

Preparing a written response to ageism



Purpose

A guide offerings tips on how to use multiple formats: letter, email or social media post, to compose a written response to ageism. It provides guidance on how to structure your response and what you need to consider for different formats.



Audience

People, including older members of the community wanting to prepare a written response to their experience or observation of ageism and to challenge ageist stereotypes.

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[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/
AgePositiveCommunicationToolkit](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/AgePositiveCommunicationToolkit)

Before you begin...

- Identify the person/s and/or the organisation/s to whom you are sending your written response. You may need to send your written response to several parties especially where those parties have a shared responsibility/interest. Refer to Responding to Ageism Guide.
- If you are making a complaint through an authority or organisation, read through their complaint process to ensure you understand what you need to do. If necessary, contact the authority/organisation to clarify any points.
- Make sure that you have the correct contact information (email and/or physical address) to send directly to the relevant person/s.
- If you intend to post your response on a social media platform ensure that you are familiar with any rules concerning acceptable language and whether your comments could be considered defamatory. See the section on writing for social media on page three of this guide.

List continued on next page

- Make sure that you are familiar with word count limitations if you intend to prepare a 'letter to the editor' or post on social media platforms.
- Ensure that you provide your contact information (do not do this in social media posts) so you can be contacted to clarify any details and/or for the provision of a response. Also be clear if you are happy for your name to be published such as at the end of your 'letter to the editor'.

Structuring your written response

- Describe the situation/scenario in which you experienced ageism or perceive older people being portrayed in an ageist way. A short, objective, factual description is important for the reader to get a clear sense of context.
- Clearly state why you consider the situation/scenario demonstrates ageist attitudes.
- Make sure that you've incorporated any culturally diverse aspects that are important to you.
- Clearly state the perceived consequences of the organisation/person continuing with this behaviour e.g. how it reflects badly on the organisation/person, how it impacts on the portrayal of older people.
- Suggest how the organisation/person's ageist behaviour needs to change in order to challenge ageist stereotypes. This could include links to appropriate resources. Please refer to the list of useful resources in this toolkit.
- Conclude your response with what actions you hope will be taken to improve the situation and whether you expect to hear back about actions taken in response to your communication.



After you've prepared a draft



- Resist the temptation to respond quickly, particularly when feeling outraged or insulted. Prepare your reply and then review it the next day.
- Proofread your response to ensure that the points you have raised are clear, suggested actions are relevant and realistic and that your tone is calm and approachable.
- Read your draft out loud to yourself.
- Ask friends, colleagues or family members to review your draft.
- Double check that you have completed all the requirements if making a formal complaint.
- Double check that you have the correct contact details before sending your response. If you are sending your response to multiple parties make sure you have the correct details for all.

Writing for social media



Social media has gained great popularity over the past few years yet not everyone is a regular user of Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc. Preparing a post for these and other platforms requires a different approach including hashtags, reels and stories. You may need to consider:

- 1 **Relevance** - it is important to post your response to the most relevant audience. For example if you believe that a recent television commercial is ageist you are more likely to get a reaction if you post on the organisation's (service or products) social media page/s rather than your own Facebook page. This directly targets your response to the responsible party.
- 2 **Language** - different social media platforms use different language. It is important for you to take this into account when preparing your social media response as it increases the chances of your post being read and building an online collective response.

List continued on next page

- 3 **Length** - you can still use the steps on page two to structure your online response however, you have fewer words to get your point across. Include a 'headline' type statement in the first sentence to entice the audience to read your post. While it's important that you write in your own style, take a look at other posts especially those with many reactions to guide the development of your response.
- 4 **Positivity** - whilst wanting to challenge the stereotypical portrayal of older people it is important to politely suggest desired changes to behaviour positively not use negative, belittling or bullying language that may lead to further problems. Consider making constructive suggestions e.g. "I would love greater age diversity in the images X uses in their X ads" or "to get a better understanding of the financial realities for X I suggest you look at X research."
- 5 **Images** - consider using an image or video to help to get your point across. Social media is a very visual platform and using images could draw attention to your post.
- 6 **KISS** - Keep It Short and Simple, use plain English or culturally appropriate language; break it up with headings, bullet points and lists; limit it to two or three sentence paragraphs and be as succinct as possible.
- 7 **Call to action** - the power of social media is its ability to draw people together to build momentum for change. Consider what you want other readers to do to support your post - would having a high number of reactions to your post increase the possibility of change? If so, ask viewers to like and share your post.
- 8 **Respond to new posts** - the social media community is built on responding so it is important for you to reply to the responses your post receives. This may be answering any questions posted or directing readers to another website that provides suggestions for how to tackle ageism. You will find a list of useful resources in this toolkit.

For more information contact

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