



Government  
of South Australia

SA Health



# FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO SAFEGUARD THE RIGHTS OF OLDER SOUTH AUSTRALIANS

2023-2027



## Acknowledgement

We acknowledge this land is the traditional lands for the Kurna people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country. We also acknowledge the Kurna people as the custodians of the greater Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kurna people today. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain sensitive material including names and/or images of deceased persons.

This document respectfully uses the term 'Aboriginal' to refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both.

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# MINISTER'S MESSAGE



All adults have rights, no matter our age, identity or where we live. These rights do not, and should not, diminish as we get older.

Older South Australians are diverse, with different lived experiences, skills, aspirations, wants, cultures, genders, sexualities and backgrounds. They have the right to live dignified, self-determined lives, free from exploitation, abuse or mistreatment.

Sadly, approximately one in six older Australians experiences some form of abuse or mistreatment, often by someone they know and trust.<sup>1</sup> For every report made, it is likely that another five cases remain hidden without any suspicions being aroused.

It is therefore vital that we all continue to work to uphold and respect the rights of older people, so that they remain valued members of our society, with the opportunity to contribute socially, economically and civically.

Future Directions sets the statewide direction, strategic priorities and conditions to raise awareness of, and prevent and respond to abuse and mistreatment of older people in South Australia over the next five years.

Underpinned by a focus on safeguarding the rights of older people, it builds on the strong foundation and learnings from extensive work undertaken to implement the founding *Strategy to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians 2014-2021*.

The South Australian Government is committed to a whole-of-life-course approach as set out in *South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025*<sup>4</sup>, taking a strength-based approach to maximise the opportunities an older population brings.

Future Directions aligns with this approach and particularly focuses on tackling ageism as a fundamental element of safeguarding the rights of older people. It aims to raise awareness and identify opportunities to prevent and respond to the abuse or mistreatment of older people. It also aligns with the Government's response to the 2022 independent statutory review of the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA)*<sup>2</sup>, recognising the important role of Office for Ageing Well and the Adult Safeguarding Unit in preventing and responding to abuse or mistreatment.

I thank the stakeholders, advisory groups and networks that have been involved in developing Future Directions and urge you all to consider your ongoing role in safeguarding the rights of older people in our state.

**Hon Chris Picton MP**  
Minister for Health and Wellbeing

# SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER SOUTH AUSTRALIANS

The South Australian Government, through Office for Ageing Well, is committed to a whole-of-life-course approach to the health and wellbeing of older South Australians to ensure they remain active and engaged in their communities.

An important component of this is steering the strategic development and implementation of a rights-based approach to abuse or mistreatment prevention, recognition and response. This is what *Future Directions to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians 2023-2027* (Future Directions) aims to deliver.

Future Directions is informed by:

- > Data and insights about what older people have said about their experiences of abuse or mistreatment and prevention strategies
- > Latest evidence of what works to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse and mistreatment of older people
- > National elder abuse policy framework
- > South Australia's strategic ageing well policies and programs, including learnings from the founding *Strategy to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians 2014-2021*
- > Data and insights from the Adult Safeguarding Unit (SA)
- > Human rights principles
- > *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995* (SA).<sup>2</sup>

Including the voices of older people in decisions that affect them means that strategies and policies are focussed on what matters most. Future Directions is directly informed by the diverse voices of more than 2400 older South Australians. It not only guides the work of Office for Ageing Well but can be used in the adult safeguarding work of other South Australian government departments, non-government and community organisations, as well as by older people.

Future Directions acknowledges the journey to date, showcases important projects and achievements, and explains the process of development. Importantly, it sets out a clear approach to safeguarding the rights of older South Australians by outlining suggested actions and partners. It contains Foundational principles, Strategic priorities and Enabling conditions, that together, serve to strengthen older South Australians' rights and prevent, recognise and respond to abuse or mistreatment. It also contains a variety of actions that will be implemented and built upon over its life.

The Office for Ageing Well website will be updated annually to include new actions as they are developed, and to highlight progress to date.

Safeguarding is the action/s that a person, organisation or community takes to promote and protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of a person to live free from abuse or mistreatment.

Future Directions recognises that work to safeguard the rights of older South Australians happens along a continuum and is everyone's business.

Action includes strategies that address prevention and awareness, early intervention, and reporting and responses for those at risk of, or who are experiencing, abuse or mistreatment.

These actions can be targeted to a group or an individual but they can also reach multiple targets, including families and communities, as well as society and its systems.

Tackling ageism and shifting negative narratives on ageing and older people, is fundamental to preventing abuse and mistreatment of older people and is a central theme of Future Directions, focussing on community, organisational and societal change.

It also recognises the important role of the Adult Safeguarding Unit in upholding the rights of those who may be experiencing abuse or mistreatment in South Australia. Future Directions underscores the importance of the Adult Safeguarding Unit's approach of working alongside older South Australians to assist them to safeguard their rights, while tailoring its safeguarding responses to an individual's needs, wishes and circumstances.

In 2022, the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA)* was reviewed, as required under the Act. The Independent Review, conducted by the South Australian Law Reform Institute (SALRI), consulted widely across South Australia and made a number of recommendations for legislative reform and practice improvements for the Adult Safeguarding Unit. Future Directions adopts the Government's response to the review recommendations, and emphasises the important role of Office for Ageing Well and the Adult Safeguarding Unit in preventing and responding to abuse or mistreatment of adults, including older people.

South Australia's Future Directions also plays a key role to help deliver on priorities under the relevant national policy framework<sup>3</sup>. It outlines government and community strategies, and sets priorities for implementing agreed actions and research.

## Alignment with South Australia's Strategic Ageing Well Objectives



South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025<sup>4</sup> outlines the broader statewide vision for ageing well and sets the foundations for the strategic and coordinated action required to make South Australia a great place to spend a lifetime.

The implementation of Future Directions is crucial to delivering on the vision of the Plan. Future Directions sits alongside other key statewide ageing policy directions delivering on the Plan's vision, including the *Age Friendly SA Strategy*<sup>5</sup> and the *Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia*.

## The Rights and Freedoms of Older South Australians

The *Statement on the Rights and Freedoms of Older South Australians* (formerly the *Charter of the Rights and Freedoms of Older South Australians*) is informed by human rights principles, serves as the foundation of Future Directions, and underpins actions that will be implemented.

The statement is a declaration of human rights principles that are rights-based rather than needs-based, as needs change over time but human rights remain constant.

Following the Statewide Conversations, the former charter was renamed and revised to include consultation feedback and make it easier to read and understand. The right to access pets and companion animals, the right to choose family and have them recognised, particularly important for older people who identify as LGBTI+ and for Aboriginal people, and the right to retain cultural connection, including retaining kinship ties, are now included.

## Statement on the Rights and Freedoms of Older South Australians

<p><b>Dignity, respect and self-determination</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Older people have the right to be treated with dignity and humanity and to be free to exercise personal self-determination.</li> <li>2. Older people have the right to freedom of movement and to choose where they live.</li> <li>3. Older people have the right to live autonomous and self-determined lives, to take risks and be supported to make their own decisions/choices.</li> <li>4. These rights shall only be restricted in accordance with law.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Liberty and security</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Older people have the right to be free from torture or other forms of cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment.</li> <li>6. Older people have the right to liberty and security and to be free from exploitation and physical, social, psychological, financial, chemical, and sexual abuse. No person shall be deprived of their liberty, except in accordance with the law.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Equality and non-discrimination</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Older people have the right to exercise their rights free from all forms of discrimination, whether on the basis of age, disability, sex, gender identity, colour, sexual orientation, location, religion, political opinion, educational qualification, national origin, culture or ethnicity.</li> <li>8. Older people have the right to be treated equally before the law.</li> </ol>



