

How to make the most of the opportunity of ageing

Increasing lifespans are a consequence of our social development over the past 200 years. We can and should take more advantage of the opportunities of this as well as managing the problems better. How?

Having properly informed politicians

One third of voters are now between 55 and 75 and their proportion of the population is surging. Their voices are being heard more than ever and this will increase.

Good responses to the resulting social changes are available but have been regularly pushed beyond the short-term political horizon.

The political risk of this inaction is rising fast, as Finland found when inadequate and poor-quality aged care recently led to the overturn of the long-term governing party.

The misconception that people simply 'get old' has underpinned many political responses. However, we become more different from each other with age, not more alike. Close personal support is required. Institutions have major difficulties in dealing with this, and so are prone to poor responses for aged care.

Governments fund most aged care needs and should reassess a strategy which includes allowing for-profit operators to dominate the provision of services. The Aged Care Royal Commission is exposing many flaws.

Being ethical

It is 'ethical' to prolong life for almost any reason, yet the consequences are rarely taken into account. In many cases people are exposed to the risk of a remaining life which can range from miserable to atrocious, often without them realizing this. People should

push to be better informed and be able to choose the most appropriate end of life action for them, with support as necessary.

Being personally accountable

Aged care is required to attend to:

- Functional dependency – unable to manage normal activities of living
- Poor physical health
- Cognitive impairment
- Poor mental health such as depression

If we each address these situations earlier, our need for aged care support can often be delayed and our ongoing quality of life improved, often at lower cost.

Having access to good advice

Social support is a major positive factor in effective ageing. It's not just a matter of professional advice. As a community we should better inform people about why longevity is increasing and what they can do to make a difference for themselves.

Poor financial literacy is a major obstacle for older people although professional advice is available. However, access to professional longevity advice remains very limited. Resolving this has been our challenge at My Longevity.

We all talk easily in 'time'. By realizing our own time frame and its possible stages and influences as we age, we are more likely to make the best of the rest of our life.

Everyone benefits from a more informed and engaged older community, especially because it continues to grow.

This is why we developed the Longevity Plan – to enable each person to understand and prepare for their own journey while they are in reasonable shape.