




*What 4,562 seniors told us about  
co-designing aged care  
and how providers can use it*



**Professor John McCallum**  
CEO & Research Director  
National Seniors Australia

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# The 9th National Seniors Social Survey

- Conducted 15 February-1 March 2021
- Open to all Australians aged 50+
- 5430 survey participants
- Quantitative data and verbatim comments
  - Inspired by Royal Commission Recommendation 107:  
*“priority [be] given to research and innovation that involves co-design with older people, their families and the aged care workforce”*
  - We asked survey participants:  
*“Can you please describe what ‘co-design’ means to you? If you don't know or are unsure, please say so.”*
  - 4562 people (84%) answered this question





# PART 1: What do older Australians think about the idea of co-design?

- Overwhelmingly in favour of older people co-designing aged care
- 40% of the 4562 commented on who should be involved in co-design - the most frequently mentioned group was “older people”

## Reasons:

- Younger people cannot know what older people need
- Older people have wisdom and expertise from a lifetime of living
- Older people have knowledge and skills from relevant careers and education
- Older people should be treated as intelligent people like anyone else
- Participants’ enthusiasm for involvement themselves
- Those most affected by a system should co-design it



# Survey participants are keen to co-design

“

I know that there would be many areas that I could provide good advice based on my experience.

”

“

I haven't heard about this but if I could make some recommendations or have my voice heard I would like to know more.

”

“

In other words we should be involved!!

”





## Those most affected by a system should co-design it

“

Makes sense to involve the people using the system to have a say in the way it should operate

”

“

People should have the right to make decisions that will affect them

”

“

I totally agree. No one understands, can criticize, improve and design Age Care better than those that live in it and can see the faults, inconsistencies and the levels of failure and their reasons

”

“

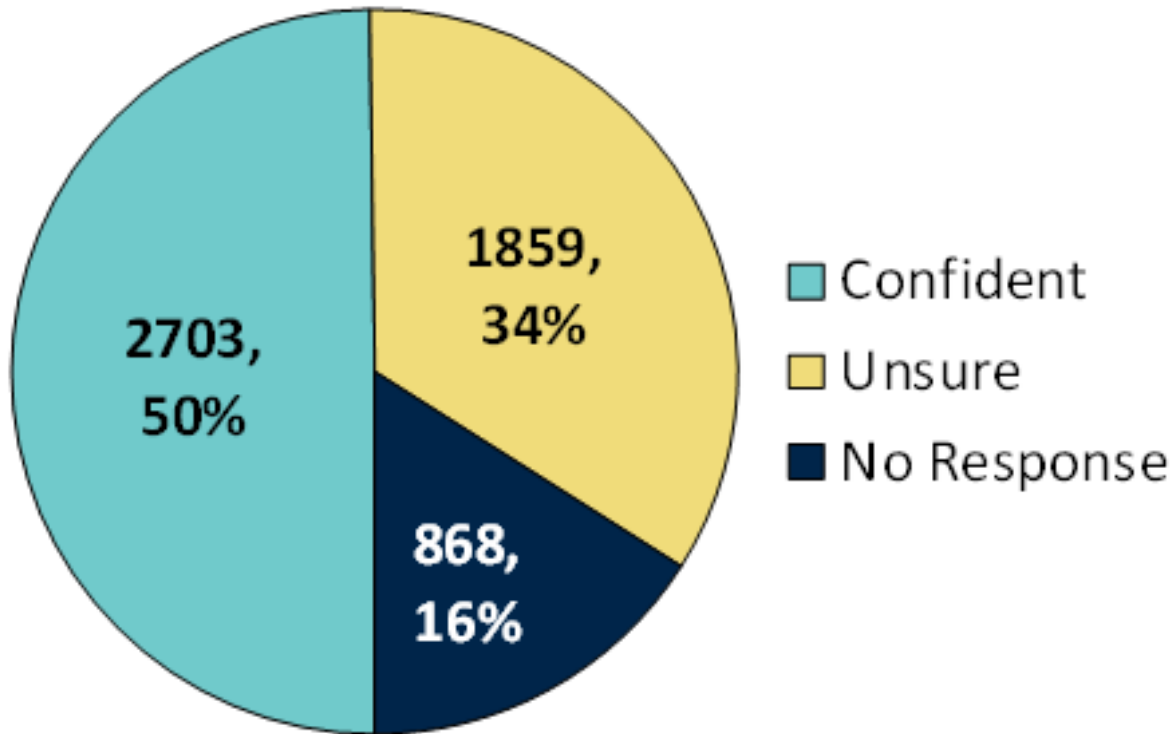
Given that older people are the primary users of the aged care system, it's a sad indictment on the creators of the system that a Royal Commission finding calls for 'co-design' involving older people

”



# Uncertainty or cynicism about co-design

- A third of survey participants expressed uncertainty about the co-design concept, or cynicism about government implementation of it



“government waffle” “bureaucratic jargon”  
“polly-speak” “lip service” “empty words”

“Government wants older people’s involvement  
so they can rubber stamp their decisions”

“It means having your say and being ignored”

“It means making suggestions to an enquiry of  
some sort knowing that they will come to nought”





# What aspects of the aged care system do older Australians want to co-design?

## *All aspects!*

Including...

- Individuals' control over their own aged care
- All aspects of services and facilities such as food, staffing, activities
- Architectural design of rooms and buildings
- Policy, funding, laws, regulations, standards, monitoring
- Decision-making processes and feedback mechanisms themselves
- And more...





