

## Social Inclusion Report 2012 - 2013

### **Introduction**

The Southern Services Reform Group, Social inclusion Workgroup, embarked on a project in 2012 which took on some unexpected twists and turns. The project the group decided to work on was given the title 'Reaching the Unreachable'. It was an ambitious brief but the group was prepared to 'give it a go'. The project proposal described the strategy in some detail - a postcard and poster would be developed and distributed to reduce the stigma attached to loneliness. The aim was to promote acceptance by using suitable images and wording to help individuals feel comfortable in contacting a service provider for assistance. Key service provider contact numbers would be displayed and it was expected that the postcard / poster would reach individuals that were socially isolated by being available at targeted places (pharmacies, medical clinics) and delivered to suburban homes.

The membership of the workgroup provided a good representation of service providers in the southern region who provide social programs to older people. They included City of Holdfast Bay, Marion, Onkaparinga and Mitcham, Resthaven, ACH, COTA, St John, ECH, Red Cross, Baptist Care and Domiciliary Care. Consumers were also consulted throughout the process and included the SSRG Consumer workgroup and participants at an Onkaparinga community centre.

The project was not designed to target younger adults or youth and was not going to target specific social programs. It would aim to connect each individual to something appropriate for that person.

### **Project Objectives**

The objectives of the project were to reduce the stigma associated with loneliness and to create a resource that would encourage individuals to contact services and engage in social programs.

### **Reason for the Project**

The project aimed to create opportunities for people to engage in life again – to ignite or continue their connection with life and feel a sense of hope for the future despite restraints or disability. Individuals need to feel they belong and that they are achieving and productive. As peoples' basic needs are often being met (particularly when there is financial security) social connections become even more important.

The project 'Alone in a Crowd: Supporting Older Australians Managing Loneliness'

suggests the following: ‘...the research literature reports that loneliness is an increasingly pressing social and health issue that has potential to influence quality of life of older people. Concern is further raised by the ageing of Australia’s population...’ (Stanley et al, 2010)

## **Methodology**

The methodology used was based on action research principles – plan, act, lessons learned, changes made. The research question was: What would it take to design a poster and postcard that reduces the stigma attached to loneliness and creates an atmosphere of acceptance by using appropriate graphics and wording to help individuals feel comfortable in contacting a service provider for assistance? What was learnt in the first postcard distribution informed changes made in the second distribution. The process has ensured continuous improvement.

## **Method**

- Toucan Display Systems were engaged to develop the resources, give advice and assist with forming a marketing plan.
- A small suburb was chosen for distribution in the Onkaparinga region – Christies Beach. Population = 4,833 Residents 65+ = 1,200
- The postcards were delivered to each home in the target suburb, inserted in the Messenger Press newspaper.
- An assessment form was developed for people who responded to the postcard and included the question – ‘Just out of interest, what did you think about the postcard?’
- One week after the postcard distribution, posters were hand delivered to pharmacies and medical clinics in the Christies Beach shopping precinct – Beach Road.
- Five weeks after the postcard distribution, postcards, posters and feedback forms were sent out to 46 Medical Clinics in the Onkaparinga region. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes were also included.
- An enclosed letter asked clinics to give out the postcard to any interested clients and display the poster. They were also asked to fill in a feedback form to give their views about the project and the postcard. Questions asked were:
  1. Is the postcard useful?
  2. What are your thoughts about the image used?
  3. Do you think more should be done to address social isolation?
- Based on the feedback from consumers, service providers and Toucan changes were made to improve the process for the Holdfast Bay distribution. This included targeting a larger suburb, different uplifting image and refining of the activity examples.
- Finally, a second postcard distribution was organised for March 2013 in the City of Holdfast Bay region. The suburb selected was Glenelg - including East, North & South Glenelg.  
Population = 7466 Residents 65+ = 805

- In this distribution there was a longer time span between the letter box drop and the poster distribution. Posters were distributed late May and July to extend the life of the project. They were delivered to the following organisations:

Bay Discovery Centre
Bayside Medical Centre
Brighton Library
Chemist Warehouse
Glenelg Community Chenmart
Glenelg East Day/Night Pharmacy
Glenelg Family Practice
Glenelg Library
Glenelg Medical Centre
Glenelg Orthopaedics
Glenelg Specialist Centre and Day Surgery
Holdfast Medical Centre
Morphettville Medical Centre
Rose Street Clinic
South Australian Melanoma and Skin Cancer Clinic
United Discount Chemist
City of Holdfast Bay Council foyer

