

OFFICE FOR  
RECREATION  
& SPORT



# targeting mature age participants



Government  
of South Australia

be active.



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## TARGETING MATURE AGE PARTICIPANTS

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# Introduction



This resource was funded and produced by the Office for Recreation and Sport and written in partnership with Active Ageing SA. It has been produced as a pro-active measure to assist sport and recreation organisations in catering for the rapidly expanding over 50's market.

Targeting Mature Age Participants is designed to assist organisations to understand the needs of mature age people and offers suggestions to address those needs within a sport and recreation context. This resource provides marketing-based advice on planning, promotion and maintenance of programs and offers references for accessing the many resources and sources of expertise that are available. Case studies have also been included to provide real life examples of how to apply some of the principles contained within this resource.

It is hoped that this resource will both inspire and empower organisations to target mature age participants.



# Setting the Scene

## Setting the Scene

Australia, like most of the rest of the world, is experiencing an ageing phenomenon. The phenomenon is a result of a combination of lower fertility rates, increased life expectancy and the sheer, large number of 'baby boomers' who are moving through the age structure. With 'leading edge' baby boomers now well into their 50's, there is increased urgency for recreation, sporting, community and health groups as well as Governments, both State and Local, to address the needs of this growing market i.e. the over 50's.

For providers of sport and recreation, significant opportunities exist to capitalise on this growing section of the marketplace by developing and expanding the options available for participation. Organisations that capitalize on these opportunities will be better positioned to experience success in the future. Thinking ahead and preparing for the huge influx of mature age baby boomers just makes good business sense.

### Worth Noting

Due to ever decreasing fertility rates, it is projected that the coming years will see a significantly smaller proportion of the population made up of young people. In 2002 those aged 0-14 made up 19.1% of the South Australian population. By 2021 this is projected to be 15% and by 2051 the proportion will decrease to 13%. Sport and recreation organisations that have historically catered for the youth market may need to consider shifting some of their resources in order to meet the needs of the mature age market. (*Australian Bureau of Statistics 3222.0, Population Projections 2002 to 2101 series B projections*)



# Defining the Target Market

## Defining the Target Market

For the purpose of this resource, the target market is defined, simply, as people over the age of 50 years. Masters Sport is an exception as participants in some sports can be much younger than 50.

### What Is A Baby Boomer?

The term 'baby boomer' applies to those born after World War II, between the mid 1940s and mid 1960s. Their huge numbers have created a bulge in global population statistics and have a significant influence on the State's profile and age structure.





## Just the Facts

- South Australia has the highest median age (37 years) of all States and territories and the highest proportion (14.5%) of persons aged 65 years and over (*Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, Basic Community Profile and Snapshot*).
- It is projected that by 2021, the total proportion of South Australians over the age of 65 will have risen to 22.2% of the population and by 2051 this is projected to reach 31.1% (*Australian Bureau of Statistics 3222.0, Population Projections 2002 to 2101 series B projections*).
- Australians enjoy one of the highest life expectancies in the world. For women this is 82.4 years and 77 years for men. Life expectancy for Aboriginal people is much lower at 63 years for women and 56 years for men (*Australian Bureau of Statistics catalogue 3302.0 2002*).
- Fertility rates peaked in 1961 with the average woman giving birth to 3.5 children in her lifetime. By 1981, the fertility rate had decreased to 1.9 and in 2001 it stood at 1.7. This is well below the population replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman (*Australian Bureau of Statistics 3105.0.65.001 Australian Historical Population Statistics 2003*).

### Participation Rates of Mature Age People

The rates for participation in physical activity amongst mature age people are considerably lower than that of the average population. The 2002 Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) indicated that 68.7% of South Australians over the age of 55 participated in at least one form of physical activity for exercise, recreation or sport over the previous year, compared to 77.8% of the total population surveyed.

Similarly, the *Physical Activity Levels of South Australian Adults 2001 Survey* indicated that older South Australians are less likely to participate in sufficient physical activity compared to the average South Australian. (Sufficient physical activity is defined as 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week). In 2001, 52.5% of all adults in South Australia were sufficiently active, 30.7% insufficiently active and 16.9% were inactive. For people over the age of 60 years, 45.2% were sufficiently active, 29.9% insufficiently active and 25% inactive.



# Challenging the Myths

## Challenging the Myths

There have been dramatic changes in the health, environment, cultural and demographic conditions which define the lives of older people and which make growing older a very different experience in the twenty first century compared to any other time. Despite this, we live in a society that still perpetuates stereotypical myths and images of ageing. These myths need to be addressed and countered for both physical activity providers and potential participants to increase participation within this target group. Below are some of the myths and counter realities:

### ***Ageing is a time of mental and physical decline***

Older people today are more active than ever before and enjoy participating in a wide variety of activities and lifestyles. They are more socially mobile and independent and most are healthy, active and aware that the mature or senior years offer new and exciting opportunities for leisure, travel and a change of direction.

