

Australian Psychological Society



Special Interest Group in Psychology and Ageing

NEWSLETTER Issue #2 July 1998

FORWARD

Welcome to this, the second edition of the Newsletter for the Special Interest Group in Psychology and Ageing. As you all are well aware, next year, 1999 represents the International Year of older Persons. For all psychologists interested in Ageing this event will provide an important forum for expression of their ideas.

The article in this edition are designed To help provide a focus from which will be discussed widely throughout 1999

We hope you find it informative and Interesting, and we would like to take This opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of both contributors and volunteers in its production and distribution.

We look forward to receiving your feedback and an expression of your opinions.

New South Wales Debbie Koder (02) 9661 0111

South Australia Mary Luszcz: (08) 8201 2481, mary.luszcz@flinders.edu.au

Victoria Jenny Neale (03) 9499 8983

Western Australia Sue Lowe (08) 9334 3780

33rd APS Annual Conference

Notes of special interest for Members
Friday 2 October

9.30 am – 11.00am : Issues in Ageing:
The differential diagnosis of the dementia
Syndromes. (T. Wardill)

11.30 - 1.00 pm : Forum on teaching
Clinical Geropsychology. (E. Helmes)

1.00 pm - 2.00 pm Interest Group AGM

1.30 pm - 2.00 pm: Life and death issues:
Research on well being of older people.
(Y. Wells)

Sunday 4 October

Workshop 11 Fergus Craik:
Cognitive changes in normal ageing.

National and Regional Coordinators

Ed Helmes Interim National Convenor
(08) 400 5543, e.helmes@cowan.edu.au

International Year of Older Persons

As most members of this interest group would know, The United Nations has designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons (IYOP). Through the Directorate of Social Issues, APS is planning two major and related initiatives as our contribution to the year's events. The development of a Position Paper on Psychology and Ageing will examine psychological research and practice which may impact on the health and well being of older Australians. The Society's participation in Australia Coalition '99 (AC'99) will enable us to coordinate our efforts with those of other groups planning events and activities in keeping with the IYOP's stated theme "Towards a society for all ages".

Earlier this year, I placed a notice in In - Psych calling for expressions of interest from members willing to join working groups to develop position papers on five current social issues, of which ageing was one. Following the responses to that notice together with discussions with the executive of the Psychology and Ageing Interest Group, my proposal for a Working Group to prepare a position paper Psychology and Ageing: Contributions to the International Year of Older Persons was approved by the Board of directors at its June meeting. The working group consists of myself as convenor, Assoc Prof Ed Helmes, Prof Mary Luszcz, Ms Mavis Hoy, Ms. Lyn Ward and Dr. Lindsay Gething with assistance from Delys Sergeant who is Chair of the National planning Coordinating Committee of AC'99. There are clearly many more members of the Interest Group who could make a substantial contribution to the proposed paper, and I would be pleased to hear from any of you who have thoughts about key issues which might be

covered. Putting pen to paper (well fingers to the keyboard) with a 500 - 1,000-word summary of your research or practice area of interest could be an excellent way to help shape the focus of the paper, and all contributions would be acknowledged if taken up.

The Working Group will meet shortly by audioconference to plan the dimensions of the paper and start dividing the workload -if anyone else would like to join the group for a commitment of 4- 8 meetings over the next twelve months, and is prepared to write, edit or at least comment on drafts in progress, there is plenty of scope for involvement. We would particularly welcome input from older members who see themselves as directly affected by the issues under discussion ((as we all will be eventually if the gift of life lasts long enough). Some of the issues which might be addressed in the paper were canvassed by Ed Helmes in the APS submission to the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia in February - work, stereotyping and on discrimination, illness and disability, elder abuse and mental health. Others were raised by non psychologists who Attended the AC'99 Partners Forum in Melbourne, which I attended in May - when I mentioned that I was representing APS, clinical issues such as expert differentiating between depression and early Alzheimer's disease, roles for Psychologists in Nursing homes, and the importance of retirement counselling and the provision of accessible adult education activities for Older persons were all suggested as areas in which contributions from psychologist's would be welcome.