A follow up 'postcard drop' was made in August to the following:

Lighthouse Community (Brighton Baptist) Church
St Jude's Anglican Church
St. Dominic's Care Centre
Somerton Baptist Church Community Service
Holdfast Bay Community Centre
Glenelg North Community Centre (Canasta Club)
Glenelg Community Centre
St Paul's Lutheran Church
Church of Christ - Brighton
St Martin's Church
St. Dominic's Care Centre
St Andrews Uniting Church
Seacliff Uniting Church
Holdfast College for Seniors
Brighton Over 50's

## **Outcomes**

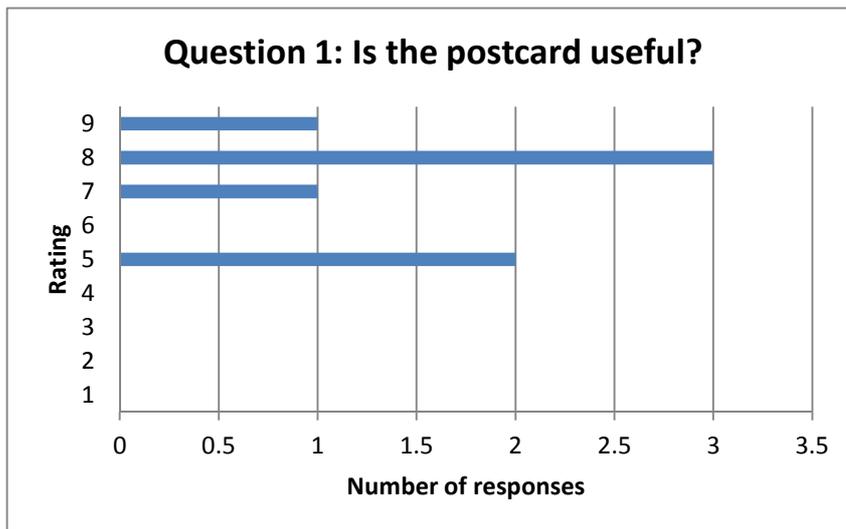
### **Stage 1 - Onkaparinga**

The responses to the postcard were minimal. In total, 4 residents contacted the Onkaparinga Transport and Social Program. The details are as follows:

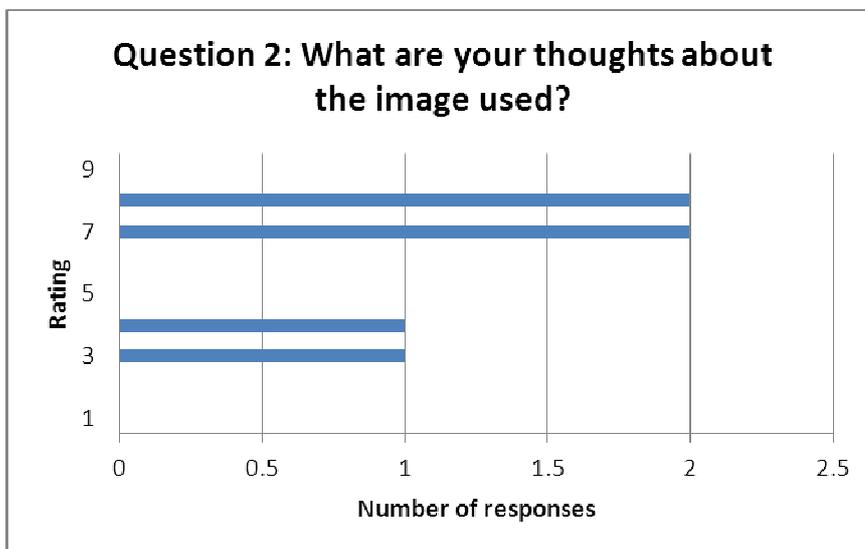
1. 82 year old male, requiring transport to get to medical appointments, he recently hurt his knee and taxi services are expensive. The card prompted him to make contact. **Assessment of the postcard:** “Excellent, well done. Easy to understand.”
2. 59 year old female, not in paid employment and ‘getting bored’. The postcard prompted her to call - she would like to volunteer and be able to do something for other people. **Assessment of postcard:** “Good idea. Liked that it wasn’t the same old tea and biscuits. She liked that they were out and about.”
3. 82 year old male, requiring shopping and social support. **Assessment of postcard:** “Very friendly image.”
4. 80 year old female wanting to meet people, get out of the house and socialise. **Assessment of postcard:** “Good – get connected, try something different. Didn’t think about volunteering.”

