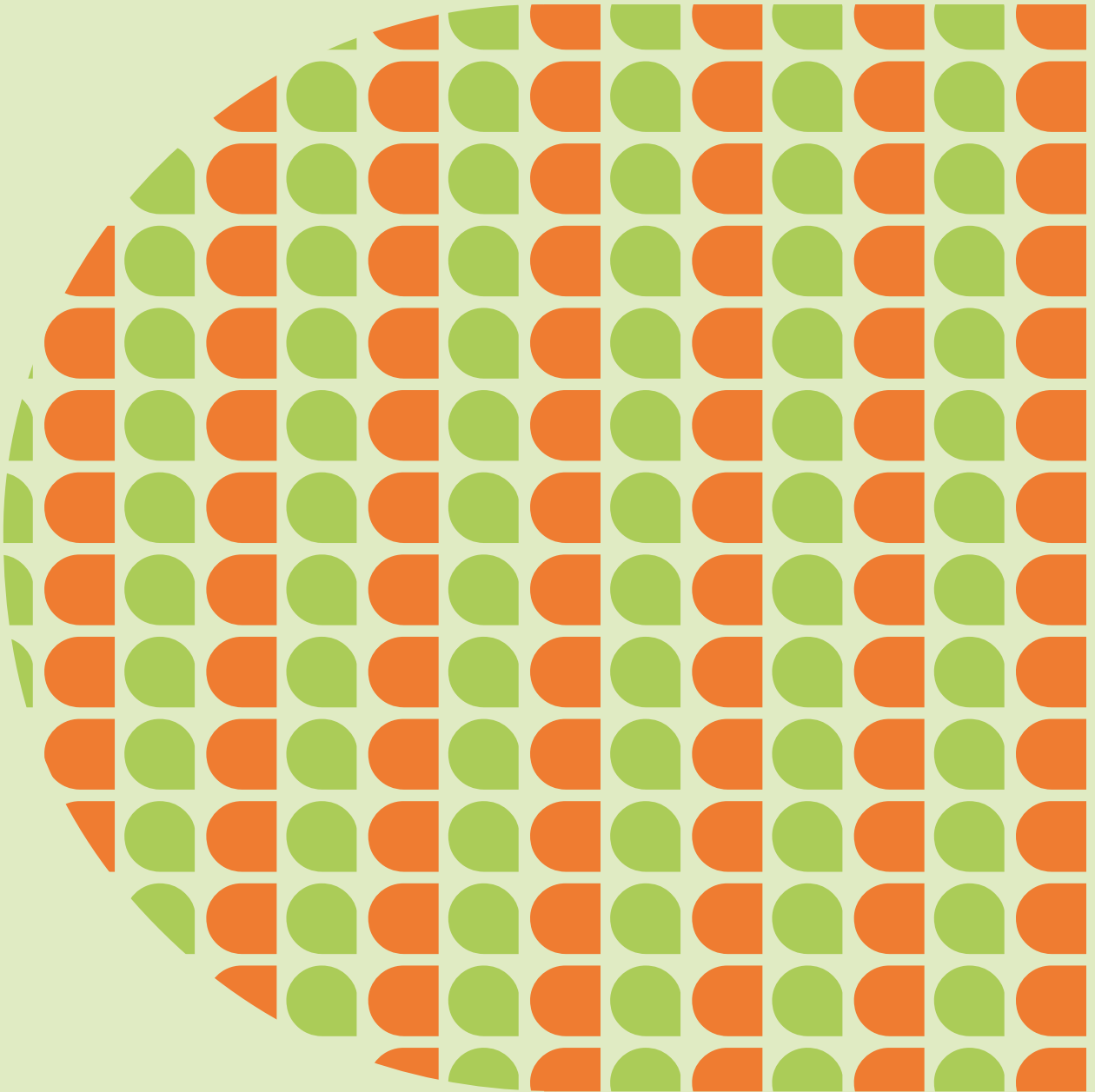


The Embolden2023 Collection



# The Embolden2023 Festival on Ageism and Respect for Older People Report

## Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to everyone who helped make #Embolden2023 such a success, including the following people:

Uncle Rick Nelson for his Welcome to beautiful Dja Dja Wurrung Country; to Kerrie Tim for a powerful plenary and to all the older people and their representatives who shared their stories and strategies for change, including Gwenda Darling, Dr Katrina Mynard, Steve Grady, Theresa Flavin, Dubhg Taylor, Yumi Lee, Max Primmer, Maddie, David Menadue, Chuping Yu, Yvonne Sillett, Kathy Mansfield, Hayat Doughan, Rachael Brennan and Shirley Glance OAM.

The Design Café Team, including Debra Nicholl, Arati Vidyasagar, Sue Petrini, Dominique Horne, Meg Humphrey, Dora Mansbridge, Meg Polacsek, Amber Mills, Paula Fernandez Arias, Ara Creswell, Susie Dunn, Tiarna Jason, Hazel McKenna, Georg Tamm, Rosa Goncalves and Maria Katsabanis.

Artist in Residence Dr Julie Gross McAdam.

Our Embolden2023 partners and supporters, including our Principal Partner **Elder Rights Advocacy and the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN), Australian Association of Gerontology, ADA Australia, The Older Women's Network NSW, QueerSpace, Drummond St, and COTA Australia.**

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The team at Celebrate Ageing for their work coordinating the congress, including Dr Catherine Barrett, Tonye Segbedzi, Robyn Smith, Sarah Liversidge, June Lowe, Melissa Williams, Max Primmer and Brian Seaton.

## Photography

Thank you photographer **Suzanne Phoenix** and videographer Ian Bickerstaff and videographer Ian Bickerstaff Photograph of Philippa Campbell by Julian Meehan.

## More information

Webpage: [celebrateageing.com/embolden](https://celebrateageing.com/embolden) or [celebrateageing.com/margins](https://celebrateageing.com/margins)

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**The  
Embolden2023  
Collection**



## Thank you

to Djaara Elder, Uncle Rick Nelson,  
for his warm Welcome to Country.

Thank you also to the Dja Dja  
Wurrung Clans Aboriginal  
Corporation.

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# Executive Summary

This report summarises #Embolden2023, Australia's only national event focused on building the capacity of service providers, policy makers, community leaders, older people and everyone who works with older people – to combat ageism and build respect for older people. Embolden is an initiative of Celebrate Ageing Ltd, a charity that has been combatting ageism and building respect for older people for over a decade.

Over 110 people attended the Embolden Festival, hosted across three days at the Daylesford Town Hall in regional Victoria. Activities included a Fashion event, Congress of Older People's Voices from the Margins and a Symposium. The theme *Words Make Worlds*, recognised language as a powerful tool for change - language reflects and preserves the cultural values and practices that perpetuate the ageism and inequalities experienced by older people – and can drive change. Subthemes involved exploration of marginalisation, co-leadership, beautiful, old and continue.

A critical theory approach was taken to exploring relationships of power as a catalyst for culture change. Critical theorems related to the subthemes were presented to and refined by delegates.

