Age-Friendly Engagement and Communication Guide

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1. Age-Friendly Engagement and Communication Guide

The Federation Council in collaboration with the Ageing Well Advisory Committee has created this easy to use Age Friendly Engagement and Communication Guide.

The Federation Council is an ageing population. In 2016, 35.2% were older adults (60 years and over). It is important that the council effectively engages and communicates with our older residents in our work to ensure our policies, programs and services are relevant and work for the people across the life cycle.

Effective engagement and communication with older people involves actively listening and genuinely responding to what matters to them most. It is open, inclusive and supports a dynamic dialogue between the council and the community.

The Federation Council has developed this Age-Friendly Engagement and Communication Guide as part of its ongoing commitment to genuine community engagement. It is a result of collaborative work between the Federation Council and the Federation Ageing Well Committee.

The Age-Friendly Engagement and Communication Guide is intended as a source of reference for Councilors, Council staff and anyone keen to improve the quality of communication with our senior residents and visitors.

We encourage its use to guide and support mutually respectful relationships as we continue to create an all-ages-friendly community in the Federation Council region.

Federation Ageing Well Strategy 2018-2022
7.1. Develop an age-friendly communications guide and educate Council staff on the considerations required and include this into systemised practice.

2. Ageing Well Advisory Committee

Council's Federation Ageing Well Advisory Committee provides advice and support to Federation Council regarding issues affecting the lives of older people in the Federation Council.

If you would like to discuss a matter with the Ageing Well Advisory Committee, please contact Council or speak directly to one of the committee members.

Ageing Well Advisory Committee Members 2021/2022 are as follows:

Corowa
Ida Mensforth
Stan Bromley
Wendy Eyers

Howlong
Jenny Enever
Mike Gardiner

Mulwala
Liz Seeliger

Oaklands
Yvonne Perrin

Urana
Jenny Hearn

Councillor Representative
Councillor, Gail Law

3. Engagement and Communication

There is a difference between engagement and communication and whether you engage or communicate depends on what you are trying to achieve.

Communicating is fine if it is just for information sharing or to inform the public.
For example, for upcoming events, updates on projects, proposed road works or general announcements then a written letter telling them about what is happening, when it is happening and what they need to do is acceptable.

If you are making a decision that will impact the lives of a person or the environment where they live then you may need to engage with them.

Engaging older people through open dialogue and informed participation improves decision making and makes the process more transparent. Policies, programs and services can also be more effective when you engage and involve people.

Often they can help you spread your message to the broader community and explain your decisions. And if they start adding to the plan, driving it, and making it their own, that's even better.

4. Community Engagement Process

Community engagement is an ongoing task and assumes the "key" stakeholders will be involved in a project or policy process from its inception right through to implementation and subsequent review.

Engage people in all stages of the engagement process

1. Creating and delivering the engagement plan and budget
2. Implementing the plan
3. Closing the loop (Did you do what you said you would do)
4. Evaluation

4.1 Levels, Purpose and Tools used in Community Engagement

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)'s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

Increasing impact of the decision →

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

WHICH COMMUNICATION TOOL TO USE	Website Social media postings Direct Mail Media releases Newsletters Advertisements Fact sheets Presentations Emails	Conversations Surveys Feedback forms Social media posting Focus groups Community meetings or forums Public comment Written submission Insight mapping Polls and voting	Focus groups Workshops Site visits Advisory Committees Community leaders Stakeholder groups S. 355 committees Stakeholder networks Forum discussions online or face to face Insight mapping Polls and voting Engagement platforms	Facilitated workshops Design or deliberative forums. Participatory decision making Co-designing and building the plan Site visits Online or face to face forum discussions Prioritisation and voting Round table S.355 Committees Advisory Committees Stakeholder groups	Open dialogues Co-created design Participatory budgets Some Advisory Committees Some Section 355 Committees

4.2 Level on the Spectrum of Public Participation

The Spectrum of Public Participation is not a flow chart.

Each steps in a process – starting on the left and working to the right – so selecting a level needs to be based on the specific context.

