

Experience Required

Why older workers are key to solving Australia's workforce crisis.

Cultivating an Age-Diverse Workforce

The '5G Workforce' is upon us. Inside, discover how multigenerational workplaces can boost creativity, supercharge problem-solving, and improve communication. Learn the secrets to creating harmonious, high performing age-inclusive teams, where employees of all ages, at all life stages, are supported to thrive.

Resolutions for Ageing Well in 2023

Taking inspiration from the famous 'Blue Zones', being regions of the world where citizens live the longest lives, in the greatest health, we share eight evidence-based resolutions for ageing well in 2023 and beyond.

Ageing-Focused Living Labs

Step inside our LifeLab[®] and explore the fascinating world of ageing-focused Living Labs. We explain how Living Laboratories spur innovation and mitigate market risk, welcoming older adults and their diverse perspectives, into the design process.

Welcome from CEO Julianne Parkinson



The impact of Australia's sustained workforce crisis can be felt in every corner of our nation, from classrooms and construction sites to farms, factories, and hospitals. Amidst ballooning demand for housing, healthcare services, digital services, educational services, food and natural resources, there's too much work to be done, and too few minds to share the load.

An October 2022 report by the National Skills Commission found that the number of occupations struggling to fill positions leapt from 153 to 286 over 2022 - meaning nearly one-third of all Australian sectors are facing critical shortfalls.

Stringent restrictions enacted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have seen substantially fewer skilled migrants relocating to Australian shores. Concurrently, declining numbers of younger Australians, aged 15 to 24, are currently engaged in, or seeking, paid employment.

Significant drivers of this trend include the hastening automation of many service-based industries, and increased enrolment in higher education and training. Changing

societal values, and evolving attitudes towards career, leisure time and personal pursuits are also contributing factors.

The comprehensive depletion of Australia's labour force is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, that demands innovative thinking on all fronts. At the Global Centre for Modern Ageing®, we firmly believe that retaining older Australians in meaningful employment, and encouraging retirees to re-join the workforce with the appropriate levels of support is critical to maintaining our nation's prosperity and economic productivity, reducing welfare expenditure and increasing self-reliance in retirement.

We are living longer, in greater health, than ever before. Many thousands of older Australians are rounding the corner to their planned retirement with an increased capacity, desire or need to continue working. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures, dating to 2019, more than 143,000 older Australians returned from retirement in 2018-2019 alone, citing boredom, financial obligations, or a change in their personal circumstances.

There is strong evidence that mature workers represent a valuable, and underutilised resource. This reliable, characteristically hardworking cohort, brimming with knowledge and lived experience, stand ready, willing, and able to contribute.

Older workers' hard-won expertise can help to bridge the widening skills gap, boosting productivity and

reducing staff turnover. Their skills and knowledge can be captured, to benefit the next and subsequent generations, through collaboration and mentoring opportunities.

Tomorrow's workplaces, and workforces, cannot be a copy and paste of the past. To harness this enormous opportunity, and cultivate truly resilient, 'future proof' teams, recruiters and business leaders alike must be prepared to skill up, and think differently. Organisations must create the conditions that enable older adults to thrive and contribute to their full potential.

In this edition of Connect, we explore the documented benefits, and foundational principles of harmonious, age inclusive workplaces, sharing practical strategies to engage, retrain and retain older workers.

Also in this edition, we unpack the benefits of ageing-focused Living Laboratories, and explain how GCMA's flagship LifeLab® supports high-calibre user co-creation for entrepreneurs, non-profits, organisations, and governments in the APAC region and worldwide.

Finally, we share evidence-based resolutions for healthy, purposeful ageing in 2023 and beyond, inspired by the world's famed Blue Zones.

We trust that the topics discussed in this latest newsletter spark stimulating, vital conversations about the conditions we set for older adults, and how these align with our own expectations, and aspirations, for the future.

- Julianne Parkinson, CEO



Embracing Age-Inclusivity: Creating Harmonious, Productive Intergenerational Teams

An age inclusive working environment can deliver a host of benefits for organisations of all sizes. While leadership, organisational culture and interpersonal dynamics doubtless contribute to a team's success or failure, there is compelling evidence to suggest that age-diverse teams communicate better, and generate more creative, efficient, and effective solutions to problems than homogenous teams (Rousseau, Tannenbaum, & VanEpps, 2008). They can also improve an organisation's ability to understand and serve a diverse customer base by welcoming a diverse array of perspectives.

