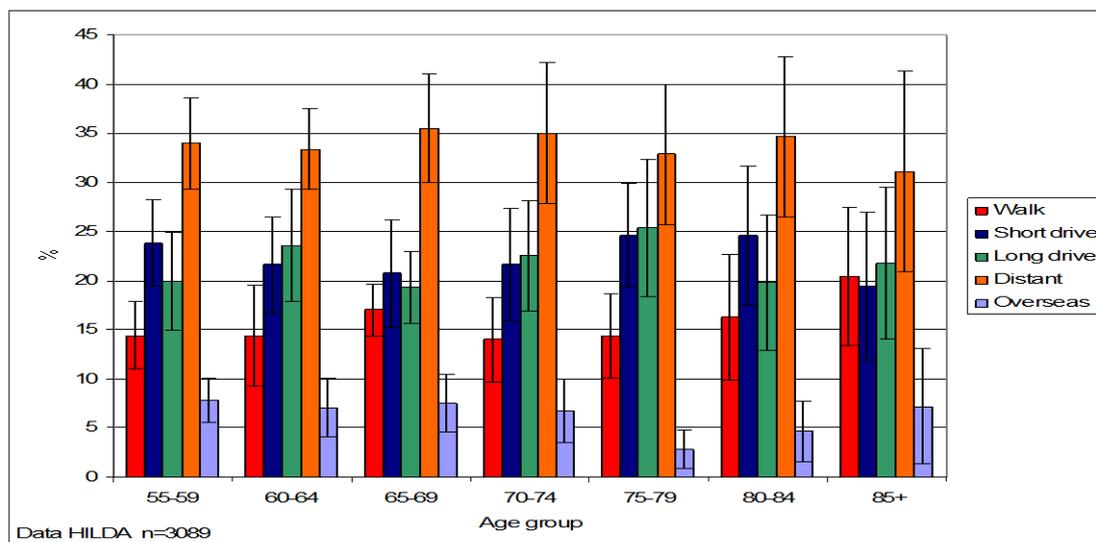
Section summary

The health results shown in these graphs present a very positive outcome when viewed from the perspective of older people themselves. The community negative ageing viewpoint of older people as being 'past it' and 'over the hill', and forming a section of the community whose needs and wishes can largely be ignored. Unfortunately older people tend to internalise this attitude towards them as shown in Appendix A, attitudes which are not supported by this data. Older people are shown to be involved within their communities, and even where health conditions and disabilities are present, there seems to be a willingness to overcome difficulties and have a positive attitude towards life.

5.7 Family and living arrangements

Family and living arrangements provide a secure base against which people age. This section includes the distance away of children, number of children, number of marriages and household type.

Figure 34: Distance away of first child by age group.



Questions asked in the research related to the distance away of children from 1 – 13. Only the distance away of the first child was used as this provided the largest sample. Eight distance categories were provided for respondents which were re-categorised for this research according to the ease of physical connection. Less than 5 km were classed as ‘walk’, 5 to 19 km as ‘short drive’, 20 – 99 km as ‘long drive’, over 100 km as ‘distant’ and the overseas category was retained. Few respondents (less than 10%) for most age groups had the first child living overseas whereas most had a child within easy access. Intergenerational contact is an important aspect of ageing and this is achieved through social networks and particularly through family connections.

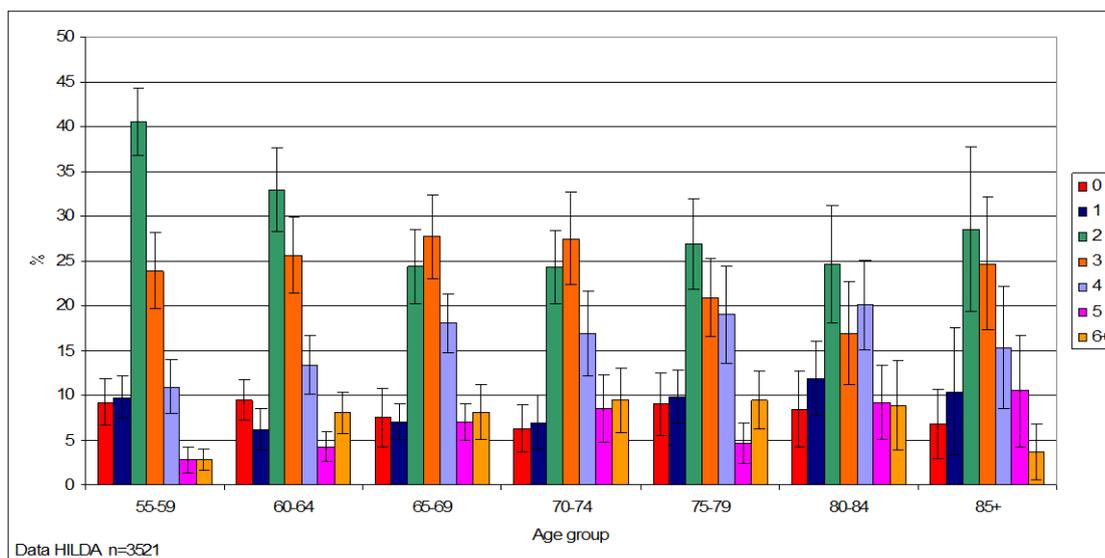
This question highlights the changing world in which older people live. Gilleard (2005, p157) points out that compared with the beginning of the 20th century, the end of it saw ‘those over 65 had been removed or removed themselves from the settings of work and home which had once been the principal sites of intergenerational exchange’.

Ter Muelen and Ubachs-Moust (2005, p657) describe a newly emerging problem ‘the ability to provide care has become very problematic for many children, because of the geographical distance, the decreased number of brothers and sisters (who could alleviate the burden of caring), the care for their own children and the (increased) participation of women in the labour force’. This is also raised by Walker and Naegele (2009, p17) ‘labour market policy constraints and the associated need for job mobility and flexibility are increasingly forcing families to become widely scattered’. They add ‘this imposes a considerable restriction on the opportunities to support relatives in need of assistance and care’.

From the point of view of older people, being a grandparent can be a big influence on their lives and well-being. Clarke et al. (2005, p 67) cited research in the UK into the importance of grandparenting. 70% of those surveyed said it was one of the most important parts of their lives and only 4% stated it did not contribute at all. The latter group may include grandchildren who lived a considerable distance away. Davidson et al. (2005, p96) pointed out another aspect of grandparenting quoting a participant in their research, referring to her granddaughter, ‘if I have to get up at six o’clock or seven I have an incentive ...otherwise I feel sorry for myself and stop in bed’.

Forced loss of contact with grandchildren can be particularly stressful for grandparents. Research into this aspect of ageing is the subject of research by Sol Encel, one of the interviewees in this research.

Figure 35: Number of children ever had by age group.



This question is an important aspect of ageing and follows on from the previous one, as in older age many people rely on the support of their children in a variety of ways. Where grandchildren are involved, it can be a reciprocal relationship, adding to the quality of life.

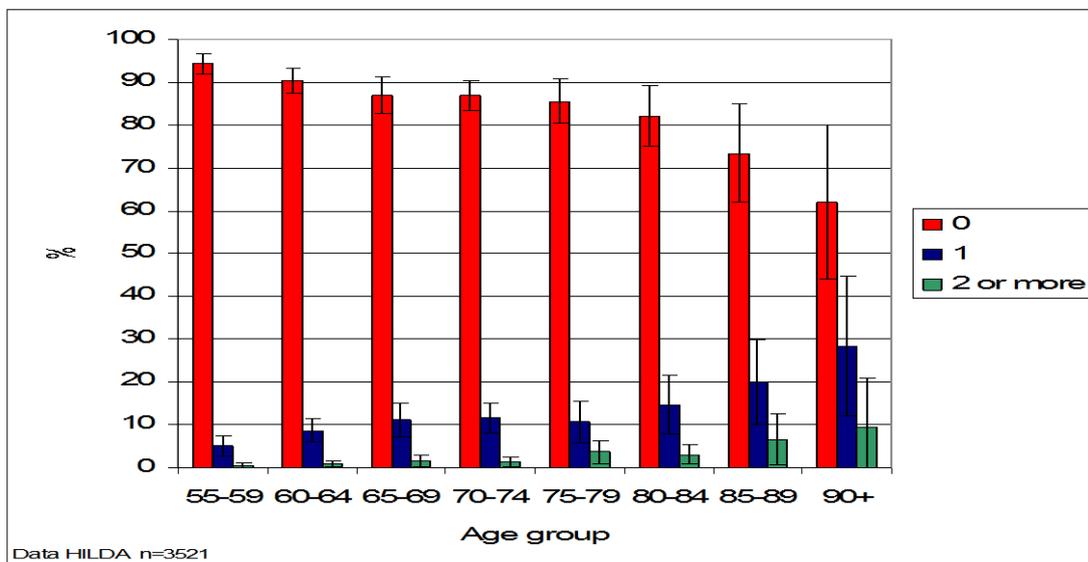
The number of older people who have never had children is fairly consistent throughout all age groups, as is the number with one child. The dominant response is two- or three children, apart from the 80 – 84 group, who tended to also favour four children. Two- and three-children families are more the norm with the youngest age group. This may change with changes in fertility rates. Poon (2005, p350), in research on the oldest-old, comments ‘For

those elders without children, fewer receive help from relatives than those with children, and significantly fewer childless have weekly contact with any relative’.

Walker and Naegele (2009, p16) point out that support networks of older people ‘are constituted predominantly by close family members such as spouse, children, grandchildren or sisters and brothers’. Thus a fall in fertility affects not only the number of children but also the number of siblings to assist with providing support, further reducing the size of this network. The situation is further complicated by Lowenstein (2005, p404) who points out that ‘today adults can have more parents than children’ a situation which will increase with lower fertility and increasing divorce and remarriage. Harper (2005) comments that ‘families are more likely than before to be both multigenerational and slim. Termed the “beanpole” family’.

The importance of family to people from ethnic backgrounds is of relevance, particularly where proficiency in English is a problem. Rao et al. (2006, p178) indicate that family ‘play an important role in maintaining and promoting their culture and providing social support to the younger members of their own families as well as their respective communities’. Their needs should be recognised.

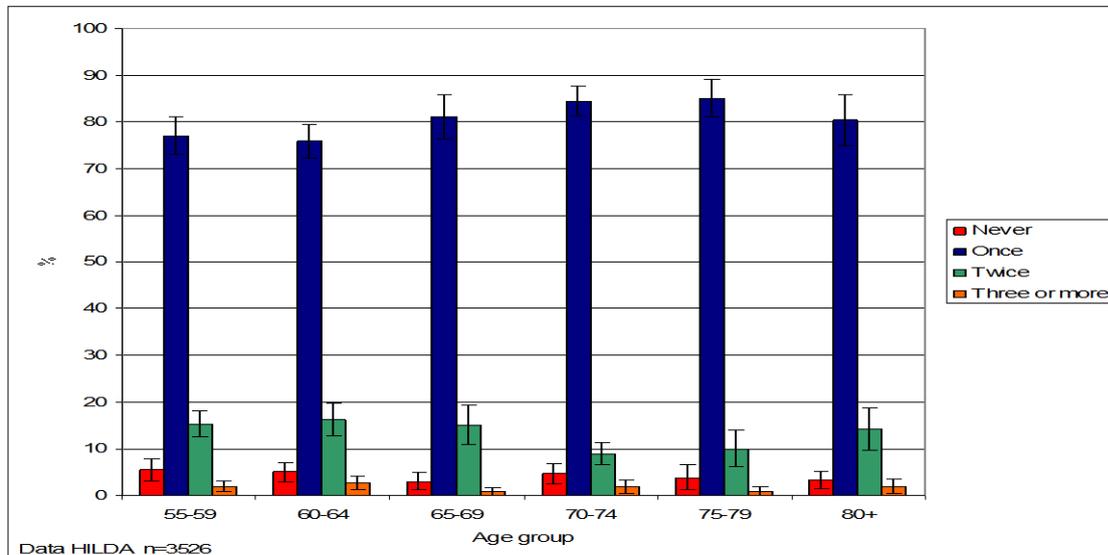
Figure 36: Number of children who have died by age group.



As expected, with increasing age, older people are more likely to outlive their children, with a few people in all age groups reporting losing two or more children. Data such as this is a

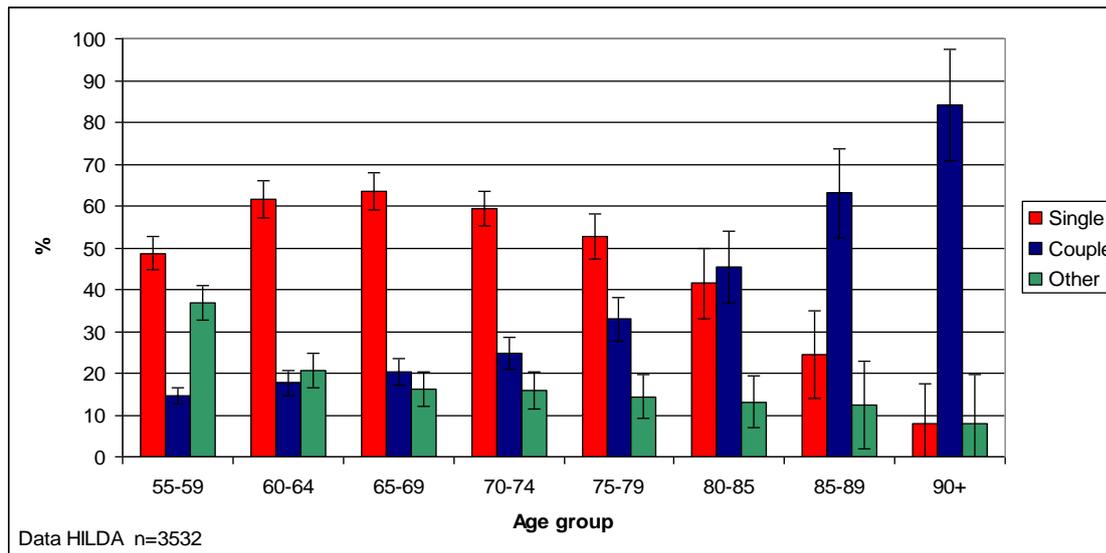
reminder that older people's life experiences are often very different from those of their younger counterparts.

Figure 37: Number of legal marriages by age group.



The question asked how many times respondents had been legally married. Responses up to eight were recorded but small cell sizes resulted in collapsing to the categories shown. Less than 8% never marry, with a fairly constant value for all age groups. 'Once' is the usual experience with higher numbers of marriages fairly constant. This graph is likely to change in future as living with a partner, rather than going through the formality of marriage, becomes more acceptable within the community. This question has implications for younger people who may have more than the conventional two parents to assist and maintain contact with.

Figure 38: Household type by age group.



Households were classified as those in which there was a couple, those in which there was only one inhabitant, with the other 25 categories grouped together. The rise in one person occupants is likely to follow widowhood and may also increase as women in particular follow careers rather than following the marriage/children path of the past.

Gender differences. In the 70-74 age group, more men appear to be in a couple household. In this age group and all above, more women were in single person households.

2007 data trends. There were more people in the 55-64 age groups living in households other than couple or one person households. There were also more people in the 60-64 age group living in couple households.

Faulkner (2007, p152) extrapolates the problem into the future to take into account the ageing population. ‘The housing careers of the older population are likely to present the most significant area of change in the 21st century when compared to the 20th century. This will occur because of the increase in the numbers and proportion of older people in Australia, the decrease in household size and the fact that by 2021 over 40% of households will be occupied by at least one older person’. He also suggests ‘government, architects, developers and housing providers will be forced to think about the suitability and functionality of present-day designs, the range of housing options available in the marketplace and the cost of housing provision. This will need to occur in a policy environment where affordable housing for low-income older persons is under enormous threat’ (p153).

This theme is stated more specifically in the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia (2002) which noted that ‘consumers, industry and governments will certainly need to give greater attention to housing design which is suitable for older people- whether it be housing specifically for older people or housing which meets the changing needs of people as they age’. Also ‘young and old people benefit from buildings that are safe, healthy and comfortable and that can be adapted to the changing needs of individuals and communities over time’ (Australian Government 2006). Kendig and Bridge (2007, p224) take the picture further: ‘Housing increasingly needs to be responsive to the emergence of the “Third Age” in which people have left work but remain healthy for many years before a typically shorter period in the “Fourth Age” of frailty and dependency’.

5.7.1 Policy implications

As people age family members are likely to take a more important role in their lives, providing necessary support. Easy access to at least one child suggests that the child may both provide support, and give grandparents easy access to grandchildren, which can be a part of successful and healthy ageing, as well as providing reciprocal support. Governments at all levels should support this where necessary, particularly through transport assistance, including national recognition of pension and identity cards such as driver’s licences. Legalising the rights of grandparents would also give recognition to this relationship. Governments are aware that in future there will be fewer young family members to provide assistance to the increasing number of older people. Policies should be directed at maintaining independence among older people, and providing appropriate support for carers, as well as addressing the other aspects of the dependency ratio such as increasing the size of the future work force. The number of children who have died is likely to change in future. Child and infant mortality are decreasing, and war casualties fewer, resulting in more living children. As legal marriage tends to be less popular among young people, de facto relationships, or partnerships, may take their place, thus perhaps maintaining the status quo in terms of couple households. The current policy of building large houses may not be appropriate to meet the needs of older people who tend to live in single or double occupancy homes, with the number of single occupancy homes increasing with age. This will be a particular issue as the costs of heating and lighting homes are likely to escalate in future. More smaller, single or couple occupancy homes may be required, supplementing the current ‘McMansions’.

5.7.2 Section summary

This part of the analysis has concentrated on the family and the living arrangements of older Australians. It is important, as these are indicators of the amount and type of assistance older people will need if they are to remain at home in their later years, which is the optimal situation. It is also a measure of the extent to which older people have support from partners and children, the latter dependent in part on fertility rates and the number of surviving children.

As people age they are more dependent on assistance, which can either be provided by family members, by the community or by local or federal government programs. Cooperation amongst these various groups to enable people to stay in their home environment is the optimal solution, in terms of cost and well-being. Houses which are adaptable to changing needs should be part of future planning.

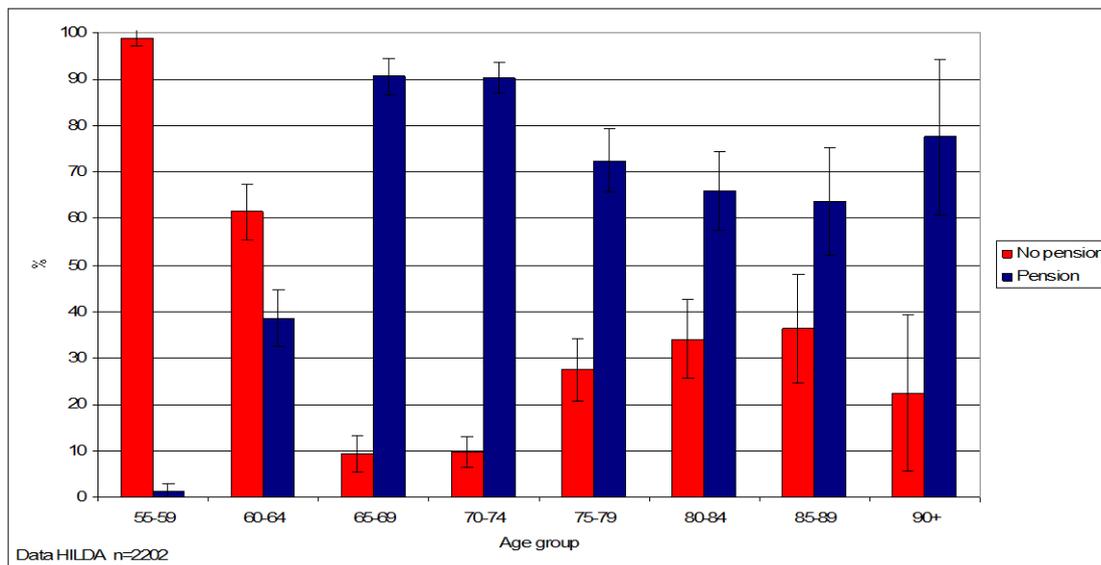
5.8 Financial situation

This section deals with different aspects of the financial situation of older people, including the numbers in receipt of the age pension, dividends, rental income, and service and disability pensions. Sources of income, total income, total private income, financial satisfaction, level of prosperity and inability to pay bills are also investigated.

