Southern Melbourne
Primary Care Partnership

Framing Age
Message Guide

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In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

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Introduction

This message guide contains recommendations that will help you talk about age, ageing and issues that affect older people in ways that reduce ageist attitudes and behaviours. It is based on national message research undertaken by Common Cause Australia on behalf of a consortium led by Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership[1].

The purpose of our research was the primary prevention of abuse against older people, of which ageism is a key driver. However, the insights we gained through our research and the recommendations contained in this guide are applicable to anyone interested in reducing ageism more broadly in our society.

We have therefore written this guide for everyone who talks to our community about older people in any context. Whether you're a journalist writing about the experiences of people on pensions, a council worker talking about the services available to older members of the community or a passionate advocate developing a public awareness campaign on ageism, this guide is designed for you.

If we are to create a society that respects, values and celebrates everyone **regardless of age,** we must begin by **thinking and talking differently about people as we grow older**. We hope this message guide takes all of us one big step further in that direction.

[1] Consortium members are detailed on page 1.

Approach

The research and recommendations outlined in this guide are based on the Common Cause approach to community engagement. This approach is based on decades of research from the fields of social psychology, cognitive linguistics and behavioural economics.

A key finding of this research is that most people think about social issues from multiple and often conflicting perspectives. Importantly, these different perspectives operate mostly at a subconscious and emotive level, which means people's attitudes and behaviours are often driven by factors beyond their conscious awareness.

In our research for this project, we sought to identify perspectives (also known as frames) which make people feel at a gut level that everyone should be valued and respected as unique individuals regardless of age. We also sought to understand which frames moved people into an oppositional mindset in which older people are stereotyped and devalued. Identifying these oppositional frames is just as important as supportive frames, because it tells us which ideas we should avoid activating in our audiences.

Methodology

In order to identify the dominant frames that people in Australia use to think and talk about older people and the issues affecting them, we conducted a public discourse analysis. This involved collecting and coding over 18,000 words of language data from dozens of publicly available sources of discourse on topics including ageism, abuse of older people, aged care and retirement. These sources included media articles, opinion pieces, political debate, social media discussions and popular culture.

In addition, we conducted 18 confidential one-on-one interviews with key advocates working on age-related issues across Australia. This language data was then coded and analysed based on key metaphors, values and story logic in order to identify the dominant supportive and oppositional frames used by Australians to think and talk about older people and issues affecting them.

These frames were then tested using an online survey of 1,395 people, nationally representative by age, gender and location[2]. The 15 minute survey included a range of question formats — including forced choice[3] and split sample[4] questions. We also tested five 30 second audio-recorded messages in which participants moved a dial up and down on their screens as they listened to the messages to indicate their level of agreement with what they were hearing in each moment. This provided us with a word-by-word view of the persuasive effect of the messages we tested and allowed us to isolate specific elements of our messages that resonated best with different audiences.

[2] A representative selection of respondents were drawn at random from an existing national panel.

[3] Forced choice questions force respondents to choose between one of two statements with no option to skip or opt out of the question. This allows us to assess the strength of opposing frames relative to each other – for example, to assess whether a promising advocate message is more or less powerful than a common opposition message.

[4] Split sample questions split the entire sample into two random groups and present each with different versions of the question. These questions are used to assess the impact of using different words or frames on people's responses.

Attitudinal Groups

By scoring survey respondents' answers to key questions throughout the survey, we identified three attitudinal groups when it comes to thinking about ageism and older people:

Supporters

These are people who strongly believe in the need to respect people as unique and valuable members of our community regardless of age.

They strongly support action at all levels (individual, business, media and government) to address ageism. They are firm in their support and are not persuaded by opposition messaging.

Persuadables

These are people who mostly agree with our supporters, but are also attracted at some level to opposition messaging.

As the name of this segment suggests, these are the people our messaging has the most persuasive effect on because they are not fixed in their views.

Opponents

These people are comfortable with stereotyping older people and do not believe they are of equal value to everyone else.

