



Sea Change Retirement Does it live up to expectations?

Research conducted in Mandurah WA
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the project set out to enhance opportunities for retirees to find meaningful part-time work, but we found

- very few retirees were at all interested in returning to *work*, although they happily volunteer – they didn't even want to talk about working again;
- the few people who un-retire were 'tapped on the shoulder' for a particular job by someone who knew them

what we think is going on: the sea change retirees are on holiday

expectation: an extended holiday

a holiday mindset:

- Mandurah promotes itself as a relaxed holiday destination; boasts of its waterways for boating, fishing, swimming... its arts and festival culture;
- the image is confirmed: presence of tourists, recreational activities, and lots of retirees and retirement villages;

reinforced by a retirement mindset:

- chronological age counts: I shouldn't be working after reaching what they believe is retirement age;
- this is a time to relax and just please myself – recreation and rest 'owed' to me after a lifetime of work

... but holidays end

we found example after example of people who had retired to Mandurah, attracted by the location and its active holiday lifestyle, leaving again after 10, 15 years because as they aged:

- they wanted to be nearer to family support and access to services, especially medical and transport services;
- the physical activity promoted by a fun-filled seaside holiday no longer matched their sense of self;
- and perhaps most of all: they wanted to return to a place where they felt a sense of connection, of belonging.

what next to learn and do?

- more systematically investigate the 'end of the holiday' hypothesis;
- track people's processes of transition post 'sea-change';
- how do (and can) local councils shape expectations of retirement and ageing over the whole of the second half of life? what other influences shape expectations of the second half of life?