Those entering post paid employment years expect to have many more quality years left to enjoy life. For many, these years give them the licence to recreate themselves and to pursue many different types of activities and experiences.

### ***Older people are all the same***

Older people are highly heterogeneous and differ in life experiences, family make up, marital status, ethnicity, education and socio-economic status. The over 50's consist of people in various stages of the life cycle and from different generations, with each segment having their own set of values, needs, desires and motivators.

### ***Older people are frail and dependent***

Research indicates that the frailty or physical and mental losses associated with ageing can be slowed or minimised and independence and function maintained through remaining connected to community and through participation in physical activity. Most older people are fit, active and mobile thanks to improved medical care, research and lifestyle factors.

### ***It is too late in life for older people to become physically active***

The cultural and social backgrounds of many older people lead them to have the self belief that participation in sport and physical activity is inappropriate for their age group, or that they are simply too old or too frail to participate. In addition, sport and recreation providers and participants alike are under the misconception that older people cannot learn a new sport or activity.

The fact is, many mature age people get involved in sport and recreation only later in life. They have been able to learn new skills and significantly increase their strength, endurance and flexibility as a result.

***Chronological age can only quantify people,  
it can never qualify or define them!***

# Barriers to Participation



## Barriers to Participation

To develop a successful program that will attract and retain participants, it is important to understand the barriers to participation for mature age people. Listed here are the main barriers to participation:

### ***Lack of transport***

Many older people do not drive and are reliant on public transport, council transport and car-pooling. Therefore, unless the activity is within walking distance, transport to and from the activity can be a significant barrier.

### ***Lack of knowledge or misunderstanding about physical activity***

People are often unaware of the connection between participation in physical activity and health, wellness and quality lifestyle as they age. They may believe that they are active enough, or that participation in physical activity is too dangerous and will lead to injury or death. Many have never participated and think they are too old to start now.

### ***Unaware of available opportunities to participate or whether available activities are appropriate for them***

Many older people, particularly those who have no previous experience with physical activity, are unaware of the opportunities and alternatives for participation in their local area. Alternatively, they may be aware of an available activity but are unsure as to whether it is an appropriate activity for their age and ability level.

### ***Negative stereotypes***

Negative images of ageing depicting frailty, passivity and dependence, especially in the media, produce low expectations in individuals and society of the levels and types of performance and participation of older people. Negative beliefs and attitudes about older people and their involvement in sport and recreation reinforce negative stereotypes.

### ***Cost***

A large percentage of older participants are on fixed incomes and cannot afford to participate in sport and recreation opportunities that require significant outlay. This is particularly evident when the costs occur all at once, such as obtaining club membership and purchase of equipment and clothing before they even get started.

### ***Existing medical conditions***

Certain medical conditions that may require modified activity programs, together with the fear of pain and injury, may negatively affect older people's understanding of the benefits of participating in physical activity.

# Barriers to Participation

## ***Fear of injury or death***

Many older people fear becoming involved in sport and recreation as they think it will increase their chances of being injured or, worse still, it will lead to death from heart attacks or heat stroke.

## ***Busy Lifestyle***

Older people these days are likely to be leading a busy 'portfolio' lifestyle that includes enjoying new activities, learning new skills, being involved in challenging ventures, travelling the world, seeing new sights or, closer to home, helping to raise grandchildren, working as volunteers, working in part-time jobs to supplement their income, or caring for their parents or partners.

## ***Motivation***

As with everyone, whether or not a mature age person decides to become active will depend upon their individual motivation. There is always going to be a certain percentage of the population that are never likely to be motivated enough to become physically active. However, more important to note is that there is a substantial percentage of the population who are considering becoming active and are very close to taking the step from awareness to participation.

Organisations may not be able to increase individual motivation, but they can engage and cater for those who are considering becoming active by educating potential participants about the benefits, eliminating barriers to participation, tailoring programs to meet the needs of the target market and promoting available programs in an effective manner.



# Shaping Your Message



## Shaping Your Message

It is important to make sure that the marketing message is right before any attempts are made to communicate the message to the target audience.

Shaping your message means finding ways of making the message relevant to people's lives while matching their expectations, their wants and needs; it is about identifying how their participation in your activity can help meet their need for physical activity.