# Accommodation key – mentioned by 40%



“ Co-designing means that older people are consulted/ included/ listen to as to what they require/need/want in an aged care facility so that it meets their medical, physical and emotional needs as they age and perhaps become more frail ”

“ Let them have their say about how they live, and LISTEN to the people involved ”

“ Where Prison Guards and Inmates agree on the amenity of the confined spaces Inmates should live in. ”





# Tailoring to individuals' diverse needs is another key theme

“

There is a clear need to cater for individual needs and to avoid the 'one cap fits all' approach.

”

“

Both being of Aboriginal Background we would like to see a better care plan put in place for our people

”

“

As a transgendered person, my particular views and circumstances are not often heard.

”



Consumer involvement is now being mandated in provider governance

do you know what your  
customers want?



## PART 2: Co-design in action for Residential Aged Care and communication needs

- Follow-up survey of c.600 people who completed the original survey
- Providing evidence to Aged Care providers and Royal Commission reforms
- October 2021, two open-ended questions:

*“How could residential age care change to make it a better and more desirable option for those who need it?”*

*“What type of guidance, assistance and information do you think should be easily available for people when they need residential age care?”*



# Q1 How should residential care be re-designed?

- Hundreds of suggestions and ideals
- Overarching theme is for more *“home-like”* environments for people to continue their lives as they lived them before entering care
- This includes:
  - Smaller, community-based housing structures
  - Diverse, tailored, home-style food with choices
  - Activities that are more appropriate
  - Flexible routines with more resident control
- Support for better pay and conditions for staff
- More monitoring for abuse, reduced fees, no profit-oriented models



We grouped these numerous ideas into

# 12 IDEALS

for improving aged care

Reduced fees and support for non-profit models



Flexible, home-like living quarters with freedom and control



Increased staff numbers, improved pay and conditions



More residential care for all regions of Australia



More home-like meals and tailored food choices



Specialised health staff and flexible healthcare options



Diverse housing models, small homes and partner facilities



More socialising opportunities and better activities



Catering to diversity in care teams and facility culture



Facilities that enable ageing in place



Facilities for visitors, travel and online communication



Management accountability and abuse prevention







## Q2 What guidance, assistance and information are needed?

- A one-stop-shop model advocated by many
  - Follow individuals through aged care process from start to finish
  - Case worker approach where consumers know their contact
  - Independent and free-of-charge system of assistance for all
- Also a need for plain language explanations and less *“lawyer speak”*

“

Unless we ask the correct question, we are not getting the answers we need to make a decision.

”



We grouped these ideas into

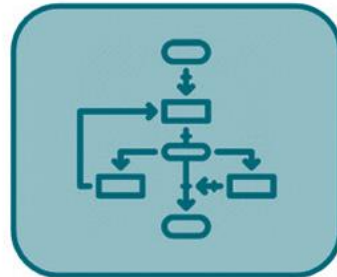
# 5 information, guidance & assistance NEEDS

Information about specific residential aged care facilities



Effective strategies for communicating with older Australians

Guidance navigating processes and the aged care system



Professional services to protect welfare of care seekers

Public communication to encourage aged care planning



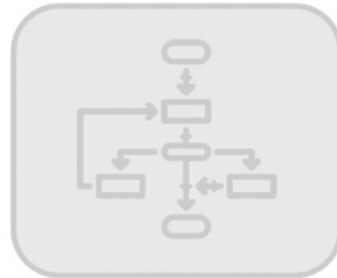
# One highly relevant to providers

Information about  
specific residential  
aged care facilities



Effective strategies  
for communicating  
with older Australians

Guidance navigating  
processes and the  
aged care system



Professional services  
to protect welfare  
of care seekers

Public communication  
to encourage  
aged care planning



**Customers need to know what  
they're buying**



# A checklist of residential aged care features

- Hundreds of comments included specific aspects of residential aged care facilities that people want to know about
  - We summarised this in a 15-point list for consumers and providers to use
- 

1. Costs and financial implications
  2. Care levels and specialist services
  3. Staff qualifications, ratios, pay
  4. Medical and wellbeing support
  5. Application processes, trials, contracts
  6. Residents' rooms and belongings
  7. Communal areas and activities
  8. Food and water
  9. Facility routines
  10. Visitors, communication technologies
  11. Facility culture, diversity, relationships
  12. Turnover and incident records
  13. Corporate management and budget
  14. Accountability and conflict resolution
  15. Summary reviews and ratings
- 

*Each of the 15 points has multiple items within it*



For example:  
point 1. Costs and financial implications

**Are there costs for SECURING a place?**

***What are the regular, ONGOING fees?***

**Do I pay fees if I go into HOSPITAL?**

**What INCIDENTAL costs are not covered?**

***Is it cheaper to enter as a COUPLE?***

**Are there TAXES on these transactions?**

*And more!*

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For example:  
point 6. Residents' rooms and belongings

**Can I bring my own TELEVISION?**

***What are the standard FITTINGS?***

**Where do I store my WHEELCHAIR?**

**Are there rules about MUSIC?**

***Is there a landline PHONE?***

**How do I protect my PRIVACY?**

*And more!*



# A checklist of residential aged care features



Download the full checklist from the National Seniors website at <https://nationalseniors.com.au/research/reports>

*Attention to detail in the time of need is the dominant issue*

*With no **LAWYER SPEAK** in the information!*



# Conclusion: Older Australians know what they want and expect to be able to get it

Download our reports at <https://nationalseniors.com.au/research/reports>

- 2021: *Co-Designing Aged Care: Views of 4,562 Older Australians*
- 2022: *“As close to home as possible”:  
Older Australians’ Hopes and Fears for Aged Care*

## Thank you!



The 9<sup>th</sup> National Seniors Social Survey, which provided the data for these reports, was approved by the NHMRC accredited Human Research Ethics Committee of Bellberry Limited, APP 2020-12-1319.



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