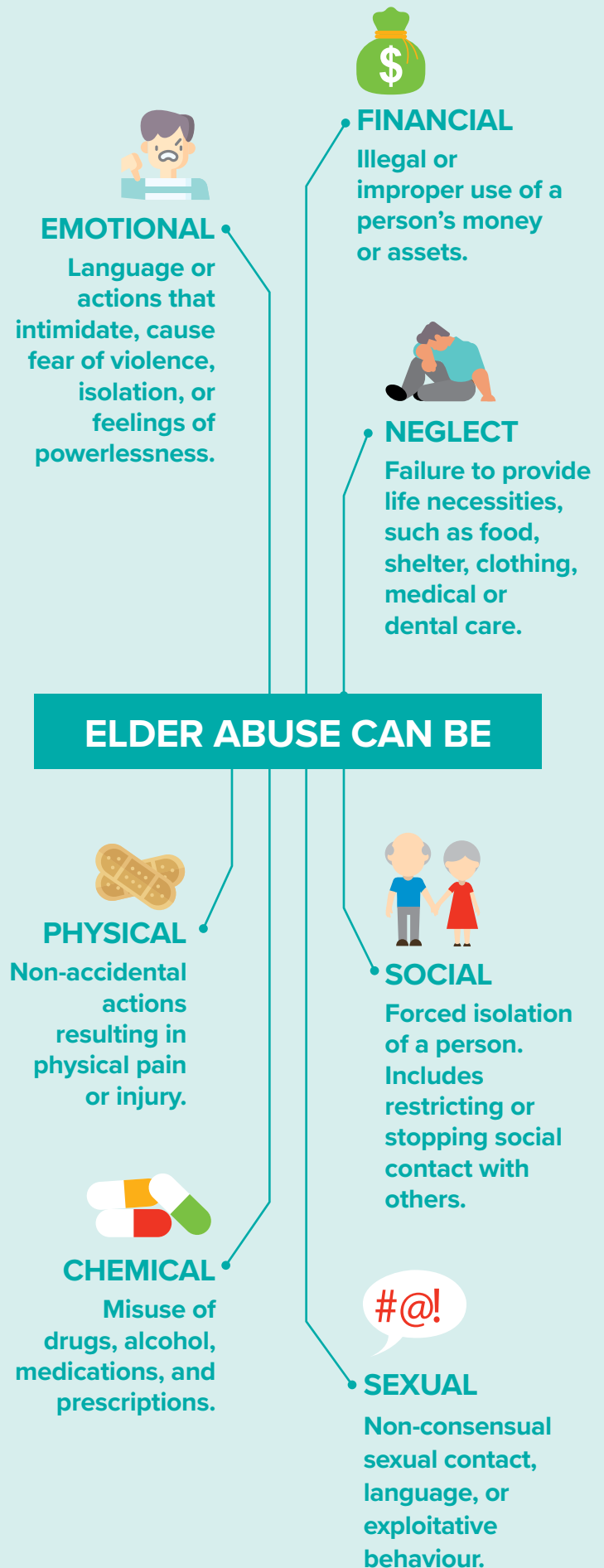
<b>Standards of living and care</b>	<p>9. Older people have the right to food and water to nurture them nutritionally and emotionally, adequate clothing and shelter, adequate means and resources, to enjoy the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health and wellbeing, and the right to a dignified death.</p> <p>10. Older people have the right to make their own decisions about their health care and end of life, including in advance, and for this to be respected.</p>
<b>Privacy and family</b>	<p>11. Older people have the right to have their family of choice respected and be free from arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home or communications.</p> <p>12. Older people have the right to a family life and to have valued relationships within their family unit, including connections with pets and companion animals, respected by others, including government agencies and officials.</p>
<b>Social and economic participation</b>	<p>13. Older people have the right to freely associate with others and to participate fully in the social, economic, and cultural life of their community.</p> <p>14. Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right, with other members of their community, to maintain and use their language, their kinship ties and connection to land and culture.</p>
<b>Freedom of thought, conscience, spirituality, religion, and expression</b>	<p>15. Older people have the right to exercise freedom of thought, conscience, culture, spirituality and religion.</p> <p>16. Older people have the right to freedom of opinion and expression, to seek, receive and share information and ideas, and to lifelong learning.</p> <p>17. Older people have the right to seek, and be provided with, personal information about them held by government agencies or officials.</p>

## Definitions and terms

**Safeguarding** is the action/s taken by a person, organisation or community to promote and protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of a person to live free from abuse or mistreatment.

**Elder abuse** is any deliberate or unintentional action, or lack of action, carried out by a person, often in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes distress and/or harm to an older person. It can occur once or many times.<sup>6</sup>

In Future Directions, the term **abuse or mistreatment of older people** is used instead of Elder Abuse, to be more inclusive of diverse cultures and norms.



## Protective factors

Investment in protective factors takes a proactive approach to safeguarding the rights of older people and helps to prevent or reduce the risk of experiencing abuse or mistreatment.

Many actions in Future Directions are focused on protective factors. Key strategies include enabling social supports, fostering healthy relationships with family members, education and awareness-raising in community settings and early intervention when or if concerns arise.



## Risk factors

Common risk factors that may make individuals more vulnerable to abuse or mistreatment as they get older include:

- > Dependence on someone for care, finances and daily living
- > Cognitive decline
- > Not having enough money
- > Having assets and wealth
- > Physical barriers to accessing services, e.g. distance or lack of transport options
- > Living with disability
- > Social isolation and loneliness
- > Insecure tenure and/or unsafe housing
- > Limited access to IT/ telecommunications, e.g. digital exclusion

These risk factors have been informed by older South Australians, evidence-based literature, Adult Safeguarding Unit (SA) data<sup>7</sup> and the *National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study*.<sup>1</sup>

The Foundational principles, Strategic priorities, Supporting conditions and actions in Future Directions have been formulated to prevent or address these risk factors.

# STATISTICS AND TRENDS

## Abuse and mistreatment



**1 in 6**  
Australians 65+ has experienced abuse or mistreatment.<sup>1</sup>

Australians aged **65-69** are most at risk of abuse or mistreatment.<sup>1</sup>

Those aged **80+** are more likely to experience neglect.<sup>1</sup>

In SA, the most common types of abuse or mistreatment reported to the Adult Safeguarding Unit<sup>7</sup> are:



**44%**  
emotional



**43%**  
financial



**20%**  
neglect



**17%**  
physical



Women are more likely (**15.9%**) than men (**13.6%**) to experience abuse or mistreatment.<sup>1</sup>

**Older people living with disability or long-term medical conditions are twice as likely to experience abuse or mistreatment.<sup>1</sup>**

**15.3%** of culturally and linguistically diverse participants reported abuse or mistreatment.<sup>1</sup>

## Help and support seeking

**61%**

of older people don't seek help or advice when they are experiencing abuse or mistreatment.<sup>1</sup>



Abuse or mistreatment is often invisible. When action is taken, it often involves the person themselves talking to or avoiding the person causing the harm, which can increase risk and isolation.<sup>1</sup>

**Community and family networks of older people are important, however a South Australian community perceptions online survey found<sup>6</sup>:**

**44%**

did not feel connected to their neighbourhood and community.

**85%**

had someone they could rely on, for example a partner or family living with them or family living nearby.



Those with family interstate or overseas reported finding it more difficult to ask for help.



Loneliness was also identified as a factor of concern.

## Persons of concern and nature of abuse or mistreatment in SA

During 2021-22, the Adult Safeguarding Unit<sup>7</sup> received 1,463 calls regarding suspected abuse or mistreatment of older people in South Australia. In these cases, the person alleged to be carrying out the abuse or mistreatment was:

**28%**

adult son

**18%**

adult daughter

**11%**

'other' family member

**7%**

husband/  
male partner

The most prevalent types of abuse and mistreatment in South Australia are consistent with national trends i.e. financial coupled with psychological abuse.

### The Adult Safeguarding Unit:

- > provides confidential information and advice to callers concerned about themselves or an adult who may be vulnerable and experiencing abuse or mistreatment
- > responds to reports of suspected or actual abuse of adults who may be vulnerable and experiencing abuse or mistreatment
- > provides support to safeguard the rights of adults who may be vulnerable and experiencing abuse, tailored to their needs, wishes and circumstances
- > through Office for Ageing Well, contributes to preventing abuse through early intervention, community awareness raising and education.

# SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS 2014-2022

Since 2014, with the introduction and implementation of the founding Strategy and Action Plan, Office for Ageing Well has partnered with a diverse range of government, non-government and community organisations, as well as older people themselves, to deliver the identified actions and more.

The four action plan pillars were:

1. Raising awareness
2. Strong community connections
3. Responding to vulnerability, risk and abuse
4. Policies and beyond

Strong progress has been made under each of the four pillars. These achievements reflect the collective efforts and commitment of state government, local government and non-government organisations, older people and the broader community to prevent and stop abuse or mistreatment of older people in South Australia.

## 1. Raising awareness

Significant efforts have been made through annual campaigns to raise community awareness of the rights of older people, signs of abuse or mistreatment, and elder abuse prevention strategies.

The first Stop Elder Abuse campaign ran in 2015, urging people to seek information from the website or through the Elder Abuse Prevention Phone Line service (1800 372 310). Between 2015 and 2022, the Phone Line has taken almost 6000 calls from concerned older people, service providers and other community members (5000 of these since the Adult Safeguarding Unit commenced in 2019). The Phone Line has been the portal to the Adult Safeguarding Unit since October 2019.



1 in 20 older Australians experiences some form of abuse from a person they know and trust

**Speak up and help stop Elder Abuse**

If you are being abused, or suspect someone else is, call the  
**SA Elder Abuse Prevention Phone Line  
1800 372 310**

Our trained staff can provide free confidential advice and support or you can make a report

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/stopelderabuse](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/stopelderabuse)  
[stopelderabuse@sa.gov.au](mailto:stopelderabuse@sa.gov.au)

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Printed materials and information on the Office for Ageing Well website are reviewed regularly to incorporate the latest information for individuals, communities and workforces. Office for Ageing Well often works with specific groups and communities to ensure they have access to timely and accurate information and supports that help to safeguard their rights.

### Knowing Your Rights

A Guide to the Rights of Older South Australians aims to raise community awareness about the rights of older people, especially at different times in their lives, and the laws that provide safeguards and protection. Since it was first published in 2017, more than 40,000 copies have been distributed across South Australia and many more downloaded from the website.

## 2. Strong community connections

Social isolation and loneliness are significant risk factors for abuse and mistreatment, particularly for people dependent on others for their daily living needs and social supports. Conversely, inclusive communities, where older people feel valued, included and able to contribute to their community, family, work and society, are known to be strong factors in preventing abuse and mistreatment.