They are more likely to view older people as a burden whose views and preferences can be ignored. These people are firm in their opposition and are not persuaded by our messaging.

Analysis of Attitudinal Groups

We analysed how these three attitudinal groups responded to each of the questions and messages in our survey.

Messages that appealed strongly to supporters and persuadables were identified as most useful for future messaging because they toggle (or switch) persuadables into a supporter mindset. On the flip side, messages that appealed to both opponents and persuadables were identified as harmful messages because they move the latter into an oppositional frame of mind.

Encouragingly, our survey found a quarter of respondents (25%) were supporters, while only one in seven (15%) were entrenched opponents. Meanwhile, almost two-thirds (60%) of participants were persuadable on the topic and toggled between supportive and oppositional attitudes.

As the table below illustrates, people's likelihood to be a supporter or opponent on this issue is strongly correlated with age. For example, 65-74 year olds are almost three times more likely to be supporters than 18-34 year olds. Meanwhile, 18-34 year olds are 14 times more likely to be opponents than people 65 years and older.

Age	Supporter	Persuadable	Opponents
18-34 years	12%	60%	28%
35-49 years	23%	60%	17%
50-64 years	32%	58%	9%
65-74 years	39%	59%	2%
75+ years	31%	67%	2%
Total	**25%**	**60%**	**15%**

Despite these important differences by age, it is worth noting that among all age groups *most people are persuadable*. So whether you are engaging with a group of teenagers or octogenarians, how you frame your messages will play a significant role in how many, if not most, of your audience responds.

So how should we be framing our messages to toggle **persuadable audiences** of any age into a supporter mindset? That's what we turn to now.

Top Tips for Messaging

Based on the insights we gained from our discourse analysis and message testing, we have developed six top tips for talking about age, ageism and older people in ways that confront ageist stereotypes.

1. Use values (not facts) to persuade

Facts alone do not change people's minds. Indeed, research shows that confronting people with facts that contradict how they feel about an issue only serves to entrench their position further. Appealing to their deeply held values, however, can shift people's attitudes and behaviours by changing the way they feel about an issue.

A growing body of research from around the world shows that engaging different values in people can change the way they both think and act in relation to social and environmental issues. For example, engaging fear-based or materialistic motivations in people (such as family security, wealth, image and power) is associated with increased discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards 'out groups'.

Meanwhile, engaging more altruistic, egalitarian and self-directed values (such as helpfulness, equality, broadmindedness and freedom) tends to increase people's tolerance and acceptance of others.

We found strong evidence of this in our research. Not only were our supporters significantly more altruistic and egalitarian in their values orientation than the overall sample, but our opponents were unusually attracted to self-centred materialist values. This suggests we should engage altruistic and egalitarian values in persuadable audiences in order to activate a supporter mindset and avoid activating more selfish and competitive motivations associated with an opposition mindset.

Indeed, the most effective messages we tested were steeped in values around equality and self-direction. For example, messages that reminded us not to make assumptions about people based on their age and to value every life equally regardless of age, generated over 90% agreement among persuadable audiences.

Unfortunately, in our public discourse analysis we found many advocates attempt to generate support for issues affecting older people by appealing to more selfish motivations. For example, by pointing out that everyone (who is lucky enough) will be an older person one day too. The assumption is that unless people think the problem will affect them, they won't care.

Similarly, advocates will sometimes explain the reason we should care about issues such workplace discrimination and forced retirement is because of the pain this will cause the economy. For example, they point out that preventing older people from working reduces economic productivity, which ultimately affects all of us. Again, the assumption is that people will care if they can see how discrimination against older people affects others.

But research suggests the opposite is true: messages that appeal to more altruistic motivations are far more powerful at motivating support than appealing to the audience's more selfish concerns that the problem may affect them one day too. In other words, persuadable audiences (and supporters) are far more concerned about people being discriminated against than what this might mean for the economy or themselves in the far-off future.

In short: Engage altruistic and self-direction values in order to motivate support, not dry facts or appeals to selfish motivations.

