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DISCUSSION PAPER

Our intergenerational future

Cooperation not conflict

Don Edgar and Patricia Edgar

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A Message from NARI's Director

Don and Patricia Edgar are the National Ageing Research Institute ambassadors. With distinguished academic careers exploring social trends affecting families and media for children respectively, they have turned their attention to our ageing population, shining a spotlight on policy inadequacies and ageist narratives and suggesting new alternatives. They were appointed NARI's inaugural ambassadors in 2014 in acknowledgement of their advocacy and thought leadership on issues associated with ageing.

Their latest paper, 'Our Intergenerational future – Cooperation not conflict', provides a thoughtful commentary on intergenerational narratives as they exist today, and how we can create a more positive intergenerational future. We hope that this paper will be a catalyst for further discussion and debate about this important issue.

Professor Briony Dow
NARI Director

About Don Edgar and Patricia Edgar

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Dr Don Edgar is one of Australia's best-known authorities on social trends as they affect families, communities, and the workplace. He was the founding director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, which became one of Australia's pre-eminent research institutes in family law, social security, work-family programs, youth and family support services, child protection, child poverty, childcare, and ageing. Don is an ambassador for the national Ageing Research Institute and the author of 16 books including joint author of *PEAK: Reinventing Middle Age (2017).*

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Acknowledgements

More than one in five Australians are living in multi-generational households, defined as two or more adult generations living under one roof. This adds to the diversity and complexity of daily living, particularly since the advent of COVID-19.

This paper had its origins prior to the pandemic, aiming to assess the evidence for intergenerational conflict. It is the start of a dynamic process, which will be ongoing over years, to come to terms with radical changes to the patterns of family life. These are changes we must understand and respond to in Australia if government family and social policy is to be effective.

We would like to thank NARI, the National Ageing Research Institute, which inspired us to undertake this research, in particular its Director, Briony Dow. Her support, editorial assistance, and comments on the debate on ageing and the Royal Commission into Aged Care, Quality and Safety (2020) have been invaluable. Previous research by Katherine Betts of the Australian Population Research Institute, and research assistance by Jane O'Sullivan and Ed Smith have underscored our work, providing critical detail. We also wish to thank Annabel Peck, Rachel Meehan, and Debra O'Connor for their insightful comments on the manuscript and Emily Buck for her meticulous work referencing the paper.

Contents

A Message from NARI's Director 1

About Don Edgar and Patricia Edgar 2

Acknowledgements 3

Abstract 6

Introduction 7

What is meant by a 'generation' anyway? 9

- The Silent Generation 9
- Baby Boomers 10
- Generation X 12
- Gen Y, the Millennials 12
- Gen Z, the Centennials 13
- Limitations of generational labels 14
- The 'conflict' debate 15
- The role of COVID-19 and 'Fake News' 17

Tackling some myths about intergenerational inequity 20

- 1. Myth or reality? Health care costs have increased because of a larger ageing population 20
- 2. Myth or reality? Older people are a burden on society because of the rising costs of aged care 21
- 3. Myth or reality? Young people are disadvantaged through less and more costly access to higher education, low job availability, lower wages and youth incomes 24
- 4. Myth or reality? Older people are creating an increasing dependency on tax-paying younger workers 27
- 5. Myth or reality? Housing costs are excluding the young from the 'Australian Dream' 31
  - Home ownership 31
  - Still living at home? 33
- 6. Myth or reality? The prospects for young people are poor 35

Facing a new social order **36**

– What do we mean by 'the social bargain' struck between generations? 36

Forging new intergenerational links for the future **39**

Policies and programs to foster positive intergenerational relationships **40**

Conclusion **42**

Appendix A **43**

– Exemplary Intergenerational Projects 43

– The BIG Project 44

– Examples of intergenerational projects focusing on specific areas of interest: 45

Abstract

This paper examines the evidence for the regularly repeated assertion that there is an intergenerational conflict between 'Baby Boomers' and 'Millennials', based on the idea that the former have benefitted at the expense of the latter. We argue that this view is based on inaccurate assumptions and is damaging socially when the nation faces an ageing population that is increasingly multi-generational.

