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MEDIA RELEASE

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AUSSIE SENIORS FEAR FOR FUTURE OF \$46 BILLION VOLUNTEERING INDUSTRY, NEW RESEARCH REVEALS

Red tape and lack of connection have Aussie seniors concerned for the future of volunteering when they're no longer able to give back.

Australia could be headed for a decline in volunteering that would leave a multi-billion-dollar hole in the economy according to a new study, released today by the Australian Seniors Insurance Agency, which reveals that one in five Australians aged over 50 are involved in organised volunteering within their communities.

The [Modern Australian Communities report](#) is the ninth instalment of *The Australian Seniors Series* – an ongoing national study investigating the shifting attitudes and concerns affecting Australia's over 50s. This study examines the role Australian seniors play in their community and the impact that may be felt when seniors are no longer able to donate their time.

Seniors who are involved in volunteering spend an average of 411.9 hours a year donating their time, adding up to an annual total of more than 1.4 billion hours volunteered. Based on minimum wage, this equates to a mammoth \$46.5 billion in donated time each year.

But more than two thirds (68.3%) of seniors are concerned about the future of volunteering when their generation is no longer able to give back.

Chief Marketing Officer and Australian Seniors Insurance Agency spokesperson Simon Hovell said, "Aussie seniors are already seeing a downward trend in volunteering, which is likely to continue over the next decade as the current generation of over 50s starts to wind back their volunteering commitments.

"The research shows that the majority of Australian seniors agree their generation tends to volunteer less in their local community than their parents' and grandparents' generations. In addition, nearly a third of seniors say they're less likely to volunteer in ten years' time due to their health, mobility or availability of time," Mr Hovell added.

Time and health pressures are the greatest barriers to volunteering faced by seniors (48.3% and 34.0% respectively), but a significant portion of seniors (29.1%) cite out-of-pocket expenses as their number one hurdle. This is unsurprising, considering seniors' time is usually donated free-of-charge and only one in six (16.2%) are sometimes or regularly reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, while the remaining 83.8% say they are rarely or have never been reimbursed for expenses.

The role played by the government is a hot topic amongst volunteering seniors. Of those involved in volunteering activities at least yearly, close to three in five think the government should help reduce the red tape involved in volunteering (57.9%) and provide financial support for local community organisations (56.8%).

They also think that the government could provide support by improving infrastructure to facilitate volunteering work (53.2%), creating government websites to help match people up to volunteering opportunities (48.1%) and running awareness campaigns to promote participation in volunteering (48.0%).

"While there are a number of contributing issues that seniors feel are making volunteering

increasingly difficult to get involved in, a key factor causing many seniors to worry about the future of volunteering is the simultaneous rise of political correctness and decline in community-mindedness. The majority of seniors (70.3%) agree that political correctness is making it harder to volunteer, and around the same number (73.7%) believe the death of traditional community-mindedness is prevalent in our current society,” said Mr Hovell.

According to the research, the pace of modern life is singled out by most seniors (72.8%) as the driving factor behind the decline in community connection, with seniors feeling that people nowadays lack the time to interact with one another. There is also concern amongst seniors that people are more selfish or self-centred (58.4%) and have changing moral values (47.1%) that contribute to less community-mindedness.

Community remains hugely important to Australians over 50, with nine in ten believing that local communities are the fabric of our society. To a lesser extent (73.8%), Aussie seniors also say their quality of life is reflected by the quality of their local community.

Sadly, however, four in five (80.3%) seniors feel the role of the neighbour has changed from past generations. Of these seniors, the overwhelming majority (94.2%) think neighbours have become less caring, connected or supportive. This is sustained by the fact that close to one third (27.8%) of seniors say that they have tried to connect with their neighbours without success.

This perceived death of community-mindedness may also have a knock-on effect that accelerates the decline in volunteering, as close to half (46.1%) of seniors say their sense of place in their community encourages them to volunteer or give back.

Beyond the negative economic impact, a decline in volunteering could also have serious consequences for the health of both current and future Aussie seniors. Nearly all seniors say volunteering keeps the mind working (96.9%) and improves self-esteem or self-worth (96.7%). Volunteering also helps many seniors avoid loneliness (93.0%) and improves mental health (92.5%).

You can view the full findings of the report here: <https://www.seniors.com.au/news-insights/modern-australian-communities-survey>

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About Australian Seniors Insurance Agency

Australian Seniors Insurance Agency was established in 1998 to provide cost effective insurance solutions for the mature Australian Market, a market too often ignored. Australian Seniors Insurance Agency offers car, home, travel, funeral, pet and accident insurance for Australians over 50.

About the 'Australian Seniors Series'

In order to explore the travel behaviours of senior Australians, CoreData surveyed online 1,000 typical Australians over 50 years old across the nation in January 2018. The sample collection employed soft quotas to monitor representativeness of the Australian senior adult population.

Hard quotas by state were also employed to ensure all the main states were represented with sufficiently robust samples in the research: NSW = 200, VIC = 200, QLD = 200, WA = 200, Remaining states/territories = 200.