



Engagement plan – Aged care community engagement approach 2023

Date: As at 12 December 2022

Version: 2.0

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Background

The Australian Government is putting security, dignity, quality and humanity back into aged care. This is in response to the recommendations of the [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's final report](#).

The aged care reforms will create a system that:

- makes sure there is a registered nurse in every aged care home, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- provides an average of 215 minutes of care per day for aged care residents
- includes a pay rise for aged care workers
- is simpler to navigate, with [face-to-face services to find care](#)
- [empowers older Australians to make informed choices](#)
- is [strongly regulated](#)
- provides better food for aged care residents
- makes providers [accountable for the government funding they spend](#)
- caps the amount home care recipients can be charged in administration and management fees, with monthly reporting.

Extensive engagement is occurring to deliver on the aged care reforms across four main audience groups:

- Older people, families and carers
- Aged care workers
- Aged care providers
- Aged care experts and peak organisations

The entire Australian community is impacted in some way by aged care reform. Therefore, community engagement is a critical part of aged care reforms, in particular making sure older people, their families and carers, and others who support older people, are aware of aged care reform and have the opportunity to contribute.

People are encouraged to [get involved](#) in the reforms and help drive change in aged care in Australia.

The [Aged Care Engagement Hub](#) was established as a central platform for people to engage in activity, depending on which audience group they fit within. The community engagement road show activity will encourage people to register for and get involved in future aged care reform activity via the hub.

Engagement principles

The following principles for engagement were endorsed in 2021 to guide engagement with consumers, families and carers about aged care reforms.

Senior Australians, families and carers are at the centre of our engagement, ensuring our policies and systems respond to the needs of people who need and use aged care.

	Purposeful engagement 	Timely engagement 	Respectful engagement 	Inclusive engagement 	Transparent 
Senior Australians, their families and carers	Senior Australians have the right to participate and have a direct and active role in the processes that affect their lives. We will make sure their voices and experiences are used to inform, design and adjust our policies, programs and projects. We will be clear about the purpose and intent of the engagement we intend to have.	Engagement with senior Australians requires adequate time. We will engage at the right time and with enough notice to make sure their views are considered. We will consider their time when asking them for input and compensate for time given when that is appropriate.	Ageing and Aged Care Group are strengthening capabilities in consumer engagement. We will listen to and respect people's views, ideas and their lived experiences. We will make sure our engagement is delivered in ways that are appropriate, safe and considerate to senior Australians, their families and carers. We will be sensitive about how we engage and the questions we ask.	Senior Australians will be engaged using dedicated methods and processes tailored to their needs. We will make sure our engagement is accessible to consumers so they have a genuine opportunity to contribute. We will ensure our engagement is culturally safe and appropriate. We will: • use simple language and visual tools to make information easier to understand. • translate material to Easy Read, and provide ways to access information in other languages, including Auslan • provide online and offline options for engagement, as appropriate.	Improved transparency with senior Australians will build trust. We will be open and share learnings and decisions at regular times. This includes providing information back to those who are involved in our engagements about progress and decisions made. We will be clear about how we will and have used information. We will continually evaluate engagement approaches and show whether they have been effective.
Our stakeholders	We will be clear about the purpose of our engagement. We will be respectful of an organisations' time when requesting advice and participation in engagement activity.	We will provide sufficient time and opportunity for stakeholders to consider issues and provide feedback. We will coordinate our engagement as much as possible to avoid stakeholder fatigue.	We respect the expertise of our stakeholders. We respect the knowledge and relationships these organisations have with consumers. We will be sensitive to commercial interests.	We will work with stakeholders and seek advice on the best approaches and requirements for engaging with senior Australians, their families and carers from diverse backgrounds and with more complex needs. We will work with all stakeholders in a way that is appropriate for them, including aged care organisations and workers, peak bodies and experts. We will partner with stakeholders to make sure engagement is equitable and representative.	We will encourage the sharing of information and learnings across government, the sector and the community, with consideration to privacy.

Community engagement objectives - 2023



Share information about the changes occurring as part of aged care reform and how these will benefit older people and the community. This includes communicating changes that have already occurred, and how these changes will impact people's experience of aged care.

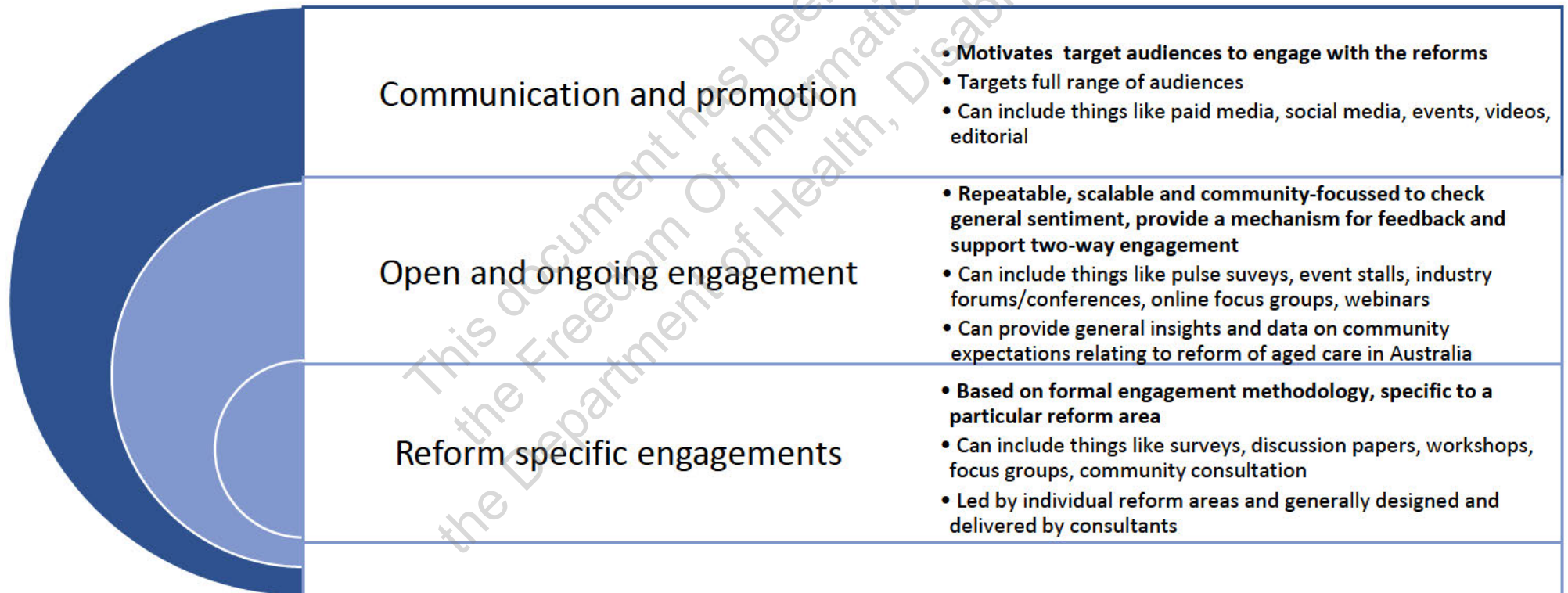


Learn from aged care consumers, older Australians, families and carers, and other stakeholders, about what they think of changes, how reforms impact them, and what matters most to them and why.



Understand how consumers and stakeholders are being impacted by reforms, as changes take place.

Integrating communication and engagement



Target audiences

The target audience groupings are relevant for the focus of this community engagement only. Engagement on aged care reforms occurs with a range of different stakeholders, with varying priorities and focus areas depending on the specific reform.

