

**Australian**

**Psychological**

**Society**

**Interest Group  
In  
Psychology and Ageing**

**Newsletter Issue No. 8**

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*WARNING.*

*When I am an old woman I shall wear purple  
With a red hat which doesn't suit me.  
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves  
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.  
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired  
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells  
And run my stick along the public railings  
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.  
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain  
And pick flowers in other people's gardens...*

*...But maybe I ought to practice a little now?  
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised  
When suddenly I am old and start to wear purple.  
(Jenny Joseph)*

***Forward***

It has been a very productive year for the Psychology and Ageing Interest Group. We now have either a convener or a section representative in all states and territories. Many thanks to Mike Tyrrell, Section Representative, in the Northern Territory and Clive Skilbeck, Section Representative in Tasmania.

This issue of the newsletter reflects the fabulous work that has been done this year to firmly validate and secure our frame of reference within the field of psychology in Australia. Thanks go to Ed Helmes, Nancy Pachana and David Stokes for preparing the Submission to the *Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee Inquiry into Workforce Shortages and*

*Care Standards in Aged Care.* Along with the link you received electronically to this newsletter you would also have received a link to that submission which has been posted on the APS website. Thanks also go to Nancy Pachana, Ed Helmes and Deb Koder who, with the assistance of Mary Luszcz, have been working towards the development of ethical guidelines for the psychologists working with older adults.

Thanks also to everyone who contributed articles and reports for inclusion in the newsletter and to all group members for their support. Best wishes for another successful year in 2005.

***Deborah Gardner***  
*Editor*

## ***APS Conference Message***

A reminder to all IG members that at the APS Conference in Sydney, there will be a joint symposium between the College of Health Psychologists and the Psychology and Ageing Interest Group on "Psychological Health and Ageing" from 3-5pm on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October.

The APS has organised a time slot on Friday 1st October at 12:30pm for the Psychology of Ageing Interest Group AGM at the APS Conference. Please check your program upon registering or with the conference organisers for the location of the AGM meeting room.

Deborah Gardner

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## ***Feature Article***

### ***Geropsychology In Postgraduate Clinical Psychology***

A position paper developed by Cathy Gluyas, Sarah Wrigley and Christina Bryant on behalf of the Geropsychologists' Interest Group, Victoria.

### **Population Change, Mental Health and Clinical Psychology Service Provision**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) identified 12.7% of the population as being 65 years of age and over. This figure is likely to increase to 14.9% in 10 years & to 19% in 20 years. Estimates of the prevalence of mental health problems in this age group range from 6.1% (McLennan, 1998) to 20% (Brodaty, 1991), with underreporting of problems being a notable feature of this age group. Particular mental health issues that have received recent attention include the high rate of suicide in older men (24 per 100,000 in men over 80: (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001) and the high prevalence of depression (51%) among residents of nursing homes

(Commonwealth Department of Aging, 2001).

Awareness of the increasing proportion of older people in our community is a challenge to psychologists to review their roles and responses to this important group. In the year 2000, an APS position paper on Psychology and Aging (Gridley et al, 2000) recommended increased attention to the particular issues of older age in the education of psychologists, and an audit of the older age content of under- and post-graduate programs in psychology. As a group of Victorian clinical psychologists working with older clients in a variety of settings, the Geropsychologists' Interest Group is committed to the implementation of these recommendations and improving the profile of clinical psychologists in aged mental health services.

### **The Current Situation**

Although psychological treatment has demonstrated effectiveness for the mental health problems of the aged, very few clinical psychologists are employed in psychogeriatric services. Snowdon et al (1995) identified psychologists as having the lowest mental health professional to patient ratio (1: 66,200) across psychogeriatric services. A phone survey of aged psychiatry services in Victoria this year found no clinical psychologists in any rural service, and only 6 psychologists employed in the 8 metropolitan services which employ a total of 4.1 EFT clinicians; in addition there are 2.9 EFT clinical psychologists within aged care and rehabilitation wards. Within the North Western Mental Health Service of Melbourne, 2 psychologists are employed in the aged care sector compared to 28 in one young people's service.

### **The Potential Contribution of Psychologists**

What do psychologists have to offer older people and their families? Key applications of psychological skills include psychological therapies for managing mental health problems, physical health

problems including pain and other issues relevant to older people, such as bereavement and adjustment. Psychologists should be also contributing to the management of dementia-related issues – challenging behaviour in the family and in residential care, end of life issues and so on.