The data was collected in 2003, before the world economic crisis, and this may have affected the accuracy of the results. It could be assumed that once the crisis is over, this may once again have some correspondence to appropriate data.

An important omission from the HILDA data relates to the type of housing respondents have in terms of ownership. In discussing older people's financial status a big divider appears to be whether they own their own homes, are in government housing or in private rental accommodation, with this latter option frequently the more expensive.

Figure 39: Recipients of the age pension by age group.

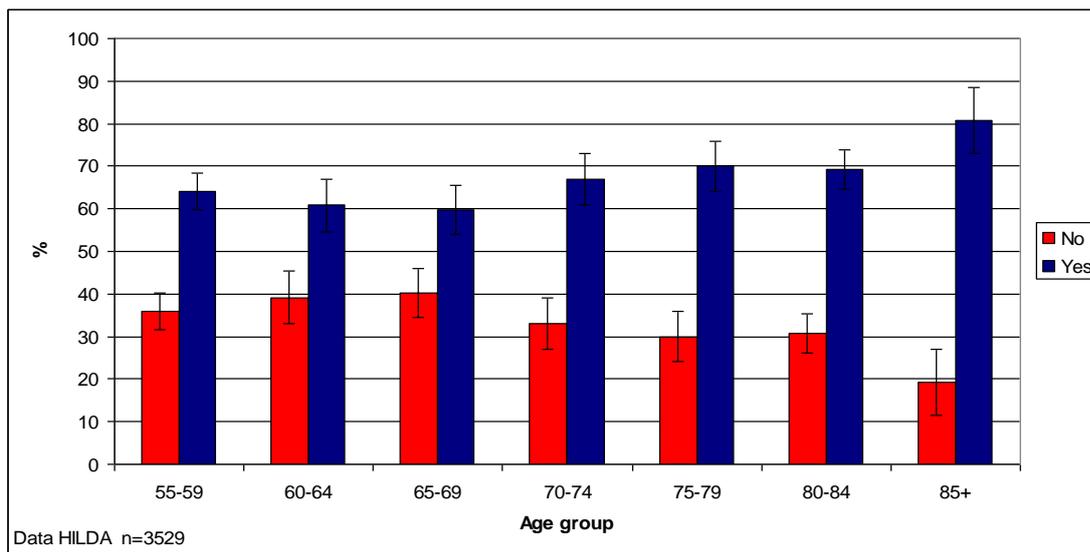


The first two columns reflect current inaccessibility to the age pension below age 65 for men and 63 for women (with a few exception categories). Beyond this barrier, older people are more likely to receive the pension with the rest relying entirely, or almost entirely, on private income. The size of the imbalance changes with the older groups. The question referred to pension receipt with no distinction made between full pension and supplementary pensions. Borowski and Olsberg (2007, p209) estimate that of the recipients of the age or service pension, two-thirds receive a full pension and one-third a part pension.

Gender differences. More women than men in the 60-64 and 80-84 age groups were apparently receiving the age pension. The former group may be explained by the fact that currently women receive the pension at a younger age and fewer women have substantial superannuation.

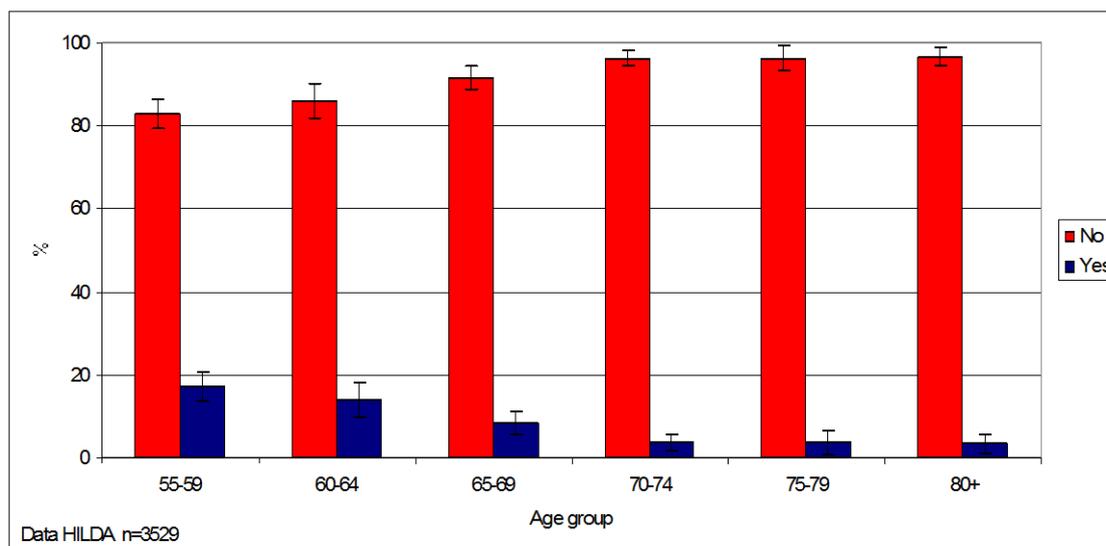
2007 data trends. A smaller percentage of people in the 60-64 age range were receiving the pension which may be due to tighter eligibility criteria. There was a greater percentage of recipients in the 75-79 age group.

Figure 40: Recipients of dividends by age group.



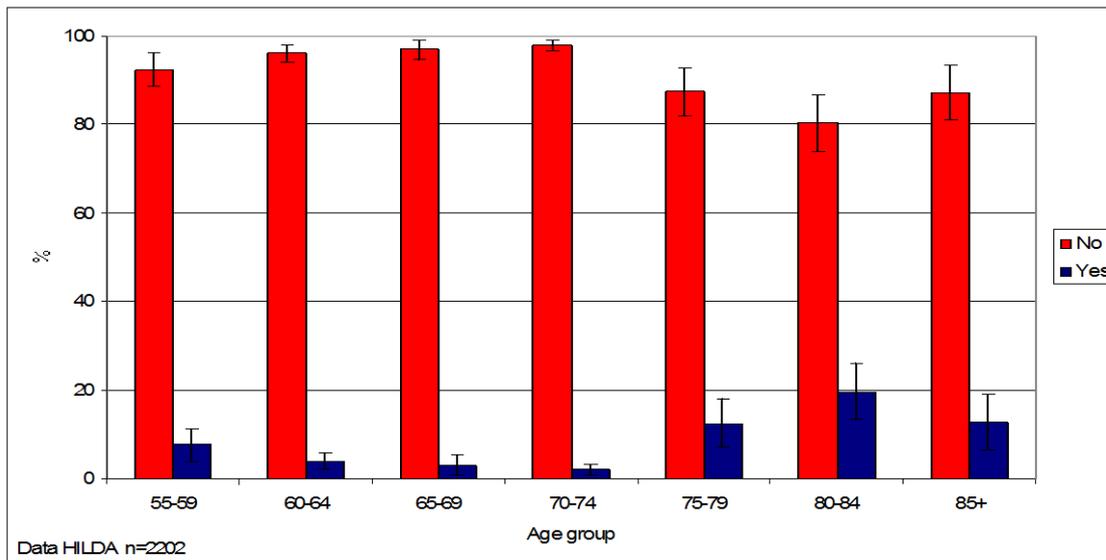
More than half of respondents report receiving dividends but without information regarding amounts held. Some may be small amounts of easily available shares, such as those bought as the result of share offers such as Telstra. The results suggest that older respondents are more likely to own shares with a possible connection with past or current income.

Figure 41: Receive rental income by age group.



The percentages of older people who receive rental income, i.e. own a rental property, are small and decrease with age. There are two possible explanations. The younger age groups may have had a greater opportunity to acquire an additional property, or older people may have had to sell assets to provide extra cash. This graph contrasts sharply with the previous one on dividends and may reflect the greater amounts of money involved.

Figure 42: Recipients of service pensions by age group.



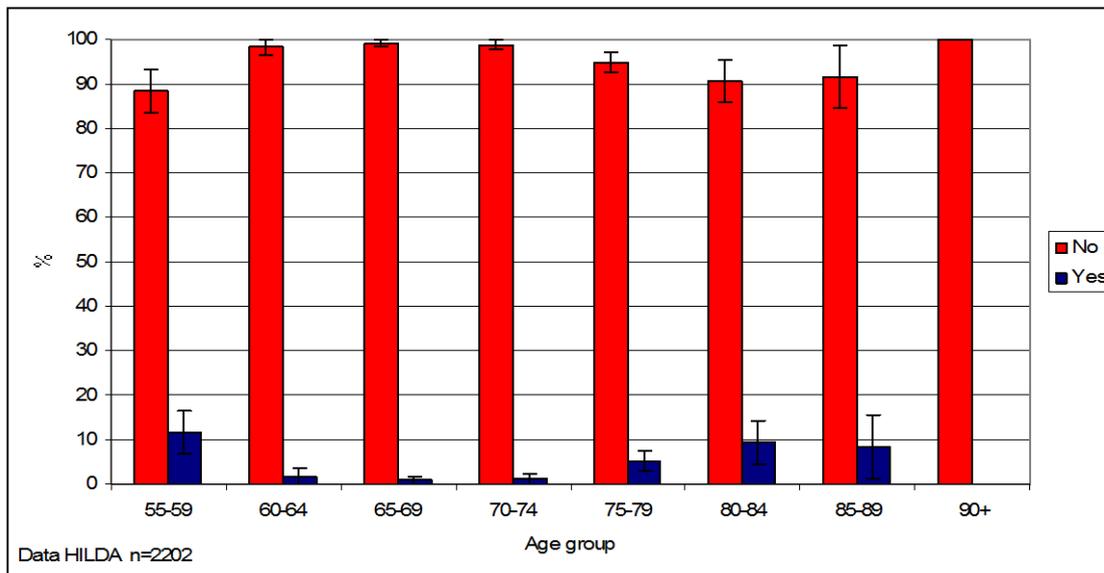
The changes shown between age groups probably reflect the timing of wars and the extent of the involvement of Australian troops in them. It provides a reminder of the different life patterns of older people, and the different hardships different age groups have undergone.

Service pensions only apply to a small percentage of older people and will diminish in future as the number of Australian servicemen and women involved in wars decreases.

Gender differences. More women than men were recipients above the age of 80. This may be due to the fact that women have a greater life expectancy than men and many of them may have been war service widows.

2007 data trends. There were a lower percentage of service pension recipients in the 60-64 and 75-79 age groups, again a reflection of the timing of wars and Australia's involvement.

Figure 43: Recipients of disability pensions by age group.

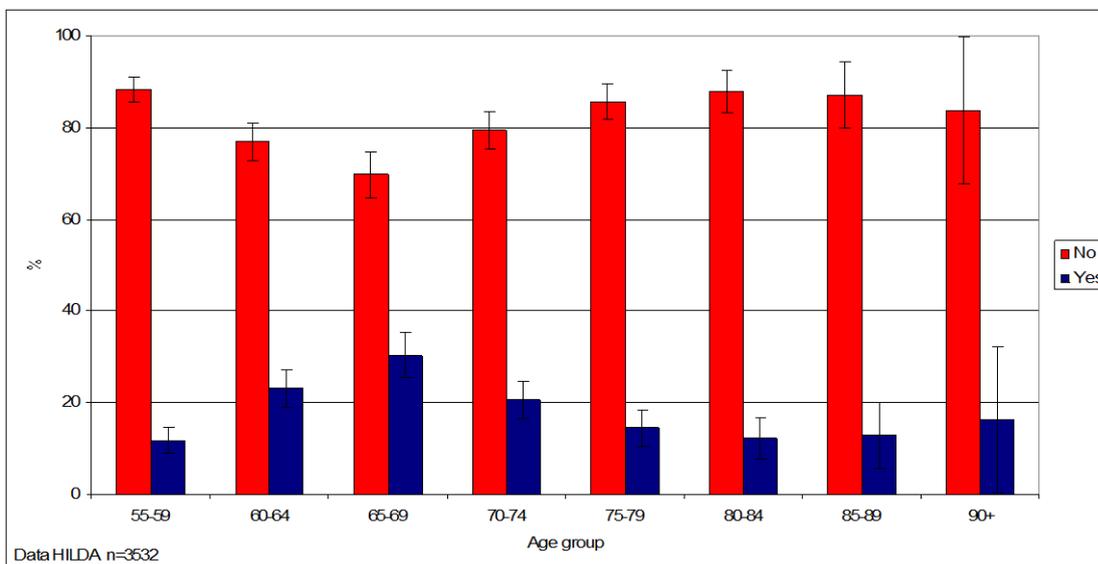


In the lower age groups the receipt of a pension suggests a small percentage of early health deterioration, which was found in previous graphs (Figure 3). As people reach pension age this may replace the disability pension.

Gender differences. More men received disability pensions in the 55-59, and 75 and above age groups. This could be due to employment based accidents or war service.

2007 data trends. A lower percentage of people in the 75-79 age group received a disability pension.

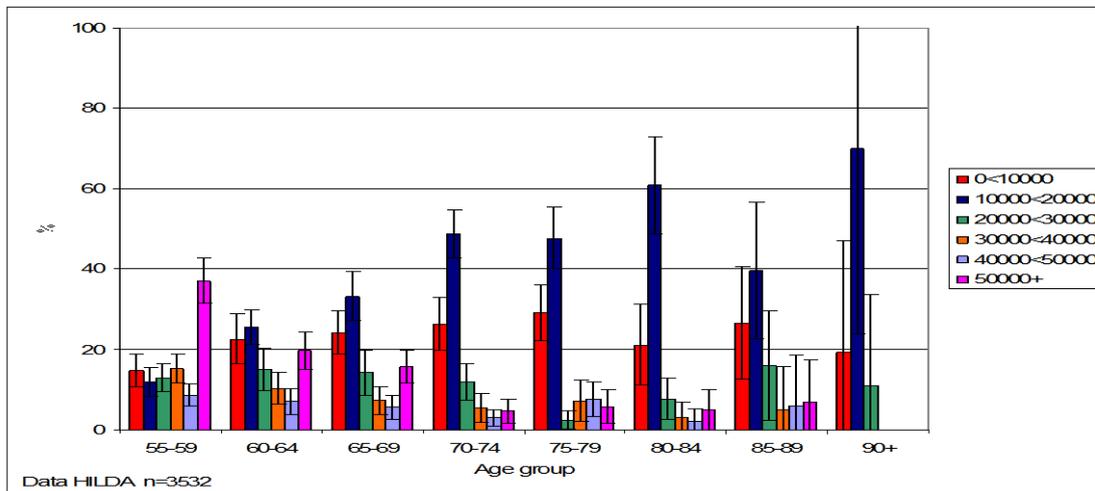
Figure 44: Sources of payments received- Superannuation/Rollover fund/Annuity/Life insurance/Allocated pension fund by age group.



The two younger age groups are perhaps unable to have access to superannuation funds (except for public servants). Above age 70 the data suggests that older people have less access to such funds. Age based, or limited life funds may also have expired.

Gender differences. More men than women in the 70-74 age groups received these benefits.

Figure 45: Total income (derived) by age group.

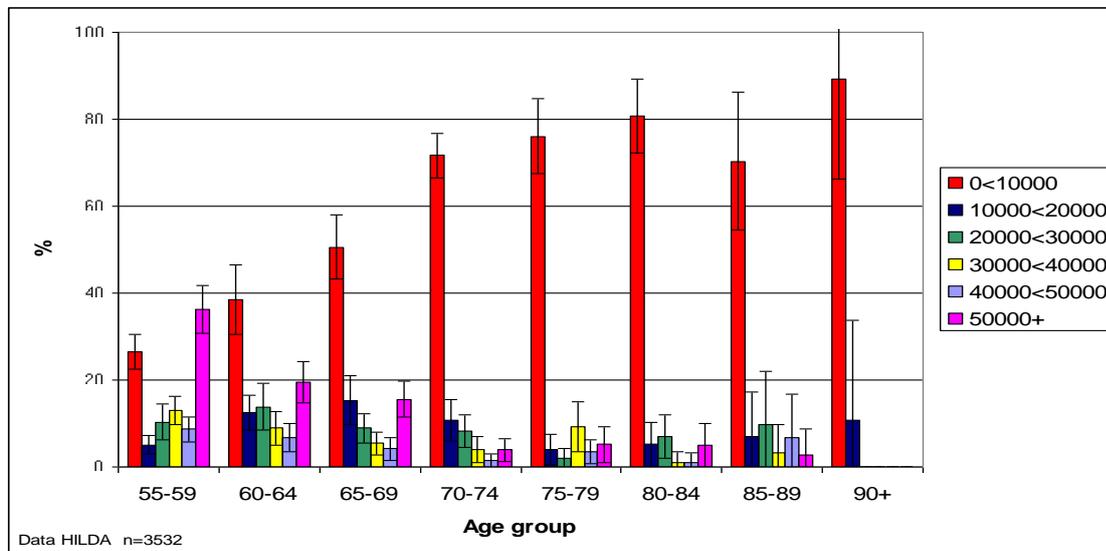


These are derived figures and include market income, private transfers, Australian and foreign pensions and benefits, family tax transfers and child care benefits. Windfall (irregular) income is excluded. The income figure obtained by this method appears to be inaccurate as the age pension income alone in 2003 was almost \$12,000 for single pensioners and almost \$20,000 for couples, either of which most Australians aged 65 and over would have been eligible for. It is unlikely that there would be such large numbers of people who were either not eligible for, or were not claiming, the pension. Visala Rao et al. (2006) suggest that Australians with a lower level of English proficiency may be among this group and it can be attributed to factors such as ‘the belief that the family rather than the government should support older people and a lack of awareness about their rights and privileges because of language barriers’. Some of the younger respondents would still be in employment. As would be expected, the percentage in the highest income category decreases beyond the accepted retirement age.

Gender differences. The graphs suggest that more men were in the \$50,000+ income bracket in the 55-59, 65-69 and 75-79 age groups. More women in the 55-59 and 60-64 age groups were estimated to have total incomes less than \$20,000, and in the 65-69 age group, more women had a total income of between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

2007 data trends. A smaller percentage of people were apparently living on incomes below \$20,000 in the 65-69 age group, fewer living on less than \$10,000 in the 70-79 age groups and more living on incomes between \$10,000 and \$30,000 in the 75-79 group.

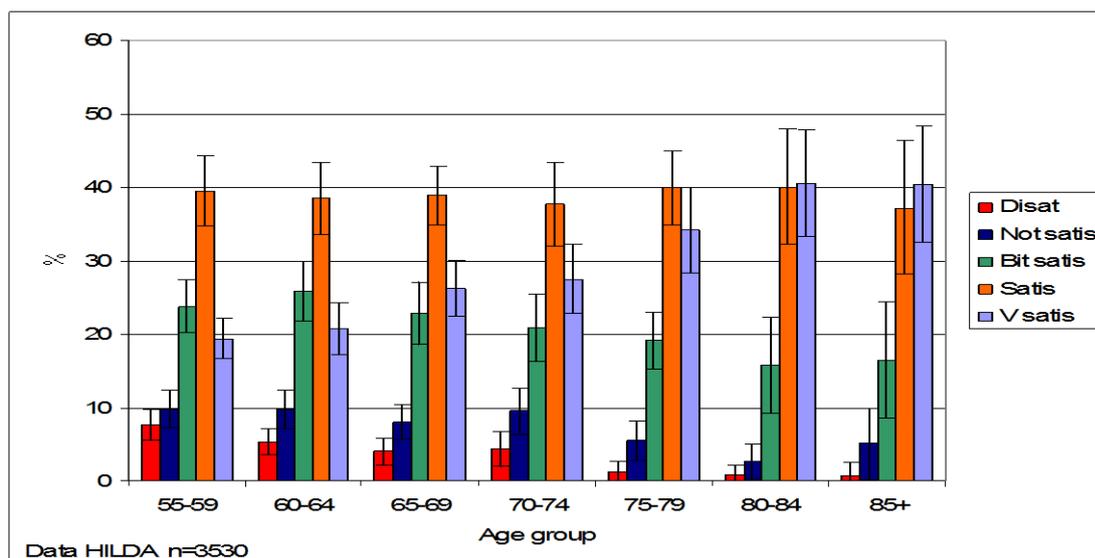
Figure 46: Total private income (derived) by age group.



