

# Women's Health Policy Alliance Communique

30 August, 2019

## Forum 2 | Healthy ageing

Jean Hailes for Women's Health, together with the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI), hosted the second Women's Health Policy Alliance forum on Tuesday evening. This is the second of five forums in our policy series focusing on how the women's health sector can work together to address the priorities and actions identified in the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030 (NWHS).

David Lloyd, CEO of Jean Hailes, and Associate Professor Briony Dow, Director of NARI, opened the forum, focused on Priority 2 – Healthy ageing for women. In her presentation to the forum, Associate Professor Dow highlighted the need to take a life course approach to dementia and cognitive decline, and the need to address the impact of family violence and elder abuse on healthy ageing for women. "Preventing and responding to the drivers of elder abuse are critically important. Addressing ageism and sexism through positive messaging and modelling will help to change both perceptions and behaviours towards older women—we need to see older women as more than their deficits," Associate Professor Dow said.

Following in the footsteps of the first forum, Tuesday evening brought together a range of policy officers, clinicians and researchers working across the women's health sector. They were all willing to share their knowledge and expertise with the broader group, and willing to collaborate on improving health outcomes for women and girls in Australia.

Participants discussed a range of initiatives that are working well to address healthy ageing across the life course, such as the National Heart Foundation's 'Living well with heart failure', and those that could potentially be built upon to extend their reach and impact. These initiatives included the Victorian Active Ageing Partnership, which could be extended nationally, or the 'This Girl Can' campaign, to include a strengthened focus on older women. Some programs were identified that could be adapted for another setting, such as the 'PITCH' strategy for dementia developed by NARI, which could be modified as a continence-specific training program for home care workers.

There was also significant interest in the linking of complementary initiatives such as 'Age friendly communities', where older people live safely, enjoy good health, and stay active and involved, with '20-minute neighbourhoods', a pilot program improving people's ability to live locally by providing for most of their daily needs close to home. Linking these initiatives would provide the opportunity to create an age-friendly approach to addressing population growth.

It was recognised that collaboration is key for successful healthy ageing initiatives. We need to work together on coordinating research instruments and sharing data across organisations, combining results from longitudinal studies, and acknowledging that healthy ageing is truly a multidisciplinary field—nothing can happen without sector collaboration.

A central theme throughout the discussion was the need to address ageism, sexism and stigma through positive messaging, modelling and myth-busting. Participants noted that there are initiatives taking these positive steps, such as the 'Flesh after fifty', art program that celebrates women and ageing through art, or the 'Laugh without leaking', campaign, breaking down barriers of stigma associated with incontinence through humour.

Jean Hailes' David Lloyd noted that the WHO's ['Decade of healthy ageing from 2020-2030'](#) coincides with the span of the NWHS. "This is a fantastic opportunity for us to collaborate and help the government deliver a healthy ageing agenda for women in Australia," he says.

--ends