Higher levels of involving, collaborating and empowering are not necessarily "better". If an issue is not controversial and does not provoke passionate feelings, a lower level maybe more appropriate, but for issues which are complex and controversial, it can save time in the long run to choose a higher level.

Some times the level of participation may change or you may choose to use tools from different levels to allow a broad spectrum of the community to engage.

For example,
You may find that issue was more controversial than first thought and a higher level of consultation might be needed to address the concerns of the community or to ensure you can reach people who are unavailable during working hours or are unable to travel have the opportunity to contribute their ideas you may run a series of community forums during the day, as well as have a survey on the website.

4.3 Council Specific Engagement Channels

Council can engage with the community in a variety of ways:
- Council "Have your Say" online engagement tool
- "On exhibition" Council's public exhibition of Council documents e.g. plans and strategies
- Development Applications - Notice of Proposed
- Focus Groups and Workshop
- Surveys online and paper based
- Feedback forms
- Face to face meetings
- Phone interviews
- Individual interviews with hard to reach residents
- Local community meetings
- Public meetings
- Community forums
- Written submissions
- Peer-led consultations
- Advisory Committees Community leaders
- Section 355 committees
- Stakeholder groups or networks
- Attending interagency with partnered organisations
- Targeted presentations to community committees, sporting groups or service clubs.

4.4 Why engage with older people?

1. Council regularly needs to consult with members of our community. Sometimes it is a legal requirement such as putting Development Applications on public exhibition, to assist in the development a strategy, plan or policy, before commencing a major project, or to make good decisions that take into account community interest. Many of these consultations include the opportunity for direct participation by individuals or community groups.

2. Australia's population is ageing. The proportion of older people, those aged 65 years and over, has been steadily increasing over the last century for both men and women, and this trend is expected to continue. The World Health Organisation predicts that by 2050 there will be more old people in the world than children for the first time in history.

3. The population in the Federation Council Local Government Area is older and ageing faster than regional (27.2%), state (21.3%) and national average (21.3%). It has one of the highest percentages of people aged over 60 years in New South Wales at 35.2% in 2016. From 2016-2021, Federation Council saw an increase of 450 people over aged 65 years. Our largest growth age group are those aged 75-79 whilst the 65-69 years age group remained constant. Therefore, 4,432 of our residents are considered older people and should be given every opportunity to be part of Council's consultation process.

4. Engaging with older people provides many opportunities for Council and the broader business community.

5. Older people have a wealth of knowledge, life experience and expertise.

6. Community consultation tells us if they agree with your plan or if they have other suggestions or alternate ways to get the same desired result.

4.5 Top Tips for Engaging with Older People

Community engagement involves getting of your chair and going and talking to be people either informally or formally. You need the person to go on the journey with you and quiet often take some ownership.

1. Make sure the engagement process is open to everyone, with every person given an equal opportunity and encouraged to participate.

2. Make sure there is a genuine intent to listen and reflect their concerns in the final decision or use their suggestions if possible. Community engagement should never be a token process.

3. State and clarify the need for the decision or the problem to be solved, not to sell a particular solution.

4. Ensure you are inclusive of people who may not be physically mobile or who are not online.

5. Consider the best ways to be inclusive of a diverse range of older people and how to address any barriers they may have to participating.

6. While many older people are tech savvy and online, some still rely on traditional forms of communication. This may include face-to-face, post/mail, newspapers, printed material and phone.

7. Get out into the community, speak to people. Consider communicating through local networks, Council and community organisations.

8. Keep in mind people who live across our Council area especially in the small villages. Use your contacts or other organisations if resources/budgets are limited.

9. Older people want to be genuinely and directly consulted, ensuring their views are sought and valued.

10. Don't change the way you communicate as a "favour" to seniors. Embrace senior friendly communication because it is logical and makes good business sense.

11. Run older people-led engagements where applicable and offer support and training to adequately run the engagements.

12. Use accessible venues that are safe, comfortable, accessible and local if possible.

13. Consider the time and day you run your focus groups and workshops. Daytime activities may be more suitable for people who are retired or using public transport. Others may prefer after work or weekends, due to work and caring commitments.