CRITICAL	Older people in Australia who use aged care services (consumers) – e.g., live in aged care homes or receive in-home care	Actively engage through events and partnerships
FOCUSED	- Families and carers of consumers - Older people who are considering accessing aged care services - People 50+ - Aged care workforce	Encourage engagement and build understanding of a new aged care system and how planning for aged care supports positive ageing
INTERESTED	- Consumer aged care, health, housing and mental health organisations - Aged care providers - Peak bodies - Industry	Share information and encourage their shared promotion of content and engagement opportunity about aged care reform
PASSIVE	All Australian community	Showcase content and stories that demonstrate progress to improve aged care and about specific changes occurring as a result of aged care reforms

Methodology

Community engagement approach to reach older Australians, their families and carers

1. **Community roadshow – a nine-month schedule from February – November 2023** of engagement via attendance at **30 events** across the country – refer Appendix 1 (Excel)
 - Led by Aged Care Communication, Engagement and Change Branch
 - Includes events organised, referred or attended by the department's State and Territory Offices (STOs) to develop ongoing partnerships for engagement
 - Must achieve a wide geographical spread to maximise reach and diversity and incorporate CALD audiences
2. **Event sponsorships – at least 10 sponsorships** (within the 30 events) that support attendance at in-community events – refer Appendix 1 (Excel)
 - Help to reach a diverse range of older people around Australia
 - Capitalise on new opportunities that may arise during 2023, for example new events that would be effective for sponsorship
 - Involvement of reform areas where specific community engagement needs to be targeted
 - Collaboration, where appropriate, with policy areas (for targeted consultation), state and territory network staff, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the commission), and other partners like the Council of Elders (CoE)
3. **Three national strategic partnerships** – to improve ongoing and regular engagement with older people in Australia and increase awareness of the reforms – refer Attachment B.
 - Prioritised during a workshop in December 2022
 - Three distinct types of partnerships will help to achieve the objectives outlined on page 5:
 - Media / content partnership – aiming to share content and disseminate information and case studies about improvements in aged care reform including what this means for older people in Australia
 - On-location partnership – engage older people in settings they already interact to help inform them about aged care improvements and reforms, as well as provide the opportunity for older people to give input to reforms
 - Organisational partnership – provide an avenue for the Ageing and Aged Care Group to increase engagement with older people through groups they already interact with (e.g. use of peak body or major older people's networks).

Selecting engagement events (refer Appendix A – Excel for draft list and prioritisations)

It will be important to be strategic about choosing the mix of the 30 events to get the most out of these event opportunities (including 10 sponsorships). In addition, within the 30 events all states and territories must be covered.

Larger audience – engage with lots of people (e.g. 1000 + in attendance)	Small, regional – engage people outside of main metro, for more in-depth insights to be gained on additional barriers to accessing aged care	Diverse populations – engage people from different backgrounds and circumstances to understand other issues or trends impacting priority population groups
✓✓ 70% of events (21) to be larger, metro-based (including in major regional centres) 10 capital (all capitals plus additional in highest population centres - Sydney, Melbourne) 10 major regional (one in each jurisdiction plus additional in NSW, SA, WA) (all 10 sponsorships to be of major events)	✓ 20% of events (6) small, regional events 1 in each state and territory (outside ACT and NT)	? 10% of events (3) targeted to specific population groups: • 1 First Nations in NT • 2 CALD – Qld and Vic

Prioritising and selecting strategic partnerships (refer Attachment 2 – Potential partnerships)

A workshop will be held to set clear objectives for partnerships, and to prioritise the three strategic partnerships – this will be based on recommendations in Attachment 2. An options report to progress the three strategic partnerships has been submitted as a separate document.

Engagement methods and materials

Questions for engagement - general

Following are the main general questions we would ask people in any community engagement event.

1. Have you heard about changes being made to Australia's aged care system? What do you know about the reforms?
2. When you think about accessing aged care support, what does respect, care and dignity look like to you?
3. What are the most important things you want to see improve under the aged care reforms?
4. How do aged care services help you achieve good quality of life – like staying active, being social or participating in community?
5. How has COVID-19 impacted your experience of aged care?
6. Do you have concerns about changes that might be happening in aged care?

Additional questions that are specific to reform areas would be provided by the reform and policy areas across Aged Care Group.

Additional questions relevant to localised issues and services could also be provided by the Department of Health and Aged Care state/territory and regional officers.

Engagement methods to generate discussion and input

Method	Purpose	Description – how to use	Key questions
In-depth discussions	Engage in meaningful conversations with the community to understand what's important to them, their concerns and ideas in relation to improving aged care (and in particular reforms).	Discussions led by an engagement specialist from The Social Deck, who will use the general discussion questions to facilitate meaningful conversations with older people, families and carers at events. Ideally, events would have seating available for discussions in a 'scone and tea' type environment. This is a tested research and engagement approach with older people in Australia, and they are particularly effective where people need more context, and when they want to participate through more personal conversation/storytelling.	All engagement questions

Live Feedback Wall (use of Menti where appropriate)	Capture a range of views and feedback on broad concepts and provide a visual representation so participants can build upon ideas and other contributions.	Display collective feedback, in real-time, at an event. It is an effective way to demonstrate transparency and can act as a point of interest/incentive for others to engage and contribute. Depending on the event we could use a 'billboard'/poster where people can add their ideas and thoughts directly, or incorporate use of an online tool, such as Mentimeter, which can generate and display a word cloud on a large screen.	What does good aged care look like? What can be done to improve aged care?: [themes] - Security - Dignity - Quality
Conversation cards	Raise awareness about the reforms and identify key issues for older people.	Short conversations at face-to-face community events. Conversation cards let community members choose their own topic area of conversation/focus, so they drive the conversation on what matters to them. They are also a useful way of collecting brief feedback in writing.	Questions 2,4,5 Specific reform questions when provided
Engagement Hub walkthroughs	Inform older people of the engagement hub and build their capacity to access and contribute to this platform.	As the primary call to action, the Engagement Hub would be offered and feature heavily during any engagement activity on laptops (number dependant on event size). Members of the engagement team will offer walkthroughs of the site, including where to find and register for open engagement opportunities, what we've heard and news (to demonstrate the value of engaging).	-
Complete the pulse survey	Increase participation in the pulse survey and better understand awareness levels and specific areas of reform important to community.	Encourage participants to do the community pulse survey on iPads or printed versions while at events, or encourage them to do it later. Postcards or other promotional items could be handed out to promote the pulse survey.	As per survey or short version built for online / iPads
Video feedback/ vox pops	Capture feedback, demonstrate engagement presence, and with permission of participants, produce content to promote and encourage engagement from others	Record interviews and discussions or on-the-spot 'vox pops' at engagement events. These could be filmed and edited by The Social Deck or, where appropriate, we could work with the department's video production supplier to attend some events.	Questions 2-4

Event engagement approach

The style of this community engagement requires an adaptable approach to meet the needs and interests of different people who might engage during events. The following guides the styles of engagement based on people's engagement commitment.

Person's commitment level and resulting aim of engagement	How to engage
1 MIN: Make aware	Share materials and let the person know about opportunities to engage
5 MINS: Find out what's most important	Ask what is most important to them; elicit feedback/views on this related area of reform or against 1-2 general questions, using conversation card or general conversation Contribute to Feedback wall / board (if available)
15 MINS: Get broad feedback	Encourage to do the pulse / other survey. Discuss and take notes on specific areas of reform important to them – understand what is important, what they know and what impacts reform might have on them
30 MINS: Get detailed feedback	In-depth discussion which provides the opportunity to understand what's important to them, their concerns and ideas in relation to improving aged care (and on particular reforms).

