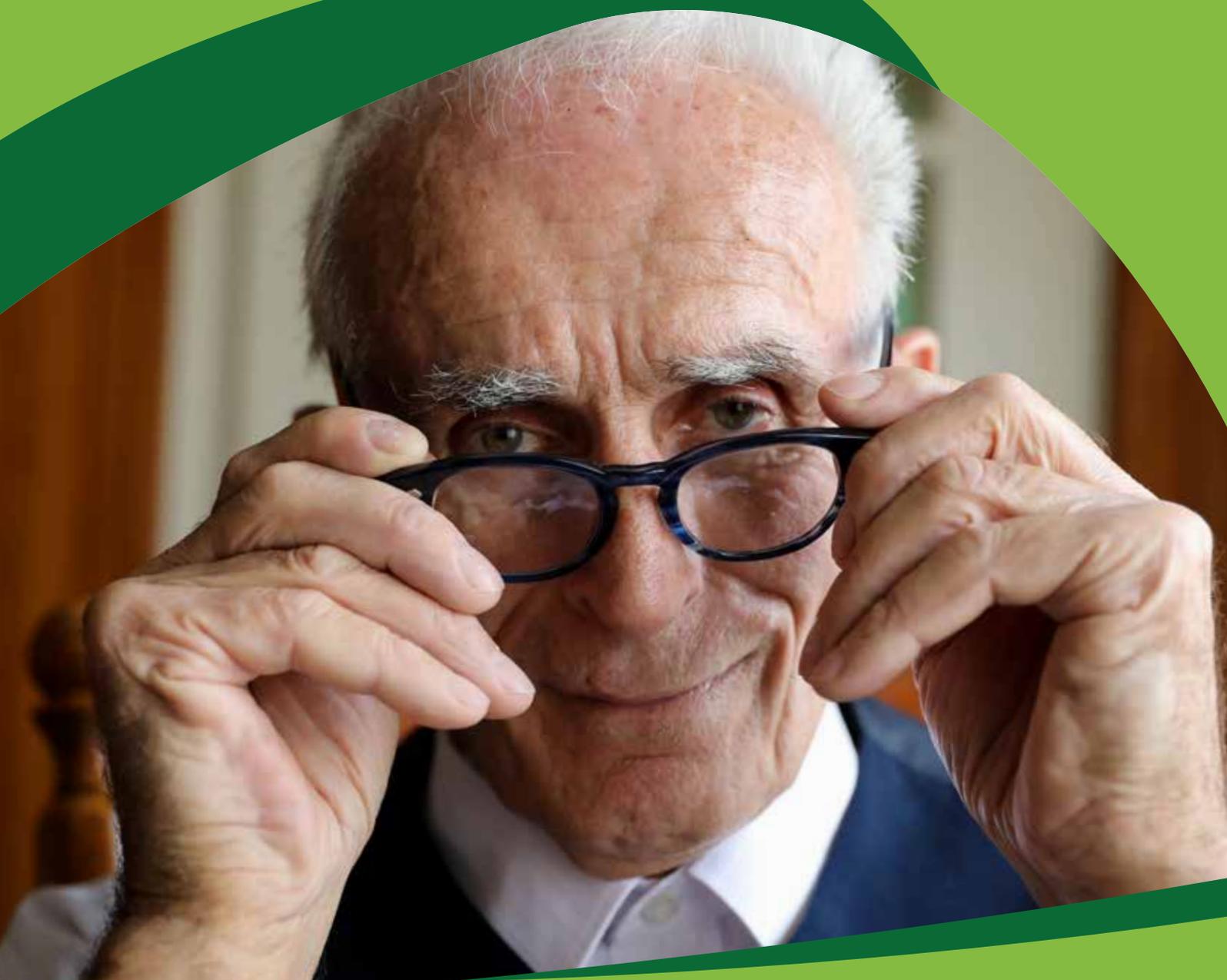


Reframing Ageing in Australia

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Executive Summary

This study involved 27 participants from four different locations across Australia (Sydney, Adelaide, Hobart and Rockhampton). During full-day workshops, participants were trained in framing, reframing, and engaging community in conversations about ageing and ageism. During the workshop, participants contributed to co-designing alternative frames of ageing. Participants were asked to attempt to raise awareness of ageism in their communities. Follow-up debrief sessions were conducted three months later to understand their experiences.

The five alternative frames that were identified by the groups were:

- **Look at people for who they are, not their age**
(Diversity and Human rights frame);
- **Empower yourself and others to be our true self at every age**
(Empowerment and support frame);
- **Older adults contribute to society** (Value frame);
- **We all engage in lifelong learning as teachers and learners**
(Education frame);
- **Ageism affects people at all ages; we are in it together**
(Intergenerational frame). Participants found the reframing process useful and considered it a proactive tool that helped them get people to see different perspectives.

Over the three months, many of the participants continued building awareness about ageism within self, others, and society. In addition, once this awareness was formed some participants acted on it and changed behaviours, such as self-talk or how they talked to others, calling people out for ageist comments, engaged in conversations about ageing and ageism, or directed their focus on more organisational change such as promoting a change in language used.

Not all people engaged in this process to the same degree. The participants recognized that making people aware of ageism and getting them to look at a different frame also took time. This is not unexpected, as building awareness seemed to be an ongoing journey for many participants as they described their process. Many of the participants who attended the debrief sessions and interviews formed or were in communities where they were able to interact regarding the ideas of ageing and reframing. This could have been the online Facebook group, or meeting with others from the workshop, and some took these ideas to organisations and workplaces or networked with others they met

who were also interested in the topic. Having others to discuss ideas seemed to be an important aspect of increasing understanding over the three months.

Participants used a wide range of strategies to tackle ageism. Being confrontational was considered ineffective but bringing people into a conversation and getting them to think about ageing from a different perspective (reframing) was beneficial. There was not one specific approach to having these conversations, but instead participants used a range of techniques such as humour, story, and facts. Along with this, they highlighted the importance of different audiences (e.g. different cultural and social groups) requiring different approaches. Language also played an important role, with some participants questioning words such as 'care', 'retirement', and 'old', and the connotations they bring with them. Due to the complexity of ageism, participants suggested tackling ageism using multiple approaches.

Participants found addressing ageism complicated, challenging, and time consuming. They were aware that the anti-ageism movement has just started, and concepts of ageing are ingrained in our society. This makes it challenging to discuss ageing with others since not everyone wants to talk about it, especially when it is seen as 'just something for older people' or something to fear. In addition, some participants felt that they might come across as the stereotypical complaining old person, or as an activist which they did not necessarily want to be.

Recommendations include:

- Teach people about the concept of framing and reframing, as well as the alternative frames.
- Teach and encourage different techniques (e.g. using narrative, facts, language) and apply these to varying contexts with diverse audiences.
- When forming a grassroots movement, create a community with multiple options for engagement (i.e. online, in person).
- Recognise and support people at different stages of awareness and action and set expectations.
- Training should include the different levels where ageism occurs (self, others, society), and skills involving non-confrontational conversations with diverse groups.

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Introduction

Ageism is one of the most pervasive and accepted forms of prejudice in societies throughout the world (WHO, 2015; Palmore, 2015). This prejudice not only occurs on an individual basis but is ingrained in our social interactions, cultural practices, and institutions (Nelson, 2005; Iverson et al., 2009). Ageist views and negative attitudes towards older adults affect our workplaces and healthcare systems where negative stereotyping can have a significant detrimental impact on older adults. Ageism incorporates three components: cognitive (i.e. stereotypical ideas), affective (i.e. prejudicial attitudes), and behavioural (i.e. discriminatory actions). For instance, the stereotype that older people are slow to learn can lead to feelings of prejudice against older workers, and discrimination against older people when hiring. The Australian Human Rights Commission (2018) reported that almost a third of employers said they were reluctant to hire once a job seeker was a certain age and of those, 68% indicated a reluctance to employ workers over age 50 years.

Attitudes towards ageing in Australia perpetuate negative stereotyping and affect people throughout the country (O'Loughlin & Kendig, 2018). Most ageism falls under the category of implicit ageism. Implicit ageism is the “thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward elderly people that exist and operate without conscious awareness or control, with the assumption that it forms the basis of most interactions with older individuals” (Levy, 2001, p. 578). Thus, to challenge this type of ageism it can be important building awareness of what ageism is and how it is deeply ingrained in our society (Levy, 2001). The EveryAGE Counts Campaign’s goal is to tackle ageism against older Australians. The Benevolent Society’s Drivers of Ageism Report (2017) and EveryAGE Counts Community Segmentation Report (2018) outline recommendations for reducing ageism, including building awareness around misconceptions and “targeting change in people’s personal beliefs and experiences, in order to achieve change in the policies and practices of government and businesses”(p.30).

One way to approach the issue is by raising awareness of ageism through showing how ageing is commonly framed and reframing this thinking about ageing and being older.

Framing

What is a frame?