Communities that are age friendly support strong community connections, because they maximise opportunities for good health, participation in all aspects of life, and safety and security. South Australia's *Age Friendly SA Strategy* also supports the strong community connections pillar.

Over the life of the founding Strategy, the focus on building connected communities continued through partnerships with local government, the delivery and implementation of the *Age Friendly SA Strategy* and a range of projects. The diversity of older populations, including the importance of cultural considerations, was recognised by working with a range of Aboriginal communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

### **Supporting Aboriginal Elders and connection with country**

Kura Yerlo's Meiwi Matters project supported Aboriginal Elders to connect (or re-connect) with country and culture and supported intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge through conversations and yarning. Elders led the project through a codesign process that kept their voices and wishes central to project planning and delivery. Elders involved reported a sense of increased connection to culture and community, wellbeing and sense of belonging.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, strategic partnerships to strengthen community connections across diverse communities and networks were more important than ever.

### **Responding to COVID-19 and social isolation**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Office for Ageing Well partnered with MCCSA and COTA SA to address social isolation and provide social support for older people during the critical first months of the pandemic.

MCCSA's Social Support Strategies project developed three key areas of information: contact points for COVID-19 information; mental health and pathways to access support; and resilience, wellbeing and good health for older people, available to all its member organisations on the MCCSA website. Communities were encouraged to share the information through their respective channels of communication (e.g. social media, ethnic radio, community television, local newspapers and word of mouth).

COTA SA's Postcards from behind the COVID curtain project offered an opportunity for older people in SA who were not digitally connected to engage with others by recording their experiences during COVID-19 restrictions. The project involved sending participating older people a pack of two specially designed postcards. They were invited to share their experiences of life during COVID-19 pandemic with COTA SA and to send a second postcard to a friend, family member or neighbour to stay in touch or to initiate a new friendship. A short creative film was produced, capturing the narrative of five older South Australians, their coping mechanisms and what gives them zest in their lives.



### 3. Responding to vulnerability, risk and abuse

A number of initiatives were developed under this priority area including: the Elder Abuse Prevention Phone Line Service (Phone Line); Good Practice Guidelines to Prevent Abuse of Older South Australians - 5 Steps to Good Organisations Practices (Good Practice Guidelines); and the establishment of the Adult Safeguarding Unit, the first of its kind in Australia.

In October 2015, the Phone Line Service\*, was established and became the portal to the Adult Safeguarding Unit when it commenced in October 2019.

The Good Practice Guidelines were developed to enable services and organisations to support the rights of older South Australians and implement safeguards for elder abuse prevention.

Following significant state and federal inquiries, the Adult Safeguarding Unit was established in October 2019 under the Ageing and *Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA)*<sup>2</sup>.

Members of the community and service providers can contact the Adult Safeguarding Unit for free confidential advice, information and support, or to make a report of actual or suspected abuse of an adult who may be vulnerable, including older people. Once a report has been received, the Adult Safeguarding Unit must assess the report and take action. Between 1 October 2019 and 30 December 2022, the Adult Safeguarding Unit received more than 5000 calls, almost half of which were reports (2,375) about suspected or actual abuse or mistreatment of older people.

#### Penny's story and support from the Adult Safeguarding Unit

Penny is 80 years old and used to walk her dog every night and interact with neighbours. Penny's husband passed away a few years ago and her adult son had moved in. Her neighbour Jill became concerned when she hadn't seen Penny for a while and made a house call. She found Penny was not able to open the door, said she was locked in the house and did not have a key, food or access to a phone. Jill reported her concerns to the Adult Safeguarding Unit (the Unit).

Staff visited Penny at home and sought her consent to speak with her son and health services (e.g. GP). Further investigation found Penny's care needs had changed significantly in recent times and she was confused and disorientated when alone and required full time assistance. The Unit found supports had not been put in place for Penny with her changed circumstances, and Penny's son had limited understanding of her Advance Care Directive and the impacts of the current situation. The Unit was able to work with Penny, her son and care providers to put in place measures that upheld Penny's rights, while also ensuring she was appropriately safeguarded and re-established a safe and respectful relationship with her son, aligned with Penny's wishes.

*Names and details have been changed to protect privacy.*

\* In 2019, the Phone Line changed its name to Abuse Prevention Phone Line. In response to community feedback, the Phone Line is now referred to as the Adult Safeguarding Unit.

## 4. Policies and beyond

Since 2014, policy responses focussed on elder abuse prevention, awareness and response have been developed and implemented.

In 2015, the *Charter of the Rights and Freedoms of Older South Australians* (Charter of Rights) based on human rights principles, was developed, and underpinned the former Strategy and the work of Office for Ageing Well. These rights include the right to autonomy and self-determination, the right to dignity and respect, the right to participate in all aspects of life and the law, and the right to be safe and to be free from exploitation and abuse.

To translate these rights into practice, the Age Friendly Services project was initiated with South Australian government services. Following a codesign process with older people and a range of South Australian government customer service staff, the [Age Friendly Services Guidelines](#) and website were developed to improve the customer experiences of older people. An Age Friendly Services week was also piloted in 2022.

The South Australian Government, through Attorney General's Department and Office for Ageing Well, were active members on the cross jurisdictional National Plan Working Group that developed the *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians 2019-2023*<sup>3</sup>. Several South Australian actions are included in the National Plan Implementation Plan, with progress reported annually through the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

The *Office for the Ageing (Adult Safeguarding) Amendment Bill 2018* modernised the *Office for the Ageing Act 1995*, renaming it the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995* (SA) and changing the name of the Office for the Ageing to Office for Ageing Well. It also established the Adult Safeguarding Unit, and set out its powers and functions. The Amendment Bill came into effect on 1 October 2019 and was a significant policy initiative for South Australia, resulting in a rights-based service to respond to reports of actual or suspected abuse of adults who may be vulnerable for a range of reasons, including older people.

Research into elder abuse prevention has highlighted the importance of connection and codesign as integral components. They have also demonstrated that there is much more to know about what works to prevent and address abuse or mistreatment for diverse groups.

Further detail about the achievements under the former Strategy is available in Appendix 1.

### Approaches to Promoting Safety of Older Aboriginal Peoples

The 'What Keeps You Safe' research project, a partnership with SAHMRI (South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute) Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity Unit and Office for Ageing Well, found that to safeguard against abuse or mistreatment of older Aboriginal people and Elders, reinforcing respect and designing initiatives, resources and programs with older Aboriginal people and Elders were key. As a result, the *Respect Connect* campaign was launched in 2020 to raise awareness about the importance of community connection and respect for Elders and will continue to be rolled out across various communities.



# SETTING THE DIRECTION

To ensure Future Directions represents the unique and diverse voices of older people in our state, Office for Ageing Well engaged The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) to develop and deliver a statewide consultation in 2021 (Statewide Conversations).

Various methods were used to engage with almost 2400 older people, and a diverse array of government and non-government organisations across the state.

To understand the existing body of local, national and international work, a **desktop review** identified common risk factors for abuse and mistreatment, current policy priorities and impact of current abuse prevention, awareness and response activities. Key areas were identified, including what may have changed since the founding strategy (for example the impact of COVID-19), and were tested with older people and refined, where necessary.

**Workshops** were held with the Safeguarding Strategy Advisory Group, Ageing Well Community Networks and various stakeholders, including COTA SA, Carers SA, Aged Rights Advocacy Service, Community Centres SA, Office of the Public Advocate, Legal Services Commission, local governments, Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia, Uniting Communities, National Seniors and universities, along with others with an interest in safeguarding older people's rights.

These workshops facilitated collaboration and innovation, as well as identified new strategies and partnerships to prevent abuse or mistreatment of older South Australians.

Older people are the experts in their own lives. Genuine engagement through small group discussions was undertaken with older people, particularly those who face greater barriers to ageing well such as people who identify as carers, culturally and linguistically diverse, gender and sexually diverse, experiencing homelessness and/or with minimal financial and other resources, and people living with disability. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members were also consulted and involved in these discussions. Key themes and priorities were tested and new priorities from lived experience emerged.

Lastly, a **statewide online survey** was conducted, attracting 2313 responses. Respondents shared their views on proposed priority and action areas. They provided their views on risk factors of concern for older South Australians, how these may lead to abuse or mistreatment and ideas about how to tackle them.

TACSI collated results and presented a report to Office for Ageing Well, together with a *Strategic Framework for Safeguarding the Rights of Older South Australians*<sup>9</sup>, which formed the basis of Future Directions. A full list of stakeholders consulted is available in Appendix 2.

## Consultation and engagement process

### 1. Desktop review

Review relevant research papers and strategies to develop a perspective on safeguarding issues for older people and the common risk factors contributing to abuse or mistreatment.

### 2. Planning workshop

Work with Office for Ageing Well to align on strategic approach and the focus for interviews and workshops.

### 3. Innovators workshop

Work with 14 innovation stakeholders (with a focus on older people and adult safeguarding) to identify potential priority areas, innovative actions and partnerships.

### 4. Generative group interviews

Small group discussions and generative activities with 20 diverse older people to develop a systems perspective on ageism and the risk factors that can lead to abuse or mistreatment.

### 5. Synthesis and theming

Interview notes and generative activities synthesised to identify emerging themes. The themes indicate strategic priority areas and conditions that will support outcomes that prevent the abuse or mistreatment of older people (supporting conditions).

