



National Seniors Australia

Productive Ageing Centre

“AGE MATTERS”

**RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM
2008 – 2010**

February 2008



BACKGROUND

National Seniors Australia (NSA), formed in 1976, is Australia's pre-eminent not-for-profit seniors' organisation and represents the aspirations and views of senior Australians. With a membership of over 280,000, we advocate on behalf of people 50 and over on issues such as health, employment, retirement incomes, and aged care

The NSPAC was established by NSA to advance knowledge and understanding into all aspects of productive ageing to improve the quality of life of people aged 50 and over. Based in Canberra, NSPAC is co-funded by NSA and the Department of Health and Ageing

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The NSPAC Research and Education Program is underpinned by the following five principles:

1. Broaden the focus on ageing, from dependency and illness to quality of life and well being.
2. Ensure high quality and innovative research that emphasises the positive aspects of ageing.
3. Recognise the value of older people and their contribution not only to the economy but also to their families and communities, both individually and as a whole.
4. Promote consumer-oriented research which is responsive to the needs of NSA members and benefits all older people.
5. Broadly disseminate knowledge gained through research, with a view to informing social inclusion in the community.

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out a strategic plan for the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre (NSPAC) until the end of its current funding agreement with the Australian Government in 2010. It sets out our vision and describes our goals and strategic priorities.

The work program of NSPAC is guided by the Research and Education Advisory Committee (REAC) which advises the NSA Board on research issues and priorities. REAC also makes recommendations to the Director of NSPAC regarding research conducted by the Centre and the allocation of research grants for the implementation of research by external consultants.

VISION

To be a leading centre for research, education and information on productive ageing in Australia.

ROLE

The fundamental role of NSPAC is to promote, disseminate and fund research and education in productive ageing, and support productive ageing decisions by individuals, through consumer-oriented research.

Key objectives of NSPAC are to:

- Support quality consumer-oriented research informed by the lived experience of people aged 50 years and over;
- Inform Government and the community on productive ageing matters; and
- Raise awareness of research findings which would be of use to individuals.

ACTIVITIES

Research, education and information are the core activities of NSPAC.

- **Research** – initiating, developing and supporting innovative and high quality research that improves our understanding of the social, economic and cultural factors which influence the experience of ageing;
- **Education** – improving community understanding of productive ageing and raising awareness of research findings which would be of use to individuals.
- **Information** – improving the dissemination of research information and other advice to enable people to have greater choice and control at key points of transition in their lives.

“Productive ageing is concerned with building a sustainable community. Productive ageing promotes the choices and capacity of all Australians, as they age, to engage in valued activities, whether through work, learning volunteering or community service. ”

LOOKING BACK: THE FIRST FIVE YEARS (2002-2007)

During its first five years, NSPAC undertook a diverse range of projects designed to establish the Centre and advance research in productive ageing in Australia. These included:

- The Process of Participation and Phased Retirement: Evidence from Mature Aged Workers in Australia.
- Seniors and volunteering, a multi stage investigation of the benefits and barriers to volunteering amongst older Australians.
- Optimising acquisition of novel skills in older adulthood.
- Managing the ageing workforce, an operational HR framework for older employees.
- Older road users and Australia's road safety policy directions.
- The participation of older Australians in the arts supply chain.
- Seniors' attitudes toward and willingness to use assistive health technologies,
- Views of seniors toward aspects of transport infrastructure, applying the latest Cognitive Thinking technology (with Queensland Department of Main Roads).
- Publication of the Productive Ageing Bibliography, a searchable CD which contains a bibliographic reference and brief overview of the key Australian research into productive ageing published over the last five years.
- Instituting a research grants program to facilitate cross institution projects and develop better networks with age focused researchers.
- Facilitating the inaugural 'Productive Ageing Forum' in collaboration with the Department of Health and Ageing and the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well,
- Pilot project to develop a Monitor of Seniors' Attitudes (with Australian Seniors Finance).
- Ageing Baby Boomers in Australia: Actions for Better Retirement (ARC Linkage Project research collaboration with the University of Sydney and AARP).

"There is a real danger that in emphasising the negative aspects of ageing, and in clinging to stereotypes, we overlook the advantages of having larger numbers than ever before of older people rich in skills and life experience that they can, and do, contribute not only to the economy but also to their families and communities."