## Fashion Event - #OldisBeautiful

The #OldisBeautiful campaign was launched on International Day of the Older Person. The launch involved sharing photo portraits of older people through online and hard copy media and a series of street posters featuring Wurundjeri Elder Auntie Sherree Francis. A front cover spread in The Senior Newspaper (circulation 1.3 million) included a project portrait and the hashtag #OldisBeautiful.

An #OldisBeautiful webpage has been established to share the portraits and older people's messages about what beautiful means to them (see: [celebrateageing.com/beautiful](https://celebrateageing.com/beautiful)).

### **Critical theorem on beauty:**

*Expanding narrow definitions of beauty to encompass older people is a powerful tool for combatting ageism. This approach can assist in protecting older people from internalised ageism and connecting older people by enabling those who are not yet old to see a positive trajectory for their own ageing.*

## Congress of Older People's Voices from the Margins

Congress included presentations by 15 older people (or their representatives) from marginalized groups to explore marginalisation across gender, ability, place, culture and sexuality. Following the presentations, a Design Café was led by service providers, policy makers, advocates, researchers, academics and community leaders - to explore root causes of marginalisation and identify ways to create more inclusive families, communities, services and policy.

Ageism was identified as a root cause of marginalisation – and is exacerbated by other forms of oppression (that are not recognised due to ageism) including racism, ableism, sexism, metrocentricity, classism and queerphobia.

Overall recommendations included: developing accessible information, engaging local communities, promoting inclusive services, working with families and developing policies in partnership with marginalised groups of older people.

### **Critical theorem on marginalisation:**

*The concept of marginalisation has much to offer approaches to diversity planning and programs to prevent Elder Abuse and other forms of ageism. It views marginalised older people as 'us' rather than 'them' and thereby guides us to an understanding we all play a role in marginalisation and strategies for prevention.*

## Symposium

The symposium began with a session on co-leadership by older people – including presentations by graduating Fellows and launching the Philippa Campbell Fellowship for Older Women. The power of words was explored with linguist Professor Kate Burridge and a workshop explored #OldisGood as an antidote to ageism.

The final session acknowledged ageism as a barrier to valuing aged care workers, advocates and care givers (paid and unpaid) who work with older people. Insights from Dr Stephanie Dowrick highlighted the importance of valuing self and a DIY Angels activity explored strategies for valuing our own contributions.

**Critical theorem on co-leadership:** *It is important to consider the contributions of older people and people living with dementia beyond their lived experience. Recognition of older people's skills, capabilities and passion can open up opportunities for co-leadership that amplify the success of innovations.*

**Critical Theorem on 'old':** *The word 'old' has negative connotations in many Western cultures; it is often used as a slur that disempowers older people and prompts those who are not yet old to fight or deny their ageing. Creating alternative words won't combat ageism. We need to understand ageing as a privilege, and attributing positive qualities to old is an important step in combatting ageism.*

**Critical Theorem on 'continue':** *Ageism is a significant barrier to recognition of the valuable contributions made by those who work with older people (paid and unpaid). Strategies are needed for aged care workers, advocates and carers to value their own contributions in order to continue.*



## Artist in Residence

The artist in residence was Dr. Julie Gross McAdam, director of a dementia-specific art as recreation therapy program. Julie invited delegates to contribute to a visual art piece responding to the theme #OldisBeautiful.

## Evaluation

Evaluation forms were given to participants at completion of Congress and the Symposium and completed by 37 of the 100 delegates at Congress and 22 following the Symposium.

The evaluation approach drew on the [Kirkpatrick Model](#), reviewing four levels of the education i.e.: delegates reaction, learning of new knowledge and skills, and plans for behaviour change – using a 7-point Likert scale with the following results:

Measure	Congress	Symposium
Relevance	6.51	6.51
New knowledge	6.54	6.48
Practical use	6.55	6.41

Participants were also asked if they had plans to utilise what they had learned, 86% responded they did and gave examples of their plans. Participants will be followed up after a 6-month period to review impacts.

## Action plan

To help promote change as an outcome of #Embolden2023 a suggested action plan has been developed, with actions for each of the five Embolden subthemes. In summary the suggestions include:

- **Marginalisation:** read the report on Congress of Older People's Voices from the margins and review the suggested actions: [celebrateageing.com/margins](https://celebrateageing.com/margins)
- **Co-Leadership:** consider options to increase participation by older people and people living with dementia – review the models for co-leadership at the Elder Leadership Academy: [celebrateageing.com/academy](https://celebrateageing.com/academy)
- **Beauty:** read about the #OldisBeautiful campaign and consider hosting a workshop: [celebrateageing.com/beautiful](https://celebrateageing.com/beautiful)
- **Old:** watch the video of Professor Kate Burridge's presentation on language and older people
- **Continue:** read about the Everyday Angels project celebrating the achievements of aged care workers and consider a DIY Angels project encouraging aged care workers, advocates and carers to value their own contributions: [celebrateageing.com/continue](https://celebrateageing.com/continue)



# Welcome & Opening Remarks

## Our Time, Kerrie Tim (Keynote Speaker)

I was born and raised on my Mitakoodi ancestral lands, adjoining the lands of my Kalkadoon ancestors in northwest Queensland. In my early twenties I was told that because I'm Aboriginal I would not live a long life. I decided to plan to live to 120.

I've had an extraordinary life so far: fantastic family; stimulating and rewarding work, and; a lifetime commitment to humanitarian work. But the next sixty years are all mine. I'm trying to figure out what this will mean. For now I'm guided by a couple of questions:



*What am I willing to risk becoming the person I want to be?*

---

*What am I holding onto right now that is holding me back?*

---

*How has my family impacted how I see and exist in the world?*

---



# This is our time

Being an Elder can vary depending on class, culture, and other factors but currently it usually begins between 50 and 60 years of age. Living a long life is a gift. Many before us have worked hard to enable us to live long lives.

Many people, including Indigenous people, do not get to become Elders due to hardship and exploitation. Yet, Elders are the fastest growing age group globally. All of us in this room are the result of a dream hard fought for.

We are a strong bunch, energetic, and intelligent. We have spent decades working on behalf of loved ones, humanity, and all life. In the process, we've amassed a tremendous amount of much-needed knowledge, experience, and perspective.

Still though there is massive misunderstanding of what it means to be an Elder and this oppression hits us hard. We experience being ignored, dismissed, pitied, and treated disrespectfully. We are considered a burden to our families and society.

Our generation is blamed for current world problems. If we can afford it, we are expected to retire, to leave important matters to younger people. Increasingly Elders are segregated from families and communities, resulting in isolation, vulnerability to exploitation, desperate loneliness, and lack of lifesaving help.

We are having to come to terms with declining health, disability, dying, and death. Our fears about illness, dementia, disability, dying, and death become attached to being an Elder. Such fears can occupy large amounts of attention.

Yet these fears will yield to facing them. Opportunities to talk about them and to laugh and cry about their impact on our lives can leave us with a better picture of reality, more resilience to face difficulties, and more hope for the future.

We can find new and creative ways to continue to live big lives, to think well about our health, successfully respond to changes in our abilities, and when needed, thoughtfully prepare for death.

