

Ageing in Your Community Kitchen Table Discussion Summary

Thank you

In November and December of 2020, COTA Queensland supported five community members in regional, rural and remote Queensland to host Kitchen Table Discussions. We were interested in learning more about the experiences and thoughts of people who may not usually participate in consultations about what it is like to age in their community.

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,
The Engagement Team.

What we did and who was involved

COTA Queensland recruited five community members to host a 90-minute discussion on ageing in their community with time afterwards for morning or afternoon tea. Hosts were provided with a Host Kit, received training, took notes, provided feedback to COTA Queensland and participated in a debrief session.

We heard from five hosts and 38 participants from Pomona, Cairns, Gold Coast and their surrounding areas. Both men and women participated and all participants were aged between 50 and 99 years. Some participants identified as living with a disability or chronic health condition, being a carer, Aboriginal, an LGBTIQ+ community member or being from a non-English Speaking Background.

Some people lived independently at home while others were supported to live at home or resided in a Residential Aged Care Facility. Some participants received or provided informal care to their spouse, partner, friends or family members. Others received support through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP), Home Care Package (HCP), Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) and Home Secure Assist.

The discussions focused on five questions:

1. If a friend or family member from out of town came to visit, what would you tell them about getting older in your community?
2. What are the positive things about getting older where you live? How do your community, its services, and surroundings help you to stay living in your home or community as you age?
3. Is it hard to age well in your community? What has made it hard and what would make it easier for you?
4. With COVID-19 there's been a lot of changes in how we interact, go about our daily lives, and how services are provided. Has there been anything that has helped you to live well in your home or community during these times?
5. If you had a magic wand, what would you like to see in your community to support you, or others as you age? Are there any other comments you would like to make?

What we heard you say

We heard varying views and experiences from participants. A summary of what we heard is below.

The value of being involved

People enjoyed hosting or being a participant. Many people met new people, found the discussion interesting, learnt new information on how to access care, or are taking action to learn more and look at ways to support other people.

When telling others about their community

The environment was often mentioned as an important quality and the lifestyle as being "easy going". Having lots of activities to participate in and opportunities to contribute to, such as volunteering, Men's Sheds or attending U3A was important and mentioned by many. The ability to "get around" was raised as both a challenge and in some areas something that works well.

Many thought that information about services and supports available was lacking. Support services (residential aged care) on the Gold Coast was mentioned as a lifesaver though a lack of other community services was also mentioned. People in Pomona mentioned how much they liked living there and the strong sense of community, similar to people in Cairns. Pomona's Community House played a role in supporting people and while services for daily

living were available locally, eg, doctors and shops, most aged care services were provided by services located in surrounding towns.

"There is no information in Surfers Paradise for senior citizens."

"I am independent, but I need to know more information."

The positives about their communities

Having access to natural spaces, whether that be mountains, water or parks, and access to shops and health services, were again mentioned. The importance of community support and access to activities that linked to their culture, intergenerational activities and opportunities to join in different groups and get support services when needed was also spoken about. Pomona, in particular, talked of community support and connection, with Cairns and Pomona speaking often about the importance of volunteering and being involved in activities.

The challenges experienced in their communities

We heard a number of challenges that made it hard for people to age well in their community. Most challenges related to understanding and navigating the aged care system and knowing what supports are available to them. Transport and in some areas the closure of community groups was also a concern.

Many suggested that there needs to be more education on what help you can get, including information and education from local people and social workers. There is not enough assistance nor facilities where you can talk to people face to face. Most communication needs to be done via a call centre or via the internet. Some also mentioned the lack of mental health support available. Many said that there is not enough aged care support available to help when it is needed, and people need to be more informed about support available. In some areas, people said that public transport was okay though in other areas public transport and other transport services either were not available, accessible or useful and it has become a real challenge.

"People help each other and there is a strong sense of community."

"We have many places where we can volunteer, to become involved in supporting the community and each other."

How to make things easier for people

Quite a few people mentioned that there are many organisations out there to assist people and it is important to maintain social connections and your health, and people's attitudes play a big role.

More information should be made available to assist people, including via social workers. All people should be able to access the information they require. Community groups can assist with this and a one-stop-shop may be helpful. More help is needed with learning computers, especially in the home, as most things need to be done online.

There needs to be better scheduling and availability of low-cost transport services, including public transport. Many wanted more care, support and housing options in their local area with one person suggesting a lifestyle resort. People wanted more access to help in the home, with services being reliable and staying to a schedule.

Covid-19 changes and what should remain

COVID-19 impacted some people more than others. During this time where some felt isolated and restricted, there have been improvements seen in accessing services, such as shopping being delivered, dedicated seniors shopping hours, and telehealth being available. Health services have been good along with access to PPE and hand sanitiser. Technology has been helpful and more people are developing computer skills. Having supportive community networks, friends and family have helped many during this time. Some mentioned that communication and the importance of people and the local community became even more apparent during this time. There was also the appreciation of spending time in nature and spending time alone.

"As the population ages, the government will save money on residential care by spending more on at-home care."

"I feel grateful to be living in Queensland and Australia."

"I became conscious of the need to stay connected."

If people had a magic wand they would...

If people had a magic wand they would improve community services, activities and transport. They would have community gardens, increase access to health care, have a one-stop-shop for information and support, and increase accessibility to services and facilities. They would also tackle ageism, have an improved aged care system, and give greater attention to mental health, domestic violence and people living alone.

"I would like to stay in the area. I would need transport when I cannot drive that goes through the region stopping at each small town/village."

"I feel very fortunate to have the life I have."

"There is very little assistance that is actually local. I would like to stay in the community but will either move closer to family or they will move closer to me."

"We want to stay within our community."

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 these discussions. If you would like to be involved in future consultations please register on our Engagement Hub if you haven't already done so cotaqld.engagementhub.com.au If you would like to remain up to date with information from COTA Queensland, please sign up to COTA Life 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.