



**Mid-term review
of South Australia's
Plan for Ageing Well
2020-2025:
SUMMARY
REPORT**

October 2023



**Government
of South Australia**

SA Health



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INTRODUCTION

This report summarises and discusses the findings of a mid-term review of *South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025 (the Plan)*.

Conducted by URPS in 2022-23, the mid-term review measured progress against the Plan and in particular against its three strategic priorities: home and community, meaningful connections, and navigating change. The review produced two reports: *Ageing well measuring success: mid-term review and Mid-term review companion document*^(1, 2).

This summary report provides a concise overview of these reports, taking a thematic approach and highlighting what matters most to older South Australians. It also provides an opportunity for Office for Ageing Well to provide a response and commentary against each of the themes.

To support this approach, the report is informed by additional targeted research, data and information.

Office for Ageing Well

Office for Ageing Well is established by legislation. It takes the lead on state government ageing policy and works with and for older South Australians through the Seniors Card Program, Retirement Villages Unit, Aged Care Strategy Unit, state Ageing Policy, Adult Safeguarding Unit and community grants.

It provides policy advice to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, raises awareness, works across government and the community, and contributes to planning and service development – informed by the diverse voices of older South Australians.

Plan for Ageing Well

Supporting South Australians to age well is a state government priority.

Of the population of South Australia, 39.2% (697,189 people) is aged 50 years or older, with 74.1% (515,360 people) living in the broader metropolitan area and 25.9% (181,840 people) living in regional South Australia⁽³⁾.

Around 19% of South Australia's population is aged 65 years or over, above the national average of 16% and the second oldest population of any state or territory⁽⁴⁾. Around two in five South Australians are aged 55 years and over, again higher than the national average, with a statewide median age of 41 years, with high growth in the 70 to 74 age group^(5, 6). Women make up the highest proportion of those aged 55 years and over, with a steep increase in the proportion of women aged 80 and over⁽⁴⁾.

South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2022-2025 recognises that ageing well is the same as living well. It recognises that ageing well is about physical, social, economic, emotional and psychological wellbeing. It therefore addresses a range of life experiences: health and housing, safety and social connection, affordability and agency, and friends and family.

The Plan affirms the diversity of older South Australians – their needs, desires, views, means and backgrounds are as varied as they are in the general population. Valuing the individuality of older people is central to their health and wellbeing.

Based on this approach, the Plan's vision is for 'a healthy, connected, equitable and sustainable community, which takes a whole-of-life approach that fosters many years of living well, and supports people to die with dignity in line with their wishes.'

The Plan identifies three strategic priorities for action over five years:

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:
Home and community

Appropriate, affordable and accessible homes that allow people to age where they live

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:
Meaningful connections

Opportunities to connect with the neighbourhood and community through ease of access and removal of barriers

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:
Navigating change

The information, support and agency to make decisions and respond to life changes.

To help achieve these, the Plan seeks to tackle ageism, grow a diversity of options and choices for older people, and improve access to information and support.

Office for Ageing Well within the Department for Health and Wellbeing leads the development of the Plan and of a range of programs and policies that support it. However, the Plan's strategic priorities cannot be achieved by one department or office – all South Australians, including government, non-government and community organisations, have a vital role to play. Ageing policy and programs fall across jurisdictions, with aged care the responsibility of the Australian Government. Collaboration and coordination are the keys to best practice service delivery.

Ageing well requires a system-wide approach rather than piecemeal solutions. And it needs all of the community – individuals, the public sector, community groups and organisations, and the private sector – working together across the social and structural determinants of ageing well.

Strategic priority 1 – Home and community

Homes and communities enable flexibility and choice, and support us to live how we choose, no matter our age, needs, wants and desires.

1. Accessible supports that make existing homes more flexible to people's changing needs and wants over time.
2. Models and options for creating homes that suit a greater diversity of needs and aspirations.
3. Affordable and accessible homes.

Strategic priority 2 – Meaningful connections

A future where everyone has the opportunity, support and encouragement to maintain and develop meaningful connections.

1. Facilitate people being more connected to neighbourhoods and community (and vice-versa).
2. Create diverse options for continual growth and meaningful contribution.
3. Ensure access to transport is not a barrier for connection and contribution.

Strategic priority 3 – Navigating change

A future where we all have the capabilities and supports for remaining active participants throughout all life's transitions.