There are tough challenges in ageing but there is also joy, intelligence, and courage - needed to continue to grow and to think about what we shall do with the rest of our lives.

There are big problems - climate emergency, pandemics, racial injustice, violent conflict, and economic inequality - that require immediate, creative solutions. We Elders have the experience and perspective to join with others to become a powerful force in restoring the health of our planet and lead people to a rational, peaceful society.

Indigenous Elders inherit responsibilities that come with moral obligations. Indigenous leadership is life-long: it's based on life-long learning; it is relationship-based; it considers positions of leadership as well as the responsibilities that come with the practice of leadership; and it places on us an obligation founded in responsibility for those who come behind, for all life, and for country.

We connect with you and other Elders in a special bond: Elders are as precious and essential to human society as all other humans. Society would be lost without our contribution, without us!

The future of humanity needs us, and we need to be intelligent and in good shape to respond. We need to be well rested, well nourished, well exercised, well organised, and well connected to others. This is our time.

Warm regards, Kerrie Tim

# Dr Catherine Barrett, Celebrate Ageing Ltd (Curator)

The Embolden Festival is an initiative of Celebrate Ageing Ltd, a charity that has been combatting ageism and building respect for older people for over a decade. The annual Festival started in 2018 to accelerate the pace of change; and returned in 2023 following a three year Covid19 related break.

The 2023 program introduced a Congress of Older People's Voices from the Margins, alongside the Fashion event and Symposium. Listening to older people who are marginalised is a critical step towards equity. The evaluation results for Congress were very positive – cementing its place in the Embolden Festival program. We hope you will read the Congress report on the Margins webpage: [celebrateageing.com/margins](https://celebrateageing.com/margins)

The Embolden Collection is an important legacy from the Festival – it synthesises key learnings, offers delegates an action plan and links to key resources. We hope it will help to accelerate the pace of reforms to combat ageism.

Thankyou to everyone who made #Embolden2023 such a success, in particular our eight partners, 50+ presenters and facilitators, 100+ delegates and our wonderful team.

# Debra Nicholl, CEO Elder Rights Advocacy (Principal Partner)

Elder Rights Advocacy is proud to have been the Principal Partner for #Embolden2023. We are committed to combating ageism and building respect for older Victorians.

The Embolden Festival presented several innovations that will guide us for years to come. We were pleased to be part of the #OldisBeautiful workshops, which offered an innovative approach to building the confidence of older people – and educating the community about valuing older people and valuing our own ageing. These are important steps in primary prevention of Elder Abuse, and we were pleased to be part of the workshops.

I was also delighted to cofacilitate the Continue workshop at the Embolden Symposium. The workshop raised questions about how we continue to combat ageism and advocate for older people in a world where older people and those of us who work with older people are often not valued. We need to acknowledge the challenges, our humanness and the need for support. We need to look after ourselves – that's why the DIY Angels initiative is so important.

Elder Rights Advocacy is a member of the Older Person's Advocacy Network or OPAN. In Victoria, phone 1800 700 600 or (03) 9602 3066 Monday to Friday, 9-5 pm. We can arrange an interpreter or translator. In other states/territories, phone OPAN on 1800 700 600 between 8 am and 8 pm Monday to Friday to be put through to your local advocate. More info: [elderrights.org.au](https://elderrights.org.au)

# Introduction

This report summarises the insights, outputs, outcomes and a suggested action plan from #Embolden2023, Australia's only national event focused on combatting ageism and building respect for older people. Embolden is an initiative of Celebrate Ageing Ltd, a charity that has been combatting ageism and building respect for older people for over a decade.

Established in 2018, Embolden seeks to build the capacity and confidence of service providers, policy makers, community leaders, older people and everyone who works with or for older people - to accelerate the pace of change.

Embolden recognises older people, and people living with dementia, as thought leaders, innovators and influencers. The objectives of Embolden are to:

- Promote cross disciplinary learning
- Promote cross cultural respect
- Promote opportunities for older leaders to be heard
- Build resources and momentum for culture change
- Critique the evidence – and build new evidence
- Adopt engaging approaches to learning.

In the context of Embolden, cross disciplinary learning refers to learning between older people, service providers and others. The event was held at the Daylesford Town Hall, in regional Victoria in October 2023, to coincide with International Day of the Older Person.



## Program

The Embolden program included a Fashion event, a Congress of Older People's Voices from the Margins and a Symposium.

The #Embolden2023 theme *Words Make Worlds*, drew on cultural theories of language as a powerful tool for change. Language reflects and preserves the cultural values and practices that perpetuate the ageism and inequalities experienced by older people. In short, language mirrors culture - and can drive culture change.

The program explored the power of words broadly and the following subthemes in particular depth - marginalisation, co-leadership, beautiful, old and continue. A critical theory approach was adopted for the exploration.

## Critical theory and outputs

Applying a critical theory lens to development of the program guided critique of current values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours towards older people. The program drew on theory by Habermas<sup>1</sup> that critique is necessary for changing practice – or culture.

The critical theory approach also guided production of outputs, or resources to guide action taken by delegates after the event. It was considered important that delegates left the Festival inspired and with resources for change.

The resources were shaped by critical theorems<sup>2</sup> or small theories about how the world is (power in particular) and what must change. A critical theorem was developed for each subtheme and posted on the walls of the Town Hall, alongside a call to action. Delegates were invited to provide feedback on these as the event progressed.

1 Geuss, Raymond (1981). *The Idea of a Critical Theory*. Cambridge University Press

2 Grundy, S. (1982). Three modes of action research. *Curriculum Perspectives* 2(3): 23-34.

## GreenFest

We are committed to minimising waste and reducing harm to the planet by reusing, recycling and minimising the carbon footprint of the Festival. Strategies to achieve this included:

- **Promotional materials:** mostly online, recycled paper, no plastic film on hard copy materials
- **Program:** abstracts and bios were shared online, the program was summarised onto a one page document and a small number printed in black and white on recycled paper
- **Lanyards:** bamboo lanyards used and collected after the event for reuse
- **Name tags:** black and white nametags were printed on recycled cardboard, without plastic coating or sleeves
- **Coffee and tea:** ceramic cups were provided by the Town Hall and a small number of bamboo cups were available for takeaway
- **Drink bottles:** delegates asked to bring their own drink bottles
- **Satchels:** not provided
- **Cutlery and crockery:** ceramic plates and metal cutlery were provided by the catering company
- **Food waste:** volunteers from the Daylesford Good Grub Club collected surplus food for local people unable to access or afford food
- **Banner:** the event banner is printed with logo only to enable reuse annually.

Thankyou to the delegates for supporting these initiatives and we look forward to learning more about how to improve future events.

## About this report

The purpose of this report is to help build momentum for change by outlining key insights from Embolden and suggested actions. Key sections include:

- An overview of the #OldisBeautiful fashion event and critical theorem on Beauty
- An overview of congress and critical theorem on marginalisation (please also see full report on congress at [celebrateageing.com/margins](https://celebrateageing.com/margins))
- An overview of the symposium and description of the co-leadership, old is good and continue subthemes and related critical theorems
- A description of the artist in residence program
- A summary of the evaluation
- A suggested action plan.