FROM *"One reason to get involved with ending ageism against older people is that you'll also be ending discrimination against your future self."* [appeals to self-interest]

TO *"Getting involved with ending ageism is important, because every life is of equal value, no matter our age."* [appeals to value of equality]

FROM *"A 2015 survey found that 27 per cent of older Australians had faced workplace discrimination – often during the hiring process."* [presents dry facts]

TO *Nobody should have their opportunities in life limited by their age. Yet recruiters all too often overlook perfectly qualified older applicants when hiring new staff."* [appeals to values of self-direction and social justice]

2. Emphasise similarities (not differences)

One of the barriers to empathy is seeing ourselves as different to another person or group of people. Lack of empathy, in turn, is an enabler of prejudice and discrimination. To reduce this barrier, it is important our messaging emphasises similarities more than differences.

However, in our public discourse analysis, we found most advocates unnecessarily group people based on age and then highlight the different experiences and needs of 'older people' compared to 'the rest of us'.

One way of building greater empathy is to remove unnecessary age-based labels like 'older people' or 'the elderly' when the word 'people' would have conveyed the same meaning. Another approach is to replace 'othering' phrases such as 'older people' or 'them' with inclusive words such as 'we' and 'us' to remind us of our shared humanity and experience of ageing.

Of course, there will be times when referring to 'older people' is both necessary and appropriate. For example, when talking about ageism directed at older people. However, the question to always ask yourself is whether 'age' is the most relevant factor in the situation. Take the below statement as a case in point:

> *"It's often beneficial for older people to become more involved with the community – for example through volunteering."*

Is age really the key factor determining whether people need to become 'more involved in their community'? Wouldn't people's work status, existing social network and living arrangements be more relevant? In this case, perhaps it would be better to say:

> *"It's often beneficial for **people who are retired or not in paid work** to become more involved with the community – for example through volunteering. This is especially the case **if they live alone or have a limited social network**."*

Using person-centred language that leads with 'people who…' helps us to dispense with broad labels and instead focus on what is more relevant than age in each situation.

Another way we can build empathy is to highlight the similarities between people at different stages of life. Instead of focussing on the way older people are different from younger people, we should point to what never changes – our desire to choose our own goals, to be valued as equals, to enjoy the company of others and to contribute to something bigger than ourselves. We all get lonely, we all need support from time to time, we all want to be respected. In short, when explaining what older people want and need, make a point of saying this is no different to what we all want and need at various stages of our lives.

In short: Build empathy by emphasising similarities across age groups and referring to 'people' and 'us' instead of 'older people' and 'them'.

FROM

"All older Australians deserve access to high quality aged care that respects their dignity and preferences." [unnecessary age grouping]

TO

"All Australians deserve access to high quality aged care that respects their dignity and preferences." [unifying reference to 'Australians']

FROM

"Ageism can have a profound impact on older people's job prospects, confidence, health, quality of life and control over their life decisions." [unnecessary age grouping and reference to 'them']

TO

"Ageism can have a profound impact on us and our job prospects, confidence, health, quality of life and control over our life decisions." [inclusive reference to 'us' and 'our']

FROM

"As people get older they lose their independence and become more reliant on others for support." [emphasising differences]

TO

"There are great opportunities and great challenges at every life stage, and to overcome the challenges, we need help from families, communities and society, whether we're nine or 90. It's called life." [emphasising similarities]

3. Celebrate diversity (not stereotypes)

At the heart of ageism are simplifying and often hurtful stereotypes about older people that wash away the inherent complexity and diversity of people's experiences. To address ageism, therefore, we must chip away at these stereotypes by telling a more accurate story of human diversity.

Unfortunately, our research shows many of us are reinforcing these stereotypes in the way we talk about age, ageism and older people.

An example of this is when advocates use well-worn tropes that reinforce the idea that young is always better than old. For example, when we say:

> *"No matter your age you can be young at heart."*

What is meant as an empowering statement, instead reinforces the ageist narrative that being old is undesirable.