While the primary goal of the Directorate of Social Issues is to consider how psychology can contribute its understandings to the goal of community well-being, position papers also provide an excellent opportunity to raise the profile of psychology in the public mind, and to demonstrate the relevance of psychology to particular social issues. It is generally accepted that psychologists are under utilised in aged care services, so this initiative has educative potential for the general public and for policy makers. I see my role as convenor of the Working Group as one of coordination to enable the Interest Group to drive the direction and substance of the paper itself

The tripartite coordinating group overseeing IYOP in Australia consists of the conference of Older Australians, Chaired by Senator Kay Patterson, the Taskforce for Healthy Ageing and AC'99, the umbrella group for the non government sector's involvement. APS is a Coalition Partner, which gives us a reference point for the development of our own activities, including the position paper, and the opportunity to promote such activities. The impressive list of contributions on psychology and ageing to the forthcoming APS Conference are a Case in point, since the conference will coincide with a major event in October to launch IYOP. Members interested in AC'99 activities in their own state can contact the Secretariat's Web Site:

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ac99>

Heather Gridley

APS Director of Social Issues

Notice of Elections

To all members of the Special Interest Group in Psychology and Ageing

It is necessary to elect a National Committee comprising Convenor, Secretary, Treasurer and up to six Committee members.

This is done because of the by-laws that govern the interest groups of the Society. If more than this number are nominated an election will be necessary.

Office bearers are elected for a two year term and there must be at least three Committee meetings each twelve months. All positions are open for nomination

If you wish to nominate for a position please contact:

Jan Knight
APS PO Box 126,
Carlton South
Victoria 3053
Fax 03 9347 9220

SUBMISSION

From APS for the National Strategy for an Ageing. Australia

Themes and issues

Work

Compared to the workforce in other industrialised countries relatively few Australian's continue to work into their late 50's and early 60's. Work provides not only incomes, but also self esteem, social contacts and increased physical activity. Therefore policies should support the increased involvement of older people in the workplace. Compulsory retirement and early retirement policies can be seen as forms of discrimination and should be enforceable only when work performance has been impaired.

Stereotyping and discrimination

Australian society tends to promote youth in its public images, often to the exclusion of older people. This reflects negative stereotyping

of older people that can extend to open discrimination. Such practices are not consistent with Australian values of equity and fairness. As such, they should be officially discouraged and practices put into place to counter them.

Illness and disability

Old age does bring increased risks of illness, disability and dependency. At the extreme these factors contribute to the loss of independence associated with residential care. Humanitarian values are consistent with economic concerns when government policies support the prevention of illness and disability and promote the independence of older people in the community. This requires a combination of education, incentives, and a closer coordination of government policies to ensure consistency of objectives.

Mental Health

The 'baby boomer' generation that is approaching retirement age is one that has experienced a higher rate of mental health problems than the current generation of older people. This pending increased demand has implications for service delivery and health costs in the coming years that can not be ignored.

Elder abuse

Infirm older people are particularly vulnerable to physical and psychological abuse. Elder abuse has received much less attention than family violence involving young people, even though research has shown it to be common. Most such abuse takes place within the assault and intimidation by strangers also occur. All such activities against older people need to be better understood in order to introduce effective preventative measures.

Another aspect of Psychology and Ageing

A recent article by Koder & Ferguson (*Australian Psychologist*, 1998, 33(2), 96-100) notes the low proportion of psychologists who work with older people and some of

the possible reasons for this being the case. They also note the resistance of APS to accrediting the Geropsychology program at Edith Cowan University. At this point, some information can be provided to update the information in that article. The program has been realigned with the Clinical program there and that effort is still under review by the Clinical College and the Professional Development and Accreditation Group. It has now been over a year since the original accreditation visit, and the issues over this program remain unresolved. This situation may reflect some of the issues discussed by Koder and Ferguson and some points in the themes in this issue.

In many ways, this situation does not reflect positively upon the Society. The members of the Interest Group may wish direct their queries about the situation to the APS directly.