14. As most people are coming along voluntarily in their own time, consider offering tea and coffee and catering especially over a meal time.

5. Communication Process

It has never been more important for Councils to communicate effectively with residents, media, stakeholders and employees.

Whether it's to encourage greater self-service or to promote understanding of local priorities, effective communication has the power to engage communities, challenge misconception and help us achieve our objectives.

Implementing some of these best practices will help to connect and build a strong dialogue with our older residents contributing to the most successful business outcomes.

5.1 Top tips for communicating with older people

1. **Create user friendly formats**
   While many people prefer visually orientated content, others may prefer audio or easy to read text with large print. Having a variety of delivery formats allows you to reach a broader audience.

2. **Open communication**
   Make sure all information is clear and concise and communication is open and in plain respectful language.

3. **Use a variety of communication channels**
   Such as local radio, newspapers, printed newspapers, word of mouth, and information on local notice boards and businesses. As well as email, electronic newsletters, easy to navigate interactive websites and social media.

4. **Minimize visual and auditory distractions**
   Where possible reduce the amount of visual and auditory distractions such as other people and noisy backgrounds. Face the person and give them your undivided attention.

5. **Write things down**
   As we age our hearing and memory starts to decline. Having information written down on a notepad or email is a great way to give them the help they need.

6. **Be respectful**
   Treat people how you would like to be treated. If it's taking longer to reach a solution, or someone is not understanding what you are trying to explain, don't let frustration show in your voice or speak to them like they are stupid. Instead continue to work with them in a non-condescending tone or change the way you are delivering the information.

7. **Be patient.**
   Seniors often take longer to understand requests, make decisions and respond. Instead of getting frustrated keep calm, go slower, listen carefully, and make sure you get everything right before continuing.

8. **Listen.**
   Take the time to speak with the person. Avoid cutting off their stories. They'll have a much more pleasant experience and you'll resolve the problem more fully.

9. **Accept difference of opinions**
   Respect others' opinions the same way you would like yours to be, and don't disregard those who disagree with you. Listen to all sides, and try to compromise when a decision must be made.

10. **Allow questions**
    If communicating face-to-face allow ample opportunity for people to ask questions. If communicating online provide a contact number for people to ring to find out more information.

5.2 Council Specific Communication Channels

Council uses a number of channels to communicate with residents and visitors including:
- Council website – www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au
- Latest News on the Council website
- Council coordinated newsletters such as the online Community Conversations Newsletter and printed Urana District Newsletter (monthly).
- Tourism website – www.northofthemurray.com.au
- Federation Council's Tourism Industry newsletter distributed to businesses located in Corowa, Howlong, Rutherglen, Albury, Wodonga, Mulwala and Wahgunyah.
- Inclusion in community newsletters such as the Howlong Grapevine.
- Federation Council Snippets in the Corowa Free Press and the Yarrawonga Chronicle (weekly)
- Social media postings on Council's Federation Council Facebook page, I am Federation youth focused Facebook page, or Council's tourism destination website, Facebook and Instagram page, North of the Murray.
- Community noticeboards
- Media packs and media releases to local and regional newspapers and news outlets.
- Direct emails or e-flyers to specific databases, community service providers, sporting clubs and community groups.
- Phone calls
- Face to face meetings / conversations
- Mail out to households.
- Direct mail / letters
- Posters and flyers printed and online.
- Interagency contacts
- Council committees and ambassadors
- Stakeholder groups or networks
- State Government and other government organisations
- Factsheets, and guidelines
- Strategies, plans and policies.