Resources and materials to support engagement

Engagement resources / collateral

Resources that people can 'take-away' will be used to:

- encourage people to engage at events
- prompt and continue awareness of the aged care engagement hub

Resource Pack

Every engagement activity and event will be supported by an event resource pack, which The Social Deck will develop in consultation with the department to ensure effective engagement, inclusion of priority reforms and technical accuracy of content.

The resource pack will include:

- an event run sheet
- overview of each engagement event/activity, including the purpose and methods used at each
- an explanation of each engagement method, including which resources are required and how to collect and record data
- a complete set of resources relevant to each event (e.g., posters, postcards, conversation cards, information sheet, script/talking points and discussion guide including about specific reform questions and areas for event staff).

Roles and responsibilities in engagement

There are four main parties to deliver this engagement program: **[this section to be checked / updated against the service officer document]**

Aged Care Communication and Change Branch	State and territory offices and delivery network for aged care	The Social Deck (contracted engagement specialists)	Council of Elders
Leading the program of engagement, management of Aged Care Engagement Hub, and coordination of communication and engagement for aged care reforms. Promoting engagement activity. Ensuring event opportunities align with Aged Care Group engagement objectives. Ensuring there is consistency and effectiveness of engagement with community about aged care reform processes, including leveraging involvement of consumer peaks and other stakeholders. Support policy areas to drive engagement at consumer events by providing strategic advice and producing comms collateral. Lead event collaboration between key partners to ensure effective and consistent delivery.	It's proposed that regional staff will attend events, where possible, and help to guide decisions about the best events and engagement priorities in their jurisdiction. State and territory offices can also request support for engagement they are undertaking at state-based or regional events. Through attendance at events, staff will: • Direct stakeholders to aged care information. • Direct consumers to the three My Aged Care access points for information on aged care programs and to assess their eligibility for services. • Talk to consumers about aged care reform and how reform programs may impact their experience of aged care in the local community. • Engage with local aged care sector about aged care reform and supporting them to understand and prepare for changes. • Report community feedback to the department's communication and policy areas.	Design engagement methods, questions and materials to support community engagement about aged care and aged care reforms over the next 12 months (2023). Manage all reporting of data to ensure that engagement produces meaningful outcomes. Facilitate partnerships to improve reach and engagement ensuring the community is aware of and understands how they can be involved in aged care reform and system changes that affect them.	There may be opportunities for Council of Elders to be involved in community engagement activity, a critical part of their role. Council members play a key role in sharing information about the reforms with older people living in Australia and sharing older people's thoughts and concerns back to government. This role may include: • Attendance at events to speak directly to community and consumers • Speaking opportunities arranged as part of sponsorship • Involvement in content as part of strategic partnerships

Communication and promotion

Promotions

The Social Deck will support promotion of community engagement events through channels such as:

- Community radio
- Local newspapers
- Relevant Facebook groups (by location/region, closed networks for older Australians)
- Local aged care facilities
- Community centres.

Coverage would mostly be unpaid and secured through outreach by The Social Deck, either directly to local media/facilities or through additional strategic partnerships with trusted organisations. We recommend approaching organisations like the Older Persons Advocacy Network, Men's Shed and National Older Women's Network who have established members and channels for disseminating information about local engagement opportunities.

Engagement events videos

The Social Deck will iteratively compile video footage and audio from engagement events as they are completed, including video feedback and vox pops (see engagement methods). From these, we can produce a series of video storytelling packages that can be used to support further engagement at events, and as data and promotional packages for aged care reforms (e.g., publishing videos with consent to the Engagement Hub).

The first video will be produced after the initial month or two of events, with regular updates throughout the engagement period. These will also be useful for partners to use when disseminating information to their networks about aged care reform engagement.

Reporting

Event reports

For each event attended, a report and data pack will be produced that covers:

- participation numbers
- key themes raised
- specific feedback and data points
- recommendations for future event/s of that nature.

This will include collating and coding data from each event so at any point in time, Aged Care Group can get a summary of the main issues and themes. We propose this would also align with analysis of data from the pulse survey so there is a complete package of community engagement.

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Final report

In October 2023, we will provide a final report that collates all key data, participation and themes from the community engagement that occurs under the scope of this engagement plan during 2023.

Risk management

Risk	Description	Rating	Mitigation
Low engagement/interest	Low engagement/interest at events due to: - consultation fatigue - mistrust in government - perception of inability to make an impact	MEDIUM	- Market research findings around current attitudes and sentiment will heavily inform any engagement content/promotional material - Engagement activities are person-centred and guided by what the individual says is important to them - A variety of engagement options will be presented at each event to provide choice - Engagement activities will be designed to keep interactions short and non-burdensome
Engagement data is insufficient/not representative	The data collected across the engagement activities either doesn't provide enough information, is not appropriately segmented or is otherwise inconclusive.	MEDIUM	- Engagement activities are designed and tested by The Social Deck's specialist engagement team - Reporting templates are used across activities to allow consistent data capture - Event summaries will be produced after every engagement activity to advise early and often on the level of data being captured
Event logistics/sponsorship arrangements fail	Events are unable to proceed as planned, or at all, due to errors, faults or unforeseen circumstances. Sponsorships don't deliver as agreed or expected.	MEDIUM	- The Social's Decks logistics team will manage all details of event planning and management - Sponsorship agreements will be carefully scrutinised and assessed for value for money - Contingency plans will be in place for every event in case of weather, technology, resourcing and other issues
Potential for public criticism/hostility from participants during events	Community members or stakeholders take the opportunity at public events to express hostile or aggressive views about the government,	MEDIUM	The Social Deck engagement team will be fully briefed on current community and stakeholder sentiment/media issues before every engagement event

	department or the aged care system.		• Our team are equipped to facilitate difficult conversations to ensure appropriate on-the-spot management and de-escalation where relevant • A reporting process will be built into our event management approach to ensure appropriate briefing of the department and further issues management
Impacts of COVID	COVID-related restrictions or considerations that relate to people, venues or events result in unforeseen changes, cancellations or supply issues.	LOW	• The Social Deck will develop and implement a COVID safe plan for engagement activities • Contingencies will be built for cancellations, product delays, staff shortages etc
People confused about purpose of the engagement (given the Royal Commission has already taken place)	People are less inclined to participate, responses / data doesn't provide useful insights	LOW	• Clear messages in all communication about purpose of the reforms and engagement activity • Standard TPs for engagement staff and govt staff • Issue register in place
Strategic partnerships are ineffectual/ unsuccessful	Negotiations or outcomes associated with strategic partnerships don't deliver on agreed outcomes, impact relations between government and partners or carry reputational risk.	LOW	• Strategic partnerships will be personally negotiated by senior members of The Social Deck team with experience working with partners • An approach to strategic partnerships will be outlined in the engagement strategy • A strategic partnership workshop will be held with the department to agree scope and objectives
Participants provide feedback on issues unrelated to Aged Care Reform	The data collected across the engagement activities either doesn't provide enough information, is not appropriately segmented or is otherwise inconclusive.	LOW	• Issues register in place • Attendance by relevant department staff at all events • A communication and engagement strategy is in place targeted to key stakeholders and with tailored activities to ensure meaningful, safe and accessible consultation

