



Diversity and the baby boomers

The Compass consultation in Australia

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At a glance

Issue

- Australia's rapidly aging population and the impact on Australian society and the economy

Objectives

- Supplement the national policy debate on Australia's aging population and provide practical solutions to government

Activities

- Compass consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders
- Internal communications campaign to foster understanding of corporate citizenship and the Compass initiative
- External communications campaign to promote the report's findings and recommendations
- Implementation of a pilot Neighborhood Contact Program to address social isolation prevalent amongst the elderly community

Results

- Release of Diversity and the Baby Boomers Report 2005
- Release of the Evaluation Report of the Neighborhood Contact Program 2006
- Novartis successfully profiled as a proactive and innovative corporate citizen
- Strengthened relationships between Novartis and government/community stakeholders
- Raised public awareness of Novartis and the aging population via successful media campaign

Australian baby boomers head toward retirement

Australia is not the only country where people are living longer. However, thanks to Novartis Australia, the government is being encouraged to consider the challenges posed by an aging population. The Compass consultation process, launched in 2005 by the national Novartis subsidiary, seeks to facilitate policy discussions, identify practical solutions and make a positive contribution to the Australian community.

As in many developed countries, aging is a key issue in Australia with potentially serious implications for both the national economy (how to socially and financially support more retired people) and society itself. In order to constructively contribute to Australia's policy development on this issue, Novartis Australia conducted a broad-ranging nationwide consultation process to identify key issues and develop various solutions. This consultation process resulted in a series of recommendations. In 2006 Novartis implemented one of these recommendations to show government how corporations can positively impact society outside of their core business activities while providing meaningful input into national policy development.

In 1890, Australian life expectancy for males was 47 years and 51 for females. By 2002, it had risen to 77 years for males and 83 for females. National fertility rates have also fallen significantly in recent decades.

In order to understand this complex issue and identify a direction for addressing the challenges it posed, Novartis Australia consulted with key consumer health organizations, researchers and government institutions. The consultation was conducted in 2005 through a series of interviews, a survey and a call for submissions.

Diversity and the Baby Boomers

Stakeholder views were collated and these formed a report entitled *Diversity and the Baby Boomers*, released in 2005, which called for action on three fronts:

1. Establish a 'neighborhood contact program' for older people in the community.
2. Develop financial literacy programs for older women.

3. Provide public education on the social and economic impact of aging, both positive and negative. The target audience for such a campaign would be Australians of all ages, including the very young.

The report also put forward policy recommendations on a number of fronts, including how to address productivity shortfalls, meet future health and age-related care costs, and develop flexible service provisions. It also looked at the potential social and economic opportunities offered by this major demographic change.

Successful launch

The report was subsequently launched by the Australian Federal Minister for Aging, The Hon. Julie Bishop, at Parliament House in Canberra alongside the late Professor Gary Andrews, Director of the Centre for Aging Studies at Flinders University.

The launch of this report provided Novartis Australia with a means to meet a range of government stakeholders in person and brief them on the outcomes of the report. Not only did the report offer valuable information to supplement the government policy debate, it also provided valuable relationship building opportunities. The report attracted significant media attention, resulting in heightened public awareness of the aging population issue.

The success of the report launch and subsequent government interest were communicated to all Novartis associates. This assisted in profiling corporate citizenship at Novartis Australia as something tangible and worthy of involvement.

Pilot program in 2006 – The Neighborhood Contact Program

In 2006, Novartis Australia focused on implementing a key recommendation from the 2005 report. This involved the development of a 'Neighborhood Contact Program' aimed at stemming the phenomena of social isolation that was identified to be prevalent amongst elderly members of the community,

During a pilot of this program, a small group of Novartis associates volunteered to partner with elderly people in need of assistance or simply companionship.

Business case

This two-year project focused on one of the largest issues facing the Australian government. In turn, it provided Novartis with a valuable opportunity to build lasting relationships with government and key decision makers.

Stronger relationships were also forged with non-governmental organizations who can now be called upon to provide support and endorsement in current and future campaigns for Novartis product reimbursement and public disease awareness campaigns.

The program also provided an opportunity to profile Novartis as an innovative and pro-active corporate citizen.

The two-year program was a genuine attempt to build and strengthen relationships between Novartis Australia and its stakeholders. It exemplifies how a company engaging with stakeholders can provide meaningful advice to government on how to address a major national policy challenge.

About Novartis Australia

Novartis Australia has business activities in pharmaceuticals, consumer health, generics (Sandoz), eye-care, and animal health. Novartis employs more than 600 people across Australia, and invests over USD 22 million annually in local research.

Contact

Rebecca Fisher-Pollard, Corporate Affairs Director,
Novartis Pharmaceuticals Australia
Email: rebecca.fisher-pollard@novartis.com

