

# KNOWLEDGE MODULES

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1 OF 7

MODULE 1  
Ageing in Context

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# BEFORE WE BEGIN

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## REFLECTION

Before we begin this module take a moment to **think** about this statement from [Israel Doron](#) on the newly emerging idea of 'Ageivism':

*Ageivism calls for the liberation of older persons from existing oppression and discrimination which is embedded in ageism. It opposes any attempt to eliminate older persons as a distinct social group, or eradicate old age as a unique human experience. Ageivism, as an ideology, encourages older persons to self-identify as such, and to actively resist the attempts to ignore their unique subjective social experiences of being old in modern and post-modern societies.*

Professor Doron, an expert in law and gerontology calls for a **rethink** of how older persons are treated within society.

**What is the context of this 'call to arms'?**

# OVERVIEW

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## AGEING IN CONTEXT

This module is first in the knowledge component of the training program.

Understanding **ageing in context** means understanding the demographics of our ageing population, both locally and globally, and of our projected future populations.

Understanding **national elder abuse frameworks** and **Queensland's age-friendly** strategic policy approach is key to working effectively within the contemporary policy landscape.

Understanding ageing in context ensures advisers see **older persons in context** including how services can be delivered in an age-friendly manner, without resorting to discriminatory **societal constructs or stereotypes** and in observance of legislative and **human rights** standards.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

include gaining knowledge about the ageing population and how social constructs affect older persons' identity in the community. Additionally, advisers will gain knowledge about relevant policy frameworks that promote older persons' interests.

# TOPICS COVERED

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This module covers the following topics:



## THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS LIVING LONGER



## AUSTRALIA'S AGEING POPULATION

- Current population
- Future population
- National Plan on Elder Abuse
- Ageing in Queensland



## AGE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT



## HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORKS FOR OLDER PERSONS

- United Nations Principles for Older Persons
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
- Anti-Discrimination Laws

# THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS LIVING LONGER

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## The world's population is living longer.

Even the poorest countries have experienced decades of improved life expectancy over the last 50 years. Wealthy countries now have life expectancy averages that are almost twice what they were 100 years ago.

For example, Australians have **gained** 33 years of life expectancy since 1890, now living between 80 and 85 years on average. Despite this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons still face a **gap in life expectancy** of almost 10 years compared with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons ([AIHW](#), [ABS](#)).

Population ageing is poised to become one of the most **significant social transformations** of the twenty-first century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society, including labour and financial markets, the demand for goods and services, such as housing, transportation and social care and protections, as well as family structures and intergenerational ties ([UN Ageing](#)).

# THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS LIVING LONGER

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The **number of older persons** (those aged 60 years or over) is expected to more than double by 2050 and to more than triple by 2100, rising from 962 million globally in 2017 to 2.1 billion in 2050 and 3.1 billion in 2100.

Globally, the population cohort aged 60 or over is **growing faster** than all younger age groups ([UN Ageing](#)).

However, longer lives can have **negative consequences**.

This includes possible **longer periods of morbidity and disability** and **greater exposure to abuse** over the life course.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has noted the factors contributing to an increased **prevalence** of elder abuse include longevity ([WHO, 2015](#)).

# AUSTRALIA'S AGEING POPULATION

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In 2017, Australia's population of older persons aged 60 years and older was 21% (5,134,710) of 24,451,000 persons. Half of them had some **degree of disability**. One in three were born in a **non-English Speaking country**.

**Women** are still living longer than men. In 2016, women were 51% of those aged 65–74, 54% of those aged 75–84 (54%) and 63% of people aged 85 and over ([AIHW](#)).

One-quarter of persons aged 65 and over in 2011 were **born** in a non-English speaking country and a further 11% of older persons were born in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The **most common** non-English speaking countries of birth for older persons were Italy (4% of all older people), Greece, New Zealand and Germany (approximately 2% each). Italian was the most common non-English language spoken at home by persons aged 65 and over in 2011 (111,000 people), followed by Greek (69,000) and Chinese (49,000) ([AIHW](#)).