The paper examines the loose definitions of 'generations' and shows much of the so-called 'generational inequity' is class-based rather than caused by generational dis/advantage. We examine the evidence for generational inequity including increasing health care costs, the rising cost of aged care, the taxation burden on the young, their access to housing and higher education, and their future prospects given environmental change and technology.

We conclude that while certain aspects of the tax/income transfer system do favour older people, and that access to home ownership has become increasingly onerous for younger generations, advantage is not shared by the whole Baby Boomer generation. Much intergenerational exchange is from older parents to the next generations, not the other way around.

We ask what is meant by the social bargain struck between generations in a time of rapid social change, and urge governments to forge new intergenerational links for the future, rather than perpetuate the notion of intergenerational conflict.

We conclude with examples from overseas and Australia of policies and programs that go some way to fostering more positive intergenerational relationships in the cause of social cohesion, economic and social wellbeing.

Finally, we call for a more nuanced discussion of 'the ageing problem', or the so-called 'intergenerational conflict', and for policies aimed at removing inequality across the entire system, as many people of all ages are suffering disadvantage in what is an inequitable economic system.

Introduction

For the first time, multi-generational families have become the norm. Throughout history, parents have died at an earlier age, giving way to their offspring – one generation succeeding another. What is different now is that people are living longer, and three and four generations are increasingly living concurrently and often in proximity. The family, the community, society, and its institutions need to adapt to this radically new social structure. What this means must first be acknowledged and understood for society to reform.

An ageing population will create problems for the future unless we face up to the social implications. While projections vary according to assumptions about fertility and immigration rates, the current population of those aged over 65 (3.8 million or 15%) will likely increase by 2057 to a total of 8.8 million (22%).[1] Given that economic forecasts of 'growth' are based on production and consumption, and even though large assets are owned by older people, their patterns of workforce participation and consumption are relatively low, so 'growth' will also be low. While successive policy decisions have created a situation where assets cluster within the older population, that concentration of wealth is in the hands of fewer older people than assumed. Their assets will, under current inheritance laws, pass on to their own offspring, exacerbating inequality for some across the generations.[2]

While it is true that young people today face formidable obstacles to obtaining a higher education, secure jobs, and affordable entry into the housing market, it is also true that many Boomers are as poor as Millennials, not all have a university degree or own their own house, and they face a future that is equally uncertain in a post-COVID world. Repeated media mantras about 'intergenerational inequity', which have lodged in the public mind, are not a universal truth.

To speak of intergenerational conflict is to foster ageism in Australian society and deny the continuing contribution of Boomers (as workers, volunteers, and parents) to the economic and social wellbeing of all. It is ageist to assume that older people as a group are an unproductive burden on society, and that the generations of young and old have conflicting interests that cannot be reconciled and fostered for the good of all.

We argue inequity is more the result of a 'class' distinction than a 'generational' difference. The Boomers are diverse socially and economically. There are also 'gender' and 'cultural' distinctions, since more than half of all those aged 65 and over are women and three out of 10 are born overseas. Given stagnant wages, high debts, increased competition, and a future where the younger generations are repeatedly told they will be replaced by technology, along with the unwillingness of Boomer-age politicians to act on climate change, is it any wonder that young people are disaffected from traditional political parties and institutions?

There have always been old people in our social mix; the difference now is not just that the human life span has increased, but that more people are living much longer and living well, with their years of frailty before death reduced. This means older people must work longer than our parents worked, both to support their needs and for ongoing personal satisfaction. We need a radical and creative

> *"We need a radical and creative rethink about the ways in which a 100-year lifespan may be structured, reinventing all aspects of our lives including education, employment, housing, finances, relationships, lifestyle, and health care."*

1 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/demographics-of-older-australians/australia-s-changing-age-and-gender-profile

2 Thomas Picketty, *Capital and Ideology*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020. Picketty terms such inheritance 'patrimonial capitalism'. Such writers point out (as did Simone de Beauvoir many years ago) that analyses based on age or gender discrimination tend to obscure the underlying 'class' differences within those categories. Though 'class' analysis has fallen out of favor in recent years, we argue that class differences, as indicated by socio-economic status, educational achievement and employment position, remain a significant determinant of power within society; identity politics is a confusing factor in much current political analysis.

rethink about the ways in which a 100-year lifespan may be structured, reinventing all aspects of our lives including education, employment, housing, finances, relationships, lifestyle, and health care.