There is now good evidence for the efficacy of a wide range of therapeutic interventions with older adults. Recent reviews (Karel & Hinrichsen, 2002; Gatz et al, 1998) have highlighted the effectiveness of cognitive behaviour therapy and inter-personal therapy for a range of psychiatric disorders including depression and generalised anxiety disorder. Other effective programmes include the work of Bird (1999) in relation to management of challenging behaviours in dementia.

### **The Training Needs of Psychologists in relation to Older People**

Despite the demographic changes in the Australian population, we do not appear to be preparing psychologists to work with the increasing numbers of older people. As noted below, few postgraduate psychology training courses in Victoria provide training in this area. This is in contrast to the recognition given to training in this field by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, who have a Faculty of the Psychiatry of Old Age, which promotes specialist training.

Clearly, however, there are certain skills that psychologists will need if we are to provide effective services to this age group. The American Psychological Society has established guidelines (1996) for the skills and knowledge base needed for geropsychologists that could provide a useful starting point for the development of relevant curriculum materials in this country. According to these guidelines, areas that training should include are:

- An understanding of late-life development

- Knowledge about normal and pathological cognitive change
- Psychopathology/ mental health issues
- Current knowledge of a range of treatment approaches
- Medical issues for older people including psychopharmacology
- Legal and ethical issues

It should also be noted that opportunities for placements in services for older people are probably an important key to raising awareness of the rewarding work that can be done with older adults. In the United Kingdom, this has been recognised in the requirement for all clinical psychology training courses to provide teaching and placements specific to working with older adults in order to be accredited. As such, a placement in services for older people is one of the four core placements trainees are required to undertake in the first two years of training. The other placements are in adult mental health, work with children and adolescents and learning (intellectual) disability. Trainees also have the opportunity to take further specialised placements working with older adults in their final year of training.

### **Relevant Content in Postgraduate Training Courses**

A recent informal survey of the eight Victorian universities offering post-graduate clinical psychology courses revealed disappointing results in terms of content relating to geropsychology. Only two courses mention older people in their course outlines and only one of these (Melbourne University) offers a unit specifically devoted to psychogeriatrics. In addition to examination of course outlines, each of these universities were contacted and asked to what extent ageing issues were covered throughout their clinical courses. These contacts confirmed the information obtained via the course outlines. A number of universities did state that despite the absence of geropsychology in their courses it was possible for students to complete research projects in this area. The majority of course convenors did

acknowledge, however, the need to include geropsychology within their post-graduate courses in the future.

## Recommendations

In the light of the evidence presented above, we would like to make the following recommendations:

1. That the APS move towards having more stringent requirements for content on working with older people for courses to be accredited. This content could include course materials, placements and opportunities for research projects.
2. In view of the current shortage of psychologists trained in this area, placements may need to be of shorter duration than would be ideal in the long-term.
3. Links need to be established between the universities and the health services to promote both employment and placement opportunities.

## Conclusion

The motto of the American Geriatrics Society proclaims the aim of “adding life to years, not merely years to life”. Psychologists are in a unique position to add quality to that life, but will be unable to meet the challenge of an ageing population unless we train more psychologists to work in this area. Our survey of current training in Victorian courses is cause for alarm that clinical psychologists will be unable to meet the demands of an ageing population. There is a need for the APS and the universities to take concerted action to remedy these shortcomings.

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### ***Elsie Harwood Award***

The winner of the Elsie Harwood Award for 2004 was Penny Wareham from the University of New South Wales. The title of Penny's thesis was "The Effects of Prose Complexity and Familiarity on Elite Young and Elite Elderly Adults' Recall of Prose". Her advisor was Dr. Peter C Birrell.

The study examined age-related differences in elite adults' recall of prose, and evaluated the suitability of the Processing Resources model, the Adaptive Strategy model, and the Interaction model as explanations of any age-related differences found. Twenty six elite young adults and twenty six elite elderly adults read a complex, logically argued newspaper editorial and a simple, yet unfamiliar, short story. Prose familiarity and prose complexity were each found to influence age differences in prose recall, indicating support for the Interaction model of discourse processing.

Penny Wareham

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### ***Post Graduate Studies in Geropsychology at James Cook University***

James Cook University offers several programs from the undergraduate through postgraduate levels for people interested in training in work with older people. Further information on the entry level Certificate of Ageing and Mental Health can be obtained from [psychology@jcu.edu.au](mailto:psychology@jcu.edu.au) or on the web at [www.jcu.edu.au/courses/certinfo/](http://www.jcu.edu.au/courses/certinfo/).

