

the old folks roam



Community spirit: Dalmeny Bowling Club members Robin Gourley, Barbara Wort, Phil I'Anson, Lucy Gresty and Sue Goldsmith (and below) the view from the club



Sharing knowledge: Shelby Fitzhardinge, 17, with Dulcie Boyd, 86. Both are involved with a program promoting interaction between generations

It's one of those places where the neighbours are friendly with each other and everyone lends a hand

men. In 2020, women are expected to live until they are 85, while men will live to approximately 80. This is expected to have a major impact on health, work and housing over the next few decades.

Although we are seeing a mini baby boom, with the fertility rate in 2006 increasing to 1.81 babies per woman compared to a historic low of 1.73 in 2001, it is still below the population replacement rate of 2.1 births per woman.

A recent report by business information analysts IBISWorld found the growth in "grey power" will be good news for some industry sectors, such as pathology, nursing and complementary therapies including physiotherapy and chiropractic services.

There may also be good news for those catering to retirees, with retailers of trailers, caravans, mobile homes and marine equipment likely to prosper in the longer term, along with those developing leisure facilities, such as golf courses.

But while many older people move to such places to see out their final years, a lack of medical services often leads them to change their plans down the track.

"When you 'oldify' a community there's obviously challenges in service provisions - aged care, acute health care," Salt says.

"You find these communities are often very religious as well, the older people get, the closer they get to God.

"They will need religious ministers, which are in short supply."

As well as infrastructure, Salt believes one of the challenges will be finding ways to find meaningful engagement of people in their late 70s.

"You find a lot of these people are quite tech savvy," Salt says. "They will want to be connected with their middle-aged kids and Gen Y grandchildren through internet services.

They live there and their kids live in Sydney and their grandkids live in New York or London.

"It's almost like the first truly fractured extended family with people living longer and relocating to a lifestyle town. You can live in these places, drive your scooter around and have a wonderful time, but you don't get to see your family as much.

"A lot of people go down to the South Coast and live happily for 20 years down there, but when they have serious health problems in their 80s they come back to town," Salt says.

"It's not always a final resting place after all."