Some suggested general messages that could be included in your promotional materials:

- You are never too old to start a new activity, learn new skills and experience all of the benefits that participation in sport and recreation has to offer.
- Physical activity assists in the management of many chronic conditions such as arthritis, diabetes and osteoporosis.
- Physical activity can help you to live independently for longer. It offers the opportunity to turn back the physical clock. ***This message is considered one of the most powerful as remaining independent, in their own homes, is an important issue for them.***
- Physical activity does not need to be strenuous to achieve health benefits.
- Participation in physical activity programs will provide many opportunities to make new friendships and expand social networks.
- Stronger muscles help reduce the risk of falling and improve the ability to perform the routine tasks of daily life.
- Physical activity will give you more energy and vitality and make you feel great. Focusing on the feeling of vitality rather than simply exercising to prevent disease has been shown to be a more powerful and motivating message for older people.
- If you don't use it, you lose it.

Research conducted on behalf of Sport and Recreation ACT indicated that older people thought that the most appealing term to use for exercise was 'physical activity'. The term 'sport' brought connotations of competition and children's sports, neither of which they could relate to and the term 'exercise' was perceived negatively, being associated with 'repetitive' and 'difficult'.



# Shaping Your Message

Other strategies to consider when shaping your message include:

- Address the stereotypes by using images of mature age people being involved and active; use humour, joyfulness and happiness. Depict people as vibrant, active and useful. Use role models who are independent and robust. Show them participating with different generations and having fun with children and grandchildren.
- Emphasise the social benefits of your activity as primary to the health benefits, as older people place greater importance on this aspect.
- Challenge the potential participant to “try something new” in a supportive environment.
- Clearly indicate that your program is suitable for beginners, for all ability levels, for their age group and led by properly qualified instructors who have experience with mature age participants. Also emphasize the ability to be empathetic to participants’ individual needs.
- State that the program is flexible and can be modified to meet their needs and to address any physical limitations. However, only state this if it is realistic.
- Address their fear of injury or death by stating how the program is safe and suitable for beginners and their age group.
- Personalise the promotional information by adding names as you talk about the people who are the instructors or those who will be taking their enquiries.
- Utilise images of realistic role models to whom your target market can relate, rather than former elite and well-known athletes who are now mature age athletes. Mature age people will also take note of peer role models who are considered people of authority.
- Mature age people perceive themselves to be 10-15 years younger than their chronological age. When advertising your activity, utilise images of people who are 10-15 years younger than your actual target market.
- Provide information about the benefits of physical activity, particularly in relation to maintaining independence, and link this to your activity. Older people respond to information that further educates them and empowers them to make informed decisions that will have a positive effect on their lives.

# Communicating Your Message

## Communicating Your Message

Once you have shaped your message to fit the intended target market, you must then develop and employ strategies to get your message 'out there'.

- Word of mouth is considered one of the most effective strategies for promoting to this market so offer formal inducements, such as reduction in membership rates to those who recruit friends and family into the program. Also consider having a Bring a Friend Day.
- Conduct an Open House, which is of a social nature. Invite people in to meet the instructors, ask questions, meet current participants and perhaps 'have a go' at the activity. Serve food and provide vouchers for a free first visit.
- Set up displays in shopping malls, shops, pharmacies, churches, libraries, Local Government offices, community fetes or any other place where the market gathers. It is also effective to staff the display with advocates and role models and to offer a free cup of coffee to those who stop by, which will provide an opportunity for communicating testimonials and providing a personal touch.
- Offer to provide an educational guest speaker at local community clubs such as senior citizen clubs, Rotary Clubs, RSL's etc. Provide information about physical activity and how your program meets their need for physical activity. Utilise role models and testimonials. Link this talk to a free opportunity to have a go at your activity.
- Utilise the local media when possible. The Messenger Press is widely read by this age group. Provide a great photo opportunity and/or human interest story to attract editorial space or alternatively use paid advertisements.
- Link with other community and State-wide events such as community fetes, Healthy Bones Week or Every Generation to promote your message.
- When communicating in print, utilise the following principles: Short sentences and simple language that is free of jargon, large (12-13 point) print that is easy to read such as sans serif or arial, adequate spacing between lines, good contrast between print (preferably black) and paper (non glossy).



# Communicating Your Message

## Target Marketing and Market Segmentation

The over 50's population spans several generations and is made up of individuals who differ in status, background, lifestyle, previous experiences, attitudes, ethnicity, and education. This market includes the autonomous, younger and more active baby boomers and also includes retirees who are slowing down and beginning to deal with chronic disease. The motivations for participating in physical activity will vary from person to person. Some will do it strictly for health reasons and others for social reasons. Thus it is useful to define the segment of the market that you are trying to attract and shape your message accordingly

- Mature age people are also taking steps into the computer age, so don't forget to utilise the internet for communicating your message.
- Make use of information services that mature age people access such as local council directories, Seniors Information Service and Active Ageing SA's physical activity directories. Make sure organisations such as the Osteoporosis Association, Arthritis Foundation and local health networks are aware of your programs.
- Organise the distribution of fliers and posters through local council, health centres, doctors, physiotherapists, recreation centres, libraries, pharmacies and shopping centres.
- Promotional information should include the cost of the activity and the exact location. If you are attempting to draw participants from outside walking distance, it is suggested that you include both bus number and bus stop information.