# AUSTRALIA'S AGEING POPULATION

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For **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** persons in 2016, 15% (112,231) were aged 50 and older, 4% (31,000) were aged 65 and over and less than 1% (0.2%) were aged 85 and over ([AIHW](#)).

The proportions for those aged 65 and over, and 85 and over are considerably smaller than equivalents for the non-Indigenous population (which were 15% and 2.1%, respectively), reflecting the **higher mortality rate** and **lower life expectancy** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons ([AIHW](#)).

The most populous states have the **largest share** of older persons. Some **regions** have higher concentrations of older persons. Five Australian regions have proportions of 20% or more of persons aged 65 years or older.

In **Queensland**, the Wide Bay region has 21.8% ([AIHW](#)).

Recently published [Insights into vulnerabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50](#) (2019)



# AUSTRALIA'S AGEING POPULATION

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In terms of **social engagement**, 1 in 10 older persons remains employed, 7 in 10 own their own home.

3 in 10 were **volunteers** and older persons are one quarter of all **informal carers** in Australia ([AIHW](#)).

In 2018, Australians aged 65 and over had a **workforce participation** rate of 13% (17% for men and 10% for women) ([AIHW](#)).

214,000 persons entered **aged care** in 2015-16.

In 2014-15, 814,000 older persons received **Home and Community Care Services** (HACC) including home modifications, centre-based day care, meals, domestic assistance, one-way transports, social support, personal care and nursing care ([AIHW](#)).

# AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE POPULATION

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Australia's population will **continue to age**.

By **2051** it is projected that:

- 25% of the population will be **retirement** age
- There will be 25 **centenarians** for every 100 babies
- Older persons will **outnumber** children aged 0-14
- The population cohort aged between 65-84 will rise from the population of Brisbane/Gold Coast (~2.6 million) to that of Brisbane and Melbourne combined (~6.3 million)
- The population cohort aged 85 + will rise from the population of Canberra (~400,000) to Perth (~1.8 million)

Those **working to support** older persons will halve – from 5 to 2.5 persons of workforce age and 3.5 Million older persons will be using aged care services including Home and Community Care. ([AIHW](#), [ABS](#))

# AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE POPULATION

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Australia's population ageing projections are **reflected in global trends** and have led to decades of debate about **apocalyptic demography**, or the prevailing belief that an increasing dependent aging population means increasing demands on the resources of society, and that those demands will be **impossible** to meet ([Robertson, 1990](#)).

A **language of 'crisis'** about this apocalyptic demography has been present since the 1980s ([Talarsky, 1998](#)).

In Australia, a wide range of **policy work** has been done in respect of the impact of ageing on society through successive [Intergenerational Reports](#), Productivity Commission references on [Ageing](#), [Aged Care](#), [Housing](#) and [Superannuation](#) and reports on [Human Rights](#) in areas of work, discrimination, aged care and health.

# NATIONAL PLAN ON ABUSE OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS

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The [National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians](#) (Elder Abuse) 2019 – 2023 is available. It contains 5 Priority Areas:

1. Build our understanding of abuse of older people, so we can better
2. Target our responses
3. Build community awareness to create the momentum for change  
continue to strengthen our service responses
4. Help people better plan for their future
5. Strengthen safeguards for vulnerable older people.

# NATIONAL PLAN ON ABUSE OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS

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The Government has engaged the [Australian Institute of Family Studies](#) (AIFS) and the [National Ageing Research Institute](#) (NARI) to conduct a [National Elder Abuse Research Project](#). The National Elder Abuse Research Project comprises three (3) components,

1. To develop a nationally accepted and usable Australian definition of elder abuse
2. To develop and test instruments to measure elder abuse against the Australian definition and
3. Develop a data analysis plan and conduct secondary data analysis to answer key research questions on elder abuse.

Obviously, a national research project of this scale and importance will significantly influence the ways in which the States and Territories approach elder abuse and financial abuse.

