



Key Insights: ADA Aged Care Conversations (Maleny, Gympie and Kingaroy) May 2026

1. Strong Demand for Information About Services and Supports

A consistent theme across all three events was that attendees were primarily seeking information about available services, supports and community programs. Participants actively engaged with stallholders, collected resources and reported learning about services they had not previously known existed.

- High levels of engagement with information stalls and providers.
- Many attendees were unaware of available supports in their communities.
- Information about local practical services was of most interest.
- Resource tables and printed materials were particularly popular.

2. Ongoing Challenges Accessing Aged Care and Support Services

Several conversations highlighted significant barriers to accessing services, particularly in regional and rural areas. Examples included:

- A farmer in Conondale approved for My Aged Care services but unable to access support due to workforce shortages in his area.
- An older man in Gympie caring for his wife who'd had a stroke, experiencing frustration with My Aged Care communication processes, resulting in delays and the need to restart applications.
- Community workers reporting insufficient services available for referral despite increasing demand.

These examples suggest that eligibility for services does not necessarily translate into access to support.

3. Social Connection is Sustained Through Existing Community Networks

When asked how they stay connected, attendees consistently referenced established community groups and activities. Common examples included:

- Sporting clubs
- Churches
- Libraries
- Rotary
- Older Women's groups
- Veteran networks

The conversations reinforced the importance of local community organisations in reducing social isolation and maintaining wellbeing.

In Kingaroy, South Burnett Stronger Together Seniors Social Isolation Program and the local Neighbourhood Centre in Nanango, played a significant role in supporting the local community to stay socially connected.

4. Community Connectors Play a Critical Role

The events highlighted the value of trusted local individuals and organisations who connect people to information and support. Examples included:

- Volunteers at the Maleny Tourist Information Centre, who were identified as highly connected local community members and effective channels for promotion.
- Deb from South Burnett CTC, who is a trusted and well-known figure in Kingaroy and whose participants attended the event.
- Katherine from Relationships Australia Queensland's Seniors Social Connection Program, who is supporting significant community engagement despite staffing pressures.

These local connectors appear critical in reaching older people and increasing awareness of services.

5. Workforce and Service Capacity Pressures are Significant

Conversations with service providers revealed concerns about limited staffing and growing community need.

Issues raised included:

- Single staff members managing multiple programs and responsibilities.
- Lack of volunteer support.
- Growing demand for assistance from people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness.
- Insufficient services available to meet referral needs.

The increasing number of older people and families at risk of homelessness was identified as a particular concern.

6. Event Format Could Be Improved

Feedback was consistent across all events that presentations were too long without breaks. Suggested improvements included:

- Shorter presentation sessions.
- Morning tea or networking between speakers (i.e., breaking it up into 2 parts).
- More opportunities for attendees to engage with providers and one another.
- Improved room layouts that support movement and conversation.

Operational issues also impacted attendee experience:

- Tea and coffee facilities were difficult to use due to a lack of tables or places to put drinks.
- Technology issues in Kingaroy created distractions during presentations.

7. Word-of-Mouth Promotion Remains Powerful

Many attendees reported hearing about the events through friends or community networks rather than formal advertising. Key observations:

- Some participants only became aware of the event shortly beforehand.
- Word-of-mouth was a common referral pathway.
- Local hubs such as tourist information centres may be valuable partners for future promotion.

8. Libraries Identified as an Untapped Opportunity

Feedback from attendees in Maleny suggested there is demand for more activities and events for older people through local libraries. This may represent an opportunity for future partnerships and community engagement initiatives.

Overall Conclusion

The events demonstrated strong community interest in learning about services, supports and opportunities for social connection. Attendees were highly engaged and appreciative of the information provided, but conversations also revealed persistent challenges around service availability, aged care navigation, workforce shortages and increasing social vulnerability. Trusted local organisations, volunteers and community leaders play a vital role in connecting older people to support, while future events could be strengthened through shorter presentations, improved networking opportunities and expanded promotion through local community channels.

Prepared by Karen Wilson, Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Peak Services Program. Date 1 June 2026