Council on the Ageing Queensland

Event Summary Report

Age Well Stay Connected (Longreach)
BRINGING QUEENSLAND SENIORS & COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Event Date: 10 October 2025

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24 November 2025

www.cotaqld.org.au

About Us

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland is a for-purpose statewide charitable organisation. We are the state's Seniors Peak and Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak and work with and for older adults, advancing the rights, needs, interests, and futures of people as we age.

For more than 60 years, we have worked to influence positive social outcomes for older Queenslanders. We connect directly with older Queenslanders, their families, carers, and organisations, service providers, consumer advocates, special interest groups, and our federal, state and local governments. We engage with all of these groups to understand needs, aspirations, and priorities for older people in Queensland, and partner to achieve the best outcomes for people as we age.

Our work includes policy analysis, community education, representation, evaluation and research, and cross sector collaborations to achieve systemic change. We deliver funded programs directly to older people in need and provide sector support to those organisations who offer aged care and other services to older people.

We seek to eliminate ageism and support healthy ageing and growth of age-friendly communities. There are many areas of policy development needed to achieve this – elder abuse, energy, social isolation and loneliness prevention, climate resilience and disaster preparedness, digital inclusion, health, housing, and transport are just a few.

Our vision is that ageing is a time of possibility, opportunity, and influence.

With the number of older people expected to double by 2050, ensuring their voices are heard has never been more important.

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Acknowledgement
Council on the Ageing Queensland acknowledges Australia's First Nations Peoples as the original custodians of this land.

Acknowledgements

Photography
Only photographs for which participants provided consent are included in this report.

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[1] The Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak body, established by COTA Queensland in October 2024 and funded by the Queensland Government, supports and strengthens more than 60 seniors social connection services statewide, by enhancing service delivery, reducing social isolation, and increasing meaningful community engagement for older adults.

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Executive Summary

On 10 October 2025, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland, in partnership with ADA Australia and the Queensland Public Advocate, hosted the *Age Well, Stay Connected* – Longreach event, the final in a three-part series. The event was held at the Longreach Civic and Cultural Centre, a welcoming hub for diversity, inclusion, and community engagement.

The event aimed to raise awareness of social isolation among older Queenslanders, including First Nations, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), LGBTIQA+, and other under-represented communities. It celebrated local strengths and diversity, valued lived experience, and created a safe, inclusive space to share ideas and strengthen social connections for older people. The event was an inclusive, community-led gathering, bringing together older people, carers, Elders, volunteers, local service providers, and sector professionals from aged care, health, social, community, and support services. Held during Queensland Mental Health Week, the event also focused on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of older people.

The event was promoted through emails, partner websites, social media, and printed flyers were widely distributed with the support of local service providers. Despite these efforts, attendance was lower than expected, partly influenced by the extreme heat. In total, 25 people attended, including Elders (n = 1), community members (n = 5) and sector stakeholders (n = 19), representing a range of organisations. Participants travelled from Longreach, Isisford and surrounding areas.

Informed by learnings from the Brisbane and Townsville events, the program was co-designed with local ADA Link Community Connector, Jo Winkleman, to align with community needs and priorities. Partners, ADA Australia and the Queensland Public Advocate, along with an older COTA Queensland volunteer, also contributed. Accessibility and inclusivity were central to the event, ensuring that everyone could participate fully, regardless of mobility, cultural background, or familiarity with technology. However, sound-system issues on the day prompted suggestions for the use of closed captions at future events.

Queensland Government–funded [Seniors Social Connection Services](#), Queensland Men's Shed Association, 60 & Better Winton, and 60 & Better Barcaldine were invited to actively participate on the day. The Men's Shed engaged as speakers, panelists, and World Café hosts, helping to build trust, connections, and collaborative ideas. While unable to attend, COTA Queensland visited Winton 60 & Better participants beforehand, hearing stories of strength, resilience and connection. The #OldisBeautiful Winton Photographic Exhibition was displayed at the event, encouraging participants to engage and reflect. The 60 & Better Barcaldine Program could not participate on the day, due to prior training commitments.

The program combined lived experience storytelling, information sharing, interactive workshops, and open conversations to create an engaging and inclusive environment. Older participants, many of whom are community leaders, shared stories of staying socially connected and supporting others to do the same. Local organisations and sector professionals led hands-on sessions and presentations, that highlighted practical tools and approaches grounded in real community practice. Participants gained insights into current initiatives that enhance social connection for older people in Outback Queensland and considered how place-based approaches could be tailored and strengthened within their communities. Throughout the day, participants networked and connected with one another, contributed to a *Wisdom Wall Activity*, and enjoyed engaging in the #*OldisBeautiful* Winton Photographic exhibition, reading stories about positive ageing experiences.

In the afternoon, participants engaged in World Café conversations, sharing experiences and ideas for supporting older people to stay socially connected.

Four key topics guided the World Café conversations:

1. Building connections and friendships — in person and online
2. Thriving at Home and in the Community
3. Supporting Older Men to Stay Connected
4. Building Inclusive Communities: Collaboration and Partnerships

Six key themes emerged from thematic analysis of the activities:

- **Building Social Connections:** Leveraging local hubs, groups, and events to strengthen relationships and networks through inclusive and varied engagement opportunities.
- **Digital and Inclusive Approaches:** Supporting participation for all by engaging local peer mentors and community champions, promoting services and events, and opportunities through online and in-person channels.
- **Expanding Access to Communities:** Engaging remote and underrepresented communities with casual, short-term activities, addressing program gaps, and providing transport solutions to improve accessibility.
- **Strengthening Networks and Collaboration:** Actively promoting volunteering, peer support, and peer mentoring, while fostering collaborative opportunities with local Councils, schools, community organisations, and clubs to enhance engagement.
- **Community Leadership and Lived Experience:** Amplifying older people's voices through storytelling, co-design, and recognition of local community leaders to increase engagement, inclusion, and access to services.
- **Leveraging Resources and Partnerships:** Work with schools, churches, non-profits, and other partners, and explore funding opportunities to sustain and expand initiatives.

Key outcomes emerging from the event included:

- **Strengthened Collaboration and Community Learning Outcomes:** community and sector stakeholders deepened their understanding of social isolation, learned about available supports, and strengthened connections to enable coordinated, community-led initiatives, fostering ongoing collaboration to enhance engagement and wellbeing.

- **Practical Insights and Future Action:** The event identified effective ways to engage and support older adults and carers, including through libraries and local hubs, digital mentoring, intergenerational initiatives, accessible and welcoming events, community champions, and approaches to address program gaps and challenge ageism.

- **A Strong Foundation for Ongoing Initiatives:** Insights from the event will guide the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak in expanding its reach, raising awareness, and increasing impact across regional, rural and remote Queensland.

The event strengthened social connections for older people, including carers, raised community awareness, and fostered cross-sector collaboration. With 25 participants, it produced insights, stories, and a summary report to support local application of learnings. By highlighting community-led approaches and raising awareness of available services, the event laid a foundation for ongoing initiatives. Its insights will guide the future work of the Seniors' Social Isolation Prevention peak to enhance inclusion, wellbeing, and meaningful participation for older Queenslanders, particularly in regional, remote, and Outback communities.

Purpose and Content

This section outlines the purpose, aims and objectives of the *Age Well Stay Connected - Longreach* event, and the community members and organisations it engaged.

