



SkyLarkers
Iuala's place for people over 50.



It must have been a difficult card because no one is talking!

Annual Report

2007-2008

Funded by Department Of Communities

Skylarkers 60 and Better Program was funded to provide activities and information to people over 50 in the area covered by the postcode 4007.

Activity Groups:

- The organisation will provide a range of social, educational and physical activities which emphasise and enhance healthy ageing.
- Activity groups will be set up in direct response to the identified needs of the target group. These activities will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the activity is relevant, viable and meeting the needs of participants.
- Participants will be encouraged and supported to be proactive in the implementation of all aspects of the program. This may include skill development opportunities leading to practical involvement eg management committee roles.

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Skylarkers 60 and Better Program has provided a range of social, educational, and physical activities to the participants.

Social activities: Most of our activities have a large social component. Social Craft, BBQ's, Mahjong, Shared meals, card playing, MenTell (men's group), morning teas, parties, outings and bus trips, informal gatherings, and our drop in service all provided participants with an opportunity to socialise and get to know each other.

Educational Activities: You are never too old to learn something new. Our participants have had many opportunities to learn.

The mens group attended 'Quick and easy meals' at Inala Community House as a group. They also had some cooking sessions during the year.

Many of our target group volunteer, and all of our own volunteers are 'participant volunteers' this year. The topics for our organisational volunteer training covered: Rights & Responsibilities of Volunteers, Care for your back & get the job done safely, Recognizing depression, Dealing with difficult situations and personalities, Cross cultural volunteering, and talking generally about volunteering. Training like this assists, not only our own organisation but the wider community as well as many of our volunteers volunteer for other organisations as well as our own.



Fire display during Seniors Week

We have also had 4 team training days where specific teams got together to learn from outside expertise or from each other and to socialise. Many of our volunteers have a high standard of expertise in areas useful to the organisation and its participants. Taking advantage of available expertise to train others in the organisation provides valuable, and affordable learning experiences for participants, volunteers and staff.

Several of our volunteers and participants have attended trainings: fire training, volunteer management training, strengths based practice.

General learning opportunities have been created through our regular activities as well. Computer lessons, card making, participation in expos, guest speakers and being part of seminars and speakouts have been the more formal learning groups. However even things like craft, mahjong, card playing, exercise practice group, and our garden provide valuable opportunities to learn new things.

This year one of our participants has been attending the Older People Speak Out forums on behalf of Skylarkers. This gives an opportunity for issues for the people of Inala to be raised, and she brings back information for the participants of the program.

Physical Activities: We extended our exercise practice group to 3 days a week. This group is designed for people of all fitness and they can attend one, two or three times a week. The emphasis is on developing strength and balance to prevent falls. A fall is the thing most likely to cause an older person to lose independence and we know that older people value their independence.

Garden: The garden continues to develop. Recently a number of meals have been prepared with 50% or more of the food coming from the garden. We have eaten oranges, strawberries, passion fruit, chokos, potatoes, capicums, onions, potatoes, snow peas, lettuce, tomatoes, spinach and an array of herbs and green leafy vegetables. The program thanks Civic Solutions for the assistance they give us with the garden.

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In October and January the Forum group reviewed the activities of the program. The forum do this to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of the local community. Overall the forum was happy with what was being offered and decided to concentrate this year on the activities already in existence. The two major changes introduced because of these reviews were 1) increasing the exercise group to 3 days a week (unfortunately we also had to introduce a fee to cover the cost of equipment, which made it difficult for some participants), and 2) the introduction of a regular “bring and share meal”.

- **Participants will be encouraged and supported to be proactive in the implementation of all aspects of the program. This may include skill development opportunities leading to practical involvement eg management committee roles.**

Skylarkers 60 and Better Program is made up of small groups doing the things they want to do and taking responsibility for their own groups. This year we have a participant, taking responsibility for getting the exercise practice group organised. The teddy bears, slimmers, craft, games and mahjong groups take responsibility for their groups as a co-operative effort. Card Making have 4 tutors who, under the leadership of their team leader, take turns to teach the group. The computer lessons are run by the tutors under the leadership of their team leader. The BBQ's are run totally by volunteers, who coopt assistance from other participants. Our shared meals is gradually taking on the responsibility for the group. Volunteers meet and greet newcomers and try to make them feel welcome.

Our newsletter would not be as interesting without the input of our participants, who send in articles, create puzzles, and suggest topics for inclusion in the newsletter. Other people type, work on layout, print, fold and label the newsletter for posting.

Participants have participated in the state conference, men’s shed gathering, volunteering network meetings, the OPSO forums (see above) and the Elders Seniors week activity.

A volunteer established a new website which was launched at the beginning of the financial year. He taught staff how to maintain and make adjustments to the site. This was just as well as the volunteer moved on to use his computer skills as a government employee. (The pay there is better.)

We have had a volunteer as Workplace Safety Representative for the site.

Volunteers helped us source some computer donations and then prepared 12 of the excess computers for us to give away to other organisations in the community. I know the “new” computers made a lot of difference in our own centre and hope they produced as much value in the other organisations as well.

