



Event Summary Report

Age Well Stay Connected (Townsville)

BRINGING QUEENSLAND SENIORS & COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Event Date: 3 September 2025

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24 November 2025

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

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland acknowledges the Bindal and Wulgurukaba peoples, Traditional Custodians of the lands on which this event took place and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Randal Banbari Ross, Juru/Bindal descendant for delivering the Welcome to Country and sharing his cultural knowledge.

Our gratitude extends to all contributors and participants who generously shared their time, stories, and insights. Your lived experiences and local knowledge have deepened our understanding of how older Queenslanders in Townsville stay connected, cared for, and celebrated in their communities.

We also extend our sincere thanks to our partners, ADA Australia, the Queensland Public Advocate and Life Without Barriers, and to the Queensland Museum Tropics for hosting the event. Your collaboration, support, and hospitality made this event possible and ensured a welcoming space for meaningful engagement.

A special thank you to Celsie Mead, COTA Queensland Volunteer Champion, for her valuable contribution to the co-design and delivery of the events, and for providing thoughtful feedback on the reporting. We also extend our thanks to the Townsville Region Committee on the Ageing (TRCOTA) for their uplifting SPLaSH (Sing, Play, Laugh and Share Happiness) performance.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the planning, logistics, and facilitation of the event, helping to create a welcoming and inclusive space for meaningful connections and conversations.

This event was delivered by Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland, in collaboration with ADA Australia, the Queensland Public Advocate and Life Without Barriers, with support from the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety through the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak initiative¹.

Photography

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

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 3 September 2025, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland, in partnership with ADA Australia, the Queensland Public Advocate, and Life Without Barriers, hosted the *Age Well, Stay Connected* – Townsville event, the second in a three-part series. The event was held at Queensland Museum Tropics, 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), LGBTIQ+, 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.

The event was promoted through direct emails to providers and stakeholders, posts on partner websites and social media, and printed flyers were shared in local cafes, libraries, community centres and at the venue. A total of 57 people attended, including Elders ($n = 2$), community members ($n = 24$), and sector professionals ($n = 31$) representing a diverse range of organisations, including First Nations groups. Participants travelled from across Townsville, the Whitsundays, and surrounding areas.

The program was informed by learnings from the Brisbane event and co-designed and delivered in partnership with Life Without Barriers. Contributions from partners, ADA Australia and the Queensland Public Advocate, with input from an older COTA Queensland volunteer, helped shape the program to meet community needs and priorities. Accessibility and inclusivity were central to the event, ensuring that everyone could participate fully, regardless of mobility, cultural background, or familiarity with technology.

Queensland Government-funded [Seniors Social Connection Services](#) — Life Without Barriers and Queensland Men's Shed Association actively participated as speakers, panelists, and World Café table hosts. Their involvement contributed to strengthening connections, building trust, and fostering collaborative ideas and actions beyond the event itself.

The program combined storytelling, live music, 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. Older adults shared stories of dementia, loss and volunteering. 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.

Throughout the day, participants networked and connected with one another. Key insights were captured visually by graphic recorder, Rachel Apelt (Artbalm). A live performance by TRCOTA volunteers, who generously donated their time, enhanced the welcoming and vibrant atmosphere. In the afternoon, participants engaged in World Café conversations, sharing experiences and ideas for supporting older people to stay socially connected.



6 key topics shaped by feedback from the Brisbane event and insights provided by Townsville participants at registration, guided the World Café conversations.

- Age-inclusive communities – strengths and opportunities
- Building new connections and friendships
- Digital connections for healthy ageing
- Supporting safe, connected and independent living
- Inclusive communities, belonging for everyone
- Supporting older men to stay connected

Six key themes emerged from thematic analysis of all the activities:

- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Ensuring housing, transport, and public spaces are accessible, inclusive, and enable full participation for older adults.
- **Community Engagement and Connection:** Strengthening peer mentoring and volunteer programs, and providing safe, accessible spaces, both physical and online platforms, that foster social, intergenerational, and community connections.
- **Lived Experience and Co-design:** Involving older adults in shaping programs and services, ensuring their perspectives, needs, and experiences guide decision-making, with tailored support for diverse groups, including First Nations communities.
- **Meaningful Participation:** Offering hands-on, interest-based activities that recognise contributions, celebrate diversity, and create purposeful engagement opportunities.
- **Social Connections:** Building stronger neighbourhood networks, celebrating diverse identities, and expanding tailored engagement opportunities for men.
- **Digital Skills and Inclusion:** Building older adults' confidence and capabilities with technology to support participation, learning, and wellbeing.

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 highlighted the need to support older adults and carers through accessible, inclusive, codesigned programs, such as digital mentoring, peer support, intergenerational initiatives, retirement programs, and community hubs, and by improving service access and navigation to reduce isolation, and foster wellbeing, connection, and independence.
- **A Strong Foundation for Ongoing Initiatives:** Insights from the event will inform the final Longreach event and shape the ongoing work of the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention peak, expanding reach, awareness, and impact across communities.

The event strengthened social connections for older people, including carers, raised community awareness, and fostered cross-sector collaboration. With 57 participants, it produced insights, stories, digital graphic recordings and a summary report to support local application of learnings. By highlighting community-led approaches and raising awareness of available services, the event provided a foundation for ongoing initiatives and will guide the future work of the Seniors' Social Isolation Prevention peak to enhance inclusion, wellbeing, and meaningful participation for older Queenslanders.



Purpose and Context

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

Purpose

The purpose of the event was to bring together communities in Townsville and 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 Townsville

Townsville was chosen as the second location in the event series because it is a regional city with a growing ageing population and significant geographic isolation. Many older adults live in surrounding rural communities, where access to social support can be limited. This made Townsville an ideal location to foster connection, reduce social isolation, and strengthen local support networks through community-led initiatives.

Aims

- Raise awareness of social isolation and its impact on older Queenslanders, including First Nations, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), LGBTIQ+, 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.



Event Overview

On **3 September 2025**, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland, in partnership with ADA Australia, the Queensland Public Advocate, and Life Without Barriers, hosted the *Age Well, Stay Connected – Townsville* event. The second in a three-part series, it followed the inaugural event held in Brisbane on 31 March 2025. The event took place at the **Queensland Museum Tropics**, 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 local cafes, libraries, community centres and at the venue. Registrations via Humanitix enabled collection of key participant demographics.

Around **57 people** attended (see Table 1 for participant summary).

Table 1. Number of Participants by Category and Organisation Type

Category/Org type	Number of Participants
Elders	2
Older Persons	21 (including 15 older volunteers)
Interested community members	3
Sector Professionals	31 (including 3 carers)
Government	
State (<i>n</i> = 2)	
Local (<i>n</i> = 5)	
NGOs (<i>n</i> = 20)	
SSI-funded orgs (<i>n</i> = 4) ²	
Total participants	57

Participants came from **diverse backgrounds and organisations**, including representatives of First Nations communities, travelling from Townsville, the Whitsundays and surrounding regions.