Every employee, regardless of age, should feel valued and respected in their workplace. Organisations can actively promote a respectful culture by factoring age diversity into their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs.

Establishing clear policies, including age inclusive recruitment and retention strategies, is an excellent first step to preventing discrimination or harassment on the basis of age. Organisations can also highlight their company's commitment to inclusivity in internal communications, or by supporting employees to form and participate in age inclusive affinity groups.

Hybrid and flexible working arrangements, including flexible hours, can be especially appealing for older workers. Per the Stanford Center on Longevity's *New Map of Life*, allowing employees across

the age spectrum paid and unpaid intervals to fulfill caregiving responsibilities, manage health conditions, pursue higher learning, and navigate social transitions can keep individuals earning, building financial stability, contributing to taxes, and creating benefits for themselves, their workplaces, and society for longer.

Many older workers say they are less likely to receive training and development opportunities than their younger colleagues. There is evidence to suggest their impressions are correct, with one UK study finding no explanation for the disparity, beyond the workers' age (Blanchflower, 2013). Equitable access to training and development can enable employees of all ages to broaden their skills and knowledge, providing value to the individual and business alike.

A worker should never be deemed 'too old' to be worthy of further investment.

Mentoring programs can encourage knowledge sharing, and foster solidarity, between older and younger workers. Both mentors and mentees can experience the positive effects of such programs, including increased job satisfaction, career development, and organisational loyalty (Malette, Dominguez, & Tannenbaum, 2016).

The Global Centre for Modern Ageing® offers expert advisory services, and can support your business to plan, implement and measure age inclusive practices and policies. For detailed guidance tailored to your organisation's unique needs and challenges, [get in touch with our team](#).

Top Tips for Mature Job Seekers

If you're an older candidate, and believe your age is a barrier to employment, you are not alone. Regrettably, more than one third of workers aged between 50 and 70 feel overlooked or 'shut out' when applying for new roles, according to the UK's Centre for Ageing Better.

There's scarce evidence to support the damaging stereotype that older people are poor performers when measured against their younger colleagues. And, as an older person, it's possible you may be overlooking the many competitive advantages you have over younger applicants.

You're likely to have a breadth of experience, knowledge and maturity that would be an asset to your prospective employer. Older workers typically bring well-honed communication skills, emotional regulation skills and a knack for problem solving, having been exposed to a wider range of experiences, situations, and people than their younger counterparts.

Harness your unique strengths, and position yourself for the best chance of success, with the following practical suggestions:

- Use a skills based CV, that draws attention to your skills, relevant experience, and qualifications. You do not need to list your age and may opt to 'downplay' dates. (Be sure to update your online presence, e.g., LinkedIn, too! Consult with a friend, family member or professional if you need assistance with this task.)

- Sell your transferrable skills. Throughout your career, you have likely finetuned your communication skills, adaptability, and leadership qualities. These are highly transferrable skills for a variety of roles.
- Demonstrate your capacity to learn and adapt. Willingness to learn new technologies, and adopt new ways of working, will serve both you and your prospective employer.
- Keep an open mind, exploring different industries and fields. You might find the thing you've always done is not aligned with your future plans. Consider flexible working arrangements and flexible hours. Be open to different working styles, e.g. part time, contract, or temporary work.
- Cultivate your network. Get to know other professionals in your chosen industry, as well as organisations and groups focused on employing older workers.
- Keep your skills up to date by volunteering or joining professional organisations in your local community. You never know who you might meet, or what opportunities might come your way.
- Don't get discouraged! It may take some time to find the right opportunity. Job searching can be a lengthy process for candidates of all ages.





GCMA Myth Busting: Older and younger workers want different things... or do they?

Public discourse tends to perpetuate a divisive narrative, emphasising superficial differences and stoking well-worn conflicts between older and younger generations. In truth, older and younger people are more alike than they are different, despite the different historical and cultural contexts that have influenced their values and behaviours.