We have three of our participants on the Management Committee of Inala Community House. These people have great compassion and a real wish to make a difference in the community and it shows in their dedication and the work they do for the organisation.



Information provision.

- The organisation will provide information about health-related issues through various information displays, expos, forums and a regular newsletter.
- Information provided will be aimed at empowering consumers to make informed decisions regarding their health and well being.
- The program will establish links with other organisations to provide input into healthy ageing.

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Various information is available at the centre and the range changes constantly. The most sought after information has been about the services in the community available for

older people, various Home and Community Care services, walking groups, Falls prevention, Myths of Ageing, various health strategies, and medical transport options.

This year we didn't have a display at the library, but hope to do so again next year.

Nearly half of the people who ring the centre are referred to other services in the community. We don't set up activities in competition and refer where other services provide what the person is looking for. Musical Morning tea, Tai Chi at Hub Neighbourhood Centre, Art classes at the Art Gallery, health services at Inala Community Health and respite at Inala Day Respite centre are high on the list of places people are referred to.

The computer access has been used for a wide range of activities including preparing tax, searching for holiday information and making bookings, learning more about medical conditions, sourcing craft ideas and 'how to' information.

Topics in recent newsletters have included: Traditions, advocating seniors friendly technology, recognising the volunteer work in the organisation, health facts in brief, uses of the internet for older people, Funeral options, Love and alzheimers, some mentally stimulating activities, reasons to exercise, information about some health support email groups, about the office of seniors, stress and anxiety, building people's capacity to take control of their personal lives, warfrin and spinal bleeds, transport and lifestyle, maintaining a healthy bladder, exercises for the brain, relationships and ageing, good oils, suicide and what to do, computers and exercise, links between brain and body. About 600 newsletters are posted out or given to individuals every two months, although this year our budget restraints has reduced this some months. Others are accessed via email or by being downloaded from the website. We are encouraging people to use the electronic version rather than a printed version to reduce costs.

Website 29779 hits since September 2003. On the site we placed a list of all the local HACC services, information about the program, links to sites that may be useful and a current diary with our daily events. A frame on the front page is changed regularly to keep participants updated with any short notice items. We also have a sudoku puzzle and a cross word puzzle that changes daily to keep people mentally alert and active.

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It is important not to underestimate the amount knowledge and wisdom the participants of the program have. They support people when they have a crisis, provide information and refer them to other groups or services. No, it doesn't make me obsolete, but sometimes information coming this way is even more valuable and accepted than coming from the 'professional worker'. I try to make sure that our participants know about the information they need, but I also give them information I want them to know because they are out and about in the community and can share this information with others less connected in the community.

The program rarely makes formal referrals. The policy is to give people information to empower people to then take action on their own behalf.

We have promoted training run by other organisations which is aimed at empowering participants in their lives. Examples of this type of trainings are: UQDrive program for people who have retired from driving to help them stay connected socially, various trainings for carers, alzheimers association trainings about living with dementia.

Two of our men attended the Men’s shed gathering with me. Afterwards I was told by the men that our Wednesday morning MenTell group is really a ‘men’s shed’.

- **The program will establish links with other organisations to provide input into healthy ageing**

Links with other organisations included the following: Brisbane City Council, Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology, Inala Elders, Hub Neighbourhood Centre, Civic Solutions, Challenge Employment, Bridgeworks, Inala Wangarra Inc., Council of the Aged, Aged Care Queensland, Acacia 50 and Better, Inala Youth Service, Adult Learning Association, KinCare, community support program at Inala Community House and Inala community health.

We have given much written input into the regional falls prevention program for older people in the region.

Bremer Tafe gave us some obsolete computers (12). They were much better than the computers we were using in the centre so the volunteers set them up and transferred all our work over to the new computers. They then prepared the excess computers (6), and our old computers (6) for giving away to organisations who needed them. Inala Family Accommodation & Support Service Inc for use by their clients, ‘Our Place’ (Inala Community House) for use by unfunded organisations, Acacia Ridge 50 and Better program for their computer classes, South West Communities Family Day-care Playgroup for client use, Civic Employment to provide work experience to Work for the Dole Programs and many of our own clients (very old computers) benefited from their work.

Skylarkers were responsible for preparing a powerpoint showcasing the 60 and Better Programs, Older men’s groups and the Older People’s Action Programs for the state conference. It was a great learning exercise for us because we all learnt about these programs.

I am humbled by the generosity of the community, and their commitment to this exciting program – we couldn’t survive without it. The support of the management committee, CEO and my peers makes the job so much easier – thank you.

Be well everyone.

Margaret Redsell

Participation																	
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Apr	May	Jun	Total	YTD
Activities	717	1031	746	2494	1194	657	1183	3034	384	1123	789	2296	1120	715	880	2715	10539
Info Provision	358	785	379	1522	763	332	888	1983	182	782	383	1347	738	441	552	1731	6583
Other	0	6	14	20	0	0	0	0	5	0	4	9	3	0	15	18	47
Totals	1075	1822	1139	4036	1957	989	2071	5017	571	1905	1176	3652	1861	1156	1447	4464	17169