



STATEWIDE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS PROJECT – STAGE 2

Prepared for Department of Human Services, South Australia

Clear Horizon



Think Human

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Disclaimer

This document has been produced with information supplied to Think Human and Clear Horizon through Statewide Community Conversations with the communities of South Australia, a horizon scan of ageing-related strategies and plans, and findings from the Final Impact Review of *South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025*. While we make every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this report, any judgements as to suitability of the information for the client's purposes are the client's responsibility. Think Human and Clear Horizon extend no warranties and assumes no responsibility as to the suitability of this information or for the consequences of its use.

Dictionary

Acronyms	Description
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CHSP	Commonwealth Home Support Program
GP	General Practitioner
InComPro	InComPro Aboriginal Association Incorporated
LGBTIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Asexual and other diverse gender and sex identities
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NZ	New Zealand
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SA	South Australia
UK	United Kingdom
WHO	World Health Organization

Acknowledgements

Clear Horizon and Think Human gratefully acknowledge the invaluable support of Office for Ageing Well and the many people who contributed to the successful planning and implementation of the Statewide Community Conversations and the production of this report.

We especially wish to express our gratitude to the members of the Co-design Group and the conversation hosts who worked diligently to engage with older people across South Australia. Their efforts made it possible to hear the many voices from a range of diverse lived experiences. The conversation hosts commitment to travelling from a range of locations, recruiting local community members, attending training, facilitating focus groups, and working above and beyond the expectations has been fundamental to the producing the findings for this report.

We also wish to extend our sincere thanks to the many participants in the Statewide Community Conversations who shared their insights, ideas, hopes and recommendations for the next State Ageing Well Plan 2026-2036. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this project and contributing to the future of ageing well in South Australia.

Clear Horizon and Think Human would also like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands across the state of South Australia and on whose lands these Statewide Community Conversations were held. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the ongoing connection to land, sea and culture. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal Land.

This report was produced where Clear Horizon and Think Human work on the lands of the Kaurna People of the Adelaide Plains and the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared for Office for Ageing Well, Department of Human Services, to present the findings from Statewide Community Conversations that took place across South Australia in mid-2025. The conversations were part of a broader project to undertake a Final Impact Review of *South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025* and conduct desktop research about other ageing-related strategies and plans. The results of all these activities provide findings and recommendations to Office for Ageing Well to inform the next State Ageing Well Plan 2026-2036.

Background

South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020–2025 (the Plan for Ageing Well) sets out a vision for ageing well in South Australia, developed through extensive community engagement with over 1,500 older South Australians and key stakeholders. The plan includes three strategic priorities: Home and Community, Meaningful Connections, and Navigating Change. These priorities were supported by enabling factors focused on tackling ageism, growing diversity, and increasing accessibility, and underpinned by supporting conditions that highlighted the need to be outcomes-driven, take a systems perspective, and focus on collaboration.

The Plan for Ageing Well was evaluated over time through three key reviews: a Benchmarking Review in 2021, a Mid-Term Review in 2022–23, and the Final Impact Review in 2024. The Final Impact Review represented Stage 1 of a two-stage project with a report delivered to Office for Ageing Well in February 2025. Stage 2, the focus of this report, involved a series of Statewide Community Conversations with older people across South Australia and horizon scanning research into current Australian and international ageing related strategies and plans. Taken together, the Final Impact Review, Statewide Community Conversations and horizon scanning research provide findings and recommendations to inform the priorities of the next State Ageing Well Plan 2026-2036, alongside other inputs and resources determined by Office for Ageing Well.

The project was delivered through a partnership between Office for Ageing Well, Clear Horizon, and Think Human. Clear Horizon conducted the Final Impact Review in Stage 1. For Stage 2, Clear Horizon undertook the horizon scan research and, with support from Office for Ageing Well, engaged Think Human to lead the design and delivery of the Statewide Community Conversations and production of this report.

A total of 3174 people participated across both stages of the project. In Stage 1, this included 2819 survey respondents, 14 individual interviews and 24 focus group participants. In Stage 2, this included 317 people who took part in Statewide Community Conversations.

Methodology

A summary of the methodology for Stage 2 is described below. Please refer to the main body of this report (Methodology section) for further detail about the Stage 2 methodology. Please see the companion report, *Final Impact Review of South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025*, for the Stage 1 methodology.

Co-design Group Engagement

A Co-design Group was established to inform the methodology for both Stage 1 and 2. Group members brought their lived experiences and professional perspectives into key activities and workshops throughout the whole project. The group comprised of 13 community members including seven older South Australians with diverse lived experiences and six professionals with relevant expertise.

Horizon Scan Research

Clear Horizon undertook a desktop horizon scan of current Australian and international ageing related strategies and plans (e.g., ageing well, healthy ageing). The horizon scan, together with the Final Impact Review findings, informed the themes that were used to guide the Statewide Community Conversations. The research questions guiding the scan included identifying the priorities and actions of other current Australian (national and state-based) and international ageing well strategies. In this report, the horizon scan findings were synthesised with thematic findings of the Statewide Community Conversations to add depth to the evidence informing the next State Ageing Well Plan.

Statewide Community Conversations

The approach for the Statewide Community Conversations was developed with the Co-design Group, which informed training and resources (including a conversation toolkit) developed by Think Human.

The Statewide Community Conversations were delivered via two strands.

Strand 1: Community-led conversations

Think Human designed and led Strand 1 which focused on building the capability of community members to take up the role of conversation host. They undertook the Statewide Community Conversations through peer-to-peer engagement, with a particular focus on people from priority populations who might otherwise not have had an opportunity to participate in such consultation activities. These community-led conversation hosts were recruited by Think Human from their networks and included some of the lived experience members of the Co-design Group.

Strand 2: Staff-led conversations

Office for Ageing Well led Strand 2 where staff from Office for Ageing Well and partner organisations were the conversation hosts who engaged with established groups of older people. Partner organisations included representatives from organisations in the Co-design Group, and staff from not-for-profit organisations, local councils and community groups.

Analysis and Consolidation

All data from both strands were subjected to thematic analysis to produce key findings from the Statewide Community Conversations. These findings were brought to a consolidation workshop in August 2025 for validation and to develop recommendations and actions for the next State Ageing Well Plan.

The workshop was opened by The Honourable Nat Cook MP, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well, who heard from a panel of community-led conversation hosts about their experiences and priorities for ageing well in South Australia. It was facilitated by Think Human with support from Clear Horizon and Office for Ageing Well staff. There were 46 participants including Co-design Group members, conversation hosts, and representatives from partner organisations and Office for Ageing Well.



Figure 1. Consolidation Workshop participants (August 2025)

Themes

The findings of the Statewide Community Conversations produced four themes as summarised here and detailed further in the report.

Theme 1: People have Peace of Mind

Older South Australians described peace of mind as being able to meet their basic needs, having confidence in the future, and being able to plan ahead for later life. Across the Statewide Community Conversations, several challenges related to peace of mind were identified such as cost-of-living pressures, transport issues, housing insecurity, difficulties navigating complex service systems, and uncertainty about future support options.

Theme 2: People are Safe and Well

Feeling safe and well as people grow older involves having both a sense of security and access to optimal health and wellbeing. Participants consistently emphasised that health and wellbeing is the foundation for ageing well with many viewing good health as central to maintaining independence, social connection, and quality of life. Being safe and well includes living in secure, appropriate housing, access to health and in-home support, and strong local support networks. Challenges to being safe and well include regional service gaps, inaccessible built environments, and a lack of culturally safe care.

Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible

Older South Australians described being valued and visible as more than recognition; it is about having equitable access to services, meaningful opportunities for multigenerational connection, and the assurance that their unique identities and contributions are understood, respected, and reflected in policy and practice. While challenges such as complex service systems, reduced community spaces, and barriers to cultural inclusion can undermine these aspirations, positive local examples demonstrate that inclusive, relationship-based approaches foster recognition and belonging.

Theme 4: People are Participating

For older South Australians, participation is not simply about attendance; it is about having the skills, confidence and opportunities (including social connections and economic participation via paid work) to contribute meaningfully to community life. The Statewide Community Conversations showed that participation can be a source of identity, purpose, and wellbeing, whether through digital connection, volunteering, or involvement in local clubs and decision-making. However, digital exclusion, cost-of-living pressures, transport barriers, and declining local infrastructure limit participation for some people.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from analysis of the Statewide Community Conversations with the findings of the horizon scan research and Final Impact Review.

Please note that in the report, the recommendations are mapped to the four themes and relevant enabling factors. A list of 'community asks' are also provided to support action planning for the next State Ageing Well Plan 2026-2036.

1. Commit to building an 'Age Friendly South Australia' as part of the World Health Organization's Global Network.
2. Focus on building workforce capability to provide empathetic and skilled responses to diverse needs and preferences of older people.
3. Ensure a dedicated and statewide focus on addressing the complex challenge of transport provision for all older people in South Australia.
4. Include a strong focus on renting and homelessness policy and practice across South Australia to better safeguard the rights of older people.
5. Commit to creating the conditions for people to grow older in their communities of choice.
6. Commit to an inclusive approach to normalise and facilitate financial, legal and health plans for later life, tailored to diverse cultural and support needs.
7. Focus on the ageing well needs of older carers and support for the people they care for.
8. Focus on designing simplified access to services and systems with the people who use them.
9. Commit to building inclusive health promotion approaches for ageing well.

10. Continue to build on the anti-ageism campaign for South Australia as a state where all ages and stages of life are valued equally.
11. Commit to improving the accessibility of the built environment and facilities for all older people.
12. Focus on providing access to and support for digital technology for all older South Australians.
13. Prioritise and incentivise the development of lifelong opportunities for older people to fulfil purposeful roles and meaningful contribution to South Australia.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared for Office for Ageing Well, Department of Human Services, to present the findings from Statewide Community Conversations that took place across South Australia in mid-2025. The conversations were part of a broader project to undertake a Final Impact Review of South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025 and conduct desktop research about other ageing-related strategies and plans. The results of all of these activities provide findings and recommendations to Office for Ageing Well to inform the next State Ageing Well Plan 2026-2036.

1.1. Background

South Australia's *Plan for Ageing Well 2020–2025* (the Plan for Ageing Well) sets out a vision for ageing well in South Australia. It was developed by Office for Ageing Well through extensive community engagement with over 1500 older South Australians and key stakeholders. The Plan for Ageing Well included three strategic priorities: Home and Community, Meaningful Connections, and Navigating Change. These priorities were supported by enabling factors focused on tackling ageism, growing diversity, and increasing accessibility, and were underpinned by supporting conditions that highlighted the need to be outcomes-driven, to take a systems perspective, and to focus on collaboration.

The Plan for Ageing Well was evaluated over time through three key reviews: a Benchmarking Review in 2021, a Mid-Term Review in 2022–23, and the Final Impact Review in 2024. The Final Impact Review represented Stage 1 of a two-stage project with a report delivered to Office for Ageing Well in February 2025. Stage 2, the focus of this report, involved a series of Statewide Community Conversations with older people across South Australia and horizon scanning research into current Australian and international ageing related strategies and plans. Taken together, the Final Impact Review, Statewide Community Conversations and horizon scanning research provide findings and recommendations to inform the priorities of the next State Ageing Well Plan 2026-2036, alongside other inputs and resources determined by Office for Ageing Well.

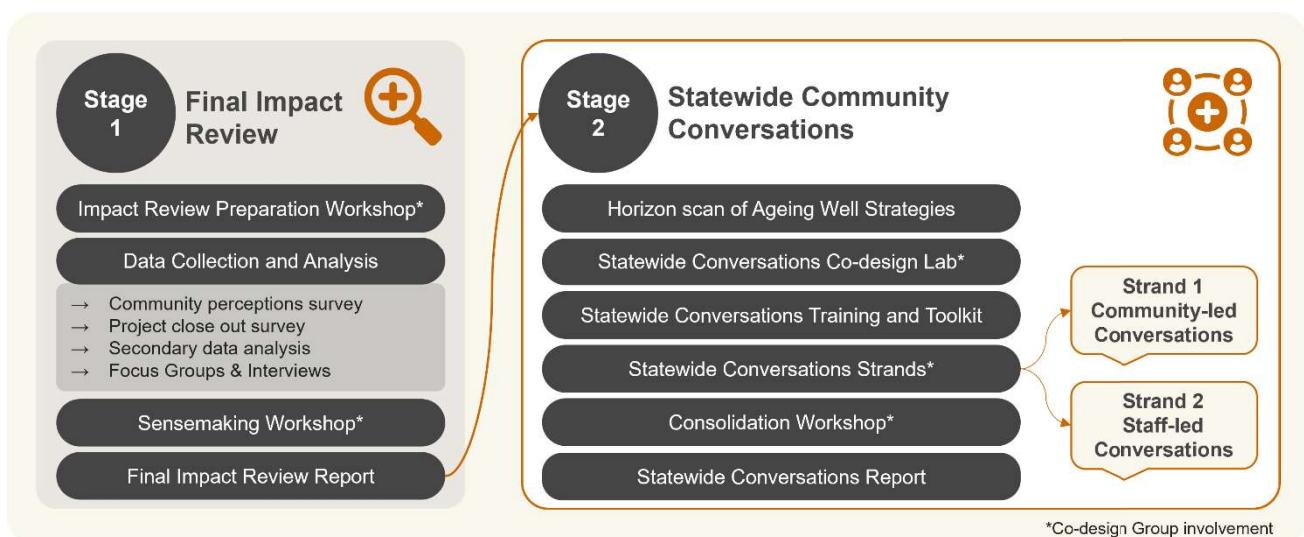


Figure 2. Project stages and main activities

A total of **3174 people** participated across both stages of the project. In Stage 1, this included 2819 survey respondents, 14 individual interviews and 24 focus group participants. In Stage 2, this included 317 people who took part in Statewide Community Conversations.



Figure 3. Participant engagement in Stages 1 and 2

1.2. Project partnership

The project was delivered through a partnership between Office for Ageing Well, Clear Horizon, and Think Human. Clear Horizon conducted the Final Impact Review in Stage 1. For Stage 2, Clear Horizon undertook the horizon scan research and, with support from Office for Ageing Well, engaged Think Human to lead the design and delivery of the Statewide Community Conversations and production of this report.

1.2.1. Office for Ageing Well

Office for Ageing Well is a South Australian government body established under the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995* with a mandate to support, advocate and include the diverse voices of the state's older population in policies services and initiatives and takes a life course approach to ageing well. Its legislative objectives emphasise creating an inclusive society where older people can age well, free from discrimination, while ensuring their skills and experience remain valued within the community. Office for Ageing Well is guided by principles that promote dignity, appreciation, and respect for older people, while recognising and responding to the multicultural nature of the community in program planning and service delivery.

