

Ageing Bodies, Trusted Hands

Creating Compassionate, Person-Centred Support

Danijela Hlis - Aged Care Consumer Advocate

Lived Experience and Advocacy

- Danijela's journey from interpreter to aged care advocate was shaped by personal caregiving for her parents.
- She champions culturally safe, person-centred care, especially for people from CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) backgrounds.

Communication and Cultural Safety

- Language loss in dementia isolates many older people; reverting to mother tongue is common and often misunderstood.
- Lack of interpreters and bilingual tools leads to misdiagnosis, fear, and preventable deaths.
- Communication is as vital as food and water in aged care.

Person-Centred and Compassionate Care

- Care must go beyond routines—empathy, respect, and cultural understanding are essential.
- Examples show how music, language, and cultural familiarity can restore joy and dignity.
- Person-centred care must include co-design with older people and respect for the "dignity of risk."

Opportunities for Reform

- Legislation must protect vulnerable people, especially those who can't give consent.
- Funding should support families who provide culturally appropriate meals and care.
- Respite care, affordability, and clearer transitions from home to residential care are urgent needs.

Family, Community, and Carer Involvement

- Family carers are vital but unsupported once loved ones enter residential care.
- Community groups, peer advocates, and cultural clubs to be recognised as care partners.
- Residents' committees need training and protection to advocate without fear.

Education and Awareness

- Many older Australians lack awareness of their rights and aged care reforms.
- National education campaigns and accessible resources (e.g., brochures, multilingual tools) are needed.
- Programs like OPAN, Speak My Language, and intergenerational initiatives are promising but underutilised.

Systemic Gaps and Legislative Needs

- Current aged care relies too heavily on recommendations, not enforceable laws.
- There's no mandate for ethnic-specific care, interpreters, or cultural dietary needs.
- Workforce shortages, underfunded multicultural organisations, and lack of training persist.

Final Call to Action

- Move from consultation to co-design.
- Shift from recommendations to enforceable legislation.
- Honour the dignity, identity, and contributions of older Australians—past and present.