# Communicating Your Message

## Partnerships - A Key to Success

There are many organisations and individuals who are also interested in improving the health and independence of older people and they can be powerful allies in supporting and promoting your program. This includes, but is not limited to, Local, State and Federal Government, churches, civic groups, community and private health agencies, retirement villages, physiotherapists, GPs and rehabilitation centres. Ensure that all relevant parties are aware of your activities and the target group at which the activities are aimed. It is also suggested that you involve them in community consultation when developing and shaping your programs.

## The Power of Testimonials

People who have benefited from participation in your program and enjoy your program, offer one of the most effective types of promotion aimed at the mature age group. Utilise participants who match the age group (10-15 years younger) and market segment you are trying to attract. Seeing and hearing someone like themselves attest to the benefits of participating in your activity will overcome a number of possible barriers such as, "I'm too old." or, "There is nothing in it for me." Testimonials can be used in written promotional materials, as part of community presentations or simply through encouraging participants to spread the good news to their friends.



# Program Planning Suggestions

## Program Planning Suggestions

The following are additional suggestions to consider when planning and implementing programs for mature age people:

- Develop a profile of your local community including age, ethnicity, key community groups and community leaders.
- Think local. Older age groups tend to choose activities within a closer geographical radius of their home, compared to younger people.
- Consider approaching Local Government to assist with transport through the utilisation of council buses. Once the group is up and running, encourage car-pooling.
- Due to transport and safety considerations, program activities during daylight hours, ideally mid morning and mid afternoon.
- Conduct market research in the local area to gain an understanding of what activities are currently being offered to your target market.
- Develop a focus group to advise on programming and the needs and issues of your target market.
- Offer the first visit to your activity free of charge as older people appreciate the opportunity to 'try before they buy'.
- Keep in mind that there is likely to be a large percentage of your target market that has no experience with your activity. Provide beginner opportunities and promote them as such.
- Recruit leaders and coaches who are from the same age group as the participants or, if that is not possible, have leaders who are understanding and empathetic to the needs of the age group. Also educate all support staff regarding the needs of the age group.
- Provide access to the activity leader following the sessions so that participants can ask further questions and seek advice regarding the issues that affect their participation. This will also provide an excellent opportunity for the leader to seek program input from the participants and to form a relationship with the participants, which fosters trust, loyalty and ultimately, patronage.

# Program Planning Suggestions

- It is crucial to provide an opportunity to socialise following the activity. Include a cup of tea and a biscuit as part of the cost of your activity and provide a place for participants to sit and chat.
- Offer separate opportunities just for socialising such as group lunches, or group trips.
- Minimise start-up costs as much as possible and offer advice on what type of clothing and equipment is needed and where to obtain these items at the best price.
- Offer special discounts and two for one memberships. Provide flexible membership options such as monthly, seasonal, and per usage.
- Be prepared to modify your activity to meet the needs, limitations and abilities of various participants.
- Research has indicated that a major barrier to participation for females was looking foolish, particularly in front of men. Single-sex classes should therefore be considered.
- If utilising music, ensure that it is appropriate music for the group and played at an agreed volume.

It should be emphasized that the best thing an organisation can do when planning and shaping a program is to ask the target group and existing participants what it is that they want and need. Also encourage participants to provide feedback and input into the program.





# Masters Sport

## Masters Sport

Masters Sport, also known as seniors, veterans and golden oldies, is organised sport for people who are beyond the age of open, mainstream competition. For some sports eg gymnastics and swimming, this can be as young as early 20's but is usually over the age of 35. Masters athletes can be those who have continued on in their chosen sport, have returned later in life to a sport, or in some instances, they may be taking up the sport for the first time.

Many sports, seeing the potential of this growing market, have already developed Masters Sport options. Some sports have established separate leagues, others have added additional age categories to existing competitions and in some cases, separate peak bodies have been developed to cater for Masters participants.

Modifications to the sport have been needed in some cases to make the activity safe and appropriate for the age group. These modifications include reducing the game time, limiting the amount of physical contact, reducing the weight of equipment and decreasing distances.