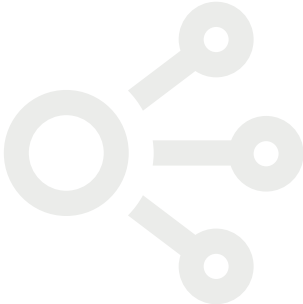
This is especially true of attitudes to employment (Kooij, Thijssen, Dijkers, & Tims, 2018). All generations value fair compensation and benefits, opportunities for growth and development, and a healthy work-life balance.

Research also suggests that autonomy, mastery and purpose are compelling factors that bridge the supposed generational divide.

According to one 2017 study, published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, employees of all ages, regardless of their level of tenure, value the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to their organisation (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2017).

While it's true that older and younger people may differ somewhat in their working styles, it's important to note that many other factors, including an individual's role, seniority and personal preferences can also influence their working style.

Employers that focus on creating a positive, communicative culture will better serve the needs, aspirations, and preferences of their employees than those making broad assumptions on the basis of age or generation.



An Expert Perspective: Associate Professor Katrina Radford on Workforce Engagement and Transitions

Over the last few years, we have seen an increased push for more inclusive age-friendly workplaces, and a renewed focus on generational differences at work, specifically around how we better engage and retain a multi-generational workforce. This is increasingly important as we enter a trend of 'unretirement' where almost 4 out of every 10 new workers are over the age of 55. In Melbourne alone, 15.8% of workers were over the age of 65 (ABS 2020).

However, ageism is still rife in organisation and is a key topic that must be addressed through the push for age-friendly workplaces. Did you know that almost 21% of recent retirees were forced to retire early because their workplaces could not cater for their health or physical needs? (ABS, 2020). This is despite earlier research that found memory loss and chronic illness progression can be delayed by longer participation in the workforce (Brough, Johnson, Drummon, Pennisi & Timms, 2011).

Research on workforce engagement and transitions continues to highlight the importance of flexibility and consideration of health conditions, alongside understanding of the ageing and increasing caring requirements as our parents and partners age with us (Allen, Alpass, Szabo & Stephens, 2021; Mansour & Tremblay, 2019).

While innovations in the workplace to include those with a chronic condition are emerging, most focus on volunteering rather than paid engagements (Robertson & Evans, 2015). Specifically designed job boards such as olderworkers.com.au and groups such as Professionals with Alzheimers (PALZ) have emerged to normalise and combat ageism and the challenges associated chronic illness, yet these groups are largely underutilised and under-represented in workforce innovations.

What is known is that, as the population ages, the available workforce is shrinking despite large workforce shortages and the availability of work across Australia. Thus, the time is now to invest in more innovative, age-friendly, inclusive workforce solutions for the future with the Global Centre of Modern Ageing®.

ABS (2020). Retirement and retirement intentions in Australia. Retrieved 20/10/22 at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/retirement-and-retirement-intentions-australia/latest-release>

Allen, J., Alpass, F. M., Szabó, Á., & Stephens, C. V. (2021). Impact of flexible work arrangements on key challenges to work engagement among older workers. *Work, Aging and Retirement*, 7 (4), 404-417.

Brough, P., Johnson, G., Drummond, S., Pennisi, S. and Timms, C., 2011. Comparisons of cognitive ability and job attitudes of older and younger workers. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 30 (2), pp. 105-126

Mansour, S., & Tremblay, D. G. (2019). What strategy of human resource management to retain older workers?. *International Journal of Manpower*.

Robertson, J., & Evans, D. (2015). Evaluation of a workplace engagement project for people with younger onset dementia. *Journal of clinical nursing*, 24 (15-16), 2331-2339.





Meet Dr Katrina Radford

Associate Professor Katrina Radford has authored more than 50 publications, and is a board member of the Australian Association of Gerontology. She also serves on the advisory board of the Australian Institute of Intergenerational Practice. Dr Radford brings extensive experience in Australia's disability and ageing sectors, having worked as a behavioural therapist for autistic children, and within the strategy unit of a large aged care organisation, prior to becoming an academic.

As a researcher, Dr Radford is particularly focussed on creating and planning for inclusive workplaces, building the systems and programs that provide quality care for an ageing population, and improving the recruitment, retention, and support of employees in the aged care sector. Her expertise also extends to trialling new, innovative systems that address ageing and ageism, including workforce trials to re-engage the older population.



