

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO POLICY IMPLICATIONS  
OF AN AGEING COMMUNITY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 18 JUNE 2014**

**Members**

**Ms M.M. Quirk (Chair)  
Mr I.M. Britza (Deputy Chair)  
Mr C.D. Hatton  
Mr M.P. Murray  
Dr A.D. Buti**

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**Hearing commenced at 10.25 am****Mrs LEANNE NOVATSCOU****Project Manager, Seniors Exergaming WA, Seniors Recreation Council of WA Inc, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** On behalf of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and appearance before us today, especially at short notice, so thank you very much. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiry into policy implications of an ageing community. I think you have seen the terms of reference.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, I have.

**The CHAIR:** Firstly, I will introduce myself. I am Margaret Quirk; I am the Chair; I am the member for Girrawheen. On my left, is Mr Chris Hatton, the member for Balcatta. On his left is Mr Mick Murray, the member for Collie–Preston, and on my right is Dr Tony Buti, the member for Armadale. We are a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament. This hearing is a formal procedure of the Parliament, which commands the same respect given to proceedings of the house itself. So even though we are not asking you to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament—do not be too concerned about that. This is a public hearing and Hansard will make a transcript of the proceedings. If you refer to any document, if you could refer to its full title so that Hansard can record it properly. Have you filled in a “Details of Witness” form?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** You understand that there were notes on the bottom of the form about giving evidence to the committee?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** You also read the information for witnesses briefing sheet?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today’s hearing?

**Mrs Novatscou:** No.

**The CHAIR:** All right. We have got some questions to ask you today, but before we do that, would you like to make an opening statement, maybe explain the role of the Seniors Recreation Council?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Well, I cannot go too much into what they do because I work on the fringes of the Seniors Recreation Council, but they basically provide a service. They are groundbreaking in a lot of what they do; the research behind programs and getting them out to the public so that they can experience everything firsthand. The exergaming is one of those programs that they have helped launch, basically. Yes, getting out there, so doing a lot of good work in the community, basically, with the seniors.

**The CHAIR:** What ages do you work with?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Primarily 55-plus but they have started branching out a bit younger, because what they are finding is that there is a gap of people that are getting to retirement age, and they are finding that they actually are not aware of what is available to them. So they are actually starting to go back a bit younger in age to try to make people more aware as they are coming into retirement of what is available for them out there in the community.

**The CHAIR:** What about at the other end, who are the oldest clients you have got?

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**Mrs Novatscou:** I would say, we have had a 100-year-old, yes; so, any age group —

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** There is still hope for us!

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, there is, there is always hope!

**The CHAIR:** We are looking at something called “The Seniors Strategic Planning Framework”, which aims for a community in which all Western Australians age well in communities in which they matter, belong and contribute. Have you got any thoughts on that?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, I think a lot of them feel like that, but there are a lot out there that feel like they are not included; they have isolated themselves and that is a bit frightening to see when you are out there. It is very difficult to get them out of their homes sometimes and participating in things. There are wonderful services out there, but actually getting them to come out is still the issue, I feel from what I have seen. There are the ones that will always come, they will try anything, they will participate in everything and they enjoy life to the fullest; but there are still a lot out there that are sitting in their homes and not feeling part of a community, I would say.

**The CHAIR:** We will get you shortly to explain to us about tech-savvy seniors and exergaming.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** But, perhaps, you can give us your impressions as to how many seniors would be computer literate or not be challenged by technology, from your experience.

[10.30 am]

**Mrs Novatscou:** I think there is only a small percentage that are comfortable with it, still, and they would probably be the more recent retirees that have had to grow in their jobs, but as for the older ones—and there is still a lot missed that are younger; my mum is one of them, she is frightened of technology. They think they are going to break things, so I still feel there is quite a high percentage out there that do not have any technical confidence, I suppose, even with DVD players. We had a training day yesterday, for example, and we teach them how to plug in the Xbox to the TV and set it up from scratch so they know how it all works. The lady goes, “Oh, I can’t do that, my husband always uses the remote control”, so she has not even had any experience of using a remote control for her TV or the DVD player in the home. I think there is still quite a high percentage out there that do not experience technology as it is today.

