

ROYAL COMMISSION CONSULTATION SUMMARY

THANK YOU

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety developed proposals for a redesigned aged care program. They are interested in people's views on these proposals and the impact of COVID-19 on aged care.

During July 2020, COTA Queensland engaged with people living and working across Queensland to hear their views. What we heard will inform our ongoing advocacy work, and were shared with COTA Australia to inform the Royal Commission. COTA Australia presents information to the Royal Commission through a range of mechanisms including as a witness and through submissions.

COTA Queensland thanks you for taking part in this consultation and sharing your experiences, ideas and insights. A summary of what we did and what we heard you say is provided below.

We look forward to future opportunities for engaging and connecting with you.

September, 2020



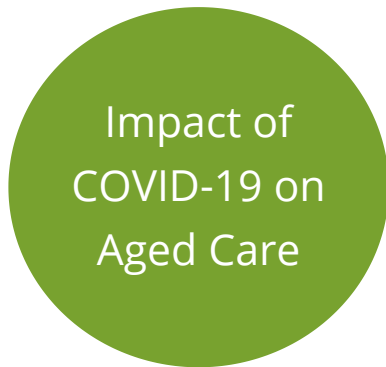
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WHAT WE DID

We invited people to participate through online surveys and 'virtual conversations'.

We chose three consultation topics as they align closely with our work and are of interest to the Royal Commission.



We heard from over 40 people including those who are receiving aged care and support services, informal carers, aged care workers and others within communities who provide formal and informal support.

Over 40% of people who responded live in rural and regional communities across Queensland. Some respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or LGBTIQ.




These are some of the things we heard you say.


WHAT WE HEARD YOU SAY

ABOUT THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and the government and community response have impacted the ways aged care support is provided and experienced. The usual stressors on carers and the aged care setting have continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and in many ways have been amplified; your stories have reflected this. On the other hand, we have heard of compassionate, caring and innovative responses by communities, families and workers in ensuring people who may be vulnerable or isolated at this time feel supported and connected.



People receiving care or people providing informal care who have been affected negatively through the COVID-19 changes, shared their experiences of having services stopped or received services they did not need or want. Some people expressed concerns for their safety, with people experiencing falls as they could not attend their usual classes, and one person feared that workers were not taking adequate infection control precautions to keep them safe. Many people experienced limited social interaction as they were no longer able to meet with friends or family, go shopping, or attend their usual group sessions.



Even though many challenges were raised, for some people there had been little change to their lives. For others, their support improved as it could be received in different ways and became more accessible. In some instances, care was provided by people or groups in the community rather than through formal services, or through technology to which they did not previously have access. While having access to technology and knowing how to use it were raised as pressing issues, the benefits of technology allowed some people to connect, communicate and go about their daily lives in new ways. Some people expressed their desire for the positive changes to continue as we move into a "new normal".

WHAT WE WE HEARD YOU SAY

ABOUT CARE FINDING IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The challenges of understanding the aged care setting and how to access it were mentioned. Of the people who participated in this consultation, many were from regional, rural and remote areas of Queensland. The need to have locally-based, informed and available services across Queensland was alluded to by the majority. Many areas were said to be under-serviced and if services were available, then they were sometimes provided by organisations not based in their towns so were often unfamiliar with the ins and outs of the community. Knowing how to find information about services was also difficult with people preferring someone to talk to face-to-face rather than accessing My Aged Care online. People said it was important that local support is available to help them understand and access the aged care system and processes.

ABOUT INFORMAL CARER SUPPORT AND RESPITE

We also heard that carers (spouses, adult children, friends and neighbours) need greater recognition of the care they provide, their expertise and knowledge in the caring relationship, as well as their information and support needs in the caring role. People said that caring for others can be wonderful and rewarding, as well as challenging, draining and time-consuming. Many people suggested that including carers in the assessment process when people are assessed for their care needs would help carers to better receive the support they need. Increasing availability and flexibility in respite including improved understanding of and access to different types of locally available respite was highlighted.

WHAT WE HEARD YOU SAY

IMPROVING AGED CARE AND WORKING TOGETHER

People are wanting their voices and stories heard and for aged care services to be more available, more supportive, and easier to understand and access. Being able to stay safe, independent and connected in their own homes and communities is important, and innovation and new ways of working are needed.

COVID-19 is highlighting challenges and gaps in the way aged care support is delivered and thought about; it is also offering up solutions that previously may have seemed too challenging.

Government, community groups and organisations, carers, families and people receiving care all need to work together and play differing though complementary roles. A range of strategies are needed to support people to continue living safely and well at all times, including during pandemics and emergencies.

STAYING INFORMED AND INVOLVED

We are very grateful for your input to this discussion and thinking, and look forward to keeping you informed and included through other opportunities in the future.

This document has provided a brief overview of the information we heard through this consultation. If you would like to be involved in future consultations please register on our Engagement Hub if you haven't already done so. <https://cotaqld.engagementhub.com.au> If you would like to remain up to date with information from COTA Queensland, please sign up to COTA Life. <https://www.cotaqld.org.au/news/cotalife/>

You are also welcome to contact COTA Queensland on 3316 2999 or via engagement@cotaqld.org.au to discuss the outcomes of this consultation in more detail.