The data indicates that as people age they have less access to private money, with none in the 90+ age group having access to more than \$20,000, although they may be asset rich in the form of the family home. As life expectancy rises, this will place an even heavier burden on the pension system, a situation which will be relieved as the compulsory superannuation requirements take effect.

Gender differences. The age group 70-74 showed no differences. More men had incomes \geq \$50,000 in the other age groups. More women between 55-64 years had <\$20,000 and in the 65-69 year group more women had <\$10,000 income.

Figure 47: Level of financial satisfaction by age group.



Respondents were asked to respond on a scale of 0 (totally dissatisfied) to 10 (totally satisfied) with 5 neither satisfied not dissatisfied, with their financial situation. Based on cell counts, the first three categories were grouped, the rest paired. The data suggests that the majority of people in the 55+ age group are satisfied with their financial situation, while a minority are not. This may have changed with the downturn in the world economic situation.

Gender differences. In the 60-64 age group, men were more likely to record only being a ‘bit satisfied’.

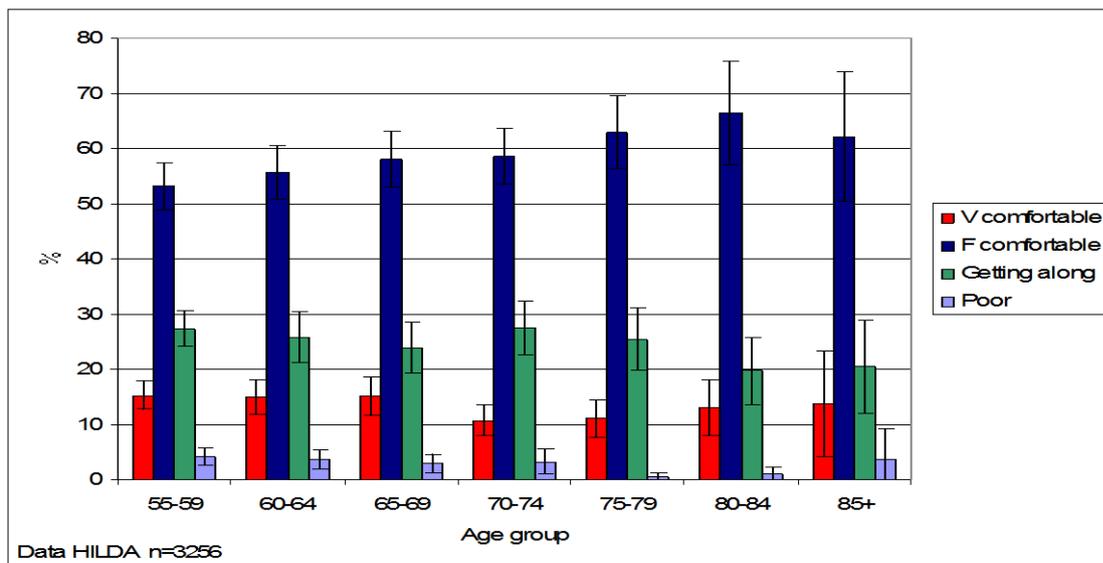
This compares with the findings of Warren (2006, p31) that for retired people ‘their perceptions of their financial situation were quite favourable’.

There is still concern about single pensioners, particularly those renting their accommodation. The question of home ownership was not asked in the survey yet this can make a big financial difference to older people. Non-owners are faced with rent payment. Hugo (2007, p43) makes the point ‘people in public housing may well be protected but in the private rental market, you are really vulnerable. Lots of older people end up in caravan parks, which are not secure, because they can’t find public housing and can’t afford private rental housing’. The same article makes the point that as public housing supply decreases, waiting lists favour families, which limits access for older people. The influence of home ownership is further stressed by Temple (2008, p23) ‘owning a home is an important factor protecting households from housing affordability stress’. He also points out that the range of concessions available to home owning pensioners, including concessions on rates, water and sewerage and

electricity, assists in protecting them from stress. Kendig and Bridge (2007, p221) estimate that ‘more than 80% of older people now are homeowners and home ownership rates in old age have been rising slowly, reflecting increasing real incomes’. They continue ‘Financial stress for non-owners on low incomes has been accentuated by continuing declines of low-cost boarding houses and caravan parks’.

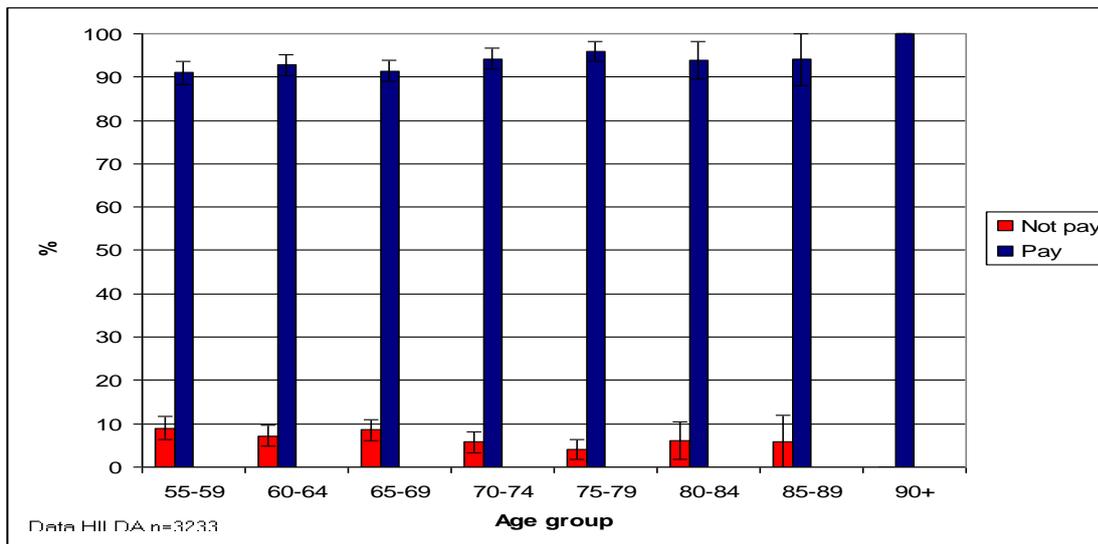
Krause et al. (1991) demonstrated that financial problems (common in many older people) are a prime factor in reducing feelings of self-worth and in the increase of depressive symptoms’.

Figure 48: Level of prosperity given current needs and financial responsibilities, by age group.



Respondents had a choice of 6 categories in their perceptions of their prosperity. The first two, prosperous and very comfortable were collapsed, as were the last two, poor and very poor, as a result of small cell sizes. The majority of older people had a very positive response and there is a consistent pattern among the groups.

Figure 49: Inability to pay electricity, gas or telephone bill on time, by age group.



The graph shows those who were unable to pay for these essentials compared with those who were able to pay. This was the only response to the debt/poverty issue which provided adequate data. The degree of reported poverty was further investigated through responses to questions on going without meals, inability to heat the home and receiving help from charities. Responses to these were too small to analyse by age groups and are included with other such responses in an earlier section of this chapter. The data suggests that current rebates for these basic expenses are not adequate, and that pensions may not be adequate to cover essentials, particularly for those reliant entirely on the age pension and paying private rent.

5.8.1 Policy implication

Current legislation requires compulsory employer superannuation contributions which should alter the number of age pension recipients in the future, with fewer people on pensions, particularly full pensions. Income from both dividends and rental properties affect the amount of pension older people may be able to access. If there are trends in either direction in either of these two categories then they need to be taken into account in assessing pension costs in future. Both types of income provide asset security for older people in the future. Availability of income from other, non-government sources affects the need for the age pension, either in full or as a supplementary pension. Changes in pattern of provision by superannuation funds are important in assessing future pension fund requirements.

If the data for total income are correct, then there appears to be an unacceptable number of people living below the poverty level who are not eligible for, or who are not claiming, the age pension. This problem needs investigation.

5.8.2 Section summary

The data in this section supports the need for adequate public housing, as many people in the lower income brackets would not be able to afford private rental charges.

The pension situation has already been addressed through compulsory superannuation contributions although there will always be those who fall through the net, such as the self-employed and those who either have not been in the workforce or are taken out of it. The pattern in the past of women going in and out of employment, particularly with child birth and child rearing, may change if more child care placements become available or other arrangements are put in place. This data was collected before the world economic crisis and the September 2009 rise in pensions. Using the data available, responses showing a lack of satisfaction with the financial situation need to be investigated. The age pension should provide a reasonable standard of living but many older Australians report living in poverty.

The prosperity and financial satisfaction graphs suggest a reasonable standard of living, and feeling of prosperity, for most older people in the pre world recession period. The emphasis should be on those who give negative responses. Financial advice should be available for older people, currently a task addressed except very unsatisfactorily by Centrelink. It should not be assumed that older people have the necessary skills to adjust their lifestyles to the lower levels associated with the reduction to a pension income compared with a salary.

Inability to pay bills suggests that Governments at State and National levels need to revise the extent of rebates for essential services, particularly as they are likely to rise exponentially as provision of energy becomes more expensive with measures taken to address climate change. Again the need for assistance with financial management may be an issue. Australia is too rich a country to put its citizens in the situation where they are unable to pay for heating and cooking and communication. A prosperous country should be able to make reasonable provision for its older members, so that none live below the poverty level.

In dealing with older people, it is important that the minority, those who are struggling financially, should be provided with both monetary assistance and necessary expertise to

enable them to have an acceptable lifestyle. Failure to do so contributes to a form of elder abuse for which a rich country such as Australia has no excuse.

5.9 Summarising this profile of older Australians

This chapter has added a face to a group of people variously described as the ageing, or the elderly, or older people, often without even an age range as a minor descriptor. It has shown that the age group 55+ consists of a wide variety of people from different backgrounds with different attributes and capabilities, and living life based on very varied backgrounds. It shows their similarities and differences, in their characteristics, their fitness and health, their household and living arrangements and their financial situations.

The profile created is a very positive one, with many of even the very old old being actively involved in their communities and socialising, as well as still being physically active. Most older people have a very positive attitude to life and are satisfied with their lives, including the financial aspects of it. This profile should dispel for ever the ‘hostile and demeaning descriptions of the elderly which have denied them their status and self-respect for far, far too long (Laslett 1991).

As society changes, older people in future will be better educated, healthier and more active, raising the potential for even greater social and political capital (Walker 1998).

The profile data produced here paints a very positive picture of older people, with only a small minority indicating a negative lifestyle, and these could well be at the end of their life cycles. It suggests that older people are keen to socialise and be part of their communities. The extent of this social capital should be recognised and extended and facilitated to include recognised purposes and projects, and include those currently on the fringe of successful and healthy lives.

Australia may be falling behind developments in other countries. Maltby and Rohleder (2009, p238) comment that the enormously increased lifetime after retirement and the desire of older people to participate actively in Germany indicates that there is a need for meaningful and acceptable new roles for them. ‘Old people contribute their knowledge, their abilities and their time in socially useful ways’. Extending this to include having a purpose, taking on new challenges and finding new talents and achievements, would raise this to a higher level. The

profile of older Australians shows that most are quite capable, in terms of health, social involvement, family support and financial situation, of achieving these aims.

This paper argues the benefits of older people having a purpose in life, rather than just time-filling, for an increasing number of years. The portrait painted suggests that older people are quite capable of achieving the aims of this thesis and benefiting from it. Australia would benefit from the increased social capital, and the current negative ageism would be difficult to maintain in the light of the recognised achievements of older people.

It is important for people in any age group to maintain good physical and mental health, including those in the later stage. The value of good physical health is being recognised and programs to improve this in the community are being recognised in terms of fitness and dietary health are becoming more widely circulated and given financial support. At this stage the special requirements of older people as they cope with the ageing process are not being recognised or met. Even the age at which people are likely to be regarded as old or ageing is undefined. The various graphs recording people's responses show some variation. For example the number of people who are not limited in moderate physical activity decreases throughout all age ranges. From the age of 70 to 75 there is a decrease in the number of people who report no difficulty in carrying groceries, climbing a flight of stairs, walking more than 1km and an increase in the number who report that they achieve less physically than they would like. This suggests that this may be the age group at which the physical effects of ageing begin to take effect.

Mental health is less easy to measure, particularly in terms of loss of brain cells through the ageing process. There are rough measures but these are likely to vary between individuals and the effect could depend on the extent to which these are compensated for through the creation of new connectors, particularly if older people can be encouraged to have a purpose in life.

This quantitative analysis has created a very positive picture in terms of both physical and mental health of people in the 55+ age group. No longer can this group merely be given a general classification of 'old' but instead they have very particular characteristics which vary, particularly as ageing progresses. Physically most of them are relatively physically fit (not confined in wheelchairs as popular myth suggests) and show similar positive results in terms

of mental fitness. Most of them are involved in their communities, with many remaining in the workforce.

The results here indicate that the community's negative attitude of 'ageism' identified earlier in this thesis is not justified. Older people not only have a lot to offer the community but if encouraged and given a supportive environment they can be encouraged to do so. This will not only benefit the community but also older people themselves who will be able to adopt a more positive attitude towards themselves and the ageing process.

5.10 Summary

Justification of the choice of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) database for the quantitative section of the research, including appropriate questions, and the ability to divide the data into appropriate specific age and gender groups, representative of the population of older people, has been examined in this chapter. The methods used to analyse the data and produce the results shown in this thesis have been outlined. The broad picture of older people created by the data has been discussed and the positive attitudes and abilities of those involved in the ageing process have been measured. The effects on policy decisions have been considered.

The criteria for successful ageing, as suggested in this thesis, are feasible among the 55+ Australian population.

The situation regarding older people and the paid workforce, voluntary work and the role of carers will be investigated in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Work and other recognised uses of time

This chapter follows the pattern established in the previous chapter investigating the use of time, and the extent to which people in the later stage of life have a purpose through involvement in work, paid or unpaid, or as carers. All three designated ways of life can produce the benefits of feeling part of a worthwhile project, and the self-esteem, status and health benefits associated with this. Graphs and the analysis shown were obtained using the methods detailed in the previous chapter.

This chapter provides a profile of older Australians who are involved in work, voluntary work or take on the role of a carer. This thesis argues that the later stage of life is more successful and healthier if older people have a purpose in life. Korczyk (2004) reinforces the concept that longer careers could be good for workers, with the added mental and social stimulation, and the opportunity to acquire additional assets. Clarke et al. (2005) point out that the subject of their research, quality of life of older people, is influenced not by the role undertaken but by the nature of the environment in which it occurs and also whether people wish to be in that environment. This chapter initially includes an investigation into the incentives and barriers to longer working lives in terms of workplace conditions.

Originally 28 questions from the database were selected as relevant for this section but seven of them recorded low responses and are included in the low response section at the beginning of the previous chapter. Again any gender differences or trend lines shown by comparison with the 2007 data graphs, are given following each topic.

Much of this chapter is taken from a paper published by the researcher (Guy 2008).

6.1 Work

For many people, a decision has to be made regarding whether to retire or not, and when to do so. Staying on in the current job, where possible, is probably the easiest option and has many benefits, including self esteem, status, the satisfaction of being part of a worthwhile project, attachment to the community and a sense of worth, and financial benefits in terms of salary and increased superannuation.

Older people often have different needs in the workforce, both in terms of conditions and ambitions (ABS 2004). PMSEIC (2004, p39) also stresses the financial benefits of continuing in the workforce and the advantages of meeting the needs of older workers. 'For ageing

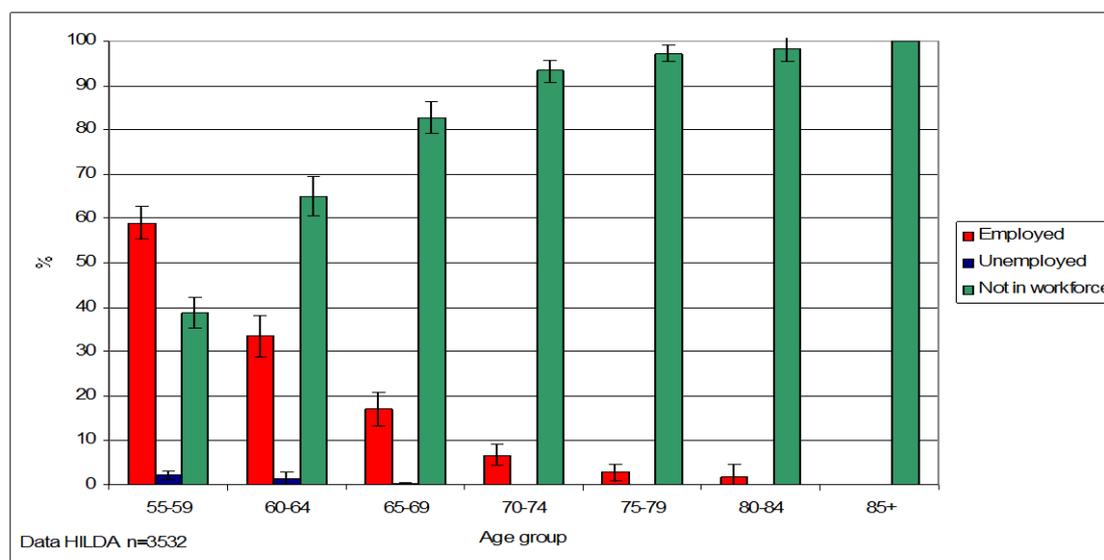
individuals, working a few years longer can bring continuing social benefits and increased income adequacy later in life. Flexible paid work opportunities can increase people's choices as to how they spend some of their additional years of productive life'. PRI (2005, p39) points out that 'many workers of all ages rely on their workplace to encourage and support their needs for satisfying work, creativity, social status and social bonds'. Longer careers could be good for workers, with the added mental and social stimulation, and the opportunity to acquire additional assets (Korczyk 2004). Volentine et al. (2005, p3) used data from a survey of 4000+ respondents from the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands. The research indicated that the primary reasons people expect to work after retiring is that they want to stay involved and connected (45%) and they enjoy work (43%). This applied almost equally to those still in employment, those not currently working and current retirees. For the latter group, participation in an activity which would give them a purpose in life would satisfy these needs.

One difficulty in discussing work in an ageing context is that there is no widely accepted definition of mature age, or older workers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2004) defines this as the 45-64 age range which is too broad to be useful. The most valuable sources use the 55-64 age range, separating it into the 55-59 age group, which largely stays in the workforce, and the 60-64 age group, which often has the choice of early retirement. Workers in the 65+ age group are frequently ignored as in many countries the number is small. Data using the 55+ age group, the subject of this thesis, are quoted when available.

The numbers involved in each question largely varies from questions asked of all respondents to those only applicable to people currently in the workforce and in some cases those seeking work.

6.1.1 The current situation

Figure 50: Employment status by age group.