Australians today are contributing as active members of society well into and beyond their fifties and sixties. Middle age comes later than it used to, with 30 years added to life expectancy across the last century. Fifty years of age is now the beginning of our middle years, not the beginning of old age. Already more than seven million Australians are in those peak years from 50-75.

A male born today can expect to live to 80.7 years, a female to 84.9, and their 'healthy' life expectancy has risen to 73, nearly 10 years above the global average. At present only 2% of Australia's population are aged over 85; that percentage will rise to 4.4% by 2066.[3]

This is an achievement to be celebrated, but it also poses challenges for us to adapt to the radical shifts in social structures and lifestyle demanded by such a transformation. The research on successful ageing has found that social and personal attitudes influence longevity – not only how long you live but the extent to which you enjoy your long life. No one goes through life escaping hardships, trauma, grief, or significant disappointment, but the way we deal with those experiences makes all the difference. Resilience and a positive attitude, the ability to reinvent ourselves as our circumstances change over the years, engagement with and interest in people and issues, loving relationships with partners, family and friends, and finding a worthwhile purpose are all critical factors in leading a long, rewarding life.[4]

" The issue of ageism is rarely discussed. Even younger generations who do interact well with grandparents and other elders they have grown up knowing, may still view ageing as a negative state. Addressing this barrier could be key to leveraging more positive attitudes to the ageing population generally."

Nature helps us because the brain develops over time and most of us learn to show better judgement as we age. We have experience to draw on, which gives us more perspective. While old age has already been transformed, we have been struggling to identify what needs to be done, politically and socially, across all age groups, to catch up with the reality of changes in life expectancy. This struggle has led to a debate about the impact of those living longer on the expectations of the young.

The notion that an ageing population is unrelieved bad news for our social and economic future has been debunked by documented research and case studies demonstrating that the burgeoning ageing population can be an economic and social resource for families and the community and that, for an increasing number, there are manifold joys in growing older. As frailty and ill health do not normally set in until the last few years of a person's life, by managing demographic change, society can gain value from its elders, reaping a 'longevity dividend' by drawing on their experience, perspective, integrity, and wisdom.[5]

The issue of ageism is rarely discussed. Even younger generations who do interact well with grandparents and other elders they have grown up knowing, may still view ageing as a negative state. Addressing this barrier could be key to leveraging more positive attitudes to the ageing population generally. This paper examines the evidence and calls for a more rational and productive approach to what are emerging as new and challenging multi-generational relationships. We need a new roadmap for ageing, which brings the generations closer together and draws on their unique resources in a reciprocal, more positive way.

We call for a more nuanced discussion of 'the ageing problem', or the so-called 'intergenerational conflict', and for policies aimed at removing inequality and inequity across the entire system, as many people of all ages are suffering disadvantage.

3 Patricia and Don Edgar, *PEAK, Reinventing Middle age,* Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2017; Barbara Bradley Haggerty, *Life Reimagined. The Science, Art and Opportunity of Midlife,* Riverhead Books, Penguin Random House, New York, 2016.

4 Patricia Edgar, *In Praise of Ageing,* Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 2013.

5 Patricia Edgar, *In Praise of Ageing;* Lynda Grattan and Andrew Scott, The 100-Year Life, Living and working in an age of longevity, Bloomsbury London Oxford, 2016; George E Valliant, *Triumphs of Experience The men of the Harvard Grant study,* US Belknap, Harvard, 2012.

What is meant by a 'generation' anyway?[6]

The term 'generation' is used loosely to describe an age group that moves through the life cycle together. The chronological markers used to define a generation are arbitrary, and different commentators give or take off a few years when they define such age groups. Labels such as 'Baby Boomer' and 'Millennial' are not meaningful as descriptions of coherent groups as they are not broken down by economic differences, educational status, ethnicity, or gender. So, this is an inexact science, which has been adopted by marketeers attempting to create consumer groups. Nevertheless, these labels have caught on, and have strongly influenced the debate about ageing and the beliefs of generations living today regarding intergenerational equity.

Another approach to defining each generation, which helps clarify the values and behaviours of age groups, is to look at events occurring in a lifetime which have had significant impact on aspirations, expectations, and opportunities across a life course. Even such events are experienced in different ways, and do not cause the same reactions or outcomes.

