WHAT DEAF SENIORS TOLD US ABOUT QUALITY OF LIFE IN AGED CARE

deaf connect
Serving our community.
Sharing our culture.

Report Summary 2026 – for the Auslan translation, please click here or scan the QR code.

SCAN FOR AUSLAN

Over the past year, 193 Deaf Seniors, family members, CODAs, aged care providers and stakeholders shared their stories through interviews and focus groups across Australia. Their experiences helped us better understand the experiences of Deaf Seniors as they navigate aged care services and residential aged care.

We found

Good aged care for Deaf older people is not achieved through communication access alone. It includes culturally appropriate care that recognises language, identity, community connection and belonging as foundations to quality of life.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Deaf Seniors told us that quality of life is about more than communication access. It includes being understood, having a say in decisions, maintaining language and identity, staying connected to the Deaf community, and feeling a sense of belonging.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Community connection emerged as the strongest priority across all participant groups.
As one participant explained:

> *"Having regular Auslan interaction, social contact, and feeling part of the Deaf community is essential for wellbeing and quality of life."*

THE RISK OF POOR QUALITY OF LIFE

Deaf Seniors described challenges maintaining communication, participation and community connection as they moved through aged care systems. While communication support was often available for formal appointments, it was frequently absent from everyday interactions. Participants reported experiences of isolation, reduced participation, and loss of community connection.

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AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

The Aged Care Act 2024 recognises Deaf people within culturally appropriate care provisions. Participants consistently identified six elements of quality care:

- Everyday Auslan
- Deaf Culture
- Deaf Space
- Connection to Deaf community
- Supported decision-making
- Trusted relationships

The findings show that communication, culture and community connection are fundamental to quality of life for Deaf seniors, and should be reflected in how aged care services are assessed, funded, delivered and monitored.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Deaf Connect will use these findings to inform advocacy, partnerships and engagement with government, regulators and aged care providers.

STAY IN TOUCH

This report reflects the experiences and stories shared by Deaf Seniors, families, providers and community members across Australia.

If you have questions, experiences, or stories about Deaf Seniors and aged care, please get in touch. Your insights help us continue advocating for better outcomes for Deaf older people.

Contact Deaf Connect:

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