Purpose

The purpose of the event was to bring together communities in Longreach and the surrounding areas, to address social isolation among older people through an inclusive, community-led gathering. It built on local strengths, celebrated diversity, and valued lived experience. Through open conversations and shared insights, participants explored ideas to help shape future approaches for supporting older Queenslanders to stay connected.

Why Longreach

Longreach was chosen as the third location in the event series due to its remote setting and limited access to services, which increases the risk of social isolation among older adults. Hosting the event in Longreach aligned with the *Age-Friendly Queensland Strategy* by supporting its goal to foster inclusive, connected communities across regional, rural and remote areas[2]. These factors made Longreach an ideal choice for the third and final event.

Aims

- Raise awareness of social isolation and its impact on older Queenslanders, including First Nations, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), LGBTIQA+, and other marginalised or under-represented communities.
- Strengthen connections and networks across communities.
- Promote inclusive dialogue that amplifies diverse and underrepresented voices.
- Inspire community-led action that reflects the needs and aspirations of older Queenslanders.

Objectives

- Bring together older people, carers, Elders, volunteers, providers and sector professionals to strengthen connections and foster collaboration.
- Explore and celebrate local community strengths and initiatives, providing a platform for storytelling, knowledge sharing, and community-led action.
- Encourage active participation from older people and local providers to generate innovative ideas and identify opportunities and actions tailored to the needs of local communities.
- Capture key insights to reflect community voices, enhance accessibility, and document the findings to guide future actions and collaborative projects.

Target Audience

- Older persons aged 60 years and over, and First Nations peoples aged 50 years and over, who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, social isolation.
- Carers and support networks who help older people stay socially connected.
- Sector stakeholders, including service providers, government representatives, and professionals across aged care, health, social, community and support services.

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[2] https://www.families.qld.gov.au/our-work/seniors/an-age-friendly-queensland/strategy-reporting
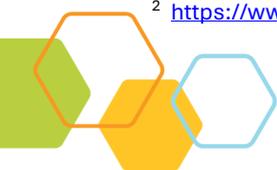
Event Overview

On **10 October 2025**, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland, in partnership with ADA Australia, and the Queensland Public Advocate, hosted the *Age Well, Stay Connected - Longreach* event. The third in a three-part series, it followed the inaugural event in Brisbane (31/3/25), and the Townsville event (3/9/25). The event was held at the **Longreach Civic and Cultural Centre**, a well-established hub for diversity, inclusion, and community engagement.

The event was **promoted** through direct emails to providers and stakeholders, posts on partner websites and social media, and printed flyers were shared in the local library, cafes, by local providers, and at the venue. Registration via Humanitix enabled the collection of key participant demographics. Around **25 people attended** (see Table 1 for participant summary).

Table 1. *Number of Participants by Category and Organisational Type*

Category/Org Type	Number of Participants
Elders	1
Older Persons	5 (including volunteers)
Sector Professionals 　　Government 　　　　State (*n* = 5) 　　　　Local (*n* = 4) 　　NGOs (*n* = 8) 　　SSI-funded orgs (*n* = 2)	19 (7 of which identified as an older person)
Total participants	**25**

Participants came from a **range of organisations and sectors**, travelling from Longreach, Isisford and surrounding communities.

The event **prioritised accessibility and inclusivity**, enabling full participation for all individuals, regardless of mobility, cultural background, or technological skills. This commitment began at the planning phase, with a fully accessible, inclusive venue to ensure all participants could engage comfortably. Our approach was guided by the Queensland Government Best Practice Guidelines for Event Delivery[3], reflecting our dedication to creating an inclusive environment for all.

Informed by learnings from the Brisbane and Townsville events, the program was co-designed with local ADA Link Community Connector, Jo Winkleman, to align with community needs and priorities. Input was also provided by local providers, Winton and Barcaldine 60 & Better Programs. Partners, ADA Australia and the Queensland Public Advocate, along with an older COTA Queensland volunteer, also contributed. Accessibility and inclusivity were central to the event, ensuring that everyone could participate fully, regardless of mobility, cultural background, or familiarity with technology.

Facilitated by Geoff Rowe, CEO of ADA Australia and John Chesterman, the Queensland Public Advocate, with Jo Winkleman and Celsie Mead actively participating as speakers and world café table hosts. Their involvement helped strengthen connections, build trust, and encourage collaborative ideas and actions beyond the event itself.

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[3] www.qld.gov.au/about/events-awards-honours/events-resources-and-guidelines

The event actively engaged **Queensland Government-funded Seniors Social Connection Service[4]**, Queensland Men's Shed Association, including Longreach Men's Shed, drawing on their networks of local communities and volunteers.

The program combined **storytelling, information sharing, interactive workshops, and open conversations** to create an engaging and inclusive environment where participants could learn from one another and share their experiences. Local organisations and sector professionals led hands-on sessions and presentations, that highlighted practical tools and approaches grounded in real community practice. Participants gained insights into current initiatives that enhance social connection for older people and considered how place-based approaches could be tailored and strengthened within their own communities.

See Appendix A for the **Program Agenda** and Appendix B for a list of **organisations represented**.

The event began with a **Welcome to Country** by Iningai Traditional Custodian, Tony Weldon. This meaningful start established a respectful and inclusive tone for the day. The event was **officially opened** by Cr. Anthony (Tony) Raynor, Mayor of Longreach Regional Council, who remained for part of the morning to listen to local community leaders share their stories.

To **set the scene**, Karen Wilson, Executive Officer of the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak at Council on the Ageing Queensland, and Jo Winkleman, ADA Link Community Connector, shared reflections on connection, ageing, and community.

Karen shared her personal story and commitment to helping older people stay connected. Growing up in Brisbane and living nearly two decades in London, she reflected on the important role of informal connections in fostering belonging and resilience. Since joining COTA Queensland nine years ago, including supporting her mother through end-of-life care, she has valued community spaces and informal networks. Visiting Winton and Longreach, Karen observed the strong tradition of connection in Outback Queensland, exemplified by the Stockman's Hall of Fame and the Winton 60 & Better program. She emphasised that while technology can support connection, creativity, storytelling, and shared experiences are central to resilience, framing ageing as a time of possibility, opportunity, and influence, and encouraging participants to share their own stories and ideas to strengthen communities.

Jo Winkleman, Longreach-based ADA Link Community Connector covering the Central West region, shared a passionate story about her first out-of-town conference, where her CEO helped her feel included in a large group, a moment that highlighted the importance of belonging. In her dual roles with the National Care Finder Program and the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) as an Aged Care Advocate, Jo spoke about the privilege of supporting older people to age with dignity, helping them remain safe, independent, and connected. She also reflected on her ongoing work to create an inclusive community for all ages, striving to make a meaningful difference by ensuring seniors have access to the support and resources they need to thrive.

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[4] https://www.qld.gov.au/seniors/recreation-staying-connected/social-connection-leisure/staying-connected-your-community#:~:text=We%20fund%20a%20range%20of%20programs

Keynote Speaker

Dr Catherine Barrett, Founder and Director of Celebrate Ageing, joined via Zoom and shared insights from her recent visits to Longreach and Winton, highlighting the strong sense of community and lessons in keeping older people connected.