Through partnerships with government, non-government, and community organisations, Office for Ageing Well leads and contributes to policy development, raises awareness of issues and opportunities of an older population, and works to modify social structures and attitudes that impact older South Australians' wellbeing, with a strong focus on co-design and lived experiences.

1.2.2. Clear Horizon

Clear Horizon is a certified B-Corp that works to enable 'for purpose' organisations to achieve more and better impact. Clear Horizon specialises in collaborative approaches for measurement and evaluation with a strong focus on learning partnerships. The company has a well-deserved reputation for being at the cutting edge of evaluation theory and practice. Their deep theoretical understanding of evaluation is grounded in extensive experience of conducting over 200 evaluations across all levels of government, not-for-profits, regional organisations, industry bodies, and international settings.

1.2.3. Think Human

Think Human is a collaborative, customer-driven, Adelaide-based consultancy with extensive experience in co-design, community engagement, facilitation and coaching to deliver strategy, business improvement and process redesign.

Think Human's work with communities is guided by trauma-informed practice and draws on narrative techniques that place people at the centre of their story and as experts in their own lives and experiences. A key priority focus area for Think Human is policy and practice around growing older and tackling ageism in Australia.

2. PROJECT DESIGN

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of Stage 2 was to undertake horizon scanning research and a series of Statewide Community Conversations with a diverse range of older South Australians and stakeholders to determine the priorities and recommendations for the next State Ageing Well Plan 2026-2036.

2.2. Principles

The project was guided by the following principles:

- **Partnering for success:** Strong communications, project meetings, and dedicated roles to support a trusting and respectful partnership approach.
- **Participatory co-design:** working collaboratively with Office for Ageing Well and Co-design Group members to guide the project design and implementation.
- **Valuing lived experience:** valuing and listening to the voices of older people to ensure the project was grounded in the intersectional realities and perspectives of all older South Australians, with particular attention to those voices that are marginalised and have greater barriers to engage.
- **Adaptive project management:** Respond to emerging needs or changes to achieve project success within scope.
- **Learning culture:** Continuously using evidence and experience to develop insights and inform decisions.

2.3. Methodology

The methodology of the Statewide Community Conversations was shaped by a developmental process, including input from a Co-design Group, and the findings of horizon scan research and the Final Impact Review. Notably, the chosen methodology for Statewide Community Conversations put the delivery of conversations into the hands of conversation hosts including community members, Office for Ageing Well staff and staff from partner organisations. Think Human's role was to lead the design and delivery the data collection resources and processes with the conversation hosts and undertake data analysis to produce this report with support from Clear Horizon.

2.3.1. Co-design Group Engagement

A Co-design Group was established to inform both Stage 1 and 2 as members brought their lived experiences and professional perspectives into key activities and workshops throughout the whole project. The group comprised of 13 community members including seven older South Australians with diverse lived experiences and six professionals with relevant sector expertise.

The lived experience members were recruited through a targeted selection process designed to ensure diversity across ages, geographic locations, and priority population groups. Office for Ageing Well distributed a call for expressions of interest throughout its networks, asking potential participants to share their backgrounds and motivations for involvement. Final selections were based on candidates' experiences and ability to contribute to the project's aims and provide insight into the

priorities of people from regional South Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTIA+¹ communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities, people experiencing housing instability, and people living with disability.

Professional members were selected for their expertise in working with priority populations and their ability to contribute organisational perspectives. The following organisations were represented in the Co-design group: City of Onkaparinga, Council on the Ageing South Australia (COTA SA), ECH Inc., InComPro Aboriginal Association Incorporated, Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCCSA), and Office for Ageing Well.

2.3.2. Horizon scan research

Clear Horizon undertook a horizon scan of current Australian and international ageing related strategies to identify emerging trends, challenges, and innovations. Together with the Final Impact Review, these findings were used to inform the design of the Statewide Community Conversations approach and provide supplementary evidence to aid in the analysis of themes and findings. Please Refer to Annex 2 for details about the approach taken in the horizon scan.

2.3.3. Designing the approach

The Co-Design Group engaged in a workshop at the start of Stage 2 to help design the approach for the Statewide Community Conversations. Workshop activities included:

- identifying the Co-design Group's desired role in this stage of the project
- discussing the findings of the Final Impact Review and horizon scan research to create conversation themes that informed data collection
- identifying key priority population cohorts for engagement
- reviewing the inclusions for the proposed conversation engagement strands
- designing the data collection strategies and toolkit for the conversations
- creating a 'call to action' to promote the conversations.

The workshop with the Co-design Group enabled Think Human to design the Statewide Community Conversations approach for recruitment, sampling and data collection via two strands as described further below.

¹ There are various acronyms used to refer to the diversity and breadth of gender and sex identities and we recognise that some people reading this report may use different terminology. We have adopted LGBTIA+ as recommended by Office for Ageing Well as the preferred acronym amongst older South Australians.

2.3.4. Conversation Strands

The Statewide Community Conversations were delivered via two strands as outlined below. Please see Annex 4 for further details about the key differences between the two strands in terms of target populations and the conversation host profile.

Strand 1: Community-led conversations

Think Human designed and led Strand 1 which focused on building the capability of community members to take up the role of conversation host. They undertook the Statewide Community Conversations through peer-to-peer engagement, with a particular focus on people from priority populations who might otherwise not have had an opportunity to participate in such consultation activities.

Recruitment of conversation hosts was undertaken primarily through the Co-design Group and Think Human's existing networks, supplemented by Office for Ageing Well contacts as required. Given the small number of hosts recruited, there was no public broadcast call for conversation hosts.

The eleven conversation hosts recruited for Strand 1 included a diverse group of people with experiences of living in regional and rural South Australia or priority metropolitan areas², living alone, living in unstable or rental housing, and from backgrounds including people with disability, LGBTIA+ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, single women, and men³.



Figure 4. Participants in a Statewide Community Conversation

² This included lower income areas where people who participated in the Final Impact Review indicated they were not ageing as well compared to other regions.

³ The Final Impact Review found less participation from men than women and therefore were considered a priority group for engagement due to underrepresentation.

Strand 2: Staff-led conversations

Office for Ageing Well led Strand 2 where staff from Office for Ageing Well as well as staff from partner organisations were the conversation hosts who engaged with established groups of older people. Partner organisations included representatives from organisations in the Co-design Group, and staff from not-for-profit organisations, local councils and community groups.

While Strand 1 took a focus on engaging with diverse populations, Strand 2 also included engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, multicultural community organisations, and participants located in regional and rural settings. Further to this, Office for Ageing Well undertook parallel research and engagement strategies with priority groups to inform the next State Ageing Well Plan in addition to the Statewide Community Conversations described in this report.

Strand 2 engaged with older people and other community members via established and existing groups that were interested in participating in conversations about ageing well in South Australia.



Figure 5. Discussion table at the Consolidation Workshop

2.3.5. Community Conversation Toolkit

A toolkit was developed to enable conversation hosts to collect data from the Statewide Community Conversations in both strands. The toolkit included:

- background information about the project
- general guidance on hosting a safe and engaging community conversations
- sample run sheets for varying conversation group sizes and contexts
- information about supporting services for participants if required
- guidance on how to document and submit insights and demographic data from the conversations.

The guiding questions in the toolkit were shaped by conversation themes built from the findings of the Final Impact Review and horizon scan with additional input from the Co-design Group. These conversation themes were:

- **Wellbeing:** support to maintain health and wellbeing across the lifespan and into our older years.
- **Stronger Connections:** being able to make social connections, participate in employment, volunteering and local/community networks, social and digital inclusion.
- **Life Transitions:** planning early for later life, preparing for key transitions before challenges arise, improving service navigation, meaning and purpose, financial security, working lives.
- **Home and Community:** strengthening affordable, adaptable housing options, and supporting age-friendly communities that enable people to age well across different life stages and circumstances.

Please refer to Annex 3 for further information about the toolkit questions used in the conversations.

An online survey created a central point where conversation hosts from both Strands 1 and 2 could submit basic information about the groups, participant demographic data and the write-up of the group's comments and ideas. Supplementary data collection methods were offered to Strand 1 conversation hosts to ensure there were as few barriers as possible, such as submitting audio files and handwritten notes that were transcribed by Think Human staff.

2.3.6. Consolidation Workshop

All data from both strands were consolidated and subjected to thematic analysis using Converlens qualitative data analysis software. A results pack was put together to articulate the key findings emerging from analysis ahead of a consolidation workshop.

The purpose of the consolidation workshop was to present, validate and refine the findings, and discuss actions and recommendations for the next State Ageing Well Plan. The workshop was led by Think Human with support from Clear Horizon and Office for Ageing Well staff.

The workshop participants included Co-design Group members, conversation hosts, and representatives from partner organisations and Office for Ageing Well. The Honourable Nat Cook MP, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well, opened the workshop and heard from a panel of community-led conversation hosts about their experiences and priorities for ageing well.



Figure 6: Hon Nat Cook MP (pictured left) and Consolidation Workshop panel (pictured right)

2.4. Ethical protocol

Clear Horizon and Think Human adhered to ethical protocols informed by several key policy documents and ethical guidelines. All participants in Statewide Community Conversations were adults who participated on a voluntary basis. Remuneration and reimbursements for involvement were managed to recognise the time and effort conversation hosts and participants put into this project. See Annex 1 for further details.

2.5. Strengths and Limitations

The Statewide Community Conversation approach provided opportunities to reach people who would not normally participate in this type of consultation. This was a significant benefit for producing the findings of this report; however, resource constraints shaped methodological choices with lead to some limitations in the findings.

2.5.1. Strengths

Broader reach through trusted networks

Conversation hosts for both strands reached out to their existing networks where they already had rapport and trust with community members. For Strand 1, this meant that conversation hosts prioritised reaching those who were less likely to engage in formal focus groups, which allowed greater reach to a wide range of diverse voices and perspectives. For Strand 2, this meant that conversation hosts could engage with established groups to share their ideas about ageing well. This made it possible to reach a high number of people through this strand.

Flexible engagement methods

Conversation hosts were trained and supported to adapt their approach to meet the diverse needs of the participants, including engaging people in a one-to-one setting as required, in person or by phone. Some conversation hosts who were more confident as group facilitators personalised the approach and included more group work, whilst those with less experience followed the provided prompts and questions in the toolkit verbatim.

2.5.2. Limitations

Non-specialist facilitators

Whilst utilising peer community members as conversation hosts enabled success in engaging harder to reach groups, this meant that much of the engagement was carried out by people who were not trained extensively community engagement specialists or facilitators. This meant that the toolkit had to be more prescriptive in terms of structure and method than would be the case with specialist community engagement practitioners. Some community-led conversation hosts found challenges in going deeper into a theme or concept during conversations, discomfort in discussing challenging topics with community peers, or uncertainty about whether they were 'allowed to go off script'. As a result, some of the findings may be at a higher level than would otherwise have been the case.

Data quality constraints

To ensure the role of conversation host was accessible and manageable for community members, a range of documentation and data collection methods were permitted, including data recorded directly

into an online survey, audio recordings and typed notes. As such, the data provided by conversation hosts were of varying consistency, quality and depth. The quality of data also impacted the demographic results about the participants as this information was not always recorded completely. These issues, however, are not uncommon in participatory research approaches, which have the advantage of engaging people who might not have otherwise participated as noted in the strengths above.

3. DEMOGRAPHICS

3.1. Background

The following demographic data pertains to the people who participated in the Statewide Community Conversations. The demographic data Figure 8 to Figure 13 should be understood in light of the limitations in the quality of data collection.

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Engagement

The Statewide Community Conversations engaged a total of 317 people across multiple locations in Adelaide and South Australia as shown in Figure 7.

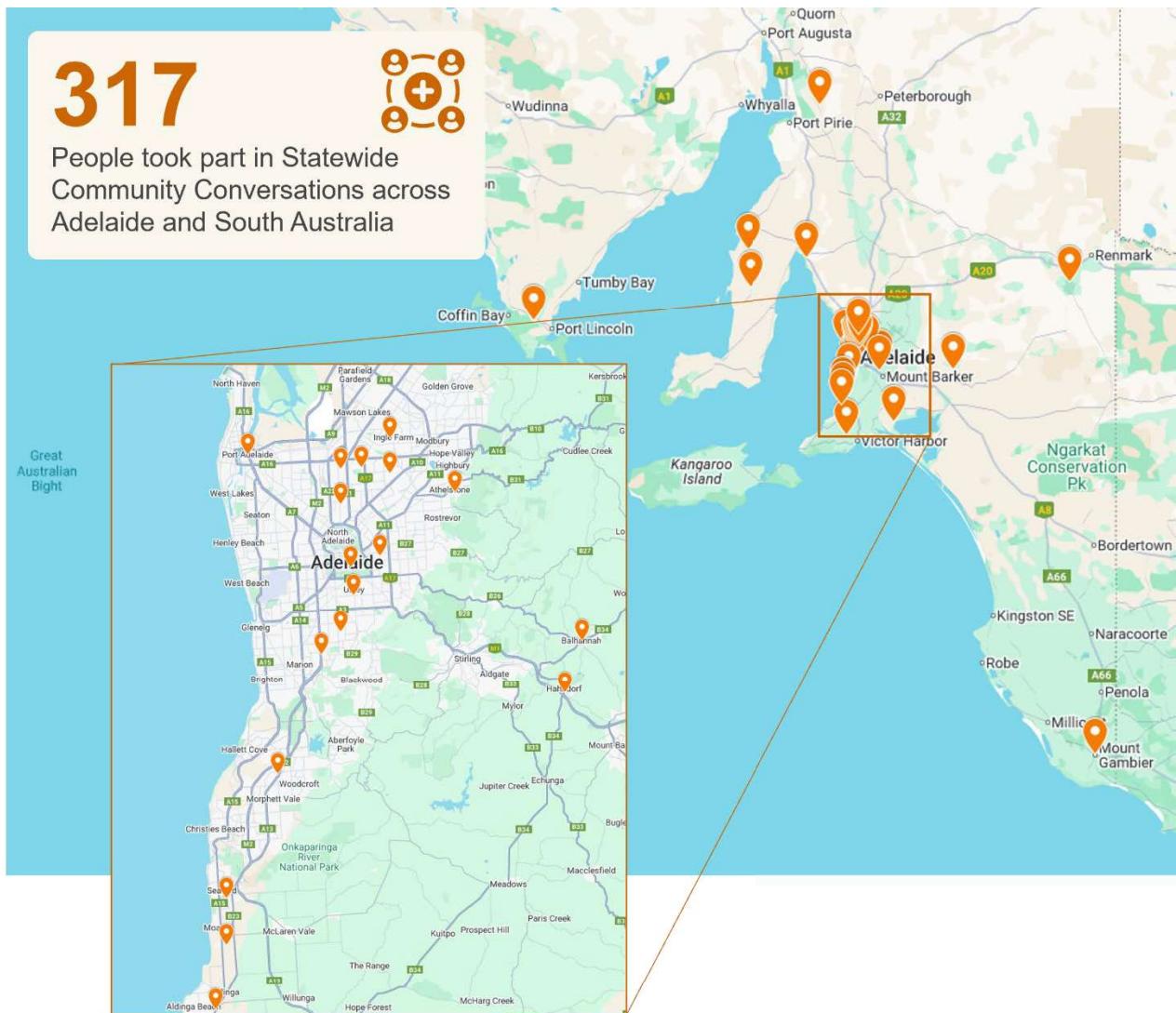


Figure 7. Statewide Community Conversations locations

Figure 8 shows the distribution of the 317 participants across both strands with 97 people in community-led conversations (Strand 1) and 220 people in staff-led conversations (Strand 2).