1. Services and supports start by focussing on what is most important to the person.
2. Better access to support that builds resilience and ability to cope with difficult transitions – when needed.
3. Systems and bureaucracies enable options, choice, flexibility, and are outcomes-focussed.

Enabling factors

To realise the three priorities for ageing well, South Australians need to work together to:

1. Tackle ageism – South Australia must lead the way in creating an inclusive society, moving beyond ageism.
2. Grow diversity – South Australia must foster options and choices that reflect the diversity of needs, wants, experiences and aspirations.
3. Increase accessibility – South Australia must improve access to options, information and supports that enable ageing well.

Supporting conditions

Three supporting conditions underpin the three priorities for ageing well:

1. Outcomes-driven – Learn through action, align around outcomes, drive change from older people's lived experiences.
2. Systems perspective – Develop leaders who act systemically, applying an ageing lens to all policies.
3. Collaboration – the power of partnerships – Foster conditions for collaboration, recognise the roles multiple stakeholders can play.

MID-TERM REVIEW



Ageing Well Measuring Success Framework

The mid-term review's aim was to monitor progress against the strategic priorities of South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well, using the Ageing Well Measuring Success Framework⁽⁷⁾. Office for Ageing Well engaged URPS to develop the framework in 2020, co-designed with the community and government agencies, to help understand the impact of the Plan and how well older South Australians are supported to live well.

The framework identifies indicators, methods of measurement, potential data sources, and measures of success or targets. These align with the strategic priorities, enabling factors and supporting conditions of the Plan. These are provided in Appendix 1.

A separate statewide review of the operation of the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995*, which establishes Office for Ageing Well, was conducted in 2022 by the South Australian Law Reform Institute⁽⁸⁾. The legislative review confirmed the important role of Office for Ageing Well.

Review methodology

In 2020, URPS collected benchmarking data for selected indicators in the framework. This allowed for comparison with data from the 2022-2023 mid-term review.

There was little significant change in older people's perceptions from the 2020 benchmarking study to the 2022-2023 mid-term review, although there was a small drop in the number of older people feeling valued by their communities, learning new skills and knowledge, and feeling they have sufficient information to navigate change. The relative stability between 2020 and 2022-2023 can in part be explained by the short duration between the two reviews.

The mid-term review by URPS comprised a range of primary and secondary review activities:

Community perception survey – a survey of people aged 50 years and over, advertised through a range of media and project partners, October to December 2022: 3,376 responses

Key informant interviews – direct interviews with randomly selected survey respondents, with a view to diversity, conducted after the survey: 10 interviews

Focus groups – discussions with two cohort groups, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the LGBTI+ community, March 2023: two focus groups (20 people)

Desktop audit – website and direct-contact audit to determine the number of local councils with age-friendly plans in place, 2022-2023

Media and communications audit –

audit of state government websites and media releases and two South Australian newspapers for language and images relating to older people, March 2023, and 25 February to 3 March 2023 respectively

Data retrieval – retrieval of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on age profiles, housing types, housing affordability stress, volunteering, further education, and paid employment

Project partner survey – a close-out survey of Office for Ageing Well project partners who received funding in 2022-2023: 18 responses.

Additional research

To complete this summary report, additional data and information has been retrieved from sources including the ABS, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Office for Ageing Well.



FINDINGS



The mid-term review sought the perceptions of older South Australians about their lives and the communities in which they live, based around the strategic priorities within South Australia’s Plan for Ageing Well. The views of older people outlined in this report are derived from the community perception survey, key informant interviews and focus groups, unless otherwise stated.

Five key themes about what matters most to older South Australians emerged from the review:

1. **Being valued**
2. **Being independent**
3. **Living at home**
4. **Connecting with others**
5. **Receiving support.**

These themes reflect but do not exactly align with the strategic priorities and enabling factors of the Plan.

“It is very important to be socially connected and meet friends regularly and keep on meeting new friends, which makes life more interesting and enjoyable.”

Being valued

We don't always feel valued or seen

The *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995* outlines the functions and objectives of Office for Ageing Well. These include eliminating stigma and discrimination associated with ageing and creating an environment in which older people are accorded dignity, appreciation and respect.

Feeling valued provides a sense of wellbeing, happiness and self-worth. An important part of feeling valued is having one's identity, culture and individuality recognised.