More information on the Postgraduate Certificate of Geropsychology, Postgraduate Diploma of Geropsychology or the Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Geropsychology is available from [postgraduate.psychology@jcu.edu.au](mailto:postgraduate.psychology@jcu.edu.au) or from [www.faess.jcu.edu.au/sop/](http://www.faess.jcu.edu.au/sop/).

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### ***Across the Nation***

#### ***ACT Branch***

Kaarin Anstey  
ACT Co-ordinator

The ACT Psychology and Ageing Interest Group has had a great year with a few successful events. In March we held a half day symposium attended by 50 professionals and students on Psychology and Ageing: Clinical and Research Directions. The 5 speakers covered a broad range of topics including the relevance of genetics and neuroimaging for understanding dementia, cognitive and sensory risk factors for unsafe driving, clinical case-studies and exercise in the treatment for depression. Our second event was a breakfast held jointly with the Australian Association of Gerontology on "Life after work: a look at some third age and retirement issues". Dr Don Rowland, a demographer in the Sociology Dept at ANU spoke on A brief reality check on the "Third Age" Dr Peter Butterworth and Ms Sarah Gill from the Centre for Mental Health Research spoke on The transition to retirement and mental health: Exploring policy implications. In August we held a breakfast at ANU where Nancy Pachana our national convenor spoke on "Assessing Competence". This was attended by 16 clinical psychologists and other professionals who work with older adults. As a new group we are still getting to know each other and enjoying finding out the variety of roles that psychologists are taking in working with older adults and developing and implementing policy to improve aged care. We look forward to strengthening our professional network and further informative and social events in 2005,

#### ***New South Wales Branch***

Michael McMahon  
NSW Co-ordinator

The APS NSW Psychology and Ageing Interest Group has met three times

so far in 2004. The February meeting was a planning meeting. The May meeting saw Maree Thomas demonstrate the Behavioural Assessment of Dysexecutive Syndrome (BADs) with participants then discussing their favoured assessment tools for use with elderly clients. Deborah Coder presented at our July meeting and spoke about psychological management in the elderly including management of challenging behaviours. Average attendance at the meetings has been about ten which has allowed for good post-presentation discussion. Our October meeting has been postponed as Friday 1st October is the date for the Interest Group on Psychology and Ageing Symposium at the APS Conference (3-5pm). An "Ageing" symposium is also scheduled for Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October at 8:30am-10:30am. The National AGM will follow at 12.30pm. The CCN conference on Mild Cognitive Impairment is on in late November, but our final meeting of the year will go ahead on 30th November commencing with a presentation by Vicki Richardson entitled 'Post-operative delirium in older community dwelling adults', followed by afternoon tea at a local cafe.

### ***Queensland Branch***

Nancy Pachana  
Qld Co-ordinator

During 2004 we have had several interesting speakers give presentations to the group, including Dr. Valerie Stone, from the University of Queensland, speaking about competency issues in older adults, and Dr. Patrick Dulin, from Massey University in New Zealand, speaking on psychological assessment of older clients in residential care setting. Future speakers include Louise Hickson, a UQ-based speech pathologist who is Director of the UQ Communication Disability in Ageing Research Centre. Major research interests of this unit are communication changes associated with ageing, hearing impairment in older people and functional communication in aphasia. The website for the Centre is [www.shrs.uq.edu.au/cdarc](http://www.shrs.uq.edu.au/cdarc)

We have tried to have a few more socially oriented events this year, with the most recent being an enjoyable evening in a trendy organic restaurant, with Ed Helmes from JCU filling us in on what is happening up North, and discussing an interesting competency case.

We are looking forward to a repeat of the very successful and enjoyable Christmas party towards the end of this year!

### ***South Australian Branch***

Paul Kemp  
SA Co-ordinator

The group in SA continues to have a diverse membership - comprising of clinicians from a variety of settings, academics, and students. Over the last year the interest group has been quite active; offering regular seminars on topics pertinent to geropsychology, as well as experiencing an increase in membership numbers. In these areas a number of the gains made in 2003 have been consolidated and further extended.

