



Helping Older Australians to Flourish – Camping for a Change

We will offer an outdoor education program in a residential camp setting to 20 culturally diverse older people who reside in the City of Melbourne. They will be randomly assigned to one of two camps, held approximately two weeks apart, for two nights. Both camps will offer a vibrant learning environment, which will stretch participants' personal resources in demanding but stimulating ways. However, one will offer activities that push participants beyond their "comfort zone", such as a high ropes course. Prior to finalising the program of activities, we will survey participants to find out whether there are any new activities or hobbies they have always wanted to try and now have the time to pursue them.

Why is this project important?

In today's society, we're suffering from "nature-deficit disorder". The components of being in nature, such as open space, fresh air, natural light, freedom from distraction and artificial stimulation, will be a change in environment for many participants and will also play a role in facilitating positive behaviour change. Participants will meet people from different social or cultural backgrounds which will provide them with the opportunity to practice new ways of relating to others. This project will allow us to test the PERMA approach to wellbeing and ways of measuring PERMA, which may be incorporated into other healthy ageing initiatives offered by the City of Melbourne, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, COTA and NARI. These include workshops for individuals who work in aged care, presentations to older people in the community or a new research direction. This is an opportunity for the City of Melbourne and the state of Victoria to show innovation and be world leaders in helping people flourish.

Key questions that the research is trying to answer

The primary aim of this project is to use the camp setting to help seniors flourish. The comfort zone model will be explored to determine the types of activities/challenges that best facilitate learning, change and personal growth. Aligned with the City of Melbourne's community grant requirements, which also mirror PERMA, the outcomes of this project are:

- To improve participants' wellbeing and to increase opportunities for physical activity;
- To improve participants' knowledge/skills through opportunities for life-long learning; and
- To enhance participants' connection to their community and/or new communities (people with shared values, interests or activities).

Funding

City of Melbourne

Lead NARI researcher

Liz Cyarto, PhD
Healthy Ageing Stream Leader, NARI