



MEDIA RELEASE

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National Survey Gives Older People a Voice On the Challenges to Eating Well at Home

The Maggie Beer Foundation has launched a national survey inviting older people living at home to share their lived experiences with food, to shine a light on an urgent but often overlooked issue: the food, nutrition and wellbeing of older people living independently.

The vital place of eating well in ageing well is often poorly understood. Good food, enjoyed and eaten, contributes not only to vital nutrition for older people living in their own homes, but also to their sense of worth, purpose, belonging and engagement.

The survey marks the first major public engagement initiative of the HomePlate Project — a first-of-its-kind national initiative designed to better understand and address the challenges older people face in eating well while living and ageing at home.

The Foundation is calling on older people to take part in the survey.

There are currently 4.4 million Australians aged over 65, representing around 17% of the population. By 2050, this is projected to rise to nearly one in four Australians.

Importantly, 96% of older Australians live in domestic households, not aged care homes, and most express a strong preference to remain at home throughout their lives.

But ageing at home does not automatically mean ageing well.

Research suggests that between 10% and 44% of older Australians living at home are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition, while one in three older hospital patients is malnourished. Alarming, malnutrition can go undetected for years, often masked by gradual weight loss, fatigue or reduced appetite.

As Australia prepares for a demographic shift unlike any in its history, understanding how we can support older people to eat well is no longer optional — it is essential.

Jane Mussared, CEO of the Maggie Beer Foundation says that while independence is deeply valued, many older Australians face silent challenges around shopping, cooking, appetite, affordability and social isolation.

“Malnutrition is often invisible. It can begin quietly — smaller portions, skipped meals, a loss of appetite, or the gradual fading of enjoyment in food. Loneliness, reduced mobility or financial pressure can mean the fridge isn’t stocked, the stove isn’t used, and meals lose their flavour and ritual. By the time it’s recognised, eating well — and with it strength, socialisation, resilience and wellbeing — may already be compromised.”

Ms Mussared says the survey represents a critical first step in shaping practical, community-driven solutions.

“Business and service providers are already working hard to address the challenges older people living at home face,” Ms Mussared said. “The HomePlate Project is an opportunity to complement these efforts by listening to older people living in their own homes. If we want to improve food experiences for older people, we must start by

understanding their everyday realities — what’s working, what isn’t, and what matters most to them about the food they’re eating.”

“Food is not simply fuel. It is memory, culture, joy, comfort, dignity and connection. And, while this is a lifelong need, we often hear older people themselves underestimating the importance of eating well in living well.”

The survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete, is confidential, and open to people aged 65 and over who are living independently in the community. Family members and carers are encouraged to share the opportunity to provide feedback with loved ones.

Clare Fargher, the Foundation’s HomePlate Project Lead, said elevating the lived experiences of older Australians is essential to shaping effective national responses.

“Ensuring access to enjoyable, culturally appropriate and nourishing food is a national priority as we age,” Ms Fargher said. “Listening directly to older people about their experiences at home is fundamental to designing solutions that will genuinely improve wellbeing and independence. These insights will assist us to work with services, businesses and community groups to build a road map for the future.”

The insights gathered through the survey will inform the next phase of the HomePlate Project, including a review of current programs and models in Australia and internationally. The ultimate outcome will be a series of practical recommendations and approaches to strengthen food enjoyment, connection and wellbeing for older people ageing at home.

Funded by the Wicking Trust, the HomePlate Project brings together nutrition experts, community organisations, care providers and older people to identify food solutions that support ageing in place.

“Solutions are likely to range from services to education and information, and will need to fit local community strengths as well as the diversity of circumstances of older people,” said Ms Fargher.

The Foundation is encouraging community groups, service providers, families and health professionals to help amplify the survey to ensure diverse voices are heard.

“The HomePlate Project is starting by gathering the perspectives of older people themselves,” said Ms Fargher. “The survey complements a range of focus groups and one-to-one interviews that we are doing in metropolitan and regional areas.”

Ms Fargher said the project is about creating momentum for a broader national conversation.

“Eating well at home is deeply connected to how we feel, how we connect with others and how independently we can live,” she said. “This survey is an opportunity for older people to shape how Australia supports food and ageing at home into the future.”

Older people can complete the [survey](#) or register to stay informed about the [HomePlate Project](#).

www.maggibeerfoundation.org.au

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About the Maggie Beer Foundation

Established in 2014, the Maggie Beer Foundation works to bring about life-altering change to the wellbeing of older people through access to good food. In collaboration with older people, carers, researchers, aged care teams and clinicians, the Foundation advocates for the central place of good food in improving quality of life for older Australians — wherever they live.

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