The Masters Games is a multi-sport festival for mature age people and is conducted at a regional, State, national and international level. South Australia has their version of the Games, which are licensed and facilitated by the South Australian Sports Federation (Sport SA) and held in a variety of regions throughout the State. Although competition and winning is important, the focus of the Masters Games is on participation and socialisation. Regions hosting the Games have reported significant economic benefit and increased participation in sport by mature age people through the creation of new leagues and competitions. Likewise, sporting organisations at both a club and State level have successfully utilised the Masters Games as a catalyst for getting more mature age people involved in their sport.

Coaches working with Masters Athletes should be properly trained. The Office for Recreation and Sport, in conjunction with the Centre for Physical Activity in Ageing, has developed a coaching update course for coaches of Masters Athletes.

Sporting organisations, clubs and recreation centres should ensure that they have competitive options available for mature age participants. Organisations wishing to develop Masters Sport options should, in the first instance, contact either the relevant State or national sporting body for advice, as it is likely they will have guidelines for modification and competition programming. For additional assistance, contact Sport SA or the Office for Recreation and Sport, who can either directly assist, or refer you to the most appropriate organisation.

# Something for Local Government

## Something For Local Government

Local Government can have a significant role to play in increasing the participation of this age group. The role of Local Government could include:

Assisting with transport - Utilising council buses to transport mature age participants to and from activities similar to current services that transport them to shops and doctors.

Formation of networks - Council on the Ageing SA has been working in conjunction with local councils to develop networks of local seniors groups. One of the primary aims is the development and promotion of physical activity opportunities within the network and linking the network to already existing opportunities in the local area. These networks have significantly increased communication between councils and the mature age population providing a greater understanding of the needs of the target group across a range of areas. It has also allowed an opportunity for the aged care, sport and recreation, and community services areas of council to work collaboratively for greater outcomes.

Encouraging council owned recreation centres and community centres to develop programs specifically for mature age people and ensuring that the facilities are accessible by the target group.

Promoting the importance of physical activity and available opportunities through information in the council newsletter, local services directory, on the council web site and through distribution of promotional materials through the council networks such as local libraries, community centres and council offices.

Include displays about available mature age activities in council organised community fetes.

Gain an understanding of the activities and facilities already available and what the gaps are and then formulate a plan to address the gaps.

Proactively and reactively offer advice to community organisations in relation to council demographics and unmet needs



# Risk Management Considerations

## Risk Management Considerations

Some suggestions to consider:

- Modify activities and alter rules to fit the abilities of the market (eg reduce game time, minimise or eliminate physical contact, provide safer equipment and decrease distances).
- Leaders and coaches need to be suitably qualified and have an understanding of working with the mature aged.
- Ensure guidelines are in place for beginners and for safely increasing activity levels (eg medical/health form, doctor's approval and regular re-assessments).
- Have a risk management plan and codes of practice in place.
- Older people who have previously been sedentary should start with short intervals of moderate physical activity and gradually build up to the desired amount.
- Older adults should consult a physician before beginning a new physical activity program.

The Office for Recreation and Sport (ORS) advocates that all organisations develop and implement formal risk management plans.

Contact ORS for further information and available resources.

*\* A general health questionnaire should be completed by all participants prior to commencing a program.*



## Adelaide City Life Links

### *A creative partnership approach*

Adelaide City Life Links is a partnership program between Active Ageing SA and the Adelaide City Council supported through the council's Recreation and Sports Grants Program. Set up in 2002, the program is designed to encourage older people to take a new look at themselves and the city through a creative series of walks and talks. The monthly walks are intended to provide a quality program to encourage increased participation in physical activity while increasing people's awareness of the creative and lifestyle opportunities available throughout the City of Adelaide.

The walks are designed and led by qualified, professional leaders in the field of fitness, active ageing and health promotion. Each series and individual walk has a theme and a fully researched narration, while additional speakers and visits are incorporated into the design e.g. Wake Up To The West End Walk included a tour of the Jam Factory and the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra premises.

Every walk finishes with a social morning tea and participants are provided with handouts covering aspects of the walk, as well as resources on the area, together with additional health promotion information. The high quality of the program design and the leaders, have attracted a loyal and growing following.

### **Promotion**

Adelaide City Life Links has been promoted through editorials in About Adelaide, Messenger Press and The Advertiser's, 'Looking Forward' section. Brochures have been distributed throughout various council venues, through Seniors Centres and further information about the program is available from the Active Ageing SA Hotline.

### **Socialisation**

Opportunities to socialise and learn about their local environment has proven to be the ingredients for success in this program with physical activity occurring incidentally. Feedback from participants has indicated that they are involved primarily because of the group social interaction, the chance to meet new people and to learn more about their local environment. They also have indicated that the morning tea is a highlight, as is the friendliness of the leaders.