NSPAC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM 2008 – 2010

LOOKING FORWARD: THE NEXT THREE YEARS (2008-2010)

To assist in the development of this research and education program, REAC engaged in a strategic planning process that involved reviewing NSPAC's progress over the first five years, examining the current ageing related research environment in Australia, and appraising the capacity of NSPAC to make a substantial and lasting contribution. It builds upon the successes of the last three years but addresses issues which confront NSPAC.

This research and education program contains a set of inter-related strategies organised under the following five key goals:

Key Goal 1: Support and increase research effort in productive ageing.

Research can help us to understand and improve the experiences of older people on many fronts. NSPAC is committed to generating a quality program of consumer-oriented research which is forward thinking, responsive to the needs of NSA members and benefits all older people. The basic aim is to develop approaches which challenge the view of ageing as a time of decline and dependency and promote productive ageing. Research will focus on quality of life and well being, addressing ageism and recognising how seniors can, and already do, contribute to the social and economic well being of their communities.

Strategies:

- Foster and support targeted research on productive ageing.
- Establish and participate in partnerships with researchers, government agencies and other stakeholders to jointly support interdisciplinary and collaborative research on productive ageing.
- Administer and provide funding for research projects that extend knowledge of productive ageing and focus on generating change.
- Engage seniors, including NSA members, in setting the research agenda and priorities.
- Seek new and innovative research opportunities in emerging areas to add to and improve outcomes from research on productive ageing.

NSPAC will continue to support research guided by the six broad thematic areas identified in the funding agreement between the Australian Government and NSPAC:

- Lifestyle issues for seniors;
- Productive ageing through people maintaining their independence;
- Productive ageing through paid and voluntary work;
- Productive ageing through education and learning;
- Preventive health and productive ageing; and
- Productive ageing and technology.

NSPAC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM 2008 – 2010

Key Goal 2: Create and organise a public education program to promote productive ageing.

Research is of little or no use unless it is read and can be used to guide action. Education and dissemination of research findings which would be of use to seniors is a key strategic focus of NSPAC. As the amount of ageing related research grows, both nationally and internationally, a systematic approach to translation and dissemination of research findings is vital. NSPAC will give high priority to the 'translation' of research findings into information and action agendas in formats which would be of use to NSA members and others who have an interest in productive ageing, and effective dissemination.

Strategies:

- Translate research outcomes into useful information for NSA members and the community at large.
- Ensure that positive outcomes from research are delivered to NSA members and stakeholders.
- Develop awareness and improve understanding of the benefits of productive ageing research amongst NSA members and other stakeholders.

Key Goal 3: Be a key source of information on productive ageing.

Facts and figures should inform our opinions. However, for many people, including seniors, access to succinct, reliable and accurate data on ageing and older people can be difficult. More attention needs to be given to compiling and disseminating statistical information on the demographics and status of older Australians in a way that facilitates wider use and exchange of this information. NSPAC's work will focus on how that status is changing over time with regard to employment, access to technology, health care, and other aspects of independent living and participation in society.

Strategies:

- Establish PAC as a key source of reliable and accurate information on productive ageing.
- Enhance access to statistical and other information responses to ageing.

NSPAC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM 2008 – 2010

Key Goal 4: Develop international linkages.

Alliances with international groups and organisations can enhance research productivity by taking into account developments in other countries. Involvement with international groups and organisations can also help identify ways in which NSPAC can impact on the climate for research on ageing and the process by which research priorities are set.

Strategies:

- Liaise with similar international bodies.
- Identify opportunities to develop strong and effective linkages with relevant overseas groups and organisations.

Key Goal 5: Effective Organisation.

As an organisation, NSPAC must be able to respond to new knowledge and changing needs. It must have the capacity to monitor trends and assess the impact of its activities.

Strategies:

- Maintain an effective, expert Research and Education Advisory Committee.
- Recruit, retain and support excellent staff.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of all our programs and initiatives and make adjustments as required.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

The NSA Board requires measures against which the performance of NSPAC may be evaluated. The Australian Government needs evidence of the benefit of its investment in NSPAC. To meet the needs of the NSA Board and the Australian Government, an operational plan with associated key performance indicators will be presented annually.