

Draft ERA statement

ACTIVE AGEING PROJECT – New volunteering

New life for Baby Boomer volunteers

Baby boomer retirees may get a new lease of life as “professional” volunteers if an innovative local government proposal is accepted by the Commonwealth Government.

As they move into the transition to retirement phase, baby boomers are looking for more varied volunteering options that match their passions and skills - and don't require them to be locked into long-term volunteering commitments and boring training and paperwork.

The proposal has been developed by the Eastern Regional Alliance of six Adelaide councils that cover a total population of around 290,000 people.

While volunteer work such as working in libraries or driving community buses is highly satisfying to many volunteers, older people with professional or trade skills are often looking for ways to use those skills in a volunteer capacity.

Community consultation undertaken across the region for ERA's Ageing Strategies project team indicated that many older residents are committed to volunteering but are concerned at the limited range of volunteering opportunities offered by their councils.

The eastern suburbs of Adelaide have a high representation of tertiary graduates and people employed in professional, managerial and technical roles. The Ageing Strategies project team believes it is now necessary to find innovative ways of harnessing those skills and interests, and enabling Baby Boomers to go on contributing as volunteers.

Many community based agencies and service clubs in eastern Adelaide are struggling to survive and having to explore new, more informal service models and develop alternative strategies to recruit new members and volunteers.

Not surprisingly these organisations are also looking to their local councils for support with planning as they reinvent themselves in a changing community.

Under the proposal, which will be put to the Commonwealth Government's Living Longer, Living Better aged care reform program for funding assistance, ERA plans to extend online volunteering innovations developed by the Local Government Association of SA and Volunteering SA.

These new volunteering opportunities would be underpinned by a regional online volunteering platform that would enable volunteers to manage their own volunteering program. Volunteers would register online their specific skills and interests, sign up for or update their volunteer passport, identify potential volunteering opportunities, undertake online training, and communicate online with peers and volunteer coordinators.

The ERA proposal would focus in particular on new opportunities around learning, environmentalism, mentoring, community management and facilitating other volunteers such as corporate volunteering programs as well as more traditional roles in community services.