Please note there is a separate report for the *Congress of Older People's Voices from the Margins* at: [celebrateageing.com/margins](https://celebrateageing.com/margins).



*We hope this report  
will help to build  
momentum for  
change.*

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# Fashion Event

## #OldisBeautiful (IDOP)

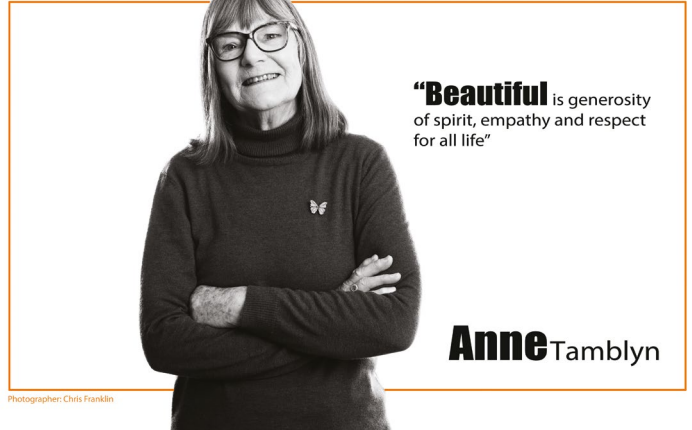
Every year Embolden Festival is launched with a Fashion and Beauty event on International Day of the Older Person (IDOP). The event provides an innovative opportunity to engage the broader community in understanding and combatting ageism.

The Fashion and Beauty event for #Embolden2023 involved the release of a series of photo portraits from the #OldisBeautiful project. The portraits were taken at workshops where older people explored internalised ageism and what beautiful means to them.



#OldisBeautiful

[celebrateageing.com/beautiful](https://celebrateageing.com/beautiful)



The workshops were facilitated by Celebrate Ageing Ltd and hosted by the Maroondah City Council, U3A Hepburn and the City of Brimbank, with guest speakers from Elder Rights Advocacy providing information on rights and advocacy. Professional portraits from the workshops were shared through social and other media to combat ageism in the community by:

- Encouraging community members to see older people as beautiful
- Building connections between older and younger people (of all generations)
- Helping younger people see older people as role models and identify their own positive ageing pathway
- Decreasing the 'othering' of older people.

Dissemination included 100 large street posters of Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Sherree Francis (previous page) across Melbourne. Aunty Sherree shared her message about what beautiful means to her:

*When you become older you appreciate who you are with much more authenticity. This is me it says. I am a First Nation Elder with wisdom and knowledge to share with the younger generations. My journey is slowly ending, everything is beautiful through my eye. I am beautiful. I leave this legacy to my daughters, granddaughters and future generations of granddaughters.*

A project media release was picked by HelloCare, Compass and The Ballarat Courier. A front page spread also appeared in The Senior Newspaper, with a portrait of project patron Michelle Trebilco and the hashtag #OldisBeautiful (see image above left). The Senior has a national readership of more than 1.3 million people.

The #OldisBeautiful campaign was launched on day two of the Symposium with presentations from a workshop facilitator, photographer and participants (see image of participant Anne Tamblyn above).

A report on the #OldisBeautiful pilot is available on the project webpage, with a facilitator's kit for people interested in hosting a workshop. The kit includes a license to replicate the project, step by step guidelines, information sheets, consent forms, a presentation for workshop participants, photographer's guidelines, evaluation tools and suggestions for engaging the media. The kit is available for a small licensing fee, check the project webpage for more information: [celebrateageing.com/beautiful](https://celebrateageing.com/beautiful).

Evaluation of the #OldisBeautiful project is reported separately (see: [celebrateageing.com/beautiful](https://celebrateageing.com/beautiful)). The critical theorem and call to action is presented [below](#).





# Beauty

## Critical Theorem & Call to Action

**Critical theorem:** Expanding narrow definitions of beauty to encompass older people is a powerful tool against ageism. This approach can assist in protecting older people from internalised ageism and connecting older people by enabling those who are not yet old to see a positive trajectory for their own ageing.

We the delegates at #Embalden2023 call for expansion of the narrow definitions of **Beauty**, to include older people, as summarised above and outlined below.

The word 'beauty' refers to something that is pleasing to the senses or mind aesthetically, or qualities that evoke a sense of pleasure, admiration or appreciation. However, concepts of beauty have become more narrowly defined as physical beauty and youth - and we are called to fight the visible signs of ageing.

Such narrow definitions of beauty reinforce ageism – or the message that we are 'less' as we age. They exacerbate the 'othering' of older people, or the psychological distance between older people and those who are not yet old.

The 'othering' of older people is a driver of ageist inequalities, abuse, discrimination and violence.

Expanding narrow definitions of beauty to include older people is a powerful tool to combat ageism. It can empower older people, reduce internalised ageism and guide younger people (of all ages) to identify and connect with older people and envisage their own ageing trajectory.

Exploring the concept of #OldisBeautiful with older people also provides an opportunity to expand the concept of beauty as broader than a physical form. It includes attitude, character, spirit and encompasses all human shapes, sizes, skin colours, genders, sexualities and abilities.

# Congress of Older People's Voices from the Margins

The inaugural Congress of Older People's Voices from the Margins was held prior to the Symposium, to explore how marginalised groups of older people experience ageism, and how ageism marginalises older people. A detailed report on Congress is available on The Margins webpage at: [celebrateageing.com/margins](http://celebrateageing.com/margins).

Congress included presentations by 15 older people (and their representatives) focused on the experiences of Aboriginal people, Auslan users, people living with dementia, people living with HIV, male care partners, people ageing on a farm, dialysis user, LGBTIQ+ people, sex workers, polio survivors, Moslem refugees and older women experiencing homelessness. The presentations related to five categories of marginalisation - gender, ability, place, culture and sexuality.

Following the presentations, a Design Café was led by service providers, policy makers, advocates, researchers, academics and community leaders. The aims of the Design Café were to explore root causes of marginalisation across the presentations and identify ways to create more inclusive families, communities, services and policy.

## Root causes

There was general agreement that ageism is a root cause of marginalisation. Other underlying forms of oppression (exacerbated by ageist views of older people as homogenous) contribute to marginalisation and can include racism, ableism, sexism, metrocentricity, classism and queerphobia.

Across the presentations by older people, marginalisation was described as a consequence of the following:

- **Ignorance:** lack of understanding of unique experiences and needs
- **Disrespect:** ageist view that older people are homogenous
- **Grief:** sadness can lead older people to marginalise themselves
- **Shame:** some older people are ashamed of their disease/ability
- **Resources:** lack of information and resources for older people
- **Invisibility:** some older people don't feel empowered to challenge invisibility
- **Literacy:** lack of technical, cognitive or English language skills to access info
- **Silencing:** lack of safe spaces to speak and active shutting down
- **Stigma:** older people who don't comply with social norms are stigmatised
- **Segregation:** lack of accessible spaces
- **Contribution:** belief that older people have nothing to contribute.