Catherine explored the **impact of ageism on loneliness, self-perception, and community participation**, noting how subtle societal messages about being "*less capable*" or "*less beautiful"* are often internalised. Using the analogy of ripening tomatoes and referencing terror management theory[5], she illustrated how fear of ageing can drive distance from older adults and our own ageing. Catherine emphasised how proactive strategies, such as regular exercise, can reduce morbidity and enhance wellbeing. She shared examples of innovative community programs that challenge ageism and celebrate ageing, like the **#OldisBeautiful project**[6]. She highlighted stories of older people being "*seen for who they are*" rather than their age, such as locals asking for small acts of assistance in the community and engaging in activities that foster connection, confidence, and fun. She noted that in smaller towns like Winton, the strong sense of "*knownness*" (knowing people's names, histories, and personal circumstances) supports **inclusion and resilience**. Catherine concluded by encouraging participants to reflect on their own communities: what is working well, where ageism may be present, and how local initiatives can be strengthened to promote positive ageing paths.

Ageing in Place – A Pathway to Social Connection

Rose Harris, National Engagement Lead (Regional, Rural and Remote), Home Care Workforce Support Program[7] talked about Ageing in Place as a Pathway to Social Connection. Rose highlighted the importance of understanding people's stories to better support them in their communities. Drawing on her experiences growing up on a farm surrounded by older people, she described it as a privilege that shaped her perspective on ageing and community connection. Rose shared insights from her work, including how assistive technology helped support her father, and reflected on her early career writing obituaries for the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, realising the importance of capturing people's stories while they are still living. Rose explored what makes a town a "*forever place"*, emphasising that it is the combination of services and the amazing people who become part of the local fabric, encouraging people to stay. She also highlighted the potential of health and aged care careers, encouraging others to see these roles as both rewarding and one of the fastest-growing career paths in the country.

Figure 1. *Photo by Karen Wilson, Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak*

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[5] https://practicalpie.com/terror-management-theory/

[6] Over the past year, Celebrate Ageing have worked with organisations on the **#OldisBeautiful** project - from Yarra and Bayside to Cairns, Brisbane, Winton and Mount Glorious. For more info visit https://www.celebrateageing.com/

[7] https://skillshubs.com.au/

Lived Experience Stories: Older Queenslanders

Three older people shared their lived experiences, giving voice to the perspectives of two older men and a female volunteer, all of which are community connectors.

David Kerrigan, AM, Zone Chairman, Central Queensland, Queensland Men's Shed Association (QMSA), reflected on his experiences growing up, highlighting how childhood memories and strong connections with neighbours shaped a lifelong sense of community. He spoke about knowing each family and their history and learning respect for women, elders, and children from positive role models, values that continue to guide his work in health and men's health. Drawing on his experiences with Men's Sheds, he highlighted both the benefits and challenges of these community spaces. Reflecting on visits to Gladstone, Longreach, Barcaldine, and Clairmont, he emphasised the value of sharing ideas, building partnerships with schools, councils, and community groups, and organising local initiatives like community BBQs with support from both local government and residents. His reflections showed how collaboration, local knowledge, and shared experiences strengthen community

Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion shared how volunteering with COTA Queensland and at her local neighbourhood centre gives her a strong sense of purpose and connection. During the pandemic, she worked on a peer navigator program in her local library. In this role she supported her peers to link to local services and supports (e.g., book clubs, computer classes and social activities), a role that now helps her assist others in identifying skills they can share. She established a book club herself, enjoys bringing guest speakers into the Neighbourhood Centre, engaging in continual learning, and sharing ideas and opinions. Volunteering makes her feel valued and helpful.

Lenny Coyte, President and Secretary of Longreach RSL Memorial Services reflected on how growing up in a family committed to community shaped his lifelong dedication to helping others. From supporting neighbours and volunteering at the post office, to older mentors in construction, he learned the value of respect, practical skills, and proactive involvement. He recalled memorable moments, such as the community rallying to help an injured person on a pioneer wagon road, and experiences later in life, including reconstructing Winton's *Waltzing Matilda*, contributing to local committees like the Men's Shed and Longreach Fishing Club, and supporting initiatives during droughts and COVID disruptions. Lenny highlighted that community connection is built through everyday acts, valuing local resources, and helping others whenever possible, a philosophy he continues to live by, demonstrating that even simple gestures can strengthen resilience, belonging, and wellbeing in rural communities.

These stories highlighted the resilience and strength of older Queenslanders in rural Outback communities, highlighting how social connection, meaningful engagement, and community participation support wellbeing and reduce isolation.

Community Voices: Stories of Connection in Longreach

As the event coincided with **Queensland Mental Health Week**, we included a focus on older people's mental health. We heard stories of connection from community organisations and local providers, highlighting their work supporting older people in Outback Queensland.

Kym Webb, Care Coordinator, Longreach's Home and Community Care (HACC) shared insights from her work, highlighting the dedication and commitment of staff providing quality support for older people. Kym said many team members have deep, long-standing community connections and know local histories and relationships so well they can offer support without needing client's addresses. She emphasised the importance of a proactive approach, checking in with clients about occupational therapy referrals, domestic support, and social activities, recognising that older people do not always ask for help themselves. They currently support 168 clients, with flexible scheduling and transport for social activities, extending to surrounding communities such as Windorah, Jundah and Stonehenge. Kym said that social isolation is particularly common among men, as they tend to engage less socially than women. She expressed concern that the new aged care reforms could add costs that restrict access to vital services. Kym's reflections illustrated the value of local knowledge, personalised care, and proactive engagement in supporting older people to age well and stay connected.

Kate Cross, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Suicide Prevention and After Care, Central West Hospital and Health Services (CWHHS) shared insights from bringing her experience from metropolitan mental health services to rural communities. She highlighted how unexpected moments of empathy, like helping clients with everyday tasks (walking dogs or attending doggy day care) can play a vital role in supporting people to re-engage with their community. Kate described taking clients "*under their wing*", providing personalised support and guidance to help them reconnect socially. She said, many referrals come from GPs or the Emergency Department, often for people who are unwell or unsupported. Kate emphasised the multidisciplinary approach of her team, which includes registered and assessment nurses, social workers, and child, youth, and adolescent specialists, operating under a "*no wrong door*" policy, to ensure people can access help and referrals when needed.

Carmen Brooke, Library Manager, Longreach Community Library highlighted the role of libraries as age-friendly community hubs, particularly in supporting older people to stay socially connected and digitally included. She noted that digital exclusion is a concern, especially for First Nations people, and described how the library provides free, welcoming tutorials on devices and technology, helping people overcome technical challenges in a confidential, friendly environment. Carmen emphasised that libraries offer more than books, they provide large print books, talking books, movies, and access to resources that help people develop the skills to participate fully in the digital world. Programs such as First 5 also support intergenerational engagement. She reflected on the importance of combating the "*I'm too old*" mindset, ensuring everyone feels valued and supported to remain connected to their communities.

Panel Discussion and Q&A

Next, a panel of four contributors shared insights into community-led solutions for reducing social isolation and strengthening connections.

Councillor Dale Bignell, Isisford Seniors Program shared his experiences, drawing on 32 years working in shearing sheds in Tasmania before returning to the region in 2016. He described how aged care forums encouraged participants to share their stories, helping identify community needs. With support from WQPHN grants and through Jo Winkleman's guidance on My Aged Care registration, their program surveyed seniors, highlighting the need for regular bus services and mental health support, including the [Blue Tree Project](#). Initiatives such as the Friday bus service, craft and yoga sessions, garden parties, and visits to working shearing sheds helped seniors get out of their homes, connect socially, and enjoy shared laughter. One 92-year-old entertained the group with jokes. Local businesses and creative fundraising initiatives, like recycling projects, supported these activities. Dale emphasised that these small but meaningful efforts greatly enhance wellbeing, community engagement, and joy for older people.