6. Where do older people in the Federation Council area find out information?

Communication Type	Mulwala	Corowa	Howlong	Oaklands	Urana
Posters	Windows at Mulwala Civic Centre, • Mulwala Bakery and Butcher • Post Office • Mulwala Library • Mulwala Pharmacy • Mulwala FoodWorks supermarket • Notice board at Savernake Hall • Various local businesses • Golf club?	Notice Boards • IGA • Memorial Plaza • Library • Intereach • Post office • Various shops in main street • Health Service and GP Clinics • Amaranth • Karinya	Notice boards • IGA • Library/Resource Centre • News agency • Hardware store • Op shop • Health Service	Notice Boards • General Store/Post office • CWA • Men's Shed • Mobile Library • Number 16 2nd hand store Milthorpe St • Billabong Ag • Oaklands Cafe	Notice boards • Mac Knight Park • Post office • Billabong Agricultural • Grocery Shop • Café • Newsagent • Mobile Library • GP Clinic • Health Service/ Columbo lodge
Fliers / brochures	• All of the above and emailed to Community Groups. • Mulwala Lifestyle Village • Clubs	• Civic Café • Green Bean Café • Amber Rose Cafe • GP Clinic • Community Garden • Men's Shed • Amaranth • Intereach • Health Service	• Bakery • ½ Acre Café • Library/Resource Centre Letter box drop	• General Store/Post office • Mobile library • Men's Shed • PO Boxes • GP Clinic	• Post Office • Council Office • Billabong Agricultural • Café • Pharmacy • GP Clinic • Health Service/Columbo lodge

		5 Aged Care Services – • Karinya • St Andrews • Hospital • St Johns Close • St Mary's Court			• Arts and Historical Society • Court House Museum • Stepping out leader • Bowls Club
Radio	• ABC Goulburn Murray • ABC Riverina • 2AY, 3SR, EdgeFM • 3NE • 104 The Border	• ABC Goulbourn Murray • ABC Riverina • 2AY • 3NE • OAK FM	• 2 REM • ABC Goulburn Murray	• ABC Riverina • ABC Wagga Wagga	• ABC Riverina • Triple M The Border • Country Radio 104.5 •
TV	• Prime • WIN • ABC • SBS	• Prime 7 • WIN	• Prime 7 • WIN	• Primer 7 • Nine • Channel 24 ABC	• Prime7 • Nine • ABC
Newspapers	• Yarrawonga Chronical • Herald Sun	• Corowa Free Press • Border Mail	• Border Mail	• Corowa Free Press • Border Mail	• Corowa Free Press (inc. snippets) • Border Mail
Newsletters	• Council • Across the Arts • Tourist Centre • Yarrawonga and Mulwala Schools • Rotary	• Council • Men's Shed • Community Garden	• Council Quarterly newsletter • Grapevine • Probus • Golf Club • Primary School	• Council • Oaklands Central School • CWA	• Councils quarterly newsletter • Urana newsletter • Urana Public School • St Frances Xavier Primary School
Social Media	• Yarrawonga Health • Council Facebook • Across the Arts	Facebook Acc Council What's on in Corowa Daysdale Community Group	Facebook Acc • Council • What's On in Howlong • The Howlong Community Page	Facebook • Council • Oaklands RSL and Bowling Club • General Store	Facebook • Council I'm from Urana Urana District Communities Rand Community Hub

					• Central School	
Websites	• Council • Yarrawonga Health	• Council website	• Council website	• Council website	• Council website

7. Language

Everybody deserves to be addressed and regarded as a valued member of society. The language we use to communicate with older people can not only reduce misunderstanding, conflicts and stress, it is also important in ensuring older people feel valued and included.

To communicate effectively, it is not enough to have well organized ideas expressed in complete and coherent sentences and paragraphs. One must also think about the style, tone and clarity of his/her writing, and adapt these elements to the reading audience.

7.1 Top 10 Effective Use of Language Tips

1. Use plain English, simple words and phrases.

2. Avoid using Government or business jargon. Jargon is unnecessarily complicated language used to impress, rather than to inform, your audience.

3. Instead use familiar words and a conversational, personal tone.

4. Use adjectives that are accurate and avoid patronizing or demeaning words such as "adorable," "eccentric," "feeble," "senile" and "grandmotherly."

5. Use constructive language.

6. Highlight main ideas and important information with headings, point form and bold face type.

7. Proceed logically, with the most important ideas first, with good links from one paragraph to the next.

8. Use short paragraphs.

9. Use examples to illustrate ideas or concepts.

10. Present ideas with photographs or diagrams if it makes it easier to understand.

8. Print Design

Senior-friendly design choices will make your typeset copy lead to communication, not frustration. Follow these guidelines to help keep reading a pleasure for your senior audience, and to enhance their understanding and absorption of your message as well.