Evaluation of engagement activity

OBJECTIVES – What do we want to achieve?	TARGET OUTCOMES – What change do we want to see?	ACTIVITIES/ OUTPUTS – What will we produce?	METHODS OF EVALUATION – How will we measure activity and effectiveness?
OBJECTIVE 1: Share information about the changes occurring as part of aged care reforms and how these will benefit older Australians and the community. Raise awareness about what reforms have been implemented in response to consultation.	- Increased awareness levels of aged care reforms - Older Australians, families and carers see examples of how reforms will improve aged care - Older Australians, families and carers see examples of how reforms have already changed aged care	Events Promotional resources Sharable content via media partnership Other partnerships Storytelling Media coverage	- Pulse survey and/or market research - Event attendance – # people engaged - Visits to engagement hub/ analytics # stories / content features - Media monitoring - positive and new coverage - Reach in media
OBJECTIVE 2: Learn from aged care consumers, older Australians, families and carers, and other stakeholders, about what they think of changes, and what matters most to them and why.	- Increase levels of involvement of older Australians in reform activity - Reforms implementation is informed by consumers, families and carers	Engagement methods at events - Feedback wall - Conversation cards - Discussion notes Video stories / vox pops Data summaries from each event	- Discussion notes - Data coding / analysis of discussion notes and inputs from participants - Pulse survey - Assess: - Quality of data from engagements - Assess use of data / learnings by reform areas
OBJECTIVE 3: Understand how consumers and stakeholders are being impacted by reforms, as changes take place.	- Reforms are designed with an understanding of how they impact consumers - Aged care consumers, family and friends report feeling supported through aged care reforms	In-depth discussion during events Data collected through in-depth interviews	- Discussion notes - Data coding / analysis of discussion notes and inputs from participants - Pulse survey - Data / feedback being collected by reform/policy areas

Attachment A - Implementation / project plan (The Social Deck delivery)

*completed once events and partnerships determined

Deliverable	Task	Delivery date	Status

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the Freedom Of Information Act 1982 by
the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Attachment B - Partnership options – to be workshopped and determined

Organisation	Strategy	Community reach
Priority one		
Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) – the national professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector and supporter of adult literacy and numeracy. Or Australian Local Government Association – represents 537 councils across the country and is the voice of local government – a partnership would involve working together to pilot a place-based roll out of aged care engagement in libraries and other local government-run community centres.	Information dissemination via public libraries Local events in public libraries / other local resource centres Leverage / incorporate programs to increase older Australians' digital literacy	National reach Ensure some targeting to regional areas
Media partnership (e.g. ABC) – national broadcaster with content and programming across television, radio and digital platforms. <i>NOTE: A range of investigations and considerations will be needed to pursue this option and the media partnership would likely be entered into directly by the department, rather than contracted through The Social Deck, and would likely leverage media buys.</i>	Aged care and ageing experience/story collection Call to action to share stories and engage. Information dissemination – increase profile and awareness of what reforms are taking place	National and regional reach
National Seniors Australia, COTA or OPAN – work with existing peak a non-profit organisation with a large member base. Potential opportunity to provide information through their website, members-only section, and other distribution lists.	Information dissemination Support targeted engagement (Paid)	General, national
Additional options if above become unfeasible		
Probus South Pacific – social network for retirees, has chapters in each state and territory which could assist with local event planning.	Information dissemination Local events	Regional and national reach
U3A (University of the Third Age) – connecting older Australians to lifelong learning, local chapters in most states which could assist with local events.	Information dissemination Local events	Regional reach
Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) – manages EnCOMPASS aged care connector program, could assist with targeted information dissemination or facilitated engagement	Information dissemination Local events Support targeted engagement (Paid)	People from CALD backgrounds*
NACCHO – peak body representing 100+ Aboriginal health services. Information dissemination via health providers, community events	Information dissemination Local events	First Nations people*

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Expense Item	Estimate	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	
Project Management		23,760	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1800				
Strategic planning														
Strategic partnership workshop and assessment / write up		5,280		4,800										
Engagement Plan		5,808	4,800	480										
Event coordination														
Securing sponsorships for expo/festival events x 10 (3-4 days)		6,600						3,000						
Coordinating attendance at events x 20 - festivals/expos, events in partnership with SROs (10 Days)		15,840			1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600					
Promotion of events (up to 1 day for 10 which may require promotions)		13,200		1,200										
Strategic partnerships														
Libraries/LGA partnership scoping, strategy, set up & content support		8,800					4,000	2,000						
Media partnership, scoping strategy, set up and content support		15,840					7,200		3600					
Seniors peak / provider strategic partnership scoping, strategy, set up and support (3-4 days)		6,600												
Development, design and production														
Conversation cards series (up to 10)		3,960			3,600									
Design of engagement resources (collateral to support engagement)		6,600			6,000									
4 x vox pop video series (storytelling)		9,680												
Event attendance														
10 x expos / festivals (2 staff for entire events)		26,400			7,200	2,400		4,800						
10 x community events/expos (2 staff for entire events)		26,400				4,800	4,800	2,400	2,400					
10 x other local events partnership with regional officers (1-2 staff for entire events)		19,800												
Reporting														
Data analysis, coding (+ individual write ups for each event)		33,000			3,000	3,000	2,000	3,000	1,000					
Final report - brief evaluation/review of engagement activity with recommendations		9,680												
TOTAL		237,248												
Additional expenses														
Travel		32,000			3,148.94	5,851	784.6	6,839.56	3,254	801.77				
Stall fees (outside of sponsorship, 10 events at \$800 per event)		8,000			130.25			55	160	297.82				
Print costs (1 pack per event at \$600 per pack)		19,800			600	1,200	1,800	1,200	1,800	600				
Production and distribution of engagement resources (final budget to be agreed)		48,000			10,985		26,974.55	2,500						
Participant incentives (\$25 voucher or similar for some events, up to \$50 for more targeted engagement if d		12,500												
Total		120,300												
Plus GST		132,330												
Monthly totals			6,600.00	7,080.00	27,464.19	20,650.88	43,159.15	31,994.56	23,814	12,100	0	0	0	0
Total Inc GST			\$7,260.00	\$7,788.00	\$30,210.61	\$22,715.97	\$47,475.07	\$35,194.02	\$26,195.40	\$13,309.55	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Running total expenditure to date		\$190,148.61												
Total contract value (GST inc.)		369,578												
Total amount of contract allocated (GST inc) for 2022-2023 FY		\$252,813.00												
Total to be billed (GST inc) for 2022-2023 FY		\$62,664.39												
2023-2024 FY funds allocated (GST inc)		\$ 116,765.00												

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[illegible]



Aged care reforms

Community events 2023

Final report

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Executive summary

The Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) Aged Care Communication and Change Branch engaged The Social Deck (TSD) to coordinate and support a range of community engagement activities as part of their broader community engagement program on the aged care reforms.

This report covers engagement activity from February to November 2023 and includes insights gathered from DoHAC stalls at 20 aged care and community events across Australia.

The aged care reforms are in response to the recommendations of the [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's final report](#).

In recognition that the entire Australian community will be impacted by aged care reforms, this project focused on community engagement as a mechanism to share information about the reforms and better understand what is most important to older people, their families, and carers.

Generally, the report finds there is low awareness amongst older people about the aged care reforms, however many people were eager to engage with DoHAC to better understand how they would be impacted. Furthermore, there was genuine interest in providing feedback about the aged care system, including what changes are most needed.

The common areas of interest emerging from the data collected are:

- [improvements to the aged care workforce](#) such as recruiting, upskilling and retaining
- [challenges understanding and navigating the aged care system](#) including knowing how to access My Aged Care and receive services, the administrative burden of accessing aged care, understanding the process and navigating through each step
- [better information and communication so older people can make informed decisions](#) including having proactive communication in a range of formats and channels
- [support to stay at home as long as possible](#) with the need for additional and improved home care services and continuity of staff to support people at home
- [funding of aged care and affordability](#), which included suggested changes to means testing, measures to address the cost of living and changes to the way funding is allocated.

Learnings from community events

Overall, this report finds that holding stalls at community events was an effective way to reach older people, their families and carers.