**Medical Clinic Feedback Results:**

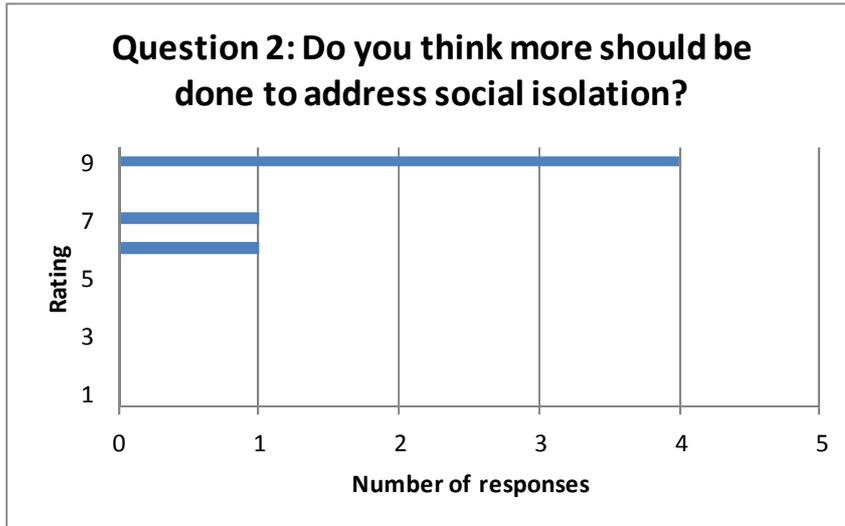
**1=no, 5=no opinion either way, 9=yes**



**1=not appropriate, 5=no opinion either way, 9=innovative**



1=no, 5=no opinion either way, 9=yes



Feedback Comments

1. Is the postcard useful?	2. What are your thoughts about the image used?	3. Do you think more should be done to address social isolation?
I have put the poster in the waiting room.	An alternative image may be useful ie something not requiring an expensive accessory.	If possible
Too early to tell, but we will display it.	Not sure, but does the sports car suggest you need some affluence to participate?	Certainly – but some people are usually isolated due to cost. Ability to access (transport) – (physical)
Will hand out postcards to our elderly patients when having their health checks with the nurse.	The image makes me think two people who are quite independent, possibly newly retired, are enjoying time/drive	
Not really.		

**Stage 2 – Holdfast Bay**

Similar to the Onkaparinga trial, the responses to the postcard were minimal. In total, 6 residents contacted the Holdfast Bay HACC Social Liaison Officer, however not all responses came directly from the letter box drop. The details are as follows:

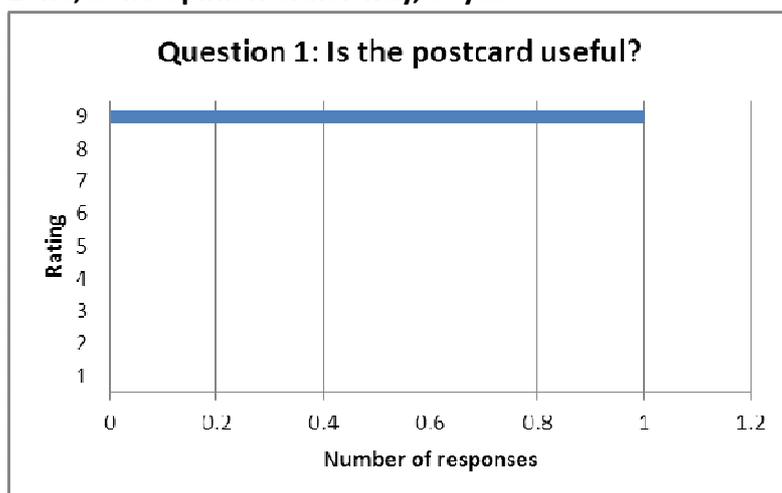
1. Female (age unknown). Was already well connected but looking for more activities. She was leaving for a holiday on a cruise, but a variety of social options were emailed out to her.
2. Female (age unknown). Responding to message left – called back but unable

- to contact despite leaving messages.
3. Female (age unknown). Responding to message left – called back but unable to contact despite leaving messages.
  4. Female (age unknown). Has just moved into the area and wanted to reconnect into a new community.
  5. Female (age unknown). This response came from seeing the poster and postcards at a medical clinic. It was from a younger person, under the age of 65years.
  6. Female (age unknown). Received the postcard while visiting a Holdfast Bay Community Centre.