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 Delivery³, reflecting our dedication to creating an inclusive environment for all.

The program was **co-designed and delivered** in partnership with local Queensland Government-funded Seniors Social Connection Service, *Life Without Barriers*⁴. Contributions from partners, ADA Australia and the Queensland Public Advocate, with input from Celsie Mead, an older COTA Queensland Volunteer Champion, helped shape the program to meet community needs and priorities.

² <https://cotaqld.org.au/social-isolation-prevention-peak/>

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

⁴ <https://www.lwb.org.au/>



Facilitated by Geoff Rowe, CEO of ADA Australia and John Chesterman, the Queensland Public Advocate, with Stacey Eilers, Life Without Barriers and Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion, 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.

The program combined **storytelling, live music, 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 the list of **organisations represented** on the day.

The event opened with a **Welcome to Country** by Randal Banbari Ross, Juru/Bindal Descendant. This meaningful start established a respectful and inclusive tone for the day. Randal highlighted that all the tribes of the Townsville region are connected through Moiety, their skin system and noted, "*if it wasn't for our Elders, we wouldn't be here*".

To set the scene, Karen Wilson, Executive Officer of the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak and Stacey Eilers, Care Manager for Townsville and Surrounds at Life Without Barriers, shared reflections on connection, healthy ageing, and community. Karen introduced the new peak body, funded by the Queensland Government to build the capacity of over 65 organisations across Queensland that support older people to stay socially connected³. She shared a personal story about the impact of life transitions and the value of informal connections, such as knowing your neighbours.

Stacey discussed the strengths, challenges, and needs of the local community, highlighting the importance of place-based solutions that build on local people, places, and connections. She also reflected on the role of programs such as *Be Connected* and home care supports in fostering social participation, reducing isolation, and enabling older adults to remain engaged in their communities. This context shaped the discussions and activities throughout the day.

Keynote speaker, Dr Catherine Barrett, Founder and Director of Celebrate Ageing Ltd, joined the event via Zoom. She shared her perspectives on the growing health and policy impacts of social isolation and loneliness, emphasising that ageism drives loneliness and that the wellbeing of older people is a shared responsibility. Catherine acknowledged that social isolation is a global issue and can increase the risk for premature death by 26%⁵.

Catherine noted that internalised ageism can affect anyone, including care and support workers, with consequences for our health and wellbeing.

Catherine also discussed the *#OldisBeautiful* project⁶, noting that beauty extends far beyond external qualities and is reflected in how we live our lives. Her insights deeply resonated with the audience.

⁵ www.psychiatricjournal.net/article/view/154/6-1-18?utm_source=chatgpt.com

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/>



Lived Experience of Older People

Three older people shared their lived experiences, offering valuable insights from an older man navigating personal loss, a female volunteer, and a dementia advocate.

Allan shared his experience of caring for his wife for over seven years, which left him using a walker. Joining the Townsville Men's Shed transformed his wellbeing and his walker went into the cupboard as he became active again. As a Woodwork Coordinator, he enjoys laughing and working alongside others, and fostering intergenerational connections. He said the Shed has low membership fees, welcomes a new member nearly every day, and there's always someone willing to give others a lift.

Celsie shared how volunteering for Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland and her local neighbourhood centre gives her a strong sense of purpose, belonging and connection. She talked about volunteering on a community peer navigator program during the pandemic, where she was in her local library, supporting her peers to discover book clubs, technology supports, computer classes, health and wellbeing info and social activities, a role that now helps her assist others in identifying skills they can share. She has even established a book club herself, enjoys bringing in guest speakers at her local Neighbourhood Centre, engaging in continual learning, and exchanging ideas and opinions. Celsie says volunteering makes her feel valued, appreciated and helpful.

Jenni, a Dementia Advocate, shared her story of courage and resilience of living with dementia. Despite her diagnosis, Jenni emphasised, *"I'm still Jenni, and I am still here!"* Jenni's story illustrated the profound impact of a diagnosis, the importance of not making assumptions about what someone living with dementia can do, and the value of simply *asking first*. Jenni described the challenges she faced, from career changes to navigating varying support from care workers. She shared how she authored a children's book to help her grandchildren understand dementia. Her experience underscores the importance of dementia awareness training for service providers, and ensuring activities are meaningful, engaging, and genuinely supportive. [As Jenni was unwell and in hospital on the day of the event, her friend Carolyn, kindly read out her story]

These stories highlighted the resilience and strength of older Queenslanders navigating ageing, loss, and health changes. They underscored the importance of social connection, meaningful engagement, and community participation in supporting wellbeing and reducing isolation, and the need for inclusive, person-centred approaches that recognise individual strengths and aspirations.



Community Voices

We also heard stories of connection from local community organisations and service providers, showcasing their work and the impact they have in supporting older people to age well and stay connected in their community.

Kirsty Ahern, ADA Link worker shared her experiences of the pandemic, noting how shared challenges helped people feel less isolated, fostering a sense of “*we were all in this together*”. She emphasised how trust and connection can be built through community connectors, highlighting how carers are often among the most isolated, and stressed the importance of grief support, relationship-based care, and community connection.

Ngairé Trigg, Community Development Officer, Townsville City Council, spoke about the [Neighbours Every Day initiative](#), a year-round social connection campaign led by Relationships Australia. Evolving from Neighbour Day, it fosters inclusion, connection, and community safety, offering practical tools to help build respectful relationships and reduce loneliness. Ngairé talked about the [campaign resources](#), including the magnet used as a conversation starter, supports for people experiencing grief, including the [Father’s Day memorial](#) initiative and emphasised how communities come together, especially during times of crisis or disaster.

For more information visit: <https://neighbourseveryday.org/>

Riley Naish (he/him), LGBTI Seniors Visiting Scheme, Queensland Council for LGBTI Health acknowledged the historical discrimination experienced by older people from the LGBTIQ+ community, and how aged care services can sometimes reinforce these experiences. Riley asked participants to raise their hand if they knew someone from the LGBTIQ+ community. About 50% of participants raised their hands. He then highlighted supports such as the LGBTI Seniors Visiting Scheme and monthly older persons morning tea events, which provide safe and welcoming spaces for connection.



Figure 1. Riley from Queensland Council for LGBTI Health engaging with participants



Phillip Alley, Community Indigenous Liaison Officer at [Kirwan Health Campus Older Persons Community Services](#), shared insights from his work supporting culturally safe services and connecting people to supports, including My Aged Care. He highlighted the impact of socioeconomic barriers and cultural misunderstandings, and emphasised the importance of spiritual beliefs, Indigenous law and lore, and traditional ceremonies in guiding community life and accessing services.

Julie-Anne Cobb, Mental Health Nurse at Neami National, shared how older people can access support services without referrals and highlighted the availability of free crisis support. She provided information on a range of mental health supports, including peer workers, wellbeing coaches, clinical staff, and carer support groups. Julie-Anne also spoke about the [Townsville Medicare Mental Health Centre](#), which offers free mental health and wellbeing support with no appointment, referral, or Medicare card required. A safe space for older people to share what's on their mind.