Frames are the way that information is packaged, and the values, feelings and other messages that the packaging sends about the topic. For example, when newspapers frame the ageing population as a “silver tsunami” they send the message that the ageing population is a disaster to be feared. Framing has been defined from a range of disciplinary perspectives including anthropology (Bateson, 1972), sociology (Goffman, 1974; Benford & Snow, 2000), linguistics (Tennen, 1993), communication and media (Scheufele, 1999), and political science and policy (Entman, 1993). The definition and understanding of frames have evolved over time.

Gregory Bateson is attributed with introducing the idea of framing. In exploring ideas of play and fantasy, Bateson (1972) describes a frame as “a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages. (p191)” He suggests frames are a way for our minds to structure information and divide it up into sets of messages. These are compared to the analogy of a mathematical set with a frame being described as “a class or set of messages (or meaningful actions)” which are enclosed and brought together by an imaginary line. For example, if the issue of the increasing ageing population is often tied with messages that older adults are a burden or a “silver tsunami”. Bateson (1972) also used the more concrete analogy of a picture frame. The purpose of a picture frame is to draw attention to what is inside the frame, highlighting specific colours, and enhancing the picture’s mood – so the silver tsunami frame focuses on the economic and social costs of ageing amidst a tone of concern or fear. The frame also suggests that we focus on what is inside the frame (the negative consequences of ageing) and ignored what is outside it (e.g. positive contributions of older people). Thus, the frame draws the attention of the viewer to what to look at.

Goffman (1974) built upon the idea of frames in relation to social situations and ‘frames’ of understanding or “schemata of interpretation”. Goffman (1974) considered frames as culturally constructed ideas of reality that allow individuals to make sense of their lives and the world around

them. Thus, frame analysis is one way to analyse and interpret the social construction of reality. A person can examine the frames of a specific issue or topic, such as ageing, and see how people construct these.

The frame is not the content but is used to communicate additional information about the message and draw the audience’s attention to specific points. Frames are used to highlight (make salient) some parts of the information (Entman, 1993). What is excluded from a frame can be just as important as what is included. Robert Entman (1993) advanced the concept of framing in communication studies arguing that the essence of the framing processes makes something more salient and stand out (Entman, 1993). A frame is activated by a person’s previous frames of understanding. Frames activate specific schema that encourage audiences to think and act in a certain way (Entman, 2007; Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004). They also sit within a specific culture and that culture influences the way a frame is interpreted. Frames activate emotional responses (Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004; Lakoff, 2010). Frames can inform individual decisions on what to include in any given information set and what to ignore (Gilliam & Bales, 2001); thus, allowing for particular thoughts, and in time, certain behaviours to occur.

Metaphors can be used as frames to shape the way we perceive information and allow us to connect ideas to what we already know and make sense of the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1979). These metaphors bring with them a set of information that adds to the interpretation of the message. A prominent metaphor in relation to ageing is that age is an enemy. This can be seen in commercials on anti-ageing creams or age defying skin care as well as media messages about fighting ageing through exercise and lifestyle.

Why is framing important?

Persuading others to adopt new ideas and reject old ingrained attitudes can be challenging. Framing draws our attention to specific details and is important in shaping the way an issue (such as ageing) is perceived and responded to. The way an issue is framed influences our beliefs and actions. A seminal study by Kahneman & Tversky (1984) showed that the same choice, framed differently, resulted in different decisions.

Politicians use frames to draw attention to an issue, but “also to frame the nature of the problem and what should be done” (Nisbet & Newman, 2015). When people are exposed to a specific frame repeatedly, they can change their opinion on an issue (Dardis et al., 2008). Furthermore, being able to oppose the other political party’s framing with counterframes is important (Chong & Druckman, 2013). Thus, understanding the frames that contain opposing messages are useful and finding ways to counter these can be important for challenging viewpoints.

Framing and social movements

Framing is important for creating and maintaining social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000). Framing has been used to understand social movements from feminism (Ferree, 2009) to climate justice (Taylor, 2000). The way in which groups frame their purpose and focus is important to a movement’s development and success. Benford and Snow (2000) describe the main frames within a movement as collective action frames. These collective action frames create a common discourse and call to action. The frames are used to motivate and mobilise while gathering new supporters. In addition, master frames, those that are highly resonant and shared, may allow for cross-movement networking (Carroll & Ratner, 1996). For example, frames of injustice, reframes in relation to rights have been used in numerous social movements (Snow and Benford, 1992) and may be co-opted in relation to ageism.

Convincing those who do not hold a belief (e.g. that ageism exists) requires a frame that the person agrees with even if they don’t automatically agree with the issue. Dardis et al. (2008) examined media frames around the death penalty noting that over time the frame moved from a morality frame (it is wrong to kill) to an innocence frame (what if the person is innocent?) that focused on flaws of the justice system. Thus, it went from a conflict-reinforcing frame to conflict-displacing frame. A conflict-reinforcing frame causes a high level of cognitive dissonance in the person since to accept the frame opponents need to admit they were wrong (Dardis et al., 2008). Whereas, a conflict-displacing (i.e. introducing a new dimension to the issue) will allow people to hold two opinions on an issue at the same time. In the case of the death penalty, “It does not ask them to re-evaluate

their own core moral or religious background and values; rather, it simply asks people to focus on the question of whether a human-designed institution processing thousands of cases can be expected to do so perfectly, without a single error” (Dardis et al., 2008, p.134) found that people were much more likely to accept the conflict displacing premise, and thus, be swayed to reconsider whether there should be the death penalty.

For frames to be effective, they need to tap into ideals, values, and beliefs of a society (Gamson, 1989), for example, the framing of arguments that women should be jurors by the women’s movement in the early part of the 20th century (McCammon et al., 2007). One of the opposing frames to women as jurors revolved around the argument that women were different from men (and inferior in the art of politics); however, the women in the movement used this to argue that women are different, so who better to understand the motives of women. The movement tapped into the values relating to gender differences of the time and used them to their advantage.

Reframing ageing

By creating new frames, we develop and test ways of thinking, talking about and representing ageing which resonates with others in society. Change across a population occurs slowly, with innovators and early adopters acting as champions and examples for the early majority, followed by the late majority, followed by the laggards. To engage later adopters, new frames need to be shown to have an advantage, be compatible with current views, be easy to use, and have an observable effect (Rogers, 2010).

Within society, ageing is framed in ways that send specific messages about what age is and how older adults are valued. In addition, how an individual frames ageing can influence their self-perceptions of ageing which can lead to positive or negative health and well-being outcomes (Levy, 2009; Hausknecht et al., 2019). Ageing is often framed within a biomedical model of health. A biomedical narrative frames ageing as a decline or reduction in physical and cognitive abilities (Vincent, 2006). The main approach to ageing is to stop or slow the ageing process. Thus, ageing is framed as something undesirable, to be avoided, and to fight as can be depicted in the anti-ageing movement (Vincent, 2006). Such comments as “you look good

for your age,” suggests that you have successfully fought off age. This also implies that if you have not successfully fought ageing then you are somehow inadequate and unvalued.

In the United States of America, a group of eight national ageing organisations and stakeholders collaborated with the Frameworks Institute to reframe ageing in America (Frameworks Institute, 2018). The collaborative argued that for the ageing field to advance, there needs to be “a set of core ideas that create the shifts in public understanding essential to building the political will to create a more age-integrated society”.

The Frameworks Institute (2018) developed frame elements (themes) that were tested and were effective in communicating the priorities outlined. These are:

- 1 Use the value of ingenuity to gain support for changes that drive better outcomes in aging. (Note: This is related to the American value of innovation).
- 2 Position an ageing society as an untapped resource by comparing ageing to forward momentum. This relates to the metaphor of building momentum which changes the metaphor of “battling or fighting” age to one where it is of positive growth.
- 3 Use a Justice value to frame communication about challenges or problems related to ageing.

This call to action to reframe ageing in the USA has been an important move forward in the discourse around ageing. However, this work has been directed at American values and designed with these in mind.

Objectives and Methods

Objectives

The objectives of the project were to:

- 1 Identify and co-design alternative frames of ageing with interested community members.
- 2 Understand participants' experiences of addressing ageism in their communities including the reframes they used, skills, techniques, and challenges.

Methods

This is a mixed methods participatory action research study that involved 27 participants from four different locations across Australia (Sydney, Adelaide, Hobart, Rockhampton). Participants were trained in full day workshops during which they contributed to co-designing alternative frames for ageing, and were trained in framing, reframing, and engaging communities in conversations about ageing and ageism. Participants were asked to attempt to raise awareness of ageism in their communities. Participants were invited to join a closed Facebook group where they could share ideas about ageism, reframing, and how to address it. A debrief session that consisted of follow-up focus groups and interviews was conducted 3 months later.

Participant recruitment

The Benevolent Society engaged their partners on the EveryAGE Counts campaign to recruit participants. Partner organisations include advocacy groups such as National Seniors Australia, the COTA network, and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia. Participants were primarily signed up paid members of and involved within each organisation's branch structures, those who are associated through roles on advisory groups, or those who subscribe to their publications (usually current and lapsed members). There were no inclusion criteria; however, people self-identified as having an interest in ageism.