**The CHAIR:** Can you tell us what you mean by the term “tech-savvy seniors”?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Tech Savvy Seniors is actually another program—my exergaming program started under Tech Savvy Seniors and it has branched out from there—but basically it is teaching them everything they need to know. Mine is exergaming; we have got a computer program running through Seniors Recreation Council as well. We teach them how to use their telephones, how to use Facebook safely—anything they want to know. Some of them were taught how to use Skype so that they can talk with their children who live overseas now or grandchildren. Everything—iPads, you name it—we are sort of getting things out there to teach them.

**The CHAIR:** So is that something that Mabel Smith, or whoever, living in the burbs can just contact the Seniors Recreation Council to enrol in?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes. Unfortunately, we are fully booked, though, for the whole year; it is so popular.

**The CHAIR:** So there is a big demand.

**Mrs Novatscou:** There is a big demand for it and there is a big demand for the right program. Martin, who presents the computer side and the Facebook side of things for us, he is really big on the safety side—keeping them safe in technology. A few of the programs out there do not address the safety issues of keeping themselves safe on the internet and, you know, they get an email in and they go, “Oh!”, and open it up.

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**The CHAIR:** I have got a new boyfriend in Nigeria I did not know about!

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes—exactly! They are faced with that and they do fall for it, which is really sad. But he actually teaches in his course about all that safety as well, which is a really important aspect of it. There is a lot out there for seniors to go and learn, but I think putting some guidelines in place about what they should be taught would be a good thing. I am not sure if that is out there, personally, but I know Martin from the Seniors Recreation Council is very particular that they know how to keep themselves safe while using the technology. It is very important.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** What exactly does exergaming mean?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Exergaming is using an Xbox Kinect console; it is using modern technology and combining exercise with the console, basically.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** So it is not playing games?

**Mrs Novatscou:** It is, but it is all full-body movement games.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Can you describe that a little bit?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes. Basically, what we do is we have developed a resource manual and training so we can teach the people that are going to be running the program. We keep updating the program all the time and sending it out to them. We have started with bowling with the seniors because we face an uphill battle with technology, because straightaway they say, “I don’t do technology.” Then the second battle we face is exercising because they do not exercise anymore so —

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Sorry—is it interactive, then?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Very interactive, yes; they cannot sit there with a remote control. It does not have a remote control; it is completely motion-sensored. So every movement they make is reflected on the screen in front of them as to what they are doing.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** So it is about mobility —

**The CHAIR:** So, it is sort of Wii Fit stuff.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, similar but better; it is way better than the Wii Fit.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** If there is somebody in a wheelchair who is incapacitated, which happens a lot, is there facility just for using hands?

**Mrs Novatscou:** There is not a lot of facility at the moment, but yes, there are a lot of games on there that they can still play once we get them in there. We have been working hard on the seated part and the people with disabilities part. We have been presenting a lot with the Stroke Foundation, to their groups and their members, this year, and it has proved really popular with stroke survivors; they are loving it. It just takes away that horrible rehab word that becomes quite boring to them. They can do this with their family, friends, carers and all enjoy it and, yes, I think it helps them.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** I might be in contact; we have got a mum who is coming out of rehab in a couple of days who might need it.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Have you?

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Yes, thank you.

**Mrs Novatscou:** She would love it!

**The CHAIR:** I think the Seniors Recreation Council is based down at Leederville Oval there.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** But you presumably go out to —

**Mrs Novatscou:** Very mobile—everywhere.

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to maybe provide us a list of where you do courses?

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**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, the shires that we have gone through —

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mrs Novatscou:** — and the day facilities; yes, I can provide that for you. I have not got anything on me today.

**The CHAIR:** That is fine.

**Mrs Novatscou:** But I can certainly get something to you with all —

**The CHAIR:** Niamh or Sarah will be in touch to get some information.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Obviously, because it is so popular, one of our recommendations will be about whether enough resources are given to this kind of thing. I do not know if you can address your mind now or whether you want to talk to your colleagues about what level of resources you think is appropriate to wind out these activities more broadly. I mean, the obvious thing is—for example, Mick here is from Collie—are the regional areas missing out?

**Mrs Novatscou:** We are in Wagin at the moment, believe it or not, so we have got out to Wagin already.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I think Wagin's streets are paved with gold!