# AGEING & ELDER ABUSE IN QUEENSLAND

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The [Queensland Government Statistician](#) provides [data](#) on Queensland's Seniors. They reported there was 717,941 persons aged 65 and over in Queensland at last census date. ([QGSO](#)) This means financial abuse could affect **more than 100,000 Queenslanders**.

A potted history of work on elder abuse in Queensland reveals early work in Queensland began with the Queensland Council of Carers who formed a taskforce on the Prevention of the Intimidation of the Elderly in 1990 ([Kurrle, 2008](#)). The Department of Family Services and the Office of Ageing commenced the Project on Abuse of Older People in 1994.

Elder abuse services included Legal Outreach for Older Persons (LOFOP) 1998-2003, Seniors Advocacy, Information and Legal Service (SAILS) 2003-2006 and then Seniors Legal and Support Service (SLASS) from 2006 on (Williams, 2008).

The [Elder Abuse Prevention Unit \(EAPU\)](#) was established in 1997 and the same year saw [Caxton Legal Centre](#) pilot an outreach service for older persons.

# AGEING & ELDER ABUSE IN QUEENSLAND

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Kurrle's (2008) article described the history of elder abuse in Australia:

*In Australia, the first reference to elder abuse was in 1975 in a report by the Social Welfare Commission, a national government agency. This report, titled "Care of the Aged," mentioned that older people needed protecting from exploitation by relatives, friends and the general community (Social Welfare Commission, 1975).*

*Despite this, the abuse and neglect of older people by family members was not clearly recognised as a problem until the 1980s, when the issue emerged slowly on a state-by-state basis. Nurses, geriatricians, social workers and police were the professional groups who started to talk about the cases they experienced in the late 1980s and early 1990s.*

# AGE FRIENDLY QUEENSLAND

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The Queensland Government has a [strategic policy direction](#) to ensure Queensland is an [age-friendly community](#). An **age-friendly** community is one that enables people of all ages to actively participate in community life. In particular, an age-friendly community ensures older people are free from age-related barriers that prevent community participation. Age-friendly communities value the contribution of seniors and help ensure their access to all aspects of life ([QLD Government](#)).

The World Health Organisation developed the **age-friendly approach**, which identifies 8 areas (domains) that directly influence the quality of life and wellbeing of older people. The Financial Protections Service particularly aligns with two domains identified by the World Health Organisation that are also in the [Queensland: An Age Friendly Community: Strategic Direction Statement](#), namely:

- Communication and information and
- Community Support and Health Services



# COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

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Older persons should have **access to information** they need in a variety of formats to stay informed and connected with their communities, families and friends. The WHO recommends actions be taken to **facilitate older person's choice and control**. Ensuring that information is easy to understand and relevant is critical to overcoming concerns about decision-making and enabling older persons to make the right choices for themselves ([WHO](#)).

**Essential elements** of communication and information include:

- The right information at the right time
- Age friendly communications
- Age friendly formats and design and
- Appropriate use of information technology

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

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The second relevant age-friendly goal is that older persons are helped to stay healthy, active and independent through **community support and health services**, including services responding to elder abuse, fraud or exploitation. This goal directly reflects the WHO's strategic healthy ageing approach:

*“As the evidence shows, the loss of ability typically associated with ageing is only loosely related to a person's chronological age. There is no “typical” older person. The resulting diversity in the capacities and health needs of older people is not random but rooted in events throughout the life course that can often be modified, underscoring the importance of a life-course approach.”* ([WHO](#))

Allowing older persons to make **informed choices** about financial matters prevents financial abuse from happening and provides opportunities for intervention when it is already occurring. The **essential elements** include:

- Accessibility of services and
- Being linked to networks

**QUEENSLAND:  
AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY**

**AGE-FRIENDLY DOMAIN**

**Communication & Information**

Older Queenslanders access information they need in a variety of formats to stay informed and connected with their communities, families & friends.