Intervention methods

Design process

The design of the workshop was a collaborative process that underwent multiple iterations. The initial design took place as a half-day session between the Reframing Ageing Project and Campaign Director, Older Australians with The Benevolent Society. A pilot was held at the University of Sydney where the initial design was tested and adjusted. After each session of the workshop, the two Benevolent Society members and the University of Sydney members provided feedback for adjusting the next iteration.

Workshop

The workshops ran in four locations - Rockhampton, Hobart, Adelaide and Sydney in August and September 2019. The workshops aimed to provide participants with knowledge about ageism, framing and reframing, and ways to address these issues within their community. Thus, the following objectives were articulated.

By the end of the workshop participants would:

- Gain a better understanding and be able to identify explicit and implicit ageism within society, including how ageism occurs across the

life course, contributes to perceptions of ageing, and is pervasive.

- Identify and analyse frames, the messages they send, the underlying values present, and the possible impact of such messaging.
- Develop skills to address ageism.
- Create new alternative frames of ageing that can be tested within the community.
- Develop individual goals for reframing ageing and engaging community.
- Develop a community network through the workshop to support each other with reframing ageing within their communities.

Online community

A closed Facebook group was created so that participants could continue discussing and exploring the ideas introduced in the workshop. The participants were sent an email invitation to the Facebook group.

Data collection

Pre-workshop questionnaire

Pre-workshop questionnaires were sent out to participants. These collected information about participants such as age, gender, and how they heard about the workshop. The questionnaire also included the Duke Social Support Index subscale on social interaction (4 questions). This aimed to find out more about participants' social networks.

Workshop

Researchers took notes during the workshops. The final group discussion at the end of each section (see Workshop document) was recorded. Any drawings and other artifacts produced in the workshop were collected for analysis.

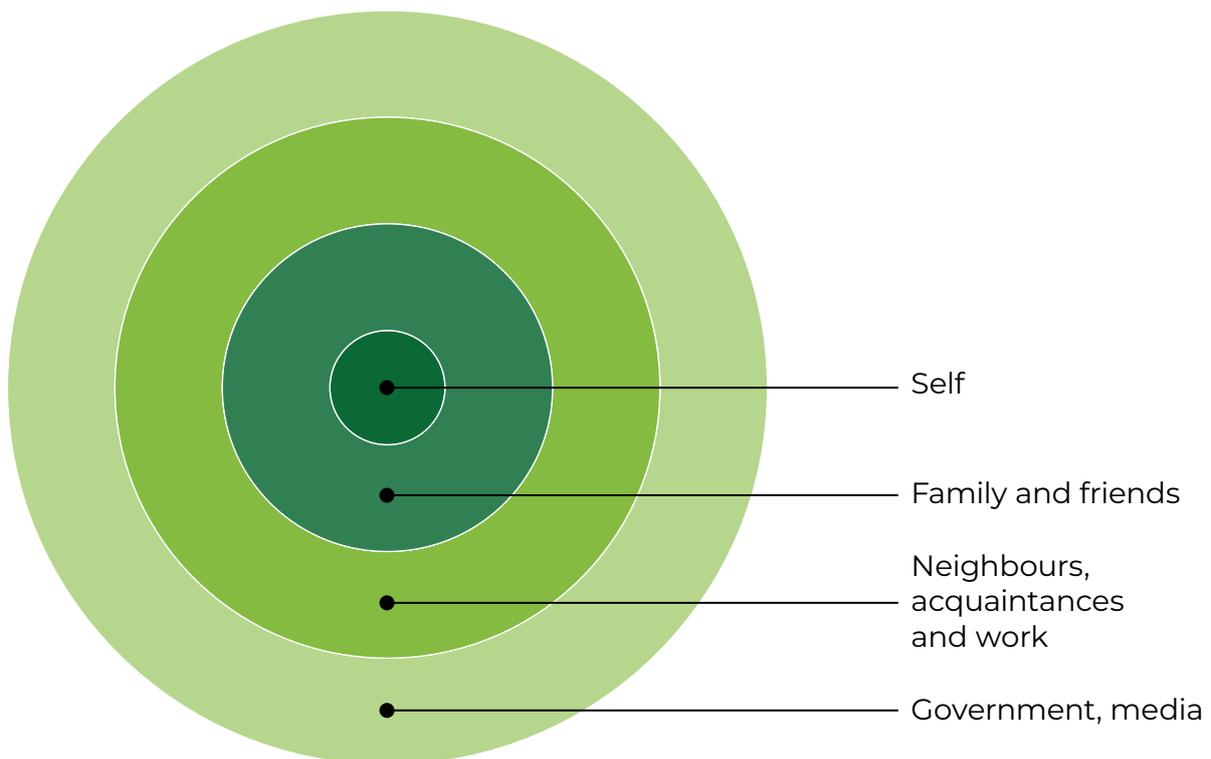
Facebook group

Data was collected from the online Facebook group. This was a combination of the number of people who interacted with the group, a collection of the posts posted, and the number of comments.

Debrief session (and interview)

A debrief session was held after three months to hear about the participants' experiences over that time. For those who showed interest but were not able to attend, they were given the option of a telephone interview. All of the sessions were recorded and then transcribed. During the debrief sessions, researchers also took notes, and collected any materials created from the activities. For example, participants were asked during the workshops and at the debriefs about how they engaged with the topic of ageism and reframing ageing. In the workshops a diagram was used to invoke ideas on different ways to engage with the topic. At the debrief sessions, they were given a similar image (Figure 1) and asked to draw on the image, comment, and describe whether they interacted with the topic at those levels.

Figure 1. Example of activity to explore focusing frames in different ways



Analysis

Objective 1: Co-constructing and identifying alternative frames

Four researchers went through the data from the workshop reframing activities and organised the ideas into themes. The themes were discussed in terms of what the reframe was, and the ageist frames they were challenging. At the end of debrief sessions and interviews, participants were read the five reframes and were asked for feedback to gain further clarity; this was used as a participant check for the reframes (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Objective 2: Addressing ageism in the community and understanding the experiences of participants

A thematic analysis of the debrief session and interviews was conducted using Braun and Clark's (2006) six phases: familiarisation of the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, map the themes, define and name the themes, write up the report. One interview transcript and one debrief session transcript containing rich and detailed data were selected to develop the initial codes. Two researchers (SH and JM) independently coded each transcript. Initial codes were compared with further additions and alterations made until the researchers reached agreement on the broad coding scheme. The Facebook group, and remaining debrief sessions and interviews were then coded for the reframe themes and further themes. NVivo 12 was used to assist in coding the interviews and debrief sessions. This analysis examined the process and experiences of participants as they engaged with reframing ageing in the community.

In addition, the reframes identified in the initial workshop were used as a codebook. One researcher went through the debrief sessions, interviews, and Facebook posts to identify whether these frames were used after the workshops. Further, a new frame (intergenerational frame) was also identified. Two of the frames were combined leaving five new frames.

Table 1 outlines the data sources used for analysis.

Table 1. Data sources related to objectives

Objective	Data sources
To identify and co-design alternative frames of ageing and being older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recordings from workshops on frames and reframes • Activities from workshop (photos from boards, paper with reframe list) • Notes from researchers (notes after each workshop on design and observations) • Facebook posts and interactions • Debrief session transcripts of participants experiences (examine for reframes) • Activities from debrief focus group session (levels of engagement, sticky notes on challenging and easiest aspects of challenging ageism)
To understand the experiences of reframing ageing in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief session transcripts of their experiences, challenges, conversations, and reframing • Facebook posts and interactions

Results

Participant information

A total of 27 participants attended the workshops at four locations (Sydney, Hobart, Adelaide, Rockhampton). The groups consisted of 5-8 participants. All participants were over 50 years of age. There were more females (n=22, 81.5 %), than males (n=5, 18.5 %). Participants heard about the workshops from a wide range of sources, and some more than one: The Benevolent Society (n = 7); EveryAGE Counts campaign (n = 5); The COTA Network (n = 5); National Seniors Australia (n = 4); The Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (n = 2); Other (n = 8).

A total of 21 participants attended a follow-up activity; either the focus group debrief session (n=14) or an interview (n=7).

Reframes

Five reframes were identified (Table 2). The alternative frames consist of aspects and ways that participants would like specific stereotypes and old frames to be reframed. These were developed in the workshops and were further developed by participants' use of them over the three months post workshop. However, the participants were not always aware they were using a specific frame. The new frames were not paired with a specific problematic frame. Problematic frames often trigger a reframe; however, sometimes a problematic frame would be challenged by more than one new frame.