Importantly, community engagement at these events [met the primary objective](#) of sharing information about the changes occurring as part of aged care reform and how these will benefit older people and the community.

They provided a valuable opportunity to have conversations with people who may not have engaged with DoHAC or the reforms otherwise (e.g., through attending focus groups). These events also served as an initial connection point to older people, who could then engage in more specific reform areas through the Aged Care Engagement Hub if they were interested in providing more in-depth feedback. The engagement materials at the stalls also worked well to generate insights from community.

While this report focuses on reform engagement insights, the stalls also provided an opportunity to engage with older people, their family and carers and providers about the aged care system more broadly. These interactions often included support from DoHAC staff to understand the system, from navigation to provider regulation and viability.

This report also identifies some limitations of the engagement activities, particularly in achieving the [additional engagement objectives](#). For example, engagement at many events involved relatively transactional interactions with older people, who were not prepared to have in-depth conversations about reforms. This impacts the quality of the data, which can lack context and depth.

The final section of the report provides some [recommendations](#) based on the learnings of this engagement program. Overall, it is recommended that continuing to attend events will help to maintain and increase awareness of the reforms and aged care more broadly. Other recommendations relate to increasing collaboration between government agencies in order to improve return on investment for future community events engagement.

Participation and activity overview

DoHAC engaged with over 3,000* Australians across 20 community events. These events included a combination of seniors-specific events, as well as broader community events open to general members of the public.

Engaged over **3000** people
at **20** community events



** note that the engagement number represents only those engaged in discussion with staff regarding reforms. Thousands more community members took brochures and materials from the stalls.*

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Throughout the events, conversations with attendees were predominantly held with:

- older people
- families and carers of older people
- aged care workforce or prospective workforce
- aged care service providers or prospective providers.

Methods

The reforms to aged care will impact all Australians in the coming years. This project recognised that community engagement is an effective way to ensure everyone can have a say on the issues affecting them, particularly older people. The primary objective of event attendance was to:

1. **share information** about the changes occurring as part of the aged care reforms and how these will benefit older people and the community. This includes communicating changes that have already occurred, and how these changes will impact people's experience of aged care (aligned with Recommendation 26 of the Royal Commission Report).

There are two additional objectives that the engagement activity was measured against as part of DoHAC's reform engagement:

2. **Learn** from aged care consumers including older people, families and carers, and other stakeholders, about what they think of changes, how reforms impact them, and what matters most to them and why.
3. **Understand** how consumers and stakeholders are being impacted by reforms, as changes take place.

There were a range of engagement materials used to encourage community input. The primary forms of engagement included discussions at the stall, conversations cards and a Live Feedback Wall where people could write their ideas on sticky notes.

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Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Q: What are the most important things you want to see improve aged care?

Write your answer here

Have your say at AgedCareEngagement.health.gov.au

1 Conversation card used to generate input from community members at aged care community events.



Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Let's change aged care together.

What changes would you like to see in aged care?	What does positive ageing look like to you?
--	---

Have your say at AgedCareEngagement.health.gov.au

2 A0 Size Live Feedback Wall Poster to generate input from community, captured on coloured sticky notes and stuck on the poster.

Data from each event was typed and coded in an excel spreadsheet, with individual event reports provided to DoHAC throughout the year.

Related documents

- Individual event reports 2023 (The Social Deck)

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Events

Events were selected with consideration of a range of variables including:

- geographic spread (attending events in every state and territory)
- a mix of regional, rural, and metropolitan locations
- demographics (e.g., First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse audiences)
- events where a significant number of older people were likely to attend
- a mix of events for older people (Seniors Expos) and broader community events (e.g., Dubbo Regional Show)
- timing of events (events needed to fall within a nine-month period).

Depending on staff availability, DoHAC stallholders generally included a mix of stakeholders in attendance from:

- DoHAC Aged Care Communication and Change Branch
- Council of Elders
- DoHAC State or Territory Office
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

State	Events
NSW	• NSW Seniors Festival (February) • Blacktown Sydney Seniors Expo (February) CALD focus • Coffs Harbour Living Well Expo (March) • Dubbo Regional Show (May) Rural/regional focus • Sydney Care Expo (November)
QLD	• Sunshine Coast 10th Multicultural Seniors Festival (April) CALD focus • Gold Coast Seniors Expo (April) • Bundaberg Seniors Lifestyle and Care Expo (June) • Townsville Seniors Expo (July) • Cairns Positive Ageing Expo (August) • Brisbane Care Expo (September)
NT	• Katherine COTA Seniors Expo (March) First Nations focus • Darwin COTA Seniors Expo (May) • Alice Spring COTA Seniors Expo (August) First Nations focus
VIC	• Melbourne Care and Ageing Well Expo (February) • Melbourne Care Expo (August)
WA	• Perth Care and Ageing Well Expo (August)
SA	• Adelaide Disability, Ageing and Lifestyle Expo (October)
TAS	• Tasmania AgFest (May) Rural/regional focus
ACT	• ACT COTA Autumn Seniors Festival (March)

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1 DoHAC stall at Tasmania AgFest



2 Staff from DoHAC State Office, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, Council of Elders and The Social Deck at Adelaide Disability Ageing and Lifestyle Expo.



3 An older person participating in engagement activities at Perth Care and Ageing Well Expo



4 DoHAC stall at Bundaberg Seniors Expo

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Part I: Insights from community

This document has been released under
the Freedom Of Information Act 1982 by
the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Awareness of reforms

Generally, there was **low awareness amongst older Australians** about the aged care reforms, particularly during events held at the beginning of 2023. As mainstream media coverage increased throughout the year relating to specific reform announcements (e.g., the 15% wage increase for aged care workers) there was increased awareness when community members were prompted about specific reforms.

In discussions at the stall, the reform measures that were widely regarded as positive were:

- wage increase for aged care workers (some people thought that this reform did not go far enough)
- aged care Star Ratings for residential aged care facilities (some people also wanted to see this expanded to in-home care providers)
- improvements to food and nutrition in residential aged care
- caps on the amount home care recipients can be charged in administration fees by providers.

Concerns about reforms

The main concerns people had about the reforms related to the **unintended consequences of specific reform measures**. These concerns were predominantly raised by aged care providers or workers.

Increased care minutes

Some individuals raised concerns about implementation of increased care minutes. They spoke about residential aged care facilities in their local area phasing out positions, such as lifestyle workers, and redirecting this resource into carer roles (in order to meet the reform requirement).

This was seen as problematic as it could mean the loss of specialised skillsets and a lack of quality in these types of programs due to lack of prioritisation. The quotes below were captured on conversations cards and illustrate concerns regarding Lifestyle Assistants.

Lifestyle Assistant - role is changing. No longer able to work in memory support. Due to increase in care minutes, providers are funnelling lifestyle assistants into carers, and we're losing that service.

Residential aged care needs more staff on each day to deliver lifestyle and leisure programs to meet the social, spiritual and cultural needs of residents. We will never achieve best resident outcomes here.... New aged care standards relate directly to this yet facilities/orgs still don't staff adequately.

A registered nurse (RN) in residential aged care facilities 24/7

There were concerns that this reform would result in significantly higher costs for providers, without necessarily resulting in improved outcomes for residents. Some providers felt that RNs are generally not needed throughout the night and can instead be on call during this time, which would lower costs.

Other aged care workers were concerned that the increased resource allocation towards RNs would mean other positions would be made redundant (e.g., enrolled nurses). This would result in losing these individuals from the workforce, who are skilled and have demonstrated a commitment to aged care.

Finally, some providers in rural and regional areas felt that due to significant workforce shortages, they would not be able to meet this reform measure and would be unfairly penalised as a result.