### 6. Interim outcomes workshop

Work with Office for Ageing Well and Adult Safeguarding Unit to align on themes, develop the strategic framework (priority areas, supporting conditions, foundational principles) and the emergent actions.

### 7. Safeguarding Advisory Group workshop

Test and iterate the strategic framework with 11 Safeguarding Strategy Advisory Group members and develop action areas.

### 8. Ageing Well Community Network workshop

Test and iterate the strategic framework with 13 Ageing Well Community Network members and develop action areas.

### 9. Statewide survey

Statewide online survey to gain feedback on the proposed strategic priorities and action areas. Respondents were also asked to prioritise the risk factors they regarded as most likely to increase older people's vulnerability to abuse or mistreatment. N=2313.

## What Future Directions will do

Future Directions aims to safeguard the rights of older South Australians, tackle ageism and prevent and address abuse and mistreatment. It recognises the need for coordinated partnerships and takes an individual, community and systems approach.

Future Directions contains:

- > Foundational principles that guide decision-making and implementation
- > Strategic priorities identified by older people as crucial to safeguarding rights and preventing abuse and a range of actions to deliver on these
- > Supporting conditions critical to achieving successful outcomes, including a range of actions to progress these.



# FUTURE DIRECTIONS ON A PAGE

## Foundational principles

<b>Work with older people as experts and the agents of change</b>	<b>Trauma informed approach</b>	<b>Respect people and diversity</b>
Older people are recognised as the ultimate authority in their lives to live well and minimise vulnerabilities to harm.	Understanding how people's histories impact their lives now and taking this into account in how we provide support.	Acknowledging and responding to older people's diversity, individuality and culture.

## Strategic priorities

<b>Age inclusive society</b>	<b>Organisations, services and supports that work for people</b>
Older South Australians can live free of ageism and are treated with respect, without prejudice, discrimination or being stereotyped, no matter their age.	Organisations, services and supports have the capability and flexibility to adapt to individual circumstances and changing needs.
<b>Connected people and community</b>	<b>Safe and secure homes</b>
Everyone has the opportunity to create and maintain meaningful connections to people and their communities of choice to reduce social isolation and loneliness.	Greater choice and access to homes where people feel safe, have secure tenure and can live on their own terms.

## Supporting conditions

<b>Growing access to support from peers</b>	<b>Preparedness and choice</b>
Greater options and access for people to receive support and services from peers.	People are better prepared for their older years and understand their choices.
<b>Fostering intergenerational relationships</b>	<b>Inclusive technology</b>
Opportunities that value and foster relationships and connection between people of all ages.	Technology that works for everyone that doesn't create reliance on others for its use.

## Foundational principles

The Foundational principles guide overall decision-making and implementation of strategic actions.

### Work with older people as experts and the agents of change

To live well and minimise vulnerabilities to harm, older people must be recognised as the ultimate experts and authorities in their lives.

### Trauma informed approach

It is fundamental to consider and gain an understanding of how people's histories impact their lives now. This trauma informed approach to ageing then informs how support or services are provided or delivered.

### Respect people and diversity

Acknowledge and respond to older people's diversity, individuality and culture.

## Strategic priorities

The Strategic priorities drive implementation of actions to safeguard the rights of older South Australians, prevent abuse and mistreatment, and respond to older people who may be at risk or experiencing abuse or mistreatment.

The priorities are informed by 'What we know', that is, the experiences of older South Australians and the outcomes that they said they wanted to see, as well as what the evidence says to date. This informs the 'Opportunities for action' and 'Key places to start', which provide suggestions for where work could begin and who should be involved.

The 'Actions', summarised on page 35, list tangible activities currently underway (ongoing) or planned (new) that contribute to the strategic outcomes.

New partnerships and innovation across government, non-government and the community will continue to generate new actions over the life of Future Directions, as evidence continues to grow about what works.

The Office for Ageing Well website will be updated annually to reflect the latest actions and progress under Future Directions.

It is important to recognise that Future Directions is closely aligned with, and will help to deliver on, the priorities and enablers of *South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025* and associated strategies and policies.



## Strategic priority 1: Age inclusive society

**Older South Australians are treated with respect, without prejudice, discrimination or being stereotyped, no matter their age.**

### What we know

Ageism is understood to be a combination of how we think about age (stereotypes), how we feel about age (prejudice) and how we behave in relation to age (discrimination).<sup>6</sup>

In recent years, research has focused on understanding the impact of ageism on increasing older people's risk of abuse or mistreatment. National policy<sup>3</sup> recognises that ageism can contribute to an environment in which:

- > Individuals who mistreat older people fail to recognise their behaviour constitutes abuse or mistreatment.
- > People fail to notice these negative behaviours or take action to stop them.
- > Older people experiencing abuse or mistreatment blame themselves and are too ashamed to seek assistance.

We all have a right to have our perspectives, knowledge and skills valued; to choose where, with whom, and how, we want to live; to be treated with respect and dignity; and to live free from abuse or mistreatment, regardless of our age or individual circumstances. However, media, employment and services (for example health and aged care) are common areas where older people report experiencing ageist attitudes, language and behaviours – these are indicative of broader societal factors that exacerbate the risk of abuse or mistreatment.<sup>3,10,11,12</sup> These areas were also reflected in the Statewide Conversations to inform Future Directions.

### Media

Ageist advertising, language, photography, media, social media, TV, popular culture and movies are the source of many negative stereotypes that feed prejudices and underpin discrimination.<sup>13</sup>

Over time, this creates the perception that older age is 'bad', carries an unworthiness, and stereotypes older people as fragile or frail or passive contributors to society or recipients of services.<sup>14</sup>

Through the Statewide Conversations, older people said they were in a constant battle to reshape the negative narrative in the media and reported that these stereotypes and perceptions:

- > Affect how they see themselves, which in turn, negatively impacts on their health and wellbeing and ability to age well.
- > Validate ageist family attitudes where older people are perceived as less capable or vulnerable. This can 'justify' steps to take control of an older family member's affairs, including where they live or their money/assets.
- > Subtle or unconscious bias or discrimination in areas such as employment and service delivery, which leads to feeling 'being done to' rather than being active participants.

**Ageing is “a good thing, a privilege, something not to be feared.”<sup>9</sup>**

## Employment

Age is the most reported reason for work-related discrimination, with older workers (aged 50-69) feeling at an age-related disadvantage when applying for jobs.<sup>15</sup>

In the Statewide Conversations, many older South Australians said they had experienced this form of ageism when seeking employment. Age-bias and prejudice about their experiences and potential contribution left many feeling vulnerable to financial insecurity.



**“I’m looking for work but can’t get an interview because people think 60 is too old. But social security services are chasing me, because without meeting their quota (for job applications and interviews) I won’t get any [social security] benefits.”<sup>9</sup>**

This is one of many similar examples where ageism had impacted someone's financial security and they worried about becoming financially dependent on others – a common risk factor that can lead to situations of abuse or mistreatment.

## Service delivery

During the Statewide Conversations, older people described experiencing structural or systemic ageism in health and aged care services, because of policies, procedures, and practices that discriminated against them based on age and reinforced ageist stereotypes. Participants believed that assumptions made by service providers about their age influenced perceptions about their health and subsequently the treatment or care they received or did not receive. In addition, people spoke about ‘being done to not done with’ or being spoken ‘about’ e.g. to carers/ family, when they were quite capable of speaking on their own behalf.

This type of ageism can negatively impact physical and mental health, and influence whether older people receive treatment or support, as well as its duration, frequency and appropriateness.<sup>10</sup> It can also lead to feelings of helplessness and not feeling valued. The way we feel about getting older also affects how well we live and age.

## Opportunities for action

Invest in the development of multi-faceted social marketing campaigns that challenge and tackle ageism by:

- > Highlighting and elevating the value of older people.
- > Highlighting what ageism looks like.
- > Emphasising images and messages that reinforce the contributions older people currently make (instead of what they have done in the past).
- > Implementing initiatives aimed at shifting mindsets and behaviours about growing older.
- > Challenging misconceptions about ageing.
- > Demonstrating ways for older people to speak up and take action to address ageism.
- > Highlighting the impact ageism can have on increasing older people's risk of abuse or mistreatment.

**Where to start:** General community, workplaces, health, aged care and medical settings and the media.

Work with a broad cross-section of the community to establish intergenerational activities, programs and training to:

- > Raise awareness about ageism and bust stereotypes.
- > Increase community awareness about the positive aspects of getting older.
- > Challenge assumptions and stereotypes of what it is to be older.
- > Recruit people from diverse backgrounds into workplaces and implement organisational policies that protect rights, focus on values and challenge ageism through role models.
- > Seek out opportunities to facilitate and support Elder-led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander intergenerational programs and activities such as cultural camps that connect Elders and younger people to promote strong intergenerational relationships.

**Where to start:** Workplaces, schools, neighbourhood and community centres, sporting clubs, local government programs, local health networks, peak Aboriginal representative bodies and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

## Strategic priority 2: Organisations, services and supports work for people

Organisations, services and supports have the capability and flexibility to adapt to individual circumstances and changing needs of older South Australians.

### What we know

Navigating systems to access services and supports can be difficult. Systems are usually designed to produce particular outputs for the system, rather than focusing on achieving outcomes for people.