Type size
- Use 12-point with plenty of leading, or line height. 13-14 point is even better.
- Character width to height ratio between 3:5 and 1:1
- Character stroke width to height ratio between 1:5 and 1:10.

Typestyle
- Choose a plain, clear font such as sans serif fonts. Examples of sans serif fonts are Arial, Calibri, or Verdana.
- While you can use a different font for headings and body content, don't use more than 3 fonts on a page.
- Set text flush left and ragged right.
- Avoid using all italics, all capital letters or underlined type.
- Avoid using wavy lines or dots as they tend to "swim" on the page.

Text Length and Use
- Avoid long blocks of text by breaking copy into chunks wherever possible.
- Consider using subheads, bulleted lists and boxes to organize content.
- Avoid the excessive use of CAPITALS. It is difficult to read and infers you are shouting at the reader.

Images and Illustrations
- Use high definition photographs (300 dpi) or illustrations.
- Explain what is in the image in text underneath or as close by as possible.
- Text overlaid on imagery is tricky because some or all of the image may not have sufficient contrast in relation to the text. Avoid printing text over the top of photographs or graphics.
- Images and photos should reflect the diversity of older people, not stereotypes. Not all people use wheelie walkers, just like not all people with disability use a wheelchair.

9. Colours

When writing documents it is important to be careful with your use of colour.

- Where possible use dark fonts against light backgrounds.
- All letters, numbers and/or symbols shall contrast with their background, either light characters on a dark background or dark characters on a light background. Dark print on a light background is the easiest to read.
- If you want to put text on a coloured background, make sure there's plenty of contrast. 70% contrast recommended.

Good Contrast   **Not enough contrast**   **Jarring**

- If using colours next to each other, many people can't see different hues or don't see the differences in simular colours (like blue and green).
- On websites and online information high contrast colours, such as basic black type against a white background, increase readability. You should also avoid layering various shades of the same colour (e.g. dark grey on light grey) and use different colours to add navigation.
- Avoid yellow, blue and green in close proximity and avoid patterned backgrounds.
- Avoid using colour as the only indicator of important information. Instead if you want to use colour also use another text indicator like an asterisk to highlight

As a general rule, avoid the following colour combinations

Green, black, yellow or purple text on green background
Light colours such as yellow, orange or pink on white background
Rainbow or neon colours
Bright blue background
Red, blue, or purple on black background
Yellow, blue, and magenta on red or orange background
Grey text on blue background
Pale yellow background
Avoid reverse lettering such as white text on pink or orange background
Same coloured gradient as text
Coloured textured background with coloured text

Multiple websites can be found to help test for colour contrast concerns by Googling "colour contrast checkers".

As an alternative to web-based tools, you could print a sample of the document using black and white or grayscale settings, then give it to an older person to see if the content can be read.

Example of a poor senior friendly design

POOR AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION

This is an example of a poor senior-friendly design.

CONSIDER COLOUR

."Reversed' type (light-colored text on a dark background) is more difficult for everyone to read.

FONT

Script and decorative typefaces tend to become harder to read at smaller sizes and when used for long blocks of text.

SMALL TEXT

What size you set your text to could make a readable font hard to make out.

SUITABLE AGE-FRIENDLY

COMMUNICTAION

Serifs

Sans-serif fonts are easier to read

Size

What size you set your text to could make a readable font hard to make out

Spacing

If the spacing is too tight, the characters become difficult to read. If it's too spread out, it can be hard to put the right letters together to form words.

10. Online Communication

As the internet has become an integral part of modern life the stereotype that older people tend to avoid using the web has become less and less relevant. Taking the time to update your website to welcome senior users can guarantee that your first impression on your client is a positive one.

1. **Increase the font size**
   Sites targeted at seniors should use at least a 12-point font as the default and should provide the option of enlarging text for increased readability.

2. **Avoid jargon and technological terms**
   Many seniors are unfamiliar with technical jargon. It's best to avoid it or say it in a clearer way (e.g. 'text-version' rather than 'HTML-version').