Table 2. Alternative frames

Alternative frame	Examples of problematic frames that trigger the reframe	Potential use of alternative frames
Look at people for who they are, not their age (Diversity and Human rights frame)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people are a homogeneous group • Age is an acceptable reason to treat older people differently • Anti-ageing movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age is a number, not a disability • There is good and bad at all stages of life • Duty of care covers all ages • Accept individuals as people (not an age group)
Empower yourself and others to be our true self at every age (Empowerment and support frame)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older adults are helpless • Age is a barrier • You have to become a stereotype of ageing (it's inevitable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't build your own barriers • Ageing is not a barrier from what you love (You can adapt, use aids etc...) • Getting support is not a barrier to giving support
Older adults contribute to society (Value frame)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity only valuable as paid labour • Older adults are a burden on society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We rely on the contribution of older adults for a functioning society. • A person's value is more than their economic productivity
We all engage in lifelong learning as teachers and learners (Education frame)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't teach an old dog new tricks • Older adults can't learn technology • Older adults are a burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people are a source of wisdom and experience. Even if I don't know how I can learn, I have been learning new technology for six decades now
Ageism affects people at all ages; we are in it together (Intergenerational frame)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageism is only an issue for older adults • Intergenerational conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageism occurs at all ages • Focus on intergenerational exchange and keeping generations together, not separating older people

Look at people for who they are, not their age

Many of the groups discussed the importance of including age in anti-discrimination policies and changing societal acceptance to treat older people differently. Older people are not a homogeneous group; in that you cannot claim everyone at 60 has a certain characteristic (besides a chronological age). No one should be discriminated against because of age. This frame taps into a human rights and social justice frame. The Royal Commission into Quality and Safety in Aged Care in Australia was underway during this program, and it was noted that if the neglect described to the review had occurred in relation to people of a different age (i.e. children) there would be much more public outrage. Participants gave specific examples where abuse and negligence were accepted because the person was older. We need to see and treat people for who they are, not based on their age.

Some discussions revolved around the myths of equating age with disease, disability, or some form of disorder. It continued with discussions on how people judge others based on age stereotypes. This included how people were expected to dress, behave, be treated, and their expected poor health, and problems with memory and thinking. For example, the idea that people of a certain age should not dress or act a certain way, or that when you turn 60 suddenly you will end up with dementia. Within the activities the reframe was often written as, "Age is ..." (e.g. age is a natural process; age is not a measure of risk or ability).

Use over the three months:

Participants continued these discussions, commenting on how age was often associated with dementia or frailty and they had to educate people that these are not the same. As one participant stated, "Age is really only an identifier of how many years you've been on this earth, that's all."

Main Level: Individual, structural, societal

Problematic frames this challenges: Older adults as a homogeneous group; age as an acceptable reason for discrimination; age as a disability/disease; anti-ageing sentiment/movement

Empower yourself and others to choose what ageing means for them

This theme had two separate aspects. Participants were focused on people (including themselves) not becoming the stereotypes that society expects of them. This related strongly to benevolent ageism – i.e. well-meaning but treating older adults as needing help or being incompetent, resulting in people taking over and disempowering the older person. In participants' stories about their parents, they recognised that they could easily fall into wanting to do everything for their parents and treating them as helpless. They also recognised this bothered those they interacted with. Thus, they tried to move to reframing ageing from ideas of a person being helpless and needing care, to one of supporting people when they need it and allowing them to make their own decisions.

The second aspect was that as you age, you often needed to make an effort to not become the stereotypes of ageing. For instance, the stereotypes of the grumpy old man or woman, the activities that older people are expected to do and not do (e.g. knitting but not playing computer games, playing golf but not roller derby). This challenged the idea of becoming stereotypes, and encourages empowerment to be who you are whether that is a person who knits or a person who games.

Example use over the three months:

This frame was a very active approach to ageing. People used it by describing their own process of challenging stereotypes by being who they want to be and not worrying about being what is expected of their age. They also used this frame when interacting with others.

"What's in my head as well. I guess that's one thing, in terms of trying to support older people, is about how you don't make them feel like they're not coping, just because they're old."

Main level: Individual, interpersonal

Problematic frames this challenges: Older adults are helpless; ageing is a barrier

Older adults contribute to society

In many of the groups it was noted that older adults are often not recognised for their contributions to society such as volunteering, childcare, and other unpaid work and caring. These incorporated conversations about how the dominant discourses in society place a higher value on paid work rather than unpaid work; this bias has also been discussed in relation to gender equity. Many of the retired participants in our study were volunteers and worked many hours.

Example use over the three months:

During the end of the project there were the Australian bushfires, and people posted, and commented in the interviews and debrief session about the role of older adults as volunteer firefighters. One participant posted a story from the ABC about “Dad’s army” described as: “A group of volunteer rural firefighters all aged over 70 are challenging the retiree stereotype, donning firefighting gear and helping put out blazes.”

Main Level: structural, societal

Problematic frames this challenges: Productivity only valued as paid work; older adults as a burden on society

We all engage in lifelong learning as teachers and learners

This theme focused on lifelong learning and lifelong teaching. Participants discussed how the stereotype of older adults not being able to learn (i.e. can’t teach an old dog new tricks) is inaccurate and harmful. This stereotype was particularly strong in relation to learning new technology. As one participant pointed out, older adults have been learning new technology for three decades now. Along with the idea of lifelong learning was an acknowledgement of the role of older adults as sources of wisdom and lived experience.

Example use over the three months:

People discussed the role of older adults either as learners or teachers. They saw lifelong learning as important and noted it over the three months.

“Education doesn’t stop, working doesn’t stop with age. Exploring and expanding, and growing, doesn’t stop with older age. And fun doesn’t stop.”

This also included ideas of older adults as sources of wisdom.

“I love that whole idea of you’d have the living libraries. We can go and chat with a person about something they’ve experienced.... And we have an incredible example that I’m a member of the State Emergency Service, and our oldest member is in his late eighties, and he still comes in uniform. He cannot do a lot in the sense that he has heart problems, and he’s also on blood thinners... However, every time we have new recruits in, Timmy’s the one we get in to show them how to do their knots because he’s a fount of wisdom.”

Main level: Individual, interpersonal, societal

Problematic frames this challenges: Can’t teach an old dog new tricks; older adults can’t learn technology.

Ageism affects people of all ages; we are in it together

Participants noted that younger people also experienced ageism. Siloing by age was seen as a problem that could lead to intergenerational conflict and increased stereotypes. Some participants discussed a need for interactions between people at all ages and older people “not being put away like lepers”. Younger people experience ageism; if awareness is drawn to this it may inspire them to challenge age discrimination at all stages of life.

Example use over the three months:

Over the three months a TV documentary of older adults and preschool children interacting was popular and many participants pointed to this to explore the importance of connecting with different generations. The connecting of different generations was often discussed as a way to defeat ageism.

“One of the things I think is developing campaigns within our community where people of all ages are encouraged to share their stories, and people come together like and they talk about their strengths, and the sharing, and that reconnection, because there’s a real disconnect that I think [is the cause of] ageism in our community.”

There was also an understanding that we are all connected and that we all suffer from ageism.

“That’s one of my comments, not to the old; it’s the young who suffer as much. And I think if we could get to them it would influence their attitude right through their life.”

Main level: Interpersonal, structural, societal

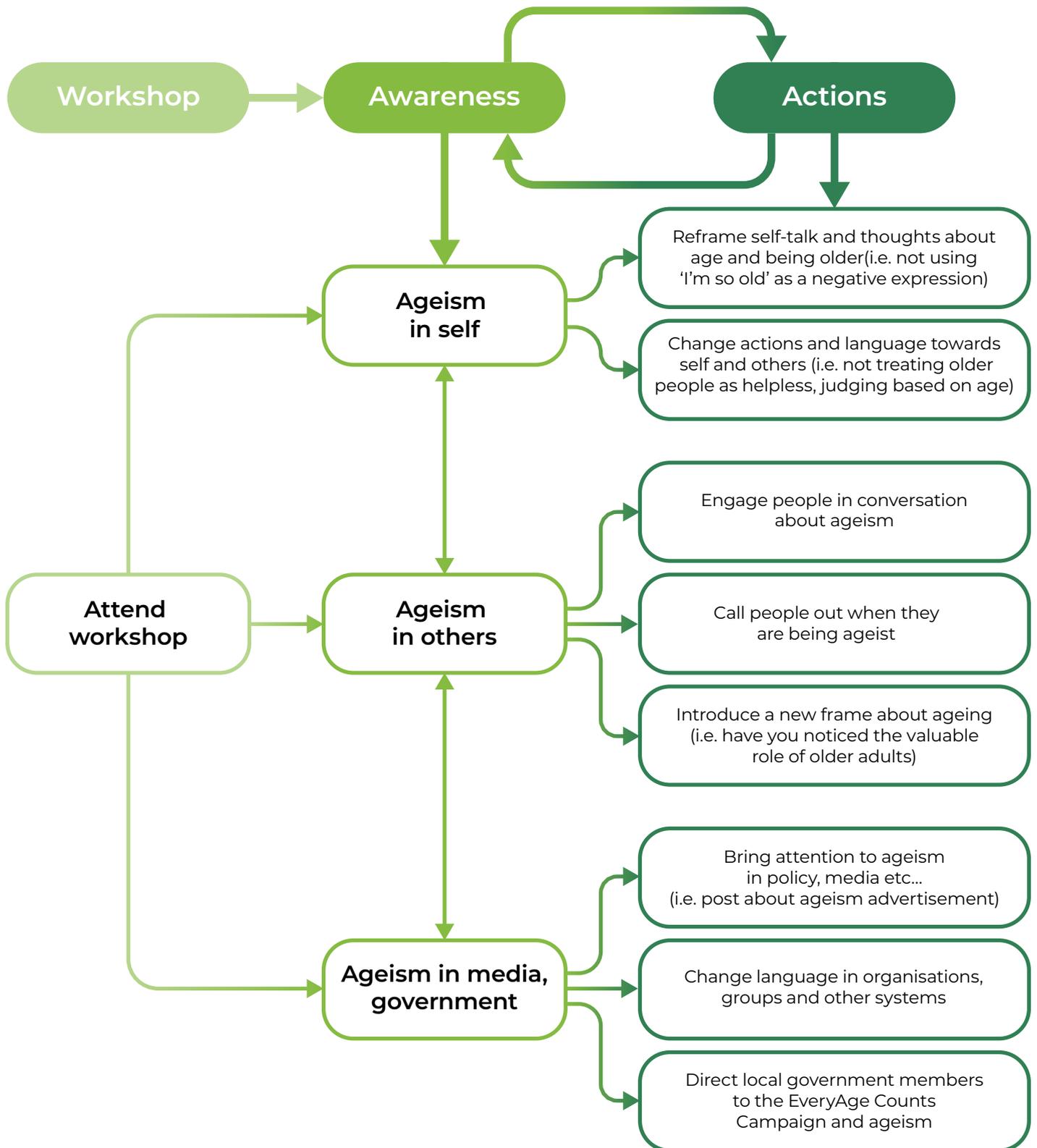
Problematic frames this challenges: Ageism only applies to older adults; age stereotypes; intergenerational conflict