Panel Discussion and Q&A

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

Amanda Mead

Seniors Learning
and Information
Service Officer
Townsville City
Libraries

Amanda highlighted the **value of libraries** as free, welcoming, and vibrant third spaces, open seven days a week for people to drop in, relax, or simply be. She described a range of programs, including one-to-one information sessions, group learning, outreach programs, family history support, and digital literacy initiatives, as well as **partnerships with the local U3A**, all of which nurture a strong sense of community and engagement.

Jenny Hazlewood

Community
Engagement
Professional
LiveUp (iLA)

Jenny emphasised the role of **assistive and digital technologies** in helping people **live independently** and **age in place**, while also highlighting the ongoing importance of face-to-face interactions for fostering meaningful connections. She encouraged embracing technology as a tool to support independence and connection, alongside maintaining in-person engagement.

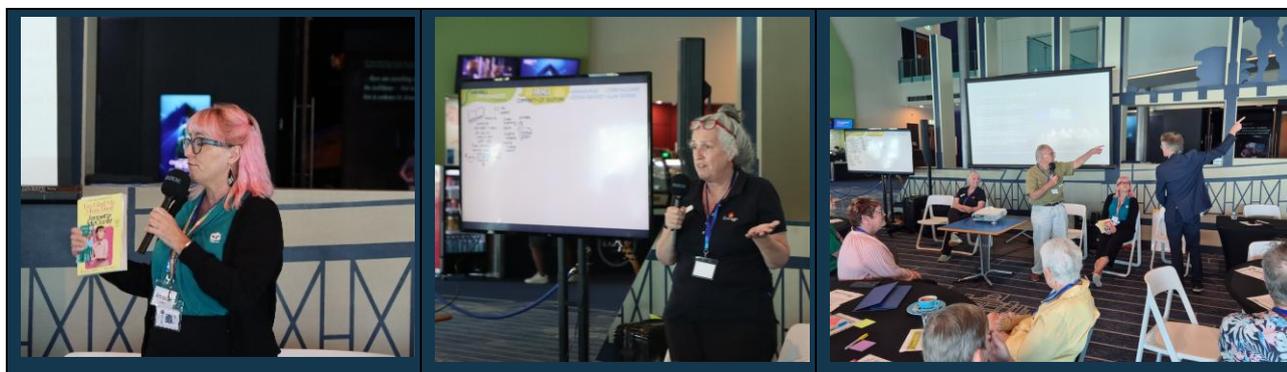
Allan Goodbun

Woodwork
Coordinator,
Townsville Men's
Shed

Allan shared further insights from Townsville Men's Shed, including their new 3D printing workshop, which is **accessible and low-cost**. He described creating 3D crosses with poppies for widows, illustrating how practical activities can foster connection and purpose.

Together, these stories highlighted the power of connection, the potential of technology to support independence, and the irreplaceable value of in-person interactions in helping people age well and remain socially connected. Figure 2 below shows a selection of photographs of the panelists in action.

Figure 2. *Amanda, Jenny and Allan engaging with participants during the panel discussion*



Lunch and Connections

During the breaks, participants connected with each other and learned more about services and supports available to help older people stay socially connected. Volunteers from Townsville Region Committee on the Ageing (TRCOTA) delivered an engaging and lively **SPLaSH** (Sing, Play, Laugh and Share Happiness) **performance**. Through music, play, and laughter, TRCOTA shared their message of joy, connection, and wellbeing for older people, creating a vibrant and uplifting moment for all.

Figure 3. TRCOTA volunteers interactive SPLaSH performance



World Café Conversations

In the afternoon, World Café conversations enabled participants to share experiences and ideas for supporting older people stay socially connected, focusing on key topics and questions shaped by feedback from the Brisbane event and Townsville registrants:

1. Age-inclusive communities – strengths & opportunities
2. Building new connections and friendships
3. Digital connections for healthy ageing
4. Supporting safe, connected and independent living
5. Inclusive communities, belonging for everyone
6. Supporting older men to stay connected

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

1. Thinking about your own community, what people, places or social activities help you or your friends stay connected and supported? (Karen Wilson)
2. Thinking about the last time you made a new friend or met someone new, who or what helped that connection happen? (Celsie Mead)
3. How do you use technology, and what makes it valuable for you? (Jenny Hazlewood)
4. What helps you to age well in your own home and stay connected in your community? (Stacey Eilers)
5. How can community spaces bring people together, and what makes them welcoming and inclusive for everyone? (Riley Naish)
6. Thinking about the programs or activities you're involved in, how could they be adapted to engage men from different backgrounds and life experiences (John Chesterman)

Figure 4

Volunteer Champion Celsie Mead sharing key insights with the group



Throughout the day, **digital graphic recorder** Rachel Apelt from Artbalm⁷ captured key ideas, experiences, and opportunities, creating a lasting visual record and enhancing accessibility.

Five visuals were produced, organised by theme as follows:

1. Welcome to Country, opening comments, setting the scene and keynote
2. Lived experience stories of older people
3. Community voices: stories of connection in Townsville
4. Panel discussion and Q&A
5. World café style conversations

⁷ Graphic recording, also called visual scribing or sketch noting, involves capturing ideas in real time and illustrating them with engaging visuals. See <https://artbalm.com/>

Key Insights and Findings

Key Themes

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

1. Accessibility and Inclusivity:

Full participation for older adults requires accessible housing, transport, public spaces, and gender-neutral, sensory-friendly, and multilingual environments. Services should adhere to accessibility standards (e.g., Vision Australia guidelines) and consider mobility, cognitive, and health needs. Inclusive practices also extend to welcoming spaces, co-designed programs, and human-centred approaches that respect diverse identities and lived experiences.

2. Community Engagement and Connection:

Strengthening social participation involves peer mentoring, volunteer programs, and trusted community spaces (libraries, centres, parks, cafés, Men's Sheds, and respite services), supporting engagement through recreational, arts, sports, intergenerational, and informal activities. Cross-sector partnerships sustain connections and promote inclusion.

3. Lived Experience and Co-design:

Older adults' perspectives and experiences, including those shaped by dementia, grief, mental health, cultural background and LGBTIQ+ identify, should guide program and service design. Co-design involves active listening, asking questions, respecting diverse beliefs, and embedding feedback into planning. Recognising lived experience through visibility, Acknowledgement of Country, symbols, and representation strengthens belonging and ensures services are meaningful, relevant, and culturally responsive.

4. Meaningful Participation:

Activities that are hands-on, interest-based, and social, such as Men's Shed projects, arts and crafts markets, choirs, and lunch groups are most impactful. Meaningful participation recognises contributions, celebrates diversity, and provides purposeful engagement opportunities, including volunteering, peer mentoring, and leadership roles and digital inclusion initiatives, such as the Be Connected program, that build skills and connectivity.

