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Mature surfers make new wave

An online social meeting site has found a booming market, reports STEPHEN FENECH

They're single, they're tech-savvy, they're aged 50 and above and they're looking for love online. Australian baby boomers make up one of the fastest growing segments of internet users with over-50s and retirees spending up to eight hours a week online second only to the US.

The impression that the internet is a domain populated only by young people couldn't be further from the truth. It was this trend that led Mike Ramsay to create a social networking site aimed at over 50s, who are becoming one of the most populous age groups in Australia.

"A couple of years ago I turned 50 and a few of my friends were divorced or widowed and it seemed there was nowhere to go for them," he says.

"I thought there was a need to create a social site where people can meet in a comfortable environment."

While MySpace and YouTube and other sites are skewed towards younger users, foreveryoungclub.com.au caters purely for men and women over 50.

A person will turn 50 every seven seconds until the year 2014 and more than half will be women, reports demographer Bernard Salt.

"There was an obvious gap in the market for an online meeting place targeting boomers; particularly one that understands people over 50 who don't see themselves as senior citizens but vibrant, healthy, active participants in life," Ramsay says.

The site, which went online in October,



Boomers The foreveryoungclub site

has quickly gained popularity. In March alone it recorded more than 670,000 hits.

After joining, members can search for male or female companionship in a safe forum. The site also offers hints on how to meet online.

Research company Nielsen-NetRatings says about 1.3 million Australians have used internet dating services in 2007, a 24 per cent increase on last year.

As the Australian population ages, life-spans are increasing and growing numbers of asset-rich baby boomers who are going through relationship breakdowns are looking for new choices, leading them to the internet.

"The majority of people over 50 want to develop relationships with people of their own generation — they have a real sense of camaraderie about their life experiences and appreciate the substance of relationships with someone else in the over 50 bracket," Ramsay says.

Registration for foreveryoungclub.com.au is free with premium membership starting at \$25 a month.