**Mrs Novatscou:** The financial side of it and resource side of it is something that I would need to speak with Mr Rogers about who is —

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mrs Novatscou:** In regards to that, there is definitely a need for more resources. I, myself, am only employed 15 hours a week to roll the project out, and I run my own business. So, I am working really long hours trying to keep up with it all because the demand is massive and we simply do not have the resources at the moment to be able to keep up with it. We are pretty much, as I said, fully booked for the whole year. I try and squeeze in whenever I have got a free moment to get out and meet new people and present it to them on activity days. We have also got quite a few volunteers, but basically there is only myself and 15 hours a week, and Martin, five hours a week, that are paid to get this project off the ground with the funding we have got.

**The CHAIR:** So you say in the other time you work another job. Does that have anything to do with this?

**Mrs Novatscou:** It is related; I am a personal trainer. I run my own personal training business, so I am passionate about getting people moving. I think there is something for everyone out there and we need to tackle it from a lot of different ways. There is not one shoe fits all; there never will be. You know, this project will only suit certain people, but I am very passionate about attacking it from every different angle. There has got to be something out there for everybody that they can enjoy and do.

**The CHAIR:** Now are there specific programs in this exergaming or do you just adapt already available commercial products?

**Mrs Novatscou:** The commercial products are already there, and we just help them get it up and started. What we found when we did our first year, because there was a lot of research based in our first year, is that a lot of these centres that we go into are very time-poor. They do not have time to look into things that can be done. So, when we come with something that is already there for them and they just need a day's training, and then they are up and running it within their centres, it makes it a lot easier for them.

**The CHAIR:** I do not know anything about these sorts of games at all.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, that is all right.

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**The CHAIR:** So, you are not doing—I do not know; what is that game called—the auto one? You are not doing something like —

**Mrs Novatscou:** The auto car theft or whatever it is —

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mrs Novatscou:** No.

**The CHAIR:** So you are not doing something like that?

**Mrs Novatscou:** No.

**The CHAIR:** It is something that is specifically targeted for seniors or it says, “This is for people who have got limited mobility with their legs, but will exercise their arms and shoulders”; is it that sort of thing?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Look, what it is is the games are already there. We have got bowling, table tennis, skiing, whitewater rafting. It sounds hard but it is actually not because you are just standing safely and moving and activating the screen, basically. So it is really low-impact gentle exercise. It can be taken up to high impact. We have some of our seniors boxing with it. The whitewater rafting is something to be seen to be believed when the seniors do it! I had a group the other day tell me that I needed Specsavers because I was in the wrong place if I thought they were going to get up and do it. But they got up and did it, and loved it. It looks harder than what it is, but once you get up and actually participate in it, it is a lot of fun. The barriers drop; they just want to have a go and, yes, everything just improves as they go on.

**The CHAIR:** All right, are you able to give us a quick demo?

**Mrs Novatscou:** I sure can, I have got the Xbox here.

[10.40 am]

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Before you do, what is the cost?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Our services from the Seniors Recreation Council are all funded, so there is no cost to anybody else, except if they want to go ahead with the program, and we then provide the training day and the Xbox and the three games for \$250. Most of the time they only have a TV. It is very cheap and accessible to a lot of people in one location. If we take it into the Tom Dadour Community Centre in Subiaco, I think they have maybe 80 clients who come through in the week; every one of those 80 clients has access to a \$250 machine basically and games and a program that is easy to implement and enjoyable for their carers and everyone around them.

**The CHAIR:** We might let you set up.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Do we have to do it?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Would you like to? You will not be able to resist once I put it in.

[Videogame played.]

**Mrs Novatscou:** This is a Kinect sensor. This is what senses the body movement with all the activities. Today I have just put in bowling. What we start with all the time with our seniors is a bowling program because it is something that a lot of them are familiar with and feel very comfortable with doing, so that takes the fear away of the exercise side of things and allows them to concentrate on the technology basically. It is very easy to use. Basically, I raise my hand to start the system. Everything is run by hand actions and the sensor. That is me standing in the square. It tells you on the screen what you need to do. Stand as far back as you can and raise your hand to your head. It senses me. Now it allows me to sign into the system with hand actions.

**The CHAIR:** It is a bit like tai chi.

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**Mrs Novatscou:** I should have brought my other system with me. My machine is set up to name it after the Spice Girls. We call them Scary Senior and Sporty Senior and Posh Senior, which they like. They like doing all of this as well. They can create their own avatars, their own person, and record everything that they do if it is an individual. You can play with up to 10 people in the bowling. We have simply set it up as a four-player game. They rotate and take turns. It is very light, this first part of the program. As the people who have instigated the program into their centres get more confident with the technology and they know what their clients are capable of, they can increase the activity over the whole time. It gives you a tutorial on how to do it as well, but we will skip through that today.