In the Statewide Conversations, older South Australians said their interactions with the health, housing, welfare and aged care systems are often impersonal and ageist, with associated experiences of discrimination and trauma.

Red tape and inconsistencies in systems can also diminish people's rights and power to make decisions. Many older South Australians described being treated as 'a number', not having their needs and concerns understood and feeling vulnerable – all of which point to systems that could work better for people.

Older people stated the service provision and support they received was often based on assumptions that they lacked capability.

**“We’re seen as poor and uneducated because we’re accessing benefits, unable to understand or use technology, not able to hold information in our heads and having little to contribute once we retire.”<sup>9</sup>**

This can be further exacerbated for older people living with disability. Many described their interactions with systems as a lose/lose situation where they had to ‘prove their disability’ to qualify for the support they needed to live a good life, but also had to ‘prove their ability’ to receive the kind of support that empowered them to remain in control of their own life. In both situations, people felt powerless and vulnerable within a system where they felt unknown, and decisions were being made for them by others. By focusing on what people ‘can’t do’, systems may miss the opportunity to surface and leverage people’s capabilities for them to live their best life.

Within health settings, older people regularly described situations where their right to make decisions about their care was 'taken from them'. In these contexts, older people highlighted the importance of clinicians adhering to Advance Care Directives and respecting and honouring their health care and end-of-life wishes.

For older people living with disability, the Statewide Conversations found their right to choose a life they wanted to lead was, at times, in tension with disability services and decision-making. They reported this sometimes created situations where the older person may not feel empowered or supported to make decisions or feel fully included in planning meetings.

Older people receiving care at home reported that the continuous turnover of support staff made them feel unsafe and vulnerable because they had to continually let strangers into their home to receive care. This can be exacerbated, particularly for Forgotten Australians (Australians who experienced institutionalised or out-of-home care as children) and older Aboriginal people and those who identify as LGBTI+. For people in regional or rural communities, this can be made worse by personally knowing the people providing (intimate) support/care in a professional context.



In addition to health and aged care system experiences, older South Australians reported that their interactions with a range of government and non-government services was at times impersonal and felt like some services had little regard for, or understanding of, their situation. As a result, they often felt mistreated, and their experience triggered, and often re-triggered, mental ill health.

It is important to understand the circumstances that lead to older people having their right to choose and decide inhibited or denied and where this happens in different systems.

Increased understanding presents opportunities for improvement, including how services and supports can better work for and with older people, so that they are adaptable and responsive to individuals' needs, wishes and circumstances.

## Opportunities for action

Invest in evolving the design and delivery of health and human services, through codesign processes, to be better at:

- > Acknowledging and recognising people as informed and active decision-makers.
- > Demonstrating respect and empathy for people.
- > Focusing on what is important to the person seeking support and delivering support that is affordable, culturally appropriate and easily accessible.
- > Having flexibility to respond to people's individual needs and circumstances.
- > Strengthening systems to improve coordination to deliver culturally appropriate services, for example, between government agencies or between government and organisations.

**Where to start:** Health, medical, housing, and aged care services, and partnerships with state and commonwealth governments.

Strengthen the capability of older people to understand and action their rights by:

- > Continuing awareness campaigns focused on the rights of older people.
- > Encouraging initiatives that build the capability of older people to understand and action their rights, particularly in the health sector and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTI+ community members, people living with disability and those at risk of homelessness.
- > Ensuring important information about older people's rights and supports is provided in accessible formats.

**Where to start:** Local government and local health partners.

Strengthen the capability of older people to understand and action their rights:

- > Individuals' Advance Care Directives are understood, respected, followed and communicated between all staff involved in their care.
- > Staff understand, recognise and respond to conduct that constitutes abuse or mistreatment of older people.

**Where to start:** Universities, medical associations, hospitals and ambulance services, aged care, housing and human services.

## Strategic priority 3: Connected people and communities

**Older South Australians have the opportunity to create and maintain meaningful connections to people and communities to reduce social isolation and loneliness.**

### What we know

Regular and meaningful connections with friends, family and community is important to prevent social isolation and loneliness, which are risk factors for abuse and mistreatment of older people. Limited access to social supports and increased demands on caregivers mean there are less opportunities for abuse or mistreatment to be detected and reported by others.<sup>6</sup> Being lonely in older age is a strong predictor of premature sickness and death and is a growing public health issue.<sup>17</sup>

**“Having a network of friends is a good thing for your mental health, but it also means you have another set of eyes looking out for you in case there’s someone looking to do you wrong.”<sup>9</sup>**

### Impacts of social isolation and loneliness<sup>16,17,18</sup>

Although it’s hard to measure social isolation and loneliness precisely, there is strong evidence that many adults aged 50 and older are socially isolated or lonely in ways that put their health at risk. Recent studies found that:

- > Social isolation significantly increased a person’s risk of premature death, a risk that may rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.
- > Social isolation was associated with an approximately 50% percent increased risk of dementia.
- > Poor social relationships (characterised by social isolation or loneliness) were associated with a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.
- > Loneliness was associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicide.

Lonely people with heart failure were almost four times more likely to die, and faced a 68% increased risk of hospitalisation and a 57% increased risk of emergency department visits.

In the Statewide Conversations, older people said that having a network of friends is good for their mental and physical health and can reduce the risk of abuse or mistreatment by family members.

Older people reported that trusted informal and close relationships support them to live at home longer, get through difficult times, remain safe within their families and communities and avoid situations of abuse or mistreatment.

Finding ways to connect was also highlighted as important when navigating new circumstances such as moving to a regional area or for those newly widowed or single.

Making and maintaining connections was easier when older people were involved in the design of activities that reflect their different cultures, lifestyles, sexual preferences and diverse interests. Aspects such as small village design and accessible communal neighbourhood spaces were also reported as contributors to creating and facilitating meaningful social connections.

Significant peer interactions, informal or delivered through a program, were often

reported as an important way to support older people to navigate systems such as My Aged Care, Centrelink and to prepare an Advance Care Directive. Peers as advocates were also seen as providing much-needed social interaction and support in health and caring situations. Peers know and understand the person they are supporting and are invested in them rather than the system.

Another matter raised through the Statewide Conversations was the need to safeguard the rights of older people to maintain pets and companion animals in their lives; acknowledging the role of pets to support and uphold resilience, catalyse community connections and protect against physical and psychological decline. This was particularly important for people moving to or living in residential aged care.

## Opportunities for action

### Invest in informal and formal peer supports that:

- > Build older people's capacity to understand and navigate government agencies, services and processes.
- > Link new and existing residents to community and networks via trusted community members or bespoke activities.
- > Reflect diverse cultures, lifestyles, sexual preferences and interests.

**Where to start:** Peak bodies, advocacy organisations, non-government organisations and Commonwealth, state and local governments.

### Design and deliver activities and initiatives that:

- > Foster social connection in local communities that reflect diverse cultures, lifestyles, sexual preferences and interests.
- > Support older people's right to maintain connections with their pets, including in retirement living and residential aged care.

- > Provide opportunities for authentic and meaningful intergenerational relationships to develop, including in spaces where people of different ages gather such as libraries, the arts, local parks, cafes and community centres.

**Where to start:** Local government, community service providers including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and clubs and organisations.

### Design neighbourhoods that:

- > Support formation of incidental interactions, connections and relationships.
- > Enable people to know when and how to help and contribute to the lives of those around them.

**Where to start:** Urban planning and transport related government agencies and local government.



## Strategic priority 4: Safe and secure homes

**Greater choice and access to homes where older South Australians feel safe, have secure tenure and can live on their own terms.**

### What we know

A safe and secure home enables people to invest in themselves and their community, to make and maintain social connections, and access services to live a good life.

In the Statewide Conversations, many older people reported feeling unsafe where they live and/or live in insecure housing, e.g. short term rental accommodation.

Feelings of being unsafe arose from a lack of security features such as:

- > External sensor lights
- > Inadequately secure windows and doors
- > Public access to corridors and stairwells.

People reported that an unsafe housing environment triggered mental ill health or previous trauma and that living on their own can increase feelings of vulnerability to physical abuse or mistreatment.

Participants in the Statewide Conversations said that living in private rental as you age, means greater risk of becoming homeless in the face of increasing rents and no access to affordable and appropriate housing. This type of insecure tenure is of concern, particularly for older women with various factors leading to their increased vulnerability to homelessness, often for the first time in their lives.

Common unmet housing needs of older people, which also support safety and connection, include:

- > Affordable rent / mortgages.
- > Being able to afford and/or allowed to modify current homes to permit ageing in place.
- > Finding appropriate and affordable housing in existing neighbourhoods to continue to maintain connections to others and services.
- > Living conditions and communities that foster meaningful relationships and connections, preventing social isolation and loneliness, including living with pets.
- > Formal services that fully integrate and leverage homes, living environments and informal supports.

The gender pay gap and casualisation of the workforce have impacted women's capacity to save, own a home and accumulate superannuation. Family violence or abuse or mistreatment of older people can often result in loss of income, as well as housing and financial insecurity.<sup>19</sup> Caring for children, grandchildren and older parents usually falls to women, potentially taking years out of their working lives.

For Aboriginal women, caring responsibilities often extend to their children, grandchildren and those in their broader kinship and community networks.