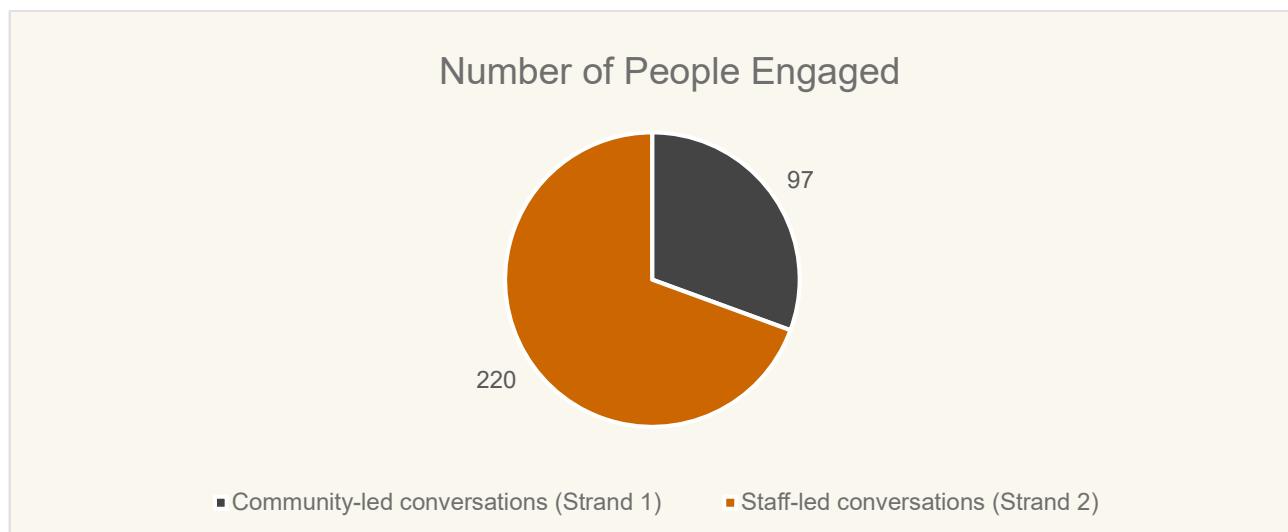


Figure 8. Number of people engaged in conversations by Strands 1 and 2

Figure 9 below presents a breakdown of the number of conversations hosted in each strand, with 36 community-led conversations and 18 staff-led conversations. What this means is that while there were fewer people engaged in community-led conversations overall, the number of conversations that took place to gain that level of engagement was higher. This data is the result of conversation hosts in Strand 1 having to contribute significant time and effort to enable comfortable engagement with people from diverse backgrounds through a variety of modes including on the phone, online, and in-person focus groups and interviews; whereas, Strand 2 were able to engage with larger numbers of people through established groups.

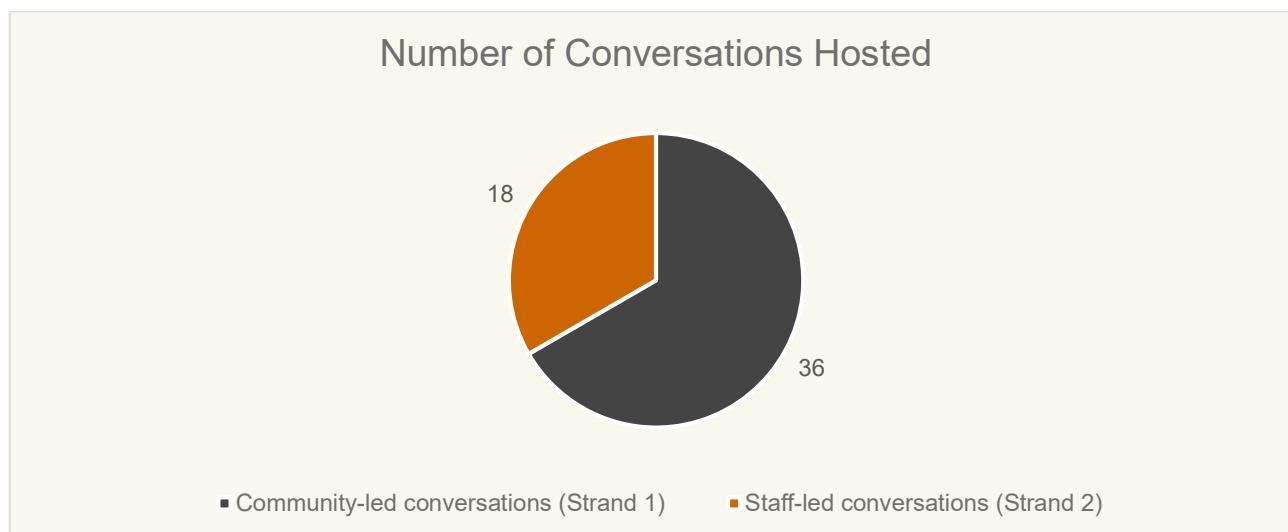


Figure 9. Number of conversations hosted in both Strands 1 and 2

3.2.2. Age and Gender

Figure 10 shows that the distribution of participants by age in both strands with 58% of participants (n=184) between the ages of 65 and 79, 22% (n=70) over the age of 80, and 20% (n=63) under 65 years of age.⁴

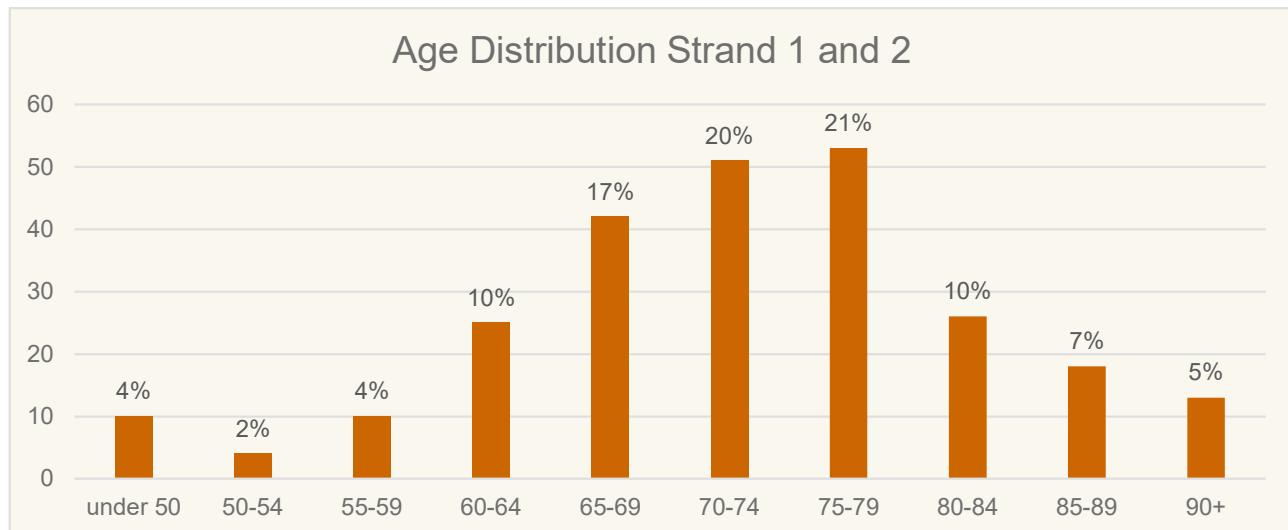


Figure 10. Age distribution in both Strands 1 and 2

Figure 11 shows that more women than men participated in the Statewide Community Conversations across both strands. Of the 317 participants in total, 292 participants reported their gender identity, with 68% (n=198) of participants identifying as women, and 32% (n=93) identifying as men. The demographic questions asked about gender diversity, however, only one person identified as non-binary in the results.

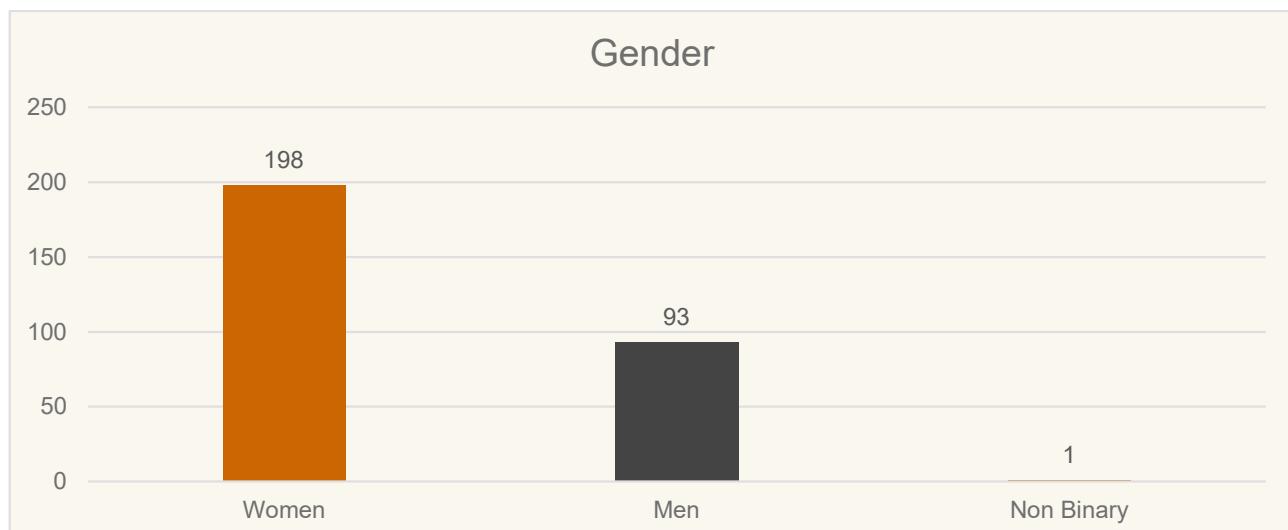


Figure 11. Gender distribution in both Strand 1 and Strand 2

⁴ The 'n' number is how many participants are included in the per cent, e.g., 184 participants is 58% of the 317 participants in the Statewide Community Conversations.

3.2.3. Social diversity

Figure 12 shows the overall distribution of social diversity in both strands, and Figure 13 presents this same data but for Strand 1 only, where community-led conversations focused more strategically on engagement with diverse populations. This type of engagement in Strand 1 is particularly visible with higher figures for LGBTIA+ people, people with disability, people living alone, and people living in regional and rural locations. As mentioned previously, there was greater engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and CALD communities in Strand 2 due to the staff-led conversations hosted in organisations that work with these populations.

It should be noted that participants were able to select more than one demographic identifier and demographic data were not always reported in every Statewide Community Conversation.