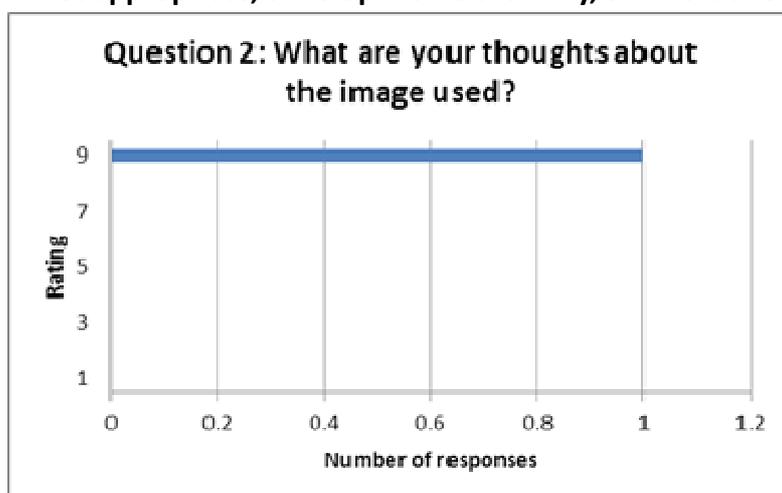
**Medical Clinic Feedback Results:**

In the Holdfast Bay region only one clinic gave feedback about the post card and poster. This could be because distribution numbers were significantly less than the distribution in the Onkaparinga region. Onkaparinga distributed the resource to 46 medical clinics, Holdfast Bay to 8. The response is in graph format below:

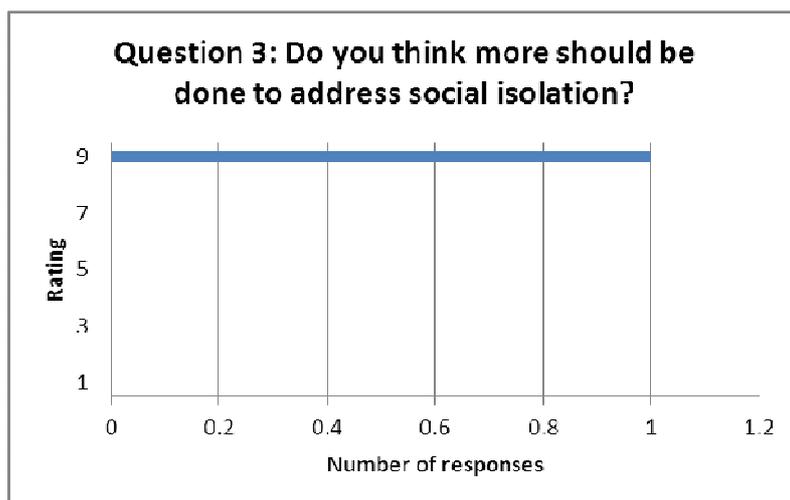
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## Discussion

### Stage 1

The workgroup explored and investigated different images because it was paramount that the illustration used would support the objective - reducing stigma attached to being socially isolated. There was much discussion and debate about the type of images that should be utilised. It was difficult to reach a consensus. People's interpretations, opinions and experiences were diverse. Finally the decision to use a more uplifting image was made – based on advice from the Steering Committee, marketing expertise and the underlying philosophy of the SSRG – innovation.

The 'thinking' behind this decision was that even when people are aged, it doesn't mean they stop wanting to encounter interesting experiences. The image was to be the trigger which would encourage people to 'turn the postcard over' and read about 'creating social connections'. The back of the postcard listed a number of different social activities and a friendly 'We look forward to hearing from you.'

Was the project a success? The results don't look impressive and perhaps mistakes were made. Arguably the target suburb was too small – there was never going to be an avalanche of responses! The image – it was a compromise – it was trying for middle ground and maybe we didn't quite 'nail it'. There was a view that the image was more likely to attract the younger old but not so, 3 of the 4 responses came from 80+ year olds.

It could be argued that our culture is not good at regarding elderly citizens in great esteem or approval. Unfortunately for some older people this view affects the way they live and their self-belief. Using such an uplifting image was risky, but the discussion it created was spectacular. The success of this project was not necessarily in the results – but in the way people began analysing their assumptions about older people.