Similarly, when we say:

> *"You're never too old to take on a new challenge."*

we again reinforce the idea that 'old' equals 'incapable'.

To help this really sink in, try re-reading these examples above and replacing 'old' and 'young' with 'black' and 'white' and 'age' with 'skin colour' to see what happens.

Another way advocates reinforce negative stereotypes of ageing and older people is when we imply that ageing automatically leads to physical and mental decline. While it is true that various physical and mental impairments can occur in older age, they do not affect everyone and are often driven by factors other than age itself. Yet in our communications, we often use the words 'old' and 'older' as stand-ins for more specific health issues or disabilities.

For example, when we say:

> *"Older people may need help remembering things."*

what we really mean is:

> *"People with dementia may need help remembering things."*

The former reinforces the stereotype that mental decline is inevitable as we age as opposed to something associated with a specific medical condition that does not affect everyone.

In order to combat negative stereotypes, some advocates have taken to pushing positive stereotypes of older people, who they depict as more 'careful', 'wise' and 'kind' than younger people. But whether they are positive or negative, ageist stereotypes reduce people to simplistic caricatures that deny us our complexity and diversity as human beings.

Similarly, some advocates attempt to counter negative stereotypes by pointing to exceptional individuals whose achievements fly in the face of popular assumptions about what older people are capable of. But whether it's the 81-year-old climbing Everest or the retired couple taking up break dancing, pointing out these exceptional people serves to reinforce the stereotypes they are designed to counter by highlighting just how unusual examples like this are. They become the exceptions that prove the rule.

Instead of countering these negative stereotypes with positive ones or pointing to extreme exceptions, we are better served by highlighting the down-to-earth ordinary diversity of people at every age. At a subtle level this involves selecting both imagery and case studies that reflect this diversity without framing them as exceptional or worthy of attention.

In addition, we can explicitly caution against making assumptions about people based on their age. This was an almost universally accepted principle among persuadable audiences that is well worth reminding them of as they reflect on issues of age and ageism. Pointing out that different life experiences also increases our diversity as we age is also a message that resonates strongly among the majority of people.

In short: Show the diversity of people at every age and avoid pandering to age-based stereotypes of any kind.

FROM *"You're never too old to learn to dance." [pandering to 'old equals bad' assumption]*

TO *"Learning new things is rewarding at every age." [avoids age-based stereotypes]*

FROM *"We need to celebrate older people as the experienced, wise and compassionate leaders of our community they really are." [promoting positive ageist stereotype]*

TO *"Different lifetimes of different experiences make people more different, not less. Let's not make assumptions about people based on age alone." [highlighting differences and condemning ageist assumptions]*

FROM *"The older generation has worked hard all their life and now they deserve our support in their twilight years." [promotes positive stereotype of older people]*

TO *"As a community we should look after each other, that includes any older people who might need support." [avoids suggesting all older people have the same experience]*

FROM *"Older people often need more help around the home." [equating 'older' with physical impairment]*

TO *"People with health issues or reduced mobility often need more help around the home." [being specific about physical impairments]*

4. Repeat your story (not myths)

Repetition is the key to successful framing. That's because every time an idea or pattern of thought is activated in our brains, the neural circuitry for that pattern is strengthened. This makes it more likely that this thought pattern will be activated in the future. Similarly, if an idea or thought pattern is not repeated, its neural circuitry diminishes over time. Psychologists refer to these thought patterns as schemas, while cognitive linguists refer to them as frames.

When it comes to addressing ageism, if we want to change the way Australians think about older people and ageing, the key is to repeat helpful frames over and over to help strengthen them. At the same time, we need to avoid activating unhelpful frames so they can diminish over time. Eventually, our helpful frames will become the dominant and default frames for the issue that will guide people's thinking without us needing to prompt it.

This is why mythbusting is a counterproductive approach to challenging unhelpful frames. Every time we repeat a myth about ageing or older people, even to point out that it is false, we strengthen the neural circuitry for that frame. For example, telling our audience that 'older workers are not set in their ways, difficult to train or prone to absenteeism' only serves to strengthen the connection between the concepts of 'older workers', 'set in their ways', 'difficult to train' and 'absenteeism' in our audience's brains.

