



EMBARGOED MEDIA RELEASE:

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The Maggie Beer Foundation assembles Alliance of the Willing to continue the urgent fight for improved food and nutrition in Aged Care

Following February's successful National Congress on Food, Nutrition and the Dining Experience in Aged Care, the Maggie Beer Foundation (MBF) is now seeking interest and inviting multi-disciplinary food and nutrition professionals to join forces to enact critical change needed to improve the health and wellbeing of Australia's Aged Care population.

The Alliance of the Willing, an initiative of MBF, will bring together experts from across the country including chefs, cooks, scientists, dietitians, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, medical experts, philanthropists, corporations, peak bodies, governments, and organisations who have the experience, expertise, passion, and heart to improve the Quality of Life of older Australians through the joy of healthy, tasty, fresh food.

The decision to form The Alliance of the Willing is the outcome of the Congress, Australia's first, which was facilitated by the Foundation in collaboration with the Department of Health. The Congress brought together both local and international experts to discuss the relationship between good food, nutrition, the dining experience, and wellbeing outcomes for older Australians. A final report of the Congress findings was published this week.

"While adequate food and nutrition is essential to sustain life, health and a reasonable standard of living, food is also a fundamental part of how we enjoy life with our family, our friends and loved ones, how we express our ethnicity, our religious beliefs, our culture and our language," said Maggie Beer.

"Great food served well has the power to bring moments of joy to each day, even in the face of advanced dementia. For too long, food has not been seen as a priority in Aged Care – it has often been an afterthought, bundled with other operational services, such as laundry, cleaning and gardens."

"The Maggie Beer Foundation is excited to further address the key issues by initiating and leading the Alliance of the Willing. This is a crucial step and the opportunity to collaborate with some of Australia's most talented and passionate professionals provides us a chance to enact real change," said Maggie Beer.

In determining opportunities and best practice, the Congress working group identified 56 findings and 139 possible actions across nine key themes to address the current pressure points experienced in Aged Care.

The findings aligned closely with the recommendations published in the final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care and include:

- Food, nutrition and the dining experience is an **urgent issue**. Australia is not the only country with these issues and would benefit from increased international collaboration
- There is **variability** in the quality of meal experiences with some homes demonstrating initiatives to improve practices but many homes exhibiting poor practices
- There is a lack of **transparency and accountability** in the delivery of food, nutrition and the dining experience. Best practice screening and reporting on malnutrition, quality of life and food experiences will improve outcomes for residents and their families
- The **workforce** engaged in the planning, preparation and serving of food is in many instances, not adequately rewarded and lacking in the skills necessary to fulfill their roles to minimum standards. Elevation of the roles of chefs and the introduction of training programs are required to improve the quality of the workforce
- **Health and allied health professionals** including GPs, Dietitians, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Dentists and Dental Hygienists, Mental Health workers, Podiatrists, Physiotherapists, and others are not adequately available to residents. The creation of multidisciplinary teams was well supported



- **Oral health** of residents coming into aged care is not always good and increased dental services within aged care will alleviate many eating problems
- Mechanisms to ensure collaboration between management, nursing staff, cooks and chefs and **Resident Foodie Groups** will result in foods that better suit cultural and residential diversity and provide greater choice.
- The joy of food can be increased by **infrastructure changes** that remove institutional food preparation practices and large dining halls, replacing them with accessible home-styled kitchenettes where food can be plated appealingly, where residents can participate, where the aromas and flavours of fresh food drive appetite

Chairman of The Maggie Beer Foundation, Peter Kenny thanked the Department of Health for providing the Foundation the opportunity to deliver the National Congress.

“The breadth of topics relevant to food, nutrition and the dining experience in Aged Care is quite thought-provoking. We know the current state of food and nutrition in Aged Care is an urgent issue, and that food that is not eaten is not nutrition,” said Peter.

“In response to the Royal Commission, the Government is providing a new basic daily fee supplement for residential aged care providers of \$10 per day – which affords providers the ability to offer quality food and improve nutritional outcomes.

“As a result of the National Congress, the Maggie Beer Foundation and our partners are poised to make further change in this ever-important area. We hope by putting out the call to join the Alliance of the Willing, we will bring together the man-power and resources to implement this change.” Peter said.

Maggie added: “There are so many people in Aged Care working so hard but often without the support or being empowered to do things better. When given the respect together with the skill, the practical ideas along with the inspiration, it is an incredibly powerful thing that we have seen individuals bring about amazing change.

“We have an opportunity to bring all stakeholders together around the table to find real solutions that our Aged Care residents deserve,” she said.

To find out more about The Alliance of the Willing or to view the National Congress on Food, Nutrition and the Dining Experience in Aged Care final report, please visit: <https://maggiebeerfoundation.org.au/>

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About The Maggie Beer Foundation:

The Maggie Beer Foundation (MBF) was established by Maggie Beer in 2014 to transform the food experience of older people, bringing life-altering change to the wellbeing of older people through good wholesome food, full of flavour.

Maggie Beer is one of Australia’s most popular food personalities. Along with being a well-known television presenter, Maggie is also a successful author of many books. Her latest book, Recipes for Life was written in conjunction with an MBF Board member, Professor Ralph Martins and is a national best seller.

MBF has been very active in the establishment of Creating an Appetite for Life program (our Masterclasses) which deliver education to practitioners in the aged care sector. These programs educate about the unique food and dining requirements of older Australians and advocate for the provision of innovative and engaging food programs to enhance the emotional wellbeing and quality of life (QoL) of older Australians. These programs will be expanded through the upcoming launch of 11 new online training modules for cooks and chefs in January 2022.