*Presenter: Gwenda Darling*

## Overall recommendations

Insights and recommendations were summarised for each category of marginalisation and suggestions made for how the concept of marginalisation could be utilised. Additionally, the following overall recommendations were made:

- **Information:** review information for older people to ensure it is useful and accessible
- **Communities:** engage local communities in better understanding and supporting marginalised older people
- **Services:** promote inclusive services by identifying the experiences and needs of marginalised older people, removing barriers to service access, educating workers and building inclusive services
- **Families:** identify opportunities to work with families and promote respect for older people
- **Policies:** ensure policies look beyond ethnicity to include the broader cohort of marginalised older people.

## Utilising the marginalisation concept

The concept of marginalisation has much to offer diversity planning and programs to prevent Elder Abuse and other forms of ageism. It views marginalised older people as 'us' rather than 'them' and guides us to an understanding we all play a role in marginalisation and strategies for prevention. Useful questions in exploring marginalisation include:

- Which groups of older people are marginalised?
- How are older people marginalised?
- Why are older people marginalised?
- What are the underlying forms of oppression that contribute to marginalisation?
- What strategies can reduce marginalisation and oppression of older people?

The critical theorem and call to action on marginalisation is presented on the following page.



# Marginalisation

## Critical Theorem & Call to Action

**Critical theorem:** The concept of marginalisation has much to offer approaches to diversity planning and programs to prevent Elder Abuse and other forms of ageism. It views marginalised older people as ‘us’ rather than ‘them’ and guides us to an understanding that we all play a role in marginalisation and strategies for prevention.

We the delegates at #Embolden2023 invite consideration of Marginalisation and older people, as summarised above and outlined below.

The word Marginalisation was used at #Embolden2023 to refer to treating an older person or group of older people as less significant, relegating them to an unimportant or less powerful position in society, or excluding them from dominant culture. Older people who are marginalised are not treated as equal.

Ageism marginalises older people, and older people may also be marginalised on their basis of their gender, physical or mental ability, place, culture, or sexuality. This is often referred to as intersectionality, and an older person may have multiple characteristics that lead to marginalisation.

Some diverse groups of older people are marginalised, while others are not. Applying a marginalisation lens raises useful questions:

- Which groups of older people are marginalised?
- How are older people marginalised?
- Why are older people marginalised?
- What are the underlying forms of oppression that contribute to marginalisation?
- What strategies can reduce marginalisation and oppression of older people?

The concept of marginalisation has much to offer approaches to diversity planning and programs to prevent Elder Abuse and other forms of ageism. It views marginalised older people as ‘us’ rather than ‘them’ and guides us to an understanding that we all play a role in marginalisation and strategies for prevention.

The concept of marginalisation is relatively easy to grasp, a critical factor in creating momentum for equity. Most people have experienced marginalisation (even for a brief period) and understand the adverse impacts. The relatability of the concept promotes understanding that protracted or persistent marginalisation can devastate an older person’s health and wellbeing.

Marginalisation is an important lens to consider in: developing information for older people, engaging local communities, promoting inclusive services, working with families and ensuring inclusive policies.



*Shirley Glance OAM and Dr Catherine Barrett*

# Symposium

The Symposium began with a session on co-leadership and then workshops where delegates critiqued evidence and power and clarified calls to action as outlined in the following section.

## Co-Leadership

The first session explored the power of Co-Leadership by older people and people living with dementia. Co-leadership was presented as ethically important and an effective strategy to promote successful change.

Celebrate Ageing's Elder Leadership Academy was outlined as an example of older people's co-leadership. The Academy offers Fellowships to older people to co-lead projects. The following older people were presented as graduands of the Academy in 2023:

**Shirley Glance OAM** (image previous page): Shirley's Fellowship focused on building inclusive services and communities for people ageing with Post Polio Syndrome (see <https://www.postpolio victoria.org.au>)

**Kathy Mansfield:** Kathy developed a Ripplegram technique to engage service providers, older Trans and Gender Diverse people and their families in understanding the consequences of later life transition (see: [alicesgarage.net/kinfolk](http://alicesgarage.net/kinfolk)).

A new Fellowship co-led by Max Primmer was also announced, focusing on connecting older people in rural communities - particularly through intergenerational activities. The session also included the launch of the Philippa Campbell Fellowship, outlined to the right.



## Philippa Campbell Fellowship

The Philippa Campbell Fellowship honours the life and contributions of Philippa Campbell. Philippa was a wonderful woman who was passionate about respect for older people, equality for women and human kindness. Philippa dedicated much of her life to working with older people, including as CEO of Elder Rights Advocacy, Victoria.

Philippa died in 2023, when she was just 56 years of age. The Fellowship celebrates Philippa's life and the contribution she made to making the world a better place. The Fellowship will be awarded annually to older women combatting the inequalities older women face.

The Inaugural Philippa Campbell Fellowship has been awarded to Theresa Flavin. Theresa is a Dementia Educator and Advocate who lives with Younger Onset Dementia. Theresa's Fellowship will promote increased awareness and understanding of the necessity for affirmative sexual consent in intimate relationships when one person in the relationship is living with dementia. This will be achieved by developing resources and providing education for people living with dementia and their intimate partners. Theresa will work in consultation with people living with dementia and their intimate partners.



# *The Philippa Campbell Fellowship honours the life and contributions of Philippa Campbell.*



# Co-Leadership

## Critical Theorem & Call to Action

**Critical theorem:** It is important to consider the contributions of older people and people living with dementia - beyond their lived experience. Recognition of older people's skills, capabilities and passion can open up opportunities for co-leadership that amplify the success of innovations.

We the delegates at #Embalden2023 invite consideration of **Co-Leadership** by older people and people living with dementia, as summarised above and outlined below.

The lived experience of older people and people living with dementia is often valued in the context of planning for improvements. When this valuing occurs, older people and people living with dementia may be consulted about their experiences or represented in strategies for change or improvement.

While consultation and representation are valuable, there may be further opportunities for older people/people living with dementia to participate in co-design and co-production. These approaches (when genuinely utilised) value the contributions older people/people living with dementia make to designing and implementing improvements.

Beyond co-design and co-production there are opportunities for co-leadership. In co-leadership approaches, older people and people living with dementia are valued as critical thinkers, researchers, strategic planners, service designers, policy makers, entrepreneurs and networkers.

Opportunities for co-leadership are more likely to emerge when we understand and value the skills, capabilities and passions of older people and people living with dementia.

Co-leadership isn't simply a call for the ethical engagement of older people and people living with dementia. It is also a call for recognition of the power of Co-Leadership. Where older people and people living with dementia co-lead change, the likelihood of successful outcomes may be significantly enhanced.





# Old is good

The #OldisGood session explored the power of words to make worlds and then focused on the word 'old' and its meaning. Professor of Linguistics **Kate Burridge** gave examples of how the meaning of words can change over time and how changing language can prompt reflection on the need to change culture. Kate also explored the history of words used to describe older people – see video at Celebrate Ageing YouTube channel.