You can play left or right-handed; it caters for everybody. To pick up a ball, you just take your left hand out and hold it steady for a few seconds until the circle is complete around the icon on the screen and then you have your ball in your hand and you are ready to bowl. To bowl, you are just swinging straight forward. If you are swinging across the body, that is where the ball will go. If they are going outward, that is where the ball will go. It is helping them to realign themselves as well. They can simply stand still and do it and they can also stand with a chair beside them, which we have had to do with a few who have balance issues. They will start with a chair and simply step forward and release the ball. As they get more confident and start to feel better and regain a bit of their balance, the chair goes. We have had people in Zimmer frames come and say they cannot play and just watch the game. Without fail, within about five or 10 minutes, they are up there playing. In some ways, it takes their mind off everything because they are so willing to compete and play.

I am raising my hand out to the side. We have the lights down the centre of the alley to line up and then it is just bowling down. Would anyone like to have a turn?

**The CHAIR:** I will have a go. What do I need to do?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Stand about here. Take your hand out to the side to pick up the ball and then just line it up with those lights on the centre. Bring your hand down. That looks good. It is something that really does get you hooked.

[Videogame played.]

[10.50 am]

**Mrs Novatscou:** When we play golf with our clients, that is the funniest, because they can do a happy dance at the end, and it imitates them. It is really good fun for them. The best thing I have seen was working with stroke survivors recently. They just get so much out of it, and so do the carers. There are lots of games where you are stepping to the side and reaching out, plugging holes.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Do they promote this being done when they are by themselves in their own houses?

**Mrs Novatscou:** I have actually sold probably just as many to individuals for their own homes as I have for the program.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** So they can go and do it by themselves.

**The CHAIR:** Before we ask you some more questions, is there anything else you think we need to look at before we turn this off?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Would you like to have a look at the whitewater rafting?

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** I have not brought my bathers!

**Mrs Novatscou:** That is all right; they actually had me testing whether you could fall out of the raft. This is the same group that suggested I was in the wrong place and needed my Specsavers! They asked me, "Can you fall out of the raft?" and I said, "I don't know. I haven't actually tried to fall out of the raft," so they gave me all these ideas on how I could fall out and, carried away in the moment, they suggested that I try falling over and rolling out of it, which I proceeded to do, and no,

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you cannot fall out of the raft! You cannot get wet! They are quite cheeky, some of these seniors, when you get them up and going. The whitewater rafting one is very popular with them, as well. It is visually very stimulating and they have to react quite quickly. We always say to them, "It doesn't matter what you crash through or what you do or anything like that; it's simply about getting up and giving yourself that bit of a challenge every day and getting out of your comfort zone."

**The CHAIR:** They are constantly reminded, physically, what their limitations are, so this is really good.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, and they can do it in the privacy of their own home. Our program has primarily been about social inclusion and making it fun. Basically, when we get together there is a bit of a morning tea and a couple of hours of playing. They drink their coffee and chat with their friends. Actually, I do not think I have ever been to a session without everyone having a go.

**The CHAIR:** What is the optimum sized group?

**Mrs Novatscou:** I think about six; you get a good turn, but I have worked in groups with one machine where there has been 15, and they still have a really good time. Because we are there for a couple of hours they get 10 or 15 minutes each of getting up and down and having a go. We are finding that that part is quite important to a lot of them; they live on their own, so to come out is quite important. Even if they are in a retirement village, they will come out into the community area in the village and do this program. Hale House, which is part of Amana Living, they have been working with me for nearly three years on this. My volunteers are all 70-plus and they challenge their grandchildren, so it is intergenerational as well. It is starting to bridge the gap.

**The CHAIR:** These are not specifically tailored towards seniors?

**Mrs Novatscou:** No, but they all do what they need. Xbox, unfortunately, does not tailor it, but there is a lot of research being done in the UK.