5. Connected Neighbourhood:

Building strong neighbourhood networks, celebrating diverse identities, and expanding tailored engagement opportunities, particularly for older men, helps reduce social isolation. Informal practices, such as welcoming newcomers, buddy systems, and encouraging participation, strengthen inclusion, while formal programs, community events, and intergenerational activities support sustained social connections. Initiatives like *Neighbours Every Day* show how everyday connections foster belonging, wellbeing, and participation.

6. Digital Skills and Inclusion:

Digital tools and assistive technologies can enhance connection, learning, independence, and wellbeing. Social media (Facebook, Messenger), video conferencing (Zoom, Politizoom), online platforms, AI tools (ChatGPT, recipe apps), entertainment (Netflix, YouTube), and productivity apps (health trackers, bill payment apps) all support social participation, skills development, and engagement. Providing accessible guidance, training, and support is essential to ensure equitable digital inclusion for all older adults.



Key Outcomes

The event generated clear insights and practical outcomes to inform future initiatives:

- **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:** Support older adults and carers through accessible, inclusive, codesigned programs, such as digital mentoring, peer support, intergenerational and retirement programs, and community hubs, to improve service navigation, reduce isolation, and foster wellbeing, connection, and independence.
- **A Strong Foundation for Ongoing Initiatives:** Insights from the event will inform the final Longreach event and shape the ongoing work of the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention peak, expanding reach, awareness, and impact across communities.

Key Outputs

- **Engagement of 57 participants:** Older Queenslanders, Elders, carers, volunteers, service providers and sector professionals contributed, including representatives from First Nations communities.
- **Three lived experience stories:** offering insights from an older man navigating personal loss, a female volunteer, and a dementia advocate.
- **Five community stories:** from local community organisations and service providers, showcasing their work and the impact they are having in supporting older people to age well and stay connected in their community.
- **Six insights reports:** Summarising key insights and examples from World Café conversations, to be shared with seniors social connection services to inform future initiatives, including approaches to engage men and diverse communities.
- **Five visual summaries:** captured by the digital graphical recorder of key ideas, experiences, and opportunities, creating a lasting record of the event
- **Summary Report of the Event:** To share outcomes and learnings with contributors, participants and funders.

Thematic Analysis is provided in [Appendix E](#).

The five visuals provided by Rachel Apelt (Artbalm) are provided in [Appendix F](#).



Participant Experiences

Participant feedback was collected from 21 participants at the end of the event (see [Appendix C](#) for Participant Feedback Form). The responses provided valuable insights on what participants enjoyed most, areas for improvement and overall feedback.

What participants enjoyed the most:

1. Connection & Networking

- Meeting new people, building relationships, and engaging with peers and industry experts

2. Learning & Sharing

- Exchanging ideas, hearing different perspectives, and gaining insights on community connection and inclusion (e.g., LGBTIQ+ awareness).

3. Event Activities

- Contributing to World Café conversations, attending panels and sessions, and enjoying interactive elements such as the SPLaSH singalong

4. Overall Experience

- The full-day program and social elements like lunch

Areas for improvement

• Event logistics and technical aspects

- Ensure audio/visual equipment works smoothly and providing clear directions for contributors

• Promotion and communication

- Increase awareness of the event and ensuring promotional materials are accurate.

• Program and structure

- Consider a longer event (e.g., two days) and including additional sessions

Actions, ideas, and collaborations participants would like to see:

- Strengthen collaboration with Life Without Barriers and other community organisations
- Develop a Community Peer Mentor Program to support older people
- Diversify services and explore creative initiatives, such as displaying the “*Old is Beautiful*” images in public spaces
- Maintain connections and consider next steps to carry forward ideas from the event

Final thoughts / overall feedback

- Participants found the event informative, enjoyable, and inspiring, highlighting the value of networking, sharing resources, and visual notes.
- Many suggested replicating similar events in other regions to advance local projects.
- Positive feedback included praise for the organisers (COTA, ADA, LWB) and the interactive, inclusive format of the day.



Ten participants provided their **email addresses** to stay informed about future collaboration opportunities. These contacts were recorded in the COTA Queensland secure database.

Quote from a provider after the event

We are very happy with the outcomes from the event. We are in negotiations with Riley Naish from LGBTQI Health to put on a show for their clients hopefully for Christmas this year. We really enjoyed participating in the event and look forward to seeing the final report in November. Well done to you and the COTAQ team.

[TRCOTA, Townsville]

See [Appendix D](#) for additional participant feedback.

Volunteer Reflections are provided in the following section.



Volunteer Reflections

Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion, Council on the Ageing Queensland

The World Café conversations were a standout feature of the day and proved very popular amongst the participants, giving them an opportunity to tell their stories and describe how they are helping others stay socially connected in their communities. Hosting one of the tables, I gathered valuable insights, highlighting the differences between regional and urban communities, as well as some innovative programs being run in North Queensland to address these challenges.



The real-life stories shared by local people resonated strongly with the audience, inspiring many through the resilience and resourcefulness of those determined not to be defined by life's challenges. I was grateful for the opportunity to speak about how volunteering gives me a sense of purpose, keeps me socially connected, and allows me to give back to my community.

The interactive format of the day worked extremely well, with a diverse range of passionate speakers followed by a panel discussion that allowed participants to ask questions and contribute their perspectives. The graphical recording of the event was invaluable in capturing people's lives, opinions and stories, while the buzz in the room during breaks reflected the energy, engagement, and sense of connection throughout the day.

The venue, the Museum of the Tropics, was a great location and perfect for the World Café-style delivery, with staff who were helpful, supportive, and attentive to every need. The TRCOTA performance at lunchtime was a lot of fun and a very welcome change of pace, adding an extra sense of enjoyment to the day.

Local community organisations played a key role in the event's success, particularly Stacey from Life Without Barriers and her colleagues, supporting both the planning and delivery, alongside Karen. Their involvement highlighted the value of engaging local organisations and community members in these events.

Holding the event the day before the Queensland Government Seniors Expo (at the RSL Townsville Services Club) worked well. I assisted with the Seniors Expo, at the welcome and registration desk and had the opportunity to engage with community members, learn about local programs, and gather contacts for potential future collaboration. The Seniors Expo itself was well attended, with popular sessions on aged care changes, scams, and other topics of interest to older Queenslanders.



Conclusion and Recommendations

The event engaged 57 participants from diverse sectors and communities, producing six insights reports, three lived-experience stories, five community stories, five graphic recordings, and an event summary report to support local application of learnings. It strengthened cross-sector connections, highlighted community-led approaches, fostered collaboration, and raised awareness of local services and supports, providing a foundation for ongoing initiatives and guiding the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak's future work to enhance inclusion, wellbeing, and participation for older Queenslanders.