General scepticism of reforms

Some people who approached the stall held general scepticism about the reforms. During discussions, these attendees said they did not feel that the reforms would make any difference to older people. Participants who held this view often used the example of multiple royal commissions in recent years, which they thought did not produce tangible outcomes for their community.

Others felt that the reforms did not go far enough and major systemic change should include reviewing the involvement of private providers in aged care. In these responses, participants suggested that aged care system should not be privatised and should only include not-for-profit providers.

There will be no genuine change until facilities are non-profit.

All aged care should be in Gov hands - not private providers.

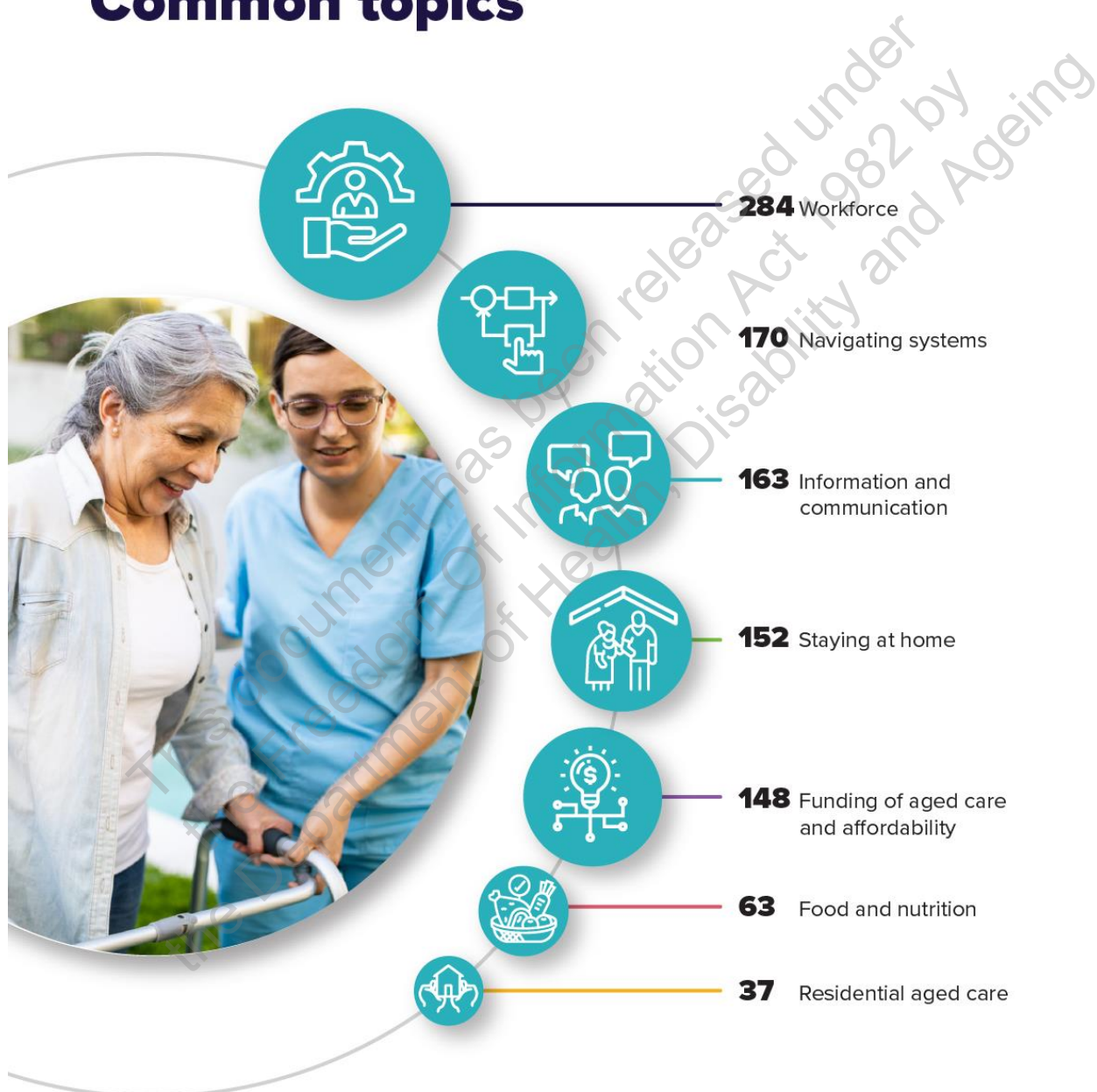
Government are essentially paying for services to make profit, some things should not be privatised.

Emerging themes

This section provides an overview of the key themes and priorities that emerged from conversations and the data collected (either on the Live Feedback Wall or conversation cards) during the 20 community events.

These common topics related to the aged care system overall, as well as reforms. The numbers and order of the themes represent the frequency by which these main themes were raised as areas for suggested improvement or as a priority.

Common topics



3 Common topics raised by community members at events.

Improvements to the aged care workforce

The most commonly raised topic was the importance of growing, upskilling, and retaining the aged care workforce. This topic was raised by all audience groups (i.e. older people, carers, providers, and workers).

Suggested improvements included:

- Ensuring aged care workers receive appropriate pay that is competitive with other industries (including the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)).

Better pay for nurses/staff in comparison to NDIS and Government.

- Proactive recognition and response to workforce shortages and the burgeoning aged care economy (a recruitment drive to encourage more workers into aged care).

Employ and train more people, especially young school leavers to work in aged care for a DECENT wage.

Incentivise mums returning to work.

- Ensuring there are the 'right' type of people employed in aged care (often describe as empathetic, patient, and caring).
- Ensuring aged care workers have strong communication skills and proficiency in English.
- Making sure aged care workers have the time to sit and talk to older people. This needs to be considered as a part of their role.

Memories - let them talk (workers shouldn't talk all the time - workers should listen).

- Providing quality professional development opportunities and training that is face-to-face, not only online.

...I don't feel confident in skills e.g. drugs knowledge, wound management.

- Specific training and upskilling in specialist areas like Alzheimer's and dementia care.

Not enough understanding of dementia from staff.

- Making sure there are career pathways for the workforce so they can transition and progress within the industry.
- Providing incentives and initiatives to encourage staff retention.

Challenges understanding and navigating the aged care system

Many older people spoke about the difficulties they had in understanding and navigating the aged care system. **Common questions or pain points for people** included:

- Initially accessing aged care services and long wait times on the phone to My Aged Care.

Navigating aged care system is difficult. I have to call multiple numbers, getting referred.

- How the Commonwealth Home Support Program works (eligibility) and how it connects with aged care packages.
- How aged care packages are assessed through My Aged Care and understanding what personal information needs to be provided from older Australians as part of this process (administrative burden on older Australians and perceived unnecessary paperwork).
- Why an assessment can take so long and a lack of communication during this period (i.e., people were unsure of the status of their application after waiting for some time). Some people noted that they gave up on accessing services during this period.
- Understanding the Assignment Letter once assessed for a package and specifically, what the next steps are.

Need clear advice re next steps once get letter advising of package - then what and why does it take 6 months.

- How to select in-home care providers and what to do if services are not available in your area.
- Difficulty understanding how to upgrade packages to increase the level of service provision as needs increase.
- What to do if you are unhappy with a provider and how to make changes.

I don't know who to talk to about changing my providers. I know I need a new code but how do I get it?

- Lack of integration across government service systems (e.g., Services Australia, NDIS, My Aged Care, hospital, and health services).
- Perception that the aged care system is unnecessarily bureaucratic and complex.