The mid-term review highlighted significant ongoing concerns about the persistence of ageism and discrimination. A large proportion of older people do not feel valued by those around them. Negative language persists in the public domain.

It also found that policies and programs do not necessarily cater for individual needs, and that language, culture and identity can be barriers to connecting with others and receiving appropriate support and services.

What older people said

Older South Australians would like to see greater respect given to the skills, knowledge and time that they have to offer. Many experience discrimination and lack of respect, and feel they are invisible and "a burden."

Around half of older South Australians (48%) do not feel valued in their neighbourhoods and communities.

Some older people feel that they are treated as if they are a single, homogeneous group. Society, as well as a range of services such

as aged care, health, housing and Centrelink, can appear indifferent to the diverse cultures, identities and individuality of older people.

Those from the LGBTI+ community feel that services for older people frequently assume that people are or should be heterosexual. This can create fear when interacting with services and the aged care sector, as with everyday life. Discrimination and harassment persist. However, the Rainbow Tick for diverse-friendly aged care organisations provides some level of comfort.

Feeling invisible and unheard

Some older people report feeling invisible, not heard, while others say they are treated like children, with the next generation trying to decide what is good for them.

Others feel fearful about speaking up about what they want and need.

Aged care service providers do not always listen to older people, take them seriously or respond to their individual needs.

Less than half feel that support and services focus on what's important to them as individuals.

Culture and identity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for 2.4% of the state's overall population⁽⁴⁾.

Australia's older people come from a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Around one-third of those aged 65 years or over were born overseas⁽⁹⁾. England, India, China and Vietnam represent the top countries of birth for South Australians not born in Australia⁽⁴⁾.

“I feel more invisible as I continue to age and have less and less control over how circumstances affect me.”

Older South Australians feel that cultural and language barriers can separate them from the community and make public settings hard to navigate.

Information provided only in English limits social and economic participation.

Public discourse

While there is some improvement in the language and images used relating to older people, negative language persists in the public domain.

A brief audit of The Advertiser and The Sunday Mail identified the use of negative terms (elderly, frail, vulnerable or burden) in 26% of articles in which older people featured. State government websites and media releases used these negative terms in 80% of relevant documents reviewed during March 2023, a significant rise from 60% in the 2020 benchmarking audit.

Rather than a lack of diverse images, a review of images shows a lack of images altogether. Older people are often invisible in public communications, even when they feature in the text.

“As a transgender person, I worry about my ability to be accepted in a nursing home environment.”

Being valued – Response from Office for Ageing Well

The following statewide policies developed by Office for Ageing Well to support ‘being valued’ include:

- > **Future Directions to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians 2023-2027**, developed by Office for Ageing Well and informed by the diverse voices of older South Australians, sets the statewide direction, strategic priorities and conditions to raise awareness of and prevent and respond to abuse and mistreatment of older people in South Australia. Strategic priorities include:
 - age-inclusive society
 - connected people and community
 - organisations, services and supports that work for people
 - safe and secure homes.
- > Office for Ageing Well is working with Wardliparingga (South Australian Institute of Health and Medical Research) to determine the ageing well research priorities for Aboriginal people in South Australia to inform an ‘Aboriginal Ageing Well Roadmap’.

Office for Ageing Well initiatives and campaigns that support 'being valued' include:

- > **Week of Ageing Well.** Run for the first time in 2023, this initiative aims to value and celebrate the diversity of older South Australians and their significant contributions to society. It brings together ageing well initiatives within government, non-government, organisations and communities, and provides supporting resources. It also has the capacity to raise awareness about tackling ageism, growing diversity, and increasing accessibility.
- > **Elder Abuse Prevention – campaign and community awareness.** In 2022, the first annual Elder Abuse Prevention campaign was developed and delivered to raise awareness about the rights of older people, and the impact of ageism on people's rights and how it can lead to abuse and mistreatment. It was run via social media, radio, digital and print media.
- > **Tackling Ageism Award.** The annual award, part of the South Australian Community Achievement Awards, recognises an individual, community group or organisation that understands the pervasive nature of ageism and is taking action to challenge it and better promote the value of older people and ageing well.