## **South Australian Masters Squash**

### ***Combining competition and socialisation in a flexible and informal environment***

The aim of Masters Squash is to keep mature age players playing squash. The Committee has structured the competition so that all players enjoy themselves on and off the court in a more social environment.

Players at all levels of ability (including beginners) are welcome. Participants can enter as a team or as an individual to be placed with a team. Players are graded according to ability within and across Divisions. This means that numbers 1-4 in each team can be vastly different in ability, but the selection committee, in consultation with the Division Controller, considers these differing abilities to ensure that all teams have matching abilities within the same Division. This system has been enormously successful to date. It has meant that couples and friends can play on the same team, even if their respective abilities are quite different. The emphasis is on having fun and beginners are encouraged to participate as grading is adjusted to accommodate all standards and tuition is freely given.

Each Division plays all 16 matches on the one night at a particular centre with all four squash courts side by side to encourage team support and interaction. They play at a different centre the following week. Many players stay on after the game to socialise and enjoy each other 's company.

Nearly 300 active players participate every week with the median age of players being 45 years. There are State and National Masters Titles that participants can aspire to if they choose. A strong bond exists amongst the Masters Squash fraternity across Australia and many close friendships are renewed at the National/State Titles.

# Case Study



Courtesy of The Advertiser - Photographer, David Cronin

## Adelaide Mall Walking

### *The introduction of a creative, physical activity program to the State of South Australia*

Adelaide Mall Walking was established in February 2001 and within a year, six malls had come on board in all parts of metropolitan Adelaide. Currently the program attracts over 500 weekly participants, 90% of whom are over the age of 50.

Based on a successful model from the United States and founded by Connie Barnes, the early morning (before opening hours) walks offer a low cost program conducted in a safe and climate controlled environment. The walks are led by experienced, qualified leaders and include a group warm up followed by an individualised walking session and a group cool down. Most walkers then stay on to socialise and enjoy a discount breakfast or coffee with the added benefit of invited guest speakers who address the group twice per month on related, health promotion issues.

Adelaide Mall Walking has employed a number of the key principles to achieve success including thorough preliminary planning, market research, engaging key partners and the utilisation of marketing/promotional messages and avenues.

### **Working with and through partners**

Contact was made with a number of potential partners and key stakeholders for program planning advice and financial support. This included the Centre for Physical Activity in Ageing (CPAA), local councils, shopping centres, Active Ageing SA, Office for Recreation and Sport, Divisions of General Practice and the Heart Foundation.

### **Program planning**

Initial research regarding existing models of mall walking groups worldwide was conducted to develop an appropriate model. A project plan that took into account all aspects of the project such as potential partners, securing funding, establishment and sustainability, and promotion was formulated and altered, as needed, based on the ongoing acquisition of information and knowledge as the project progressed.

### **Promotion/marketing**

The programs were marketed in each geographical area surrounding the malls where programs were established and in the greater metropolitan area. This included advertising, editorials and interviews with the media (Messenger Press, The Advertiser, local and regional radio stations), brochures made available in participating shopping centres, through local council outlets (libraries, senior centres, health centres) and through organisations targeting seniors (Active Ageing SA and the Seniors Information Service).

## Adelaide Mall Walking *cont.*

### Social focus as paramount

Adelaide Mall Walking are tuned into the fact that mature age people regard social interaction and the opportunity to expand social networks as the paramount benefit of physical activity. Walkers are encouraged to stay after their walk for a coffee and a chat with their peers. In addition, a social subcommittee has been established in each centre and conducts social activities for walkers such as movie mornings, quiz nights and barbeques.

### Additional strategies employed:

- The Advisory Committee holds bi-monthly meetings to address major issues and to discuss developments and future directions.
- Engagement of walking leaders who are friendly, fun, enthusiastic, empathetic and involved.
- There is never any pressure put on participants to go faster or to compete against each other. The message is to compete only with yourself, to work within your limits and to gradually improve your fitness level.
- Fostering of a group identity through the wearing of attractive Mall Walking T-shirts.
- Participants from all groups are encouraged to come together for outside walks such as the Arthritis Walk, and the Million Paws Walk.
- Adelaide Mall Walking participants raise money for good causes and charitable organisations, giving participants a sense of contributing to the community. In 2001, \$3,500 was donated to the Heart Foundation.

This program was the Winner of the *Community Recreation Award for Excellence and Innovation* at the 2002 Recreation and Sport Industry Awards

# Case Study

## **Active Fitness, Barmera Recreation Centre (YMCA)**

### ***A program that meets the needs of the individual***

Active Fitness is a lifestyle program designed to improve the fitness levels of older people and introduce them 'back into the community'. Established as a YMCA program, the sessions attract a range of older people from 50-80+ years of age, with predominantly more females (approximately 90% female -10% male).