Unfortunately, mythbusting and challenging negative stereotypes is something many advocates and well-meaning allies do frequently when communicating with the public around ageism and older people. When we do this, we have the counterproductive effect of activating and strengthening the very ideas we are trying to dispel.

The reason so many advocates get this wrong, is because mythbusting feels so right! Nothing feels more necessary or satisfying than to correct misinformation. But if we want to change the frame we need to stop telling people what we don't want them to think and start talking more about what we do want them to think.

This means repeating our helpful story at every opportunity and avoid activating unhelpful myths and stereotypes at all costs.

In short: Focus on what you want your audience to believe instead of repeating myths and negative stereotypes — even to point out how wrong they are.

FROM

"It's common to think that as we age, we become frail and less able to contribute to society." [repeating unhelpful ideas]

TO

"As we age, many of us find we're more committed to giving back than ever before." [activating helpful ideas]

FROM

"Firms routinely look past merit and assume older Australians are less tech-savvy and will struggle to fit in with their corporate culture." [repeating unhelpful ideas]

TO

"Firms routinely look past merit and ignore the benefits of hiring older people with a diverse range of experiences and ideas." [activating helpful ideas]

5. Focus on solutions (more than problems)

As a rule, persuadable audiences are more motivated by solution-focussed messages than those elaborating on the problem. There are two important reasons for this.

Firstly, it's normal for humans to avoid both physical and mental pain or discomfort. When we confront people with problem-focussed messages we're inviting them to feel negative in some way – whether it be anger, frustration or sadness. Since persuadable people are, by definition, not heavily invested in the issue already, a logical reaction from them is to avoid those negative feelings by ignoring our message or finding excuses and rationalisations that minimise the problem so they don't need to feel that pain.

Secondly, problem-focussed messages can be demotivating if they make the problem seem too big or deeply entrenched to ever be solved. Why get upset about a problem we can do nothing about anyway? An example of this type of messaging is highlighting the true, but demotivating, fact that half the world's population is ageist.

Indeed, when we used this fact in our testing to highlight how widespread the problem of ageism is in our society, we found this reduced support for actions to address the issue from persuadable audiences. In other words, the bigger we make the problem sound, the less people support solutions to address it.

In addition, an analysis of the moment-to-moment responses from persuadable audiences to the audio messages we tested, revealed they consistently agreed more with statements about the solutions to ageism and the positive outcomes of these, than with statements about the problems these solutions were designed to address.

This doesn't mean you should ignore the problem. An important part of our narrative must be demonstrating the way in which ageist attitudes, behaviours, systems and policies harm people. But if we want to engage persuadable people in this narrative, we need to spend far less time elaborating on these problems, and more time showing how we can work together to fix them.

In short: to entice persuadable audiences to engage with your message, spend more time talking about solutions than problems.

FROM

"Our government does not value older people. That much is clear based on the results of the royal commission into aged care."
[focussing on problems]

TO

"Our government needs to boost funding for aged care to ensure everyone in our community is treated with the love, support and respect they deserve." *[focussing on solutions]*

FROM

"Ageism is everywhere! Half our population is ageist." *[focussing on problems]*

TO

"More of us need to speak up when we see or hear ageist comments or jokes."
[focussing on solutions]

6. Keep it real (not abstract)

If you're trying to motivate people to do something, your message must connect with them emotionally. Messages that focus on abstract concepts and use academic or legal jargon rarely achieve this. Instead, telling stories about real people and real events using down-to-earth language, helps your audience relate to the message and connect at an emotional level.