**The CHAIR:** We just have a few more questions. Thanks for that; we are all exhausted!

**Mrs Novatscou:** I am exhausted!

**The CHAIR:** I think you mentioned about the physical limitations that a lot of seniors have; for example, they come to you with a Zimmer frame. Have you any views about the ways in which seniors are treated and their physical incapacities that might be counterproductive?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes. I have only been in the senior area for the last three years, but speaking to various people, someone recently was telling me that our seniors can go out and buy a walking aid or a Zimmer frame themselves; they are not even fitted properly for them anymore. I think once upon a time it had to almost be prescribed; that is what I have been told recently, but it seems like nowadays they can just go out and get one for themselves. Their families are probably thinking, "If they've got that, I feel a bit safer. They're at home and they've got support when they're moving through the house." I think that is getting a bit out of hand, especially when I see them sitting and saying that they cannot do something, and then they actually can, so it almost becomes a bit of a mindset, I think, that they have become reliant on something as opposed to doing something about keeping their mobility and balance. It has just been like, "Here, here's a Zimmer frame, or a stick whatever it might be, and you're fine now," as opposed to, "Well, you might need this for a little while, but we need to work on various aspects to help with your range of movement or your balance," which are two big issues to me, because it certainly limits what they can do and we want to help prevent falls because generally speaking, once they have had a fall, they do not recover well. There are a lot of views about equipment. I also think that some of the centres I have been into, some of the carers that work in those facilities are really good. They are there for them, but they are not overprotective of them, and I think that is good because you can see those ones are still getting up and about and doing things. Then you will go into another facility and they are always over-caring, if that makes sense.

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[11.00 am]

**The CHAIR:** A bit more cautious, and that comes through to the patient?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes. Look, you would have to be really unlucky, and no-one would ever want to see anyone fall under their care when they are in these facilities, but it is almost just like they are little bit too over-protective. I guess everyone is scared of being sued nowadays. I guess there is a lot of fear involved when you are looking after somebody else's loved ones. But I think in that respect they take away the ability for that person to just stay within what they feel capable of; it is almost like, "Oh, just sit down", or, "I'll hold you", or, "I'll do this", as opposed to letting them keep getting up and doing what they can for themselves and encouraging them to do what they can for themselves. There are almost two extremes out there. They all do wonderful work and they are beautiful with their clients, but that is a vast difference to me that probably really does need addressing, and maybe instead of pills being handed out, a bit of exercise could be prescribed. No-one probably really knows all the answers, but I feel quite strongly about, particularly, the balance issues. I train the younger age group—my age group and younger—and I always talk to them about maintaining their balance. If I see a client is really lacking balance, I say to them, "Okay, we're working on that now; that is the most important thing to regain because you don't want that to get worse, and it will as you age." So maybe it needs to be addressed at a younger age, as opposed to waiting until we get to our twilight years and have a bit more time.

**The CHAIR:** You have obviously had a lot of positive feedback with that program.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** What is the most surprising thing anyone has said to you?

**Mrs Novatscou:** There have been a number of surprising things, actually. I think working with the stroke survivors has been absolutely amazing, because they have lost their confidence to do things. Silver Chain are running this program in two of their facilities in Fremantle, and they had a Mr Passalacqua, his name is, and he was very scared to give anything a go. He joined up and did the bowling on the Xbox, and he has now joined the local lawn bowls club and is playing because he, all of a sudden—whatever it was—realised he could actually get back out and do things still.

**The CHAIR:** That is fantastic.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes. There have been so many lovely stories. This gentleman, young Ron—I think he is 97—is at Wanneroo Adult Day Centre.

**The CHAIR:** I think we have a picture of him.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, he is gorgeous. He gets up and just believes in a bit of light activity every day still, and will give it a go.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Are there any local councils that have taken the program on, by any chance?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, quite a few of shires, through their adult day centres, have taken it on. There are a lot that still are not doing it.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** But there are some?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, there are a lot that are doing it, too. The ones we have got out to, I think 95 per cent have joined up. Once we have gone out and shown them what it can do, they have —

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** How much does it cost to set this up?

**Mrs Novatscou:** At the moment the only charge we charge anyone is the cost of the Xbox, which we managed to source bulk and we just provide it at the cost we paid for it.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** What is that?

