



**STRATEGIC  
RESEARCH  
AGENDA FOR  
AGEING WELL**  
in South Australia

**INSPIRE. MOTIVATE. INNOVATE.**

# Foreword

South Australians can expect to live longer, healthier lives than any previous generation. This brings opportunities to maximise quality of life for people as they get older. Most people live independently as they age and make many contributions to their communities, workplaces and families.

Some people experience ageing better than others. Research shows that social and structural factors, also known as social determinants, strongly impact how we age – our health, wellbeing and life outcomes. There are many opportunities across the life course to improve physical and mental health, and social aspects of ageing well through policy, practice and community action.

We must take up these opportunities to address social and structural challenges. To do this we need a strategic approach to generating new knowledge through research, evaluation and effective knowledge translation.

To effectively address emerging policy priorities, outlined in South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025, and ensure that investigator-driven research is coordinated and policy-relevant, the need was identified for a strategic approach to research and co-creation of priority questions for ageing well.

The Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well marks an exciting and innovative direction for the South Australian Government, through Office for Ageing Well, and the broader South Australian community. The Strategic Research Agenda is intended for researchers, knowledge co-producers and anyone generating or translating knowledge into policy or practice in pursuit of ageing well in South Australia.

**HON CHRIS PICTON MP**

Minister for Health and Wellbeing





# INTRODUCTION

## A Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well



In 2021, Office for Ageing Well, SA Health, worked with the Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation and a range of stakeholders to co-develop a strategic research agenda to support implementation of South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025 (the Plan).

The purpose of the Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia (the Strategic Research Agenda) is to identify a range of priority research areas that can help to address questions of policy and community importance. It aims to articulate knowledge gaps and reach a shared understanding on what research is needed to address the social determinants of ageing well.

Office for Ageing Well is committed to identifying and addressing research questions of policy, practice and community relevance by focusing on the social and structural determinants of ageing well, outlined in the Plan.

The Plan identifies supporting conditions to facilitate the Plan's vision. The three supporting conditions that are especially pertinent to research priority setting are 'outcomes driven', 'systems perspective' and 'collaboration – the power of partnerships'.

The Strategic Research Agenda aims to address the Plan's supporting conditions. Firstly, it focuses on outcomes by listing research priorities to evaluate success and impact, and promoting learning from what works and what doesn't. Secondly, it builds capacity across disciplines and boundaries (research / practice / policy) to respond to diverse knowledge needs. Lastly, by bringing together a range of stakeholders with a role and interest in evidence generation and use, it sets priorities collaboratively. By presenting the research priorities needed to address knowledge gaps and policy challenges, critical policy and practice questions can be more strategically and efficiently addressed.

Ultimately, the aim of the Strategic Research Agenda is to focus and unify collective efforts towards evidence generation, increasing efficiency and impact of research funding, and ensure that research activity is relevant and useful for policy and practice.

As the Plan calls for action on the conditions that foster and support individuals and communities to age well, the Strategic Research Agenda focuses on the gaps in knowledge related to social and structural factors, and calls for comprehensive, integrated, multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approaches to new knowledge generation and implementation / translation.

# Developing the Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well

Office for Ageing Well engaged the Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation to work in partnership to co-develop a Strategic Research Agenda on the social determinants of ageing well.

Over 100 participants representing a range of knowledge producers, community representatives, policy actors, practitioners and local thought leaders were engaged in the co-development process, using an interactive and stakeholder-driven approach.

Multiple methods were delivered over five stages, including steering group engagement, desktop scoping review of international research agendas on ageing well, multi-stage stakeholder workshops for topic generation, ranking by consensus and expert peer review.

A small group of South Australian professionals from practice, policy, academia (research and teaching) and the community sector was invited to join a project steering committee (full list outlined on p.15). Members had expertise across a range of determinants of ageing well, including housing, built environments, infrastructure, work participation, social service, social inclusion, community engagement, community development, public policy, psychology, social behaviour and cognition, and health promotion.

A further group of stakeholders with technical, policy and research expertise, practice wisdom and knowledge of lived experience across the determinants of ageing well was invited to participate in an interactive workshop process to generate topics and knowledge gaps.