Frank Pearce, Regional Coordinator, Queensland Men's Shed Association, shared his insights about Men's Sheds across Queensland, ranging from small groups of five to large sheds of 400. He highlighted how they provide vital spaces for older men to connect, learn, and support their mental health. In the words of one participant, *"If it wasn't for the Men's Shed, I wouldn't be here"*. This highlighted the vital role of Men's Sheds as a prescription for regaining wellbeing and a place to discover community. Men's Sheds help address the lack of social spaces for retired men, offering opportunities to engage in music, art, wood and mental work, discussion groups, and other activities that build soft skills and camaraderie. Men's partners often encourage attendance, recognising the benefits for their loved ones. Sheds are evolving to include air-conditioned quiet spaces for conversation, cards, or reflection, and efforts are underway to expand the model to communities such as Cunnamulla and Surat, ensuring more men have access to these supportive networks.

John Palmer OAM, long-standing Community Leader shared how his lifelong involvement in community work has shaped his approach to supporting older people. He highlighted the importance of encouraging younger community members to consider the needs of older adults and think about how they can contribute. He also emphasised the value of older people staying actively engaged with younger generations, serving as mentors and community champions. John stressed the importance of listening to everyone's stories, both older and younger, recognising that young people are the future champions of community wellbeing. By fostering an open, inclusive culture and keeping *"the door open"* for participation, John seeks to create opportunities for meaningful intergenerational connection and a culture of giving, reflecting the widespread desire among older adults to continue contributing as they did in earlier years.

Nicky Wildermuth, Social Worker and Mental Health Clinical, Central West Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Service emphasised how mental health concerns do not discriminate by age, and that grief, loss of independence, and the inability to do familiar activities can significantly impact older adults. She said social connectedness is just as important as physical wellbeing, as it plays a key role in helping people stay healthy and remain in their own homes. Nicky reflected on the value of simple, everyday interactions like "stopping to say hello in a coffee shop" or "popping into the library to ask how someone is doing", which can make a meaningful difference in reducing isolation and supporting mental health. Her insights reinforced the importance of fostering connection and community as a vital part of wellbeing for older people.

Together, these stories highlighted the power of connection, the value of intergenerational relationships, and the key role of people, spaces and places for supporting mental health and wellbeing. The stories also showed that in-person interactions and practical support are essential for helping people age well and stay socially connected.

Lunch and Connections

During the break, participants networked and connected with one another. They also viewed the **#OldisBeautiful Winton** photographic exhibition, and contributed to the **Wisdom Wall Activity**, sharing their thoughts on what ageing well and staying connected at home and in their community means to them, while viewing visuals from the Townsville event.

Figure 2. *Venue showing the #OldisBeautiful Winton exhibition and Wisdom Wall activity*

World Café Conversations and Connection Activities

In the afternoon, World Café conversations enabled participants to share experiences and ideas for supporting older people stay socially connected, focusing on four key topics:

1. Building connections and friendships — in person and online
2. Thriving at Home and in the Community
3. Supporting Older Men to Stay Connected
4. Building Inclusive Communities: Collaboration and Partnerships

Questions were guided by feedback from the Brisbane and Townsville events.

Table hosts captured ideas on post-it notes and flipchart paper and summarised key points to share with the wider group. By guiding and not directing the conversations, they created a welcoming and inclusive space where everyone could contribute. All hosts received clear guidance, and each table was provided with an A3 laminated question card to guide conversations. Questions and table hosts are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. *Questions and Table Hosts*

Workshop	Question	Table Host
1	When it comes to building connections and friendships, both online and in person, who or what in your community helps you stay connected and supported? This might include people, places and social activities	Celsie Mead
2	What helps you, or the people you care for, live well at home and stay connected in the community? This could include people, places, activities, routines, or supports that promote wellbeing and independence (Jo Winkleman and Rose Harris).	Jo Winkelman and Rose Harris
3	When you think about the programs or activities you participate in, how could they be adapted to engage men from different backgrounds and life experiences? (Frank Pearce and David Kerrigan).	Frank Pearce and David Kerrigan
4	What kinds of partnerships or collaborations in your community help older people stay connected, supported, and included? How could these be strengthened or expanded. (Karen Wilson and Liz Turner)	Karen Wilson and Liz Turner

Note! Elizabeth (Liz) Turner, Acting Communications and Engagement Coordinator at Longreach Regional Council, joined Workshop 4 as co-host, sharing some key insights from her work organising community events for Council.

The next section highlights key insights and findings from the day's activities.

Key Insights and Findings

Key Themes

Six key themes emerged from the day's activities, providing insights to guide future initiatives:

1. Building Social Connections

Leverage local hubs, groups, and events to strengthen relationships and networks, provide inclusive and varied engagement opportunities, and create spaces where older people can actively participate, share skills, and contribute to community life. Actively challenge ageism by highlighting older adults' capabilities and achievements.

2. Digital and Inclusive Approaches

Support participation for all by engaging local peer mentors and community champions, promoting services, events, and opportunities through both online and in-person channels, and ensuring accessibility for people with diverse needs. Encourage older people to use digital tools to stay connected while maintaining non-digital options for those offline.

3. Expanding Access to Communities

Reach remote, underrepresented, or socially isolated communities through casual, short-term, and flexible activities, addressing program gaps, and providing transport and accessibility solutions. Ensure participation is inclusive, welcoming, and responsive to local needs.

4. Strengthening Networks, Volunteering, and Mentoring

Actively promote volunteering, peer support, and mentoring opportunities, including short-term and skill-based roles. Foster collaborative initiatives with schools, clubs, community organisations, and other partners to expand engagement, create meaningful intergenerational experiences, and build sustainable community networks.

5. Community Leadership and Lived Experience

Amplify older people's voices through storytelling, co-design, recognition of local leaders, and showcasing their lived experiences. Encourage older adults to take on leadership roles, mentor others, and contribute to decision-making, strengthening inclusion and community-led initiatives.

6. Leveraging Resources, Partnerships, and Sustainability

Collaborate with schools, churches, non-profits, councils, and other partners to maximise resources, share knowledge, and explore funding opportunities. Support long-term sustainability and growth of initiatives, ensuring they are community-driven and responsive to local needs.

Key Outcomes

- **Strengthened Collaboration and Community Learning Outcomes:** community and sector stakeholders deepened their understanding of social isolation, learned about available supports, and strengthened connections to enable coordinated, community-led initiatives, fostering ongoing collaboration to enhance engagement and wellbeing.

- **Practical Insights and Future Action:** The event identified effective ways to engage and support older adults and carers, including through libraries and local hubs, digital mentoring, intergenerational initiatives, accessible and welcoming events, community champions, and approaches to address program gaps and challenge ageism.

- **A Strong Foundation for Ongoing Initiatives:** Insights from the event will guide the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak in expanding its reach, raising awareness, and increasing impact across regional, rural and remote Queensland.

Key Outputs

- **Engagement of 25 participants:** Older Queenslanders, Elders, carers, volunteers, service providers and sector professionals contributed, including representatives from First Nations communities.