A presentation then explored representations of older people in popular media including news stories, social media, advertising, magazines and birthday cards. The presentation highlighted the mocking of older people's bodies and technical skills, blaming older people for major catastrophic events, attributing positive qualities to youth and denial of ageing – concluding that too often representations of 'old' are synonymous with 'bad'.

The concept of 'Wordbergs' was presented to challenge the dismissal of ageist words as harmless. Statistics on the impacts of ageism show the extent of harm and highlight how changing our language is a useful strategy to promote reflection on ageism in culture.

Delegates were then invited to make a birthday card with a message about the positive aspects of ageing. The cards are intended to set a reminder for delegates to be mindful about their words and celebrate their ageing.

Delegates were also offered an #OldisGood badge (see page 3) to help generate conversations in their workplace, community or family. The critical theorem and call to action for this subtheme is presented on the following page.





# Old

## Critical Theorem & Call to Action

**Critical theorem:** The word ‘old’ has negative connotations in many Western cultures; it is often used as a slur that disempowers older people and prompts those who are not yet old to fight or deny their ageing. Creating alternative words won’t combat ageism – we need to understand ageing as a privilege and identify the positive attributes of old age and understand that #OldisGood.

We the delegates at #Embolden2023 invite consideration to the meaning of the word ‘old’, as summarised above and outlined below.

The world old refers to having lived for a long time. While it may be used in reference to characteristics that are good or improving with age, more often it is used as a slur.

In many Western cultures, the word ‘old’ conjures negative images of vulnerability, frailty, morbidity and mortality.

The negative connotations of the word ‘old’ result in age denial, hiding our age and the visible signs of ageing, and attributing the positive qualities of older people to youthfulness.

In ageist cultures, many older people dislike being referred to as old and call for alternative terms to be used.

Using words other than ‘old’ to refer to people who are old – or to ourselves - does not resolve the underlying issue of ageism. Alternative words will be subjective to the same cultural values (ageism) and also become slurs.

It is not the word ‘old’ that needs to change – it is our attitude towards ageing and older people that needs to change. We need to embrace opportunities to learn from cultures of respect for old people, particularly Aboriginal culture.

Rethinking the meaning of the word ‘old’ – and attributing positive qualities to it is an important step in combatting ageism and building cultures that value ageing and older people - #OldisGood





# Continue

Ageism has an adverse impact on aged care workers, advocates and care givers (paid and unpaid). It can result in the devaluing of their work by others – and by themselves. Building cultures of respect for older people requires that we value the work of those supporting older people and advocating for change.

The Continue session presented the issues of fatigue, burnout and workforce shortages as real issues in a 'post-covid' world; and suggested these issues are amplified for advocates and care givers working in an ageist world. It then considered ways to reduce worker reduce fatigue and burn out through strategies to recognise and affirm their contributions and encourage their valuing of self.

The session began with a message from Debra Nicholl, CEO of Elder Rights Advocacy about the challenges of aged care advocacy and the importance of self-care. Debra told delegates:

*I love the work I do and so many of you here also love what you do and are very good at what you do. I want to keep doing the work I am doing - but to be able to continue our important work we also need to acknowledge the challenges. By acknowledging when it is hard, we give others permission to be human and we take an important step in the process of taking care of ourselves.*

Presenters also included Stephanie Dowrick, Australian writer, Interfaith Minister, social activist, and author. Stephanie responded to the following three questions applying lessons from her most recent book *Your Name is Not Anxious* to the support needs of aged care workers, advocates and care givers:

- How do good aged care advocates, workers and carers value themselves in an ageist world where older people and those who work with them are less valued?
- How do good aged care advocates, workers and carers take care of themselves or value themselves if they are working in an organisation where they don't feel valued or heard?
- What do you mean when you say we need to respond to stressful situations by taking care of our bodies first?

Stephanie's presentation was video recorded and is available on the Continue webpage: [celebrateageing.com/continue](https://celebrateageing.com/continue).

The final part of the session reflected on *Everyday Angels*, a project celebrating the achievements in staff in aged care. It recounted how community members were invited to provide feedback about the achievements of aged care workers – and how affirming it was for workers to receive the positive feedback.

The problem then presented to delegates is that in an ageist world, the achievements of aged care advocates, workers and carers are seldom recognised or valued. This gap creates a need (and opportunity) for self-valuing and affirmation, a concept referred to as DIY Angels.

The DIY Angels process was explored, with delegates invited to write down something they had done in the past week that they were proud of. Delegates were then invited to share their responses, which included:

- *Walked an elderly neighbour home as she was very frail and risked falling*
- *Started building relationships with people and organisations that don't always have a chance to be heard*
- *I supported a program participant to remain in social support program by implementing a supportive and safe support plan.*
- *Created a safe space for honest conversations and my staff to be vulnerable and heard*
- *Spent more time than I thought I had to give to an older person*
- *Today during the lunch break, I called a dear friend who is [in] isolation in an aged care facility, because his wife has COVID. He is lonely and bored. I wanted him to know I was there for him and he was not alone*
- *Organised my family to do weekly calls to sibling with dementia.*

Delegates were encouraged to replicate the activity in their workplace, community or family. A webpage has been created to share the DIY Angels and Everyday Angels activities (see: [celebrateageing.com/continue](https://celebrateageing.com/continue)). A copy of the Maya Angelou poem that inspired the workshop (shared by Philippa Campbell) was given to delegates to remind them of the importance of valuing what they do.



*My wish for you is  
that you continue.  
Continue to be who  
you are, to astonish a  
mean world with your  
acts of kindness.*

*Maya Angelou*





# Continue

## Critical Theorem & Call to Action

**Critical theorem:** Ageism is a barrier to recognition of the valuable contributions made by those working with or caring for older people i.e.: aged care workers, advocates and carers (paid and unpaid). It is important that those working with older people understand and value their own contributions in order to continue their important roles.

We the delegates at #Embolden2023 invite consideration of the word Continue, as summarised above and outlined below.

In an ageist world it can be difficult to bear witness to the devaluing and disrespect of older people. Additionally, in a world that doesn't value older people enough – those who work with or for older people are often not valued or adequately supported.

To continue working with and for older people, particularly in a 'post' Covid world where there are global workforce shortages and collective fatigue, the importance of valuing and affirming our contributions is critical.

Just as we call older people to protect themselves from internalised ageism, we call on those working with and for older people to protect themselves from the devaluing narratives about the important work they do.

The call for valuing the achievements of the aged care workforce does not suggest there is no room for improvement. The need to do better was clearly articulated in the Royal Commission into Quality and Safety in Aged Care.

Alongside the calls to do better – we seek recognition of the positive difference we make to the lives of older people every day. We must value it ourselves if we are to Continue.



# Artist in residence

The Artist in Residence program at Embolden provides an opportunity to learn from an older artist and explore the power of art as a tool for combatting ageism.

The artist in residence at #Embolden2023 was Dr. Julie Gross McAdam. Julie is the director of MAC.ART, an internationally respected and multi-award winning dementia-specific art as recreation therapy program. She has directed 3000+ artists in aged and community healthcare settings in Australia and North America to depict the life and times of the contributing participants.