Process and journey of reframing ageing

Participants were recruited from a range of organisations and attended the workshops for different reasons. Some participants were activists or involved in other social movements, while others were not. For some participants the concept of ageism was new, while others had worked with challenging ageism previously.

Over the three months the journey of most participants involved an increasing awareness of ageism in themselves (either self-ageism or their own ageism to others) and/or around them (i.e. noticing ageism in others, noticing ageism in the media, in government policy etc.). Participants made comments like: “I’ve become much more aware of ageism”; “I certainly became conscious of stuff more so in the last couple of months”; and “within the last few months I’ve been much more active about it.” For some, this awareness led to actions such as reframing ageing or calling people out (Figure 1). Most participants reported an internal process which could be simply questioning whether certain interactions were ageist, while others went through a very deep and transformative process that led to a shift in perception and change in action.

Figure 2. Process from Workshop to Awareness and Action

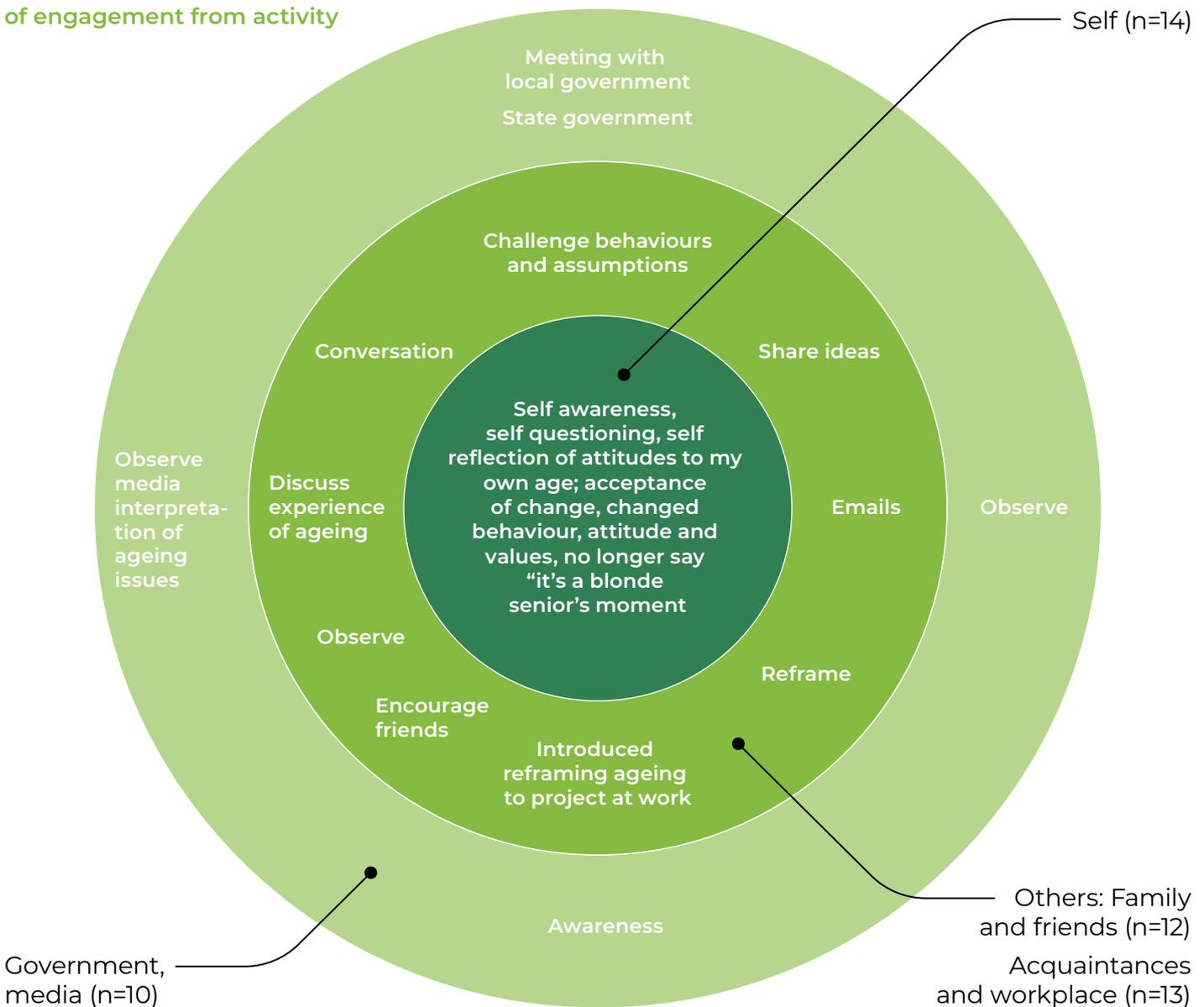


Process: Workshop – awareness – action

Areas of engagement: awareness and action

Participants commented on engaging and tackling ageism at different levels. For those participants who were at the group debriefs, they had an opportunity to write down which areas they engaged with tackling ageism over the three months (Figure 2). Figure 2 gives examples of some of the comments written on the participants (n=14) activity sheets who attended the group debrief. These areas were also part of the discussions in the debrief sessions (group and interview sessions) as well as commented on and posted about on the Facebook group.

Figure 3. Examples of areas of engagement from activity



Ageism in self

Most of the followed-up participants commented that they became more aware of their own language and attitudes towards ageing in themselves and how they saw ageing in others. In their drawings most highlighted the internal circle (see Figure 2). For example, one participant commented on how they realised when people were complimenting them on how they looked for their age, both they and the complemator were assuming that looking older was negative:

“What I realised was when people were saying to me that I didn’t look my age, it was almost in my head like well, that’s a good thing because I’m not old. And I never realised that before. It was something that I never realised before, how I looked at that, and yet I don’t consider myself ageist, but I am in my own way.”

This led them to reassess themselves and their ideas about ageing:

“I don’t look at my greying hair the same way. I even like the lines that are on my face in the same way.”

“What I learnt has changed the way that I think about things. Yeah, because it has, because I think differently about myself, not in who I am, but in the way that I [speak] to myself, probably not to others. I wouldn’t say things like, “You look old” to anybody else [laughs]. I wouldn’t do that. I wouldn’t dare do that, but I’ve stopped doing that to myself.”

Some participants reported an increased awareness of their own ageism towards others. Examples included an awareness of thoughts towards an older person dressing a certain way, not wanting to be associated with older people, and judgements towards younger people. Participants also noticed their own ageism towards older family members. This awareness led to a change in the way they behaved towards that person and the language they used. For example, one participant wanted to get rid of the word ‘care’ and change it to ‘support’. Another participant expressed how recognising ageism changed her relationship with her mother:

“I actually say “Look, Mum, maybe you just can’t do that anymore”. And I can tell it really shatters her. So I have found myself, again through these discussions and the discussions we’ve been having through the Coalition, I just find myself really not doing that anymore. If she wants to do something, then what I’ll try and do is support her. So even though that sounds really minor, it’s really huge in terms of the way I view my mother,

and having to really shift that, or change that from one of telling her that she just can’t do what she used to do, to trying to support her to do what she wants to do, even though what she wants to do may seem a bit crazy to me. So even little changes like that in our own behaviour when we can self-reflect and see that in our own behaviour.”