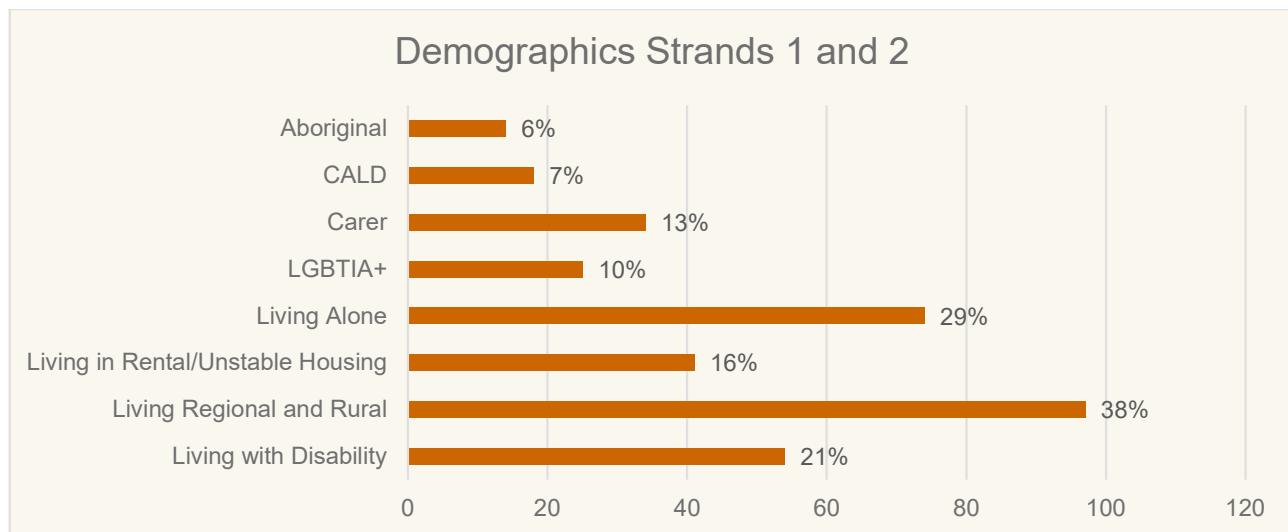


Figure 12. Social diversity demographics in both Strands 1 and 2

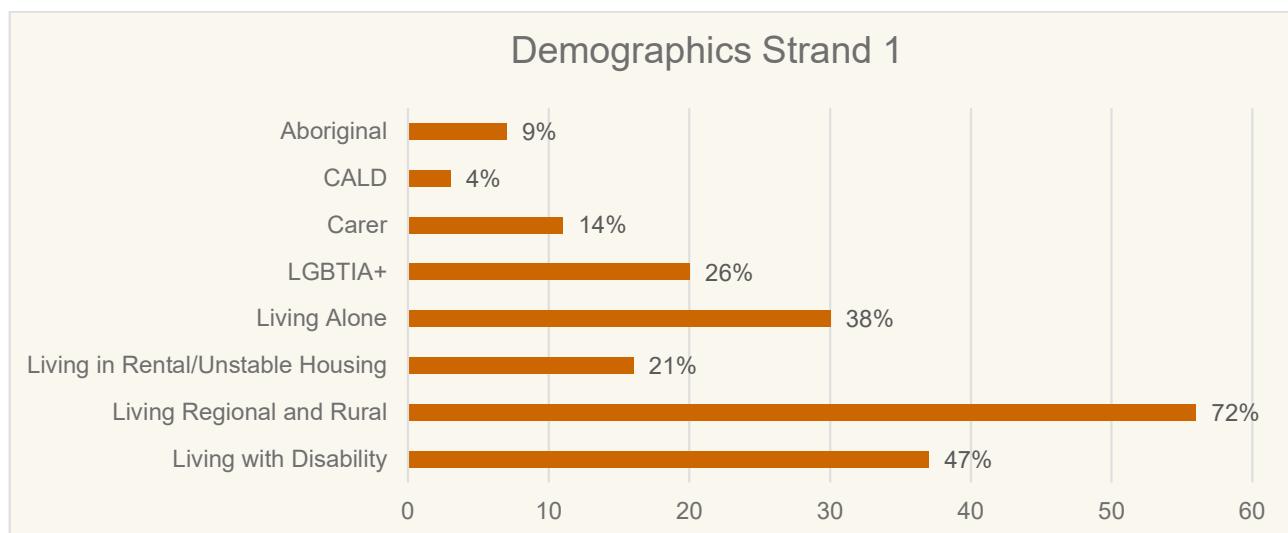


Figure 13. Social diversity demographics in Strand 1 only

4. FINDINGS

Four themes emerged from the Statewide Community Conversations

- People have **Peace of Mind**
- People are **Safe and Well**
- People are **Valued and Visible**
- People are **Participating**.

This section begins with a general overview of these themes followed by the findings for each theme and subtheme, including the desired outcomes and current challenges. Each subtheme also includes an analysis of Statewide Community Conversation findings with the wider context found in the Final Impact Review and horizon scan research. Quotes from participants are provided throughout the report to bring their voices into the findings.

It should be noted that there is overlap across the subthemes and challenges identified through the Statewide Community Conversations. This result highlights the interwoven barriers and enabling factors that support or hinder ageing well. For ease of reading we consolidated these as far as possible, but some issues appear across themes.

Finally, while the themes relate to all older people regardless of background, some findings were more pronounced for specific population groups as described in Section 5: Ageing Well for Specific Populations.

4.1. Overview of Themes

The Statewide Community Conversations highlighted a strong desire for **peace of mind** as people described significant concerns and uncertainty about meeting their basic, everyday needs as they grow older. While these concerns are potentially exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis, people did not think that the challenge of daily living will get easier in the near future. Many participants described witnessing the substantial rising cost of housing over many years (not simply in the last few years) and were concerned about what this meant for ageing well.

Related to having peace of mind, another strong theme was a need to feel **safe and well** as a key aspect of ageing well. The complexity of support systems combined with a shortage of local services, particularly in regional and rural areas, added to the sense of uncertainty and impacting wellbeing. Participants reported that existing services are complex and hard to navigate and many held concerns that governments were not necessarily prioritising reforms that would make systems and services more age friendly and accessible.

Older people want to be **valued and visible**. Participants expressed several concerns about this issue including the ongoing presence of ageism and marginalisation of older people; lack of connections, empathy and understanding across generations; and the segregation of aged care from

the rest of society. An age-friendly South Australia is one where age-positive policies and practices ensure that older people are valued by the systems that support them and are visible in society.

Finally, for a full and meaningful life, older people need to be able to **participate** and contribute fully to society. Participants described a loss of purposeful roles and opportunities in the workforce, combined with increasing digital barriers and exclusion, leading to disconnection and isolation. For South Australia to be genuinely age-positive and inclusive, older people need to be able to **participate** in all aspects of life as they grow older.

Across these priority four themes there are several subthemes and common enabling factors. Figure 14 offers an overview of these findings with further detail in the next sections of the report.

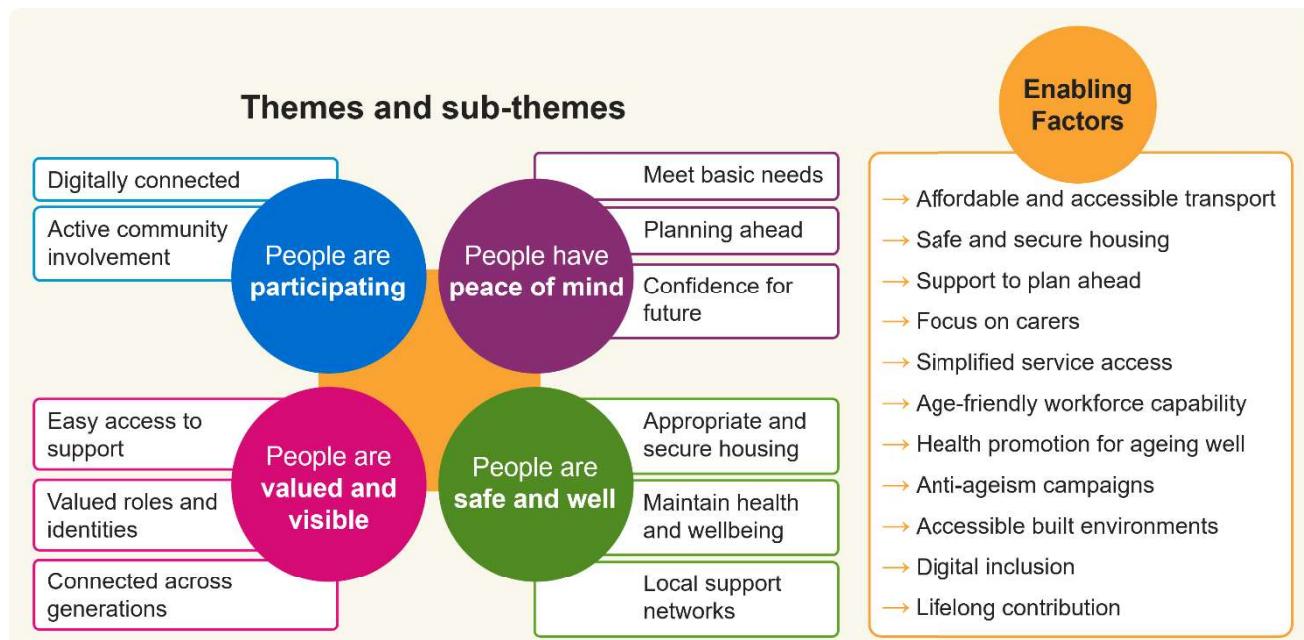


Figure 14. Themes, subthemes and enabling factors

4.2. Theme 1 – People have Peace of Mind

Older South Australians described peace of mind as being able to meet their basic needs, having confidence in the future, and being able to plan ahead for later life. Across the Statewide Community Conversations, these priorities were shaped by cost-of-living pressures, housing insecurity, difficulties navigating complex service systems, and uncertainty about future support. The Final Impact Review and the horizon scan reinforced these issues, with data and policy analysis showing how economic pressures, housing affordability, and service access challenges intersect to affect wellbeing.

4.2.1. People can meet their basic needs

Desired outcomes: People are able to meet their daily living costs and essential services are affordable, accessible and available locally.

Approximately 32% (n=101) of participants in the Statewide Community Conversations raised cost-of-living pressures and housing insecurity as major barriers to having their basic needs met. Rental insecurity was frequently ranked among the top three concerns in regional sessions. Participants described the rising cost of essentials such as housing, food, utilities, and transport, with regional and rural living compounding these pressures through higher travel costs, fewer retail options, and limited competition.

With a higher proportion of older people being on fixed incomes than the general population, these cost-of-living pressures can be particularly acute as people age. Private renters were particularly vulnerable, reporting not only higher financial stress but also a lack of security in their living arrangements. When basic needs are not met, participants reported that it was much harder to be actively involved and connected to the community. Participants emphasised that other goals in life can be achieved if these basic issues are addressed first.

Current challenges

- **Rising costs:** Many participants mentioned the increasing costs of healthcare, housing, and transportation, with concerns about the affordability of aged care and the barriers of home ownership to eligibility for aged care support.
- **Financial strain:** The pension has not kept up with inflation, leading to financial strain and a need for increased pension allowance to live rather than just survive.⁵
- **Utility costs:** The cost of utilities, such as electricity, is a significant burden even with rebates currently offered by government.
- **Food prices:** The cost of food at supermarkets has increased, making it difficult to have food and nutrition needs met.
- **Access to benefits:** Some people do not access to their benefits entitlements as they find the system (e.g. Centrelink) too hard to navigate or were concerned about the stigma of accessing government support.
- **Transportation issues:** Access to transportation (whether by driving or public transportation) was identified as a major issue alongside concerns about adjusting to changes in mobility needs and worries about becoming isolated if one cannot drive or access reliable transport.

⁵ For example, one participant noted that a pension increase of \$3 did not even cover the cost of a prescription.

“Transport is a daily source of anxiety for many older people – you’re uncertain if you can get to an appointment, if taxis will show up. It can even be hard to get out for a coffee with a trusted friend”.

The wider context

The Final Impact Review confirmed the challenges facing renters, with housing satisfaction at 77% for private renters compared to 93% for homeowners. Limited public transport added to these pressures, making it harder to access affordable shops, health services, and social activities: an issue also explored in Theme 2 (People are Safe and Well).

The horizon scan found that informal community and local networks can act as buffers against hardship, but structural reform is essential, particularly in the areas of economic security, workforce participation, housing and ageing in place. Strategies from multiple jurisdictions emphasise increasing the supply of affordable, age-friendly housing, improving rental protections, and promoting home modifications and adaptable housing standards to support ageing in place (Bergstra & European Parliament, 2021; COTA, 2021; Healthcare Denmark, 2019; New Zealand Government, 2019; State of Queensland, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023).

4.2.2. People have confidence for the future

Desired outcomes: People know what to do if their circumstances change and feel confident for the future.

To age well, people need to feel confident that they can continue to live well and connected to people and place. Many participants felt uncertain about the future particularly due to insecure housing. People shared experiences of being passed between organisations, receiving conflicting information, or being excluded by online-only service systems. Service access challenges were pronounced in rural areas, where limited public transport, a shortage of health professionals, and long wait times compounded anxiety about the future.

Current challenges

- **Housing:** Homeowners face financial burdens, such as council rates, water rates, emergency services fees, and insurance costs, which are rising. Those in rental properties are subject to frequent and steep rent increases. Many participants were concerned that their home may not be suitable as they grow older, and they do not feel confident that they will be able to stay there or find something suitable and affordable locally.⁶
- **Confidence in service continuity:** Many participants reported that they did not have confidence that the services and supports they need will be available to them in the future. Even where the services in question are the responsibility of the Federal Government, they want to see the State Government influencing change.
- **Trust in services and supports:** People also expressed low levels of trust in existing aged care and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services, with many expressing a reluctance to let staff into their home if the need arose due to concerns about skill level and risks to personal

⁶ For example, one participant who lives in a caravan noted that Government supports for modifications are not available to them to age well in place.

safety. Some were also concerned about local and global environmental impacts and want to see government investment and commitment to address these issues.

“More support at home across all areas, with less cost - even if you have a code for the Commonwealth Home Support Program you can’t get the services”.

The wider context

The Final Impact Review showed that confidence in navigating life changes declined from 64% to 57% between the midterm and final review of the previous Plan for Ageing Well. This result was the largest drop across all wellbeing indicators. Service complexity, duplication between providers, and digital barriers, as further discussed in Theme 3, were identified as major drivers of decreased confidence. While some Statewide Community Conversations participants reported feeling overwhelmed, those with a single trusted local contact shared that *coordinated local services* had made a significant difference to their confidence.

The horizon scan also found that locally coordinated service delivery, integrated offline and online navigation supports, and mobile health and aged care services are effective in building confidence in the future for ageing populations, with several strategies emphasising that these should be embedded in trusted community settings (Bergstra & European Parliament, 2021; Government of Wales, 2021; Healthcare Denmark, 2019; New Zealand Government, 2019; Western Australian Government, 2023).

4.2.3. People are able to plan ahead

Desired outcomes: The care needs of dependents, partners and close friends can be met today and into the future; plans for later and end of life are clear and established.

Around one-third of Statewide Community Conversations groups discussed the importance of being able to plan ahead for later life, particularly through legal, financial, and health planning. Many reported deep concerns about the needs of people they care for (e.g., dependents, partners and friends), particularly those already facing financial strain.

Current challenges

- **Future support for dependents:** People who are caring for a loved one – be that a child, partner or companion – need to have peace of mind that their loved one will be safe and supported if they are no longer able to care for them. This is a concern that begins much earlier in life, as parents of young children think and plan ahead to their own ageing journey and how they can continue to offer care throughout their own lifetime and beyond.
- **Planning ahead:** Participants expressed difficulty in navigating the process of establishing key legal documents relating to decision making for future health, accommodation, finances and wills. Whilst people recognise its importance, planning ahead tends to happen when people are already facing challenges. Participants who had completed their future planning documents, however, spoke about the sense of relief and control it gave them, and some actively encouraged peers to do the same.

“Actually, getting on and doing stuff before you are right in the middle of it. Like [...] doing your will before you die, getting that Advance Care Directive done while you can still make decisions for yourself, identifying and appoint a Power of Attorney to manage your money when you can’t do this anymore. Is there going to be somewhere there for me as I get a lot older?”

The wider context

The Final Impact Review reported some evidence of low engagement with legal planning tools and a lack of public awareness about these options. The horizon scan also found an emphasis in ageing policies on the importance of early and accessible planning, particularly for carers⁷ and people with complex family circumstances. It highlighted how embedding services in familiar community settings, as seen in several national and international strategies, can increase uptake, especially when combined with targeted outreach to priority populations (Australian Government, 2024; Government of Tasmania, 2025; New South Wales Government, 2023; Northern Territory Government, 2021; State of Queensland, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023).