Some **suggested improvements** to make navigation of the system easier for older people included:

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- Simplify the aged care system and reduce red tape for both older people and providers.
- More face-to-face services to support older people to register for My Aged Care.
- Having one central care planner to support older people through the assessment process (rather than calling multiple numbers or continual referrals).
- A My Aged Care call-back service to reduce waiting times on the phone.
- Simplification of the Assignment Letter (after assessment) which should be in plain English and clearly articulate next steps.

Letter of Offer [assignment letter] needs to be in plain English with steps on how to implement package.

Use health literacy guidelines to write the letter and then test the letter with people of different levels of cognitive ability.

- Integration across aged care and health systems and services to ensure older people are supported.

Need better integration between the hospital, rehab, and aged care systems. Long wait times to discharge older people from hospital.

GPs need to be educated on what the Commonwealth Home Support Program is so they can refer.

Better information and communication so older people can make informed decisions

Many attendees at the stall were concerned that older people and their families often don't know where to find information about aged care. There was also often confusion about the aged care systems itself.

Common suggestions included:

- Proactive communication to ensure older people understand the aged care system and know what support is available.

Need a strategy similar to bowel screening, cervical screening. Contact people when they become eligible to say 'now you've turned XX, it's time to think about aged care who will help you etc.

Clearer communication about pathways in different stages of aged care.

TV ad campaigns on first step to take to access aged care.

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- Providing information through a wide range of formats, including hard copy, online, and providing face-to-face support (particularly Services Australia).
- Ensuring key messages aim to educate people on their options and encourage agency of older people to make decisions.

Education for people going into care - about future decision making, and care services.

- Providing information on what home care providers are available and ensuring these are area specific.

Easier to find out what in home services are available.

Provider list particular to rural areas.

- Providing information in many different formats and through different channels, including face-to-face, digital, television.
- Ensuring older people understand their rights and have information about advocacy organisations (including information about elder abuse).

Support to stay at home as long as possible

A key priority or goal for older people was the ability to stay at home as long as possible, with a range of suggestions about what would help to support this. Common areas discussed included:

- Continuity of aged care support workers going into older Australian's homes and greater certainty of visit times. Older Australians spoke about the frustration with having to reexplain each time where items are kept and not being able to develop a relationship with staff.

I want the same people to deliver my services. Be advised well in advance if they change the time and people. They should stick to the agreed time for services and day.

More consistency with home care package i.e. hard to get services with same people, difficulty building relationships.

- More availability of home care services, particularly in rural, regional, and remote areas and in specific categories of service delivery (e.g. maintenance and gardening services).

In Dubbo - can't get services - cancelled at the last minute. 3 weeks to get through to MAC. No community care. High demand... not enough services both in RAC and HC.

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- Improving home care services, including communication, transparency, quality of service delivery, and avoiding the use of agency staff (i.e. subcontractors).
- Additional home care supports are needed by older people during night times.
- Personalised support, which supports independence.
- Implementing a star rating system for home care providers to ensure transparency and informed decision-making.

Funding of aged care and affordability

There were a number of issues raised about the affordability of aged care, and how funding and means testing works. The key areas for review or improvement included:

- Changes to the way unspent funds are dealt with.

You have to exhaust your unspent funds before you can be reassessed for higher level package or an aged care home. Should access ACAT sooner > 11 month wait for assessment.

- Changes to means testing and the way in which assets are assessed.

Farm is an asset, but income isn't high. Need a more fair way to charge fees. I saved super but others spend it. I need it for my services, they don't.

Shouldn't have to sell your home to receive aged care.

The calculator on MAC does not take into account that for the first 2 years, the value of the home is not counted.

- Adjustments to accommodate the increasing cost of living.

A greater increase in pensions...

It's frustrating that the costs involved are not all covered by the packages.

Travel costs should not come out of people packages, people in rural areas are spending so much on travel which leaves limited funding for the services they need.

Cost of meals and transport is too dear - price caps.

- Changes to the way in which funding is allocated by government.

HCP funding should be held by the government like a bank. Transfer between providers would then be simpler.

Change the funding model of aged care facilities so that the resident has the funding package and can control/make choices.

Increase home care package funding levels.

Better food and nutrition

Many people who engaged in conversations at the stalls had negative perceptions regarding the quality of food in residential aged care facilities. Older Australians, families and carers also saw good food and nutrition as a key priority for positive ageing.

Suggestions for improvements included:

- Multicultural food options in residential and in home care that respond and mirror the increasing diversity of older Australians.
- Acknowledge that next generations will have different expectations of food and may have different requirements (e.g. they may have travelled more widely and enjoy diverse cultural cuisines or are vegan etc.).
- Ensuring food is prioritised as a critical determiner of health and wellbeing and adheres to nutrition guidelines.

A better adherence and training for all staff regarding food and fluid modifications, in line with the international dysphagia diet standardisation initiative (IDSSI).

Improvements needed in residential aged care

While many people who attended these events were not living in residential aged care, there was a strong desire to ensure improvements are made to these facilities. These included:

- Improved staff to resident ratios to ensure older Australians are safe.

One carer per resident.

More staff in aged care facilities for surveillance (my mum has had stuff stolen by residents).

- Measures and processes to improve the physical safety of residents.

Should never be a situation where police are called to aged care facility [in response to taser incident with 95-year-old woman in NSW aged care facility].

Need a solution on how to care for people who fall out of bed (not allowed to restrain now).

- Ensuring residential aged care facilities are homely and designed well.

Individualised rooms, not all the same.

Environmental factors - (e.g. insulation to regulate temperature in aged care).

More children and pets in residential aged care facilities.

- Additional residential facilities in rural and remote areas.
- Better access to health services within residential aged care (e.g. nurses, dentists).
- More opportunities for intellectual stimulation and creative activities.

Connection to family, friends and community

The importance of remaining connected to family, friends and community was emphasised mostly in the context of positive ageing. Significant sub-themes included:

- Ageing in place with local support and connection to community.

Need to maintain connection to community after moving into residential care.

- Intergenerational connection between young people and older people.

Our society separates the young from the old, there is much to learn from the older Australians.

Involve younger generations in visiting older people.

- More initiatives to encourage community engagement.

More investment in community activities in regional + rural areas.

- The importance of volunteering and making it easier to volunteer.

Culturally appropriate care

The importance of providing culturally appropriate care was also mentioned in specific locations. This was raised in relation to First Nations peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD).

In remote Australia, aged care needs to cater for cultural practices and understand what First Nations Peoples need by asking them (at the moment many elders hit health issues

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have to go to a centre run by Indigenous peoples because the western medical centres don't understand how to treat people culturally).

Care finders need to establish partnerships with multicultural and ethnic-specific organisations to ensure culturally sensitive care and support.

Other enquiries – My Aged Care

Many people approaching the stall sought practical information and advice on accessing aged care support, as well as specific details about their needs and package levels through My Aged Care. If Services Australia had a stall at the event, individuals were generally directed to that stall.

Common comments from people regarding My Aged Care included:

- Long wait times on the phone.
- Confusion about whether it is better to register early for My Aged Care, or to wait until services are needed.
- Uncertainty about whether family and carers can register through My Aged Care on behalf of their family members.
- Dissatisfaction that there aren't more face-to-face options, that there is not a call-back service, and that callers cannot speak to the same person each time.

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Part 2: Learnings

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the Freedom Of Information Act 1982 by
the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

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Assessment against the engagement objectives

Events were predominantly used to share information and raise awareness of the reforms. The table below measures against the **primary objective**, including the value and limitations of engagement activity.