The project followed action research principles. The results assisted with informing how the second phase would be 'rolled' out in the City of Holdfast Bay. A larger suburb will be targeted and a different image used. There was a lot of criticism of the sports car with a male and female in it. It was 'affluent', it gave the impression of partners or husband and wife and they weren't wearing seat belts! The second image chosen is still 'uplifting' but of one woman only – having fun and doing something different!

## **Stage 2**

A larger catchment area didn't influence the number of total responses greatly, but it could be argued that connecting even one person, of any age and making a difference is significant. Unfortunately we do not have specific ages of the respondents except for being aware that one respondent was under 65 years. The distribution focus was somewhat wider in the Holdfast Bay area in comparison with Onkaparinga, including community centres, churches and libraries but the number of medical clinics that received the resource was significantly less.

Being unable to contact respondents that had left their details is a concern, but not an uncommon occurrence. The phone calls were not coming directly to the social programs coordinator but instead were going through the main office reception. Did this make a difference? Did it make the process harder for the consumer? It is impossible to know, however reception staff were well briefed about the project and their role as first contact.

The lingering question is how do we distribute this more widely? The trial area in Holdfast Bay was still relatively small, even though it was larger than the Onkaparinga trial, but it could be claimed the size of the distribution was still an issue. Are there better places to have the postcards and posters displayed or is there an issue around a lack of exposure...simply, we need more! The main preventative factor which stops a wider campaign in the same vain happening is cost. To address this hurdle the group needs to think differently about next steps.

## **Summary**

Did the project achieve what it was designed to achieve? The research question inquired: 'What would it take to design a poster and postcard that reduces the stigma attached to loneliness and creates an atmosphere of acceptance by using appropriate graphics and wording to help individuals feel comfortable in contacting a service provider for assistance?' Was this addressed adequately?

Ten people connected with the graphics and/or wording of the postcards and were motivated sufficiently to contact a social program at their local council. The resource clearly had some success. Heart, sweat and tears went into choosing appropriate images and words that supported a positive portrayal of ageing which would make

people feel comfortable and confident to contact a service provider. This was a small innovative project that created an enormous amount of discussion about ageing and ageist attitudes. It created discussion about the importance of valuing and empowering older people, and thinking more broadly and creatively about what is possible to meet individual needs and create socially inclusive environments.

### **Recommendations**

The workgroup have discussed what next. What can be built on the foundations already laid? It was decided to create a photographic exhibition of older people in the south engaged in a variety of activities that will assist in changing perceptions.

‘Older people with positive attitudes about their ageing have been found to live up to 7.5 years longer than those with negative attitudes regarding ageing. Ageism hinders people from seeing the potential of ageing and anticipating their own ageing.’ (Ferguson, 2012) The purpose of the new focus is to de-stigmatise loneliness, position older people in positions of value, motivate and inspire others and capture the diversity of ageing. This is about building upon the uplifting graphics used for the postcards and taking the concept to even greater heights.

Photographs of older people engaged in activities that demonstrate connection, action and enjoyment will be utilised. The photographed older person is invited to share a quote to give meaning to what they are experiencing. The collection of photographs will showcase diversity – of culture and of actions.

The exhibition will be a digital display; can be copied and shown at a variety of public places and organisations. The exposure to positive images becomes a step in the process of changing attitudes towards older people and inspires older people to engage positively ‘in life’.

## References

Australian Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.abs.gov.au/>

City of Holdfast Bay: <http://www.holdfast.sa.gov.au/page.aspx>

City of Onkaparinga: <http://onkapingacity.com/onka/home.jsp>

Ferguson, J. 2012, Ageism: Nobody is Immune  
<http://www.ageingaustralia.com.au/ageism/>

Leane, V. 2011, **Valued Ageing: Living a Life of Value**, Restorative and Innovative Practice, St John Circle of Friends, Aged and Community Care

Stanley, M. Moyle, W. Ballantyne, A. Corlis, M. Oxlade, D. Stoll, A. Young, B. Zubrinich, S. & Gracia, N. 2010 **Alone in a Crowd: Supporting older Australians managing loneliness**

Stanley, M. 2011 **Cultivating People, Programs and Community, Making a difference for older people who are lonely**

**The core to wellbeing in older people:**

<http://w3.unisa.edu.au/researcher/issue/2007/october/story2.asp>