Active Fitness consists of twice weekly sessions combining general activity/aerobic/games sessions, progressive resistance exercises with free weights and a torso strength and conditioning program. Participants progress at their own rate in a positive, non-competitive environment.

### **Properly trained personnel offering tailor made programs**

A key component in the success of Active Fitness is the commitment and partnership of the program's professional personnel. The founder, who has a background in Human Movement and Sports Science, works closely with the group leader who has specialised in fitness training for older adults which she gained through the Centre for Physical Activity in Ageing.

All participants receive an initial assessment resulting in a tailor-made program designed by professionals to meet the individual needs and fitness levels of the participants.

As participants progress, they are allowed to move on to individual weight training sessions using pin weights and free weights. Many use the weights twice weekly (in addition to their other two sessions) and as a further bonus to the Centre, many have taken out a Centre membership.

## Active Fitness, Barmera Recreation Centre (YMCA) *cont.*

Participants are regularly monitored through walk tests, doctor's reports, bone density measures, personal data eg weight loss and qualitative feedback. As a result, their programs are further individualised to ensure progression at an appropriate pace.

### Shaping the message

The Active Fitness program provides a great example of getting the message right in order to attract and retain participants. Some of the messages conveyed are:

- A positive attitude is everything (the word 'can't' is banned!)
- Love what you're doing and be prepared to have a go!
- We don't push or drive - we encourage, challenge and motivate.
- SLOW DOWN - We have 60 years to reverse!
- All is possible- begin slowly and build up.
- We provide a variety of fun and fitness activities.
- We have professional, highly qualified staff.
- We educate and explain so you know why you're doing what you're doing.
- The most important thing is to have fun and ENJOY!

## **Cooinda Adult Recreation Centre**

### ***City of Marion***

#### ***Evolving to maintain relevance and future viability***

Cooinda Adult Recreation Centre (originally known as Cooinda Elderly Recreation Centre) has been catering for the over 50's population of the City of Marion since the late 1970's offering a holistic approach to active ageing through a wide variety of activities to stimulate the mind, body and spirit.

Cooinda is open daily, Monday to Friday with healthy lunches available each day at a cost of \$4.00 for a hot meal. Options for physical activity during the day include table tennis, yoga, snooker, indoor bowls, gentle exercise, tai chi and ballroom dancing. Classes and groups for dressmaking, patchwork quilting, wood burning, ceramics, lead lighting, leather craft and drawing provide an outlet for the creative and industrious individuals. The Centre is also open most evenings with the evening activities being coordinated by outside groups for the general community.

Although Cooinda has been a model success story over the years, the City of Marion realises that the Centre must continue to evolve in order to cater for the different needs and wants of the baby boomers. In addition, council wants to increase the long-term viability and community relevance of the Centre by expanding the overall user base to include the wider adult population within the local area. There is an understanding that it is important that this evolution occurs in a way that does not alienate the existing users of the facility.

Whilst continuing to offer the same types of programs, activities and services to existing users, the Centre is embarking on a number of measures to attract new users. Firstly, the name has been changed from Cooinda Recreation Centre to Cooinda Adult Recreation Centre. More modern, colourful tablecloths and curtains have been added to enhance the décor and there are plans to change the dining set-up to give it more of a café feel, with outdoor seating available and cappuccino and baguettes on offer throughout the day.

## Cooinda Adult Recreation Centre *cont.*

Perhaps the most important measures being implemented to attract baby boomers and the wider adult market, is the addition of lifestyle classes and a greater focus on lifelong learning. This adheres to the concept that baby boomers will not be attracted to a facility simply because of age-related factors (i.e. "Now that I am over 50, I will go to an over 50's centre.") but are more likely to be attracted to a facility because it offers particular activities that are of interest to them. Feng Shui, Pilates, belly dancing and computer courses are examples of the new activities being offered to attract the local adult population.

Cooinda is soon to embark on a communication strategy aimed at promoting their new image and activities to the wider community.

Cooinda is representative of many of the traditional over 50's centres and clubs that are currently grappling with the issues associated with a dwindling, ageing membership and trying to ensure their future viability by attracting new members/users who have different wants and needs to existing members. There is no simple answer to this dilemma, but the Cooinda Adult Recreation Centre's approach to attracting new users through offering non-traditional activities that appeal to baby boomers, whilst maintaining services and activities that cater for current users, is one solution worth considering.