Participating stakeholders reported the interactive priority-setting process was validating, insightful and productive. The valuable role of stakeholders in the development of the Strategic Research Agenda demonstrates the importance of collaboration in defining research priorities relevant to decision-making.

Detailed information about how the Strategic Research Agenda was developed is available in the full report produced by the Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation, titled: Developing the Research Priorities for Ageing Well in South Australia: A Strategic Research Agenda.



# Five stage process to co-develop shared research priorities

## STAGE 1 Project Establishment

- > Identification and establishment of steering committee members
- > Gathering of theoretical frameworks on determinants of ageing well to provide project parameters
- > Desktop rapid scoping review - International research agendas for ageing well
- > Deliberation and endorsement of project parameters by steering committee - “pillars” of ageing well

## STAGE 2 Collaborative generation of research gaps / topics

- > Identification of stakeholders to participate in collaborative research gap / topic generation
- > Workshop #1 September 2021 - Interactive face-to-face workshop to generate topics / gaps for future research through nominal group technique
- > 50 participants attended with 148 research topics generated

## STAGE 3 Refinement of priorities

- > Review of 148 research topics to identify duplicates, overlapping topics etc.
- > Extraction of enablers - knowledge translation, policy making process and implementation, community participation and equity
- > Review of topics for alignment with policy direction, community needs and preferences (SA’s Plan for Ageing Well), international research priorities etc.
- > Transformation of topics/gaps into answerable research questions

## STAGE 4 Ranking by consensus

- > Workshop #2 February 2022 - Interactive online workshop to vote and rate the final list of priorities according to perceived importance (significance / impact, feasibility, relevance)
- > 40 participants attended and 36 voted / rated the list of 78 topics

## STAGE 5 Consultation and reporting

- > 38 Priorities included (voted by at least two people plus high importance score)
- > Ranked priorities list discussed and endorsed by steering committee
- > Developing the Research Priorities for Ageing Well in South Australia: A Strategic Research Agenda report produced, including South Australian and international research priorities

# Research Priorities for Ageing Well in South Australia

## PILLARS

Research priorities are grouped under a set of pillars that corresponds with existing frameworks of the social and structural determinants of ageing well and aligns with South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025.

### HOMES, HOUSING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Understand the impacts of the failure to address ageing well in housing design; evaluate process of implementation of design guidelines for ageing well and outcomes; explore how to improve current housing solutions and their inclusiveness (e.g. accommodating animal / human relationships); explore how to improve private development and rental practices (e.g. pets, cultural considerations)

### SENSE OF COMMUNITY - PEOPLE

Identify key points of intervention for enhancing community connections; define what participatory models are most effective

### REGIONAL AND RURAL

Determine appropriateness of current housing stock; model future housing needs in regional/rural areas

### ARTS AND CULTURE

Evaluate the characteristics of arts and culture programs that make them appealing, appropriate, respectful and inclusive

### LIFE COURSE

Reveal how human rights diminish as we age and identify effective ways to prevent and safeguard from harm; explore how to reorient systems toward primary prevention

### SOCIAL INCLUSION

Explore which individuals and organisations are best placed to tackle ageism; identify effective strategies for overcoming negative narratives; identify initiatives for learning and connections across generations to promote meaningful roles for all

### ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION, INCOME AND WEALTH

Explore how society pays for ageing well; identify effective workplace strategies, modes and methods for age-friendliness; model the future labour market; describe younger people's aspirations for economic participation later in life

### DIGITAL INCLUSION

Identify effective policy interventions to prevent digital exclusion and improve service automation; describe older adults' barriers and enablers for using digital technology

### GETTING AROUND

Determine the structural and systematic factors that incentivise car-use and discourage active transport; understand the impacts on ageing well from inadequate transport in rural and remote areas

## ENABLERS

Enablers help to strengthen future research and the speed of translation into practice and policy. They ensure research is useful and used. Equity must be a core consideration in evidence generation, with citizens and community groups given power in the knowledge generation processes.

### KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

Ensuring that existing research is used to inform policy and practice, and that new research is informed by current available evidence and the experience and needs of stakeholders and end users.

### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHOD

Using approach and methods where research producers and stakeholders are equal partners in the knowledge generation process.

### POLICY MAKING PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Transforming change through policy, and ensuring sound understanding of the different stages of the policy process.

### EQUITY

Promoting change that does not discriminate, ensuring that no one is denied the opportunity to age well.



There are 38 research priorities for ageing well in South Australia that form the foundations of the Strategic Research Agenda. This section describes each co-developed research priority under the nine pillars and articulates the shared priority questions and sub-questions, where applicable.

## Homes, housing and built environment

Although there is maturity in the existing evidence base related to homes, housing, neighbourhoods and the built environment, under this broad pillar there are still several research questions that are considered priorities for future research.

Priority questions relate to the challenge of addressing housing design, the implementation of housing design guidelines for ageing well, and articulating wellbeing and economic outcomes of such strategies. Other priorities relate to inclusiveness of current housing solutions and rental practices, for example consideration for pets and cultural diversity.

### PRIORITY QUESTION

- What are the impacts of failing to address housing design, affordability, and supply to support ageing well?

### SUB QUESTIONS

- Do current design guidelines in housing support the wellbeing of older people?
- What are the barriers and facilitators related to the translation of accessibility / universal design guidelines into practices?
- How to “incentivise” developers (and individuals / system) to design / build housing that supports wellbeing of older people?
- How do we best support older people on low incomes to live independently in long-term and secure housing?
- What are the likely implications for the wellbeing of communities arising from not addressing housing design and affordability across the lifespan?



### **PRIORITY QUESTION**

- How can we better accommodate pets (animal / human relationships) in housing solutions and home / neighbourhood design?

#### **SUB QUESTION**

- How can we better support inclusion of pet ownership in housing solutions for older people?

### **PRIORITY QUESTIONS**

- How well do current housing models/ design guidelines address diversity e.g. cultural considerations?
- To what extent do restrictions on private rentals e.g. pet ownership, cultural practices limit access to housing for older adults?
- How can local and state governments most effectively support appropriate housing options for older adults?

## **Sense of community – people**

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Given the vast evidence base available on social and community connections, priority questions for future research reflect a focus on understanding key points of intervention for enhancing community connections and uncovering what participatory models are most effective.

### **PRIORITY QUESTIONS**

- What are the key points of intervention for enhancing community connections and reducing social isolation and loneliness?
- What participatory models with older residents are most effective for practice and policy of developing age-friendly cities / communities?



## Arts and culture

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Priorities in arts and culture include articulating the characteristics of arts and culture programs that make them appealing, appropriate, respectful and inclusive. Stakeholders for this knowledge generation should be broadly considered, including non-government organisations and the social support and care sector.

### PRIORITY QUESTION

- What are the characteristics of arts and culture-focused programs for older adults that: (a) make them appealing and appropriate to older participants; (b) engender respect among all involved and avoid age-related stereotypes and (c) create opportunities for intergenerational participation?

## Regional and rural

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Acknowledging the unique and diverse needs of older adults in our regions, research priorities with rural and regional considerations include uncovering appropriateness of current housing stock, and importantly, future housing needs.

### PRIORITY QUESTIONS

- What are the future housing needs of older adults in our regions?
- How appropriate is current housing for older adults in regional areas?

## Life-course

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Research questions seek to reveal the context for how human rights diminish as we age and, importantly, what can be done to prevent and safeguard against this. Other research priorities focus on reorienting systems towards primary prevention as opposed to crisis intervention and acute care.

### PRIORITY QUESTIONS

- Why and how do people's perceptions of human rights diminish as we age, and what can we do to raise awareness about that and to improve safeguards?
- What early indicators or predictors do we need to enable to prevent future problems, rather than crisis intervention and support?
- How can researchers, governments and policy makers best adopt a preventative focus to intervene in ways that promote optimal outcomes for older adults?

## Social inclusion

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Reducing age discrimination is a strong priority for future research in South Australia, with a focus on identifying which individuals and organisations are best placed to tackle ageism, and what strategies are effective for overcoming negative narratives of ageing, whilst building appreciation among the younger generation of the value of older people's experience and expertise. Another area of focus is on cross-generational connections, to find out what initiatives for learning and connections across generations promote meaningful roles for all.

