

BONZA Achievements to 2022.

In 1997 I first became aware of the phenomenon that is Ageing Australia. There wasn't much written then about it- no Intergenerational Reports or media comment then and few with the vision to realise that we Boomers would become the problem we are today and will be in the near future.

I was drawn to an advertisement in the Gold Coast Bulletin that wanted interested people to help develop what was being called the Grey Army. As soon as my wife showed me the advertisement the vision was there in my mind and I was drawn to it like a magnet.

I had been looking for work myself and at 46 years of age was having trouble getting any replies to my applications for work vacancies even back then.

I joined the Grey Army that day and formed the first franchise at Kirra on the southern end of the Gold Coast and thus began the first of thousands of discussions with my age group about the difficulties they too were having finding work due to age discrimination. No one had any idea why this was happening and what would be the eventual repercussions.

I fell out with the Grey Army after 3 months because the Director had no idea of the big picture of what he was dealing with and he could only focus on selling franchises rather than the need to inform and assist Boomers to plan for the future.

I accepted the challenge of developing systems needed to do that, assist and support the Boomers, and took the concept to NZ initially for 3 years due to his legal threats before returning to the Gold Coast in 2001 and establishing BONZA with my good mates Keith Blake and Rob Sutherland. We decided that a web site would be the best way to inform Boomers as information is the key to change and it was quite the innovative thing to do back then before mobile phones.

Over the last 20 years we have researched, developed and presented a 'Moving Forward' Power Point to thousands of our generation at TAFE's, Expos, seminars, workplace sites and staff rooms and lobbied politicians and political parties on behalf of my generation.

BONZA has also contributed by:

1. Taking the many parts of the jig saw puzzle that is Ageing Australia (inadequate superannuation, intergenerational issues, skills shortages, training, mature age policies, over 50s experience, fitness, health, aged care, community expectations, employer attitudes and many other parts) and simplified it so everyone understands the big picture that the jigsaw parts presents.
2. Warned Boomers not to think retirement but concentrate on their time-line of life and realise they need finances for over 30 years after turning 50 so this is a new time of life with many opportunities.

3. Suggested policies that employers might embrace to retain their valued mature age employees in the face of a severe looming skill shortage developed www.bonza.com.au as an information site for our generation.
4. Dutifully edited a monthly newsletter to keep a focus on our generation with people from all parts of society on a monthly basis with the final edition sent out in August 2011 as social media took hold of the world's attention.
5. Kept the media informed of our needs through persistent media releases and spoke to many outlets over the years.
6. Communicated with Prime Ministers, Ministers of Government, State Premiers and many politicians about Boomer issues and challenges through our annual BONZA Report. (Available on the website)
7. Facilitated many workshops, expos and community groups with my Power Point presentation 'Moving Forward' that has changed the lives of thousands of Boomers.
8. Published a motivational book for Boomers- Self Propelled- Moving Forward in Life.
9. Published a Boomer story- A BONZA Life- The story of a Baby Boomer (published by Aurora House Publishing Australia) in all good book stores and on Amazon
10. Developed a Facebook page, Twitter account and regular articles on LinkedIn so we moved forward with the times.
11. Collate the needs and wants of the Baby Boomers in our annual BONZA Report to all levels of government.
12. Developed guidelines for employers to encourage them to meet the needs of mature age workers with a Mature Age Policy in their workplace (MAP). (Available on the website.)
13. Instigated National Thank a Cop Day on the 19th September as part of our community involvement.
14. Encourage Boomers to stay fit, healthy and positive about life on a daily basis on our social media sites.

All that involvement has been wonderful in that it is very gratifying to help others in this way.

As a visionary, it is easy to see what has to be done and how to do it but you have to win the support of key players who can allow you to achieve the dream and not just talk about it. I have tried to find funds but the sacrifice has been demanding both emotionally and economically.

In 2004, BONZA approached the then Premier Peter Beattie with the idea of running a music festival and he sent it to his relevant minister with his approval for funding but the committee decided on the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival was more important that year so no funding.

We bit the bullet again and in 2005, by organising and paying for a Boomer Music Festival on the Gold Coast at Burleigh with the intention of using profits to establish our first Maturelink One-Stop Shop for Over 50's. It rained heavily all day and it took me 3 years to pay off the bills.

In 2006 former Liberal Minister Joe Hockey took an interest and was keen to have a national set up of Maturelink offices for Over 50's like Medicare but with a focus on support, training, job preparation and economic and social participation. Canberra bureaucrats were not happy that I was working for Centrelink at the time so it had to be done through Centrelink was their eventual disappointing decision.