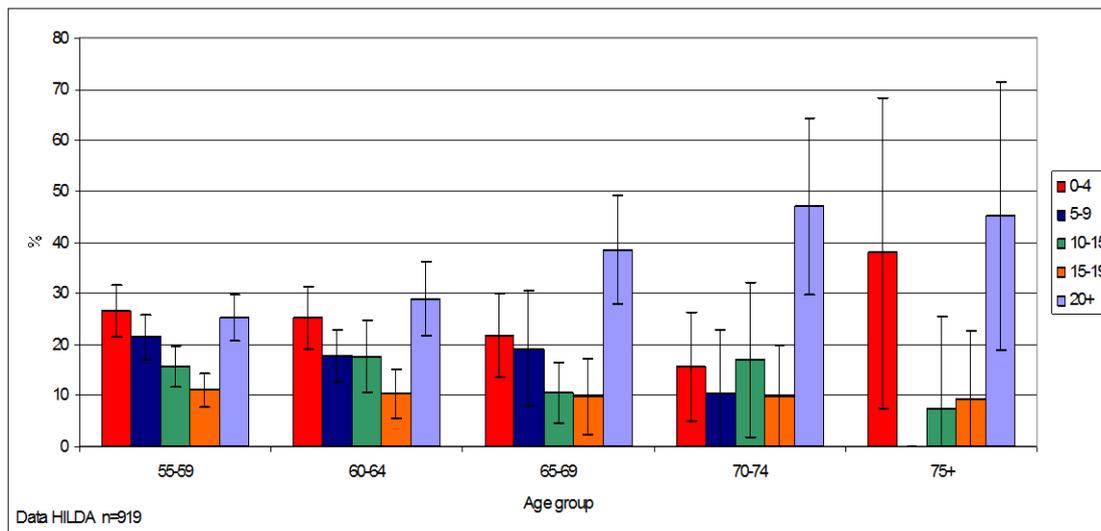
Few people over the age of 80 are still in the workforce. The middle group, the unemployed, represents those over the age of 55 who are still looking for work. From age 70 they appear to cease this quest.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data suggests that in November 2003, the unemployment rate among 55 – 64 year olds in Australia was 3.5%, of whom 82.4% were looking for full time work. Significantly, 48.8% of the unemployed were long term unemployed (ABS 2003). Between 1983/84 and 2003/4 the overall labour force percentage participation fell for the 55 – 59 age male group but rose for females. The percentages rose for both genders in the 60 – 64 age group. Those with higher education tended to stay in the workforce longer, possibly due to higher pay, greater job satisfaction and/or the opportunity to increase superannuation benefits.

Gender differences. In the age groups 55-64, a greater number of men were employed and more women were no longer in the workforce.

Research which involves older people both in and out of employment is required to identify whether the problem is that older people do not wish to work or there are no appropriate jobs for them. Data in Figure 53 suggests the latter.

Figure 51: Years in current job by age group.

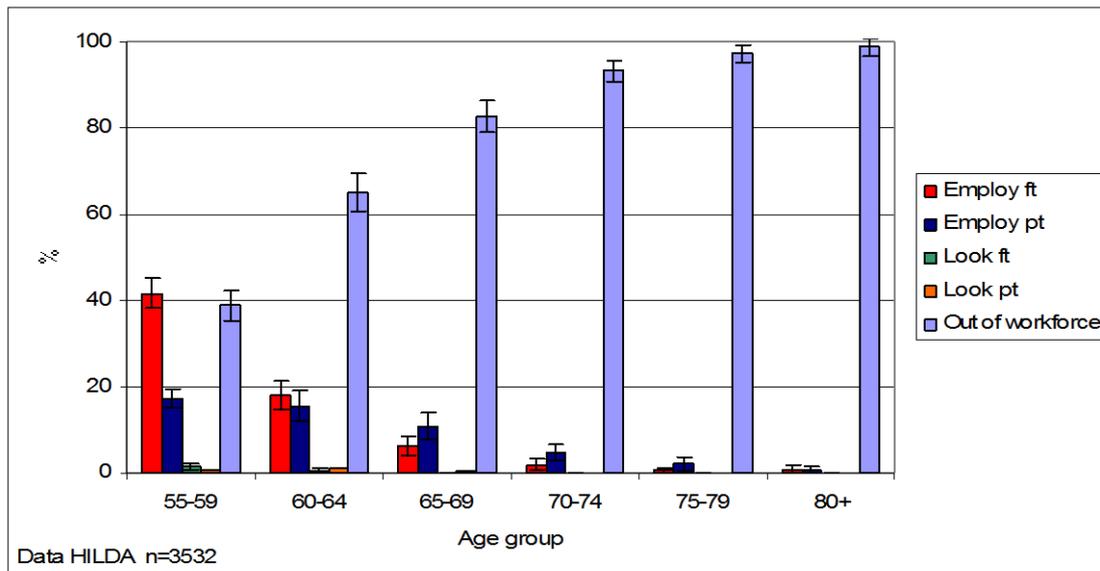


The number of years in the current job tends to be consistent when confidence intervals are taken into account. Data in the two oldest groups are not accurate due to small sample sizes but the researcher felt that it was important to gain some idea of spread with these two groups. They suggest that among all age groups it is possible to obtain some work, given the percentage of workers who have been in the current job for 4 years or less.

The two main response groups are those who have been in the current job for over 20 years and those who have recently changed either by choice or by redundancy.

Gender differences. More males over 70 are likely to have spent between 0 and 4 years, or over 20 years, with their current employer.

Figure 52: Type of employment by age group.

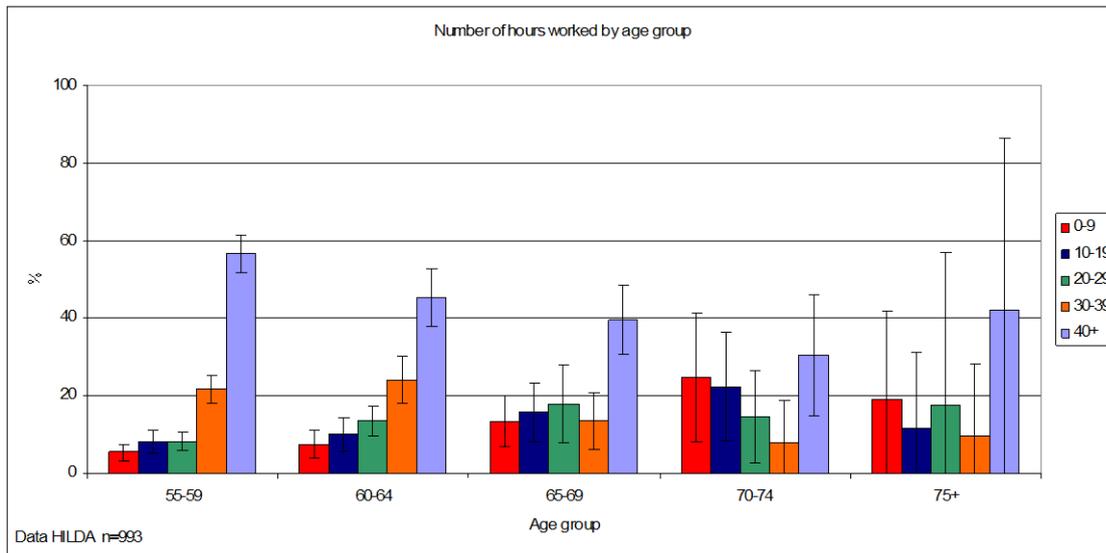


Most 55 – 69 workers are in full time work, although some are already out of the workforce. After age 60, equal numbers are in full-time and part-time work but in reducing numbers. Few people are seeking either full-time or part-time work. Data in Figure 11 shows that only a minority of older people record that they have time on their hands.

Gender differences. In the 55-64 age groups, more men are working full time, more women part time and more women are out of the workforce. In the 70-74 age group, more women are out of the work force.

Warren (2006) found that ‘For women and men, the proportion who reported retiring completely because of health reasons declines with age’. This raises the question of how different these figures would be if work was more plentiful for older people and more older people were able to postpone retirement or return to the workforce.

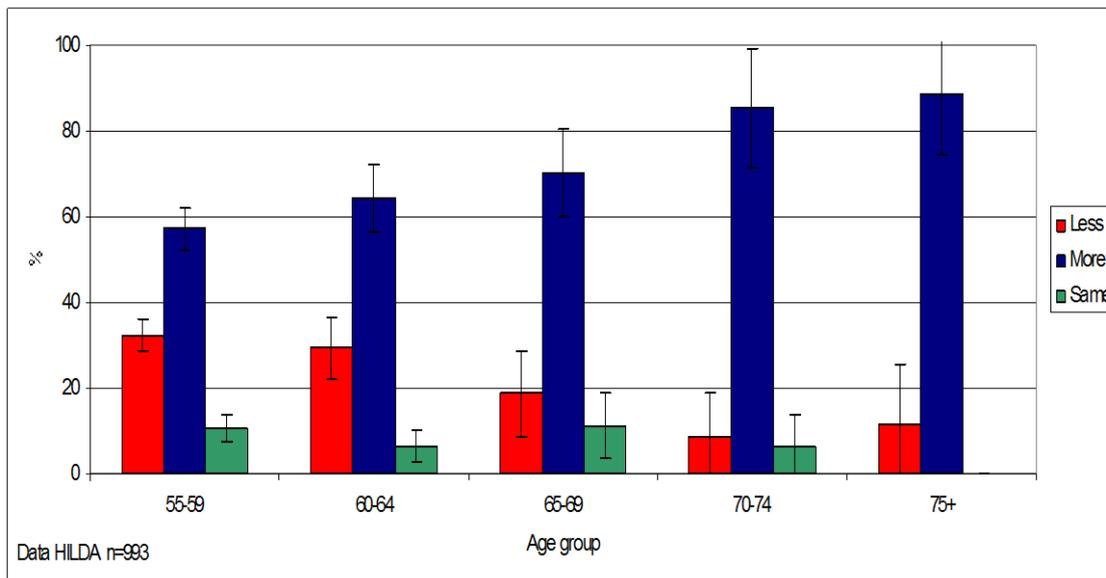
Figure 53: The number of hours worked per week by age group.



Of those still in the workforce, many work more than 40 hours, even at the older ages. This suggests that many successfully find the type of work, and the working conditions, which satisfy their needs, including enjoyment, enabling them to cope with long work hours.

Gender differences. In the 55-59 age group, more men work 50+ hours, whilst more women work between 10 and 29 hours. In the 60-64 age group, more men work 50+ hours and in the 70-74 age group more men are likely to work 20-40+ hours.

Figure 54: Desired number of hours of work by age group.

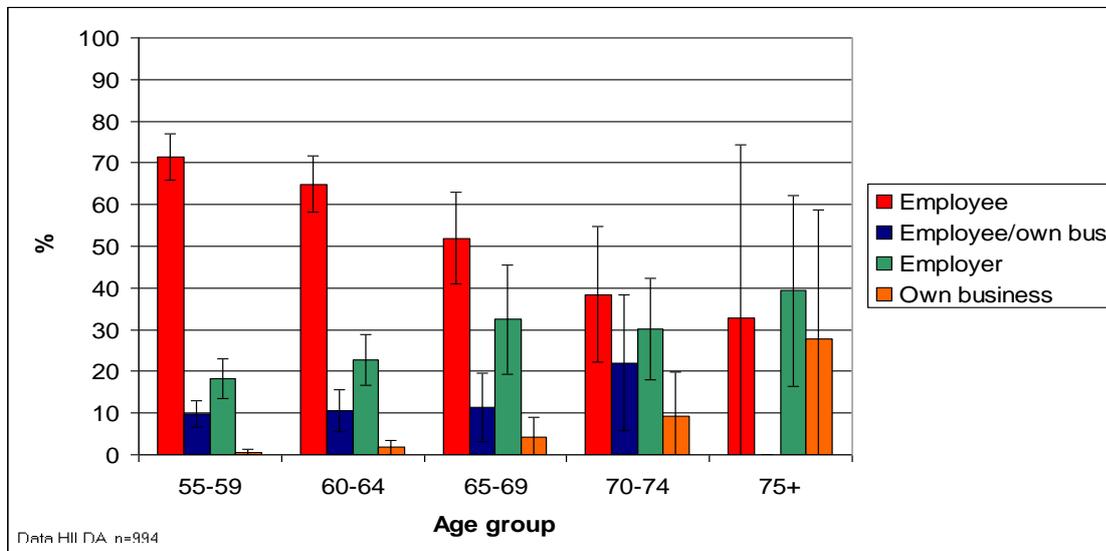


This question was only asked of people currently in the workforce. There is an unmet need for more hours of work among working older people. This increases with age.

Banks (2005, p47) states ‘There are many people already in part time jobs who would like to work longer hours. Accommodating those aspirations may well be an efficient way of increasing economic output’.

A further area of research could be an investigation into the reasons why so many older people would like to work more hours. Is this for financial reasons (for example those who were unable to pay their bills Figure 49) or for the social and/or mental stimulation that work provides. If the latter then the proposal in this thesis that older people be encouraged to have a purpose in their lives and address untapped talents would meet these needs.

Figure 55: Employment (employee/ employer) status by age group.

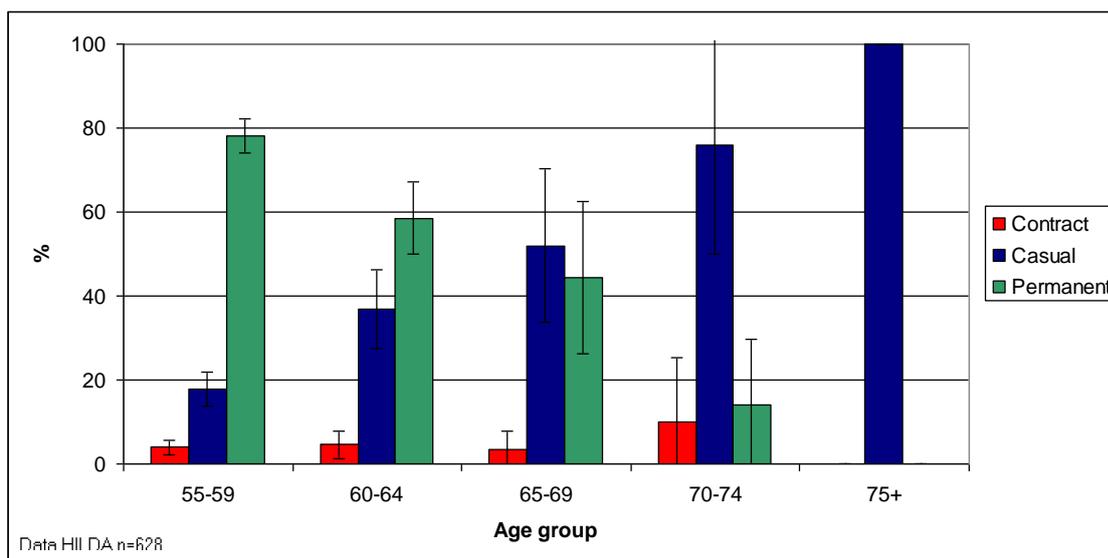


The categories here include employees, employees in their own businesses, employer/self-employed and unpaid family worker. The percentage of employees decreases with age, possibly as access to superannuation and pensions increase. Business ownership should be encouraged, and assistance given, both to assist the economy and to enable retirees to remain in the workforce. It also allows the country access to the skills and entrepreneurship of those perhaps otherwise unemployed.

Crumley (2009) records that in France 328000 small companies were created in 2008, in the middle of the world economic crisis. The result was expected to be even higher in 2009. An innovation known as auto-entrepreneur, a government scheme to cut red tape to enable

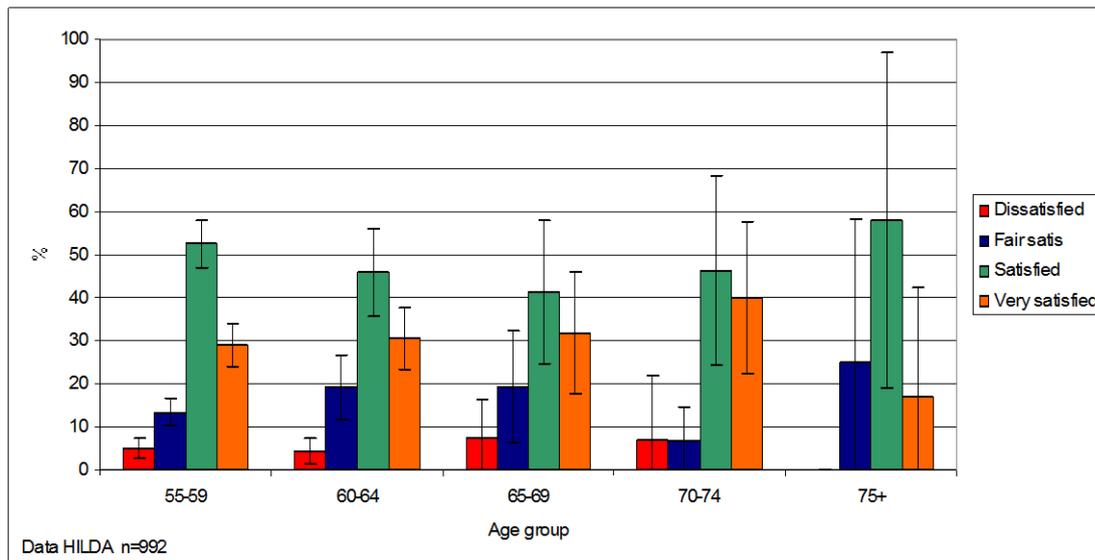
would-be bosses, is available to assist people, including older people, interested in participating. It is recommended that training and preparation for self-employment be made more readily available. Programs to help people make such a transition are increasingly popular in countries such as Finland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (PRI 2005). Such assistance helps older people to develop more portable human capital. This type of support should be available to older persons in Australia who wish to follow this path. As found in Australian studies, an alternative to retirement which often appeals to older workers disenchanted with their current work is self-employment.

Figure 56: Type of work by age group.



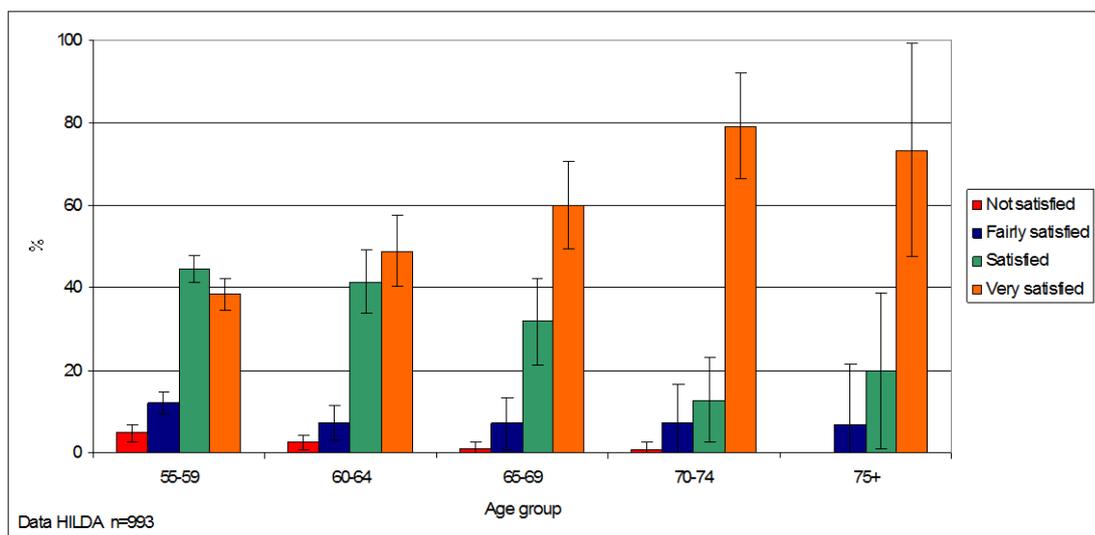
People who had their own businesses (361) were not involved in this question. Older people are less likely to be employed as contractors or in permanent employment. This may be by choice or as a result of employers' decisions. Casual work often enables older people to adjust their work commitments to their lifestyles. By age 75, all those still in the workplace have casual jobs.