A safe living environment and secure tenure are the foundations for safeguarding older people's rights, enabling them to connect with people and services within their community and to feel a sense of belonging.

## Opportunities for action

Invest in the development, demonstration and/or scale of new housing types that:

- > Reduce unwanted walk-through and drive-through traffic.
- > Increase the range of options that meet the diverse needs of older people, in particular women.

Identify housing initiatives that target and address the known needs of older people to:

- > Advocate for the delivery of quality and affordable housing for older people that supports ageing in place.
- > Challenge the interests that seek to deliver housing for financial benefit alone, and balance this with quality social outcomes.

**Where to start:** Innovators in the architecture and housing industries, small private developers and housing-related government and non-government organisations.

## ACTIONS – Strategic priorities

Actions to progress the Strategic priorities include a range of ongoing efforts and new responses. Office for Ageing Well will take the lead in kickstarting initial actions.

As work matures, it is anticipated new partners and actions will emerge.

Community and stakeholders can keep up to date with latest Future Directions actions on the Office for Ageing Well website.

### Ongoing

- > Office for Ageing Well will continue to support the Aboriginal, regional, culturally and linguistically diverse and LGBTI+ Ageing Well Community Networks to raise awareness about older people's rights and safeguarding strategies through trusted local networks and will expand to additional communities.
- > SA Health (Office for Ageing Well and departmental partners), will continue to implement a sustainable Advance Care Directives Peer to Peer education support model in a range of local council areas across metropolitan and regional South Australia, including: Cities of Onkaparinga, Mitcham, Holdfast Bay and Marion (2021-2023); Charles Sturt, Port Adelaide Enfield and West Torrens (2021-2023); and Alexandrina, Yankalilla and Victor Harbor (2022-2023) and beyond (from 2023) to assist people to complete Advance Care Directives.
- > The *Knowing your Rights – A guide to the rights of older South Australians* booklet will be revised by Office for Ageing Well to ensure it is contemporary and reflects current laws/practice. Renamed *Know your Rights*, it will continue to be distributed widely throughout South Australia to raise awareness about the rights of older people, the laws that protect them and the broad range of services offering information, advice and support.
- > Office for Ageing Well will develop, implement and evaluate a multi-methods annual Elder Abuse Prevention campaign to tackle ageism, focussed on the rights of older people through channels including social media, radio, and print media aligned with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
- > Office for Ageing Well will continue to showcase the diverse talents of Seniors Card Members and break down stereotypes through the annual Through the Lens Photographic Competition.
- > Office for Ageing Well will continue to promote the importance of culture and connection as a mistreatment prevention strategy in Aboriginal communities across South Australia, through the codesigned *Respect Connect* campaign and Aboriginal campaign ambassadors.

## New

- > Office for Ageing Well will implement the policy and legislative reforms that relate to its role and responsibilities outlined in the Government's response to the independent Review of the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995*.
- > Office for Ageing Well will expand the International Day of Older Persons to SA's Week of Ageing Well in October each year, to celebrate the value, contributions and diversity of older South Australians.
- > Office for Ageing Well will develop a suite of online resources to enable broad engagement in age friendly services across South Australia, aligning with promotions as part of the SA Week of Ageing Well.
- > SA Health will undertake an education program to ensure clinicians understand their role and legal responsibilities in relation to Advance Care Directives.
- > To increase age inclusive communications and shift the negative narrative and stereotyping of older people, a new codesigned Age Positive Toolkit, developed for Office for Ageing Well by Think Human, will be promoted widely across government, non-government organisations, media and the community.
- > Following a pilot between Office for Ageing Well, Gender Equality Solutions and the City of Adelaide to develop, deliver and evaluate Bystander Action for Ageing Well, Office for Ageing Well will continue to raise community awareness about tackling ageism and to build skills to call out ageism when witnessing or experiencing it.
- > Office for Ageing Well will develop, implement and evaluate a statewide 'Abuse Prevention Education Strategy', highlighting the link between ageism and abuse and mistreatment of older people and to raise awareness of the role and functions of the Adult Safeguarding Unit, to be rolled out over the next five years.
- > The Housing Security for Older Women Taskforce will develop recommendations for government to improve housing security for older women.
- > SYC, in partnership with Office for Ageing Well, will develop/adapt rental and financial literacy information for older renters, and test/evaluate in partnership with people with lived experience.
- > Zest Creative-Living Life, in partnership with Office for Ageing Well, will develop, deliver and evaluate a series of ageing well community conversations in four council regions, including development of a 'train the trainer' module.
- > The Adult Safeguarding Unit (Office for Ageing Well) will review public facing information to ensure communication materials meet best practice accessibility standards.
- > The Adult Safeguarding Unit will ensure that educational resources relating to the role and functions of the Unit are translated into key community languages and widely promoted.

## Supporting conditions

Supporting conditions help to deliver on the Strategic priorities to uphold rights. They crosscut agendas and aim to impact communities, institutions and systems that interact regularly with older South Australians.

### Supporting condition 1: Growing access to support from peers

**Greater options and access for older South Australians to receive support and services from peers.**

#### What we know

Participants in the Statewide Conversations reported that leveraging formal or informal peer support in key situations can:

- > Support older people to grow and strengthen meaningful social connections to prevent social isolation and loneliness.
- > Reduce older people's vulnerability to abuse or mistreatment.

Opportunities where peer support can safeguard older people's rights include:

- > Supporting older people in caring roles, e.g. caring for a partner, adult children or grandchildren.
- > Accessing peers in hospital and aged care settings, for example, assisting to ensure Advance Care Directives are followed.
- > Supporting older people who are new to a community, newly separated or widowed.
- > Navigating different and sometimes complex service systems.



Peer support initiatives are most effective when peers are embedded as community champions. Effectively supporting older people to be community champions positions them to take action themselves on a specific topic or issue in their community or network. Experienced peer community champions are also well positioned to mentor and build other older people's capacity to become community champions themselves.

Peer support and peer-to-peer initiatives require appropriate support and training. It is important to design this type of initiative with peer support/workers to identify suitable approaches for debriefing and capability building, particularly in contexts where a trauma-informed approach is required, along with mentoring with appropriate professionals.

## Supporting condition 2: Preparedness and choice

**South Australians are better prepared for their older years and understand their choices.**

### What we know

Preparing for how to live, age and die well makes people less vulnerable to the known risks that can lead to abuse or mistreatment as they grow older.

Planning earlier in life for later years means greater choice and control over situations and leads to lives with greater meaning and purpose, essentials for positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

Consideration of life beyond work and a regular income allows people to reflect on what is important to them and how they can maintain meaning and purpose as they age.

The Statewide Conversations identified four areas to begin early planning:

- > Finance and superannuation.
- > Home – where and how to live and with whom.
- > Friendship networks and connections – how to maintain meaning and purpose beyond the working years.
- > Health care support to age well, including understanding how to readily access support to live and die at home.

**SPEAK FOR  
YOURSELF.  
MAKE YOUR  
WISHES CLEAR.**

**PLAN  
AHEAD.**



Supported by Office for Ageing Well and SA Health, local Councils are developing a sustainable peer-led model that increases awareness and completion of Advance Care Directives within the community. The model and resources are being codesigned with older people and will incorporate culture and diversity considerations. Participants will explore key components of the Advance Care Directive Guide, be supported to identify their wishes and preferences for their future health and lifestyle, and complete their own Advance Care Directive.

## Supporting condition 3: Fostering intergenerational relationships

**Opportunities that value and foster relationships and connections between people of all ages.**

### What we know

Bringing together younger and older generations to build respect and connections can minimise ageism and the risk of abusive situations.

Participants in the Statewide Conversations highlighted that valuing and pursuing intergenerational relationships at all ages celebrate and foster different experiences, cultures and ways of living.

Investing in spaces that foster relationships and connections between people of all ages creates the foundation to better understand how to care about, support and contribute to each other's lives.

Intergenerational interactions provide the opportunity for two-way storytelling. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, cultural camps with Elders promote stronger intergenerational relationships and build understanding and respect for the wisdom of Elders.

These types of experiences encourage younger generations to see ageing and the contributions of older people in a positive light. They also provide opportunities for children and young people to value and treat older people with respect and prevent the formation of ageist attitudes.



Careship Coorong's project 'The Yarn Barn – Tinker and Talk', a 2021-2022 Positive Ageing Fellowship Grant project, is providing opportunities for senior community members to drive a community that engages and welcomes people of all generations. While lending a listening ear or having a chat to those in need, older people share their wisdom and skills to increase community resilience, build support networks and a more welcoming community. Seniors work with people in the community who feel marginalised to develop skills through small work-related projects to increase self-esteem and confidence and build friendships.

## Supporting condition 4: Inclusive technology

**Technology works for all older South Australians and does not create reliance on others for its use.**

Throughout the Statewide Conversations, older South Australians expressed a desire for technology that works for them, which enhances their agency and does not inhibit it. The [Australian Digital Inclusion Index](#) indicates that South Australia has one of the lowest national digital inclusion scores across Australia, particularly for people aged over 75.<sup>20</sup>

Affordable and age friendly technology is needed that is designed to work for, and include, everyone. Having to rely on others to use technology is a risk factor for financial abuse or dependency.

Isolation and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the uptake of online platforms such as telehealth, online learning, social and gaming platforms, working from home and e-commerce. Actions to enhance digital connectivity help ensure that the social, cultural and economic benefits of these trends are available to everyone, including older people.