Projects supported by Office for Ageing Well relevant to 'being valued' include:

- > Ageism Awareness Training for local government. Funded through Office for Ageing Well's Age Friendly South Australia grant program, this project aims

to build capacity of local government staff, volunteers and elected members in the City of Campbelltown to understand and challenge unconscious bias and identify ways to improve the way they interact and serve older people in the community.

- > **Bystander Action for Ageing Well project.** A partnership between Office for Ageing Well, Gender Equity Solutions and Adelaide City Council, this project developed and piloted a training resource package to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills and confidence to be active bystanders to prevent age-related discrimination and disrespect, contributing to communities that value older people and ageing well. The package was piloted by Office for Ageing Well in collaboration with the City of Adelaide and is now being rolled out more widely across local government.

Other:

Through Office for Ageing Well's **Ageing Well Community Grants program**, a range of project partners is undertaking work that contributes to the vision of **South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025**. A survey of those who completed projects in 2022-2023 showed:

- 94% worked with older people and drew on their lived experience to drive project outcomes
- 94% helped build awareness and capacity about how others can contribute to ageing well
- 88% helped to tackle ageism and promote positive ageing.

“The next generation treats us like children and tries to tell us what is good for us.”

Being independent

Running our own lives is important

South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well seeks to provide older South Australians with the capabilities, information and support they need to make their own life choices.

Older South Australians wish to continue running their own lives. When they do, their health, wellbeing, social and financial outcomes are generally better.

The mid-term review found that most older people want to continue to run their own lives. They want to live their lives as independently as possible. Many feel that they are involved in decisions that affect them but they don't always have the information they need to do this to the best of their ability.

What older people said

Four out of five older South Australians (80%) report being engaged in decisions and projects that impact or interest them.

Yet two out of five (40%) do not believe they have the information and support they need to navigate life changes.

Most strongly express the wish to be as autonomous and independent as possible, being able to rely on support as needed, and having their wishes met even when they can no longer communicate these.

Safe and respectful support may be needed to support decision-making as people grow older.

The digital world

Older people with good information technology (IT) skills are better able to find the information and support they need, given most services are now provided online.

Without the ability to access online services, older people are reliant on others to support them in making decisions or in making decisions for themselves.

IT access is also important for social interaction, keeping informed, sharing knowledge and entertainment with others, and bringing the world into the home.

Capability and skills

Three out of five older South Australians (62%) learned a new skill or gained new knowledge in the 12 months prior to the 2022 survey.

For some people, new skills are associated with social interaction, while others are forced into learning new skills with the death of a partner.

For those outside of cities, access to classes and training can be limited.

“For those who aren't in receipt of any financial government assistance it is increasingly difficult to afford assistance for day-to-day living.”

Financial security

Lack of financial security can impact not only older people's quality of life, but the types of decisions they can make.

Many older South Australians are concerned about the rising cost of living evident in higher prices of food and household products, care and services, medicines and health, housing and utilities. Making hard choices on what necessities to buy is becoming more frequent.

Pensions, superannuation and savings are deemed by many to be insufficient.



Being independent – Response from Office for Ageing Well

Office for Ageing Well policies, programs or initiatives that support ‘being independent’ include:

- > Digital inclusion and social inclusion are identified as pillars within the ***Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia*** – which aims to articulate knowledge gaps and reach a shared understanding on what research is needed to address the social determinants of ageing well.

Initiatives and campaigns run by Office for Ageing Well that support ‘being independent’ include:

- > Plan Ahead Week. This Office for Ageing Well annual campaign prompts community members to think about their financial, health, legal and personal wishes and how to ensure they are known and respected.
- > Office for Ageing Well has partnered with Office of the Public Advocate to develop the ***Substitute Decision-Maker Toolkit*** to support substitute decision-makers and appointers to understand their roles and responsibilities.

Projects supported and funded by Office for Ageing Well relevant to ‘being independent’ include:

- > **Advance Care Directives projects.** Supported

by Office for Ageing Well and Health Services Programs, models will be developed, delivered and evaluated in five South Australian local government areas in metro and regional South Australia to increase community understanding and confidence in completing Advance Care Directives.