Figure 57: Work itself satisfaction by age group



Each age group indicates a minority of workers exhibiting dissatisfaction with their work. Older workers are often able to retire if dissatisfied. The cause of the dissatisfaction will need to be investigated if Australia wishes to encourage its older workers to remain in the workforce (Australian Treasury 2010),

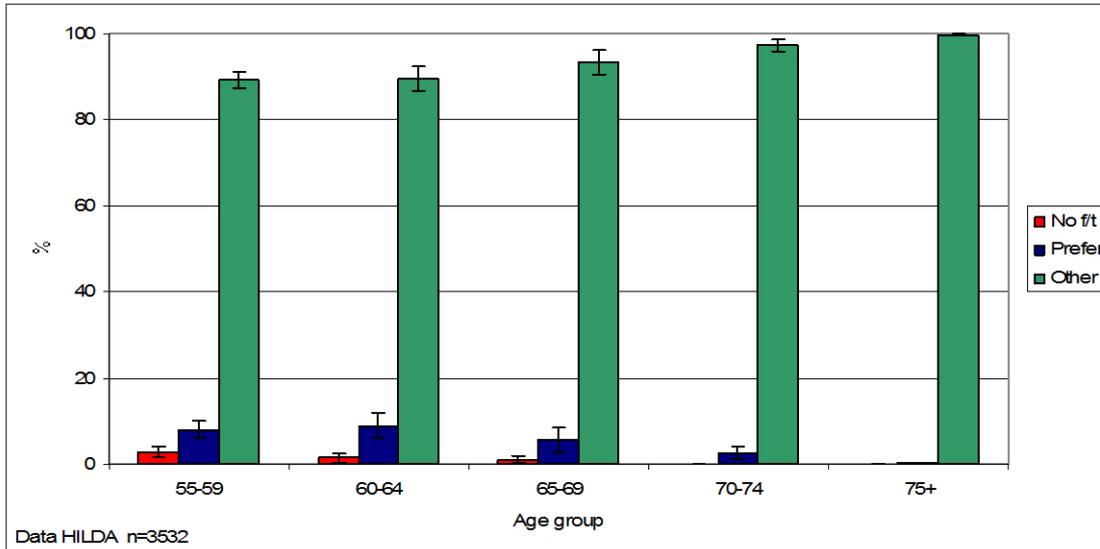
Figure 58: Overall job satisfaction by age group.



The same comments apply as for the previous graph. This graph specifically asks about job satisfaction, as opposed to the overall work satisfaction in the previous graph. The financial and social benefits, for example, of working may outweigh any job dissatisfaction.

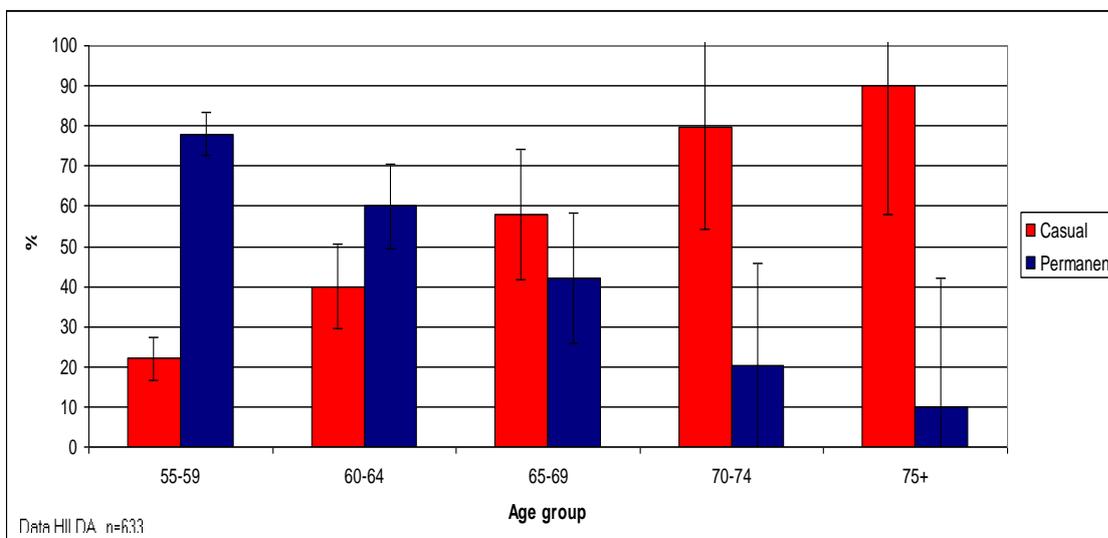
2007 data trends. Fewer people reported that they were ‘very satisfied’ with their jobs in the 60-69 age groups.

Figure 59: Reasons for doing part-time work by age group.



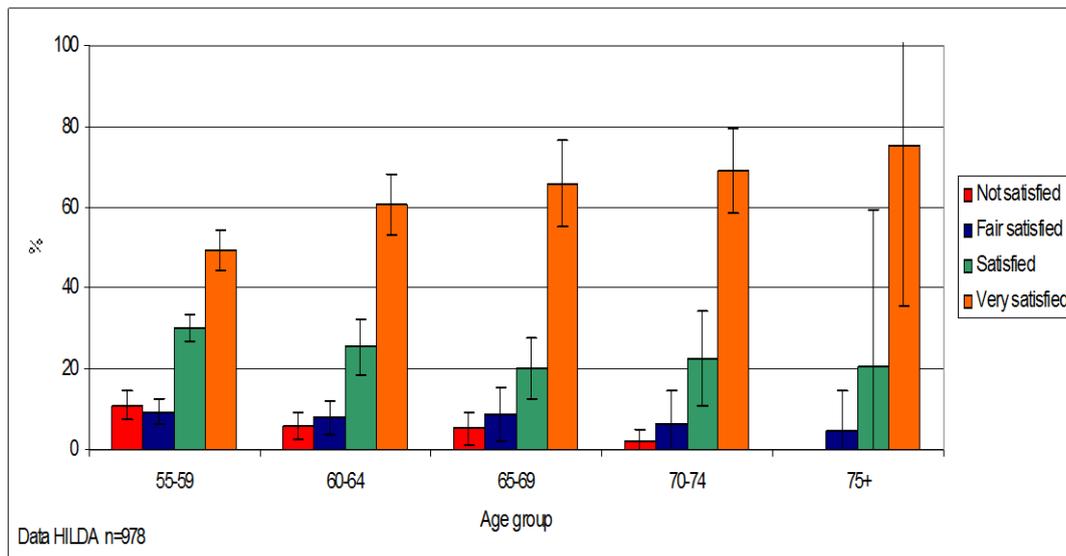
Few people indicated that full time work was not available but this may refer to appropriate full-time work. The reasons given for working part-time included illness/disability, carer role, study, voluntary work, attractive job and part-time conditions and establishing own business.

Figure 60: Casual or permanent work by age group.



The percentage of older workers with permanency decreases with age. This graph needs to be read in conjunction with Figure 63 which specifically addresses the availability of permanent part time work.

Figure 61: Degree of job security.



A small minority is not satisfied with their level of security. Most workers feel that they have tenure.

6.1.2 *The players involved*

Work is the most complicated option for the later stage of life as there are numerous players involved. One group are government policy makers who are responsible for policy which encourages employers to retain, and re-employ, older workers. Such policy is influenced by the needs of the country, employers and employees, often in that order. Government policy may then influence the attitude of employers who may reconsider their attitude towards employing older workers. Employees may in turn be affected by conditions offered by employers, although there are often other factors involved.

Much of the discussion regarding older workers centres around retirement age, the age at which there is access to the age pension, and at which severance from the workplace is more likely to occur. Most countries have a recognised retirement age of around 65, but an equally important statistic is the effective retirement age, i.e. the average age at which people actually retire. The OECD 2004 figure quoted for Australia was 63 years (Ferrier 2005).

6.1.3 Factors affecting government policy

Australia is facing a situation it has not previously encountered. Life expectancy is increasing, leading to longer periods of retirement, and to longer years of financial dependency for many. Simultaneously, fertility until recently has been falling, resulting in a smaller workforce to support this dependency. Compounding the problem in Australia and other countries, such as the EU and the US, is that workers are leaving the workforce at younger ages than in the decades after the Second World War (AARP, 2005a).

Encouraging older workers to stay in the workforce has a new urgency. The National Strategy (2002) points out that the current situation is leading to an older workforce. This document cites Access Economics as suggesting that if fertility rates at the 2001 level continued, the 170000 new entrants to the workforce per annum would fall to 125000 by 2020. While immigration policies can target young skilled migrants, the scale on which this would need to occur would be unsustainable (National Strategy 2002, Chapman et al. 2003, Korczyk 2004, Banks 2005). The National Strategy (2002) points out that labour and capital markets will have to respond to the effect of population ageing. Productivity improvements are essential. Pension costs at retirement are also of concern to the government. With an ageing population, older people should be encouraged to remain in work. As life expectancy increases, the age dependency ratio may rise, that is the number of people age 65 years and over, compared with those available for work in the 15-64 age group. Borowski and McDonald (2007, p 31) estimate that the ratio will rise from 18.8 in 2002, to 29.3 in 2021, to 44.3 in 2051. Dependency payments, such as pensions which currently in Australia are largely paid out of taxation revenue, become an increasing cost and problem for taxpayers.

PMSEIC (2004) point out that with little growth in the numbers of younger workers, encouraging older workers to remain in the workforce could be critical to economic growth and the balance between tax and expenditure (Australian Treasury 2010). If Australia increased participation rates in each age and gender cohort towards the top of the OECD countries' current levels, the level of GDP per capita would be more than 9% higher than that quoted in the Intergenerational Report by 2041-42, with most of the increase achieved in the 2020s.

Since 1970, there has been a 34% decline in the labour force for men in the 54 – 59 age group and a fall of 52% for the 60 – 64 group (PMSEIC 2004). Only one third of the first group

reportedly leave through illness or disability, and a further one fifth of those in the second group have similar reasons (ABS data). About 8% of the 65+ group are employed.

Suggested National Strategy (2002, p22) measures include: -

- Raising the profile of the ageing workforce amid the emerging shortage of younger workers.
- Increasing the recognition of the importance and benefits of training and participation in the workforce by mature age workers for future productivity and economic growth.
- Changing the culture of the workplace to appreciate the role and continued contributions of mature workers.
- Increasing the opportunities for appropriate ongoing training and professional development for mature workers.
- Establishing partnerships between employers and employment service providers to provide employment opportunities for mature age workers.
- Removing incentives for early retirement.

6.1.4 The employers' point of view

Employers can be advantaged by both retaining their current older workforce and recruiting new older workers. There are myths, detailed later, surrounding older employees.

Continuing older workers provide the benefits of company knowledge and loyalty and expertise which can be an advantage. 'As well as contributing to the labour force, the retention of mature age workers can benefit employers through the skills, experience and maturity that such workers offer' (ABS 2004, p1).

The National Strategy (2002, p18) points out 'There appear to be no barriers, in general, to mature age workers' capacity to continue working. Research has shown that productivity declines little with age; the quality of work is maintained and can be improved; corporate memory is a valuable commodity; the job turnover for younger workers is about 25%; there is no observable difference in absenteeism between younger and mature age workers'. Their 'loyalty, work ethic and reliability is high'.

The investment in training for mature age workers is as valuable, if not more so, as that of younger workers, who are more likely to pursue other employment options in the short term. Training programs, when offered to older workers, are a good investment as older workers are likely to remain in the job longer than their more mobile younger colleagues. A recent study of Australian managers showed that many view training of younger workers as a better investment than training older workers, on the assumption that older workers will not stay as long, although research is showing the opposite (Ferrier 2005). There is evidence of continued age discrimination in the workplace, despite regulation requiring employers to provide age friendly working arrangements (Korczyk 2004).

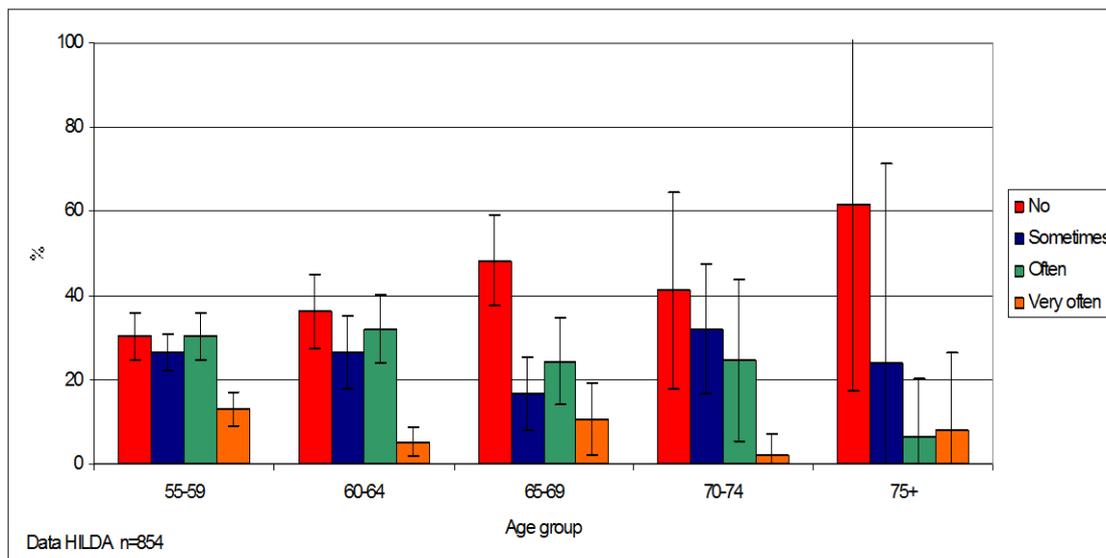
Table 1: Training by gender of 55 – 64 year olds.

Training type/gender	Males	Females
In house	29.6%	39.6%
External	17.2%	20.2%

Sources: ABS 2001, Ferrier (2005).

Some employers are aware of this need, as shown in the next graph.

Figure 62: Required to learn new skills by age group.



This indicates that older workers are able to learn new skills and are often required to do so. A minority of workers are never required to learn new skills, with this percentage increasing with age. This may result in them being less useful in the workplace and may reflect ageist attitudes amongst employers. Taylor and Unwin (2001, cited in Marshall and Taylor 2005,

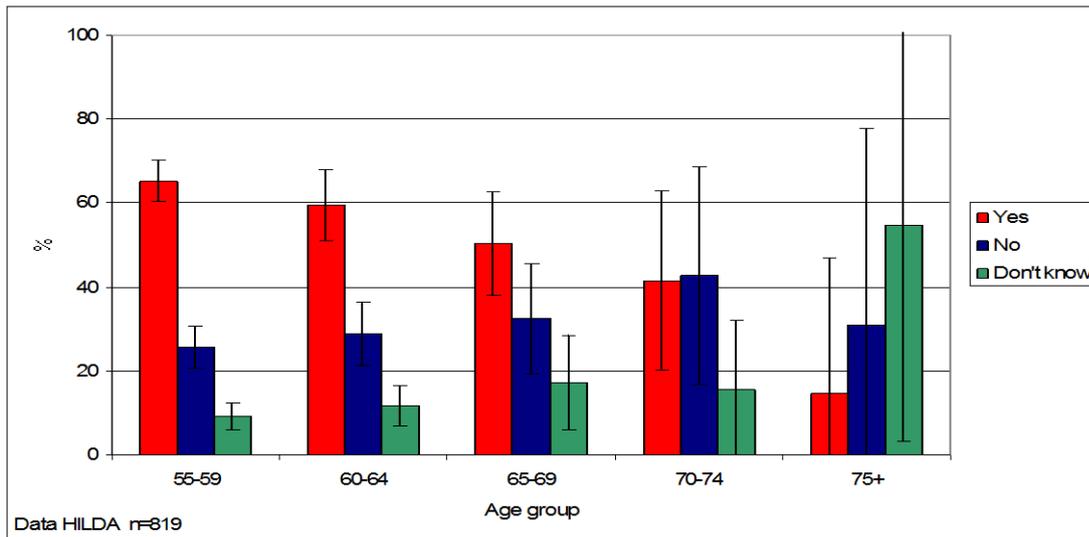
p578) quotes a British Labour Force survey which found ‘the key factor constraining older workers’ training activities was a lack of opportunities provided by employers, rather than a disinterest among such workers’.

There are advantages in employing older workers. The needs of older workers are often different from the needs and aspirations of their younger colleagues, e.g. part time and flexible employment, and a greater need for status rather than bonuses and promotion. Many of these requirements are the same as for younger workers trying to balance work/family commitments. If these were available to the whole workforce then a happier and more productive environment could result.

Employers need to realise that older workers have different priorities. Dearth, the representative of a human resources consulting firm, cited in Goldman and Mahler (1995, p152) continues this argument, suggesting that ‘many employees over the age of 50 have different priorities than older workers in the past. They are generally not striving to develop a high profile career’. Their priorities now are to ‘feel valued in the organisation, and contribute at a meaningful level’. A survey, quoted by the same authors, indicated that of 1000 American workers between the ages of 50 and 70, half wanted to undertake work that improved the quality of life in their communities, which connected them to a life passion, involved a purpose bigger than themselves or brought them together with other people’ (p152). These are attributes connected with successful and healthy ageing.

The extent to which employers are meeting some of the different needs of older employees is shown in the following graphs.

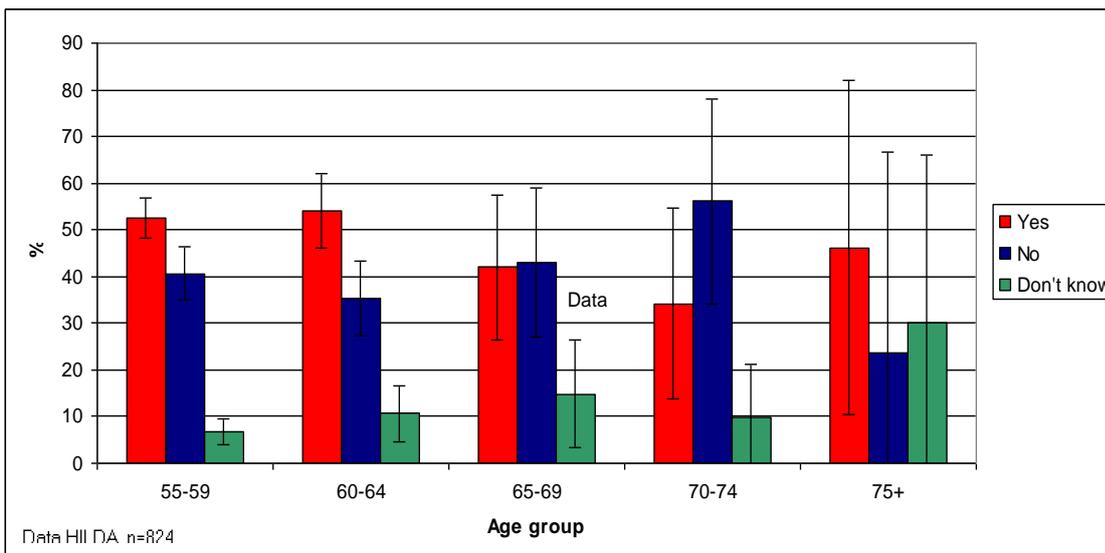
Figure 63: Access to permanent part-time work by age group.



With increasing age, employees often prefer permanent part-time work. Permanent part-time work should be available where possible. The 'yes' responses may be influenced by public servants for whom this is usually a right.

Gender differences. In the 55-59 age group, more women said they had access to permanent part-time work, whereas in the 60-64 age group more men had access.

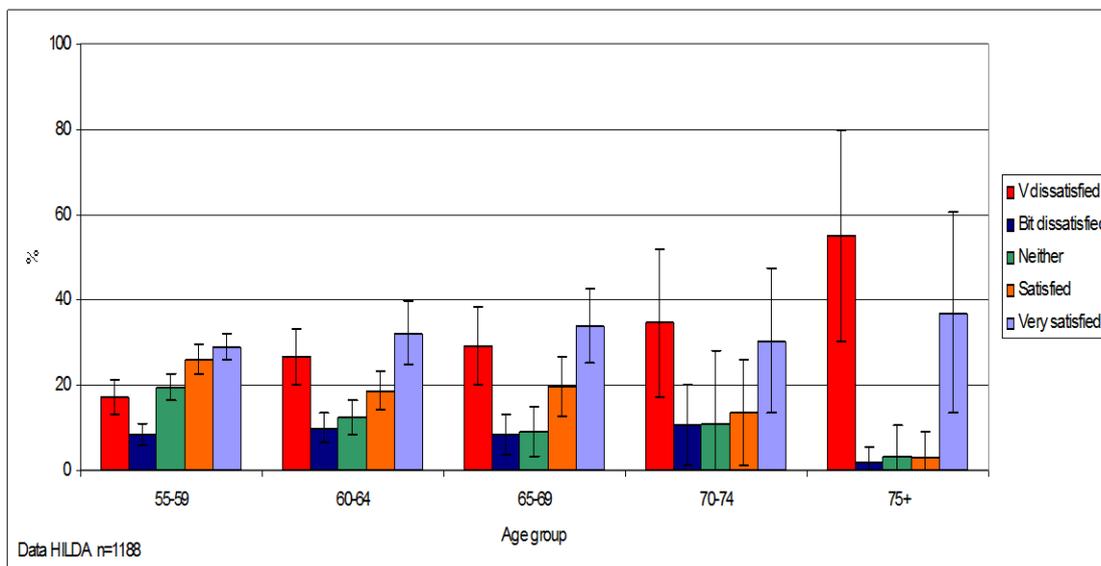
Figure 64: Availability of flexible start/finish times by age group.