Then, in 2007 Centrelink allowed me to set up a pilot program called Maturelink but became so successful that it was closed because, as it was explained to me by management, it attracted too many Over 50's and Centrelink did not have funding to do it. So short sighted.

In 2011, my then employer, Epic Employment (I left Centrelink in protest after the Pilot program was shut down) met with Queensland state government officials at my instigation to look at a Bush Skills Project that I had developed that would allow a database of training positions and jobs for Over 50's in regional and the bush particularly for the then 400 000 grey nomads by utilising their skills to teach and assist those areas to progress and survive. It rained heavily with Cyclone Debbie and all money went to flood disaster management that year even though 2 million had been promised for the project.

Finally, in July 2011, I again bit the bullet and decided to do it myself so I formed a not-for-profit organisation called Bonza Community Services to look for funding for Maturelink and Bush Skills initially but other projects as we grew.

We quickly formed a board of management of interested community leaders and began the task of applying for funding in my after work hours.

My employer Epic surprisingly then informed me of a problem with conflict of interest as they were a community organisation which I fully understand so they too blocked my involvement. I had to cut off from BONZA Community Services as I needed the income for living.

That was the final straw for hands on projects and we switched to social media input as it was easier and gained immediate results. I have no doubt that a Maturelink office and Bush Skills are still needed but it won't be us unfortunately.

You all know the problems ahead even if you haven't got the complete picture.

Those of us who have only got on average around \$200 000 in superannuation to survive for around 30 years and who will be a part of a world overrun with ageing citizens have to be given an opportunity to better prepare.

Boomers actively participating both economically and socially in society that is.

It can be done pro-actively rather than re-actively and that is my dream.

So governments and the community know the issues concerning us, BONZA developed and released our first BONZA Report in October 2014 which can be downloaded from the home page.

It is a summary of all your ideas and ours and is upgraded each year to make the wants and needs current.

Presently, we work with anyone who has aged concerns (recent submission to the World Health Authority on Ageism in the workplace and the need for a Mature Age policy in the workplace to counter it.

We also have a daily Facebook page where we feed identified information, jokes and pictures of interest to registered Boomers.

<https://www.facebook.com/BonzaBabyboomersOfNewZealandAndAustralia/>

Boomer Time-line.

2022 -There is now a skill shortage as a workforce due to 10 thousand Boomers retiring each month..

Boomers are flooding medical centres with their ailments and families are now being encouraged to look after their parents as the Aged Care industry struggles with staffing and resource problems due to the increased numbers..

Age pension goes up to 67 in 2023 and most states and territories have debated and accepted voluntary euthanasia but may take time to finalise the process..

2025 There are only 3 taxpayers paying for the needs of every retiree instead of the 5 taxpayers that do that now.

Community/welfare groups will have trouble assisting the Boomers due to the sheer numbers wanting assistance.

Many single women are living alone or are homeless as their partners have died which will become a security nightmare as they can be exploited.

Volunteer organizations have increased as society looks to support the Boomers in finding activities for them. (This is where I hope we can form BONZA activity groups and keep our generation gainfully occupied. Community groups that can help support their area and have something to do).

2030 The last of the Boomers will have officially retired but many may work on due to the skill shortage or the need for some income as well as their pension. There is now over 30% of the population eligible for the aged pension.

The older Boomers are terminally ill. Aged people are everywhere with many with nothing to do and few to look after them. Charity groups spend heavily on assisting the Boomers.

Euthanasia is on our minds as all states should be accepting our right to die with dignity and have passed the necessary laws to do so.. Security is still a problem for the huge number of women who are living alone as their partners are gone.

Society is having trouble coping with so many aged people but the situation will improve over the next 2 decades as we die off.

2060 Many countries around the world have significant drops (in the millions) of population as the BOOMER'S DIE and zero population growth does not allow for replacements in some countries.

Finally, I have to say that it is my observation and opinion that the majority of Baby Boomers today in 2022, seem to be informed/educated now about what they have to do daily for health, fitness, finance and engagement in society. BONZA's efforts have not been in vain because, in all honesty, there was a general ignorance in the issue at the end of last century when we took an interest in the issue when few did.

This will not be the end of our story as we will continue to inform and entertain 'my generation' but we feel confident that there is no need for annual BONZA Report any more so unless there are dramatic changes to our lifestyle then we are 'OK BOOMERS'.

Ageism is being addressed by many, age care is getting the attention it needs, our finances are mostly secure, homelessness is becoming a priority and governments are aware that we are watching closely when they make decisions that adversely effect seniors and mature age.

Thank you for your time in reading this,
Brian Murphy
Advocate/Editor