- > **The Golden Years – Co-designing a financial toolkit for ageing well.** Funded through Office for Ageing Well’s Positive Ageing Fellowship Grants, the UnitingCare Wesley Bowden toolkit aims to increase financial sector knowledge of people approaching retirement.
- > **Zest Creative: Ageing Well in Community Conversation Series.** The conversation series is supported by Office for Ageing Well and provides opportunity for older South Australians to discuss various topics including ageism, money matters, social connection and planning for end of life. Eight conversation series will be held, with a facilitator aiming to increase confidence and improve participants’ ability to manage change and practise control over their own life decisions.

“Continuing cost-of-living expenses are so high, I barely make do on my pension.”

Living at home

We love where we live

Supporting South Australians to age in place, within supportive and age-friendly communities, is a fundamental aim of South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well. Housing that is affordable, accessible, meets people's changing needs and reflects the diversity of the older population is central to this aim.

The mid-term review found that older people love where they live but are concerned about housing and living costs, accessing home support and the suitability of their current housing as they age. The number of older people renting or homeless is growing, particularly with a growing number of women aged 55+ at risk.

What older people said

An overwhelming majority of older South Australians (88%) love where they live and want to age in their current home (90%).

Older South Australians who like their neighbourhood identify a range of positive factors such as close public transport, shops and services, good neighbours, and affordability.

For those in retirement or aged care environments, the care and reliability of the staff is an important factor in creating happiness and a sense of wellbeing.

The costs and operations of retirement villages and residential aged care are of concern for many. The cost of entering into residential aged care can be prohibitive.

Most older South Australians feel safe where they live (85%), although roads and night time can feel less safe. The sense of security

is greatest when neighbours and families can offer support. However, the presence of COVID-19 has reduced this sense of safety outside the house, which means many older people continue to be more isolated than before the start of the pandemic.

Homes and housing

Most older South Australians are concerned about housing availability in South Australia and are either struggling with housing issues or know someone who is⁽¹⁰⁾. National data shows women aged 55 and over are one of the fastest growing groups of homeless people⁽¹¹⁾.

Nationally, while home ownership for those aged over 65 is traditionally high, the rates are dropping, with an increase in those renting⁽¹²⁾. Renting when older has been associated with poorer health, wellbeing and financial outcomes⁽¹²⁾.

People are more likely to live alone as they age, with a sharper increase for women than men, especially those over the age of 85⁽¹²⁾. Living alone may have a negative impact on health and wellbeing.

Across Australia, more than 90% of older Australians report that they are in housing that meets their current needs⁽¹³⁾. However, 30% do not feel their housing will meet their longer-term aspirations⁽¹³⁾. Downsizing may be an option for those who can afford it.

“Cost of aged care is expensive and not always available in our town.”

Ageing at home

Ageing at home is extremely important for older South Australians, yet it is not always easy.

It can require support for daily living activities, such as cleaning, gardening, shopping and going to appointments. Homes may need modifications like ramps, shower rails and non-slip flooring. Gardens may be too large for upkeep.

Affordable and accessible in-home and support services are a necessity for those who need it.

“My husband and I plan to live our lives out in our own home and not to go into a nursing home. We hope that we will be able to access support to continue to do this as we age and are no longer able to complete day-to-day tasks of living.”

Living at home – Response from Office for Ageing Well

Office for Ageing Well policies, programs or initiatives that support ‘living at home’ include:

- > In acknowledgement of the importance of this theme for older South Australians, Home and Community is the first of three strategic priorities in *South Australia’s Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025*.
- > Digital inclusion is a pillar of the *Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia* – an Office for Ageing Well document that aims to articulate knowledge gaps and reach a shared understanding on what research is needed to address the social determinants of ageing well.

Projects supported and funded by Office for Ageing Well relevant to ‘living at home’ include:

- > The theme of Office for Ageing Well’s Impact Research Grants for Ageing Well 2023 was **Homes, Housing and the Built Environment**. The three funded projects were:
 - Preventing Pensioners from Precarious Housing: losing home ownership and community disruption (UniSA)
 - Home Modifications for Ageing Well: social return on investment (Flinders University)
 - Caring for both Older South Australians and Homeless Pets (UniSA).
- > A total of 23.5% of projects funded through Office for Ageing Well’s Ageing Well Community Grants in 2022-23 supported **home and community outcomes**.
- > **Renting Well**. This is a strategic project, funded and supported by Office for Ageing Well, that aims to bridge the information gap experienced by older people navigating, through choice or necessity, the private and public rental markets. It will create practical solutions for older people experiencing challenges and frustration when navigating the rental market.