⁷ The term ‘carers’ refers to informal and unpaid carers who are providing non-professional support to family members and loved ones. It does not refer to the professionalised caring workforce.

4.3. Theme 2: People are Safe and Well

Feeling safe and well as people grow older involves having both a sense of security and access to optimal health and wellbeing. Participants consistently emphasised that health is the foundation for ageing well. Many participants viewed good health and wellbeing as central to maintaining independence, social connection, and quality of life. Being safe and well includes living in secure, appropriate housing, access to health and in-home support, and strong local support networks. Challenges identified by participants included regional service gaps, inaccessible environments, and a lack of culturally safe care.

4.3.1. People have appropriate and secure housing

Desired outcomes: Secure and suitable housing is available and affordable for people as they grow older.

A priority as people grow older is to have secure, appropriate and stable living arrangements in appropriate housing (whether private, public, assisted, etc.). Many participants, however, described deep concerns and challenges for their current housing stability and into the future.

Current challenges

- **Staying local:** Participants were concerned about that a lack of suitable housing in their communities would not meet their changing needs as they grow older or allow them to stay close to family and established community and services. Those in the most marginal housing reported that they were vulnerable to relocation, such as for people living in caravan parks who face eviction from operators planning to increase revenue from holidaymakers rather than permanent residents.
- **Downsizing:** Some participants felt pressure to downsize (or 'rightsize') their homes, but this is not an easy decision, as a home often holds emotional, cultural, and familial significance. Many participants were open to the idea of downsizing in principle but did not believe that it would free up finances for them with the increasing price of property in well-connected familiar locations and the additional costs associated with moving (e.g. stamp duty).
- **Adapting to changing needs:** Even participants who owned their homes were worried that they may have to leave their home if their needs changed, or their mobility was restricted. Participants want to see a reduction in red tape to make it much easier to adapt existing housing to meet their needs as they grow older, including flexibility in planning laws to support adaptations and multi-generational living.

“But that's my home, I know, but it needs the insides adapted, but I don't have the affordability at the moment to put a ramp out, and there's nowhere to help”.

The wider context

As discussed under Theme 1 (People have Peace of Mind), the Final Impact Review showed private renters report markedly lower housing satisfaction than homeowners, and that insecurity is amplified for older women and people in regional areas. The review also found that regional participants were

concerned about a lack of appropriate, adaptable housing that forces some to leave their communities despite deep local ties.

The horizon scan confirms that these are not isolated issues, identifying housing affordability, adaptability, and security as core ageing policy priorities across multiple jurisdictions. Many ageing - related strategies emphasise tenure security, adaptable housing design, and integrating housing with local services, with several jurisdictions trialling culturally appropriate housing and shared living models (COTA, 2021; Government of Tasmania, 2025; New Zealand Government, 2019; State of Queensland, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023).

4.3.2. People can maintain health and wellbeing where they live

Desired outcomes: People have access to information and appropriate health and wellbeing supports and services locally to enable ageing in place.

Participants described varied experiences of maintaining their health and wellbeing, with access to local services a key factor. In general, however, people did not have high levels of confidence that services would be available when and where they were needed. This was particularly acute in regional communities. Participants commented on the lack of availability of My Aged Care packages, Commonwealth Home Support Packages services and NDIS services.

Current challenges

- **Support to remain living at home:** The majority of participants indicated a desire to stay living in a domestic arrangement (and not move into residential aged care) citing many mental, social and physical benefits as long as they can access the appropriate supports and can still connect with their community.
- **Navigating complexity:** Participants expressed significant challenges in navigating the complex systems for accessing aged care and disability support. They called for improved information and support to help people understand their entitlements and access services more easily when they need them.
- **Access to transport:** Transport challenges are a significant barrier to maintaining health and wellbeing, including both current and future transport challenges. Many participants reported significant fears that if they can no longer drive, they will not be able to get to important health appointments or stay connected to social activities that support their wellbeing.
- **Support through health transitions:** There is a need for better support at a local level when there are medical needs, such as hospital admissions or discharges. This is particularly the case for people who live alone. Particularly in regional and rural areas, the requirement to travel to Adelaide for care and support can be a significant burden on relationships and finances.

“What will help us age well? I mean, basically, its health, isn't it? If you're healthy, you know you can, if you're not healthy, you can have all the support in the world, but you're still not really going to age particularly well”.

The wider context

The Final Impact Review findings showed that access to health services remains uneven, with rural residents reporting lower satisfaction and greater difficulty accessing care. Potential solutions found in the horizon scan were that the health and wellbeing policies in other jurisdictions are increasingly linked to local-based service delivery models, community transport, and co-located services (Aujla et al., 2023; Government of Tasmania, 2025; New Zealand Government, 2019). Similar programs were highlighted New Zealand and Scotland, where sustained investment in community transport and local activity hubs has improved health outcomes and reduced social isolation (Aujla et al., 2023; New Zealand Government, 2019).

4.3.3. People have local support networks

Desired outcomes: People are connected to informal local supports and relationships outside the home.

The Statewide Community Conversations identified that informal networks can be protective against isolation and complement formal services. The presence (or absence) of local support networks strongly influenced participants' sense of security and quality of life. As one participant described, "*I'm afraid that when I get older and frail that there may not be anybody there for me.*" Concerns were particularly high during times of transition, such as bereavement, relocation, or declining mobility, where people feared losing friends, neighbours, and family.

Current challenges

- **People 'looking out for you':** Participants reported that they want to make sure they have key contacts who can keep them up to date as their needs change – "*you don't know what you need to know until you need to know it!*" This type of contact provides protective supports when people live on their own and require help to remain at home and helps them feel less vulnerable should they need in-home help.
- **Maintaining contact through life changes:** Participants described how as people's circumstances change and they are no longer engaged in the workforce, their networks can require more effort to maintain and social confidence can decrease.
- **Connection to local opportunities:** Several participants noted the importance of access to community centres and culturally familiar spaces to support ongoing connection and health and wellbeing. Staying informed about health (particularly preventative care and service navigation) was also seen as vital.
- **Fear of social isolation:** Participants expressed concern that they may become isolated as they grow older, particularly if their ability to get 'out and about' is restricted. This is a particular concern for people who do not have ready access to affordable public or subsidised transport.

"Being brave and making contact with people from my earlier life to see if they would like to catch up. Over time, I'm sure we've all let connections drift, and it is often hard to reconnect".

The wider context

The Final Impact Review results echoed this pattern, showing that those with strong informal networks report significantly higher wellbeing scores. In the horizon scan, social connection emerged as a recurring focus in ageing strategies in other jurisdictions, often addressed through multigenerational programs, age-friendly community design, and targeted support for priority populations (Aujla et al., 2023; New Zealand Government, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020). International evidence from the scan also showed that sustained investment in neighbourhood programs, multigenerational projects (further expanded in Theme 3) and culturally specific community initiatives strengthens these networks, reduces loneliness, and enhances resilience, particularly in regional and rural areas (Aujla et al., 2023; New Zealand Government, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020).

4.4. Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible

Older South Australians described being valued and visible as more than simple recognition; it is about having equitable access to services, meaningful opportunities for multigenerational connection, and the assurance that their unique identities and contributions are understood, respected, and reflected in policy and practice. While challenges and systemic barriers such as complex service systems, reduced community spaces, and barriers to cultural inclusion can undermine these aspirations, positive local examples demonstrate that inclusive, relationship-based approaches foster recognition and belonging.

4.4.1. People are able to access support with ease

Desired outcomes: information, services and supports are easy to find and navigate.

Service access was closely linked to feeling respected and valued. Participants described being “bounced” between organisations and struggling to navigate fragmented systems, particularly when they required multiple forms of assistance. For some, these experiences left them feeling invisible or undervalued.

While participants voiced many concerns, they also pointed to services that worked well. Positive examples included council customer service teams who provided personalised follow-up, and library-based assistance programs where staff offered trusted, face-to-face help. These examples highlight that respect and dignity are fostered when services are not only accessible, but also relationship-based with responsive qualities that participants saw as essential to their wellbeing.

Current challenges

- **Access to healthcare:** There are significant concerns about accessing healthcare services, especially in regional areas. The lack of accessible clinics, 24-hour clinics and pharmacies, as well as limited transport options, drives people out of rural communities.
- **Built environment design and planning:** Participants expressed concern about issues related to design and planning of built environments and their impact on accessibility for older people. Participants were concerned about the state of local infrastructure, pavements, ramps and access to facilities. Whilst new buildings may adhere to tighter building codes, older people risk remaining invisible and at home if they cannot safely navigate the local area to reach their destination.
- **Older people feel their needs are under-served:** Participants expressed the need for more support to live independently at home. When these supports are not available, they do not feel ‘the system’ values them. This requires flexibility and responsiveness in support services, as well as attention paid to improving navigation and reducing complexity. My Aged Care and NDIS were consistently described as very challenging to navigate, leading some to feel that the system does not want them to access supports.
- **Older people feel that government does not listen:** Whilst some participants were happy to have their voice heard through the Statewide Community Conversations, a number of groups expressed a level of doubt that anything will change as a result of this work to improve their ageing experience, signifying a lack of trust in government to listen and affect change.

“They [government] appear to have long pockets and short hands... They seem so unfocussed on the needs of the population”.

The wider context

These results align with the Final Impact Review’s findings on service complexity and limited personalisation, which show that such barriers erode people’s sense of security about getting the help they need. The horizon scan also found similar patterns in other jurisdictions, with strategies moving towards co-located service hubs, ‘no wrong door’ entry points, and community-based navigator roles. It found that other jurisdictions are addressing these barriers by embedding navigation and support roles within trusted community settings, ensuring multiple access points (online, phone, and in-person), with an emphasis on providing culturally safe services (New Zealand Government, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023).

4.4.2. People have meaningful connections across generations

Desired outcomes: South Australia has cohesive multigenerational local communities.

Participants described multigenerational relationships as uniquely enriching and distinct from general social networks discussed in Theme 2. Older people valued opportunities to share life experiences, cultural traditions, and skills, while younger people brought fresh perspectives, energy, and often practical help with technology. As one participant put it: *“It works both ways, we’ve got time to listen, and they’ve got things we can learn”.*

Current challenges

- **Negative impacts of ageism:** Some participants felt that ageism is still widespread in society, and their needs are less prioritised than those of younger cohorts. Some highlighted the need for more awareness regarding all types of abuse of older people, especially sarcasm and put-downs, both unintended and intentional forms of mental derision. One group noted that this negative view of ageing can be internal as well, and that it can be hard at an individual level to accept growing older.
- **Supportive connections through life transitions:** Participants commented on the need for informal networks of support that walk alongside you through significant transitions, including bereavement. Participants were concerned about the risk of losing friends, neighbours and family at these transitional points in life, for example, through enforced relocation, reduced mobility or declining health.
- **Ability to access community events:** Participants identified unintended barriers that hinder older people to access community events and opportunities. These include the limitations of the built environment in local communities that can pose mobility challenges and the attitudes of others who make limiting assumptions about older people.

“If people could realise that, just because you’re old, it doesn’t mean you’re not interested in things”.

The wider context

The Final Impact Review found that older people who participated in multigenerational activities reported higher life satisfaction than those engaged only with same-age peers, suggesting unique benefits from these exchanges. However, opportunities are diminishing due to the closure of shared public spaces and the lingering effects of COVID-19 restrictions which has moved engagement into online settings.

The horizon scan identified strategies in Victoria, Western Australia, and New Zealand supporting multigenerational projects as part of broader ageing well agendas (New Zealand Government, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023). These programs not only strengthen social ties but also address skills shortages, reduce ageism, and promote mutual understanding across generations.

4.4.3. People's unique identities and roles are valued

Desired outcomes: All older people from diverse groups are safe to be themselves and valued for their contribution to society.

Participants stressed the importance of recognising older people in all their diversity, not as a single group, but as individuals with different intersectional cultural backgrounds, identities, and roles.

Participants from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, CALD backgrounds, LGBTIA+ people, and people with disability spoke of the need for accessibility, cultural safety, inclusive language, and acknowledgement of unpaid roles such as caring, volunteering, and community leadership.

Current challenges

- **Concerns about negative community attitudes:** Older people need to feel safe and confident to express their unique identities without fear of encountering negative community attitudes. Encouragingly, most participants from the LGBTIA+ community expressed that they generally had positive experiences in their daily lives at present but were concerned if this would continue to be the case as they grow older and may become more dependent on external supports. Some priority groups, including participants who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALD and LGBTIA+, expressed some uncertainty about attitudes in aged care and concerns there may be negativity or a lack of understanding.
- **People feel invisible and disregarded as they grow older:** Participants held concerns that the sense of people's unique individuality seems to diminish in the eyes of others as they grow older, with widespread assumptions about what older people do, need, like and value.
- **Loss of roles as people retire:** Many participants reported a sense of powerlessness, lack of autonomy and lack of identity when they leave the workforce.

“I find probably one of the biggest challenges as I get older is the lack of one-on-one personal conversation in the business world, yeah, [...] Going from a situation where you've got fairly close communication and have to use those skills all the time to not seeing anyone”.

The wider context

The Final Impact Review found that feeling valued was a complex matter. Only 53% of survey respondents agreed they felt valued overall. Feelings of value increased with geographic remoteness, from 51% in major cities to 75% in very remote areas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (62%) also reported higher levels of feeling valued than non-Aboriginal people (53%); however, other groups—particularly people with disabilities (46%), non-binary individuals (29%), and those in community housing (40%)—reported lower levels of feeling valued.

The horizon scan found that embedding co-design processes with diverse older people helps people feel valued in their contributions and enables higher service uptake, greater trust, and improved wellbeing outcomes. For example, New Zealand's *Better Later Life* strategy supports co-design with Māori, Pasifika, and other culturally diverse older people, while Victoria's *Ageing Well Action Plan* funds community co-design initiatives to ensure services reflect local priorities (New Zealand Government, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022).

4.5. Theme 4: People are Participating

For older South Australians, participation is not simply about attendance; it is about having the skills, confidence, and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to community life. The Statewide Community Conversations showed that participation can be a source of identity, purpose, and wellbeing, whether through digital connection, volunteering, or involvement in local clubs and decision-making. However, digital exclusion, cost-of-living pressures, transport barriers, and declining local infrastructure limit participation for some people.

These issues echo findings in themes 1, 2 and 3 highlighting that these systemic challenges cut across multiple aspects of ageing well. Volunteering and unpaid roles also intersect with Theme 3, where the value of older people's contributions is framed as an essential part of identity and inclusion.