Resolutions for Ageing Well in 2023

Research suggests that by February, the majority of people have abandoned their well-intentioned New Year's resolutions.

In fact, according to a study by the University of Scranton, just eight per cent of people achieve their resolutions.

Some of us set unrealistic goals, find ourselves derailed by unforeseen life events, or can't see the clear benefits of sticking to our resolutions. Reforming our habits can prove exceedingly difficult. To sustain motivation, experts suggest setting realistic goals, making incremental changes, and celebrating small wins.

Ageing well is a shared aspiration of many, and can inspire resolutions for healthier, happier, and more active living in 2023 and beyond.

Inspired by the 'Blue Zones', being regions around the world where people live the longest, and healthiest lives, in this issue of Connect we present eight stellar resolutions for longevity.



- 1. Embrace an active daily routine, moving naturally throughout the day.** Unstructured physical activities, such as walking, cycling and gardening can yield greater positive impact than structured workouts.
- 2. Nurture strong social connections, making special effort to connect with loved ones and friends.** Blue Zones residents typically report a strong sense of purpose and belonging, strengthened by their social connections in the wider community.
- 3. Choose whole, unprocessed foods including plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes in your diet.** People living in the Blue Zones eat primarily plant-based diets, including moderate servings of fish, nuts and minimal servings of lean meats and dairy.
- 4. Don't sweat the small stuff! Develop a daily practice to manage your stress.** Meditation, yoga, and tai chi are all excellent ways to unwind, relaxing both the mind and body.
- 5. Exercise your grey matter.** Challenge your brain with stimulating activities, such as reading and puzzles. Better yet, make 2023 the year you learn a new skill. Learning new skills can help to maintain cognitive function, boost memory and reduce the risk of age-related cognitive decline.
- 6. Hit the hay!** Aim for between 7 and 9 hours of sleep each night. Blue Zones residents understand the importance of sleep to maintaining optimal health and prioritise adequate sleep.
- 7. Ditch unhealthy habits, such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.** Both have well-documented, negative effects on health. Blue Zones residents have low rates of smoking and excessive drinking.
- 8. Get in the driver's seat!** Preventive screenings, regular check-ups and doctor's appointments can help to detect incipient health problems early, and ensure they can be treated effectively.



Innovative Ageing: The value of Living Labs

GCMA's Living Lab, or LifeLab®, is a research and innovation platform that supports the development of products, services, and technologies by involving older users in the co-creation process. But what are Living Labs, and how does best practice support innovation, minimise market risk and support the wellbeing of older Australians?

According to research, more than 70 per cent of products and services designed for older people fail to gain market traction or long-term end user adoption. This is often a result of stakeholders failing to consult, or even consider, older consumers in the innovation value chain, which not only wastes valuable resources but leaves older consumers with limited choice.

Factor in Australia's ageing population, the preference of older Australians to age at home and the potential of the longevity economy, and it's becoming more important to find ways to develop products and services with and for older people. In today's climate, Living Labs with an ageing focus are increasingly viewed as an integral part of the product and service innovation process for older demographics, as they can help to spur innovation in the longevity economy.

Already worth US\$8 trillion in the United States, the longevity economy refers to the economy actively generated by the growing number of older adults in the population. By developing products and services that meet the needs of older consumers, stakeholders can tap into this growing market and drive economic growth.

What is a Living Lab?

A Living Lab is a user-centred, open-innovation ecosystem that brings together stakeholders from academia, industry, government, and the public to co-create and/or test new products, services, and technologies in real-world or simulated environments. The goal of a Living Lab is to gather user feedback and data, which can be used to improve the design and functionality of new products and services, making them more successful in the market.

This approach is particularly useful when creating and testing products and services for specific demographics, such as older adults, as it allows stakeholders to see first-hand how the product will be used, and what challenges users may face.



How does Living Labs best practice support innovation and minimise market risk?