Other:

- > Office for Ageing Well will be supporting implementation of relevant recommendations from the Housing Security for Older Women Taskforce. This taskforce was established to identify recommendations to inform an implementation plan to improve housing security for older women.

“It helps to have something beyond oneself to think about: activities, volunteering, new challenging interests...”



Connecting with others

Connecting with others is important, but not always easy

Integrating older people into the community is an important aspect of the Plan, ensuring that their skills and experiences are not lost to the community and that they are not socially isolated.

The mid-term review found there has been mixed success in supporting older South Australians to connect. Transport options are a barrier for some. Employment and volunteering numbers remain low. And older people do not always feel valued in their communities.

What older people said

Older South Australians recognise that engaging with the community can result in greater levels of happiness and health, whether it's through employment,

volunteering, education, community groups, sport, or spending time with friends and family. Online connection also has value.

Yet barriers such as accessibility, ageism, disability, lack of information and finances can hamper efforts to get involved.

Around half of older South Australians do not feel connected to their neighbourhoods and communities (56%).

Older people feel they have to work harder to stay engaged and connected once they have retired. And as they age further, they are more likely to rely on others to continue to engage outside the home. Issues of health and declining ability can be barriers where appropriate community support is not available.

Many older people feel they lack the skills or technology to create online connections.

Employment and volunteering

Ageism is keeping older people from the workforce, with one in six organisations nationally unwilling to hire people over the age of 65 and one in five human resources professionals showing little or no willingness to recruit those aged 50 to 64⁽¹⁴⁾.

Employment, volunteering and study levels among older South Australians are low.

Only two out of five surveyed older South Australians (39%) are in paid employment. Only one in five is engaged in volunteering (18%).

Good transport is vital

Good transport is a key component of independence, but issues persist with transport and getting to services and social events.

For most, their local neighbourhood environment is easy to get around (81%). But around one in five find the poor quality of footpaths and lack of pedestrian lights can make getting to places difficult.

Most older South Australians (83%) feel that they can get transport to take them where they want to go, but for some (17%) this is not the case. Public transport proximity, frequency and accessibility for mobility aids are barriers to getting around. For people outside of cities, these barriers are exacerbated.

“Loneliness is a significant issue for older people. Staying socially connected can be difficult, compounded by transport limitations and health.”

“Loneliness and mental health are horrendous and there's nowhere to get help.”

Connecting with others – Response from Office for Ageing Well

Office for Ageing Well policies, programs or initiatives that support ‘connecting with others’ include:

- > In acknowledgement of the importance of this theme for older South Australians, Meaningful Connections is the second of three strategic priorities in *South Australia’s Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025*.
- > Economic Participation, Income and Wealth and Getting Around are pillars of the *Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia* – an Office for Ageing Well document that aims to articulate knowledge gaps and reach a shared understanding on what research is needed to address the social determinants of ageing well.

Projects supported and funded by Office for Ageing Well relevant to ‘connecting with others’ include:

- > **Co-creating Community Connections** - a project being led by Wellbeing SA and trialled in City of Port Adelaide Enfield to understand the role of ‘community connectors’ in reducing loneliness and to find ways to build their capacity to do this.
- > In 2022-23, 59% of projects funded through Office for Ageing Well’s Ageing Well Community Grants program supported **older people to establish meaningful connections.**

> Office for Ageing Well facilitates a range of strategic projects aiming to support older South Australians to build meaningful connections. In 2022-23, projects included:

- **Reimagining Volunteering** – qualitative research with people aged 75 years and over to better understand the barriers and enablers to continue or take up volunteer roles, with particular attention to the issues posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The main finding was that people who volunteer as older adults have often volunteered all their lives and that volunteering provides personal, organisational, and societal benefits.
- **Silver Screen** – an affordable and accessible, specially curated weekly cinema screening program for older South Australians held at the Mercury Cinema. Through Silver Screen, Mercury CX aims to build an accessible and welcoming community for people to gather, socialise and connect over a common love for films and the intellectual discourse around screen culture. The program is proving popular and supports the health and wellbeing of older South Australians.
- **Progressive Tea Trail** – a series of well-attended creative events held in the Adelaide Parklands as part of Nature Festival 2023 to connect people to nature and to each other.
- Office for Ageing Well engaged **COTA SA's The Plug-in** to gain insights into the drivers that improve social connectedness and wellbeing among older people living in regional

South Australia through a variety of engagement methods. The findings from the interviews and focus groups as part of the **Meaningful Connections** project led to the development of a set of guiding principles that organisations can use to apply the project findings at an individual and community level to promote meaningful connections for older people living in regional areas.

