

Age is **just** a number !

- **focus** on the person **not** the age.



**Ageing  
Positively**  
in Casey



## Introduction

As our population ages, we need to work together as a community to ensure that older people are supported, and that their valuable contributions are acknowledged for the vital role they play. The City of Casey promotes positive ageing and this booklet is a tool to explore and debunk the myths and stereotypes that are often unfairly placed on older people.

## Our Commitment

The City of Casey is committed to representing the diverse interests and needs of older people in Casey. By challenging attitudes about ageing, and raising awareness about the positive contributions that older people make to the community, it is possible to address the negative stereotypes associated with ageing.

The *Ageing Positively in Casey Plan 2005-2010* (the Plan) aims to promote and develop positive community attitudes to ageing through acknowledging the significant wealth of experience and contributions that older people make to the community.

The entire community benefits when all members are supported, no matter what their age. The Plan highlights that there is a need for both older people and the general community to challenge the stereotypes and myths about ageing.

The Plan also identifies that there are several integral factors to ageing in a positive way, such as:

- financial wellbeing
- living in the community
- participation in families and the community
- improving and maintaining health
- mobility and transport
- employment and learning.

For more information on the Plan visit Council's website [www.casey.vic.gov.au/ageingpositively](http://www.casey.vic.gov.au/ageingpositively) .

## What are the population trends for people aged 55 years and over?

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Census, the City of Casey has approximately 35,630 people over the age of 55. The City of Casey's population projections indicate that by 2021 this age group will grow to approximately 62,540; an increase of 77 percent.

The trend towards ageing populations is global. In Australia, research indicates that:

- in 10 years, the number of people over 60 will increase by 50 percent
- by 2020, those retiring will exceed those entering the workforce (Green, 2004).
- between 2004 and 2010, there may be a deficit of 195,000 workers (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007).

There is a skills shortage in the workplace, which will worsen due to our ageing population (Watson, 2006). It is economically unsustainable for ageist attitudes to persist. The community needs the contributions of older people (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007).

## What does the law say about age discrimination?

The *Age Discrimination Act 2004* stipulates that a person should not be treated less favourably on the basis of age. It is unlawful to discriminate against people based on age but there are many other reasons why age discrimination needs to be addressed.

## What do we mean by age-based stereotypes?

Older people are often portrayed negatively, as being dependent, inactive and making little contribution to the community. When describing older people, be mindful of the myths which have contributed to these stereotypes.



**MYTH:** Research suggests that employers make assumptions about older people lacking in enthusiasm and drive as well as possessing deteriorating physical and mental capabilities.

**FACT:** Research has indicated that cognitive ability does not significantly decline until people reach their 80s or 90s. Moreover, the amount of deterioration is dependant upon the individual; some people experience no changes (Watson, 2006). In fact, it is between the ages of 30 and 40, that the body experiences most deterioration.

**MYTH:** In the workplace older people are less productive, resistant to learning new skills and take longer to learn. As a result, training costs increase.

**FACT:** Generally, when older workers are supported and training programs are delivered in a way that acknowledges their experience, 'training proves just as effective and no more expensive to the organisation than for younger workers' (Watson, 2006).

- Retaining older workers provides numerous financial benefits because their '... productivity is equivalent to their younger counterparts' and their capacity to mentor can be a valuable asset to any workplace (Green, 2004).
- Research indicates 'that quality of work improves, turnover rates fall and worker loyalty, work ethic and reliability increase with age' (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007).

**MYTH:** Older people are a burden on the economy.

**FACT:** Older people contribute to the economy in a number of ways. For example, many older people provide 'unpaid assistance' to their families and also volunteer their time and expertise within the broader community (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007).

## Financial Contributions

In 2006, almost two million older people made personal donations to organisations, (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007).

- **Volunteers:** In 2006, the ABS estimated that 27 percent of older Australians (690,400 people) volunteered, and by doing so, contributed '160 million hours to the community' (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007).
- **Carers:** A Macquarie University survey conducted in conjunction with the Diversity Council Australia, revealed that 40 percent of respondents were the caregivers for a family member. In some instances, 'grandparents are raising their grandchildren'.
- **Civic activity:** Many older people are also actively involved in a variety of civic and community activities which are vital to the functioning of the local community.