Seminars in 2004 have continued to be held quarterly, and this year we also held a half-day workshop mid year. The seminar series for the year commenced in March with the topic "After Men go to War...". One of our members, employed by the Department of Veteran Affairs, presented this most interesting and informative seminar. In May a senior lecturer from the School of Psychology, University of Adelaide, discussed findings from research he had been involved in on the effects of ginkgo biloba on cognitive abilities and speed of processing. The impending September seminar will have one of our members present on the intriguing topic "Neuropsychology goes to the Movies". The AGM, presentations from students undertaking pertinent research, and an end of year social function will be held in early December. Attendance at all seminars this year has been excellent, with the numbers attending

again representing a significant increase on that of previous years.

New initiatives undertaken in 2004 included a highly successful half-day workshop held in July. We were pleased that Dr Nancy Pachana (APS Psychology and Ageing Interest Group National Chair) agreed to present this workshop, which was entitled "Dementia and Driving: A double-edged sword". The workshop was well attended and feedback about the day has been very positive – and thus a workshop may well become an annual fixture on our interest group activity schedule. Other initiatives were continuing to expand the extensive email distribution list by which as many people as possible are advised of relevant geropsychology-related information (e.g., upcoming seminars / workshops / conferences). Additionally, the interest group was involved in activities the APS SA Branch held for National Psychology Week in November 2003, and may well again play a role in National Psychology Week activities this year.

In summary, 2004 has been one where the SA interest group has taken on new challenges and further grown and evolved. I anticipate 2005 being one where the interest group continues to be a vibrant, active body, catering for all psychologists and students with an interest in geropsychology in SA.

### ***Victorian Branch***

Yvonne Wells  
Vic Co-ordinator

We have had another interesting and successful year in the Victorian Branch. We kept to the policy of having relatively few meetings during the year, hoping for a good attendance at each meeting. This policy has worked well, with over 20 people attending most meetings.

Meetings have been held in the early evening at the City campus of La Trobe University, which is a central

location that is relatively convenient for most people. We have successfully applied for generalist PD points for most meetings.

So far in 2004, we have had two meetings. In April, we addressed the question of driver assessments and their implications for older people, their families, and practitioners. Speakers included Tricia Williams from VicRoads, Judith Charlton Senior Research Fellow at the Accident Research Centre at Monash University, and Anne Harris from the RACV.

In July, Steve Gibson and Steve Malkin (National Ageing Research Institute) led a discussion on pain and older people. This featured Steve Gibson's world-leading research on older people's experiences of pain and Steve Malkin's clinical work with older people who suffer pain.

Our final meeting for the year, planned for Tuesday 14th September, is on Sexuality and older people. Yvonne Allen, the founder and managing director of Yvonne Allen and Associates. Founded in 1976, her consultancy is one of Australia's oldest and most successful introduction agencies. Yvonne trained in psychology and is registered as a psychologist in NSW but she prefers to describe herself as a Human relations consultant. She is in great demand as a speaker and is a frequent guest commentator in the media. Yvonne will speak about her experience of challenges experienced by older people in forming new relationships and developing and maintaining intimacy. There will be plenty of opportunity for discussion and contributions from attendees.

### ***Western Australian Branch***

Deborah Gardner  
WA Co-ordinator

Western Australian members have met twice this year. In April Farah Feenay (Clinical and Counseling Psychology student, Curtin University) talked about her research, which aimed to examine the effectiveness of

psychotherapy in treating depression and anxiety in people with Parkinson's disease.

In May Nancy Pachana visited the University of WA. During her WA visit we met with her over dinner. The group appreciated the opportunity to meet Nancy and to catch up informally.

In October we plan to meet again to listen to Lisa Richardson's (Master of Applied Clinical Psychology graduate, Murdoch University) presentation of her Master's project, which involved the development of a brief CBT manual for use with depressed and/or anxious older adults with minimal cognitive impairment. This research, which is coauthored by both Lisa and her supervisor, Corinne Reid, will be presented at the "Emerging Researchers in Ageing" conference in Brisbane in December.

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Regular meetings of the State Interest Groups are held in Sydney (NSW), Brisbane (QLD), Perth (WA), Adelaide (SA), Melbourne (VIC) and Canberra (ACT). On occasion these forums are held jointly with groups whose interests extend into the Ageing arena. The Interest Group is also active at the National Australian Psychological Society conferences, with symposia and papers of interest to researchers and practitioners as well as those involved in the teaching and supervision of psychologists. Social activities as well as student opportunities such as research and travel awards are also available to members. Contact your local convener for details!