Technology should not be a 'one size fits all' philosophy. Instead, a range of technologies and human interactions need to be available for older people to communicate, connect and conduct their lives. Technological solutions to remain independent and involved in society should be codesigned with those they are seeking to support.



**While digital inclusion remains closely tied to age, there are signs the digital inclusion of mid-life and senior Australians is improving.**

Reflecting the increased importance of internet access for social connections and service access during COVID-19 restrictions older Australians recorded an increase in digital inclusion between 2020 and 2021<sup>20</sup>. The total Index scores of:

- > 45-54-year-olds rose 5.1 points from 67.2 to 72.3
- > 55-64-year-olds rose 4.9 points from 61.9 to 66.8
- > 65-74-year-olds rose 3.9 points from 53.4 to 57.3
- > 75+ year-olds rose 6.1 points from 41.3 to 47.4.



## ACTIONS – Supporting conditions

Actions to progress the Supporting conditions include a range of ongoing efforts and new responses. Office for Ageing Well will take the lead in kickstarting initial actions. As Future Directions matures, it is anticipated new partners and actions will emerge.

Community and stakeholders can keep up to date with latest Future Directions actions on the Office for Ageing Well website.

### Ongoing

- > The SA Public Libraries statewide program, Being Digital, will seek to enhance the skills and confidence of older people, particularly those living in regional South Australia, to use online technology and address digital exclusion.
- > Office for Ageing Well will continue its successful partnership with State Theatre Company of South Australia to deliver the 'A Date with State' program, to support older people who have experienced loss and are seeking to stay connected to attend live theatre and connect with others.

### New

- > Aged Rights Advocacy Service, in partnership with Office for Ageing Well, will develop an initiative to address the drivers of ageism by building relationships that foster respect across generations through shared story telling.
- > Office for Ageing Well will re-energise and rebrand the annual Plan Ahead Week campaign, in partnership with Office of the Public Advocate, Legal Services Commission of SA, SA Health, Donate Life SA, COTA SA and Wellbeing SA. The new campaign, held in September each year, emphasises the importance of making your health, financial, legal and personal wishes clear to safeguard future rights by completing an Advance Care Directive, Enduring Power of Attorney, Will and registration for organ and tissue donation.

# MEASURING IMPACT

Office for Ageing Well will continually assess and review how Future Directions is making a real impact to safeguard the rights of older South Australians by monitoring, e.g.

- > Community awareness of abuse prevention strategies and knowledge of how and where to report concerns.
- > Building community members' skills and capacity to influence the drivers of abuse and mistreatment such as addressing ageism in real time via bystander intervention.
- > The number and nature of concerns raised with the Adult Safeguarding Unit.
- > Seeking direct feedback from older South Australians through a periodic Community Perceptions Survey and focussed conversations as part of the broader evaluation of *South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025*.<sup>21</sup>

In 2020-21, Office for Ageing Well engaged in a codesign process with older people, agencies, organisations and groups that play a role in ageing well, to develop an *Ageing Well Measuring Success Framework*<sup>21</sup> (the Framework).

The Framework can be used by anyone who is or wants to be part of the vision for ageing well in South Australia. It enables Office for Ageing Well, project partners and other government and non-government agencies, organisations, and groups to understand what success looks like and to change or realign their energy towards activities that create the most positive impact along the way.

For more information about the Framework and to keep up to date on progress visit [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/OlderSouthAustraliansRights](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/OlderSouthAustraliansRights)

Each action that evolves from Future Directions will include a set of indicators to determine impact and be included in partnership agreements. Measuring the impact of each action will be tailored to each project or action, informed by the methods and measures outlined in the Framework, as well as project partners and older people themselves.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 – Expanded achievements from 2014-2022 (former Strategy)

### 1. Raising awareness

Community awareness about the abuse or mistreatment of older people, its signs and where to go for more information or to access support has increased significantly since 2015. In South Australia, a key initiative contributing to increased community awareness was the successful annual Stop Elder Abuse campaign. Each year, campaigns specifically targeted the general community (2015-2021), health, legal and financial workforces (2016), and carers and volunteers (2017).

In 2017, the campaign reached out to older carers and volunteers, with messaging and collateral refreshed following consultation with the target audiences. In 2018, the campaign specifically targeted hairdressers, often in a good position to spot signs of abuse or mistreatment due to their unique relationships with their clients. Between 2019-2021, the campaign targeted the general community, particularly raising awareness about the new Adult Safeguarding Unit, which opened on 1 October 2019, and provided the call to action for the 2019-2021 campaigns.

Each campaign resulted in substantial increases in calls to the Elder Abuse Prevention Phone Line, as well as more visits to the Stop Elder Abuse website.

In 2016, Office for Ageing Well developed and released *Knowing Your Rights – A Guide to the Rights of Older South Australians* in partnership with Legal Services Commission and COTA Peer Educators. This popular booklet raises community awareness of the rights of older people, laws that protect these rights and the broad range of services offering information, advice and support, depending on the concerns or circumstances. Since its launch, demand has exceeded expectations, with over 40,000 Knowing Your Rights free booklets distributed across South Australia and thousands more downloaded from the website.

Since 2017, Office for Ageing Well has partnered with Multicultural Communities Council of SA to increase awareness of the key Knowing Your Rights messages, with more than 25 community organisations that support or engage with older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The annual *Planning Ahead Week* was established in 2014 to raise awareness about the importance of planning ahead and completing the legal tools available such as Advance Care Directives, Enduring Powers of Attorney, wills, and organ and tissue donation registration to safeguard future financial, health, legal and personal wishes. Nearly 100,000 Planning Ahead resources have been distributed, with an additional 10,000 distributed in Greek, Vietnamese and Italian. A Plan Ahead Ambassadors program was also developed. Each year, the completion rates for these legal documents increase because of the campaign.

Since 2019, Office for Ageing Well supported eight of its key partner organisations (Aged Rights Advocacy Service, ANFE Community Care, Coordinating Italian Committee, COTA SA, Federation of Polish Organisations in SA, GOCSA Community Care, Greek Welfare Centre SA, and Multicultural Communities Council of SA) to establish Ageing Well Community Networks, with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse, Aboriginal, regional, and LGBTI+ communities.

**Ageing Well Community Networks** bring together local community leaders to share information, resources, and learnings about ageing well, safeguarding the rights of older people and prevention of abuse and mistreatment of older people with other Network members, the broader community and Office for Ageing Well. More than 25 communities from diverse cultural backgrounds have been involved in the Ageing Well Community Networks, which continue to expand.

## 2. Strong community connections

Since the commencement of the founding Strategy in 2014, significant work has been undertaken across a range of projects, programs, and initiatives to strengthen community connections.

Office for Ageing Well and South Australia Police reinforced their connections, including through police membership of the Safeguarding Strategy Advisory Group and the development of a formal agreement to guide the relationship between South Australia Police and the Adult Safeguarding Unit. These connections are important as part of a joined-up safeguarding framework for older people, and for increasing the accessibility of police services.

**Living a Positive Life** resources were developed with Aged Rights Advocacy Service to encourage people to stay connected, stay healthy, stay in control, and stay safe. The South Australian Elders Living a Positive Life DVD and toolkit raise awareness of how older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can safeguard their rights and live a positive life. This initiative was promoted through the Safeguards for Ageing Well program, delivered by the Aged Rights Advocacy Service, and has been even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3. Responding to vulnerability, risk and abuse

The Elder Abuse Prevention Phone Line Service\* (Phone Line) was established and delivered by Aged Rights Advocacy Service on behalf of Office for Ageing Well. From January 2019, the Phone Line was managed and delivered by Office for Ageing Well and, once the Adult Safeguarding Unit commenced in October 2019, the Phone Line became the portal to the Adult Safeguarding Unit.

The *Good Practice Guidelines to Prevent and Respond to Abuse of Older South Australians* provides a five step process designed to assist organisations to identify a range of activities that support the rights of older people: 1. Identify workplace champions 2. Complete an organisational self-assessment/audit and consider relevant actions 3. Develop an action plan using the recommended resources 4. Implement and communicate the plan 5. Evaluate the impact. Organisations with a commitment to older people are encouraged to make use of these guidelines to support better practice in the recognition of, response to, and prevention of elder abuse or mistreatment.

The Adult Safeguarding Unit commenced in October 2019, following a number of national and state inquiries. It is located in the Office for Ageing Well and is a dedicated South Australia-wide service that has a legal mandate to respond to concerns about adults who may be vulnerable and are suspected to be experiencing abuse or mistreatment.

The establishment of the Adult Safeguarding Unit service model was informed by extensive consultation with older people, people with lived experience of mental health issues or living with disability, their carers, families and a diverse range of stakeholders. The Adult Safeguarding Unit is staffed by experienced allied health practitioners, who apply clinical and professional judgement and best practice when assessing concerns and working with adults experiencing abuse and mistreatment.

As the Unit was the first of its kind in Australia, the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995* (SA)<sup>2</sup> included a transitional provision to limit the Unit's legal mandate for its first three years of operation, to respond to reports of abuse or neglect of adults 65 years and over, and 50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In July 2020, the South Australian Safeguarding Taskforce, which was convened following the tragic death of Ann Marie Smith, to examine gaps in oversight and safeguarding for people living with disability in South Australia, recommended the Adult Safeguarding Unit expand its legal remit to respond to reports of suspected or actual abuse or mistreatment of adults living with disability as an immediate response to improve safeguarding. This took effect from 1 October 2020.