Ageism in others

Most participants increased their awareness of other people being ageist. This included family, employers or colleagues, doctors, friends, and acquaintances. For example, one participant described being in a department store:

“And I’ve gone on my own, tried something on, a roomful of women, turned around to someone and said “What do you think of this on me?”. And she looked at me and she said, “A bit young for you, don’t you think?”. I just looked at her. And here was someone making a judgement about what I should or shouldn’t be wearing based on her perception of what I should be wearing according to what she perceived of my age.”

Participants who did not completely believe that ageism existed seemed to go through a process of examining situations for ageism. As one participant who was unsure about whether ageism occurred commented:

“I don’t feel we’re victims of ageism or the attitude to age victims, we’re more victims of a faster world and general poor service in many areas... If something happened, I would go home and have a think about it and think, no, is it because I’m older or is it just they’re slack... But I was really just being targeted because I was older.”

They were still unsure, but they went through the process of questioning, which required a level of consideration.

The most common action used was to have conversations. However, with whom and where varied. Some participants discussed having conversations with family such as spouses, children, and grandchildren. For others, they brought it up at dinner parties or events. Some participants mentioned that since the workshop they were more likely to call people out. For example, one participant went with a younger woman in her 20s to the doctor for support. When the doctor directed the conversation at the participant, she pushed the doctor to direct the conversation at the young patient.

People found the easiest conversations were those where they felt comfortable and at ease; whereas, in situations where they felt less safe calling out ageism, they were resistant to doing so.

Ageism in the media, government and society

Participants discussed being aware of ageism in a range of institutions including in the media, government policy, aged care, religious organisations, employment, insurance policies, the fashion industry, and between generations.

"I've become really conscious of stuff that appears in the media. You know, the 'old mate' campaign, I just find myself much more tuned in than I was before, because of the discussions that we've been having. Stuff that I would have ignored previously or wouldn't have thought twice about, I'm now thinking "Oh". And checking myself a lot as well."

In another example a participant stated:

"When I heard that (an ageist gambling ad) on the radio I was actually mortified. Now, I wouldn't have liked it before, but I probably wouldn't have felt as indignant as I did. Even prior to the workshop I would not have felt as cross as what I did when I actually stopped and – because I was stopping and thinking about it, and I think that's what awareness does. It makes people stop and think and go hang on a second, is this true? Is this right? Is this valuing people?"

Many of the participants discussed ageism and the increased awareness as it related to employment and government policy. These were often discussed as intertwined:

"I guess just some of the information, like I've just got some, like 30% of managers in Australia admitted to not employing older people then you read the paper in the last two weeks, because the government wants people to work forever, and then they've just analysed how many people over 65 were employed in the Prime Minister's office, and in Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's office, and it's like, I think with the Prime Minister's it's none, and Frydenberg's got one."

However, these sometimes overlapped with awareness of media's ageism.

"Treasurer Josh Frydenberg made a speech about people are going to have to work longer, which is a miss-paraphrasing of what his speech was, but the media headline was, grey burden, tsunami-style stuff that we

talked about risked being here. It was in the middle of Ashton's [an anti-ageism activist] tour, so sections of the media were already alive and thinking about ageism. This particular publication journalist obviously wasn't, and it was fascinating."

Although there was significant awareness of ageism within media and institutions, not everyone was able to act on these. They could draw attention to them. Actions were partly dependent on the person's work and informal and professional social networks. For those that were involved with specific groups, some described incorporating the ideas into these and changing language.

Some participants who had connections to government were able to bring up ageism or they got them to sign the EveryAGE Counts pledge. Others planned to incorporate EveryAGE Counts into different groups.

"Neighbourhood Houses, I've got covered, that's part of my portfolio, so we're doing some work with them around elder abuse and some [unclear] abuse, but we're also going to bring in Every Age Counts into that. So, that's just to make an increase in their awareness, and meeting with them next year around that and hoping that each of the houses can look at taking, working with the campaign and the [unclear]. So, we've got a bit of a plan in there."

Some participants talked about ageism being entrenched in society, our interactions, and our beliefs. This also came up as one of the complexities and difficulties of challenging ageist views:

"How do we start breaking through that, when politically, socially, there's these very entrenched categories of how people are referred to based on their age, and all our social structures kind of fit that."

For some, there was also an increased awareness of ageism within social structures and how people don't always realise an injustice has occurred, even when it occurs to them.

"Thinking back on feminism and multiculturalism and other isms, I mean, essentially people cried out when they'd had enough, when that discrimination had impacted on them to such a degree that they couldn't stay silent any longer. Maybe people have been impacted upon without realising that they're being impacted upon, because ageism can be both subtle and quite overt."

Participants noticed the connections between ageism and other structural inequalities and related

types of stigma and discrimination, particularly gender. These intersectionalities seemed to be part of the awareness building process for a few participants. For example, one group discussed how society judges how older women dress e.g. “mutton dressed like lamb”. However, the expectation of age appropriate clothing was not as strong for men.

Creating community

Having a level of community to explore ideas about ageing, ageism, and reframing ageing seemed important to participants. The online Facebook group provided an option for some participants, whereas another group that were not interested in the online community met in person. It was observed that the participants that most engaged in the reframing process were those that had some connections, and opportunities for conversations, with others who were also interested in reframing ageing.

Organising meetings

One of the workshop groups organised a meeting with those who attended the workshop and recruited a few members who had not. These members were not involved with the online group (as a preference), but instead organised themselves to meet in person.

Networking

Some participants also ended up doing their own networking outside of the workshop group. Thus, engaging groups they were already involved with into the process or meeting new people who were also interested in ageing topics. For example, one participant shared a blog she wrote after the workshop on reframing ageing and this led to connecting to another person who was involved with “conscious ageing” and “electrified ageing”. The participant suggested:

“And then he had a little chat with me. And I gave him the link and said, “Here, you need to go and sign up”. And I think I also shared about the Ashton Applewhite before that, before all the tickets came out and that, and that’s how he got onto that. Although we didn’t talk, I did see him at the talk down at Carriageworks. So that was a really interesting one because he was the one who came and – Even though I was talking to other people, that he

actually came to me about it, and said, “Hey, tell me a bit more”.

Some participants brought the ideas explored in the workshop to their current networks. For example, participants described writing blogs, posts, and speeches to share the ideas of reframing ageing with their current networks.

Online interactions

This was a closed Facebook group and only those who attended the workshop, including researchers and members from EveryAGE Counts could join. Not all participants or researchers joined the Facebook group. A total of 25 people joined. As is common on social media there was a mix of people, including those who posted regularly, those who commented more often, and those who were observers. However, although some participants were mainly observers, they were still active in the group. It is important to note that just because a person does not “speak” within a group, they may still be “listening” (Wise, Hausknecht, Zhao, 2014). This seemed to be the case as some participants who rarely posted, still commented about the Facebook group in the debrief sessions and interviews.

Some participants who were active on Facebook referred to the group when discussing topics at the debrief. As one participant stated:

“Because we all copy, share things, and then our friendship groups are exposed to that information as well. And that’s why I think Facebook, when it’s used appropriately, can be quite a powerful tool. And I’ve got my little award to prove it, badge. [Referring to badge Facebook gave for being an active member of the group].”

Another participant commented on how it helped them continue to build awareness:

“Well, because of the workshop, I became much more aware, and all the stuff you put on the website is really good to read [laughs], on the Facebook page.”

“On the Facebook page, some of the comments, or not so much the comments, as the issues that people raise, like I particularly liked the one on humour, and actually have written an article, but I haven’t posted anything yet, because I haven’t been well. So I wrote an article on that, because that really triggered a lot for me.”

Process and patterns in the online community

Those who posted seemed to have various patterns. The discussion started with people pointing out ageism and posting examples of articles and media that were ageist. By the end of the three months, the participants seemed to post more articles that drew attention to reframing issues. Throughout there were also some participants who posted positive stories of ageing.

At the start there were a lot more posts related to calling out ageism. This group of posts called out ageism that were observed in the media and through advertisements. These posts led to the most active discussions between members. For example, the post that generated the highest level of conversation was a post of an advertisement by racing NSW which used all the stereotypes of being older to convince older people to gamble.

Another example was an advertisement by Adelaide tourism which emphasised the stereotype of the lonely older person. The commercial ends with the sentiment of “Don’t feel sorry for old mate. It’s his own damn fault he didn’t visit Adelaide sooner.” Interestingly, this advertisement caused a stir outside of the group and has been pulled since the post.

In another example, there were a group of posts that occurred with news stories on comments that the Treasurer Josh Frydenberg made and the media reaction. This event brought ageism into the media headlines and caused a stir in the group since his reported comments that older Australians were an economic time bomb. This was an example of specific language being analysed by the group, and an ageist frame that they challenged.

Near the end of the three months participants posted more posts related to looking at ageing differently (reframing). For example, one participant posted a medical advertisement that tells people not to dismiss macular degeneration as age-related. They included the comment:

‘Never dismiss any changes in vision as part of getting older. Early detection could save your sight.’ “Isn’t that what we are asking people to recognise as #reframingAgeing?”

Another example is a participant who posted a video of aged care residents cooking for homeless with the comment

“Caring about others is not bounded by age.”