Older workers often require flexibility in their starting/ finishing times, particularly when they also have carer roles or other commitments. Again the rights of public servants may have inflated the 'yes' response.

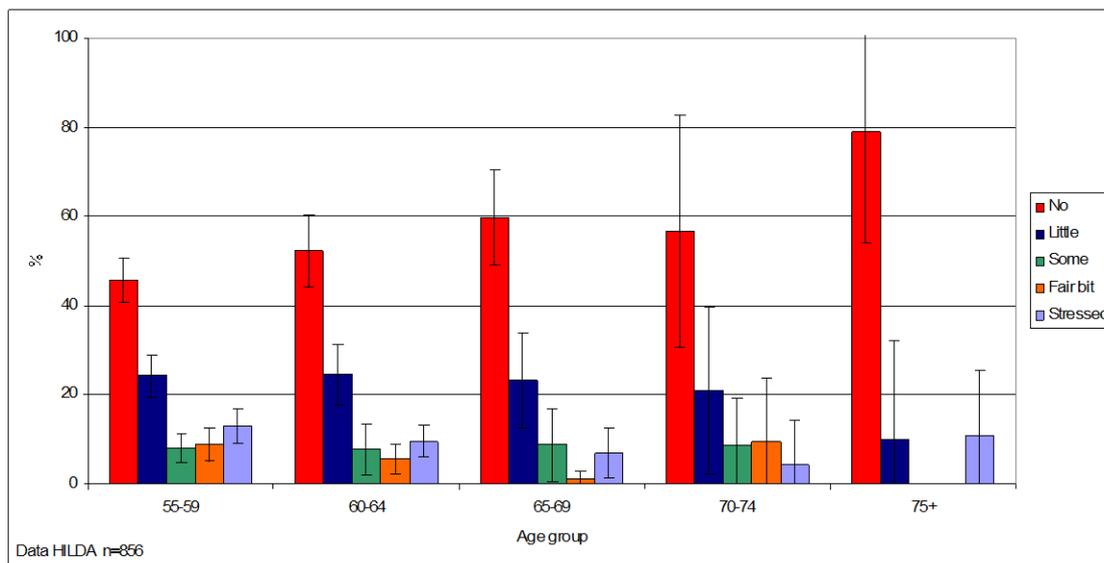
Korczyk (2004, pvii) also suggests workplace changes which could make work more attractive. These include ‘more flexible hours, perhaps flexible location arrangements such as telecommuting, and better pay and benefits for part-time workers. Many people of all ages might prefer flexible hours to accommodate physical limitations, family responsibilities, or leisure pursuits’. He suggests that ‘greater demands will be placed on employers to provide flexibility in approaches to working hours and arrangements. Demand for flexible or graduated work is expected to increase as baby boomers reach the age when they begin to reassess and exercise a choice in balancing their work commitments and lifestyle pursuits’. There is also a need for employers to recognise the transition from full time work to retirement in order to ‘maintain and better utilise the talents of an ageing workforce’. Ferrier (2005, p15) further expands on this suggesting that initiatives to encourage a longer working life will need to take into account different configurations. ‘More flexible forms of workforce participation will allow a balance of work and leisure, for this group, without forgoing the best of either. This might include more part-time work, irregular work or home based work’.

Figure 65: Employment opportunities for older workers by age group



The ‘dissatisfied’ group of responses reflect an unmet desire for work which increases with age.

Figure 66: Degree of job stress by age group



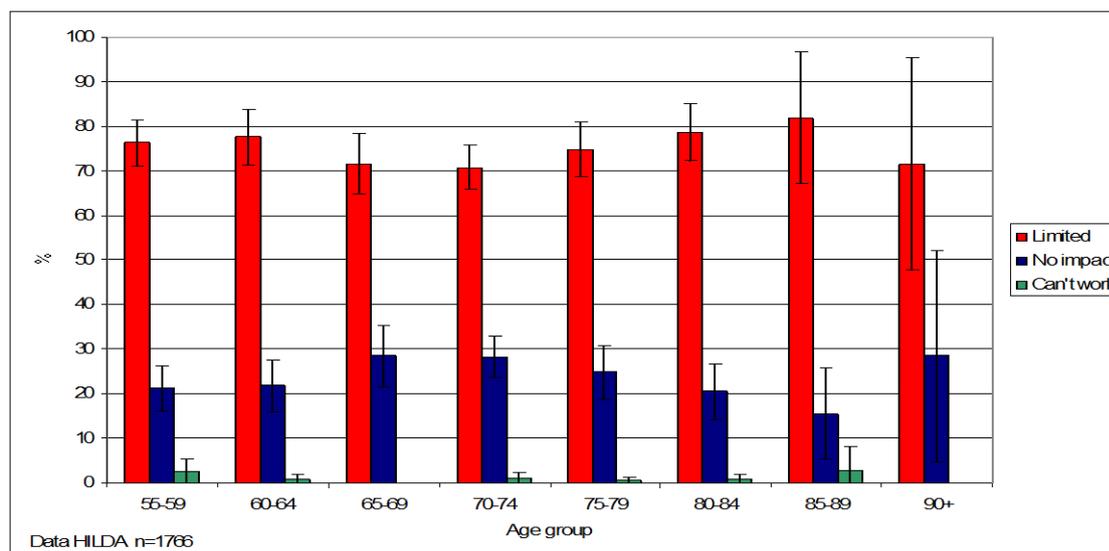
Few workers indicate high levels of job stress. Those who do, particularly among older workers, presumably stay at work because the benefits, such as higher income and greater superannuation, outweigh the problems created by stress.

Gender differences. More men in all age groups recorded no stress, whereas in the 55-59 age group more women were likely to record a ‘bit’ or ‘some’ stress. In the 65-69 age group, women were more likely to record a ‘bit’ of stress.

A Norwegian study (Blekesaune et al. 2005, p7) found that ‘men with repetitive jobs, physical demands and low job autonomy were those more likely to be retired’. In contrast ‘occupations characterised by extensive training, low physical demands, and workers’ ability to control the nature and pace of their work reduced the likelihood of retirement’. Also ‘hard physical work is associated with disability retirement for both men and women’. In discussing whether ‘job stress may reflect a degree of inclusion and appreciation’ they suggest that ‘Stimulating job stress is not only an individual experience that could reflect a preference for work stressors or work in place of leisure’ but that it is likely that many elderly workers favour work with a certain degree of job stress. They add ‘jobs with low individual autonomy lead to early retirement among men but not among women’.

6.1.5 Work and health

Figure 67: Effect of long term health problems on the ability to work of older people



This question was asked of people with a long term health condition or disability. Few of them felt that ill health prevents them from working. They might perhaps join the workforce, if not already in it, if conditions could be adjusted to meet their needs.

This is important for the argument in this thesis that older people lead more successful and healthier lives if they have a purpose in life. The graph suggests that few actually feel that they can't work, or presumably, participate in some purposeful activity.

An important consideration here is that the UK study (Clarke et al. 2005, p74) found that 'early retirees who had been forced to retire because of ill-health reported significantly lower effective well-being and life satisfaction than did those who themselves chose to retire early'. The question which arises here is whether ill-health caused the early retirement or whether conditions suitable for continuing in the workforce could not be provided, leading to early retirement.

6.1.6 Changes needed

The above data and research suggests a mismatch between the needs and desires of employees, and prospective employees, and employers. The argument in this thesis that older workers benefit from having a purpose is ideally met through participation in the workforce, either full-time or part-time. The future needs of the country, in terms of meeting workforce needs and reducing pension expenses, are also aligned with increasing participation by older

people in the workforce. Employers need to be convinced of this. One hurdle is that there are myths surrounding the employment of older workers.

Results from a survey published in 2002 in the USA debunked many of them.

- Myth 1. People age 65+ are too old to keep working. Fact: - The number of people in this age group who report serious health problems has decreased since 1972 by 22%, while life expectancy has increased by 7%.
- Myth 2. Older workers don't care about the success of their employer. Fact: - In a survey in 1998, 77% of human resource professionals agreed that 'Older workers tend to have a higher level of commitment to the organisation than younger workers' and 'tend to be more reliable than younger workers'.
- Myth 3. Older workers frequently miss work for health reasons. Fact: - Absenteeism is only slightly higher for older workers 55 and older, (4.1%) compared with younger workers (3.8%).
- Myth 4. Training older workers is a waste of time as they will retire soon. Fact: - Job retention is highest among 55– 64 year olds, even when the older worker is a recent hire.
- Myth 5. Older workers are technophobes who are unable to make use of Information Technology. Fact: - From 1997 – 2000, 'people over 50 were the fastest growing part of the US Internet audience, growing from 19% to 38% of the audience'.

Source: <http://www.nowcc.org?employers/myths.html>

Mills (2008) from the Recruitment and Consulting Services Association encourages employers to rethink their attitudes to older employees. A survey of Association members indicated: -

Table 2: Employers' opinions of older employees

Item/ age group	55+ age group	General applicants
Appropriate work ready attitudes	72%	48%
Right mix and level of skills	54%	34%
Appropriate staff easy to find	35%	16%

The Association believes that the lack of skilled workers is one of the biggest threats to having a viable and healthy economy.

Encel and Studencki (2004, p36), in a research project involving employment agencies, suggest that 'greater emphasis should be placed on staff training. There is evidence that a significant number of staff in employment agencies are influenced by the same public stereotypes, which depreciates the abilities of older people'.

6.1.7 The employees' point of view

Older employees are in a 'push/pull' situation with the advantages/disadvantages in remaining in the workforce and the perceived advantages of retirement.

Many older Australians find the 'pull' of retirement very attractive but few consider that they are choosing a lifestyle which may last for in excess of two decades. The philosophy in Australia is that those who reach the age of 65 (55 for public servants) have the 'right' to retire and lead a life of idleness and leisure without questioning whether this is a desirable lifestyle or whether it will lead to healthy outcomes. Ferrier (2005, p15) suggests that 'the ability to retire early to enjoy a more relaxed lifestyle is now, and is likely to remain, a goal of many Australians'.

The reality of retirement is often very different. It can lead to boredom, depression, loss of prestige and both physical and mental health problems. None of the older achievers mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, the centenarians and the Late Bloomers, older achievers overseas and in Australia, or the interviewees in this research, recorded ongoing problems with physical or mental health.

The health of people who continue in employment compared with those who retire, is a question which is unresolved through available employment data. One of the problems with trying to identify which came first, ill health or retirement, particularly early retirement, is labelled the ‘justification bias’. As Korczyk (2004, p17) suggests ‘Some respondents who have withdrawn from the labour force for other reasons may simply see poor health as a socially acceptable reason for not working’. (see also Tsai 2005)

Evidence regarding the health advantages, if any, of early retirement is inconclusive. In a survey conducted amongst Shell employees, Tsai et al. (2005) found that those who retired at 55 had a reduced life expectancy compared with those who stayed in the workforce until 65. The reasons for retirement were not available and those who retired early may already have had poor health which could have contributed to their early demise.

In an Australian study, Cai and Kalb (2005) used the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey to research the physical health outcomes of males continuing in the workforce. Using the 51 to 64 age group to define ‘older working age’ men, their results indicated that over the three years of the survey self assessed health was correlated to continuation in the workforce. A Canadian study (Wolfson 1993) specifically researched health following retirement and found that those who retire later tend to live longer, although the difference diminishes with retirement age.

Table 3: Work status and self assessed health of Australian males age 51-64 years

Work/health	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Not working	80.71%	51.64%	20.56%	15.09%	13.7%
Working	19.29%	48.36%	79.44%	84.91%	86.3%
n	140	426	817	762	219

Source: - Health Status and Labour Force Status of Older Working-age Australian Men. Cai and Kalb (2005)

They concluded that for this age group ‘the better their health, the more likely an individual is to be in the labour force’.

There are other influences on the decision to retire or not. Cai and Kalb (2005, p20) found that older men are more likely to be participants in the work force if their wives are also participants, and suggest that couples tend to spend their leisure time together, a finding

supported by other researchers. Blekesaune et al., (2005, p21) found that 'husbands and wives coordinate their retirement behaviour'. They cited American studies (Pozzebond and Mitchell 1989) that a husband's retirement increases the probability of a wife's retirement and Gustman and Steinmeier (2000) that husbands tend to delay their retirement until their wives can retire. This suggests that programs designed to delay departure from the workplace should be particularly directed at women.

There are a number of benefits of remaining in the workforce which were listed at the beginning of this chapter. Calvo (2006, p1) also states that 'studies of healthy aging suggest that, for many individuals, working at an older age could have a number of positive physical and psychological effects' and also that 'paid work at older ages reduced the probability of reporting fair/poor health by 6%'.

The problems connected with an ageing workforce are common to developed countries. It is important that suggested solutions take into account the needs of the older people involved. At its 2001 meeting in Stockholm the European Council set a target of 50% for the employment of workers in the 55-64 age group by 2010. In response, the Commission of European Communities developed a set of guidelines in 2002 for prolonging employment for older workers. These included: -

- The promotion of part-time work to facilitate gradual retirement.
- Enhanced work incentives and removal of early retirement incentives.
- Ensuring work skills through life-long learning and updating.
- Adapting the workplace environment to meet the needs of older workers.
- Gaining support from all involved in the strategy.

Measures introduced include tax credits for continued employment, restricted access to early retirement schemes and wage, training and recruitment policies.

Schellenberg, cited in PRI (2005, p24), analysed the reasons why older workers in Canada left the workforce. Recent retirees would have continued paid work if

- Flexible work arrangements had been available (32%)

- Part-time work had been available (27%)
- They had been in better health (26%)
- Their salary had increased (21%)
- There had been no mandatory retirement policy (11.5%)
- Other (11%)
- Care giving arrangements had been available.

PRI (2005, p25) research indicates that a third of Canadian retirees say they would have worked longer if they could have reduced their working time, taken on different duties, been paid more for example. A further 26% might have continued working if their health had been better. They suggest that early retirement is highly valued for the independence rather than total withdrawal from work, and that the plans of many older workers are quite fluid and open to influence. Retirement income plays a large part in the decision to retire or not for many people, but some simply keep on working ‘because they get satisfaction from their job or their work role’. In addition ‘workplace health and well-being will become more important’. Canadian research (PRI 2005) data indicates that about 25% of ‘retirees’ return to the workforce suggesting that retirement may not present the anticipated benefits.

6.1.8 Choice in time of retirement

Choice of time of leaving the workforce is important. There are advantages in older people being able to plan for their retirement if that is their chosen path. Unemployment, for whatever reason, is often a precursor to early retirement for older people, with associated health and financial problems. The National Strategy (2002, p17) points out that ‘unemployment is often psychologically and financially devastating for mature people and for those who are dependent on them’.

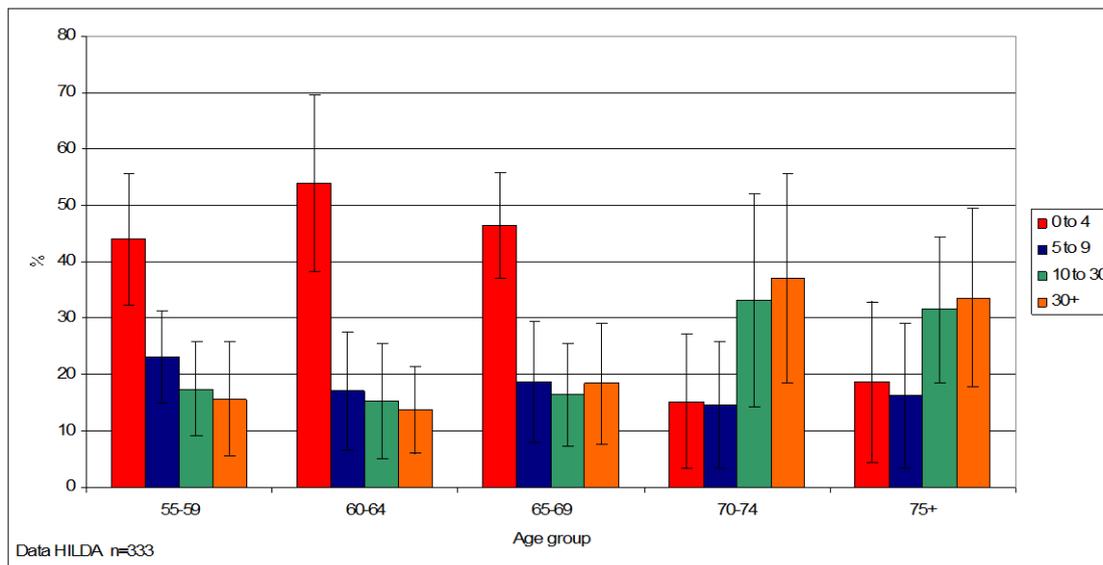
For many people, staying in the workforce under conditions which suit them is an easier option than retirement, particularly for those who have no ambition to follow another pursuit. Many dread the endless years ahead without a purpose in their lives. Laslett (1989) comments on ‘the immense importance to the individual of obtaining and holding down a job and the enhanced status of the job holder, which continually grows as the ladder of professional

promotion if ascended'. All of this is lost unless retirement is accompanied by a comparable purpose.

6.2 Carers

Working as a carer is often a reality for older people, but not always through choice. The care of a disabled family member might be imposed upon an older person but the part time care of grandchildren, for example, may be through choice.

Figure 68: Number of hours per week caring for a disabled spouse or relative by age group.



The number of hours per week spent as a carer ranged from less than five to over 40. These were collapsed according to cell sizes with the result that the hour ranges are unequal. The type of relative was not specified thus people in the younger groups could well be in what is described as the 'sandwich group' caring for both children and older parents. With the older groups the relative may be a disabled spouse, or grandchildren. The cost-saving of this activity to the economy should be calculated, and appropriate compensation, both financially and in terms of carer relief provisions given to the carers for the amount of time and services provided. De Vaus et al. (2003, p7) point out that '21% of principal carers of people with disabilities are aged over 65 years'. Also '21% of children aged less than 11 years receive some child care from grandparents'. Braithwaite (2004 p330) highlights some of the difficulties carers undergo, including 'elements of distrust in a society that is not either tolerant or respectful of vulnerability'.

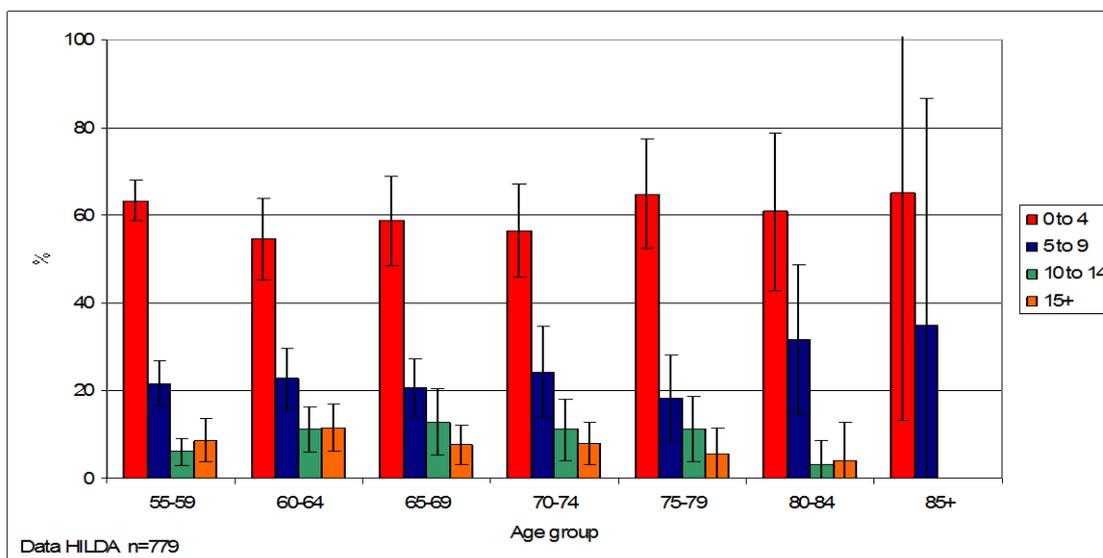
The health of carers also needs to be monitored. Stuart-Hamilton (2006, p218) looks at the effect on carers of people with dementia ‘there is a large body of evidence that caring for a demented relative usually results in significantly higher levels of depression, stress and other related health problems’.