Key insights highlight the importance of inclusive spaces, community-led programs, peer mentoring, community champions, intergenerational activities, transition-to-retirement programs, digital inclusion, and support for older adults and their carers in enhancing opportunities for social connection. They also emphasise recognising lived experience, co-designing services, fostering meaningful participation, and providing awareness training for service providers on dementia, mental health, grief, LGBTIQ+ experiences, and cultural safety to reduce isolation, strengthen social connections, and promote wellbeing. Collectively, these insights form a clear foundation for guiding future initiatives and supporting the ongoing work of the Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak, in strengthening inclusion, collaboration, and engagement for older Queenslanders.

This report presents key insights, findings, and practical learnings from the Townsville event. While formal recommendations will follow the third and final event, it offers initial guidance to support planning and delivery in Longreach, including sharing outcomes, engaging remote communities, and coordinating with government-funded seniors social connection services. These preliminary recommendations aim to ensure the remaining event builds on the insights and experiences gathered so far, supporting inclusive, impactful, and responsive initiatives that meet the needs of older Queenslanders.



Appendix A — Program Agenda



Date: Wednesday 3 Sept 2025 (9.00AM – 2.30PM)

Venue: Queensland Museum Tropics, Great Gallery, Level 1, 70-102 Flinders St, Townsville

Facilitated by Geoff Rowe, ADA Australia and John Chesterman, Queensland Public Advocate

Graphical Recording by Rachel Apelt, Artbalm Creative Services

Time	Topic	Details
8.30AM	Arrival, Refreshments and Connections	
9.00AM	Welcome to Country Randal Banbari Ross, Juru/Bindal Descendant	
9.15AM	Overview of Today's Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geoff Rowe, Chief Executive Officer, ADA Australia • John Chesterman, Public Advocate for Queensland 	
9:30AM	Setting the Scene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karen Wilson, Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak, Council on the Ageing Queensland • Stacey Eilers, Care Manager, Townsville & Surrounds, Aged and Community Care, Be Connected Program, Life Without Barriers 	
9.45AM	Valuing Ageing and Older People is Everyone's Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Catherine Barrett, Founder and Director, Celebrate Ageing (joining remotely via Zoom) 	
10.00AM	Sharing the Lived Experience of Older People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allan Goodbun, Woodwork Coordinator, Men's Shed Townsville • Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion, Council on the Ageing Queensland • Jenni Lawson, Dementia Advocate, Dementia Australia <p>Q&A (10 mins)</p>	
10.30AM	MORNING TEA	



Time	Topic	Details												
11.00AM	Community Voices: Stories of Connection in Townsville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirsty Ahern, Team Leader, ADA Link • Ngaire Trigg, Community Development Officer, Townsville City Council. • Riley Naish (he/him), LGBTI Seniors Visiting Scheme, Queensland Council for LGBTI Health • Phillip Alley, Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO), Townsville University Hospital • Julie Anne Cobb, Mental Health Nurse, Neami National 												
11.30AM	Panel Discussion and Q&A	<p>Community-led solutions to reduce social isolation and strengthen connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amanda Mead, Senior Learning and Information Services Officer, Townsville City Libraries • Romana Shepherd, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Resource and Engagement Officer, Townsville City Libraries • Jenny Hazlewood, Community Engagement Professional, ILA, LiveUp • Allan Goodbun, Woodwork Coordinator, Townsville Men's Shed 												
12.00PM	LUNCH, COMMUNITY SHOWCASING AND SOCIAL CONNECTION													
12.45PM	SPLaSH (Sing, Play, Laugh and Share Happiness) Choir													
1.00PM	WORLD CAFÉ STYLE CONVERSATIONS	<p>Share your ideas, experiences and opportunities to help shape the future directions and priorities for supporting seniors to stay socially connected</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>TOPIC 1</th> <th>TOPIC 2</th> <th>TOPIC 3</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Age-inclusive communities – strengths & opportunities</td> <td>Building new connections and friendships</td> <td>Digital connections for healthy ageing</td> </tr> <tr> <th>TOPIC 4</th> <th>TOPIC 5</th> <th>TOPIC 6</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Supporting safe, connected and independent living</td> <td>Inclusive communities, belonging for everyone</td> <td>Supporting older men to stay connected</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Breakout space for yarning circles and/or other connection activities on Balcony</p>	TOPIC 1	TOPIC 2	TOPIC 3	Age-inclusive communities – strengths & opportunities	Building new connections and friendships	Digital connections for healthy ageing	TOPIC 4	TOPIC 5	TOPIC 6	Supporting safe, connected and independent living	Inclusive communities, belonging for everyone	Supporting older men to stay connected
TOPIC 1	TOPIC 2	TOPIC 3												
Age-inclusive communities – strengths & opportunities	Building new connections and friendships	Digital connections for healthy ageing												
TOPIC 4	TOPIC 5	TOPIC 6												
Supporting safe, connected and independent living	Inclusive communities, belonging for everyone	Supporting older men to stay connected												
2.00PM	GATHER, REFLECT AND SHARE													
2.20PM	SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS													
2.30PM	CLOSE													



Appendix B — Organisations Represented

Government

State

- Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety
- Kirwan Health Campus, Townsville University Hospital
- Office of the Queensland Public Advocate
- Queensland Museum Tropics

Local

- Townsville City Council
- Townsville City Libraries
- Whitsunday Regional Council

Non-Government Organisations

- ADA Australia
- Artbalm (Graphical recording)
- Celebrate Ageing
- Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland
- Dementia Australia
- LiveUp (iLA)
- Neami National
- North Queensland Primary Health Network (PHN)
- Queensland Council for LGBTI Health
- Townsville Region Committee on the Ageing (TRCOTA)
- Wellways (Carer Gateway)

Seniors Social Isolation (SSI) funded organisations

- Life Without Barriers (Townsville)
- Prosperine Intergenerational Storytime Program (Whitsunday Regional Council)
- Townsville Men's Shed

Community representatives included

- COTA Queensland Volunteer Champion
- Dementia Advocate
- Local Elder, Juru/Bindal Descendent
- Men's Shed Representative
- Townsville Region Committee on the Ageing (TRCOTA) members
- Life without Barriers clients and volunteers



Appendix C — Participant Feedback Form

AGE WELL STAY CONNECTED EVENT - TOWNSVILLE (3/9/25)

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
- Panel Discussion 1 2 3 4 5
- World Café Conversations 1 2 3 4 5

