



Age is no barrier to volunteering, which can include a huge range of activities such as hands-on tasks like tree planting or tending gardens. Picture: iStock

## Volunteering a path to combat loneliness

LONELINESS is a growing issue within our community.

Whether it's due to the move to a more digital world, the effects of Covid or other changes within society, the increasing level of loneliness is of serious concern.

Do you ever find yourself in a crowd of people but still feel incredibly lonely?

One way to combat loneliness is to undertake a meaningful activity, like volunteering.

It's a great way to meet new people, develop new skills and generally give you a sense of purpose. It's also good for your mind and body.

The beauty of volunteering is its versatility. It could involve physical work, assisting with conservation activities like tree planting or tending gardens.

You could volunteer to drive or accompany people to their appointments, to the shops or on social outings.

Less physical roles might see you playing a board game with someone, practising language skills with new immigrants, or even proof-reading publications.

You could also choose to volunteer for a cause you care about, helping make the world a better place.

Volunteering can help advance your career and provide a soft entry into an organisation, allowing you the opportunity to showcase your skills while giving you an



MEL OTTAWAY

insight into a workplace. Recruiters view volunteering highly when considering potential candidates for roles.

It's also a great way to add to your skill set and learn new things.

For example, to become a Lifeline Crisis Supporter, you need to undertake training which equips volunteers with the necessary skills to respond to help-seekers.

Not only does giving back through volunteering have a significant impact on your community, but it can also benefit your mental wellbeing.

The simple act of doing something for others can lead to greater happiness in your life. Age is no barrier to volunteering.

If you are interested, reach out to an organisation to find out what opportunities they have available.

Volunteering SA can also assist to "match" you with areas of interest.

Don't underestimate the benefits of volunteering and the positive impact it can have, for yourself and for others.

**Mel Ottaway is Uniting Communities' executive manager, services for older people**



## Beard bans and balancing

I'VE just read the article on the office work environment from days past ("Working 9 to 5..." Boomer, March 14).

I started my working life in 1974 at an insurance broker office in North Tce. Yes, how times have changed and I wanted to share some of my memories with fellow readers.

The company didn't allow the men to wear beards so one of my departmental managers who had a full face of hair avoided this situation by shaving approximately a 25mm/one inch gap from the underneath of his bottom lip to underneath his chin.

Problem solved, as it couldn't be classed as a "full" beard.

We had what was called a computation department where approximately six to eight ladies would spend all day on mechanical adding

### BOOMER LETTERS EXTRA

machines tallying different figures without decimal points.

I can still hear the noise the machines made as we approached the room from the corridor.

Part of my duties was to calculate premiums and apply percentages for stamp duty and fire levies and so on which we did manually.

One of the first major changes in technology was when one of my workmates (circa 1977) brought a Sharp pocket calculator into the office which had a percentage button, so now we just pressed

a button for percentages. Back then we thought that was a game-changer.

Another improvement with regard to record-keeping was the introduction of microfiche which was able to put what appeared to be endless paper documents on to a plate which was then placed on a viewer so information could then be read. This was a major record-keeping space-saver as each department had a huge safe with shelves and shelves of folders.

As the article suggested, they were more relaxed times and we all worked, drank and partied together.

**Justin Carmody  
Salisbury Downs**

### Incidental learning

OLD-SCHOOL and homegrown fun highlighted

(Boomer, March 21) reminded me that as primary schools did not have laboratories, science experience was limited, although one year at mine, wheat grains were scattered on damp cotton wool on a classroom windowsill so that we could see them sprout. Yes, we really did watch grass grow.

Fun "incidental learning" was provided by making paper planes which whizzed around behind a teacher's back.

As I lived near Glenelg golf course, my siblings and I were able to observe part of the life cycle of a frog by collecting frogspawn – a frothy mass of fertilised eggs in a jelly, from the pool in a bunker – which we took home with its pond water in a jar; then waited day by day for the little wrigglers, those apostrophe-shaped tadpoles, to emerge.

Regular Boomer columnist Carole Whitelock is on leave this week.

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