Figure 4. Video shared with Facebook group

Others commented on ideas of reframing. For example, one participant posted an article with a comment:

Reframing ageism in part involves reimagining what ageing means for ourselves. It involves asking ourselves some critical questions. One such question, in an age of increased life longevity, is "What is my why?" (Find your why)

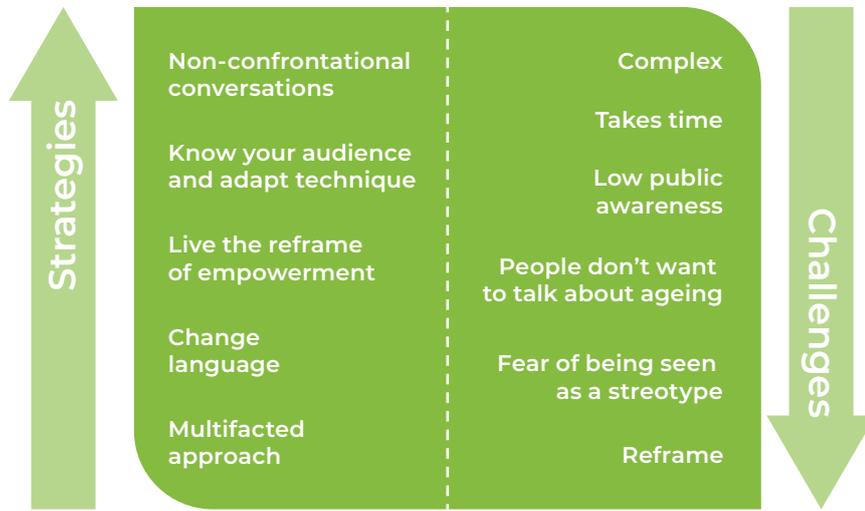
There were posts throughout the project that were positive examples of ageing, or those that could be considered role models. These posts received mixed responses in the interviews; however, not as many responses online. Some people enjoyed all the examples; whereas others felt it was defeating to include people such as Cher who has extensive money and cosmetic surgery.

What was missing was people discussing their experiences. Although we had expected that they may engage in the online community by sharing some of their experiences, this did not happen. It may be because participants didn't really know each other; and thus, weren't comfortable sharing such experiences or the medium was perceived as a more formal space for information sharing.

Strategies and challenges to tackling ageism and reframing ageing

In implementing their actions within the community, participants commented on a range of strategies they used that seemed effective. In addition, they commented on what was the most challenging.

Figure 5. Strategies and challenges of tackling ageism in the community



Strategies

In addition to creating community and networking, participants used a wide range of strategies to address ageism and reframe ageing.

Non-confrontational conversations

Participants had non-confrontational conversations, saying that these had to be “done really nicely,” “in a nice way,” “not confrontational” and “frame it as a conversation rather than a statement.” One participant pointed out that, “If our first reaction is combative, we shut down those conversations and that’s what I’ve discovered.”

When participants observed ageism (e.g. ageist comments, ageism in media, ageist behaviour), they sometimes used this as an opportunity to start a conversation around ageism and get those around them to consider different perspectives. One participant had a conversation with her son after he teased her for listening to a younger musician.

“I guess in my case it was a younger person making that ageist assumption and opening up an avenue for a bit of conversation around it, which I think was really helpful. He’s never said that again.”

In another example, a participant turned 70 and when people said “Gee, you look younger than you are.” After considering how to respond they took the opportunity:

“...to very warmly say things like, “Oh, that’s interesting that, you know, I look younger than I am, and really ageing’s not about how you look, it’s how you are.” And people would then agree, and, you know, talk about attitudes, and how important they were, and how the inner person just doesn’t change, but there are changes in external physical manifestations.”

Participants also described trying to reframe ageing in online conversations when they observe ageism:

“And I’m trying – and naturally not for the benefit of people on our Facebook site, but all the people who are friends with me on Facebook, and [LinkedIn], all the people who follow what I say. So, it’s kind of trying to turn those messages around every time I see them, and say to people, you need to think of this in another way.”

Participants talked about the messages around ageism spreading and others taking action. One participant described a dinner conversation with a priest:

“With all of the trouble that the Roman Catholic Church has had, they’ve been through enormous efforts, but not enough I don’t think – in my opinion anyway – to try and reframe attitudes of their priests. And when we started talking about ageism, or just that example, it occurred to him, actually, that yeah, that that’s something that he should build into their programmes as well.”

When participants described how they went about their conversations and reframing ageing some used facts, some used story and narratives, while others used a more conversational back and forth interaction.

Know your audience and adapt your technique

Participants reported a wide range of techniques used in their conversations and in their reframing. These ranged from people using story and narrative, to humour, to facts.

"I think if there's a way that we can use humour, the sharing of stories, because that kind of narrative approach always works well with our communities."

One participant discussed how you could use your own stories and others to reframe ageing.

"I had a similar experience and what I discovered was blah, blah, blah, and somehow segue into reframing them somehow."

Whereas some participants commented on the use of humor.

"I tend to do it in a fairly – either with a bit of humour or in a fairly nice way."

Participants commented on how they had to be sensitive to their audience and be aware of the other person's fears, culture, and place in the world.

"How do you broach it, do you use humour, do you use people sharing their stories, do you give them examples and ask them to comment on those? But inevitably you have to do it in a way where people aren't feeling that you're somehow demeaning their communities and their contributions, and the way they live their lives."

"You really, really have to target your audience. ... it's a two-way dynamic, so you might make it a very gentle statement, and you listened to how they respond to that, and you watch the body language, and you kind of pick it up from there. So yes, it's a bit of a minefield."

Living the reframe of empowerment of self

Some participants put into action the reframing of empowering themselves to not live the stereotype of ageing. They took this as wearing what they wanted (don't buy into a certain dress style related to age) and doing what they wanted and not being concerned about whether it was considered appropriate for their age.

"When I talk to people about my dance classes and my swimming, they're quite astonished that at my age I would be doing that. And that, particularly the area of

both physical activity and enjoyment, that ... it's repeated so often that it seems they seem to believe that's a very odd thing to be doing at your age. But I'm encouraging them through showing them that I can do it, and I am nobody in particular from that point of view... 'if I can do it, you can do it!'"

Participants talked about convincing themselves to participate in activities with younger people and not be concerned about how they appeared compared to their younger counterparts.

Changing language around ageing

Some participants discussed changing the language with their organisations.

"I'm in the process, I'm about to finish – is changing our policies and procedures, you know, the organisation policies and procedures, to changing the language to make it an age-friendly language. You know, even changing the word care to support, old people to older people."

Another participant commented on an organisational website where they had changed the language to a more positive frame about ageing and how people noticed this:

"One of them said that she had been on our website, and she was really excited and pleased that it talked about ageing, not getting old."

Changing language was also discussed as changing the wording and language that they used to others. This was often related to the frame of empowering others. For example, one participant described how she had to change her language toward an older person with mobility issues, so as to not word it in a way that would make her feel helpless. Instead of using words such as "let me help you" instead they asked, "is it okay if I go and and make you a cup of tea?" This subtlety of framing it as a simple question and asking permission was important to the person's sense of agency.

Multifaceted approach is needed

Many participants either took a multifaceted approach or were quite aware from their experiences that a multifaceted approach was needed. As one participant commented,

"I think you need a multifaceted approach. I think you need to be coming, whether it's a conversation with my son, or Ashton [an ageism activist] speaking to

an auditorium, because we were there as well, it was fabulous. What was it, 200, 300 people? We need to be coming at it from a whole lot of different tiers of intervention."

Because of the complexity of ageism, it was seen as needing different approaches for different aspects.

"But we do need to decide which area of ageism we're going to talk about rather than putting it altogether in one lump because the solutions are going to be different."

Importance of understanding framing and reframing

Most people suggested that understanding framing and reframing was a useful tool in addressing ageism. Although participants didn't consciously use specific reframes (i.e. I am using a value frame), they often reframed. Participants commented that reframing appeared to be a proactive approach to addressing ageism that allowed participants to find more positive ways to talk about ageing. Participants seemed to like having a way to challenge stereotyping views.

"I think it's helpful because it is a positive approach. I mean, I can't think of other ways you could have said it, ... it could have been negative, without 'stop ageism', but to rephrase something that has got a much more positive, proactive approach, and I think that's the thing."

Participants felt that framing and reframing was useful because it helped people think differently and see different perspectives. They discussed how framing was useful as a tool since it helped people see issues differently, as one participant commented:

"Because it can help the person to see it in a different way. I think that is what reframing is – it's changing the way we see things; changing the way we think about things; changing the way we talk about things. And it's only when you get a person to frame it and then reframe it that we – it's a very good exercise to get the person to see in a different way."

This included some participants' consideration for how they reframe their own thoughts. One participant saw reframing as crucial to growth:

"I think it is that reframing happens in your head and reframing your own thoughts about how you want to –

I wouldn't say age. How you will change and develop and grow over time."

Some suggested you needed self-awareness and general awareness of ageing before you can begin to reframe, as one participant commented, "So the reframing was just automatic to do once I had that self-awareness." It seemed that participants needed to develop an awareness of ageism and an awareness of what framing was before they could engage in the process of reframing.