2. 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

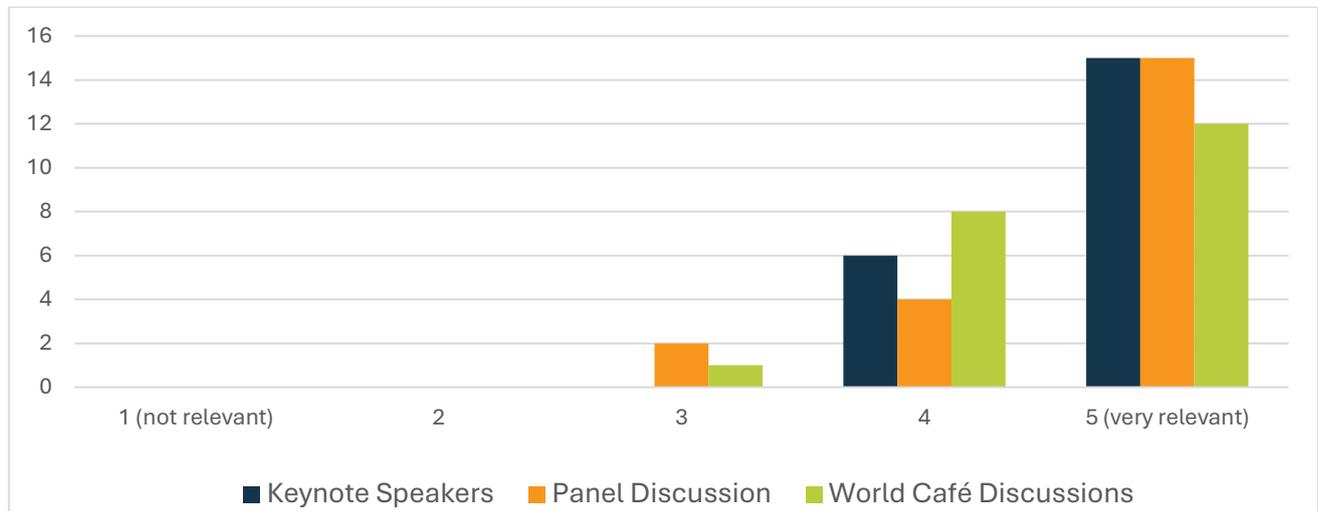


Appendix D — Additional Participant Feedback

Event Sessions

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

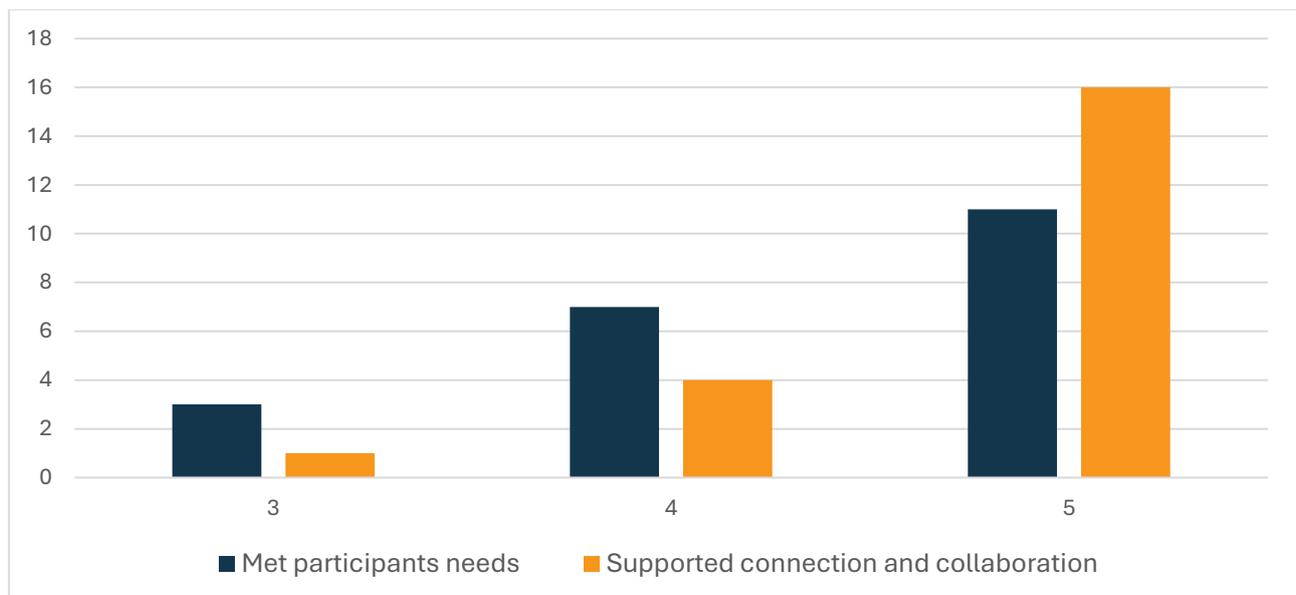
- Keynote Speaker: 6 rated "4" and 15 rated "5".
- Panel Discussion: 2 rated "3", 4 rated "4", and 15 rated "5".
- World Café Conversation: 1 rated "3", 8 rated "4", and 12 rated "5".



Overall Experience

How well the event **met participants needs** (personally or professionally) on a scale of 1 (not relevant) – 5 (very relevant): **3 rated "3", 7 rated "4", and 11 rated "5"**.

How well the event **supported connection and collaboration** on a scale of 1 (not relevant) – 5 (very relevant): **1 rated "3", 4 rated "4" and 16 rated "5"**.

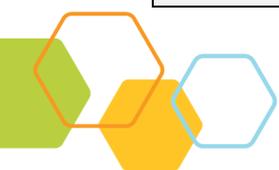


Appendix E — Thematic Analysis

Workshop 1: Age-Inclusive Communities — Strengths & Opportunities

Table A1. Summary of key insights and participant examples

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Safe Community Spaces and Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facilities: Community and neighbourhood centres, respite centres, women’s centre (safe DV support), Seniors Citizens Associations. • Learning and cultural spaces: Libraries, museums and galleries. • Public and outdoor spaces: Local park and nature reserves. • Social and inclusive venues: Neighbourhood bars (e.g., open mic)
Diverse Programs and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and recreational: sports, music/arts programs, laughing yoga and wellbeing programs, fat farmers. • Intergenerational and life stage: work connections, mothers groups, transition to retirement. • Community groups: Men's sheds, P&Cs, Parents and friends, The Older Men's Network (TOMNET), general community presence. • Community events: culture-specific events, church, food banks, local events, seniors expos and information sharing activities. • Digital inclusion and outreach: Be Connected (incl. seniors lunches and Banana vans)
Support and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care and Support Services: Home care workforce, respite centres, seniors social connection services, Meals on Wheels. • Health and Wellbeing: First Nations specific support, including dementia and mental health support (Kirwan Health Campus), Carer supports (Wellways Carer Gateway). • Transport and Accessibility: Community transport support. • Volunteering and Sustainability: Valuing volunteers and providing funding for continued services.
Information, Access and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralised Platforms: Online hubs where older people can find programs, community activities, newsletters and relevant info. • Community Networks and Outreach: Inclusive Communities Advisory Network, Mercy Community (emails, networks, identifying carers), word of mouth. • Local Channels: Local Council and community radio. • Information Challenges: Older people and service providers find it difficult accessing clear, prioritised information and staying aware of available programs and services.
Local Leadership and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and systems thinking: Big-picture thinking needed, collaboration and cross-sector partnerships • Community leadership and volunteers: community connectors, leaders, volunteers, Country Women's Association (CWA) • Local government and service orgs: Councils, PCYC learning to drive programs



Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Strengthened Community Support and Mentoring:** Recognise and expand the role of volunteers, peer mentors, and intergenerational programs in helping older people build confidence, resilience and social connections. It also incorporates transition-to-retirement programs and carer, and mental health supports for First Nations peoples, ensuring tailored support for diverse needs.
- **Identify and Leverage Trusted Community Spaces:** Focus on safe, accessible, and inclusive spaces, both physical and digital, where older adults can engage. This includes centralised online information platforms and service navigation support, enabling older people to easily access information, participate in activities, and connect with others.
- **Enhanced Collaboration and Integrated Approaches:** By fostering cross-sector partnerships, integrating technology into social and community programs, and improving coordination between organisations, this approach maximises outreach, engagement, and impact across communities.