**Mrs Novatscou:** It is \$250. For \$250, to get it into a community centre or a retirement village, you are allowing access for a lot of people for very minimum outlay. I suppose where the expense

comes in is that they do like company; they do like encouragement. They like people to come out and show them how to do these things and have a visitor. The expense comes into it down the track, I guess, to get it really rolled out by having—maybe not every week—people going out there. A lot of them we train and they take it on and run it themselves. But it is like anything: you will always need somebody to keep encouraging it and to keep it running and to keep it going forward. Things fall by the wayside a lot, I think, because there is no-one just going in and saying, “How are you going with it? Do you need a hand? I’ll come out and visit you this week”, which is what I basically do. For the ones that are not related into a shire, I will just pop in and see them, have a cup of tea, play a few games, show them something different and keep the ball rolling, basically, so they keep going.

**The CHAIR:** If you had three wishes, what would you ask the fairy godmother in terms of ageing communities?

**Mrs Novatscou:** As in relation to my program?

**The CHAIR:** Just anything you have come across in the course of your work?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Anything? In relation to the program, I would love some more staff to get it out there, which of course means funding. Funding is probably a big thing for us at the moment; we have been funded for three years now, which has been wonderful, but it runs out at the end of this year and we are out there looking now. I am sure we will get it; actually, I would be very surprised if it did not get funding and we would not continue. For me, I am so passionate about it, I would keep rolling with what I have out there already anyway, and we would find some way, in the Seniors Recreation Council, 100 per cent to keep it going.

**The CHAIR:** Are you using clients who have dementia? How does it go with them?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes. They are beautiful to work with, too, because every time they get up it is new. There is joy on their faces every time they get up. The bonus to that is, again, that as time goes on they start remembering how to do it. It switches on the neural pathways—it just works. We have not had millions of dollars of research put into it or anything like that, but we have been out there just instigating, and it works. Everywhere I go you see them coming out and playing. Mental illness? I have had firsthand experience with a couple of clients who did not want to interact with other people, but they could come and sit and watch and play. One of the ladies suffers from bipolar; she actually now runs the program at her centre. I do not know what it is about it, it just works; it breaks down the barriers. If they do not want to talk, they do not have to; they can just stare at the screen. It is great. I love it. I love going out and watching them all. A lot of the time, when I walk in they are seated and quiet; by the time I leave, they are smiling, they are energetic, they are vibrant, they are joining in. It is a big turnaround in an hour’s session, basically.

**The CHAIR:** Any other questions?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Regional centres: is there anything comparable to your business in, say, Bunbury or Collie?

**Mrs Novatscou:** The senior recreation camps in particular, are you talking about? Because they have regional branches, yes.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** With this program?

**Mrs Novatscou:** Not with this program; we simply do not have the staff to get it out there, basically, to everybody at the moment, so we have had to concentrate on metropolitan. We have taken it out to Wagin. Is Mandurah classed as regional still or not?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** No—it depends who you speak to!

**Mrs Novatscou:** We were out there yesterday and I ran a training session for 20 individuals. Some of them were just individual seniors because they purchased a machine and they wanted to know

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how to set it all up, so we ran that yesterday. There were three organisations from Mandurah, and I think one from Pingelly came, so they are all trained up and we will get it out into there. We try to meet it where we can, but time restraints are holding us back from really going where we can go with it. We just do not have enough manpower at the moment to take it out much bigger than what we are.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** How age-friendly or senior-friendly, in your view, do you think Western Australia is? It is a big question.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes, it is a big question. I think there is a lot out there that is good. I have been really impressed with what is available to seniors. I think the downside is that a lot of them do not know what is out there for them, so I think that is an area that probably needs to be addressed. I was very impressed with what is out there; I had no idea until I started working in the area. I also think, though, that there are some gaps with getting it out there, I suppose; there are lots of great ideas and lots of great people, but for some reason there is not enough time, maybe—people are time-poor in getting it out there. I am not 100 per cent sure where you would go with that or how you would address it, but I think it is just getting the information out to people. As I said, until I did this, I had no idea. I have been able to recommend lots of stuff to my mum now and my pop to go and do since working in the area. That has been good for my family, but more people need to know, obviously.

**The CHAIR:** Xbox should employ you, frankly.

**Mrs Novatscou:** We are trying that, too.

**The CHAIR:** That is terrific. So you will give us some information on where you go—that was what we required, I think, from you.

**Mrs Novatscou:** Yes; the centres or the facilities that are already involved.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much for giving your evidence today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections, and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence.

**Hearing concluded at 11.11 am**

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