Julie is an Executive Member of the Society for the Arts in Dementia Care (North America) and holds in the graphic arts, recreation therapy, aged care and dementia services.

Julie invited delegates to contribute to a visual art piece responding to the theme #OldisBeautiful (see image above). The beautiful artwork was then gifted to Elder Rights Advocacy in recognition of their work advocating for older people.

# Evaluation

Evaluation forms were provided to participants at completion of Congress and the Symposium and completed by 37 of the 100 delegates. The evaluation approach drew on the **Kirkpatrick Model**, reviewing four levels of the education (Congress and Symposium) i.e.: delegates reaction, learning of new knowledge and skills, and plans for behaviour change.

To explore these levels, delegates were given statements about the relevance of Congress and The Symposium, whether they learned new knowledge or skills and whether the knowledge/skills had practical use. Delegates were asked to record their level of agreement with the statement using a 7-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree) with higher scores indicative of higher agreement.

A fifth level in the Kirkpatrick Model relates to outcomes and documenting the degree to which delegates change something in response to what they learned. To explore this level, a brief online survey will be circulated to delegates in April 2024.

A final question asked delegates whether they had plans to make changes in response to what they had learned (yes/no options). Overall, the ratings were high on all levels (see following pages) and comments indicate that Congress and Symposium were very well received.

## Congress evaluation

The Congress evaluation results are presented in full in the Congress report and summarised below. Delegates rating were:

**Relevance:** average rating 6.51

**New knowledge/skills:** average rating 6.54

**Practical use:** average rating 6.55

When asked if they had plans to utilise what they had learned, 86% of delegates said they did and provided examples of their plans. Comments included:

- *Loved the diversity of life experiences.....this is real life*
- *Hats off to the organisers for curating such a line-up. It was very powerful to hear these voices - especially in succession*
- *It was brilliant to hear all the different stories and voices. Of course, relevant to reflect on and learn from these different lived experiences*
- *It allowed many different stories to be told and it was beautiful to see the diversity of ageing*
- *The stories shared showed how marginalised our ageing population is ...*
- *Discovered issues that I have not considered before*
- *I thought I was really conversant with marginalisation in aged care but I came away thinking about the many faces of marginalisation*
- *Will pass on to Policy at DOHAC ... [share] with colleagues and policy areas at DoHAC*
- *You've offered me breadth and an invitation to widen my understanding of experiences outside my own*
- *I will take learnings to encourage changes at my workplace e.g.: ensuring that marginalised groups are considered when developing resources*
- *I will change my way of thinking and hopefully talking about being old*
- *I hope my awareness will remain widened*
- *I think I will be more open to listening to, and helping to 'platform', such diverse voices and perspectives*

## Symposium evaluation

The evaluation process was repeated at closure of the Symposium with twenty two delegates rating relevance, new knowledge and practical skills as follows:

**Relevance:** average rating 6.51

**New knowledge/skills:** average rating 6.48

**Practical use:** average rating 6.41

When asked whether they had plans to change anything in response to what they had learned at the Symposium, 86.3% of delegates said they would and noted the following changes they would make:

- *Thinking about 'ageism' and protecting it for older people*
- *More thoughtful with communication and action with other elders*
- *I will build more evaluation into my projects*
- *That we need to continue our work but also promote change that eliminates ageism*
- *Consider photography in projects*
- *Won't change anything going to simply double down now that the ideas were validated in this conference*
- *We will use the insights to inform our work in supporting providers do better*
- *Multiple "lightbulb" moments which have refocussed my thought process around ageism. Loved it!*
- *Appreciate myself more*
- *More calling out of ageism*
- *Careful of language.*

## Overall comments

On both days delegates were invited to make any overall comments and responses included the following:

- *Great presentations and demonstrated a great insight into the various worlds of the Australian aging community*
- *Well run: well facilitated: intelligent - substance and way it's run*
- *A simple thank you for bringing us together*
- *What a fantastic event. Loved the stories, welcome country, variety of marginalised people speaking, networking opportunities and June's activity [on marginalisation] - clever! Unfolded well - (smiley face) well done!*
- *Well organised - thank you to Catherine and all those from Celebrate Ageing. Meeting new people from other organisations was very important*
- *Very inspiring event. I am keen to make some changes based on what I've learnt. Wonderful speakers with great stories to tell, it's a shame we didn't have time to hear more*
- *Such important education and learning for me, hearing directly from people is so powerful*
- *Congratulations to Catherine and the Celebrate Ageing members for an amazing congress. Well done!*
- *Absolutely brilliant day!*
- *I was most impressed with the whole project.*
- *Bravo! Amazing!*



- *Thank you for creating this amazing space for learning and sharing. Thank, thank you, thank you (big smiley face).*
- *This has been an informative and uplifting symposium. Thank you to Catherine and team.*
- *This was an entirely new experience for me. Everyone's contribution, everyone's acceptance of me was amazing.*
- *I loved the resident artist and the art project!*
- *Loved the opportunity to work on the collaborative art piece.*
- *Amazing! Fabulous!*
- *Wonderful few days. Amazing work!!!*

## Improvements

Suggestions for improvements were highlighted by several delegates and will be considered in the planning for Embolden2024. In summary, suggestions included:

- *More scheduled breaks*
- *More time for older people to present*
- *More time for discussion*
- *Q and A following older people's presentations*
- *Icebreaker activity*
- *Consider options for design café to promote discussion and debate*
- *Consider implications for delegates to utilise storytelling in their workplaces and communities.*



# Suggested Action Plan

To help promote change as an outcome of #Embolden2023 a suggested action plan has been developed, with actions for each of the five subthemes. These are not prescriptions – please review and localise to the needs of your organisation, community or group.



*Inspired to find such openness in services and government and policy makers and encourages me to reach out and connect more.*

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## Marginalisation

The suggested activities listed below related to the resources developed from Congress, which can be found at: [celebrateageing.com/margins](https://celebrateageing.com/margins)

**Go to The Margins webpage at [celebrateageing.com/margins](https://celebrateageing.com/margins) and:**

1. Read the stories from older people
2. Read the Congress report
3. Review approaches to diversity in your organisation, community or group to consider a marginalisation lens and ask the following questions:
  - Which older people are marginalised?
  - How are older people marginalised?
  - Why are older people marginalised?
  - What are the underlying forms of oppression that contribute to marginalisation of older people?
  - What strategies can reduce marginalisation and oppression of older people?
4. Review access to information to ensure it is inclusive
5. Engage local communities of marginalised older people
6. Promote the development of inclusive services for older people who are marginalised
7. Identify strategies to work with families to reduce marginalisation
8. Co-design policies in partnership with groups of marginalised older people.