**Community Support & Health Services**

Older Queenslanders are helped to stay healthy, active and independent through community support and health services, including services responding to elder abuse, fraud or exploitation.

**Financial Protections Service**

- Outreach conversations and financial information delivered within local communities.
- Financial Abuse Awareness Training Package.

- Outreach and in-house screening.
- Referral to financial information and advice, legal and social work services.

**ENABLERS**

Innovation, Collaboration, Consultation, Evidence, Research-Based Best Practice

**AGE-FRIENDLY FOUNDATIONS**

Local Capacity, Community-Based Approach, Government and Leadership Support, Changing Attitudes, Community Engagement, Responding to Diversity

# AGE IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

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Social constructs of ageing, old age and ageism play an important role in financial abuse. The status of older persons is constructed by a series of continuously evolving social representations. In some societies older persons may be viewed as the repositories of certain wisdom and guardians of social continuity; in others they may be seen as heralds of conservatism and privilege. These perceptions, in turn, shape the rights debate as it seeks to come to terms with the distinctiveness of the old as a population.

([Megret, 2011](#))

Like children, older persons are viewed as a distinct cohort of our population simply by virtue of their 'age'.

Positive discourse tends to be around positive, successful or healthy ageing which seek to rebut negative stereotypes. While we still contend with the apocalyptic predictions about the future of ageing, it is important to focus on measures that promote health and quality of life in old age. ([Gleason, 2017](#))

# AGE IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

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Older persons as a social 'other' constantly threaten social borders between old and not-old.

As a group, they are simultaneously hidden and marked out through social stereotyping.

Their power to define themselves and actively construct their own identity is tempered by powerful cultural ideologies which deny their social worth. ([Talarsky, 1998](#))

Ageism, and associated negative attitudes towards the experience of ageing, includes perceptions that older people lack worth and make less of a contribution to our society. While this may not cause abuse of older people, it can contribute to an environment in which individuals who abuse older people fail to recognise that their behaviour constitutes abuse; other members of society fail to notice these negative behaviours or take action to stop them; and older people experiencing elder abuse blame themselves and are too ashamed to seek assistance. (National Plan, 2019).



**Ageism** is now  
more pervasive  
than racism  
& sexism  
([Levy, 2002](#)).

# AGE IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

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The Australian Human Rights Commission's research looked at [Stereotypes of Older Australians](#).

**Key findings** included:

- Ageing is a loaded term and holds predominantly negative connotations – particularly among younger Australians
- Younger Australians and older Australians define 'old age' differently and this creates tensions between them
- Most Australians feel that age discrimination in Australia is common
- More than a third of Australians aged 55+ years have experienced age-related discrimination
- Age discrimination and invisibility result in a strong and negative emotional response
- Those aged 18-34 years are the least concerned about age discrimination.

# HUMAN RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS

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Older persons **lack a dedicated, comprehensive, human rights protection framework**. Consequently, as a group they lack identity as rights holders. Accordingly, as individuals they are vulnerable to human rights violations.

Over time, and in response to this, members of the international human rights community have called for a new United Nations convention on the rights of older persons.

However, in respect of older persons, only **non-binding** or '**soft-law**' measures have been introduced.

This has included the [United Nations Principles for Older Persons](#) in 1991, and 'Plans of Action' arising from conferences in [Vienna](#) (1983) and [Madrid](#) (2002).

# UNITED NATIONS PRINCIPLES FOR OLDER PERSONS

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The [UN Principles for Older Persons](#) are non-binding 'soft law' principles that **cannot** be enforced by older persons in a domestic (Australian) setting.

