

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Project ID: 38678

Project title: Evaluation of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS)

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You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

Why were you invited for this research?

You are invited to participate in this project because you are an older person (aged 65+), who receives government-subsidised residential aged care or Home Care Packages or are approved or on the National Priority Scheme for residential or home care packages. We believe that you have important insights that will allow us to better understand the well-being and social activities of older Australians.

We are looking for participants who would be willing to participate in a research project that will last until December 2025. Participation will involve completing a survey three times: one in 2023/early 2024, one in late 2024, and one in 2025. We hope you can participate in the three rounds, as we would like to follow your experiences over the next three years.

What does the research involve?

Participation involves an online survey to provide information on the well-being and social activities of older Australians. It will take around 25 minutes to complete.

At the end of the survey, we will ask for consent to link your survey responses to information collected by Services Australia about healthcare access (for example, number of GP visits). We ask for this information because we are interested in whether improving well-being and social activities of older Australians may have benefits on physical health and health care access. You do not have to agree to this, and it will not affect your participation in our study.

The online survey can be self-administered, which means that it can be answered independently by you, using a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone connected to the Internet. Or it can be administered by a Monash researcher in-person or via the telephone, which means that a researcher will ask you the questions included in the survey. You can decide which of these options works best for you.

This study is part of an evaluation of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS), being conducted by Monash researchers. The ACVVS program involves volunteers visiting older people living in residential care homes or in the community. Whether you are currently involved with the ACVVS program or not, we highly value your participation in our survey. Your involvement will help improve our understanding of ageing in Australia and of the potential benefits of ACVVS over time.

Source of funding

This evaluation is funded by the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care, but it is being conducted by researchers from Monash University. The researchers have no conflict of interest to declare. The funder's interests are in understanding how we can improve the well-being of older Australians.

Participant incentives

As a small token of appreciation for your time, you can enter a raffle of three gift cards of \$100 each per survey year. Vouchers will be provided by Prezzy (<http://www.prezzy.com.au/>) and can be converted to a retailer of your choice. Prezzy partners with over 150 retailers, including Coles Myer and Woolworths. For auditing purposes, we will need to send a list with the names of participants who received gift cards to our school's financial department. This list will be kept separately from the data and only be accessed by the researchers and by Monash University financial services.

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

To give your consent, you need to read this statement and click the button 'I consent' at the start of the online survey. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you will not be identified in any of the findings, reports or publications arising from the evaluation.

You may withdraw (quit) from the survey at any stage and without any consequences. This includes leaving the survey after it has started, or deciding after the event that you no longer want to be included. To withdraw while completing the survey, simply ask the researcher administering the survey to exit it or exit the survey directly without clicking on the final 'submit' button. If you do so, any responses that you have entered will be deleted and not used in this study. After answering the survey, you may withdraw your answers for up to five days. To withdraw from the study, you can call or email the researchers at: acvvs.evaluation@monash.edu.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

We hope this research project can be a safe space for you to share your experiences and have a voice about important issues in the lives of older people. By sharing your experiences, you can help us understand how to improve the well-being and health of older Australians, including through programs such as ACVVS. For those involved in ACVVS, your responses will help improve the program. There will be no financial cost to participants.

The main inconvenience to participants will be the time taken for the surveys. The survey includes questions about your satisfaction with life and feelings such as loneliness. If at any point you feel uncomfortable about a question being asked, you can take a break or exit the survey if you do not want to continue answering the questions.

Support services available

In the event you feel distressed during the research process, you can take a break and/or contact the following services if you wish to talk to someone about it:

- **Lifeline Australia:** www.lifeline.org.au **13 11 14**
- **Beyond Blue:** www.beyondblue.org.au **1300 22 4636**

Confidentiality

Your participation in the study will be confidential, other than to the research staff at Monash University. Your personal details will not be shared with the evaluation's funder, which is the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care. Any use of your information in our reports and publications will be in an aggregated, de-identified and anonymised form. This means that we will not report any individual answers, but combine them: for example, we will report percentages of respondents who respond 'yes' or 'no'.

Because the study has three waves (rounds), we will ask for your name, postcode, contact details, and the name and contact of your next of kin or caregiver. This is so we can contact you again to answer the next surveys. You will not have to participate in the following surveys if you do not want to. Details identifying you (for example, your name) will be kept separate from your responses to the survey and will only be accessible to the research team. If you decide to participate in the raffle and win a gift card your name will be shared with our financial department.

The survey uses Qualtrics, an online survey platform that is password-protect. Monash University has a Qualtrics license and an agreement to protect the confidentiality of responses.

As indicated above, at the end of the survey, we will ask for consent to link your survey responses to information collected by Services Australia about healthcare access. Providing consent to link healthcare information is separate from providing consent to complete the survey. You do not have to provide consent for this, and it will not affect your participation in our study. If you consent to link the data but would like to withdraw after consenting, the online survey will include an information sheet and a withdrawal form with instructions. Alternatively, you can contact the researcher during the study's duration (2023-2025).

Storage of data

All data will be stored for at least 5 years after the evaluation is completed (2026) on secure Monash University servers accessible only to members of the research team (current and future). Data will include the survey responses. All data will be password protected and accessible only on secure Monash University computers, in accordance with Monash data policies. Final disposal will be via electronic deletion of digital files.

Use of data for other purposes

We might use the data collected for future related projects. However, only aggregated and de-identified data may be used for other projects where ethics approval has been granted.

Results

A summary of the results will be available on the ACVVS webpage after the evaluation ends in July 2026. If you would like to be informed of additional aggregate research findings, please contact the research team.

Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC):

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity
Room 116, Administration Building B (3D)
26 Sports Walk, Clayton Campus
Monash University VIC 3800
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052
Email: muhrec@monash.edu

Thank you,



Dr Barbara Barbosa Neves (Lead Investigator)