Workshop 2: Building New Connections and Friendships

Table A2. Summary of key insights and participant examples

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Group Activities and Social Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choirs, dancing, street parties, arts and crafts markets • Intergenerational activities to bridge the divide
Social Practices and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of people's contributions and efforts • Making new people feel welcome • Buddy systems or mentoring programs • Encouraging participation from people of diverse backgrounds • Practicing humility, "paying it forward", and fostering an inclusive culture
Outdoor and Casual Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog walking • Local parks • Sports groups
Online / Digital Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apps and online platforms for staying connected and maintaining friendships

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Intergenerational and Peer Connections:** Expand programs that link different age groups and use buddy systems or peer mentors to build confidence, skills and social networks.
- **Inclusive and Accessible Social Practices:** Promote welcoming environments and low-barrier activities, including casual and outdoor opportunities, to ensure all community members feel safe and included.
- **Digital and Hybrid Engagement:** Integrate apps and online tools to complement in-person connections, improve accessibility and broaden participation.



Workshop 3: Digital Connections and Healthy Ageing

Table A3. Summary of key insights and participant examples

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Social Media and Online Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, Messenger • Politizoom.com • Zoom groups
Communication Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Telephone
AI & Digital Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChatGPT • AI recipe apps
Entertainment and Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Netflix, YouTube, TV programs (e.g., “The Saint”)
Personal/Productivity Apps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and wellbeing trackers • Creative tools / sprints • iPad Apps for paying bills

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Digital Skills and Confidence:** Programs that help older people use online platforms safely and confidently.
- **Technology Support and Guidance:** Training on social media, video calls, and AI tools to maintain social connections.
- **Digital Engagement and Wellbeing:** Use apps and tools in community programs to boost participation, creativity, and mental wellbeing.



Workshop 4: Supporting Safe, Connected, and Independent Living

Table A4. Summary of key insights and participant examples

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Accessible Housing and Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to safe and accessible accommodation • Accessible streets, parking, beaches and public spaces • Affordable transport and ridesharing with friends
Social Connections and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal supports from family, friends, and neighbours • Connecting through social clubs and networks • Supports to maintain mental health and reduce isolation
Communication and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User-friendly, jargon-free information • Clear guidance and referral support (e.g., My Aged Care) • Knowing where to go for help and support • Service navigation information and "cheat sheets". • Improved hospital discharge planning through advocacy
Services and Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible social clubs to increase participation • Practical supports: domestic assistance, meals, home safety, assistive technology • Financial support and funding for essential needs • Reablement programs to maintain independence • Balanced care: ensuring medical needs don't overshadow social connection, with adequate staffing and volunteer
Assessment and Individual Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one cognitive assessments • Tailor support and clarify processes • Ensure supports meet individual needs

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Accessible Environments and Practical Supports:** Provide safe, accessible housing, transport, and public spaces to support older people's mobility, independence and daily living.
- **Social Connections and Community Support:** Strengthen informal, neighbourhood and community networks, and deliver social and domestic services that promote safety, wellbeing, and autonomy.
- **Clear Information, Advocacy, and Individualised Support:** Offer user-friendly, jargon free information, clear guidance, referrals, and advocacy (e.g., hospital discharge, My Aged Care), along with service navigation support and assessments tailored to individual needs.



Workshop 5: Inclusive Communities — Belonging for Everyone

Table A5. Summary of key insights and participant examples

Key Themes	Participant Examples
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-neutral facilities • Multilingual and accessible signage • Physical access and transport • Sensory considerations (lighting, noise) • Compliance with accessibility standards (e.g., Vision Australia guidelines)
Co-Design & Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions and avoid assumptions • Respect diverse beliefs and perspectives
Understanding & Allyship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge history and accept people as they are • Actively support and advocate • Act as an ally in the community
Visibility & Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of Country • Flags and symbols • Representation of lived experience
Welcoming Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human-centred practices • Respect for all identities and experiences • Raise community awareness to promote inclusivity

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Co-design and Accessibility:** Actively involve older adults, carers, and diverse community members in planning and designing physical spaces, signage, and transport that enable full participation and accessibility.
- **Visibility and Representation:** Promote and celebrate diverse identities and lived experiences across programs, services and community initiatives.
- **Inclusive Practices:** Embed awareness, respect, and inclusivity into all community programs, events and services to foster equitable participation.



Workshop 6: Supporting Older Men to Stay Connected

Table A6. Summary of key insights and participant examples

Key Themes	Participant Examples
How to Engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Word of mouth, personal introductions, friends• Local markets and trusted informal networks
What Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hands-on, social or task-focussed activities• Playing cards• Men’s Shed projects• Sharing food
Where to Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men’s Shed Townsville• Other welcoming trusted community spaces

Ideas generated to inform future initiatives and collaboration included:

- **Expanded engagement pathways for men:** Creating informal and trusted ways for men to participate in community activities.
- **Hands-on and interest-based activities:** Offering social and practical activities that encourage participation and connection.
- **Support for Men’s Sheds and similar spaces:** Promoting safe, community-based environments where men can build relationships and stay socially connected.



Appendix F — Digital Graphic Recordings

AGE WELL STAY CONNECTED TOWNSVILLE
 WELCOME TO COUNTRY: RANDAL BANBARI ROSS • SETTING THE SCENE: KAREN WILSON & STACEY EILERS
 • VALUING AGEING & OLDER PEOPLE • EVERYONE'S BUSINESS: DR CATHERINE BARRETT

If it wasn't for our Elders, we wouldn't be here

All of the Tribes of the Townsville region are connected through our Moiety, our Skin System

DR CATHERINE BARRETT

SOCIAL ISOLATION is a **GLOBAL ISSUE**

26% ↑ Risk of premature death

CONNECTION

community collaboration

Happiness & GOOD HEALTH

Place-based solutions

AGEISM drives loneliness

The **I** in Ageism

Discrimination

Internalised AGEISM is terrible for our Health and wellbeing

Almost EVERYONE in Australia has internalised AGEISM

Our SERVICE providers too!