3. **Break down information**
   Large bodies of text can be intimidating and difficult to navigate. Break text down into shorter sections and use headings and subheadings to make it easy to find desired content.

4. **Give clear instructions and number steps**
   If your site includes instructions with more than one step, turn those steps into a numbered list. Try to keep the message as short and clear as possible.

5. **Simply form filling**
   Use large text fields, clear labelling and give specific instructions on what information is required.

6. **Make error messages clear**
   If your site uses forms, make sure that the error messages clearly describe what needs to be changed from the user's entry. Rather than simply stating that an error has been made or an entry is invalid, make sure the message is obvious and clearly spells out exactly what the problem is and how to fix it.

7. **Easy click hypertext links and single clicks**
   Use large text for hypertext links so that they can easily be seen and clicked. Make sure there is plenty of white space between the links and avoid clustering them too tightly. Make sure you have single-click links. Making sure that links are easy to navigate is basic to keeping seniors on your site.

8. **Minimize scrolling**
   Large amounts of scrolling can frustrate any user, but it can be **particularly** frustrating to seniors, who often review nearly every piece of content on a web page before choosing their next step. Web pages should also fit within the confines of the user's screen to avoid any kind of horizontal scrolling.

9. **Provide a text to speech function**
   Speech functions allow seniors with difficulty reading to still have access to your site. It's also a relief for those who easily tire from reading off a screen.

10. **Avoid major navigation changes**
    Site redesigns or rebranding are necessary to improve site usability and make sure your business stays up-to-date. Many seniors write down personal instructions on how to use a given website. Any changes made to those websites may then cause confusion in future visits.

11. Packaging and Labelling

If you need a magnifying glass to be able to read the labels on your products then you need to consider read these tips on packaging and labelling for seniors.

If a senior can't read a label they generally won't buy it.

11.1   Top 10 tips of packaging and labelling

1. **Increase the packaging**
   Use a package that is larger than is required for the product to provide more space for valuable information to be included.

2. **Multi-panel labels**
   Apply a multi-panel label and large text.

3. **Choose your colours carefully.**
   You want the package to be eye catching but not loud or gaudy. The colours should complement and enhance the product, not fight or contrast with it

4. **Font size and contrast**
   At least 12-point type with sharp contrast between background and foreground.

5. **Clear information**
   Include clear information on the product and illustrations where applicable.

6. **Use non-technical language**
   The labels, instructions and warnings should be written in non-technical language.

7. **Product reference and website directions**
   Have product inserts and references to website directions as well so people can look up online.

8. **Easy open packaging**
   Make sure the packaging easy to open, not demanding extra strength or dexterity.

9. **Policy for design and packaging**
   Consider developing a clear policy of designing and using packaging that takes into account the needs and characteristics of older people.

10. **Do a test run**
    Test the labelling and instructions with senior consumables to see if they can read and understand.

12. Ageism, Assumptions and Stereotypes

Aged based stereotypes or ageist attitudes can play a powerful role in shaping how we think about and interact with individuals, as well as how individuals within the stereotyped group see themselves.

Like any form of bias, ageism has led many of us to make false assumptions about seniors.

12.1   Stereotypes and Assumptions

The next time you think "Look at that cute little granny. I just want to eat her up!" change the way you think about growing old and about seniors by reading through these myths and stereotypes.

1. **OMG! 65 is so old.**
   You may be eligible for the Age Pension at 66, but ageing and old cannot be simply defined by numeric age. Rather they are underpinned by deeper perceptions of self and associations with health, wellbeing, life-balance and social interaction.

2. **You can't teach an old dog new tricks.**
   Older people are not only able to adapt to new situations, they are actually experts at adapting. By the time they have become a senior, they have had to adapt to countless changes and transitions in life.

3. **Getting old is depressing and then you die.**
   Contrary to the myth that aging is depressing, many studies find that seniors are among the happiest age group.