In our testing, the most engaging messages were those that included specific and tangible examples of the concepts we wanted to illustrate. For instance, instead of saying:

> *"Age-based discrimination is unacceptable."*

give visual and relatable examples of what this looks like in daily life:

> *"Ageism is unacceptable – whether it is shop assistants treating older customers as if they are invisible or ageist jokes in birthday cards."*

The best examples are people's own stories told in their own words. Indeed, first person accounts are significantly more effective than those told in the third person. Previous message testing in Australia around health policy has found that telling lived experience stories in the first person significantly increased support for policy solutions among all audience segments compared with telling an identical story using third person language.

Of course, it may not always be appropriate, nor safe, for people to tell their own stories publicly. However, where it is possible, safe and appropriate, it will create more compelling and persuasive messages.

In short: when it comes to creating persuasive and emotionally compelling messages: show, don't tell. Use real examples and real people to bring your message to life.

FROM

"Paternalistic attitudes towards older people are disrespectful. They can interfere with your basic human rights, such as your right to freedom of movement and association; your right not to have your wishes and decisions ignored or overridden; your right to privacy, and, not least, your right to dignity."

TO

"It is patronising to treat older people as if they are children. Don't let others impose their will on you. It's your life, it's your body, it's your choice."

FROM

"Older people are often made to feel invisible when out and about, shopping for clothes or waiting for service at cafes."

TO

"I'm often made to feel invisible when out and about, shopping for clothes or waiting for service at a café."

Our Persuasive Story

In our testing, we uncovered a coherent and persuasive core narrative to counter ageism that can both be used in the context of behaviour change campaigns and for building support for more systemic policy-oriented solutions. Each element of this narrative not only appeals strongly to supporters, but also to the majority of persuadables. Below we outline the core ingredients of this narrative, then demonstrate examples of how they work in practice.

Vision

To set a positive tone for our communications, it is important to start by articulating a values-based vision. This helps us frame the message in terms of shared values that appeal powerfully to both our supporters and persuadable audiences.

Core ingredients:

- *Focus on the importance of equality and freedom to choose your own path in life.*
- *Remind your audience these values are broadly shared in our community and apply to everyone (no need to make this part of our message age specific).*

EXAMPLE

"We all want to be respected and valued as the unique individuals we are."

Barrier

The barrier part of our narrative tells our audience what stands between us and the vision we seek. It establishes the problem and sets the stage for why our solutions are necessary.

Core ingredients:

- *Focus on how different expectations, pressures and treatment of people based on their age gets in the way of our vision.*
- *Point to specific examples of how these ageist stereotypes lead to unequal treatment and outcomes for older people.*

EXAMPLE

"But as we get older, many people start to treat us as if we're invisible. Whether it is colleagues not asking for our opinion, bartenders ignoring us, or family members talking over us at the dinner table. All of it says 'you don't matter anymore'."

Action

Here is where we explain what can be done to remove the barrier that stands in our way. The solutions will vary from behaviour change to policy change, but should always provide an action for our audience to take.

Core Ingredients:

- *Focus on how your solution will help challenge ageist stereotypes and help affirm our shared values.*
- *Describe not just the solution required, but the positive outcomes that will flow from it that your audience would value.*

EXAMPLE

"But whether we are nine or 90, we all matter. We all have something to contribute. And we all deserve to be seen. When you pay attention to and respect everyone, regardless of age, you create a more caring, connected and enjoyable community for everyone."

Message examples

Below is an example of how to use our story framework and message tips in practice. The 'Before' example shows common messaging mis-steps, while the 'After' example illustrates what the same message re-crafted to align with the recommendations in this guide might look like.

BEFORE

This leads with the problem, which may dissuade persuadable people from engaging with the message (see p.13)

Elder abuse is a growing problem in Australia. Research shows elder abuse affects x% of older people.

Presenting a fact without a clear link to values is less persuasive (see p.6)

Often this abuse takes the form of denying older people their right to make their own choices. Many people assume their older relatives are no longer able to make decisions for themselves or have become 'too stubborn for their own good'.

Repeating unhelpful ideas or myths like these only helps to normalise them (see p.10)

Saying 'older people' when 'people' would do reinforces the idea that older people are different to everyone else (see p.7)

But the truth is, not all older people suffer dementia and most are still young at heart.