4.5.1. People are digitally connected

Desired outcomes: People have the support and confidence in their digital literacy to fully and securely participate in life.

Participants recognised that being online is now a prerequisite for full participation in the modern age, from accessing services to staying in touch with family; yet, barriers remain, including cost to access technology, lack of skills and confidence, and deep concerns about online safety. Common issues raised included inconsistent availability of technology training, difficulty navigating online services, and fear of scams.

Current challenges

- **Keeping up with technology:** Many individuals, especially those who are no longer using technology every day in the workplace, find it difficult to keep up with the rapid flow of technological advancements. This includes staying updated with new developments and maintaining their skills, knowledge and confidence. Participants found that support and training to build and retain these skills is inconsistent.
- **Cybersecurity and scam protection:** A significant concern for many participants is the risk of scams and cyber threats. This includes issues like internet banking safety, telephone scams, identity theft, and the negative impact of scams on confidence and the ability to use technology.
- **Online accessibility:** Many online services are hard to navigate regardless of age, making it challenging for users to access and use them effectively. This includes difficulties with understanding websites, apps, and managing passwords. Without the ability to use these services with confidence, participants held concerns about being reliant on others or at risk of missing out on services.
- **Fear of private numbers:** Due to the high frequency of scam calls, participants reported a fear of answering private numbers. As a result, they may miss calls from government and support services who frequently use private numbers to make contact.
- **Need for 'non-digital' information:** Some participants commented that there is still a need for hardcopy information in non-digital forms for those who face barriers to digital access and literacy.

“Instead of a glossy brochure each Budget release, print resources so we can have appropriate connections to suit our demographic”.

The wider context

The Final Impact Review found that digital barriers create substantial obstacles to service access and information, particularly affecting older renters, people on low incomes, rural residents, and those aged over 80 years old.

The horizon scan found that other jurisdictions are embedding digital literacy and inclusion programs into trusted community settings, often pairing skills training with affordable device and internet access. These initiatives commonly combine technology training with alternative service access for those who remain offline, and in some cases, integrate national campaigns to promote social participation among older people.

In the health domain, several countries are trialling digital health innovations such as remote monitoring and mobile healthcare teams to bridge rural gaps, linking digital inclusion efforts to broader wellbeing and social connection strategies (Bergstra & European Parliament, 2021; Government of Tasmania, 2025; Healthcare Denmark, 2019; New South Wales Government, 2021; New Zealand Government, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022).

4.5.2. People are actively involved in community

Desired outcomes: People are able to contribute to community in roles and opportunities that are meaningful to them.

Volunteering, mentoring, advocacy, and participation in local events were consistently described as vital for maintaining purpose, identity, and connection. However, mobility challenges, caring responsibilities, and transport limitations restricted access to these opportunities for some.

Current challenges

- **Barriers to community engagement:** A recurring theme was the desire for increased community engagement and accessible support systems. Participants emphasised the importance of inclusive community spaces, highlighting the need for councils to provide accessible and inclusive activities and for organisations to actively support people of all abilities and ages to become involved. Some regional communities were good examples of where this was working well; for example, in Mount Gambier, people described volunteering at Foodbank or helping at Generations in Jazz.
- **Government responsibility for supporting active involvement:** Governments and local councils have a significant role to play in enabling people to age well. Participants discussed the importance of government support for age-friendly initiatives, inclusive and accessible spaces and the elimination of financial barriers and 'red tape' that act as disincentives to taking up paid and voluntary positions.
- **Lack of transport options:** Significant concerns were raised regarding accessibility and transportation in other themes, and for this one, it related particularly to the difficulties in community participation when accessible public transport had limited availability or driving was no longer an option.
- **Barriers to paid and volunteering roles:** Participants described both barriers and enablers for paid and volunteering roles related to whether an organisation/employer was willing to allow flexible arrangements and adaptations for older people such as shorter shifts, home-based tasks,

or leave for those with health conditions or caring responsibilities. Some participants would like to see more flexibility from employers to recognise long years of experience, particularly when an older person may lack formal qualifications.

“It’s so hard to be out job seeking as you seem over-qualified for the sort of role you actually want at that stage of life”.

The wider context

The Final Impact Review found that current volunteering rates among older South Australians were 18.5%, which is higher than the national average (15.4%). This figure, however, signifies a downturn since 2016 when the volunteering rate for older South Australians was 21.9%. Factors such as cost-of-living pressures, the lingering impacts of COVID-19, and more complex compliance processes may contribute to this decline.

The horizon scan found that participation for older people is more sustainable when opportunities are flexible, locally driven, and matched to people’s skills and interests. Internationally, and within Australia, strategies emphasise micro-volunteering, ‘task-based’ roles, removing unnecessary administrative barriers, and investing in community brokerage roles to connect older volunteers with suitable opportunities, including multigenerational projects that address workforce shortages in aged care. These approaches reinforce that supporting older South Australians to participate requires addressing structural barriers, transport, digital inclusion, and flexible role design, alongside recognising and valuing the contribution that older volunteers make to community life (Aujla et al., 2023; New Zealand Government, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023).

5. AGEING WELL FOR SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

The four themes described above are relevant to all older people across diverse population groups; however, the Statewide Community Conversations found that some issues were more pronounced for specific population groups as discussed below.

5.1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

5.1.1. Current challenges

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants highlighted that older people in the community often carried the responsibility of caring for young family members, sometimes in the same home, placing pressure on limited household resources.

“Stress builds up as you are worrying about finances when you’re trying to help your children and grandchildren as well”.

The multigenerational support networks in many Aboriginal families means that older Aboriginal people may support multiple generations as they age, which can make future planning more difficult. Participants stressed the importance of culturally safe and trauma-informed services across all health services, including mental health. Aboriginal people also voiced a particular concern about hospitalisation as they grow older.

“Your own mob doing the home visits - if you’re a Nunga person you want Nunga staff”.

Many felt the current system fails to recognise cultural expectations, multigenerational living, and different forms of contribution that may be different to western traditions and practices.

5.1.2. The wider context

The Final Impact Review found that 76% of Aboriginal respondents⁸ felt supported by services, a higher rate than other groups, though gaps remained for culturally safe and appropriate service provision. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) played an essential role, but Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants reported that navigating mainstream systems continued to be stressful and culturally unsafe.

These findings align with broader calls found in the horizon scan for Aboriginal community-controlled service delivery and systemic reform (Kelly, 2024; State of Queensland, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023). The horizon scan also found that multiple Australian strategies identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need aged care services that support connection to Country, integrate traditional practices, and address trauma, particularly for Stolen Generations survivors. Policies emphasise culturally safe care models, investment in ACCOs,

⁸ Please note that 76% represents a limited survey sample size of 53 people.

and support for Aboriginal veterans and LGBTIA+ Aboriginal older people (COTA, 2021; Government of Tasmania, 2025; New South Wales Government, 2023; Northern Territory Government, 2021; State of Queensland 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023).

5.2. Rental tenants

5.2.1. Current challenges

Rental costs are escalating, meaning older people may find that staying in their local area is unaffordable, and resort to renting housing that does not suit their needs or support their wellbeing. Participants called for better protection for older renters, longer tenancies and the ability to make the necessary adaptations to stay and feel safe at home. Housing insecurity was a recurring concern. Many renters described feeling vulnerable and anxious not only about their long-term future, but also at the end of every lease period, with the constant risk of forced relocation.

“Rental is so expensive, it’s just unaffordable and then you end up in a bad area. Security is also very important to me”.

The undersupply of rental properties, escalating costs, and the lack of age-friendly housing compounds insecurities. Participants living in rental housing felt particularly vulnerable and uncertain about their future living arrangements. Without the ability to make adaptations themselves and with many being on low or fixed incomes, many participants expressed concerns about where they currently live, including worries for personal safety due to the behaviour of neighbours, and their lack of choice and control over how long they can stay in the current home. For some, the threat of being separated from pets if future housing does not allow them adds another layer of stress.

“There also needs to be better laws in place to allow pets in rental properties so we don’t have to surrender our most trusted companions to secure housing”.

Furthermore, the instability of rental accommodation places people at risk of losing informal support networks if forced to relocate out of their current area. Several participants had already experienced being moved into homes where they felt unsafe to come and go, eroding their confidence and reducing their access to support.

5.2.2. The wider context

The horizon scan found that policies in Western Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland aim to improve housing accessibility, promote age-friendly designs, and provide financial assistance for home modifications (New South Wales Government, 2023; State of Queensland, 2019; Western Australian Government, 2023). In Victoria, the *Ageing Well Action Plan* and initiatives led by COTA Australia advocate for expanded social housing options, rental protections, and increased financial support for older women at risk of homelessness (COTA, 2021; Victorian Government, 2022).

The Final Impact Review noted that older women in private rental housing were particularly disadvantaged. Issues included low superannuation, housing stress, and barriers to modifying rental homes, limiting their ability to age in place. These findings were consistent with national data and

COTA Australia's advocacy for rental protections and dedicated housing strategies for older women at risk of homelessness (COTA, 2021).

5.3. Regional and rural communities

5.3.1. Current challenges

People living in regional and rural communities⁹ were concerned about the lack of services to support daily living, and the ability to still get out of the house to meet their daily needs. Giving up driving was seen as a major turning point, with participants calling for more community transport options to reduce isolation.

“Because elderly people often have to give up driving. So it may be an increase in community bus services that go around and actually pick people up so that they’re not isolated in their own homes – so they can go and, you know, participate in still doing their shopping”.

Despite these challenges, one regional group highlighted the strength of building and maintaining multigenerational connections as a protective factor if they had to give up driving.

“Much will change if I lose my licence to drive. Always thinking of Plan B for that - keeping friends who can help, volunteers at local community centre who can drive me about if needed, exploring options for public transport, although there’s not much around [this area]”.

A recurring theme was a constant worry that they will have to leave their community in order to age well. An undersupply of local aged care and in-home supports, poor provision of health care services and little or no public transport means they feel particularly vulnerable if their day-to-day needs increase. People noted that those in regional/rural residents are particularly vulnerable to the need to relocate far outside their local community as their needs change, to access suitable housing and supports.

“Can’t stay in regional SA once kids leave, but I don’t actually like the city, I love the country and the home I had”.

Furthering this, the undersupply of both basic and specialist health care services, including allied health professionals, was a significant issue for participants from regional and rural communities. When people need to travel to Adelaide for treatment services that are only available in metropolitan hospitals, they are significantly out of pocket as reimbursements do not come close to covering the actual cost. As one participant noted: “\$60 isn’t worth the paperwork!”. Participants expressed particular concern about the lack of consistent access to health services and under-investment in

⁹ The Statewide Community Conversations were able to engage with people in regional and rural settings with fewer opportunities to engage in the remote locations.

regional hospitals and health services. Some in coastal and tourist hotspots feel that services are focused on seasonal visitors rather than their needs.

"We've got so many doctors here, but the problem on that scale is we've got people coming from [another location] ...coming here for the doctors. You know, admittedly, no, you can't stop it, but that's putting us six weeks [waiting time] to see a doctor, you know".

Participants in some regional and rural communities also expressed frustration that their needs are valued less than those living in the metropolitan area as they see disparities in transport subsidies and affordability.

"The fractured health system from ambos onwards. Sorely inadequate funding for us with special needs; let alone my wife's carer support pension. We need Bulk Billing for GP care. Disability car parks are appallingly inadequate and create even more stress. Regional hospitals should not be closing - they ought to be upgraded. We are frightened and concerned and stressed by all of the above".

5.3.2. The wider context

In the Final Impact Review, respondents from regional, rural and remote settings often reported strong community bonds but significantly lower access to transport, healthcare, and digital infrastructure. For example, only 55% of respondents in non-metropolitan areas felt they had adequate transport, compared to 86% in metropolitan areas.

The horizon scan found that policies and strategies related to ageing populations aimed to expand telehealth, mobile aged care units, and regional infrastructure to support for residents to age well in place. Notably, the *Commonwealth's Ageing Well Roadmap* emphasises digital equity, climate resilience, and inclusive ageing for regional, rural and remote populations (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024). Countries such as Denmark and Sweden have also pioneered digital health innovations, including remote monitoring and AI-based diagnostics, to support independent living (Bergstra & European Parliament, 2021; Healthcare Denmark, 2019).

5.4. Carers

5.4.1. Current challenges

When facing the future, older carers hold ongoing uncertainty about their own wellbeing as well as the wellbeing of those they care for. Participants in these circumstances reported that they struggle to balance their own health with that of their loved ones, especially when they may need to travel or attend appointments. They often find it hard to anticipate and plan for longer-term scenarios and eventualities.

Carers described feeling particularly invisible and under-valued in society and called for better support, including transport support for both people if the carer needs to access services.

“Making sure my son is taken care of, I guess, and able to function, even when I if I lose function, in terms of, for instance, if I couldn’t drive, that would be a lot, it would just be a lot harder to do a lot of things, since he doesn’t drive, You know, he has mental health issues that keep him from really leaving the house much or wanting to do much”.

As a result of their caring role and the focus on their loved one, carers can also become cut off from their own support networks; with some reporting a sense that everyone thinks they are always too busy to be involved in things.

5.4.2. The wider context

The Final Impact Review did not explicitly evaluate carers' experiences, however, the horizon scan found that unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting older adults, with several documents recommending financial, emotional, and practical support to people in caring roles. *Australia’s National Carer Strategy* advocates for greater recognition of carers, expanded respite services, and financial support (Australian Government, 2024). Similarly, New Zealand and Ireland have introduced policies to strengthen carer support networks through flexible work arrangements and increased funding (Department of Health, 2013; New Zealand Government, 2019).

5.5. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

5.5.1. Current challenges

Participants from CALD communities described the importance of maintain cultural ties and community connections while also experiencing challenges due to the size of the cultural community, language barriers and connections with wider society.

Participants reflected on the transitional period facing many multicultural communities in South Australia. Some discussed how the oldest members of particularly established communities who built and sustained clubs and associations (e.g., members of Greek, Polish, and Slovakian communities) are ageing and passing away. As their numbers decline, so too does the capacity to maintain the clubs and community infrastructure that once served as vital social, cultural, and wellbeing hubs.

While younger generations within these communities are also ageing, participants noted that they typically have stronger English proficiency and greater confidence navigating broader service systems. Many are more open to participating in programs and services that are not culturally specific, though they still value cultural connection. However, they are not necessarily in a position to maintain ageing-specific programs or the physical spaces older people relied on.