- **Three lived experience stories:** Amplifying the voices of older volunteers, including a Men's Shed member, veterans' supporter, and female volunteer, who is an existing community champion.

- **Seven community stories:** Representatives from local community organisations and service providers showcased their work and its impact, supporting older people to age well and stay connected, with a focus on mental health and suicide prevention, home and community care, libraries, seniors programs, Men's Sheds, lifelong volunteering, and community leadership, including as a seasoned volunteer firefighter.

- **Four insights reports:** Summarising key insights and examples from World Café conversations, to be shared with Queensland government-funded Seniors Social Connection Services and event contributors, to inform future initiatives, including approaches to engage men and diverse communities.

- **Summary Report of the Event:** To share outcomes and learnings with contributors, participants and funders.

Thematic Analysis is provided in Appendix E.

Participant Experiences are included in the next section.

Participant Experiences

Participant feedback was collected from 13 participants at the end of the event (see Appendix C for Participant Feedback Form). The following responses provided valuable insights.

Table 3. *What participants enjoyed the most*

Theme	Feedback
Connection and Networking	• Opportunities to meet new people and reconnect with colleagues and other providers. • Building links with organisations that could support individual projects.
Learning and Sharing	• Listening to speakers advocating for shared outcomes. • Hearing lived experience stories and personal reflections.
Interactive Discussions	• Participation in World Café and roundtable discussions. • Sharing ideas, giving and receiving feedback.
Engagement with Visuals and Displays	• Appreciation of the "Old is Beautiful" wall. • Suggestions for promotional materials (e.g., badges with #OldisBeautiful).

Table 4. *What could be improved for next time*

Theme	Feedback
Event Timing and Management	• Use a bell or other cue for speakers to manage time. • Consider shorter sessions and better time allocation. • Allow time for outgoing flights. • Time management noted as an administrative issue.
Audience and Participation	• Encourage more community members to attend (acknowledging it may be challenging). • Increase advertising to boost involvement.
Preparation and Communication	• Share speakers' key points ahead of time to allow participants to prepare questions. • Provide an overview of past achievements and outcomes from previous forums.
Logistics and Technical Support	• Improve the sound system. • Catering was praised, so no changes needed there.

Table 5. *Actions, ideas, and collaborations participants would like to see*

Theme	Feedback
Accessibility and Participation for Older People	• Consider transport support (e.g., buses) and smaller group sessions. • Shorter timeframes to suit routines, factoring in heat, time of day, and comfort (seating, hearing, visual impairments). • Sometimes going to people in their own communities may improve engagement.
Networking and Community Connections	• Explore more opportunities for networking. • Include local community spaces such as Neighbourhood Centres or Drop-in Centres.
Policy and Structural Barriers	• Address legislative or administrative barriers to participation and volunteering (e.g., blue cards), while maintaining safety standards.

Table 6. *Final thoughts / overall feedback*

Theme	Feedback
Collaboration and Agency Coordination	• Consider how agencies can work together more effectively.
Follow-up and Outcomes	• Provide outcomes or next steps to participants so the event leads to action rather than just discussion.
Community Engagement	• Desire for greater community attendance and participation.
Positive Experience and Appreciation	• Participants enjoyed the sessions, speakers, and discussions. • Appreciation for promoting positive ageing and addressing the needs of older people. • Inspired by seeing efforts to improve the lives of vulnerable seniors.

See for additional participant feedback.

The next section provides reflections from Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion, COTA Queensland.

Volunteer Reflections

Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion, Council on the Ageing Queensland

As a Volunteer Champion with Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland for over 6 years, I was delighted to be involved in planning and delivering all three *Age Well Stay Connected* events — Brisbane (31/3/25), Townsville (3/9/25) and Longreach (10/10/25). I also had the privilege of sharing my own lived experience at the Townsville and Longreach sessions. Below is a summary of my observations and insights from the Longreach event and our visit to Winton.

Guest speakers from the local community shared stories about their proactive and passionate roles in supporting their community. As an older volunteer myself, it was inspiring to hear how much difference one person can make and reminded me of the value of staying actively involved, no matter your age. ADA Link Community Connector, Jo Winkleman, told a very passionate story about her first out-of-town conference experience, where her CEO helped her feel included in a large group. She also spoke about her important role in creating an inclusive community for all ages. The panel discussion also highlighted the work of providers and community members, and it was encouraging to see the Mayor, and other dignitaries attending to listen, meet hosts, and share their own involvement.

Dr Catherine Barrett's talk on internalised ageism sparked curiosity and discussion among providers, suggesting her philosophy could be shared more broadly in regional communities. The **#OldisBeautiful** campaign display, showcasing the stories of older people in Winton, attracted significant interest from participants, curious about the campaign.

The World Café-style interactive format worked very well, consistent with the other events. Conversations sparked robust discussions about ways people stay socially connected, through pubs, clubs, sporting venues, libraries, and more. Barriers were also discussed, such as limited access for some community members and the absence of a central hub like a Neighbourhood Centre, which the community is lobbying the council to address. Overall, there is strong community support for older people through aged care providers.

Event participants were predominantly providers, with only a few community members representing older people. While this was a little disappointing, local providers explained that attendance is often low on a 40°C Day. Overall, the event was truly inspiring. It was wonderful to see the commitment and contributions of older people celebrated, and it reminded me how important it is to stay connected, share our stories, and support inclusive communities.

A few days before the event, on Wednesday 8 October, we travelled to Winton to enjoy morning tea with the Winton 60 & Better members, attending their weekly craft group. This revealed a remarkable group of older women actively contributing to their community. Many were in their 80s, but age was no barrier. They volunteer freely, sharing time and skills. One lady crocheted "*good luck worms*" with inspirational messages, placing them around town at her own expense. Others crocheted fidget spinners for dementia patients at the local hospital, and poppies for ANZAC day commemorations (see Figure 4 below for photos).

Figure 3. *Winton 60 & Better Program's craftwork*
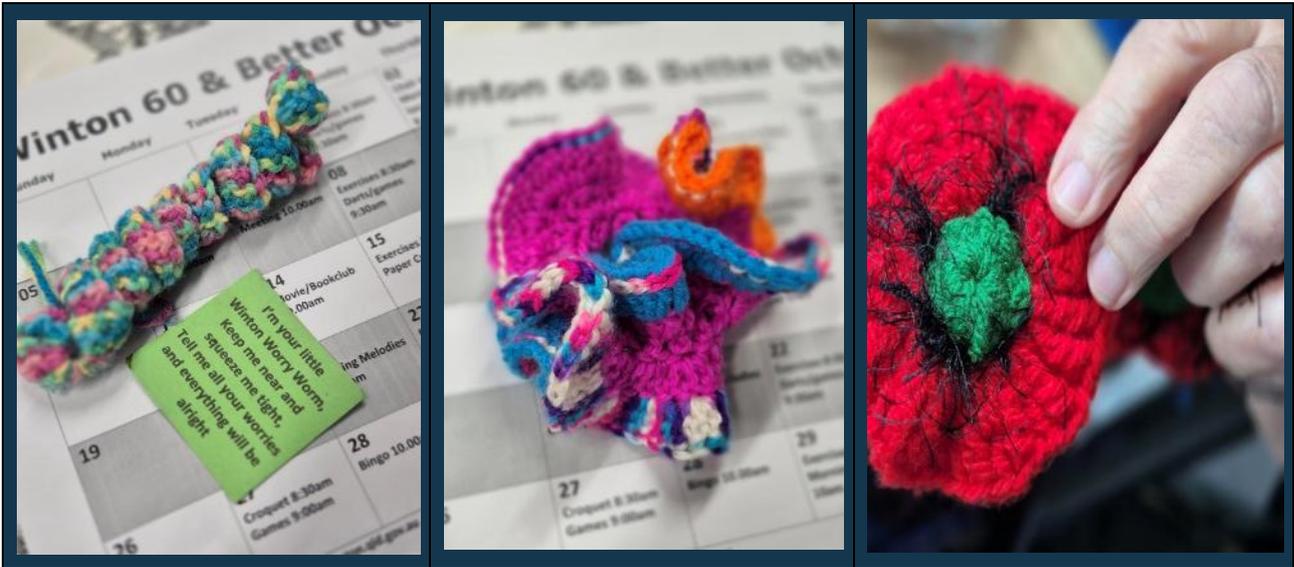
We were also invited to the Winton Neighbourhood Centre, where we learned about the activities they offer for all ages. A dedicated volunteer team supports BBQs and other events, with programs for First Nations people, children, youth, and older adults. I found the community focus on inclusion and participation inspiring and it left me feeling motivated to increase my own community involvement.