The work of carers is included in this chapter on work but with the recognition that this may not be a lifestyle of choice.

6.3 Voluntary/charity work

Many older workers exchange paid employment for voluntary work, which usually has flexible working hours and may have a variety in tasks which were absent from paid work. It usually provides the companionship of the workplace and may also provide status.

Figure 69: Hours per week of volunteer/ charity work by age group.



This is a derived variable totalling the number of voluntary/charity hours older people perform on a weekly basis. Responses ranged from less than 5 to 40+, but small cells in the higher hour groups resulted in the above classification. Even some of the old old (80+) are contributing to the community through voluntary/ charity work.

De Vaus et al. (2003, p7) quote an Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) survey which found that 37% of volunteer work was contributed by people aged 55 years and over. Valenzuela (2009) recommends voluntary work, particularly for those who do not really want to retire,

but who could change to part-time work, usually without pay. ‘Not only is this a great approach from a healthy brain perspective but having these “living treasures” at our disposal also has enormous benefits both for the community and the economy’ (p178). An Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002, p7) survey showed that 82% of volunteers became involved through personal contact ‘suggesting that volunteering not only builds social networks but grows out of them’. Narushima (2000, p4) lists benefits to the volunteers as satisfaction, self-esteem, the sense of contribution, making a difference, accomplishment and the ‘joy and stimulation of socialising with other people’.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Year Book (2002) found differences in types of male and female volunteering work. Males were more likely to be involved in repairs, maintenance, gardening and coaching, refereeing and judging whereas females were more likely to be preparing and serving food. The concern here is that the male areas are more likely to be attached to a project with an identified purpose, whereas females are involved in supportive work. Volunteering provides many of the benefits of paid work but does not provide the financial incentive of the latter. The satisfaction level from volunteer work is very much in the hands of the employer who often has no training in the special needs of volunteers. Such training should be formalised and the value of volunteers recognised and calculated at the national level. This, with the work of carers, provides part of the other side of the balance sheet, offsetting the cost of pensions and health care of older people.

Maltby and Rohleder (2009, p244) point out that volunteering requires more support. ‘The importance of training and qualification as an incentive for older people to volunteer has increased’. They point out the benefits of participation in decision-making, and contact with other volunteers, the need to offer flexible time management and the value of social appreciation.

Older people are constantly faced with media headlines referring to the increasing costs of health and pensions as a result of the ageing of the population. This creates the impression that older people are a burden on the community. This section shows that a percentage of the older population remain involved in the workforce, and others are involved as carers, or in volunteer/ charity work, thus contributing to the community, and challenging the community view that older people merely take from the community, ignoring their contribution. Stressing one half of the balance sheet consisting of medical, financial and accommodation costs add to

the world of negative ageism in which older people live. It is unfair on the people showcased in this profile.

The data presented here suggests that there is an unmet, and rarely acknowledged, need for more opportunities for work among older people. A recent Government research paper EPSA (2011) basically made recommendations similar to those given here. As usual with research into ageing the paper was written by a panel of younger people (in their early sixties) still connected with the workforce. Their findings will have limited impact as the financial aspects of encouraging people to continue working were not addressed. The paper should have looked at the position of those planning to leave the work force and those who had already left it but could be persuaded to return. The views of this latter group did not seem to have been canvassed. Until recently pensioners who continued working had their pensions reduced by 40% of their earnings, making it financially unviable to work. This appears to have been changed and older workers may now get additional tax breaks. This is not being publicised thus reducing the incentive to work. Workers who delay retirement are given extra financial incentives but this is only advertised among those already retired for whom the knowledge is too late.

The alternative to staying in the workforce, as discussed in this thesis, through being in a project, either alone or with a like minded group, such as the work done in men's sheds, and work done through connection with others, leads to satisfaction, camaraderie and a sense of achievement. This should be encouraged among those with no desire to remain in paid work. Assistance to participate in such projects, both in identifying projects and establishing them, would be beneficial to those intending to retire.

Encouragement of older people to have a purpose in life, either through part-time or full-time work, or through being involved in a project, are beneficial and contribute to successful ageing. All measures should be taken to facilitate this by those involved.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has continued the profile of people in the 55+ age group looking at work, the carer role and voluntary/charity workers. It has discussed work from the national, employer and employee viewpoints, and shown the benefits to all three groups.

Continuing in the workforce is often the easiest way of having a purpose in the later stage of life. The data shown here indicates that there is a large, untapped and underused workforce, and that employers can do more to retain their older staff, and provide opportunities for additional staff, and it would be beneficial for them to do so. The government needs to advertise its attitude towards post-pension workers and the financial incentives it provides.

The next chapter summarises the research and suggests the way forward from here.

Chapter 7 The research summarised and the way ahead

This chapter draws together the threads of this research which has investigated the effect of lifestyle choices on the physical and mental health of Australians in the 55+ age group. The research suggests that having a purpose in the later stage of life is the optimal route to successful ageing and explores how older Australians are building purposeful lives despite sometimes encountering health problems and particularly in the face of negative social expectations. Recommendations for future action and research based on these findings are suggested.

7.1 The research summarised

The original aim of this research was to investigate the effect of lifestyle choices, in terms of full time or part time work, or volunteering, or caring, the current accepted options, on the physical and mental health of Australians of retirement age, from age 55. The research was later expanded to include and investigate the value of having a purpose in any form, with its accompanying status in the community and future plans, in this later stage of life.

This was to become the foundation of the research which began with an analysis of data relating to numerous aspects of older people's lifestyles. This provided a profile of the ageing which other research often fails to do. The research has focused on the necessary ingredients for successful ageing in Australia, which can be fulfilled by having a purpose in the later stage.

Initially, descriptors such as the elderly, older people, and the aged were defined. The target group for the research were Australians in the 55+ age group who were still living in the community. A literature search identified many of the problems confronting this group and the currently unaddressed issues involved, including advancements in knowledge of the older brain and its potential for change leading to improvement in older people's lifestyles. The old pairing of ageing and senility may be exchanged for ageing and brain improvement if the concept of the need for a purpose throughout life, including the later stage, can be accepted.

A profile of older people and their lifestyles was obtained through use of a nationally recognised data base (HILDA) which enabled a quantitative summary of 69 characteristics of people in the 55 years and older group to be obtained (Chapter 5). The results from the

database were divided into different general aspects of living, subdivided into background information, such as education levels and marital status, fitness and health, family and living arrangements and the financial situation, and those with an identified purpose such as being part of the workforce or being a carer or volunteer. In addition the data enabled the current limitations of the workplace in meeting the needs of older workers to be investigated (Chapter 6). The database provided a comprehensive profile of this age group, identifying their physical and mental capabilities and current involvement in their communities. It indicated that most older people, as defined by this research, are physically capable of continuing their participation in the work force if they so desire, under possibly different arrangements such as reduced and/or flexible hours. For those who wish to retire, the data indicated that they have the mental and physical capabilities to adopt a new purpose in life as recommended by this research. Such a purpose may also be beneficial to their mental health as indicated by the modern concept of the ageing brain (Doidge 2007). The small numbers of older people who form the exception to this capability are likely to be within the final years of life.

Analysis of the literature, through all the varied disciplines, provides support for the proposition that a very necessary ingredient for successful ageing comes from having a purpose in life, with plans for the future, and the status in society which this provides. The relevance of this research arises from the study of motivational literature (Robinson 2009), discussed in Chapter 2, and particularly applies to the new 21st century concept of ageing in which many people have decades to live before death. This is a particularly important aspect of successful ageing for those who may have taken the retirement option already and have not taken on a new purpose to occupy their time. They may no longer feel that they have a role in life, and in society, with its accompanying lack of status which previously accompanied this role, and is a necessary ingredient for success in all other stages in life.

Chapter 2 explored the literature which demonstrates the tendency for older people to be viewed negatively in society as a burden and to be stigmatised as lacking the capability for engaging in sustained and purposeful activity. Whilst the quantitative analysis indicates that older people are physically and mentally capable of achieving in the later stage of life it also shows that the support networks needed, such as in areas of family and community support, are available to older people if they wish to continue along established life paths which include a purpose, or if they seek new lifestyle paths which incorporate this. A missing link

towards achieving this is the attitude of Australian society, including that of government agencies, towards older people. The current ageist attitude, with its parallels with racism and sexism, preclude many older Australians from believing in themselves and their continuing abilities. The literature provided evidence of this negative environment in which ageing takes place (Butler 1969) and the effect this has on older people (Matthews 1979) particularly in taking away their self confidence, belittling them, making them feel worthless and treating them as second class citizens (as shown by the comments made by older people in Canberra quoted in Chapter 2), a stigma previously bestowed upon women and coloured people. This thesis has shown that society and older people will benefit if society's attitude towards older people, treating them as second class, non-contributing, citizens changes, and older people's own attitudes towards themselves, largely created by this negative social environment, as being beyond achieving and making a valuable contribution to society, will need to undergo change if older people are to achieve their potential and age successfully.

The research moved on to illustrate, through the literature, famous older individuals in the past who achieved in this later stage of their lives in various fields. Other groups of older achievers were examined through the literature documenting the lives of centenarians who still lead fulfilling lives and have a defined role, and therefore status, in their communities (Buettner 2008). The sample groups involved were specifically chosen because they had a lower incidence of Alzheimer's disease than similar ageing populations. This suggests that older people with a purpose are likely to maintain good mental health, with a lower risk of dementia, which it is proposed may form a basis for further study. Similar lifestyles were also documented in a study of older people (in the US) who were not able to continue with the work they did pre-retirement but became successful in finding an alternative purpose which also gave them a defined role and status (Goldman and Mahler 1995). Again there was no suggestion of mental deterioration in this group although this was not specifically addressed. Whilst this thesis is not a quantitative test of this proposition it adds to our understanding of the capacity of older people to adopt fulfilling and purposefully directed lives and the benefits of doing so.

The research explored in depth current older achievers through qualitative research (through interviews) with seven well known Australians who are themselves still achieving in this later stage of their lives (Chapter 4). The lifestyles of this group, of different ages within the 55+ range, and from very different fields, indicated the advantages of being fully connected with

the world and having a defined role within it through their purpose and the status accompanying it. The group included an Aboriginal elder and an older female. They were chosen for their successful careers in a variety of fields, ages, gender and ethnicity. Their lives and continuing achievements illustrate the benefits society gains when older people meet these criteria. It also explores the strategies these eminent older Australians employ to cope with any physical limitations imposed by ageing. The interviews with older Australians reported in Chapter 4 suggests that being busy healthily needs to come from being involved in a worthwhile project, one that has status, and can either be paid or voluntary, but requires quite a large amount of time and commitment. The current measure of achievement of this age group by society (EPSA 2011) tends to be in terms of financial productivity, not social or inventive productivity, and this is another context which it is hoped will undergo change and further research.

It is vital that the status attached to having a recognisable purpose in all stages of life needs to be recognised if older people are to have a valued place in society and feel that they still have a role to play and have the dignity and status attached to this. This will require social and individual change. Currently many older people try to counteract the impression of older people as bludgers on society by filling their time as much as possible (being busy) without developing a purposeful identity with a defined role and status, and thus time filling until the end of life (from private conversations with older people). Even at the more formal level of paid work, there are unmet needs, again identified through the qualitative analysis. This includes those out of the workforce wanting work and many of those currently in the workforce wanting additional working hours, including flexible conditions; needs which may or may not be able to be met by employers but should be encouraged. This was also recognised in the government enquiry into employment of older people (EPSA 2011).

In summary, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggests that many people have the capacity to achieve beyond their current level at all ages, including in the later stage of life. This involves continuing with old pathways, or following new dreams. The HILDA data analysis indicates that the concept of the later stage of life as being as productive and fulfilling as previous stages is physically achievable for a majority of older people. This group has a very positive approach to their physical health, and the derived mental health data also reflects positive attitudes. Conversations with older people and the interviews with older Australians in this study suggests that for many this stage of life is free from the restrictions, in terms of

money, commitments and time, which affect previous stages, and provides an opportunity to pursue these creative talents previously unidentified or repressed.

The success at different levels which older people can achieve was foreshadowed in Chapter 4 by examples given in the Late Bloomers (Goldman and Mahler 1995). An additional bonus for older people is that increasing life expectancy provides more time and opportunity for such achievement. Realising aspirations unfulfilled in the past and following new ambitions in the later stage can be achieved without the fear of failure (Jeffers 2009) and the family commitments that often prevent this fulfilment in earlier stages of life. As this thesis demonstrates older people can be an asset to the country and community, and can have pride in themselves, as is the case with the prominent older Australians interviewed as part of this research (Chapter 4), the centenarians in Buettner's study (Buettner 2008), and the older Americans who deliberately sought to have a purpose in their lives (Goldman and Mahler 1995).

A comparison with literature from overseas suggests that the voices of older people are not being heard in Australia as they should be. The research of Tozer and Thornton (1995) indicate the benefits of working with users of the services provided, particularly in their comment that what they felt was important to older people was not what older people themselves felt was important. Since this research started, groups wishing to be given grants for research into ageing in the UK now have to demonstrate that older people are involved in designing and shaping their research projects. This does not appear to be on the horizon in Australian with both research work and conferences dominated by younger people with the voices of the potential experts in ageing, older people themselves, being silenced. This may be creating inaccurate research and could be an additional obstacle to older Australians reaching their full potential. The initiative of the UK government in applying this restriction suggests that they believe that this will produce improved research.

The two major organisations, COTA and the National Seniors Association, which purport to represent older Australians, could be encouraged to change their approach to their clients. Ideally such groups would be run by older people and employ older people, particularly in their research and policy sectors, a scenario which is not currently the case.

A 21st century addition to gerontological knowledge which is altering research into ageing is the acceptance of brain plasticity (Valenzuela 2009, Doidge 2007, Budge 2006), which

replaces the concept that older people lose brain cells and are thus less mentally capable. The quantitative analysis indicates that older people have, or could have, the necessary fitness to meet the physical challenges of ageing and are being encouraged to do so but recent developments in the acceptance of brain plasticity suggest that necessary mental fitness should also be achievable. Not only are the previously assumed connections between ageing and senility inaccurate but the literature suggests that with appropriate activity, mental fitness can be maintained or even improved (Kempermann 2006), possibly leading to a reduction or slowing down in the current increase in dementia diseases. Research in the field of the brain suggests that brain stimulation, which can overcome the loss of brain cells through ageing by creating more cell connectors, may be achieved by having a purpose in life, creating what Friedan (2006) describes as a motivational environment providing stimulation to different areas of the brain. This is providing an enormous change in direction in ageing research.

Changes in technology can assist in fulfilling the acknowledged need of people at all stages of life, including the later stage, to have a purpose and status in the community. The motivational literature which is also applicable to older people suggests that modern technology can be utilised to enable people to connect with others with similar interests, now identified by the modern use of the word tribes (Godin 2008), through computer networks and/or through physical contact. Advances in computer technology can also enable older people to remain connected with friends and family members even when physical restrictions may cause difficulties in maintaining face to face contacts. This can be an asset for reducing the loneliness often accompanying ageing and for promoting involvement in a purpose. Both reduced cost and ease of use of computers can open up the world to older people in particular, and was not available to previous generations. This is being recognised by the Federal government and assistance, both financially and in terms of expertise, and is increasingly being provided.

The current attitudes towards older people, and the self image many of them have as a result of this, is shown in the comments of older people in Canberra, discussed in Chapter 2. The review of some of the literature, however demonstrates a preponderance of conceptual arguments both in fields such as gerontology, and in current lay understanding of ageing that assumes the inevitability of dependence and of a lack of direction in older people. This is likely to be the major obstacle to the implementation of the theme of this research, that the later stage of life should be as important as the previous ones and can also be a time of

achievement. The negative aspect of ageing, ageism, was not mentioned by any of the older Australians interviewed. Their success and the adulation which accompanies it may perhaps insulate them from this environment and as older people are encouraged to become achievers this may assist in eliminating this undesirable aspect of ageing in Australia today.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

A limitation of this research has been that the database used, which, while providing a good and appropriate sample size for this age group, was not specifically designed to address the research issue of the importance of having a purpose in life. Alternative questions, such as involvement with the workforce, caring, volunteering and the extent of community involvement were substituted in this analysis. It targeted the population in the 18+ age group.

Research into successful ageing is a huge topic and the focus of this thesis has been contained and restricted in order to make a robust research contribution. It has concentrated on older people still living in private accommodation, as the appropriate database selected only interviewed older people in this situation. The lives of those living in alternative accommodation, such as retirement villages, provide a separate field for future research. This extension of the research may be possible through the researcher's more recent involvement with an aged care provider service which provides care for older people at all levels of need at seven different locations in country towns in NSW.

The problems specifically associated with older people from ethnic backgrounds have also not been addressed. In many instances these parallel those of main stream older people but issues such as language skills and isolation from family and cultural differences create additional problems. The problems encountered by gay and lesbian couples as they age and require appropriate accommodation have also been excluded. The importance of faith and belief among older people, and the contribution of these to the ageing process, has also not been addressed.

There are two main obstacles to the implementation of this research. Both are attitudinal problems. The first is the negative attitude of the public at all levels, including at the political level, from federal and state governments to local communities, towards older people and the ageing process. The second is the attitude of many older people themselves who accept their second class status and accept the concept of retirement as a time of leisure and ending rather than an opportunity for personal fulfilment, growth and achievement. This is a repetition of

earlier times when many women and coloured people also accepted their classification as second class citizens. The current unique situation in which life expectancy is increasing rapidly, creating greater numbers of older people, and the extension of this stage of life for each individual, is not being adequately addressed. The current debate tends to centre around the financial cost of the changes and to assume that old age itself drives declines in health and produces increased dependency.

Publicity needs to be given, through the actions of those involved, such as government departments and agencies purporting to represent older people, and researchers, to the benefits of having a purpose in the later stage of life which meets the necessary ingredients of status and having plans for the future. This thesis has argued that this would enable the contribution that older people can still make to be recognised and enable older people to become aware that this stage in their lives can be as personally rewarding as previous stages. The requirement of having a purpose, and with it status, which all humans need in all stages of life, and the current attitude that the later stage is different and does not have this need, should be addressed. The current impression that retirement is a time for unlimited leisure pursuits fails to point out that such a lifestyle does not meet these basic needs and together with the second class citizenship associated with it can lead to isolation, depression, suicide and possible deterioration of the brain. The advantages and outcomes of each of the options, along the lines identified in this paper, would highlight achievement and fulfilment as a desirable situation, provide publicity for the idea, and enable older people to become aware of its desirability. It would also turn the concept of a problematic ageing population into one of providing a positive contribution to society through achievement, not necessarily for monetary gain. Research is needed in to how society can support and nurture older Australians to maintain purposeful lives and identify interventions and policy changes that can effect change.

The two components which affect life at any age are physical and mental health. The quantitative analysis in this research indicates that most older people are able to adjust their lives to cope with the physical limitations which accompany ageing and which tend to increase with age. They are becoming aware of the need for physical fitness. Recognition and support from the health fraternity can facilitate this. Research into brain plasticity (Cohen 2005) suggests that mental fitness must, and can, also be maintained and, unlike physical fitness, may even be improved. The current attitude of the Alzheimer's Association to

encourage people to keep their brains active through engagement with puzzles does not meet the criteria of having a purpose in life, having plans for the future and having status in the community as a result. Rather it tends to trivialise the life of an ageing person and does nothing to address the second class citizen label. More complex research that moves away from isolated brain stimulating activities to complex purposeful lives and their interaction with brain plasticity is needed.