4. **Getting old is lonely and isolated.**
   Though social isolation can be a problem for seniors, especially to those who have limited mobility, most seniors are able to stay socially engaged. Activities with family and friends, volunteering, joining sports and community groups also help seniors stay active and happy.

5. **Old people are lazy they just watch TV all day, knit and play bingo.**
   Though retired people may have left the workforce, they are hardly unproductive. They contribute countless hours to activities like helping with child-rearing and volunteering, which makes an enormous impact on society.

6. **Old people can't make decisions about important things, so we need to do it for them.**
   Older people have developed cognitive skills based on knowledge drawn from a lifetime of experience and education, to enable them to make sound decisions. Being left out of important, personal decisions is likely to cause feelings of alienation, regardless of one's age.

7. **Old people are bumbling, cranky old farts.**
   The ageing population is diverse. You do have frail, doddery old people – there's no escaping that fact. There are also some that are active and alert and that live independently until the age of 103.

8. **Old people can't use technology.**
   In 2019, National Seniors Australia conducted research that indicated that 70 % of seniors use an internet search engine every day, 40 % use Facebook daily and more than half of those aged over 80 years regularly use internet banking.[1]

   Let's not forget, Tim Berners-Lee, Computer Scientist best known as the inventor of the World Wide Web is now considered a senior!

9. **You need to talk loud and slow as old people are deaf and going senile.**
   Age related hearing loss (or presbycusis) is a common problem with ageing. But there is no need to talk extra loud or slow. Simply face the person, speak one at a time, and speak clearly, at a reasonable speed and normal tone.

10. **The elderly are too sensitive. They complain about everything.**
    Some people are chronic complainers. Perhaps they have always been negative and prone to complaining. Maybe they are in pain which makes them irritable or taking medication that affects their mood or behaviour. They could be bored, or lacking a sense of purpose since retiring.
    Whatever the reason, validate their feelings, express empathy (which must sound sincere or it will not do the trick), and then redirect the complainer to the task at hand.

11. **Old age pensioners expect to get everything for free.**
    You try living of $430.30 a week or $22,375 a year.

12. **Conversations with older people take ages as they want to tell you about their cat or their garden or how back in my day! I don't have time for this.**
    Avoid hurrying older people. Time spent discussing concerns will allow you to gather important information and may lead to improved cooperation.
    Feeling rushed leads people to believe they are not being heard or understood.

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[1] National Seniors Australia, 2019 'Older Australian Connect with Technology', www. nationalseniors.com.au/news/latest/older-australians-connect-with-technology

12.2   Top Tips for Avoiding Ageism, Assumptions and Stereotypes

1. **Check your own bias!**
   Be aware of your own stereotypes and ageist attitudes.

2. **Don't make judgements**
   Don't just assume that because someone is older or has a disability they are not able to contribute and add value.

3. **Don't use labels**
   Avoid labels such as "elderly", "old people", and "geriatrics" can be seen as offensive. Use older adults, older people or seniors or simply treat people as individuals.

4. **Ask instead of assuming**
   Don't make assumptions about marital status, sexuality and the existence of children.

5. **Avoid using stereotypical images**
   Make sure that the images you use in your communication material do not reinforce ageist stereotypes by including a wide mix of people in different environments.

6. **Respect multiple perspectives**
   Create an environment where people are free to talk and their opinion is respected and listened to.

7. **Be culturally aware**
   Engage in ways that are culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of older people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

8. **Presume unable to adapt or change**
   Older people are not only able to adapt to new situations, they are actually experts at adapting. By the time one has become a senior, they have had to adapt to innumerable changes and transitions in life. Seniors may be slower to change their opinions, but adaptability, is generally retained as we grow old.

9. **Make reasonable adjustments**
   Where possible make changes so that all people can be engaged and involved. For example, allow extra time or a printable copy of your survey.

10. **Encourage others to reject age stereotypes.**
    Shun ageing, racism and sexism in conversations, text, illustrations and photographs.

13. References

Office for the Ageing (OFTA) and Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC)- Government of South Australia,
Better Together – A practical guide to effective communication with older people
https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

Department of Premier and Cabinet-Tasmanian Government,
Older People –A Guide to Engagement
http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au