Objective	Value	Limitations	Degree of achievement
1. Share information about the changes occurring as part of aged care reform and how these will benefit older people and the community. This includes communicating changes that have already occurred, and how these changes will impact people's experience of aged care.	- Thousands of community members across Australia were provided with information regarding the reforms. - Thousands of community members were engaged in discussion about aged care reform, thereby raising awareness and understanding of changes. - The engagement increased awareness of the aged care system in general, including home care supports and residential care. - The engagement generated greater awareness and understanding of the Department of Health and Aged Care and their role in implementing reforms (along with collaborating stakeholders such as the Council of Elders and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission). - Many community members were referred to other aged care services and Australian Government services (e.g. Services Australia). This had a positive impact on general understanding and awareness of the aged care system landscape (in line with Recommendation 26 of the Royal Commission into Aged Care).	Due to the large number of stallholders and information being shared with older people, it's possible that information regarding the reforms was not always retained.	High

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There were also a number of ways in which the **additional engagement objectives** were met, as per the table below.

Objective	Value	Limitations	Degree of achievement
2. Learn from aged care consumers, older Australians, families and carers, and other stakeholders, about what they think of changes, how reforms impact them, and what matters most to them and why.	- Community members who may not have engaged in reforms were reached through these events. - The events provided an important initial entry point for community members to then access other, more in depth engagement opportunities (i.e. through the Engagement Hub). - The Live Feedback Wall allowed event attendees to share their direct feedback with DoHAC and were often appreciative of the opportunity to do so. - Many other stallholders (e.g. providers) wanted to share their input and provided specific feedback on reform areas with the TSD staff. They were also interested to see community input on the Live Feedback Wall.	- Meaningful or in-depth engagement on specific reform areas was generally not possible at these events, as attendees were not prepared to have these types of discussions. - As participants generally didn't want to spend too much time at one stall, conversations were at times transactional. - This also means that the data is broad in nature, and emerging insights can lack specificity (e.g. cannot be attributed to particular demographics, audience groups or interests) and is not always related directly to reforms. Some responses received through the Live Feedback Wall lack context, impacting on the quality of data received.	Low-medium
3. Understand how consumers and stakeholders are being impacted by reforms, as changes take place.	- As there was low awareness of the reforms generally, not everyone engaged at the stall was able to provide information about how they are being impacted by the reforms. However, many stakeholders (e.g. providers) who approached the stall had specific insights to share about how they or their consumers were being impacted by the reforms. Some older people had detailed information to share about particular reform areas (e.g. the caps on administration fees) and were eager to share insights and information about these changes.	- Many of the older Australians who attended the events were not currently living in or accessing residential aged care. As a result, the data is less focused on changes in this area. - While some people were happy to use the comments cards, these events did not always allow for people to sit down and spend time considering the questions and writing their responses.	Medium

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Key learnings

Community events work well for **sharing information and raising awareness of reforms** amongst older people, their family and carers.

Following is a brief overview of the value of the community engagement events by:

- reach
- collaboration
- cost and resourcing.

Reach

- Community events are an **effective way to reach older people** who may not have heard of the reforms and may not normally engage with the Australian Government on this topic (e.g., people who may not attend a focus group or actively seek out information).
- These events provided a **guaranteed attendance of people interested in aged care**. It's expected attending aged care and community events allows the department to connect with thousands of people who would not have otherwise signed up to attend workshops in community or other types of engagement.
- Some events provided the **opportunity to speak with older people from diverse groups**. For example, older people from multicultural backgrounds at the festival in Blacktown and First Nations older people at the Katherine expo.
- **Promotional items and giveaways were critical** in drawing people to the stall and sharing information about aged care reform.

Collaboration

- **DoHAC STO staff played an important role in providing local information and connection** to event attendees (particularly when providers approached the stall wanting follow-up actions or advice).
- The presence of Services Australia at the events was important as most older people at the events **wanted practical information regarding how to register for My Aged Care and receive aged care services**.
- Community members with complaints or concerns about quality and safety in aged care were able to engage directly with a representative of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.
- Having older people as representatives at stalls is effective. Many older people **wanted to speak with Council of Elders representatives and valued their views and advice** as respected older people with an understanding of aged care.

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- **Event organisers** (particularly in regional areas) **were eager to have DoHAC in attendance as a stallholder** and were pleased to see the Australian Government making an effort to come and support these events.
- These events not only provide an opportunity to speak with older Australians but can also be used **to network and establish relationships with other stallholders and services.**

Costs and resourcing

- The **cost of booking a stall at regional events was generally low**, with some events not charging any fee at all.
- Holding a stall in **capital cities was more expensive**, both in terms of stall/hiring furniture costs and human resourcing.
- As DoHAC was an attendee of the events, there were **very few costs associated with promotion** (e.g., in comparison to other types of engagement activities, where targeted recruitment may be required).
- **Regional events generally required less staff, less collateral and less logistics** but delivered similar engagement insights overall. Costs to travel to regional events can be higher.
- **Travel costs were overall higher than expected**, as many events went for 2 days and require bump-in the day before the event, resulting in additional accommodation costs (3-4 nights).

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Recommendations

1. **Continue to position this type of engagement activity primarily as a means of sharing information to build awareness** about reforms and aged care policies and begin early engagement.

Why?

These events are an excellent opportunity to share information with older people and to increase their awareness of what is happening in relation to changes in aged care. They can also be a useful tool for 'starting conversations' and are an initial entry point for people to find out more about the range of reform engagement opportunities.

Because people are generally not ready to speak to reforms in any depth at these events and often prefer brief conversations, the data is generally not detailed enough to directly inform reform agendas and needs. Other types of engagement activity (e.g. focus groups, pop-up sessions in locations) would better support more in-depth discussions to better understand how people are being impacted. However, these events provide a useful starting point to promote these other opportunities coordinated by the specific reform and policy areas of DoHAC.

2. **Continue to provide two-way mechanisms for conversation and feedback.**

Why?

While the primary purpose of engagement was to **inform** (as per the department's Engagement Framework and the IAP2 public participation spectrum¹), ensuring that data from the conversations with community members are collected in some form is important and offers increased value for money.

In addition, some visitors to the stall provided feedback that the opportunity to share their views and contribute, through the Feedback Wall, was appreciated. In particular, this showed the community that their views were important and could contribute to the reforms, creating goodwill for future and ongoing engagement.

To improve data collection, consideration could be given to further incentivising engagement, e.g., vouchers or competitions for completing surveys and/or contributing to conversation cards. This method was sometimes used by other stallholders and recognises the additional time and value an attendee is contributing.

¹ https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/IAP2_Public_Participation_Spectrum.pdf

3. **Ensure there is Australian Government (DoHAC) representation at stalls.**

Why?

There is a general expectation from community members and stakeholders at events that DoHAC staff will be in attendance at their stall. Community members commented that Australian Government staff should be there to provide information and to hear directly from community about their experiences.

Some stakeholders in attendance wanted to use the opportunity to establish a relationship with DoHAC staff and for follow-up engagement (e.g., inviting DoHAC to present at an online information session). These events can serve as a valuable connecting point into communities for DoHAC staff.

As outlined in recommendation 4, consideration could be given to resourcing regionally based staff to be able to attend events, including for two-way engagement.

4. **Continue to build relationships and collaboration with DoHAC state and territory office representatives** to hold stalls in partnership and align state office representation with the Regional Stewardship Program (e.g. each event should have an attendee from the relevant geographical area).

Why?

This will reduce costs for DoHAC (with less people flying to events) and will ensure there is local knowledge and follow-up opportunities for community members and aged care providers.

5. **Collaborate with Services Australia and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission** to ensure attendance at events where DoHAC is also present to talk about aged care.

Why?

This will increase integration across government systems and ensure older people receive practical information and advice from the Australian Government about aged care at events.

Some older people or carers had specific concerns that were best discussed directly with Commission representatives.