## Co-leadership

The suggested activities listed below related to the resources shared at Embolden, which can be found at: [celebrateageing.com/academy](https://celebrateageing.com/academy)

**Go to the Elder Leadership Academy webpage at: [celebrateageing.com/academy](https://celebrateageing.com/academy) and:**

1. Read the Fellowship summaries
2. Review your existing approaches to working with older people and people living with dementia, including identify where your approaches sit on a scale of increasing participation by older people e.g.: from lower levels of participation such as representation and consultation, to higher levels including codesign and coproduction and coleadership
3. Explore whether there are opportunities to increase participation by older people and people living with dementia – to the level of coleadership
4. Check whether there are any ageist or ableist assumptions about older people and people living with dementia that are barriers to their participation e.g.: a belief that older people and people living with dementia having nothing to contribute or don't have skills necessary to co-lead
5. Identify the potential benefits and risks associated with increasing the levels of participation by older people and people living with dementia
6. Discuss what it means to 'share power' with older people and people living with dementia e.g.: beyond their skills and capacities and potential risks to an initiative, do staff have concerns about not being 'in charge'?

## #OldisBeautiful

The suggested activities listed below related to the resources shared at Embolden, which can be found at: [celebrateageing.com/beautiful](https://celebrateageing.com/beautiful)

**Go to the #OldisBeautiful webpage at [celebrateageing.com/beautiful](https://celebrateageing.com/beautiful) and**

1. Read the messages about what beautiful means to older people
2. Share the #OldisBeautiful portraits and messages with colleagues, family and friends and ask them
  - a) Whether they think youthfulness is a beauty goal – and if so, what impact this may have on the valuing of our ageing and the way we value older people?
  - b) Whether beautiful is defined more broadly by older people e.g.: less focus on what a person looks like and more focus on who a person is
  - c) How an understand that #OldisBeautiful might change the way they feel about their own ageing
3. Register to facilitate an #OldisBeautiful workshop in your community and to help protect older people from internalised ageism
4. Share the #OldisBeautiful portraits of local older people in your community to raise awareness of ageism and the importance of respect of older people.

## #OldisGood

The suggested activities listed below related to the resources shared at Embolden. Keep an eye out for the launch of the Dictionary of Ageism in 2024.

1. Make a poster with the hashtag #OldisGood and post it in a prominent place and invite conversation on the following:
  - a) Is 'old' being used in a way that is derogatory?
  - b) Are the positive qualities of older people attributed to 'youthfulness'?
2. Be aware of how the word 'old' is used in conversation and popular culture more broadly.
3. Look out for the Wordbergs in the Workplace resource being launched in 2024.



*It was brilliant to hear all the different stories and voices. Of course, relevant to reflect on and learn from these different lived experiences.*

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## Continue

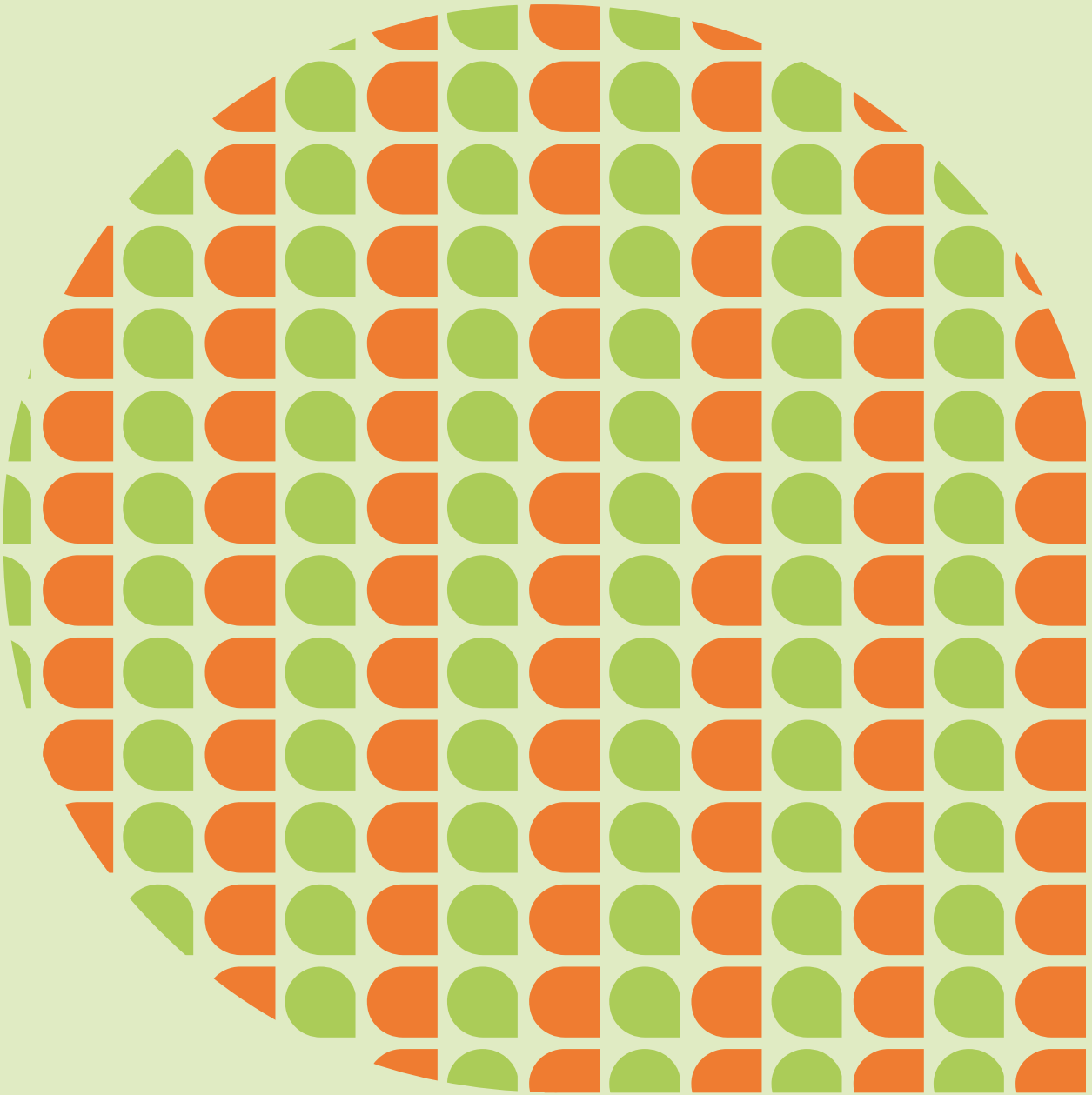
The suggested activities listed below related to the resources shared at Embolden, which can be found at: [celebrateageing.com/continue](https://celebrateageing.com/continue)

**Go to the Continue webpage at [celebrateageing.com/continue](https://celebrateageing.com/continue) and:**

1. Read about the Continue project
2. Consider hosting an Everyday Angels project to celebrate the achievements of aged care workers
3. Consider opportunities to host a DIY Angels activity, inviting team, group, family or community members to identify and value their achievements, particularly at the following times:
  - a) After a staff or community meeting
  - b) When an incident has occurred
  - c) When morale is low
4. Reflect on the achievements and identify common themes to remind participants of their strengths
5. Watch the video by Stephanie Dowrick.



The Embolden2023 Collection



**More information**

Webpage:

[celebrateageing.com/embolden](https://celebrateageing.com/embolden)

[celebrateageing.com/margins](https://celebrateageing.com/margins)