The UN Principles are grouped under **headings** that include:



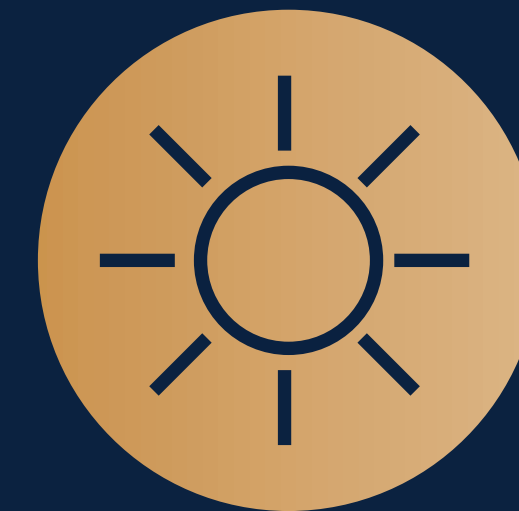
INDEPENDENCE



PARTICIPATION



CARE



SELF-FULFILMENT



DIGNITY



# CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

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The [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability](#) (the Disability Convention) applies to older persons in the same way as other international human rights conventions – based on a thematic topic – in this case disability. The Disability Convention is a **binding** legal instrument and individuals can bring [complaints](#) in certain cases.

The Disability Convention **applies** to persons with disabilities and includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (Article 1)

**The Disability Convention protects the rights of older persons with disability.**

However, old age is not impairment. The Disability Convention “provides very limited protection for older persons who **confront ageist attitudes** that are based upon age rather than actual or perceived impairments.” ([Harpur, 2016](#))

# ANIT-DISCRIMINATION LAWS

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**Federal** and **state** laws protect older persons from **discrimination** on the basis of their age.

**Complaints** about age discrimination can be made under those laws to the Commissions responsible for administering the laws.

In both jurisdictions, certain **exemptions** apply to the scope of these laws, including in some financial areas such as Superannuation, Taxation and Insurance.

# AGE DISCRIMINATION ACT 2004

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## COMMONWEALTH

The [Age Discrimination Act 2004](#) protects individuals across Australia from discrimination on the basis of age in many areas of public life, including employment, education, accommodation and the provision of goods and services.

Discrimination also happens when there is a rule or policy that is the same for everyone but has an unfair effect on people of a particular age. This is called 'indirect discrimination'. For example, it may be indirect discrimination if an employer requires an older person to meet a physical fitness test – which more young people are able to meet – if the fitness standard is not an inherent requirement of the job.

The Act is administered by the [Australian Human Rights Commission](#) who can accept complaints.

### Age discrimination

happens when a person is treated less favourably than another person in a similar situation, because of their age. For example, it could be 'direct age discrimination' if an older person is not employed in a particular job because it is assumed that they are not as up to date with technology as a younger person.

# AGE DISCRIMINATION ACT 1991

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## QUEENSLAND

The [Anti-Discrimination Act 1991](#) makes it unlawful to **discriminate** against a person because of their age. The Act is administered by the [Queensland Human Rights Commission](#).

Age means a person's chronological age, and the prohibition on age discrimination covers all ages. **Age discrimination** includes:

- Treating a person less favourably because of their age than someone in similar circumstances of a different age
- Imposing an unreasonable requirement or condition which disadvantages people of particular ages or age groups

The age discrimination provisions cover all aspects of work (recruitment, terms and conditions on which a job is offered, employment benefits, training, transfers, promotion and dismissal) as well as when a person is in a shop or restaurant, at school or college, looking for accommodation, applying for credit, insurance or a loan, or when dealing with tradespeople, businesses or state or local government.

# BEFORE WE LEAVE

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## REFLECTION

**Think** about and **locate your own** experience of how you, your colleagues, family and others around you see Australia's ageing issues.

**Think** about the following issues:

- Are you aware of positive images of ageing and what do those images say about our expectations of older age?
- Are you aware of the negative social constructs of old age and how they are used in popular culture, popular media, advertising, conversation, jokes?
- Is your own community age-friendly? If so, how so, if not, why not;
- Is your own workplace age-friendly? If so how so, if not, why not?
- Why do we conflate the issues of ageing and disability and what does that mean for our community attitudes for both older persons and persons with disabilities?
- Are you aware of discrimination against older persons?