**MYTH:** Older drivers are dangerous drivers.

**FACT:** According to VicRoads, older drivers are involved in fewer accidents and tend to drive more cautiously.

**MYTH:** Older people are more likely to be victims of crime.

**FACT:** ABS Crime statistics show that older people are less likely to be victims of crime. In 2005, only 0.1 percent of people aged 65 years and over were victims of crime.

**MYTH:** All older people will become sick and need care.

**FACT:** Generally, older people are healthy and active, with those over 75 more likely to experience illness. 'Only one percent of people aged 60-74 years were living in supported accommodation, increasing to seven percent of those aged 75-84 years, and 31 percent of those aged 85 years and over' (Australian Social Trends, 2006).

## How do words limit me?

When referring to an older person, consider the words you use to describe them and ask yourself if the language or words conjure up images that are positive and respectful.

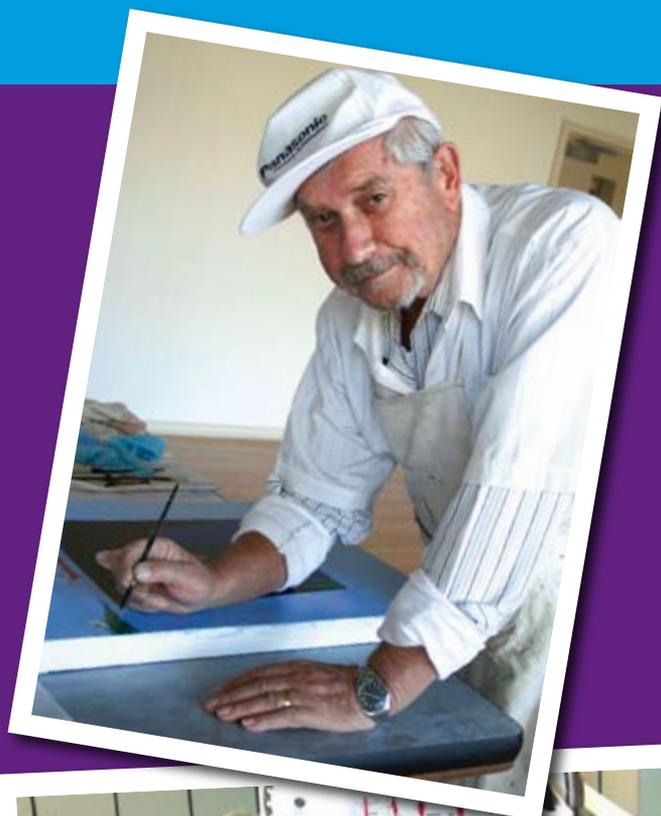
## What words should be avoided when describing older people?

- old
- aged
- senile
- pensioner

## Preferred words to describe older people include:

- older person
- mature-aged
- senior
- senior citizen
- older resident
- elder

Use 'grandmother' or 'grandfather' when it is applicable and relevant to the situation.



## Useful contacts

### City of Casey Positive Ageing Programs

[www.casey.vic.gov.au/ageingpositively](http://www.casey.vic.gov.au/ageingpositively)  
Telephone: the City of Casey's Community Development Department on (03) 9705 5200

### Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

[www.seniors.gov.au](http://www.seniors.gov.au) and  
[www.agedcareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.agedcareaustralia.gov.au)  
Telephone: 1800 500 853

### Office of Senior Victorians

[www.seniors.vic.gov.au](http://www.seniors.vic.gov.au)  
Telephone: (03) 9208 3333

### Council on the Ageing Victoria (COTA)

[www.cotavic.org.au](http://www.cotavic.org.au)  
Telephone: (03) 9654 4443

### U3A Network Victoria

[www.vicnet.net.au/~u3avic](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~u3avic)  
Telephone: (03) 96703659

## Sources

Australian Bureau of Statistics Crime and Safety survey, Catalogue no. 4509.0.2005

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Older Australians at a glance, 2007.

Australian Social Trends, Catalogue No.4102.0.2006.

Casey Population Forecasting Model, 2004.

Diversity Council of Australia, Grey Matters: Engaging Mature Age Workers, 2007.

Green, H, The Challenges of Managing an Older Workforce. Ceo Forum Group, 2004.

Watson, B, Debunking the Myths About Mature Aged Workers (45+): can't there be a silver lining in the workforce? 2006.