This reinforces the idea that 'younger equals better' (see p.8)

That's why it's important not to make decisions on behalf of elderly people – no matter how well meaning you may be. After all, you will be older one day too – how do you want your relatives and carers to treat you then?

Using 'what's in it for you' framing like this reduces empathy (see p.6)

AFTER

This leads with a positive vision that engages persuadable audiences (see p.13)

Whether we are 17 or 70, we all crave the freedom to make our own choices.

Saying 'we' and 'our' creates an inclusive 'us' (see p.7)

But as we get older, people assume they can make decisions for us. Whether it's our children telling us what we should do with our money, or carers in nursing homes choosing what time we wake up in the morning or what brand of toothpaste we use.

Using concrete examples like these helps illustrate the problem (see p.12)

Pointing out that everyone is different helps break stereotypes (see p.8)

The reality is, everyone is different in our own unique ways. Respecting someone's humanity means listening to and supporting their wishes, no matter their age.

This gives the audience a clear action to achieve our vision (see p.13)

We might lose many things over the course of our lives, but never the desire to make our own choices.

By reminding the audience of similarities in human needs across age groups, this builds empathy (see p.7)

Message examples

Below are two more examples of messages aligned with the recommendations in this guide, for your inspiration. These messages and the 'After' message on the previous page were all tested as part of our research and were convincing to the vast majority of persuadable audiences in our testing — so we know they work. But remember, you know your audience best. Take what you like from our suggested messages and mix them up with words and examples you think will resonate best with your audience.

Example 1

Everyone should be treated equally no matter their race, gender, or age.

And while our community is beginning to recognise the injustices of racism and sexism, the prejudice many of us still don't see is ageism. From the way older people are ignored by shop assistants, to the ageist jokes in birthday cards – age based discrimination is surprisingly common. But that doesn't make it right.

If we want to create a more equal society, we need to ensure people of all ages are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Example 2

Our communities are stronger and better the more we work together, support each other and stay connected.

That's why many people are increasingly frustrated by the way our media and economy celebrate individualism and a winner-takes-all culture. For example, the way people are treated like they no longer have any value once they retire.

Creating a more connected and caring community means confronting the way older people are undervalued by our government, business and the media. It means treating every life as precious and valuing everyone, at every stage of life. Valuing every contribution, big or small.

Framing Age Cheat Sheet

Here is a quick summary of our top tips and suggested story structure for you to hang up above your desk so it's always front of mind.

Top Tips

1. **Use values (not facts) to persuade**

   Engage altruistic and self-direction values in order to motivate support, not dry facts or appeals to selfish motivations.

2. **Emphasise similarities (not differences)**

   Build empathy by emphasising similarities across age groups and referring to 'people' and 'us' instead of 'older people' and 'them'.

3. **Celebrate diversity (not stereotypes)**

   Show the diversity of people at every age and avoid pandering to age-based stereotypes of any kind.

4. **Repeat your story (not myths)**

   Focus on what you want your audience to believe instead of repeating myths and negative stereotypes – even to point out how wrong they are.

5. **Focus on solutions (more than problems)**

   To entice persuadable audiences to engage with your message, spend more time talking about solutions than problems.

6. **Keep it real (not abstract)**

   When it comes to creating persuasive and emotionally compelling messages: show, don't tell. Use real examples and real people to bring your message to life.

Our Persuasive Story

Vision

Core ingredients:

- Focus on the importance of equality and freedom to choose your own path in life.
- Remind your audience these values are broadly shared in our community and apply to everyone (no need to make this part of our message age specific).

Barrier

Core ingredients:

- Focus on how different expectations, pressures and treatment of people based on their age get in the way of our vision.
- Point to specific examples of how these ageist stereotypes lead to unequal treatment and outcomes for older people.

Action

Core Ingredients:

- Focus on how your solution will help challenge ageist stereotypes and help affirm our shared values.
- Describe not just the solution required, but the positive outcomes that will flow from it that your audience would value.