Figure 4. *Visit to Winton Neighbourhood Centre*

Thank you to Helen and everyone who made us feel most welcomed!

Conclusion and Recommendations

The event brought together 25 participants from diverse sectors and communities, and included a focus on mental health and wellbeing, as it was held during Queensland Mental Health Week. It generated three lived-experience stories from older people, seven community stories, four insight reports, and an event summary report to support the practical application of learnings at local level. The event strengthened cross-sector connections, showcased community-led approaches, fostered collaboration, and increased awareness of available services, providing a strong foundation for ongoing initiatives and guiding the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak's future work to enhance inclusion, wellbeing, and participation for older Queenslanders in regional, remote and Outback communities.

The findings highlighted the vital role of meaningful social connections through local hubs, groups, events, and informal networks in fostering meaningful engagement, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. Leveraging local organisations, institutions, and trusted community champions was shown to support diverse participation, intergenerational connection, and the amplification of older people's voices. Ensuring digital inclusion, accessibility, and proactive outreach, including transport, timing, and venue considerations, is critical to enabling older people to access and navigate both formal and informal networks. Strengthening partnerships, volunteering, peer mentoring, and collaborative initiatives builds resilient communities and sustains engagement through meaningful, flexible activities in welcoming, inclusive and accessible spaces and places.

Collectively, the insights and learnings from the event provide a clear foundation for shaping future initiatives and supporting the ongoing work of the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak in promoting inclusion, collaboration, and engagement for older Queenslanders in regional, remote and Outback communities.

A consolidated report will combine findings across the event series and provide actionable recommendations to guide inclusive, impactful, and responsive initiatives that meet the needs of older people across the state to ensure older Queenslanders are connected, cared for and celebrated as they age.

Appendix A — Program Agenda

EVENT PROGRAM — LONGREACH

Friday 10 October 2025 (9.00AM – 2.30PM)

Civic and Cultural Centre

Main Auditorium, 96A Eagle Street, Longreach 4730

Facilitators:
- Geoff Rowe, Chief Executive Officer, ADA Australia
- John Chesterman, Queensland Public Advocate

Time	Topic and Details
8.30AM	☕ **Registration and Refreshments** Meet, mingle and grab a cuppa to start the day and view the *Old is Beautiful* Winton photograph exhibition in foyer
9.00AM	**Welcome to Country** Tony Weldon - Iningai Traditional Custodian
9.10AM	**Official Opening** • Cr Anthony (Tony) Rayner, Mayor of Longreach Regional Council
9.20AM	📢 **Setting the Scene: Today's Program** • Geoff Rowe, Chief Executive Officer, ADA Australia • John Chesterman, Public Advocate for Queensland
9.30AM	🔗 **Staying Connected in your Community** • Karen Wilson, Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak, Council on the Ageing Queensland • Jo Winkleman, ADA Link Community Connector / Aged Care Advocate
9.40AM	⭐ **Keynote: Valuing Ageing and Older People is Everyone's Business** • Dr Catherine Barrett, Founder and Director, Celebrate Ageing (**via Teams**)
10.00AM	🏠 **Ageing in Place: A Pathway to Social Connection** • Rose Harris, National Engagement, Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program, delivered by Skills Generation and Skills Hubs
10.15AM	🗣 **Wisdom and Stories: Lived Experiences of Older People** • David Kerrigan AM, Zone Chairman, Central Queensland, QMSA • Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion, Council on the Ageing Queensland • Lenny Coyte, President and Secretary, Longreach RSL Memorial Services Club

Time	Topic and Details
10.30AM	**MORNING TEA**
Time	Topic and Details
10.50AM	🗣️ **Community Voices: Stories of Connection in Longreach** • Kym Webb, Coordinator, Longreach Home and Community Care (HACC) • Kate Cross, Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) Suicide Prevention and After Care, Central West Hospital and Health Service (CWHHS) • Carmen Brooke, Library Manager, Longreach Regional Council Q&A (10 mins)
11.20AM	**Panel Discussion and Q&A** Hear from our panel of community speakers as they share their experiences and ideas on community-led initiatives to build connections and foster a sense of belonging • **Councillor Dale Bignell**, Isisford Seniors Program • **Frank Pearce**, Regional Coordinator, Queensland Men's Shed Association • **John Palmer OAM**, long-time Longreach community leader, with service in the Longreach Volunteer Fire Brigade, President of the Athletics Club and Scout Group, Chair of the HAAC Consumer Advisory Committee and former Mayor • **Nicky Wildermuth**, Social Worker and Mental Health Clinician, Central West Mental Health Alcohol & Other Drugs Service • **Rose Harris**, National Engagement, Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program, delivered by Skills Generation and Skills Hubs Q&A (10 mins)
12.00PM	**LUNCH, COMMUNITY SHOWCASES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT**
12.45PM	**RECAP AND WORLD CAFÉ INTRODUCTION** A brief recap of the mornings activities followed by an overview of the upcoming World Café conversations.
1.00PM	**WORLD CAFÉ STYLE CONVERSATIONS** We invite you to share your ideas, experiences and suggestions to help shape future directions and priorities for keeping seniors connected and engaged in the community • **Topic 1:** Building Connections and Friendships — In Person and Online (guided by Celsie Mead) • **Topic 2:** Thriving at Home and in the Community (guided by Rose Harris and Jo Winkleman) • **Topic 3:** Supporting Older Men to Stay Connected (guided by Frank Pearce and David Kerrigan) • **Topic 4:** Building Inclusive Communities: Collaboration and Partnerships (guided by Karen Wilson) Breakout space in Courtyard for yarning circle or other connection activities
2.00PM	**GATHER, REFLECT AND SHARE**
2.20PM	**SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS**
2.30PM	**CLOSE**

Appendix B — Organisations Represented

Government

State

- Central West Hospital and Health Service (CWHHS)
- Central West Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Service
- Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development
- North West Regional Health (NWRH)-Carer Gateway Program
- Office of the Public Advocate (OPA)

Local

- Barcaldine Regional Council
- Longreach Regional Council
- Longreach Library

Non-Government Organisations

- ADA Australia
- Celebrate Ageing (via Zoom)
- Council on the Ageing Queensland
- Isisford Seniors Program
- Longreach Home and Community Care (HACC)
- Longreach RSL Club
- Skills Hubs and Skills Generation
- West Queensland Primary Health Network (PHN)

Seniors Social Isolation (SSI) funded organisations

- Longreach Men's Shed
- Queensland Men's Shed Association (QMSA) Regional Coordinator

Community representatives included

- Local Elder
- Community Leaders
- Volunteers

Appendix C — Participant Feedback Form

AGE WELL STAY CONNECTED EVENT - LONGREACH (10/10/25)

Thank you for being part of today's event. Your feedback is important to us, and will help us learn and improve for future gatherings.