At the same time, newer and emerging communities, for example population groups from sub-Saharan Africa, Syria or Afghanistan, are becoming more established in South Australia. Whilst these communities include those who have migrated to South Australia as older people, they are often smaller in population size and have less resources and organisational infrastructure to establish dedicated spaces or regular programs that are culturally specific. Mainstream supports may not yet be

available in culturally appropriate ways or in language. As such, older people from these communities may not yet have access to any form of community-based support and may experience high levels of isolation.

Overall, the decline in established supports and infrastructure for established CALD communities and the lack of resources for emerging communities was identified by participants as a structural and systemic gap that requires urgent attention. Some participants recalled a former program, known as '*Salad Bowl*', which addressed this challenge by bringing together older people from different cultural backgrounds to participate in shared activities. The program was seen as inclusive, low-cost, and effective in fostering connection, peer support, and cultural exchange across communities. Many suggested that a modernised version of *Salad Bowl* held at multicultural organisations or community centres could offer a viable model for the future, especially in areas where standalone community programs are no longer sustainable.

Beyond the issues described above, participants also felt that the mainstream systems and services lacked an understanding of cultural norms and expectations such as multigenerational living, and different forms of social contribution that are not reflective of western traditions and practices.

“Current housing support and aged care options often fail to accommodate the preferences of diverse communities, for example, multigenerational living”.

There is a need for services to be delivered in accessible ways including support in language, from people who understand a person's culture and community. Participants mentioned a need for more culturally sensitive mental health support. Mental health responses were described, in some cases, as 'frightening'. Concerns were also noted around culturally appropriate processes for writing wills, assigning powers of attorney, or making Advance Care Directives.

5.5.2. The wider context

The Final Impact Review highlighted similar enduring challenges for CALD communities, including language barriers, reliance on family support, financial constraints, and the complexity of digital systems. A lack of culturally tailored information remained a key obstacle. The horizon scan found national and international evidence calling for more systemic multicultural planning and investment in interpreter services and digital inclusion (Australian Government, 2019; Bergstra & European Parliament, 2021; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024; Government & Cymru, 2021; Healthcare Denmark, 2019; New Zealand Government, 2019; Victorian Government, 2022).

The horizon scan found some solutions in age-related strategies such as prioritising multilingual services, cultural competency training, and outreach programs to CALD communities (COTA, 2021; Government of Tasmania, 2025; New South Wales Government, 2023; Northern Territory Government, 2021; State of Queensland 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023).

5.6. LGBTIA+ community

5.6.1. Current challenges

Participants from the LGBTIA+ community were concerned that their physical, social and care needs and preferences may not be respected in the future. A recurring theme was the importance of Advance Care Directives to protect individual preferences and identity.

“I think the one thing that kept coming up was care directives. That's something that we can absolutely individually do to help protect and maintain our health and wellbeing is having a healthcare directive that spells out how we want to be treated that covers things like grooming, you know, how often does somebody want to be shaved or presented... are they going to stay on hormone replacement and things of that nature. How are they going to be presented in an aged care facility if they're not able to dress themselves? Are they going to be dressed in, in the kind of clothes [they want], or are they going to be de-transitioned?”

Participants stressed the need to have greater assurance that services and supports they may need in the future will be safe and staffed by kind and empathetic people. This includes building housing options with community connection in mind for LGBTIA+ inclusivity. There was a call to make sure all staff are competent regarding the needs of LGBTIA+ people and to ensure services are funded consistently for continuity of appropriate care. For example, participants highlighted the lack of information, particularly in relation to transgender health and support for older people, in GP surgeries and other health and wellbeing services. Concerns were also raised about the potential for cultural and religious imposition in residential aged care, which could compromise safety and dignity.

Finally, participants emphasised the importance of maintaining connection to the LGBTIA+ community while also preserving individual identity. Despite progress, some still expressed uncertainty and concern about being accepted for who they are.

“[What matters to me is] being safe and secure, acknowledged and accepted in community settings as a gay man with disabilities. Not stigmatised for being who I am and having equal rights to everyone else”.

5.6.2. The wider context

The Final Impact Review included a dedicated focus group with older LGBTIA+ people, which found evidence of strong community connection but also significant concerns around inclusive aged care. Participants cited limited competence among health professionals to address the needs of LGBTIA+ people and a lack of visibility in mainstream services. These issues reflected horizon scan findings from national strategies and international best practice, which reinforced the need for mandated training and inclusive policy standards in aged care (COTA, 2021; Government of Tasmania, 2025;

New South Wales Government, 2023; Northern Territory Government, 2021; State of Queensland 2019; Victorian Government, 2022; Western Australian Government, 2023)

5.7. People living with disability

5.7.1. Current challenges

Participants living with disability commented that thinking about growing older in the future is a luxury as they were often highly focused on fighting for their everyday needs in the present. Preparing for ageing with a disability is particularly challenging, including finding disability-friendly housing and considering future needs.

“So, yeah, the housing that I live in is specialised for me with a disability, and I’m hoping the place that I’m hoping to move to [is also] disability friendly”.

Access to transport is already a significant challenge, particularly for those living in regional and rural areas where access cabs are not subsidised. The issue of navigating local areas is also exacerbated for those with physical disabilities. For example, some participants using mobility aids reported having to resort to using the road rather than pavements, which comes with significant personal risk. This concern also included physical access to community spaces and the accessibility of the broader built environment.

Dependence on paid carers can also mean people spend more time within their home they would otherwise wish. The loss of ageing carers and other members of their informal support network can increase their risk of social isolation. As a result, ableism was seen as a significant barrier to accessing basic services and supports that others may take for granted. Related to this, participants highlighted the incredibly long waiting times for NDIS assessments and reviews.

5.7.2. The wider context

The Final Impact Review highlighted significant challenges for people with disability who experienced significantly lower levels of accessibility, safety, and inclusion compared to the broader population. Whilst most respondents found their local environment easy to navigate (79%), this fell to 66% among people with disabilities due to infrastructure barriers. Relatedly, people with disabilities reported lower access to adequate transport options compared to those without disabilities (67% vs 81%). People with disabilities were also less likely to agree that their current home could adapt to their needs compared with those without disabilities (66% vs. 77%).

6. LOOKING FORWARD – SETTING THE VISION

The future of ageing well in South Australia is one built on dignity, visibility, and active participation. By eradicating ageism and embracing the wisdom that comes with age, South Australia can create a society where older individuals are integral to the State's communities and workplaces. Aged care will be valued and seamlessly integrated into the community, with significant improvements in human-centred care. Navigating the system will be easy, intuitive and just, prioritising support for those with complex needs, disabilities and valuing diversity in languages and cultures.

Ageing well in South Australia means that our communities will be happier, with equitable access to services and increased care provision, especially in regional, rural and remote settings. Flexible and sustainable grant funding will drive systemic improvements, which are not only reliant on government alone. Community hubs will be vibrant centres of multigenerational connections, fostering mutually beneficial relationships and offering purposeful roles and opportunities to contribute to society. Affordable and secure housing will be prioritised, with political will focused on long-term improvements rather than short-term fixes.

This is an ambitious vision that stretches far beyond the purview of Office for Ageing Well; however, the next State Ageing Well Plan offers an opportunity to leverage partnerships and communities to achieve a new landscape to achieve the desired outcomes outlined in this report. Together, we can start to build a South Australia where ageing is celebrated, and everyone, regardless of age, can live with dignity, purpose, and joy.



Figure 15. Groups of participants at the Consolidation Workshop

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emerged from analysis of the Statewide Community Conversations with the findings of the horizon scan research and Final Impact Review, with additional input from the Consolidation Workshop. The recommendations are structured as follows:

Enabling factors: A heading and short description that details the enabling factors for the recommendations and why the factors are important for the next State Ageing Well Plan.

Recommendation: Specific recommendations emerging from the findings related to the enabling factors.

Relevant themes: Connecting the recommendation to relevant themes described in the report's findings.

Community asks: The proposed actions put forward by participants in the Statewide Community Conversations and Consolidation Workshop. It should be noted that these 'asks' intend to shape the actions of the next State Ageing Well Plan, and some may already be in progress or under consideration.

Enabling factor	Age friendly workforce capability
Details	How and where services are delivered to older people has a significant impact on how 'safe and well' they feel. People seek greater assurance that staff who support them, in and out of the home, will have sensitivity, kindness and empathy towards their needs and will show respect for people's unique identities and stories. Older people from diverse background and contexts, including the LGBTIA+ community, people living with disability or neurodiversity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and CALD communities need confidence that their unique needs will be understood and met as they grow older, and priorities and values they hold dear will be respected. Uncertainty if this will be the case is a barrier to people seeking help when they need it.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="477 1450 1367 1518">1. Commit to building an 'Age Friendly South Australia' as part of the World Health Organization's Global Network. <li data-bbox="477 1540 1391 1608">2. Focus on building workforce capability to provide empathetic and skilled responses to diverse needs and preferences of older people.
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="477 1630 978 1664">• Theme 2: People are Safe and Well <li data-bbox="477 1675 1041 1709">• Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible <li data-bbox="477 1720 962 1754">• Theme 4: People are Participating
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="477 1787 1319 1855">• Improved use of gender and culturally inclusive language in all communications, services and supports. <li data-bbox="477 1866 1391 1996">• More training for staff in aged and health care services in supporting and respecting the wishes of the LGBTIA+ community, people living with disability or neurodiversity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and CALD communities.

- Create a ‘cultural passport’: a recognised document that outlines an individual’s cultural and personal needs and priorities.
- Implement consumer-driven policy and service co-design in all areas – ask and engage people as part of designing and delivering any new service, with a particular focus on engaging with diverse groups and regional communities.
- Advocate for / lead the drive for a National Centre for Excellence in Ageing Well: diverse stakeholders and sectors (including all levels of government) working together to find solutions and actions. Funded for a significant length of time – at least 7-10 years.
- Develop a South Australian State Happiness Index (SASHI) – ask communities what they want to measure, then standardise across the state. Involve communities, State and Local Government and communities.¹⁰
- Explore new models of delivering health care in regions, including exploration of more early intervention and prevention initiatives and enabling easier recognition of overseas qualifications to encourage health workers to take up regional roles.
- Invest in and prototype innovative models of community connection to build empathetic and caring communities across South Australia.
- Consider funding for ageing well officers in local council with State funding support.
- Fund local councils to provide ‘connector’ roles to help people link into supports and opportunities that help them stay active and involved.

Enabling factor	Affordable and accessible transport
Details	The certainty that people can continue to access reliable transport options as they grow older is critical to ensure people have peace of mind as they plan for later years. This impacts access to daily needs, social and community connections and health and wellbeing services. Affordable and accessible transport is particularly challenging in the regions and for people living with disability or those caring for others, where transport options do not incorporate the needs of both parties.
Recommendations	3. Ensure a dedicated and statewide focus on addressing the complex challenge of transport provision for all older people in South Australia.
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1: People have Peace of Mind • Theme 2: People are Safe and Well • Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible • Theme 4: People are Participating
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Government investment in regional, rural and remote transport and travel subsidies. • Prioritise community transport in the regions as a key enabler of wellbeing and participation.

¹⁰ SASHI would potentially include measures for: psychological wellbeing, health, time use, education, cultural diversity and resilience, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, living standards.

- Invest in co-design of innovative and responsive community transport schemes to meet local needs.
- Develop a transport transition strategy to ensure a focus on transport access for all, including the impact and opportunity of autonomous vehicles, car sharing initiatives etc.
- Consider the diverse needs of older people when exploring opportunities afforded by autonomous and electric vehicles over the next ten years.
- Increase investment in and provision of accessible parking and mobility scooter/wheelchair access.
- Subsidise maintenance and upkeep of supportive technology for disabilities and mobility, e.g. mobility scooters.
- Invest in transport to medical appointments and extend community bus hours.
- Provide support to older people to plan ahead for retiring from driving.

Enabling factor	Safe and secure housing
Details	<p>A safe, affordable, accessible and secure home is critical to ageing well and being able to stay living in the home of your choice for as long as possible. This may require adaptations to existing housing, a move to more suitable housing or investment in new housing models that support ageing in place. The barriers to this are complex and cut across government policies and portfolios at federal, state and local levels. Addressing these barriers and keeping more people living at home in conditions that suits their needs should ultimately lead to a decreased burden of cost to the government¹¹ and will encourage thriving communities. People who are in rental tenancies are at greater risk of having to relocate from their communities as they grow older, with the knock-on impacts of losing informal networks of support, breaking connections to known health and care services and the risk of losing the right to live with cherished pets. There was also a call to focus on homelessness policy and a reminder that this cohort can be forgotten by the system and face significant barriers to accessing services and supports.</p>
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Include a strong focus on renting and homelessness policy and practice across South Australia to better safeguard the rights of older people. 5. Commit to creating the conditions for people to grow older in their communities of choice.
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1: People have Peace of Mind • Theme 2: People are Safe and Well
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance older person's tenancy protections, including caps on rental increases, longer tenancies, accommodation of pets and the ability to make the adaptations needed to stay in place.

¹¹ <https://universaldesignaustralia.net.au/ageing-place-aged-care-costs/>

- Government incentives to encourage and enable adaptations in rental properties aligned to universal design principles.
- Education for older people on legal rights and obligations relating to tenancies and rental properties.
- Research to identify causes and situations of homelessness and innovative prototypes to reduce risk and exposure to homelessness and involve government, community and Homelessness Alliances.
- Develop affordable and culturally appropriate housing options, including shared housing and multigenerational models and encourage multi-generational living through legislation and incentives.¹²
- Expand the number of housing options that actively enable community connection and ensure they are accessible and inclusive (e.g. for people with disability and LGBTIA+ people).
- Provide more support for in-home modifications to help older adults stay in their homes longer and improve building codes for universal access.
- Remove stamp duty for older people who choose to downsize or relocate.
- Extend support and subsidies for home modifications to include non-permanent dwellings.
- Review the *Retirement Villages Act* to ensure operators have a percentage of affordable homes and a percentage of affordable rental options.
- Implement an advisory service that promotes reliable, age-friendly and affordable services and businesses e.g. master trades.

Enabling factor	Support to plan ahead
Details	Whilst there are existing resources and initiatives available to get things in order and plan for later and end of life, many people do not take these up. Those who do, often feel a peace of mind that comes with knowing things are in place, should their needs change or if they can no longer make decisions for themselves. The barriers to planning ahead are many, including cultural norms and stigma, lack of awareness of how to proceed, fear of the unknown or denial of the ageing process.
Recommendations	6. Commit to an inclusive approach to normalise and facilitate financial, legal and health plans for later life, tailored to diverse cultural and support needs.
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1: People have Peace of Mind • Theme 2: People are Safe and Well
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide/promote low-cost or free financial planning services for older people. • Implement 'plan ahead' education initiatives, sensitive to the needs of different contexts and population groups.