7.2.1 The effects of ageism manifests itself in several ways

The negative environment (Butler 1969, Friedan 1993) in which older people, including Australians, age is not being adequately recognised and addressed. Currently Government Departments, in particular those concerned with the affairs of older Australians, often appear to be unaware of ageism, its parallels with racism and sexism and the negative effects of all three (private conversation with senior officials in the Department of Ageing, 2009). Those responsible for government policy appear to be younger people with no personal experience of ageing, thus restricting their appreciation of the difficulties faced by older people. Employment and policy engagement of more older people in such departments may address this issue. More research is needed into the extent to which ageism is embedded in existing laws and policies and how older people can be better engaged in policy and service co-design.

The Office for an Ageing Australia could be encouraged to pursue positive attitudes towards ageing, including the promotion of the later stage of life as an opportunity to continue with dreams and ambitions begun earlier in life, or to create new ones. It could promote ageing as a time of achievement and fulfilment, a positive experience. Again employment of more older people in this office would assist in achieving this. In addition using employees who are relatively young to suggest that older people need to have a purpose in life is unlikely to be very effective.

7.2.2 Opportunities in the workforce

Encouragement of all employers, both private and government departments, to employ older people would help to meet unmet demand in the employment area. This was the recommendation of the committee set up by the government (EPSA 2011), a recommendation which was unfortunately linked to the economic potential of older people rather than their physical and mental wellness and their creative ability. For those older

people who require financial compensation for their endeavours, recognition by society of employers who realise the advantages of employing older people would be beneficial to such provision. Recognition has been given in the USA for many years to employers who utilise the skills of older people in their employment policies and this attitude could be adopted in Australia, creating more awareness and opportunity for employees.

The connection between older people and the achievements made in their working lifetimes needs to be recognised and opportunities made available for them to continue with this, possibly outside the formal workplace, if they desire. Many of the developments of the last thirty years, assisting mankind to move from the industrial age to the information age, are attributable to people who are now in this retirement age group. Unless they opt to remain in the formal working environment their talents are often not given the opportunity to be developed further and they get little credence for what they have already achieved, except often in their obituaries. There is no accepted mechanism to accommodate any new needs which require adjustment for the changing physical restrictions of ageing which they are experiencing. There is an assumption that older people are no longer productive yet the experiences of older people in the past, and at present, as explored in the literature, suggest that this is not necessarily the case.

For older people who may wish to follow previously unexplored talents, assistance, both financially and in terms of expertise, could be provided for example for older people to establish their own businesses if they wish, a path already being followed in France (Crumley 2009).

7.2.3 Inclusion of older people in research

The exclusion of older people from conferences, and from ageing research, and the possible resulting loss in accuracy in research needs to be identified (Narushima 2004, Tozer and Thornton 1995). The current situation reflects the attitude towards women a century ago where they were regarded as being incapable of contributing to knowledge of women's issues and they were excluded from research and conferences on feminism. Money available to facilitate older people to participate in the shaping of ageing research and to attend conferences, would enable these ageing research contexts to more accurately reflect the needs and ambitions of older people, as the studies quoted above found. Attendance by older people at conferences would enable some of the omissions in current research to be identified

through this group who would be able to bring attention to them, particularly as this would be based on experience. This may mean rethinking the norms of research practice in Australia. A current major inhibitor to conference participation by older people is cost (Rimmer 2007). Currently the attendance of younger people at conferences relating to ageing is paid for by their employers whereas older people are usually required to pay for themselves, often out of their pensions. This creates under-representation of older people, the experts in the field of ageing, at what should be conferences on leading edge research in the field. At an international conference on ageing held in Melbourne in May 2010, co-organised by COTA, and at a conference organised by the National Seniors in Canberra in June 2012, not even a concession discount was available for older people other than their own members. In contrast discounts for students were available. This suggests that the organisers of such conferences feel that these events benefit more from the attendance of younger people than from attendance of the experts in the field, the ageing themselves.

Mandatory involvement of older people in allocating grants for research into ageing, at both government and private levels, following the methodology outlined in this thesis, would enable research to become more relevant and accurate.

University courses leading to degrees are needed to bridge the current gap between researchers and older people, including recognised courses in ageing available through both face-to-face and distance learning modes. These should include a mixture of students of all age groups, including the older students who would be able to contribute practical knowledge of ageing (Hughes and Heycox 2006). This would increase knowledge of the ageing process throughout the community and give status to ageing. As the number of older people form an ever increasing part of society, and the need for services related to this group grow, professional recognition of work in this field is becoming necessary. Such courses are already available overseas, with both older and younger people being encouraged to enrol.

7.2.4 Rethinking attitudes towards the later years

The current concept of retirement as merely a time of endless leisure needs to be recognised as a deterrent to successful, physically and mentally healthy ageing. Older people following this path have no purpose in life, a necessary ingredient for successful living (Frankl 1959). A change could be facilitated by governments providing programs focusing on encouragement and opportunities for older people to continue working, not necessarily for financial gain, or

adopt a new career or substantial hobby or other purpose, including lifelong learning (Blair 2005). Currently older people absorb society's attitude towards them as second class citizens through negative ageism. This can more easily be changed if older people themselves show that this stage can be productive and enjoyable but this will be harder to achieve if this group is not encouraged to adopt the self concept of potential achievers. Negative attitudes towards older people will persist if elders fail to fulfil their role model as exemplars of successful and healthy lives. If older people have a purpose and are still achieving then attitudes towards them will change. This concept needs empowerment. Australia, in common with other developed countries, is missing out on a huge talent base with its associated social and intellectual capital, replacing it instead with a genteel scrapheap for older people, an attitude which affects older people themselves both in their own self esteem and through absorbing the lack of regard for them by society. It may perhaps also contribute to physical and/or mental deterioration

7.2.5 The new knowledge of brain function

The acceptance of the connection between senility and ageing is challenged by new knowledge in other fields, particularly in the acceptance of brain plasticity. The 21st century has brought an acceptance of this knowledge of the brain which changes attitudes towards its function in the later stage of life (Valenzuela 2009, Doidge 2007, Budge 2006). In the past, knowledge of the brain was characterised by belief in the detrimental loss of brain cells with ageing, with no method of replacing them or compensating for them by setting up new connections between cells. The words ageing and senility were connected. This has been exposed as a myth and understanding in this field has completely changed and altered research attitudes (Wiles and Wiles 2003). This combination of the words 'old and senile' can now be replaced by the concept of ageing as a time of pleasurable achievement as the accepted deterioration of the brain with age is not inevitable, can be avoided and the brain can be improved. The literature research in this thesis has indicated that those groups and individuals, who are leading successful and healthy lives in a motivational environment (Friedan 1993) are living examples of the advantages of having a purpose, status, future plans, and finding their element. The fact that they are all productive and have a purpose in life would indicate that the criteria for a healthy brain are being met by this purpose, providing the necessary stimulus and experiences to establish new connectors between cells in the various areas of the brain utilised through having a purpose.

The myth that brains degenerate with ageing can become self-fulfilling. Many older people accept any perceived degeneration of their memories ('senior moments') as a fact of life accompanying the ageing process. Maintenance of physical fitness is easy to prescribe, with visible results, but it appears to be less so for mental fitness. Reduction in achievement times for top athletes as they age, suggests that there is physical deterioration which can be reduced to some extent through fitness programmes. Research into ageing of the brain suggests that for mental fitness the opposite of degeneration may be true, that brain performance may not necessarily deteriorate but can be improved if new connectors are being formed (Wiles and Wiles 2003). This research needs to be given greater publicity.

The current trend which advocates 'productive ageing' or refers to 'the economic potential' of older people are terms used by younger researchers and may be offensive to older people. After perhaps half a century in the workforce this group should have the right to have freedom in their lives and should not be made to feel compelled to continue paid work, or feel guilty for not doing so (Cai and Kalb 2005). This research suggests that having a purpose in life with its associated benefits needs to be separated from economic definitions but be advocated as a pleasurable alternative experience which may or may not involve participation in the paid workforce.

The major problem with retirement is that older people tend not to regard the retirement years as a new beginning, in which they can find unfulfilled talents and new dreams. Robinson (2009) suggests that the reasons why people of all ages are reluctant to take new paths include fear of disapproval and failing. This should no longer be a problem for older people, most of whom have already succeeded in their lives. Robinson (2009) points out that older people have grown up in a world in which most adults have one career path and viewing the later stage of life as an opportunity to develop a new one is unfamiliar territory. It may also be connected to the inherited view of ageing as a time of debility, therefore precluding a new beginning. Older people must be persuaded that the latter stage of life is just another stage which may provide the opportunity for a new beginning and new opportunities if continuation of former achievements no longer appeals and satisfies. Such a change in attitude would enable many of the negative aspects of ageing to be put to rest, particularly if older people are seen to be leading enjoyable, active, productive lives, and contributing towards the community locally, nationally or internationally as many are already shown to be doing, including those interviewed for this research (Chapter 4).

The lives of older people would be enhanced if the word ‘retirement’ were to be discontinued and replaced by a word which refers to a new beginning rather than an ending, to encourage older people to have a positive, creative and fulfilling ‘life change’ if necessary, at this point in their lives.

If each stage of life is regarded as part of a continuum, with each stage, including the later stage, having easily identified purposes and goals, and with each stage valued equally (Swan 2007) then the later stage has a more natural role. Experts researching the different stages of life from different disciplines could be encouraged to place the stage of the later part of life on the same theoretical platform as other stages. In both infancy and among teenagers there are the goals of self development and skill achievement, as pre-conditions for moving on to the next development stage. In early adulthood, the aims are to establish a career and a nest, the latter possibly with a partner. These are consolidated in middle adulthood. In later adulthood the goals move towards retirement, without any definition of what this may involve. It seems to be regarded as the end of the working life, and therefore productive life, with no thought for any purpose, self development or skill achievement in what are, for many people, the decades ahead. It is a time which tends not to be defined by society and those who reach it are left without guidelines, creating their own, and often feel surplus to society’s requirements.

New ideas uncovered following this research suggests that the newly recognised ‘creative economy’ (Florida 2012) may be particularly relevant to the needs of older people. Some of the inventions of the information age began in peoples’ homes, with interest and motivation as their tools. This is an environment particularly suited to older people who have the advantage of being able to draw on lifetime experiences in a large variety of areas. Florida identifies major world events such as world depressions and wars as triggers for major changes in society; he suggests that if this pattern continues the current world financial crisis could also provide such a trigger. If the world does move to recognise creativity as he suggests then this is a world ideally suitable for older people. The recognition of this, and the role that older people could play, may need government support.

7.3 The purpose of the research

The hope of this research is that older Australians in future will be facilitated to lead happy, fulfilling and successful later stages in their lives and continue to achieve and perhaps exceed

the successes they had in the earlier stages. It can be a time of great creativity, in an era in which creativity is receiving greater prominence (Florida 2012). Older people also have the capacity to be creative in previously unexplored areas, using a combination of decades of experience and historical knowledge. This will have many positives for older people themselves and the nation. The nation would no longer feel it had the problem of an ageing population but that there are advantages to this change in the demographic composition if as a society we are prepared to look for them and encourage their fulfilment.

The aims embodied in this thesis have been identified by the author, an older person in her mid seventies, with the assistance of other older people, one of whom has started to learn to play the cello and another has taken up tap dancing. The assistance provided by this group has enabled the identification of many of the problems of ageing and society's attitudes.

7.4 The immediate future

This thesis has been written against a background of an increasing ageing population through increasing life expectancy. The ageing sector of the population particularly in western societies, rarely has a role in society and amongst its members there is an increasing incidence of dementia which is distressful for sufferers and their carers. The 21st century acceptance of brain plasticity suggests that if combined with the identification of the need for people of all ages to have a purpose in life, then there may be a more rewarding alternative than that offered at present for the later stage of life, the post retirement age.

This research has come to the attention of Baroness Susan Greenfield, Director of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, Fullerian Professor of Physiology, Patron of the Alzheimer's Research Trust and author of eight books on brain function, who wishes to promote it. As a result of this interest Alzheimer's Australia has given the researcher permission to access their members to ascertain, through interviews, whether having a purpose in later life reduces the chance of becoming subject to the disease, and whether having a purpose can slow the progress of the disease. Those involved with Parkinson's disease are already aware that having a purpose in life slows the progress of that disease (Cram et al. 2009).

A major deficiency of this research, that of being limited to those living in the community, may be addressed by the researcher's involvement with a not-for-profit organisation which runs seven aged care sites across N.S.W. involving home care, independent living units through to hospitalised care including intensive care. This may enable the outcomes of this

research, the need for older people to have a purpose in life and the mental health benefits of this, to be assessed in this alternative environment.

People who are in the later stage of life, and those approaching it, need to be aware of the pitfalls of the current widely accepted lifestyle for this age group in terms of mental health, personal happiness and fulfilment. The researcher intends to publish the research findings and recommendations in book form, preferably with illustrations provided by an artist in this age group. The intention would be to encourage older people to believe in themselves and their capabilities and for society to recognise an ageing population as an asset, not a liability. Such a publication would also bring attention to ageism and its detrimental effect on society.

These are small steps towards recognising that the later stage of life is as much an opportunity to achieve as other stages and the purpose involved in this is beneficial to the physical and mental health and well-being of both participants and society. This stage also provides an additional area of productivity, either in terms of financial or social capital, for communities and governments and the proposals given here begin the long journey which will lead to having this new way of approaching the later stage of life accepted. It would be advantageous both to older people themselves, and the community as a whole, if older people are not written off as second class citizens; they have too much to offer.

Changes to current philosophy will not be easy. In particular the concept of retirement has to be retired: there are inherited associations concerning its desirability associated with past times when this was a much shorter period in life; with research mainly in the hands of younger researchers this topic may not be addressed. The word 'retirement' is currently part of the ageing culture, particularly with its end of work connotations, with the loss of status and purpose accompanying this step. No other phase of life is denoted by a word that implies ending, or finish. All other phases, such as joining the workforce, having children, children leaving home etc have a seamless transition to the next phase. Leaving the paid workforce should merely be regarded as a transition to the next phase, characterised by further, perhaps different achievements and creativity and a more fulfilling lifestyle. Increased longevity provides plenty of opportunity for this. It can provide not only a happier lifestyle but may also provide a barrier to deterioration of the mind.

7.5 Summary

Successful and physically and mentally healthy ageing involves having a purpose in life, with the status in society associated with it, and a life plan, and life goals which create the necessary community involvement and brain stimulus. Ageing could become a desirable part of the life continuum, and the stage of life in which one can pursue one's real talents if such opportunities were not pursued in earlier stages. Recognition of the role that older people can have will enable them to be admired and respected and feel that they have a purpose and status in society. Respected elders will once again be part of society. Negative ageism will be challenged. Ageing can instead be seen as a desirable and eagerly anticipated later stage of life, including a time to revisit abandoned dreams. An ageing population should be seen as an asset, not a problem. The country can benefit from it, rather than being challenged by it.

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Appendix A

How older people feel they are viewed by the community

Comments made by members of a U3A class in the ACT in 2007.

Question: How do you feel other people regard you?

Responses:-

Silly old fools
Childish
Feeble
Losing it
Old fashioned
Grumpy
Live in the past
Miserly
Egocentric/ selfish
Worry too much
Fearful

Forgetful
Antisocial
Repetitive
Powerless
Ugly
Non-risk takers
Intolerant
Had it
Bad drivers
Self-deluding
Useless

Appendix B

Request for interview form.

Dear _____,

I am a 70 year old Ph D student at the University of Canberra researching the effect of lifestyle choices on the health of older Australians. For the last part of my research I would like to interview about 10 older Australians who are still achieving, in different walks of life. I wonder if you would allow me to interview you for this project.

I have attached an information sheet with details of what would be involved but essentially it would be an interview of approximately 2 hours, at a place and time of your convenience, at which I would like you to briefly describe your past achievements, your current work and, particularly, your plans for the future.

I am anxious not to disturb your work too much but I think it is important that older Australians are aware of what we can achieve even when we are ageing.

If you are willing to participate, could you contact me as below in whatever way you prefer. Thank you.

Audrey Guy

Telephone: - (02) 62429952

Email: - Audrey.Guy@ Natsem.canberra.edu.au

Fax: - (02) 62012755

Post: - Ms Audrey Guy, NATSEM, University of Canberra, ACT 2601

Name inc prefix and initials

Qualifications B.Sc, M.Ed, M.Acc, M.P.S.

Position Ph D student

School/Section/Department NATSEM

T (02) 6242 9952

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E audreyguy@optusnet.com.au

Appendix C

Participant Information form.

Project title: - Interviews with older achieving Australians.

Researcher: - Ms Audrey Guy, Doctoral candidate.

Supervisor: - Assoc. Professor Laurie Brown, Research Director (Health), NATSEM.

Project aim: - To detail the lives, including future plans, of older Australians who are still achieving in their fields.

Benefits of the Project: - There is an understanding in Australia, and in other developed countries, that the latter stage of life is not a time of achievement. These interviews with older Australians will show that this stage in life can be as productive as earlier stages, with accompanying health benefits. The participants are role models for their peers.

General outline of the project: - Approximately 10 Australians who are still achieving in different fields (art, music, academia etc) in their lives will be interviewed. Brief details of their lives, including their future plans, will be written up as part of a thesis analysing the lifestyles of older Australians in the 55+ age group.

The interviews will be transcribed and a copy sent to each interviewee for approval prior to publication. Any alterations requested by the participant will be made, if necessary after negotiation.

Participant involvement: - Participants will be asked to take part in an interview of approximately 2 hours. The outline of the interview will be provided and the interview will be recorded with the participant's permission, other wise the interviewer will take notes. The interview will take place at a venue selected by the participant.

Name inc prefix and initials

Qualifications B.Sc, Dip.Soc.Stud, M.Ed, M.Acc, M.P.S.

Postion Title Doctoral candidate

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Appendix D

List of topics presented to the interviewee, both before the interview and again at the interview.

Interview focus questions.

- 1. A brief description of the main achievements in your work which give you particular pleasure.**
- 2. A brief description of the work you are currently involved in.**
- 3. A description of your future plans and the goals you hope to achieve.**

Appendix E

Informed consent form.

Project title: - Interviews with older achieving Australians.

Consent statement.

I have read and understand the information about the research. I am not aware of any condition that would prevent my participation, and I agree to participate in this project. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my participation in the research. All questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name..... Signature.....

Date.....

Name inc prefix and initials

Qualifications B.Sc, Dip.Soc.Stud, M.Ed, M.Acc, M.P.S.

Postion Title Doctoral candidate

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Appendix F

Letter accompanying the transcript.

Dear ,

Please find attached a copy of the transcript of the interview you recently allowed me to conduct with you as part of my research for a Doctor of Philosophy degree, researching the effect of lifestyle choices on the health of older Australians.

Please feel free to amend the transcript as you wish. I have left some areas incomplete, for example, where sentences were not finished. I felt it would be presumptuous of me to guess the ending. Names you quoted may be misspelt but as I will not be using these in my thesis I did not check this.

I have used double space printing and line numbers to make it as easy as possible for you to delete and/or add anything you feel appropriate. You may recall achievements and events which were not included in the interview which you now feel are relevant to my research. I am anxious to represent your life story, within the bounds of my research, as accurately as possible, from your point of view.

Information in this transcript, when approved by you, will be included with that from other interviews, in my thesis. If you would like a copy of the relevant part of my thesis could you let me know? I would also like your permission to keep a copy of the interview and the transcript myself, although the official copies of these will be stored in the University archives for 5 years and then destroyed.

I have enclosed a reply paid envelope for your response. Could you please return the amended transcript to me within 4 weeks, otherwise I will assume that you are satisfied with it?

Again my very grateful thanks for sparing time to let me have a very enjoyable interview with you.

Yours sincerely,

Audrey Guy

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