1. Event Sessions

Please rate each of the following on a scale of **1 (not relevant) – 5 (very relevant):**

- Keynote Speakers   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐
- Lived Experience Stories   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐
- Community Voice   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐
- Panel Discussion   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐
- World Café Conversations   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

2. Who was your favourite speaker of the day

3. Overall Experience

- How much did today's event **meet your needs** (personally or in your work)?
  1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐
- How well did the event support **connection** and **collaboration**?
  1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

3. Open Comments

- ★ What did you find **most enjoyable** today?

- ★ What could we **improve** for next time?

- ★ Any **actions, ideas or collaborations** you'd like to see taken forward?

- ★ **Final Thoughts?** Any other comments or feedback

4. Keep me informed about future ideas for collaboration   YES / NO   (circle as relevant)
    If yes, my email address is:

Thank you for sharing your reflections

Appendix D — Additional Participant Feedback

Event Sessions

Rate each of the sessions on a scale of **1 (not relevant) – 5 (very relevant)**.

All responses ranged from ratings **3 to 5**, as below.

The table below shows the number of participant responses by rating.

Event Sessions	1	2	3	4	5
Keynote speakers	0	0	2	1	6
Lived Experience Stories	0	0	1	2	7
Community Voices	0	0	1	2	7
Panel Discussion	0	0	0	3	7
World Café conversations	0	0	0	3	7

Note! 2 people didn't attend the keynote speaker, and 2 people didn't rate any of the above

Who was your favourite speaker of the day and why

- Catherine Barrett. Tomato vine analogy and anyone who isn't an older person yet.
- Frank Pearce – QMSA
- Jo Winkleman and Rose Harris. Good stories / personable / relatable scenarios
- John Palmer, his speech stuck in my mind because he spoke about connecting youth and older persons and encouraging respect and tolerance between the demographics
- Karen Wilson - Social Isolation is very real in the outback
- Many for many different reasons – I really enjoyed both John and Nicky's points on the panel discussion. Carmen (Library Manager) was good to hear what goes on in the library. So much!
- Panel discussion
- They were all very informative from different perspectives, very interesting and very topical.
- They were all were very enjoyable and informative

Overall Experience

Rate on a scale of **1 (not relevant) – 5 (very relevant)** how much the event **met their needs** (personally or professionally) and how well it supported **connection** and **collaboration**?

All responses ranged from "3" to "5", as below.

The table below shows the number of participant responses by rating.

Overall Experience	1	2	3	4	5
Met your needs		1	2	2	8
Supported connection & collaboration			1	3	9

Appendix E — Thematic Analysis

World Café Conversations

Workshop 1. Building connections and friendships — in person and online

Table A1. *Summary of key insights and participant examples*

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Community Organisations, Clubs and Networks	• Arts and Crafts groups • Churches and faith-based groups • Community interagency meetings • Council-led initiatives (events, information, and community engagement) • Men's Sheds • Parents & Citizens (P&C), schools and charity events • Rotary (events and volunteering) • RSL Clubs, fishing clubs and wellbeing groups • Volunteering programs and community connectors
Local Places, Spaces and Activities	• Cafés and other informal meeting places • Community events, street parties, recreational and creative activities • Hairdressers and other routine social touchpoints • Health clinics and wellness hubs • Intergenerational programs • Libraries, arts and cultural centres • Pub activities (weekly trivia, fundraising, Jag the Joker)
Digital Connection and Inclusion	• Online and event calendars • Printed and local advertising (e.g., grocery stores, bakery, libraries, council, flyers) • Provide accessible contact options (phone numbers) • Use of AI/digital tools to support connection • Websites and social media platforms (Facebook)
Informal Support Networks	• Neighbour check-ins and peer support • Local social gatherings and street parties • Practical support from neighbours or landlords (e.g., pet care, dog walking) • Transport assistance and accessible timings/locations • Mentoring programs and peer support initiatives

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Community-based connection:** A wide range of local groups, clubs, and networks, formal and informal, provide opportunities for people to participate, volunteer, socialise, and feel supported within their communities.

- **Places and platforms that facilitate interaction:** Both physical spaces (like cafés, libraries, clinics, events, and neighbourhood gatherings) and digital platforms (websites, social media, online tools) act as important hubs for communication, engagement, and visibility.

- **Everyday support and inclusion:** Informal neighbourly support, practical assistance, peer networks, and accessible information all play a vital role in helping people stay connected, included, and supported in their daily lives.

Workshop 2 - Thriving at Home and in the Community

Table A2. *Summary of key insights and participant examples*

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Community and Social Networks	*Community groups and activities fostering connection* • Arts and craft centre, gardening clubs, hobby clubs • Community-based activities • Dance schools, sports clubs (netball, walking groups, Scouts, water aerobics) • Faith groups and church communities • Local events, community organisations and the Longreach Lions *Mix of formal and informal spaces for connection* • Drop-in for coffee and conversation • Social media and community noticeboards *Volunteering as a key connector* • St Vincent de Paul, skill sharing mentoring • Need to build a volunteering culture among younger generations
Access and Inclusion	*Physical and environmental accessibility* • Footpaths, kerbs, shop access, home entry levels, mobility supports • Safety measure like yellow lines and heat protection *Barriers to participation* • Financial constraints • Complex criteria and paperwork • Lack of a 60 & Better Program in Longreach *Supports that improve inclusion* • Informal drop-in spaces • Service navigation assistance • Subsidised programs
Independence and Wellbeing	*Health, safety, and daily routines that support wellbeing* • Staying active, staying safe, and maintaining routines (e.g., shopping days) Affordable and manageable supports • Low-cost activities • Gaps in mobility scooter hire/repair *Opportunities for learning and personal development* • Distance education and lifelong learning. *Assistance to maintain independence at home* • Service navigation support
Community Development and Sustainability	• Collaboration across sectors and organisations • Intergenerational engagement as a long-term connector and sustainability strategy

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Expand Access and Participation:** Reach smaller or remote communities and encourage diverse engagement through both formal groups (clubs, organisations, programs) and informal networks (neighbours, casual meetups). Address program gaps and provide flexible, drop-in opportunities, including recreational, arts, and hobby activities, to keep older people actively involved.

- **Enhance Accessibility, Support and Wellbeing:** Improve inclusivity through mobility supports, funding, safe participation, wellness programs and digital literacy. Support older people to maintain independence through practical everyday supports, routines, low-cost activities, and service navigation, with non-digital access to information.

- **Strengthen Networks, Engagement and Sustainability:** Build resilient communities through volunteering, peer support, intergenerational engagement, and collaboration across formal organisations and informal networks. Leverage social media, distance learning, and partnerships to facilitate connection, access to services, and long-term sustainability.