On 1 October 2022, the transitional provisions expired, expanding the Adult Safeguarding Unit's legal remit to include responding to reports of actual or suspected abuse or mistreatment of any adult who may be vulnerable to abuse due to age, health, disability, isolation, dependency and disadvantage, or a combination of these.

\* In 2019 the Phone Line changed its name to Abuse Prevention Phone Line and since 2021, in response to community feedback, the Phone Line has been referred to as the Adult Safeguarding Unit.

#### 4. Policies and beyond

In 2015, the *Charter of the Rights and Freedoms of Older South Australians* (Charter of Rights) was developed, based on human rights principles, serving as a strong reminder that we have the same human rights, no matter our age, identity or where we live. These rights include the right to autonomy and self-determination, the right to dignity and respect, the right to participate in all aspects of life and the law, and the right to be safe and to be free from exploitation and abuse.

In response to the *Closing the Gaps: Enhancing South Australia's Response to the Abuse of Vulnerable Older People* (2011), the *South Australian Joint Committee on Matters Relating to Elder Abuse* (2017), and *Australian Law Reform Commission – Elder Abuse – A National Legal response* (2017), South Australia developed landmark adult safeguarding legislation. The *Office for the Ageing (Adult Safeguarding) Amendment Bill 2018* passed both houses of Parliament in November 2018 and commenced on 1 October 2019.

The Amendment Bill modernised the *Office for the Ageing Act 1995*, renamed it the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA)*<sup>2</sup> and changed the name of the Office to Office for Ageing Well. As described previously it also established an Adult Safeguarding Unit, the first of its kind in Australia, and set out its powers and functions.

The *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA)*<sup>2</sup> required an independent statutory review of the operation of the Act within three years of the commencement of the Amendment Bill. The review, conducted by the South Australian Law Reform Institute in 2022, made a number of recommendations for further reform to the Office for Ageing Well and Adult Safeguarding provisions of the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA)*.<sup>2</sup> The South Australian Government supported the majority of recommendations, including legislative reform, which will be implemented in 2023-2024. The Government's response can be found on the [SA Health website](#).

In response to Recommendation 3 of the *Australian Law Reform Commission Report- Elder Abuse - A National Legal Response* (2017), the Australian Council of Attorneys-General agreed to develop a *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians 2019-2023*<sup>3</sup> (National Plan). A National Working Group was established to develop the National Plan, with South Australia represented by Office for Ageing Well and the Attorney-General's Department (SA). South Australia facilitated a consultation process to inform the National Plan, which was subsequently released by the Commonwealth Attorney-General in May 2019, followed by an Implementation Plan.

The National Plan contains key priorities and a high-level summary of the focus areas for governments over the life of the National Plan, including South Australian Government actions.

Since 2014, a diverse range of research projects has been undertaken by a range of government and non-government organisations, contributing to the knowledge base and understanding of the outcomes of a variety of safeguarding actions implemented across South Australia. This research reinforced the need to focus on upstream actions of prevention, awareness-raising and tackling ageism.

Research projects include:

> **What Keeps You Safe:** A partnership with SAHMRI (South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute) Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity Unit and Office for Ageing Well. This project conducted a literature search of national and international abuse prevention strategies, policies and initiatives for indigenous communities, and consultation with older Aboriginal people and Elders.

It found that to safeguard against abuse or mistreatment, reinforcing respect and designing initiatives, resources and programs with older Aboriginal people and Elders was key. This work informed the development of the *Respect Connect* campaign, which was launched in 2020 to raise awareness about the importance of community connection and respect for Elders, and will continue to be rolled out across various communities.

> **Prevalence of Elder Abuse in South Australia Study – Current Data Collection Practices of Key Agencies:** Undertaken in 2017, key findings from the study indicated limitations in data collected by organisations whose key focus was elder abuse. For other organisations and agencies, there was a range of privacy, consent and administrative considerations that impacted data collection in South Australia. The *National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study*<sup>1</sup> has since addressed some of these gaps.

## Appendix 2 - Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following partners in assisting to deliver the former Strategy (2014-2021), as well as the development of Future Directions (2023-2027).

- > Members of the Safeguarding Strategy Advisory Group
- > Members of Adult Safeguarding Unit Advisory Group
- > Ageing Well Community Networks
- > Adult Safeguarding Unit Implementation Workgroup
- > Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation
- > Aboriginal Health Strategy
- > Adult Safeguarding Unit, SA Health
- > Aged Care Quality Strategy, Commonwealth Department of Health
- > Aged Rights Advocacy Service
- > Attorney Generals Department SA
- > Attorney Generals Department (Commonwealth)
- > Carers SA
- > Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement, Department of Premier and Cabinet
- > Dementia Australia SA
- > Department for Child Protection
- > Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc
- > Disability Policy and Inclusion, Department of Human Services
- > Legal Services Commission of SA
- > Oakden Families representatives
- > Office of the Chief Psychiatrist, SA Health
- > Office of the Public Advocate, Attorney Generals Department SA
- > Mental Health Coalition of SA
- > Multicultural Communities Council of SA
- > Public Trustee of South Australia
- > Relationships Australia SA
- > South Australia Police
- > South Australian Council of Social Service
- > Ethnic Link Services, UnitingSA
- > Uniting Communities Law Centre
- > Aberfoyle Community Centre
- > ACH Group
- > Adelaide Mosque Islamic Society of Australia (AMISSA) Inc
- > Adelaide University
- > Aged Care and Housing (ACH) Group Inc
- > Aged Rights Advocacy Service (SA) Inc (ARAS)
- > Ageing with Pride
- > Alexandrina Council
- > Associazione Nazionale Famiglie degli Emigrati Incorporated
- > AnglicareSA
- > Australian Refugee Association Inc
- > Barossa Village Inc
- > BayTown Group
- > Blackwood Recreation Association Inc
- > Carat Australia
- > Careship Coorong Ltd
- > Catalyst Foundation
- > Ceduna Senior Citizens Club
- > Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation, SAHMRI
- > Ceylon Tamil Association of SA Inc
- > City of Marion
- > City of Onkaparinga
- > City of Port Adelaide Enfield
- > City of Salisbury
- > City of Tea Tree Gully
- > City of Victor Harbor
- > City of Charles Sturt
- > Clayton Bay Nursery & Environment Group
- > Community Centres SA (CCSA) Inc
- > Community Housing Limited
- > Co-ordinating Italian Committee Inc (CIC)
- > Copper Coast Council (Sing Australia Kadina)



- > Coromandel Valley Croquet Club
- > Council on the Ageing SA Inc (COTA SA)
- > Donovans Recreational Advisory Committee
- > Dreamtime Creative
- > Eastwood Community Centre Inc (ARPA Bush Band)
- > ECH Group
- > Echungga Community Association
- > Eldercare
- > Embraced Inc
- > Ernst and Young
- > Federation of Polish Organisations in SA Inc
- > Flinders University
- > Gawler University of the Third Age Inc
- > Gawler Vintage Veteran & Classic Vehicle Club Inc
- > German-speaking Aged Services Association
- > Glenelg Brass Band Inc
- > Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia Consolidated Trust Greek Welfare Centre SA
- > Greek Orthodox Community of SA Inc (GOCSA)
- > Hackham West Community Centre
- > Hindmarsh Island Landcare Group Inc
- > Housing Choices South Australia (HCSA) Ltd
- > Helping Hand Aged Care
- > Ink Pot Arts Inc
- > Kura Yerlo Inc
- > Lane Bros Printers Pty Ltd
- > Langhorne Creek Historic School Inc
- > Light Regional Council
- > Lions Club of Burnside
- > Lyceum Adelaide Inc
- > Mallala RSL
- > Matthew Flinders Home Inc
- > Mercury CX Inc
- > Moorook Community Hall Inc
- > Murray Bridge Community Centre Inc
- > Muslim Women's Association of SA
- > Naval, Military & Air Force Club of South Australia
- > Neighbourhood Node Pty Ltd
- > Northern Volunteering SA Inc
- > Palliative Care South Australia
- > Pickleball SA Association Inc
- > Port Augusta Bowling Club Inc
- > Port Germein Progress Association
- > Port Pirie Regional Council
- > Public Library Services
- > Regional Council of Goyder
- > Socially Connected Solutions
- > South Australian Law Reform Institute (SALRI)
- > Southern Cross Care
- > Southern Yorke Peninsula Community Hub
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- > Susan Raphael Consulting
- > The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI)
- > The Barossa Council
- > The Equality Project Ltd
- > The Paraplegic & Quadriplegic Association of SA
- > The Plug-In, COTA SA
- > Think Human
- > Town of Gawler
- > U3A Prospect Inc
- > U3A Riverland
- > Unifying Neighbourhood Intergenerational Interactions Together With You (UNIITY) Inc
- > UnitingSA
- > University of South Australia
- > Victor Harbor City Band
- > Walkerville Uniting Church
- > Warooka Bowling Club
- > West Lakes Seniors/Over 50's Club
- > Wilmington Progress Society
- > Write by the Sea

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