The GCMA is an Adherent Member of the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL), the global benchmark for best practice. GCMA's LifeLab® and other ENoLL Adherent Member Living Labs with an ageing focus:

1. Involve older people as active participants in the co-creation process.
2. Create an inclusive and accessible environment that meets the needs of older adults.
3. Provide adequate support and training for older participants to ensure they can fully participate in the co-creation process.
4. Address the diversity of older people by involving a range of older adults.
5. Ensure that the results of the co-creation process are used to develop solutions that meet the needs of older people and have a positive impact on their lives.
6. Continuously evaluate and improve the Living Lab process to ensure that it is meeting its goals and making a positive impact.

This supports innovation for product and service development for older adults in several ways, as it creates an open innovation ecosystem that enables:

1. User-centred design, an approach that involves end-users throughout the innovation process.
2. Co-creation, whereby older end-users are not just subjects of research but are actively involved in the design and or testing of new products and services.
3. Testing and evaluation of products and services in real-life or simulated environments. This allows for the identification of any issues or challenges that need to be addressed before the products and services are launched to the market.
4. Networking and collaboration to maximise the sharing of knowledge and expertise, and the development of innovative solutions.

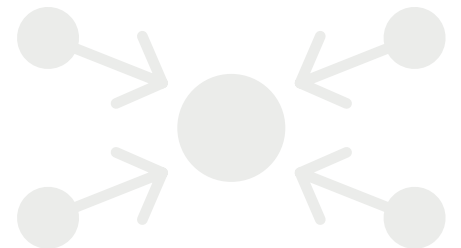
Living Labs with an ageing focus provide a unique and valuable opportunity for stakeholders to create, test and refine ideas and solutions for older consumers.

This open innovation process offers myriad benefits, as it reduces risks associated with innovation, and increases end-user adoption by supporting active end-user involvement, bringing their unique experiences and perspectives into the innovation process. It cannot be overstated how important this process is to the ultimate success of the solution being developed for older people.

Key takeaways

Living Labs with an ageing focus provide a unique and valuable opportunity for stakeholders to create, test and refine ideas and solutions for older consumers. They offer access to real-world and simulated environments, as well as diverse groups of older participants. This allows for a greater chance of success in the market by simulating the complexities and nuances of the older users' real-world experiences. The innovation ecosystem within Living Labs supports this by providing resources, and networking opportunities to help bring ideas to fruition.

Furthermore, with an ageing population, the longevity economy in Australia is also set to grow. By utilising the Living Labs platform, stakeholders can tap into this potential market and create products and services that address the unmet needs of older people. This not only increases the chance of product and or service success, but also contributes to the wellbeing of older Australians.



'StepUp' to reimagine the future of ageing in Australia



The Global Centre for Modern Ageing® is proud to champion a new service, committed to transformational outcomes for older people. *StepUp for Ageing Research* connects volunteers aged 18 plus with tailored opportunities to contribute to ageing and/or dementia-focused research projects.

Many research studies into ageing encounter problems, because they cannot recruit the required number of older participants to join in a study (or stay on throughout). The older demographic can prove difficult to reach, despite the fact that many older adults yearn to make a meaningful contribution, or 'give back' to their communities.

StepUp for Ageing Research aims to bridge this gap, making it easy for the public to connect with researchers. Developed by the University of Sydney, in partnership with the University of Exeter and University College, London, *StepUp for Research* was initially supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.

Adults who reside in Australia can get involved online, via phone or by post. The service is seeking to recruit all adults ranging from younger to older people, including individuals with dementia or cognitive decline, family, friends, and carers.

The ability to speak English is not a requirement. In fact, many studies use translators since research must represent all cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

To register, simply visit the ['Sign Up' page at StepUp for Ageing Research](#). The service will check to see if you match any current studies. It will then send you detailed information on the study, so you can decide if you'd like to take part. Please note, registering for this service does not commit you to any research projects.



Stay connected!



Have a query, or want to contribute?

Please contact
Stephanie.Johnson@gcma.net.au



Global Centre for
Modern Ageing



LifeLab

gcma.net.au

Global Centre for Modern Ageing Limited
1284 South Road, MAB Eastern Promenade, MAB Tenancy E11
Tonsley, South Australia 5042 Australia
T +61 8 6117 5510 E info@gcma.net.au



[@ModernAgeing](https://twitter.com/ModernAgeing)



[@Global Centre for Modern Ageing](https://www.linkedin.com/company/global-centre-for-modern-ageing)



[@ModernAgeing](https://www.facebook.com/ModernAgeing)