Challenges to reframing ageing

Ageism and reframing is complicated

Many participants commented about how addressing ageism was complicated. Ageism is difficult to explain, is deeply entrenched within society and people might take offence. This makes it difficult to talk about. As one participant joked,

"Age discrimination, it's a bit grey, so to speak. Age discrimination is a grey area. That's not a good headline, mind you [laughs], but it is, isn't it? It's not so clear."

It takes time

Participants acknowledged addressing ageism takes time. Because talking about ageism is complicated, they found that you were not likely to change someone's thinking with one conversation. As one participant commented,

"I certainly haven't had an experience where people, where anyone has said to me "Wow, I really look at that differently now". I think it's a really slow process."

Participants felt that there was no quick way to connect with people and get them to change their thinking and behaviour.

"Because the mindset is a much deeper conversation where you actually have to give people a lot of things to make them think and think a lot. I don't think it's a five-minute conversation."

"But when it's a once-off situation, or a very limited contact with no real relationship, it's much more difficult to I think bring about change. Because we're talking about a whole cultural change, and we're not just talking about changing our undies."

There is low public awareness of ageism

Participants found that it was much more challenging to call people out or discuss ageism in comparison to other forms of discrimination such as sexism or racism. There was an acknowledgement that the ageism movement is at an early stage so there is low public awareness and societal acceptance that ageism is an important issue. This means that participants had more explaining about what ageism is, encountered more resistance against talking about ageism, and had to raise awareness of ageism as an issue.

“Because people don’t realise anyway, they don’t realise what they’re doing. Whereas sexual discrimination, racial, people in this day and age must know. So that’s a key point, isn’t it? Most of them who have discriminated – and certainly my priest friend, he wasn’t aware until we started talking about it.”

“And when you look at the women’s suffragette movement, when you look at the work we’ve done in the multicultural space, there’s always been dismissers, there’s always been those that said “Look, you’re going on about nothing, it’s not an issue, it’s not important”. And I think we’re kind of in the early stages of seeing that with ageism.”

“I would actually like to present to groups – and I’ve mentioned [it to] a few people – but it’s finding people who go, “Well, that’s valid and we want to hear that”. So it’s almost like we have to change the dialogue a lot more first before the space is there for that to happen.”

Fear of being seen as a stereotype

Another aspect that was observed was some participants were concerned they would be considered a stereotype of being the complaining or crazy older person (This also relates to participants finding it easier to address ageism in a safe space where they will not feel people will think of them negatively).

“This is the interesting – this [is] where my head went; I’m the crazy old lady in the corner [laughs] who’s waving my flags for all old people, even though it’s not what I believe. But it’s where my head was going, was how is this going to be taken by those people who don’t know me and who haven’t got to know me in any shape or form.”

Some participants were also resistant to being seen as activists or complainers.

“Yeah, because you are seen as a nit-picker, maybe. If it’s your friends and you challenge them, yeah, it’s a bit like challenging someone for eating meat; why aren’t you a vegan or whatever?”

“Yeah, probably couldn’t figure out what to do, actually, without appearing to be deliberately confrontational, a bit odd, on a mission.”

People don’t want to talk about ageing

One challenge participants had was that some people do not want to talk about ageing. The people interested in discussing ageing and ageism were those that were already on board, so it was a bit of “preaching to the choir.” Younger people were not interested in talking about ageism because it’s not relevant to them.

“Whereas often the people who didn’t want to have the conversations were often younger people. Yeah, and I’m not saying they didn’t want to have them, but that just was the – they just didn’t engage in the conversation. It was just like, “Yeah, yeah, we’d know” [laughs]. That’s like nursing home stuff; we don’t want to talk about that [laughs]. “

Another person mentioned that they felt some people were averse to the topic due to fear.

“You have to be careful to think about people’s own fears of ageing when you have those conversations. And some people really don’t want to think about it.”

Discussion

The workshop allowed the participants to work through ideas of ageism, frames, reframing, and tackling ageism in the community. Although pithy reframes or expressions were not specifically created, each group came up with alternative frames that challenged various problematic frames (such as older adults are a burden on society). The five alternative frames that were identified were: Look at people for who they are, not their age (Diversity and Human rights frame); Empower yourself and others to be our true self at every age (Empowerment and support frame); Older adults contribute to society (Value frame); We all engage in lifelong learning as teachers and learners (Education frame); Ageism affects people at all ages; we are in it together (Intergenerational frame). These frames were used in different ways and with different techniques.

Participants found the reframing process useful. It was considered a proactive tool that helped them to get people to see different perspectives. The concept of what a frame is, and the idea of reframing were important in themselves. The learning seems to require building an awareness that ageism exists, but also an understanding of the role of frames in solidifying negative stereotypes in society and our lives. Once this was understood, then the idea of reframing and changing people's perspectives appeared to be empowering and a proactive approach.

Over the three months, many of the participants developed their awareness about ageism within self, others, and society. In addition, once this awareness was formed some participants acted upon it and changed behaviours such as self-talk or how they talk to others, calling people out for ageist comments, having conversations about ageism and reframing, or directed their focus on more structural change such as promoting a change in language used in organisations. Levy (2001) suggests a first step is to build awareness since ageism is often implicit, and secondly to address it within. Many of the participants seemed to do both of these within the three months; however, this was an ongoing process and not all people engaged in this process to the same degree. Addressing ageism within is important because negative self-perceptions of ageing and views on being older can lead to

negative health and well-being outcomes (Levy, 2009; Hausknecht et al., 2019). Since people often develop their views of ageing across the life course, and this includes the negative stereotypes (Levy, 2009), having participants recognise these is an important step within the process. Within the workshops, participants were asked to think about ageism around them, and then look at media images that were ageist and identify the messages. These activities seemed to help participants' ability to identify ageism. These concepts and understanding of them were then developed by participants ongoing interactions in the community over the three-month period. The participants recognised that making people aware of ageism and getting them to look at a different frame also took time. This is not surprising, as building awareness seemed to be an ongoing journey for many participants as they described their process.

Many of the participants who attended the debrief sessions and interviews had some sort of a community that they were able to interact with regarding the ideas of ageing and reframing. This could have been the online Facebook group, or some got together with others from the workshop in person, and some took these ideas to organisations and workplaces or networked with others they met who were also interested in the topic. Having others to discuss ideas with seemed to be an important aspect of increasing understanding over the three months.

Participants used a wide range of strategies to tackle ageism. Participants found that being confrontational was not effective, but instead bringing people into a conversation and getting them to think of ageing from a different perspective (reframing) was more beneficial. There was not one specific approach to going about a conversation, but instead participants used a range of techniques such as humour, story, and facts. Along with this, they felt you had to know your audience and that different audiences may require alternative approaches. For example, cultural factors may need to be considered. Language also played an important role, with some participants questioning words such as care, retirement, and old and the connotations they bring with them. In addition, some participants considered the way they talked

to others and the messages that specific sentences sent. Due to the complexity of ageism, participants suggested tackling ageism would take multiple approaches at different levels of society.

Participants found tackling ageism challenging. They were aware that the anti-ageism movement has just begun, and how ingrained ageism is in our society. This makes it challenging to discuss ageing with others since not everyone wants to talk about it, especially when it is seen as just something for older people or something to fear. People most likely don't want to talk about ageing because of ageism itself (ageing is not seen as interesting, is taboo, is something to avoid). Some participants were concerned that they may appear like the stereotype of a complaining old person, or a stereotype of an activist with a cause (which they did not identify with). Overall, participants found that tackling ageism was complicated and getting people to change their perspective takes time.

Conclusions

Overall, the workshop and process engaged people in thinking about ageing in new ways. The process of teaching people about frames and reframing is useful for giving them the cognitive tools to go into the community and raise awareness in others. This can be supported by creating a community that members can interact with, share ideas in, and bring up topics that are current and relevant to Australians of all ages.

Recommendations

New frames and framing

- 1 Teach people what the concepts underlying the reframes about ageism are so they will be able to have conversations in the community about these. The pithy reframe may not be sufficient.
- 2 Teach people what a frame is, what reframing is, and how to apply them in different scenarios.
- 3 People used different techniques to present the reframe including stories, humour, analogies, and facts. They need to be shown different ways to reframe so it can be adjusted for different contexts.

Supporting a grassroots community to tackle ageism

- 1 Create grassroots communities with places (both virtual and physical) where members can have ongoing interactions, share ideas, and support each other.
- 2 Recruit a range of ages into the community.
- 3 Set expectations that changing ideas about ageing takes time and is complicated; however, having conversations about ageing and introducing alternative frames may help people think about ageism over the long term.
- 4 It is useful to have both online and face-to-face opportunities to maximise opportunities for engagement with the community and changing perspectives.
- 5 Recognise and support people at different stages of awareness and action.
- 6 Develop skills in non-confrontational conversations. Prepare communities to be able to respond to ageism in diverse cultural contexts.
- 7 Training and ongoing discussions should include discussions of ageism at different levels (self, others, and media/government).

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