South Australian Seniors Card program:

- > Office for Ageing Well administers South Australia's Seniors Card program, which partners with the private sector to provide a variety of discounts and deals and other benefits to Seniors Card members.
- > Since July 2022, South Australian Seniors Card members can travel for free at any time on Adelaide Metro buses, trains and trams. From just over 477,000 trips taken in June 2022, the 12 months from July 2022 have seen a total patronage of 7,338,675 by Seniors Card members – a monthly average of 611,556 and a 37% increase on the previous full financial year.
- > Through the Seniors Card program, and a diverse range of partnerships, older South Australians can access a range of opportunities that encourage and facilitate meaningful connections, through arts, sport and nature.

Receiving support

Finding support and services can be hard

Support and services for older South Australians are available through the public, not-for-profit and private sectors. South Australian government services contribute to older people's wellbeing in most facets of their lives, from health and transport to recreation and community services.

The mid-term review found that older South Australians recognise the value of the support and services available to them, but that accessing them can be difficult.

What older people said

More than half of older South Australians (56%) do not feel that support and services focus on what's important to them as individuals.

Four out of 10 older people feel they do not have the information and cannot get the support they need to navigate change. Many report that they find it difficult to find out what support is available. For those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, information provided only in English can be a barrier to accessing services.

The time lags between seeking information, applying and receiving support are of major concern.

Services such as My Aged Care, Centrelink and the National Disability Insurance Agency are hard to understand, navigate and access.

Poor digital literacy restricts participation, with more than half of those aged 50 years and over recording low levels of digital inclusion based on access, affordability and digital ability^(15, 16). Some people are unable to access

online services due to a range of issues including network availability, ongoing costs, lack of skills and lack of access to technology.

By contrast, some older people report positive experiences with accessing local government and medical services.

Local government

Local governments provide a raft of services targeted at and open to older South Australians. These fall predominantly within community service programs such as local transport, community centre programs, leisure and interest groups, and volunteering.

Older people are generally positive about the accessibility and services that local governments offer.

In line with the *Ageing Well Measuring Success Framework*, the review investigated the number of councils with age-friendly plans. It found that only 22% of councils had these in place. Other local government activity was not measured, although accessing local government services is generally seen in a positive light.

Local and personal networks

Informal support networks are most important for some older people. The presence of family, friends and neighbours can make all the difference in staying at home happily and safely. However, some older people are concerned that they are a burden, particularly as they grow older and may become more dependent due to loss of capacity.

“My Aged Care packages are a joke.”

“I am of the age where I can navigate computers and the internet. My mother who is 90 does not.”

Most older South Australians (85%) feel they have someone they can rely on, usually a family member, a friend, a neighbour or a member of a club or religious community to which they belong.

In regional, rural and remote areas, friends and community organisation members may play a greater role where family members do not live close by.

The differences in expectations around family care versus aged care systems are particularly acute for those from culturally diverse backgrounds.

“Finding information about ageing rights, services and help around the house is very difficult.”

Receiving support – Response from Office for Ageing Well

Office for Ageing Well policies, programs or initiatives that support ‘receiving support’ include:

- > In acknowledgement of the importance of this theme for older South Australians, Navigating Change – Building Resilience is the third of three strategic priorities in **South Australia’s Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025**.
- > Increasing accessibility – is noted as an enabling factor in **South Australia’s Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025**.
- > Initiatives and campaigns run by Office for Ageing Well that support ‘receiving support’ include:
 - > Office for Ageing Well’s **A Guide to Age Friendly Services** website and guidelines support South Australian organisations to provide age friendly services. The website includes definitions of age friendly services and a self-reflection guide for organisations providing services, taking a quality improvement approach.