### PRIORITY QUESTIONS

- To what extent is systemic, structural age discrimination a problem, and how does discrimination contribute to social exclusion and isolation?
- What successful strategies can be developed and implemented to reduce ageism?

### SUB QUESTIONS

- Which organisations and individuals in the community are best placed and responsible to play an active role in reducing age discrimination?
- How to have constructive conversations about ageing to better prepare for ageing?
- How do we change the negative narratives of ageing (such as being seen not as a burden but as an asset; seen as a productive workplace contributor or volunteering), and what images and narratives on ageing best embrace the ageing process and reflect people's real experiences?

### PRIORITY QUESTION

- How can we enhance intergenerational connections in our communities, (for example across life course, aged care and childcare mix)?

## Digital inclusion

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Research questions on digital inclusion were influenced by the international research agenda review and include understanding what policy interventions are effective to prevent digital exclusion, improve service automation and identify barriers and enablers to older adults' use of digital technology.

### PRIORITY QUESTION

- What policy interventions can prevent harmful digital exclusion of older people?

### SUB QUESTION

- What are the barriers and enablers to older adults' use of digital technology?

### PRIORITY QUESTION

- How can aspects of service automation be improved to better meet the needs of older consumers / users?



## Getting around

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Acknowledging the body of evidence available on individual mobility, future research priorities are to determine the structural and systemic factors that incentivise car-use and discourage active modes of transport, and to understand the impacts on ageing well of transport in rural and remote areas.

### PRIORITY QUESTIONS

- What is the impact (social or physical) of incidental exercise involved in active travel for ageing well?
- What are the structural / systemic factors that currently incentivise car-use and discourage walking / cycling / public transport use in South Australia?
- To what extent do the challenges to effective and consistent transport in rural and remote areas limit opportunities for ageing well?

## Economic participation, income and wealth

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Priorities relate to both the macro-economic level, and to organisation and individual-level contexts. Priorities for research include how society pays for ageing well, workplaces and their age-friendliness, the shape of the future labour market, and younger people's aspirations for economic participation in later life.

### PRIORITY QUESTIONS

- How do we, as a society, pay for ageing well?
- What can workplaces and agencies do to support people to age well? For example age-friendly workplaces, models and methods in work environments.

### SUB QUESTION

- How do we improve flexible work arrangements for older persons?

### PRIORITY QUESTIONS

- What are younger people's aspirations for their economic participation as they age and how do these relate to aspirations/perceptions of home ownership and family formation?
- What initiatives stimulate learning and connections across generations in ways that promote meaningful roles for all (younger and older) participants?
- What does the future labour market look like for older people, and how do we take into account the diversity of ages amongst older workers?



## Enablers for Research Priorities for Ageing Well in South Australia

Enablers signal opportunities to strengthen future research and its translation into practice and policy. Current research and policy highlight a lack of appropriate community and stakeholder engagement, and insufficient consideration of equity and lived experiences of marginalised people.

While many of the enablers are aspirational and require dedicated effort and resourcing, they should be used to guide any new research and knowledge generation in ageing well. This will ensure that research is useful and used, that equity is a core consideration in evidence generation, and that citizens and community groups are given power in the knowledge generation process.

### Knowledge translation

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Existing research should be used to inform policy and practice and new research should be informed by current available evidence and the experience and needs of all stakeholders.

- > Promote awareness of barriers to evidence-informed action (such as political drivers, lack of collaboration and cooperation).
- > Promote awareness of the existing evidence base on the barriers and enablers to translating current research evidence into policy and practice.
- > Consider how to overcome the risk of populist/political non-evidence-based decision making and implementation.
- > Transform research findings into policies that can be implemented, evaluated and will evolve over time, to help adequately resource and implement policy, guidelines and funding allocation.
- > Encourage research partnerships - empowering, embedded, sustainable, productive partnerships across all stakeholders (aged care, community, business, policy makers, service providers).

## Community engagement in research and participatory research

Approaches and methods involving research producers and stakeholders as equal partners should be used in the knowledge generation process.