BEAUTY is so much more than external qualities

It's reflected in how we live our lives

OLD is GOOD

GRAPHIC RECORDING: RACHEL APELT - artbalm 3-9-2025

**AGE WELL
STAY CONNECTED
TOWNSVILLE**

**SHARING the LIVED EXPERIENCE
of OLDER PEOPLE**

ALLAN GOODBUN - MEN'S SHED TOWNSVILLE
 CELSIE MEAD - COTA QLD VOLUNTEER
 JENNI LAWSON - DEMENTIA AUSTRALIA-DEMENTIA ADVOCATE

ALLAN

I nursed my wife for 7 years
I ended up on a walker



We get along & Spend the day laughing and working TOGETHER

We get a new member every day

Someone ALWAYS gives us a lift



Some of our members are Young

We have a low membership fee to cover insurance



\$50/year



CELSIE

Volunteering gives me **PURPOSE**

and gives me **CONNECTION**



Helping others identify skills they could share...



feeling **VALUABLE & useful**

Bringing in Speakers to SHARE information

Continual Learning
Sharing opinions and ideas

Carolyn, on behalf of



So much is TAKEN from us with our DIAGNOSIS
DON'T ASSUME we can't do things → ASK FIRST

Living with dementia, courageously living a 'normal' life



I fear not being able to recognise my grandchildren

I am STILL JENNI and I am STILL HERE!

So I've written Children's books about it!

As a registered Nurse I'd planned to work ten years more...
One day I was lost in my ward
My dementia diagnosis Shocked me

I moved to North Qld thinking this would help, being closer to family.

Instead of being redeployed, after 36 years, I lost my job!
STAFF are turned out like RUBBISH



I had to accept Strangers into my home

- ♥ I have a long and academically rigorous career.
- ♥ I am intelligent
- ♥ I still have abilities

I could have been working further years in research

Some Activities are Very Patronising



And some were AMAZING

Many support workers were abusive

GRAPHIC RECORDING: RACHEL APELT - artbalm 3-9-2025

**AGE WELL
STAY CONNECTED
TOWNSVILLE**

**COMMUNITY VOICES:
STORIES of CONNECTION in TOWNSVILLE**

- KIRSTY AHERN - ADA LINK
- NGAIRE TRIGG - TOWNSVILLE CITY COUNCIL
- RILEY NAISH (he/him) - QC for LGBTI HEALTH
- PHILLIP ALLEY - KIRWAN HEALTH CAMPUS
- JULIE ANNE COBB - NEAMI NATIONAL

DIGNITY

ADA LINK

Covid → stats on isolation improved because of the messaging: we're all in this TOGETHER... people felt CONNECTED



Community connectors

carers can be the most isolated

TRUST and connection

Relationship-Based Support

Grief support & connection in community

"I see you"

"Sawubona" - isiZulu

TOWNSVILLE CITY COUNCIL

Neighbours Every Day



connection and community safety

Inclusion & BELONGING

Support for those going through grief
Fathers' Day Memorial



Build your connections and learn about each other's superpowers

"I'm here if you need me!"



The Village

Helping each other in disasters

QLD COUNCIL for LGBTI HEALTH



Older LGBTIQ+ people lived through terrible discrimination
Often Aged Care services reinforce this experience

To overcome social isolation we offer the LGBTI Seniors Visiting Scheme

a safe place



We also offer Weekly coffee mornings and chances to connect & catch up

Mental Health Support: Neami

- ♥ Peer worker support
- ♥ wellbeing coaches
- ♥ Clinical staff
- ♥ carers' support group
- ♥ Service navigation
- ♥ no referral needed
- ♥ free crisis help

COMMUNITY INDIGENOUS LIAISON OFFICER (OLDER PERSONS)



I help create links between people, services, and My Aged Care
And help remove the barriers

I provide information to help create Culturally Safe Services

SERVICES



The barriers are linked to many socioeconomic factors:

- Education
- Employment/finances
- Geography
- Spirituality } hearing + seeing
- Culture } spirits is misinterpreted
- transport
- Housing

There are many CULTURAL factors:

- Customary Law and LORE
- Cultural needs
- Cultural rites and ceremonies
e.g. to retrieve the clothes a person was wearing at the time of death



GRAPHIC RECORDING: RACHEL APELT - artbalm 3-9-2025

- AMANDA MEAD - TOWNSVILLE CITY LIBRARIES
- JENNY HAZLEWOOD - LiveUp
- ALLAN GOODBUN - MEN'S SHED TOWNSVILLE

 **Townsville LIBRARIES**
are open 7 days for you to drop in and just *BE.....*
 They are free, vibrant and (sort of) quiet spaces

● 1:1 info support ● Group learning ● outreach
● Family History support ● *feedback please!*
● U3A ● digital support

work **Third spaces** home

   We printed 3D crosses with poppies for the widows

We're starting a **3D Printing** course  So easy to do and inexpensive to make parts

   Technology ↓ face-to-face contact
Assistive technology can AID your independence 



SPLASH!   One of these days our VOICES will be LISTENED to by you!

GRAPHIC RECORDING: RACHEL APELT - artbalm 3-9-2025

World Café CONVERSATIONS

Age Inclusive Communities - Strengths & Opportunities

COLLABORATION!
we can't do it alone

- mentors
- volunteers
- peers
- peer mentor → find out what's happening and SHARE THE EVENTS
- Safe + Trusted places + spaces
- Third Spaces
- Cafés
- Volunteer orgs
- GREEN Spaces
- Social activities
- A TRUSTED Central place for info

Supporting Safe, Connected and Independent Living

- Informal Supports: friends, family, neighbours
 - Domestic assistance
 - Connection
 - Communication & help to navigate the system
 - Accessibility: Transport! it's not as Accessible as it should be
 - Check and don't cancel - reschedule
 - Accessible parking
-

Building New Connections and Friendships

- Choir groups
 - dancing
 - Bring new people along
 - Intergenerational activities → BRIDGING
 - Street parties
 - Online apps
 - Dog walking
 - Arts + Craft markets
 - Recognition and welcoming including diverse people in your group
 - 'pay it forward' making people feel comfortable
- Don't forget your humanity
-

Inclusive Communities - Belonging for Everyone

- Visibility!
 - Lived experience
 - Signage
 - Representation
- Physical ACCESSIBILITY
 - Flyers should be readable → Vision Australia
 - Braille on business cards
 - Transport
 - Gender-neutrality - e.g. toilets
 - Respect and Acceptance
 - Broaden our knowledge: Learn about the place we live in and its First Nations history

Become an Ally!

Digital Connections for Healthy Ageing

- YouTube with ad blockers
- old movies
- Sleep apps
- Health apps to measure your steps

Supporting Older Men to Stay Connected

- How?** The 1st involvement is IMPORTANT
 - word of mouth
 - introduce yourself
 - markets
 - friends
- What?** Men need to be doing something
 - cards
 - men's shed
 - Food
- Where?** Men's Sheds ✓