Projects supported and funded by Office for Ageing Well relevant to ‘receiving support’ include:

- > In 2022-23, 17.5% of projects funded through Office for Ageing Well’s Ageing Well Community Grants program supported **older people to navigate change**.
- > Office for Ageing Well’s **Age-Friendly SA Grants** are available to local governments to support projects that support age-friendly innovation and active participation and are inclusive of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people who identify as LGBTI+ and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities. Between 2020 and 2023 there were 18 projects funded under this grants program.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

There is a high level of alignment between the five key themes identified in the mid-term review of *South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025* and those being progressed through the State Ageing Plan and associated statewide policy agendas. These include the Plan itself, *Future Directions to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians 2023–2027* and the *Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia*. This alignment speaks to the quality of the consultation and co-design processes undertaken to inform their development.

The majority of project partners who completed the close-out survey reported that their projects directly supported at least one of the Plan's strategic priorities, which demonstrates the value of the community and strategic grants programs. Office for Ageing Well should continue to review its programs, measuring success against the Plan and evaluating the applicability of its approach to meeting the diversity of older people's needs and aspirations.

Office for Ageing Well should continue to collaborate with a range of project partners, particularly with local government, given the positive experiences older people have with the sector.

The mid-term review confirms that Office for Ageing Well should continue with its current focus on the Plan and associated statewide policies' implementation which, given the short timeframe, is not unexpected.

In developing the next state ageing plan, given the current one expires in 2025, Office for Ageing Well should continue its successful co-design approach, driven by the diverse voices of South Australian communities, focussed on but not limited to the community perception survey. Office for Ageing Well should ensure the voices of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are visible in the ageing well agenda.

Future review

While it is appreciated that the Ageing Well Measuring Success Framework was developed in consultation with older people and relevant stakeholders, further refinement of indicators could assist in future reviews.

It is recommended that the final review of South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well, which will be undertaken by an external organisation identified via a tender process, continue to be based on co-design with older South Australians.

Future reviews could also:

- > seek to attract a broader age cohort to the community perception survey – only small numbers from the 50 to 59 and 80-plus age groups (0.6% and 5.6% respectively) participated in 2022
- > increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- > increase the number of direct interviews or focus groups
- > expand the audit of age-respectful language in the public domain
- > broaden engagement with diverse groups.

APPENDIX 1

Ageing Well Measuring Success Framework

Ageing Well success indicators

Strategic priority 1 – Home and community

1. Older people feel they are able to stay in their own homes and communities
2. Older people identify that they love where they live
3. Homes are flexible and can evolve over time as needs changes
4. Care and support are provided when needed
5. A diversity of housing types is provided across the state
6. Housing is provided in a variety of tenures across the state
7. Councils have age-friendly plans
8. Older people identify that their local neighbourhood and community are age-friendly
9. Older people don't experience housing stress
10. Housing is provided utilising alternative financing options

Strategic priority 2 – Meaningful connections

1. Older people feel connected to their neighbourhoods and community
2. Older people have someone they can rely on
3. A public realm that fosters connection and interaction
4. Attendance of older people at events
5. Participation of older people in volunteering
6. Participation of older people in paid employment
7. Participation of older people in further education and lifelong learning
8. Older people feel meaningfully engaged in decisions and processes that interest or impact them
9. Older people report that transport options take them where they want to go
10. A range of transport options is available ranging from scheduled to on-demand solutions

Strategic priority 3 – Navigating change

1. Older people feel that support and services focus on the individual and what is important to them
2. Older people feel they have the information and support they need to navigate life change at key transition points
3. Government and non-government organisation align their strategies and plans to South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025

Enabling factors

1. Older people are portrayed in positive and diverse ways
2. Older people feel that options and choices reflect diverse needs, wants and experiences
3. Access to options, information and supports that enable ageing well is improved

Supporting conditions

1. Projects and initiatives are driven from older people's lived experience
2. Office for Ageing Well influences other government departments to consider implications of their policies and strategic plans for ageing well
3. Conditions foster collaboration and recognise the multiple roles stakeholders can play

Office for Ageing Well's role

1. Office for Ageing Well projects or initiatives align to the Plan
2. Projects or initiatives contribute to the three strategic priority areas of the Ageing Well Plan
3. Older people's lived experience drives project or initiative outcomes
4. Older people are engaged in the planning, implementation and assessment of projects or initiatives
5. Awareness and capacity about ageing well is built across sectors
6. Conditions foster collaboration and recognise the multiple roles stakeholders can play
7. Older people feel valued and included through project involvement

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For more information

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