- > New research should include older residents, age friendly participation methods and co-design – involve and engage according to [International Association for Public Participation's \(IAP2\)](#) spectrum guidance and aligned with other guidance such as [Better Together](#). “Nothing about us without us”.
- > Promote research projects that enable participation from the beginning, in planning as well as during implementation.

## Equity

Research should take the opportunity to address or reduce discrimination and inequities, ensuring that no one is denied the opportunity to age well.

- > All new research for ageing well should include a diversity lens, and research methods should aim to be inclusive of the experience and perspectives of people who speak a language other than English at home, Aboriginal Elders, LGBTI+ elders, women, older people in prison and those transitioning back into the community following incarceration.
- > Explore how to ensure that evidence-informed interventions reach the people that they intend to reach/serve.
- > Future research projects should seek input from diverse voices ensuring marginalised voices are heard – perform needs-based segmentation as promoted in South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025.
- > Explore and evaluate how to improve inclusion of diversity of participants in health and wellbeing research studies.

## Policy making process and policy implementation

Research should inform change through policy and have a sound understanding of the different stages of the policy process.

- > Identify policy gaps in ensuring affordable, accessible housing.
- > Address overlapping plans such as local government public health plans and South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025 to ensure diversity planning.
- > Embed policymakers in community, for example through co-locations, secondments, to generate policy with local lens.
- > Explore how to effectively assess and address barriers for diverse groups/communities in accessing public transport, and consider if this type of information is collected in a culturally appropriate way/how to improve.
- > Improve evaluation of policy implementation, to ensure accurate interpretations of policy when it is implemented.
- > Ensure that products and services for older South Australians are consumer-led and scalable in practice.



# Implementation and actions

The Strategic Research Agenda is relevant to, and can be used by, anyone generating or translating knowledge on ageing well. Multi-sectoral action, research-policy-practice engagement and partnerships, and cross-disciplinary collaboration are essential for delivery of the Strategic Research Agenda. Due to the strength of the co-development process with stakeholders across policy, practice, academia and community, there are excellent networks for the promotion and implementation of the Strategic Research Agenda.

A number of actions have been identified by Office for Ageing Well through partnerships with other organisations, which are set out below.

## A focus on research priorities for Aboriginal communities

Office for Ageing Well recognises the importance of representing well the voices and lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well. In 2023-24, Office for Ageing Well will partner with Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) to co-develop ageing well research priorities with specific relevance to older Aboriginal people and Elders living in South Australia.

## Impact Research Grants for Ageing Well

Office for Ageing Well will launch a new Impact Research Grants program, developed in partnership with the Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation. The new grants program will encourage researchers from a variety of disciplines to undertake independent research to help address questions of policy and community importance, aligned to the Strategic Research Agenda. This annual grant program aims to generate new evidence and build knowledge that is likely to influence practice and policy, addressing social and structural determinants of ageing well.

Further information about the grants program can be found at [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/strategicresearchagenda](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/strategicresearchagenda).

## Learning Labs

Central to the implementation of this Strategic Research Agenda will be researcher, policy maker and practitioner capacity building. Office for Ageing Well will partner with the Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation to deliver Learning Labs involving Research Impact Grants recipients and other interested researchers, policy makers and practitioners. The Learning Labs will co-develop resources to support knowledge translation, build capacity and collaborative research, and develop policy and practice relationships to enable research impact beyond the grant term.

## Priorities review cycles

Office for Ageing Well will regularly review the research priorities to ensure they remain relevant and current, as new knowledge is generated/implemented.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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## Steering Committee Members

Jane Mussared (former CEO) or nominee - COTA SA

Professor Helen Barrie- University of South Australia

Kate Kameniar - Southern Cross Care

Benjamin Cooper - Infrastructure SA

Professor Tim Windsor - Flinders University

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The full report that has informed the Strategic Research Agenda can be found at [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/strategicresearchagenda](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/strategicresearchagenda) and should be referenced as:

Pettman TL, Williams C, Hanifie S, 2022. Developing the Research Priorities for Ageing Well in South Australia: A Strategic Research Agenda. Report by the Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation for Office for Ageing Well, SA Health, Government of South Australia, Adelaide.

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