## **Grange Surf Lifesaving Club of South Australia - Women's Masters Program**

### ***Achieving growth and success through Masters Sport development***

At a meeting of the Grange Surf Lifesaving Club in 2001, the Committee explored ways in which they could expand their services and activities. It was highlighted that the numbers of women, particularly mature age women, participating in surf lifesaving was extremely low. At that time there were two mature age female lifesavers, both between 45-50 who regularly participated in competitions. This undermanned area in competition was one of the main reasons why the club had not been able to achieve number one status in South Australia for many years. It was agreed at the meeting that there would have to be a strong commitment by everyone to encourage women over 30 (Masters age) to join the club and participate in lifesaving activities and competition.

Two years on, the number of female Masters participants at the club had ballooned to 22 and the Grange Surf Lifesaving Club had won the State Titles for the first time in many years, largely due to the performance of the Women's Masters competitors.

A State championship is only one of many benefits the Women's Masters program has brought to the Club. The Club continues to benefit from the increased number of volunteers from within the group, from the inspiration provided to younger, female participants because of the, "If they can, we can." mentality and an enhanced image within the community through the positive local media coverage of the program.

### **Identification of the target market**

The Club specifically targeted previous female members who had been involved during their late teens and early twenties but who had left due to other commitments such as family, job, travel etc, and also the mothers of current nippers.

## **Grange Surf Lifesaving Club of South Australia - Women's Masters Program *cont.***

### **Getting the message right**

The messages communicated certainly struck a chord with potential participants.

"We need you to help us achieve number one and at the same time you will gain skills that you can use in your day to day lives and become a valuable member of the club and the community. You will meet women your own age with similar interests and abilities. You will do things you never imagined you would do. You will get fitter and stronger, you will grow together, your kids will love you for your involvement and your lives will never be the same again."

### **Communicating the message**

Individual letters were sent out to mothers of the junior division and previous female club members asking them to attend an information evening where they could find out more about the Club and how they could be involved. The meeting was well supported with many of the women bringing along a friend who had not received a letter but had heard 'through the grapevine' that there would be a squad of mature age women commencing surf lifesaving at Grange. surf lifesaving at Grange.

### **Developing a program designed to meet the needs of participants**

The program was structured so as to accommodate older participants, taking into consideration their physical fitness level and knowledge of surf lifesaving generally. The program had to offer flexibility to suit each participant's family situation and there were many instances during the months where trainers gave one-on-one training to someone who had missed out on a training session due to other commitments. This approach was well received and appreciated.

It was important that the participants started at the same 'grass root' level and worked together in order to obtain their Bronze Medallion. At the same time they could improve their fitness, meet other women their own age, and support and encourage each other to achieve their goals. Groups were kept small (only five in each group) so that the participants could receive individual attention and any concerns or insecurities of the participants were addressed quickly as it was paramount that the women were made to feel comfortable and confident through all parts of the training.

# Case Study

## **Badminton Veterans Association of SA**

### ***Creation of a new product to cater for the needs of older badminton players***

Several years ago the Badminton Veterans Association of SA (BVASA) developed their highly successful doubles competition to cater, originally, for the needs and desires of players over the age of 40. Older badminton players, as a general rule, prefer doubles to singles play and the team competition being offered at the time by the South Australian Badminton Association, included singles play which did not suit the older participants of the BVASA.

As a result, the BVASA negotiated court hire with the Badminton Association and developed a doubles only team competition. Because the numbers of older players were relatively small, there were, initially, not enough competitors to form a viable graded team competition. A decision was then made to open up the competition to all ages, divided into three grades. As a result, the Thursday night doubles only competition has gone on to become very successful, attracting approximately 100 competitors each week.





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# Useful Contacts



## Useful Contacts

### Office for Recreation and Sport

Tel: 08 8416 6677

[www.recsport.sa.gov.au](http://www.recsport.sa.gov.au)

### *be active*

[www.beactive.com.au](http://www.beactive.com.au)

### Active Ageing SA

Tel: 08 8232 9077

[www.activeageingsa.net.au](http://www.activeageingsa.net.au)

### Centre for Physical Activity in Ageing

Tel: 08 8222 1889

[www.cpaa.sa.gov.au](http://www.cpaa.sa.gov.au)

### Council on the Ageing-COTA

Tel: 08 8232 0422

[www.cota.aust.com.au](http://www.cota.aust.com.au)

### Department of Veterans Affairs

Tel: 08 8290 0555

[www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)

### Department of Human Services - Health Promotion SA

Tel: 08 8226 6329

[www.dhs.sa.gov.au](http://www.dhs.sa.gov.au)

### Department of Human Services - Ageing and Community Care

Grants for Seniors

Tel: 08 8226 6852

### Recreation SA

Tel: 08 8232 6477

[www.recreationsa.org](http://www.recreationsa.org)

### Sport SA

Tel: 08 8353 7755

[www.sportsa.org.au](http://www.sportsa.org.au)

