



**Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG)  
50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference “Ageing - the Golden Opportunity”  
Communique:  
Safe and inclusive aged care for older LGBTI people**

**1 December 2017**

AAG’s 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference “Ageing – the Golden Opportunity” was held in Perth from the 8-10 November. The conference attracted more than 450 delegates.

AAG is a membership organisation whose purpose is to improve the experience of ageing through connecting research, policy and practice. Since 1964, AAG has been Australia’s peak body linking professionals working across the fields of ageing. The multidisciplinary membership includes researchers, aged care leaders, geriatricians, nurses, allied health professionals, policy makers, advocates for older people and others with expertise in ageing.

Ageing issues for Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people have been a focus for AAG for the past few years. Among other things, AAG has delivered the following activities:

- Workshop (2013) – There’s No Need to Straighten Up: LGBTI Ageing & Aged Care in Australia
- Webinar (2014) – Understanding the Needs of Older LGBTI People
- Workshop (2014) – Rainbow Visions LGBTI Ageing Research Policy & Practice
- Develop and produce the LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Special Issue (2015) of the *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, a peer reviewed journal
- Conference presentation (2015) – Doing it Better: Strategies Targeting Older LGBTI Mental Health
- Masterclass (Nov 2016) – Older LGBTI Australia.

This year, AAG’s Annual Conference opening keynote speech was provided by the Hon Ken Wyatt AM, Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Indigenous Health. The Minister stressed the Government’s awareness of the diverse needs of older people across Australia. The Government’s Final Report on the LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy was released in late November 2017, an Aged Care Diversity Framework will be released in December 2017, and an Action Plan for older LGBTI people will follow in mid-2018. AAG was invited to participate in the Minister’s think tank session, held in Perth during the conference, to discuss aged care for older LGBTI people.

**June Lowe**, Chair of GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc, facilitated the [AAG pre-conference workshop](#) “LGBTI Elders: In their own words” hosted by [AAG’s LGBTI Special Interest Group](#). The workshop heard from a panel of five LGBTI Elders, speaking about their own life experiences and how these have shaped their hopes and fears about ageing and aged care. The statement by one Elder that “*I’d like some assurance that we’d be treated with dignity and respect by aged care providers*” was echoed by everyone on the panel. This was followed by small group discussion among the 30 workshop participants, based on a case study. The participants called for

education for aged care staff and other residents, and the development of good policies and procedures to create a safe and inclusive environment for older LGBTI people. The workshop also recommended resourcing and better links between aged care providers and LGBTI services to support older LGBTI people. While there were differing views about the desirability of LGBTI-specific aged care services, there was clear consensus about the need to include LGBTI Elders in the design of aged care services.

**Dr Sue Malta**, Social Connections and Relationships Stream Leader at the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI), presented the results of a study which highlighted the importance of providing a safe and inclusive aged care space for older LGBTI people and aged care workers who identify as LGBTI. Ongoing staff training and monitoring, awareness and sensitivity to LGBTI history, as well as strong, enforceable anti-discrimination policies/procedures, and employing staff who identify as LGBTI or are LGBTI-friendly were seen as imperatives; as was the need for consumer and staff input into management decisions. Active policies and practices to honour cultural diversity, in all its forms, were also seen as important.

**Robyn Burton**, Diversity Project Manager at ECH Inc, gave a poster presentation on a project to explore how a tailored service might enable positive ageing for LGBTI people who are accessing ageing and aged care services.

## Other highlights from the conference

AAG has released a series of communiques on key messages from the conference:

AAG released its first communique on the key messages from the conference on 21 November 2017. This communique, focussing on assuring equity of access and quality outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people, can be found here:

[AAG Conference Communique 1: Assuring Equity of Access and Quality Outcomes for Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People](#)

A second communique highlighted some of the key talks at AAG's 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, including: the presentations by the AAG 2017 Gary Andrews International Fellow Professor Sube Banerjee from the Centre for Dementia Studies at the University of Sussex on multimorbidity and dementia; the Presidential Symposium exploring AAG's 2017 Hot Topic "[The economic opportunities of an ageing population – how much do we value the golden goose?](#)"; the perspectives on ageing and aged care from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse perspective, and; the AAG Ageing Workforce Education Special Interest Group (AWESIG) inaugural symposium exploring evidence as to how to build health and aged care workforces. The communique can be found here:

[AAG Conference Communique 2: Highlights from the conference](#)

A third communique highlighted the pre-conference workshop on late life changes in housing: choices, enablers and barriers to ageing in place, the symposium on ageing well and the built environment, and other concurrent sessions exploring the latest evidence on creating environments to age well in. The communique can be found here:

[AAG Conference Communique 3: Latest evidence on creating environments to age well in](#)

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