

One area that seems to be overlooked, or at least played down, is the growing demand to support not for profit organisations that cater for the specific needs of baby boomers who have retired or are close to retirement but want to be actively involved in community life.

The Terms of Reference acknowledge the need for the Australian Government to be *committed to an active policy of social inclusion oriented to ensuring the economic and social participation of all Australians irrespective of their circumstances*. It states that *Community (not for profit) organisations play an important role in combating social exclusion and enhancing the economic, social, cultural and environmental well being of society*. The information presented within the issues paper indicates that, in terms of addressing the objectives of the study, there is a real emphasis on supporting community organisation service providers. But there is a lack of detail about the important and necessary role of organisations that address social inclusion and social participation, specifically in regard to the over 45 year age group.

The Gold Coast Acoustic Music Club “Coast Acoustics”, became incorporated in 2008. In a little over a year, we have grown from a few people jamming in lounge rooms to over 100 members with fortnightly concerts and open mic sessions at a local markets and sports clubs. We attract audience of between 50-100 people and provide opportunities for older musos to get up and have a go.

The club has received small grants from the local council and state government. However, what we find is that our club does not fall neatly into the standard target group categories. We cater predominantly for the over 45 age group who simply enjoy getting together to play music or listen to others play live music. We are not all professional musicians so we don't qualify for most cultural development grants, and we are too old to be eligible for the broad range of assistance that seems to be available for youth groups with similar interests.

A primary objective of our club, and the main reason for its success so far, is our focus on participation and inclusion of the general public. We provide opportunities for people to get together socially to interact through a common interest in music.

Members see our club as a chance to be actively involved in something that is stimulating and enjoyable, (regardless of a person's level of musical ability). There is a growing demand for that experience amongst residents on the Gold Coast, and elsewhere I expect. Many of our members and supports are retired, semi retired or approaching retirement from their workplace but are not ready to “retire”. They need to continue to communicate with others on a meaningful level and apply their knowledge, skills and hunger to learn more things in life.

The club provides a place where members can continue to be actively involved. We encourage members to learn an instrument, join a band, record a CD, get involved in event management, join the committee and so on. This is critically important in terms of promoting “healthy ageing”. It is a way of contributing to mental and physical health.

Coast Acoustics helps to build the social capital of the community. Involving members in playing music and organising music events develops mutual support. Members have a common interest in developing skills, being creative and building networks.

Given the right support, there is potential for government to provide a range of assistance. For example, by providing training in music and associated technology and assisting us with partnering with TAFE and other institutions that have technical expertise and courses to offer. Fatigue is a common problem with small music clubs like ours. It takes continuous effort to organise and sustain music events and other opportunities. One solution might be to partner with larger community organisations, such as Volunteering Australia, who are better resourced to take on certain elements. Government agencies may be able to facilitate such arrangements.

In summary, there is a need to shift thinking slightly in regard to priorities for assisting the non profit sector. A framework for measuring the contribution of the not for profit sector will need to consider the impact on addressing the needs of baby boomers. There is a need to acknowledge the growing demand to support community organisations that cater for the ageing population and to ensure that older Australians can remain active in the community

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