Workshop 3. Supporting Older Men to Stay Connected

Table A3. *Summary of key insights and participant examples*

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Personal and Proactive Connection	• Personal connection via phone calls or face-to-face interactions • Direct invitations for specific tasks or roles • Recognition of contributions • Casual "Cuppa and a chat"
Meaningful and Purposeful Activities	• Activities with clear purpose and value • Rewarding, flexible, opportunities that give men a sense of contribution • Short-term, low-pressure commitments with tangible outcomes
Community Hubs and Third Spaces	• Men's Sheds • Cafés and local libraries • Service clubs (e.g., RSL) • Familiar social spaces that support relationship-building
Communication and Outreach	• Listening to the radio • Printed calendars and flyers distributed in the community • Word-of-mouth and personal outreach • Support from local champions to spread information
Reducing Barriers	• Transport support and community buses • Accessible locations and inclusive environments • Opportunistic and informal engagement • Engaging men through tasks where they feel valued
Local Champions	• Trusted community members or champions facilitating participation and engagement.

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Build Personal Connections Through Purposeful Engagement:** Sustained participation is strongest when men are invited personally, given meaningful tasks, recognised for their contributions, and offered low-pressure, rewarding activities that provide a sense of purpose.
- **Leverage Familiar Community Spaces and Local Champions:** Informal "third spaces" like Men's Sheds, cafés, libraries, and service clubs, supported by trusted local champions, create comfortable environments for relationship-building and outreach.
- **Reduce Barriers and Use Accessible Communication:** Address practical barriers such as transport, accessibility, and inclusivity, while providing information through both non-digital (radio, flyers, word-of-mouth) and digital platforms to ensure all community members can engage.

Workshop 4. Building Inclusive Communities: Collaboration and Partnerships

Table A4. *Summary of key insights and participant examples*

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Barriers to Connection	• Ageism and under-recognition of older adults' abilities • Reluctance to volunteer • Limited community feedback on events and activities • Low participation impacted by weather • Transport barriers and venue accessibility • Limited digital access (e.g., only 4/168 clients have email) • Hearing loss: provide closed captions • Timing, duration and venue choice affect participation • Adjust start/finish times (e.g., 8.30am to 11.30am) • Health tourism affecting local access, success stories include new dialysis machine at local hospital enabling travel/holiday
Community Involvement and Engagement	• Attendance affected by weather and communication • Promote via social media, flyers, notices, community noticeboards • Council-funded Seniors Month activities well attended and delivered in partnership with local orgs/groups (e.g., RSL, local cafés) • Pubs and informal meeting places are effective hubs • Provide pre-paid envelopes for surveys to increase responses
Intergenerational Activities and Connections	• Programs involving young children (early childhood, school visits) increase engagement (e.g., Cinderella Spinderella, Bringing in Laughter, Parents and Grandparents Day, NAIDOC day, Christmas crafts, Meals on Wheels visits) • Engagement often depends on teacher or facilitator motivation • Opportunities to collaborate with schools/orgs (e.g., Bolton Clarke)
Partnerships & Collaborations	• Foster cross-sector partnerships: councils, local organisations, community groups, schools, clubs, churches, NFPs • Leverage council-led events, wellness programs, and community initiatives to expand participation • Council-funded Seniors Month events are well attended and involve collaboration (RSL, Whitmans café, Yarrabah and Ilfracombe pubs) • Other examples: Pioneer Home & HACC transport support, Wellness Fest and Winton 60 & Better, Community Expo, WQ Drought Appeal, NFP sports events, U3A, Scouts & Guides, sports clubs
Volunteer Engagement and Capacity	• Community involvement can be limited by volunteer compliance, fatigue, or low confidence • Encourage short-term volunteering and "*just give it a go*" mindset • Community mentors and local champions are key • Recruiting older volunteers can be challenging; may require flexible, low-commitment options

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Strengthen partnerships and Collaboration:** Build strong connections with high schools, local councils, sports clubs, churches, and not-for-profits, leveraging broader networks such as Volunteering Queensland. Coordinate local partnerships, share knowledge across sectors, and explore funding opportunities to expand reach, participation, and community impact.

- **Enhance Volunteering and Mentoring:** Provide flexible, skill-based, and short-term volunteer opportunities, alongside mentorship programs and pop-up information stalls. Collaborate with Volunteering Queensland to recruit, support, and recognise volunteers, and promote meaningful intergenerational engagement.

- **Improve Accessibility and Engagement:** Ensure activities are held in accessible venues, at convenient times, and supported with transport solutions where needed. Promote events across multiple communication channels (digital and non-digital) to maximise participation, strengthen connections, and increase engagement across schools, community groups, and sector partners.

Wisdom Wall Activity

Participants reflected on Visuals 1 & 5 from the Townsville Event and provided insights about their own communities.

Figure A1. *Visual No. 1 from the Townsville event*

What participants said:

In smaller communities across the Western corridor, accessing home modification services and skilled trades can be challenging, and workforce shortages add to the difficulty. Many older residents are remarkably resilient, often refusing help or services even when they would benefit. While most towns have no waiting lists for services or assessments, the cost of some supports, such as transport, can be prohibitive for some individuals. Confusion remains around changes related to the Aged Care Reforms, taking effect after 1 November, though the region is well supported by a dedicated ADA Advocate who plays a vital role in helping older people access the assistance they need.

Figure A2. *Visual No. 5 from the Townsville event*

What participant said:

In towns like Longreach, where the town spans several kilometres, transport can be a significant barrier for older residents trying to get out, attend appointments, or run errands. Cost-effective public transport, such as a gold-coin fare service, could benefit not only older people but also low-income residents and single-car families. Suggestions include repurposing school buses between 10 am and 2 pm for community use, with routes that drop passengers close to main street services, as heat, distance, and unsafe footpaths make accessing standard bus stops difficult.

The ideas shared at this event offer valuable insights to guide the work of the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak, while also inspiring other organisations and providers working to connect and engage older Queenslanders across the state.

Key Takeaways from Speaker Presentations

1. **Challenging Ageism and Promoting Inclusion**
   - Societal and internalised ageism can limit participation and sense of belonging.
   - Strong community networks, personal "knownness," and inclusive initiatives like Winton 60 & Better and #OldisBeautiful help older adults feel valued and connected.
   - Positive interventions, such as regular activity and purposeful engagement, enhance wellbeing, resilience and social connection.

2. **Celebrating Stories and Strengthening Community**
   - Capturing and valuing people's stories supports inclusion, belonging and intergenerational understanding.
   - Local relationships, supportive services, and community members create "forever places" that encourage engagement.
   - Health and aged care careers are vital in sustaining communities and providing meaningful connection opportunities.
   - Programs like volunteering, Men's Sheds, and local clubs provide purpose, strengthen social networks, and support intergenerational learning.

3. **Wisdom, Lived Experience and Accessible Participation**
   - Lifelong values, local knowledge, and neighbourhood ties underpin respect, collaboration, and active community involvement.
   - Inclusive, person-centred approaches ensure older people feel valued and empowered.
   - Staff with long-standing community ties, accessible services, and welcoming hubs (libraries, community centres) reduce isolation and promote digital inclusion.
   - Empathy, trust, mentorship, and small personalised acts strengthen connections and demonstrate the impact of everyday interactions.
   - Enablers: transport, access to activities, programs responding to community-identified needs (e.g., mental health support, bus services), and flexible inclusive environments (quiet/reflective spaces) encourage ongoing participation.