¹² Examples mentioned included making it easier and more affordable for older people to adapt homes to enable co-housing, home sharing or to add a small additional dwelling to a single-title property.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer in-person and online navigation and planning options, particularly in rural and remote areas. Education on legal rights and obligations, accessible and tailored to different diverse groups (e.g., workplace, housing and tenancy rights). Provide accessible and stigma-free planning services in accessible community hubs (e.g., in libraries).
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Details	<p>It is often family members and close community friends who ensure that those who need more support in our communities are loved, cared for and safe, yet these non-professional carers often feel unseen and undervalued. Policy and practice across the board needs to consider the wider context of carers' lives; a focus on them as individuals does not reflect the complexity of their support needs. Uncertainty for the future of loved ones is heightened as carers grow older, often to the detriment of their self-care and wellbeing.</p>
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme 1: People have Peace of Mind Theme 2: People are Safe and Well Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible Theme 4: People are Participating
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to respite options for full-time carers, including access to unplanned respite in the event of emergencies or unanticipated events. Provide flexible transport options that support both carers and those cared for. Improve workplace protections and supports that recognise the needs of informal carers.

Enabling factor	Simplified service access
Details	<p>The complexity of government support systems is a source of overwhelm and anxiety for many; this is the case as people grow older and becomes particularly acute when combined with other factors such as cultural and language barriers or additional needs and requirements such as those related to disability or gender and sexual identity. There was a clear message from South Australian communities that they do not want 'support to navigate complexity' but want to see a commitment to simplification to access they support they need as they grow older. Whilst people recognise that this is a substantial challenge that involves all levels of government, its impact on people's lives is profound. The current complexity of support systems means that more older people are reliant on others to help them navigate the system and access support, making them more vulnerable to abuse and control than they would be if they could manage their affairs themselves.</p>

Recommendations	8. Focus on reforming complex government systems into simplified and accessible service access, designed with system users.
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme 1: People have Peace of Mind Theme 2: People are Safe and Well Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build new support systems that are genuinely person-centred, co-designed with system users at all levels (staff, community, decision-makers) Advocate for one system across My Aged Care and NDIS and beyond that picks up people 'between the cracks'. Develop consumer-driven policy in all areas – ask and engage people as part of designing and delivering any new service, system or policy area. Influence the development of community-led models of health care delivery and decision-making. Advocate for supports to be delivered based on need, not age (e.g. not under and over 65 criteria).

Enabling factor	Health promotion for ageing well
Details	Good health is central to maintaining independence, social connection, and quality of life. South Australia needs to ensure that the public health system and health promotion practices enable older people to have good health as much as possible and address the social determinants of health regarding diverse cultural, social and individual needs. These practices may also extend to other government portfolios and settings where good health can be fostered and supported (e.g., transport, housing, workplaces).
Recommendations	9. Commit to building inclusive health promotion approaches for ageing well.
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme 2: People are Safe and Well Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible Theme 4: People are Participating
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence the food industry to enable access to affordable healthy food options for older people aligned to diverse cultural preferences and dietary needs. Provide free, comprehensive health assessments for all older people in South Australia, covering physical, cognitive, and emotional health. Support the development of personalised wellness plans with guidance from local services.¹³ Provide and promote free access to lifelong learning opportunities to stay engaged and maintain cognitive wellbeing (e.g., language classes, writing, or other workshops).

¹³ For example, suggestions for these plans included information about healthy eating, appropriate exercise such as balance and strength training, home safety audits, and strategies to avoid falls or injury.

Enabling factor	Anti ageism campaigns
Details	<p>Ageism continues to be a pervasive and widely accepted prejudice in South Australian society. Tackling it will be counter-cultural and will require dedicated and unwavering focus as it challenges many of the unspoken and accepted norms of society; for example, it is more worthy to be working and economically productive than not; youth is a desired state and being older is not. It should also be noted that tackling ageism will require a whole-of-life perspective on human value, with a commitment to ensuring that stereotypes and assumptions about all ages, young and old, are challenged and changed.</p>
Recommendations	<p>10. Continue to build on the anti-ageism campaign for South Australia as a state where all ages and stages of life are valued equally.</p>
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible ● Theme 4: People are Participating
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement education programs for all ages about the presence and harms of ageism and the mutual benefits of multigenerational connection. ● Build intentional multigenerational housing and communities to facilitate organic community connection. ● Collaborate with youth services to address ageism at both ends of the spectrum and address ageist stereotypes these groups may hold about each other. ● Enable and encourage connections between older people and local schools beyond 'grandparent days', including opportunities for older people to share skills and experience with children and young people in their local community.

Enabling factor	Accessible built environments
Details	<p>The maintenance and upkeep the built environment in local communities is an important enabler of access to community for older people. Whilst new civic buildings have accessibility standards to uphold, the ongoing use of older facilities, and barriers to access footpaths and in-roads to reach these facilities continues to present challenges. Whilst this will not be a 'quick fix', addressing the accessibility and age-friendliness of neighbourhoods and communities will be critical to ensure older people (and others facing mobility challenges) are able to maintain independence and visibility in their local community.</p>
Recommendations	<p>11. Commit to improving the accessibility of the built environment and facilities for all older people</p>
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible ● Theme 4: People are Participating
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invest in community hubs, such as libraries as an ideal focal point for providing access to events, information, support services, social connection.

- Ensure accessible transport to and from the community hubs/libraries (e.g., community bus on demand service).
- Prioritise community transport in the regions as a key enabler of wellbeing and participation and involve local, State and Federal Governments, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.
- Increase investment in and provision of accessible parking and mobility scooter/wheelchair access.
- Work with local communities to identify local priorities for action that enable ageing well.
- Provide subsidies for maintenance and upkeep of mobility aids (e.g., mobility scooters).
- Make safe and accessible footpaths for all a statewide initiative.

Enabling factor	Digital inclusion
Details	<p>Technology continues to advance and evolve at a rapid pace. It is likely that the technological landscape will be barely recognisable ten years from now; yet we still have the reality that some people face barriers to accessing even the most basic technology. The growth of artificial intelligence (AI) could enable greater ease and accessibility for older people; however, without an intentional equity and inclusion focus, the digital divide will continue to grow, with older people and those from diverse backgrounds at greater risk of exclusion</p>
Recommendations	<p>12. Focus on providing access to and support for digital technology for all older South Australians.</p>
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1: People have Peace of Mind • Theme 2: People are Safe and Well • Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible • Theme 4: People are Participating
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee digital training for all older people, including in the regions. This could include access to technology buddies to embed learning and support people to 'keep up'. • Support inclusion of non-digital modes of communication including printed information, face-to-face and telephone access to services as alternate options to digital access. • Focus on the development of age friendly AI tools and resources for older people, which is equitable and inclusive. • Ensure older workers are included in training and technology advances in the workplace. • Integrate scam-awareness training into core support services for older people, delivered locally or in-home. • Government, health and support services to use identifiable rather than private numbers to alleviate 'scamming' concerns.

Enabling factor	Lifelong contribution
Details	<p>A key pillar of wellbeing as people grow older is the ability to still be able to participate and contribute, whether through paid work, volunteering or informal opportunities in their community. For this to happen, there needs to be a diversity of options which are normalised rather than exceptional for older people, including longer working lives, vibrant and challenging volunteering opportunities and community-based meaningful roles.</p>
Recommendations	<p>13. Prioritise and incentivise the development of lifelong opportunities for older people to fulfil purposeful roles and meaningful contribution to South Australia.</p>
Relevant themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme 1: People have Peace of Mind ● Theme 2: People are Safe and Well ● Theme 3: People are Valued and Visible ● Theme 4: People are Participating
Community asks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support flexible, interest-based roles including micro-volunteering and 'brain work' with appropriate training and support. ● Improve resourcing for volunteer management to ensure volunteering roles and experiences are accessible, welcoming and supportive to people from diverse backgrounds. ● Fund grassroots initiatives and small grants for community-led projects. ● Improve transport options and maintain accessible, multipurpose community hubs. ● Publicly acknowledge older people's roles in volunteering, advocacy, and community leadership. ● Encourage multigenerational volunteering opportunities including proactive promotion and recruitment of younger people, working alongside older people. ● Incentivise and support age-friendly policies and practices in the workplace. ● Invest in retirement transition mentoring and support. Models need to be inclusive of culturally diverse needs. ● Normalise 'succession planning' when key staff plan to leave the workforce, invest in crossover and knowledge transfer alongside younger workers. ● Encourage workplaces to adapt roles to suit the diverse skills and stages of the workforce. ● Peer initiatives to reach out to and encourage people at risk of isolation to participate in community initiatives that align with their values and preferences. ● Initiatives for older people to share skills and experience throughout community and workplaces. ● Minimise red tape and barriers to volunteering. ● Use Assets-Based Community Development strategies to develop appropriate social and community roles.

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ANNEX 1: ETHICAL PROTOCOL

Clear Horizon and Think Human adhered throughout the project to clear ethical protocols informed by the following documents and guidelines:

- Clear Horizon's Privacy and Security Guidelines for Staff and Contractors [internal document]
- Clear Horizon's Privacy Policy [public document]
- Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluation, Australian Evaluation Society
- Ethical Considerations in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Activities, National Health and Medical Research Council
- National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, Volunteering Australia

All participants in Statewide Community Conversations were over the age of 18 and participated on a voluntary basis. Individual personal/sensitive identifying details was not recorded or reported; however, deidentified demographic data was collected and reported where possible. Verbal consent was given by participants at the start of each conversation. Where photographs were taken, each individual gave permission in writing using the Department's Talent Release Authorisation form.

Participants in Strand 1 were offered a \$30 voucher for their participation; as Strand 2 was engaging with existing groups, the protocols of the host agency were adopted.

Community Conversation Hosts from Strand 1 received reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses related to hosting the conversations and an honorarium of \$150-\$225 (depending on how many people were engaged) in recognition of the significant time and effort they dedicated to preparing for, delivering and writing up the conversations.

ANNEX 2: HORIZON SCAN RESEARCH

Clear Horizon undertook desktop research called a ‘horizon scan’ of current Australian and international ageing related strategies. The following describes the guiding research questions, search parameters, search strategy, search terms, and key considerations for the scan.

Research questions:

- What are the priorities and actions of other current (non-SA) Australian (national and state-based) and international Ageing Well Strategies?
- How do the priorities and actions of the current Australian and international strategies compare with the findings of the Final Impact Review?
- What recommendations emerge from the Horizon Scan to inform the priorities and actions of the next State Ageing Well Plan?

Search parameters:

- Inclusions: Current international, national and state level ageing well and related strategies defined as:
 - ‘Current’: a strategy that is presently active in 2025 (e.g., if a strategy covers 2020-2030, or 2025-2030 it will be included)
 - ‘National and state-based’: strategies from Australian state/territorial governments and national bodies (e.g., National Council on Ageing, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).
 - ‘International’: strategies from international bodies (e.g., World Health Organisation, OECD, United Nations) and governments of English-speaking, OECD Westminster Model nations similar to Australia: New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom.
- Exclusions: Clinical/medical research or healthcare policies/strategies, outdated policies/strategies (not current in 2025), and non-English documents.

Search strategy:

- Databases and websites: Google and Google scholar, Institutional and Government websites
- Office for Ageing Well recommendations (e.g., Ageing Well in the Commonwealth).

Search terms:

- Primary: ageing OR aging OR older AND strategy OR policy OR plan
- Secondary: ageing well policy, ageing well strategy, ageing well plan, age friendly plan, positive ageing, healthy ageing life transitions, midlife transitions.

Key considerations:

- Alignment with the Final Impact Review
- Lessons and examples from other domestic/international jurisdictions
- Whole of life and multigenerational approaches to ageing well
- Population and human rights approaches to ageing well
- Intersectionality and inclusion of diverse priority populations
- Possible considerations, where relevant, of reforms in South Australian palliative care and national stewardship of aged care.

ANNEX 3: CONVERSATION THEMES AND QUESTIONS

The following provides information about the community conversations themes and questions discussed in the methodology section.

Community Conversation Themes:

- Wellbeing: support to maintain health and wellbeing across the lifespan and into our older years.
- Stronger Connections - being able to make social connections, participate in employment, volunteering and local/community networks, social and digital inclusion.
- Life Transitions - planning early for later life, preparing for key transitions before challenges arise, improving service navigation, meaning and purpose, financial security, working lives.
- Home and Community - strengthening affordable, adaptable housing options, and supporting age-friendly communities that enable people to age well across different life stages and circumstances.

Key questions:

- What matters most to you about *this topic*?
- What challenges do you face in relation to *this topic* as you grow older?
- What could help you thrive in relation to *this topic* over the next 10 years?
- What else is on your mind as you think about growing older?
- This plan is for the next ten years. What would you most like to see change in the next 10 years?
- What is your most important message to Office for Ageing Well from this conversation?
- What would be the most significant change for you to feel like you could 'age well'?

ANNEX 4: STATEWIDE CONVERSATION STRANDS

The following table outlines further details about the key differences between the two strands in terms of target populations and the conversation host profile.

	Strand 1: Community led conversations	Strand 2: Staff led conversations
Target audience	<p>Priority populations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people living in regional or rural South Australia or priority metropolitan areas • people living on low incomes • people living alone • people living in unstable or rental housing • people from diverse backgrounds including people with disability, and LGBTIA+ people • single women • men (as an underrepresented group in the Final Impact Review) • people who are not already networked into formal groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established groups of older people in a range of community settings who would normally meet outside of the scope of this project. • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples engaged through partner organisations. • People from CALD communities engaged through partner organisations.
Conversation host profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members (including some people from the Co-design Group) from similar backgrounds as the priority populations. • Community members with existing networks that include membership of people from priority populations. 	<p>Professional staff from Office for Ageing Well and the following partner organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Onkaparinga • City of Salisbury • City of Unley Buddies and Belles • City of Port Adelaide Enfield (Kilburn Community Centre) • Victor Harbor Regional Council • Copper Coast Regional Council • Streaky Bay Regional Council • Council on the Ageing South Australia • ECH Inc • InComPro Aboriginal Association Incorporated • Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia • Unley Buddies groups