The Silent Generation

The generation between the Great Depression and the end of the Second World War (1929-45) is labelled the **Silent Generation**. Generally, they were the children of parents who had suffered through the Depression, saw their youthful years marred by a World War, often the loss of loved ones (husbands, sons, fathers, lovers) and many struggled to achieve a viable lifestyle through their adult years. They did not expect to make much money, and few expected to go to university; when they did, they entered the professions such as law, medicine and engineering. Women did not have the same opportunities as men. Most girls left school at age 14 or 15 to work in nursing or teaching, or as unskilled shop attendants, clerks or secretaries.

This generation worked hard to make ends meet, and the jobs available to them often involved hard physical labour in agriculture and manufacturing. Frugal in lifestyle and conservative in attitudes, they were too young to have fought overseas and too old to be part of the counterculture. They were school-educated, found employment, generally owned a home, and built a modest, successful life. For the first time in history marriage was almost universal. Men and women bought into the romantic myth, fed by the Church and Hollywood, of 'one love'. You married and 'lived happily ever after'. These were the days of the suburban housewife, with no child care available, no second car and total subjection to a patriarchal system. This is the generation in aged care now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, often suffering a terrible ending to their lives through neglect and isolation. They are the victims of successive government inaction in response to the numerous reviews of aged care that predated the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

6 http://sk.sagepub.com/books/the-multigenerational-workplace

Baby Boomers

The children of the Silent Generation, the so-called **Baby Boomers** born in the post-World War 2 years of 1946-1966, grew up in more stable and prosperous times, with more positive life expectations than their parents. They were charged with rebuilding a shattered civilization and they came together with purpose.

The Baby Boomers grew up in a time of relative peace, despite the Cold War threat of nuclear war, with high government investment in economic reconstruction and subsidised housing. They were a larger cohort than previous generations, spanning two decades of growth so they had real political power. And they are larger than any cohort that is following them, which has significant implications for the job market and for housing availability.[7] They are broken down by demographers into the **Early Boomers**, born 1946-56, who experienced the Cold War and the Vietnam War, and the **Trailing Edge Boomers**, born 1956-66.

Baby Boomers had access to longer and higher quality compulsory schooling than their forbears. The era saw a rise in affluence and the concomitant expansion of consumption and communication; the growth of occupational and educational opportunities for women; the shift from manufacturing to service industries; transformations in urban and rural communities, and the rise of secularism. This era brought mass media into every home, which effectively co-opted the counterculture to make it a consumer culture.

A youth culture was shaped in the US and exported through film, television and music. For the first time teenagers had a culture of their own and were fed the idea that people over 30 had nothing to say that was worth listening to.

The Baby Boomers came of age when birth control, 'the pill', and changing sexual mores, altered the face of family life. Divorce became acceptable and more women, including wives, worked in jobs outside the home. There was a sense of independence not experienced by generations before, and freedom to choose in relationships.

The development of 'lifestyle', which emerged out of the post war youth subcultures in the 60s and 70s presented ageing as something to be avoided, with mass media reassuring this new cohort that middle age could become a rejuvenating experience. By 1980 'lifestyle' had become a dominant theme within Western society. Although structured by income, education, ethnicity and gender, a mature market started to reconstruct middle age. The over 40s and over 50s were targeted with lifestyle products, including self-help books and anti-ageing products designed to ward off the signs of old age. The Baby Boomers morphed into The Third Age, which defined middle age, at 40, as the start of a new stage of life.[8]

But not all Baby Boomers were living in nuclear families and able to access this lifestyle. The number of single-parent households and de-facto partnerships increased, as did stepfamilies, altering economic fortunes and the ways generations related to one another.

7 Bob Birrell and David McCloskey, The housing affordability crisis in Sydney and Melbourne, Report One; the demographic foundations, The Australian Population Research Institute, Research Report, October, 2015.

8 Paul Higgs, and Chris Gilleard, The Third Age, and the Baby Boomers, *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life,* Vol 2, No 2, 2007.

Australia's Generational Profile

Life expectancy at birth
♂ 80.0 ♀ 84.3

Median age of parents (new births)
♂ 33.0 ♀ 30.8

Median age first marriage
♂ 29.9 ♀ 28.3

Total fertility rate
Australia: 1.9 **OECD:** 1.7

Population by year of birth

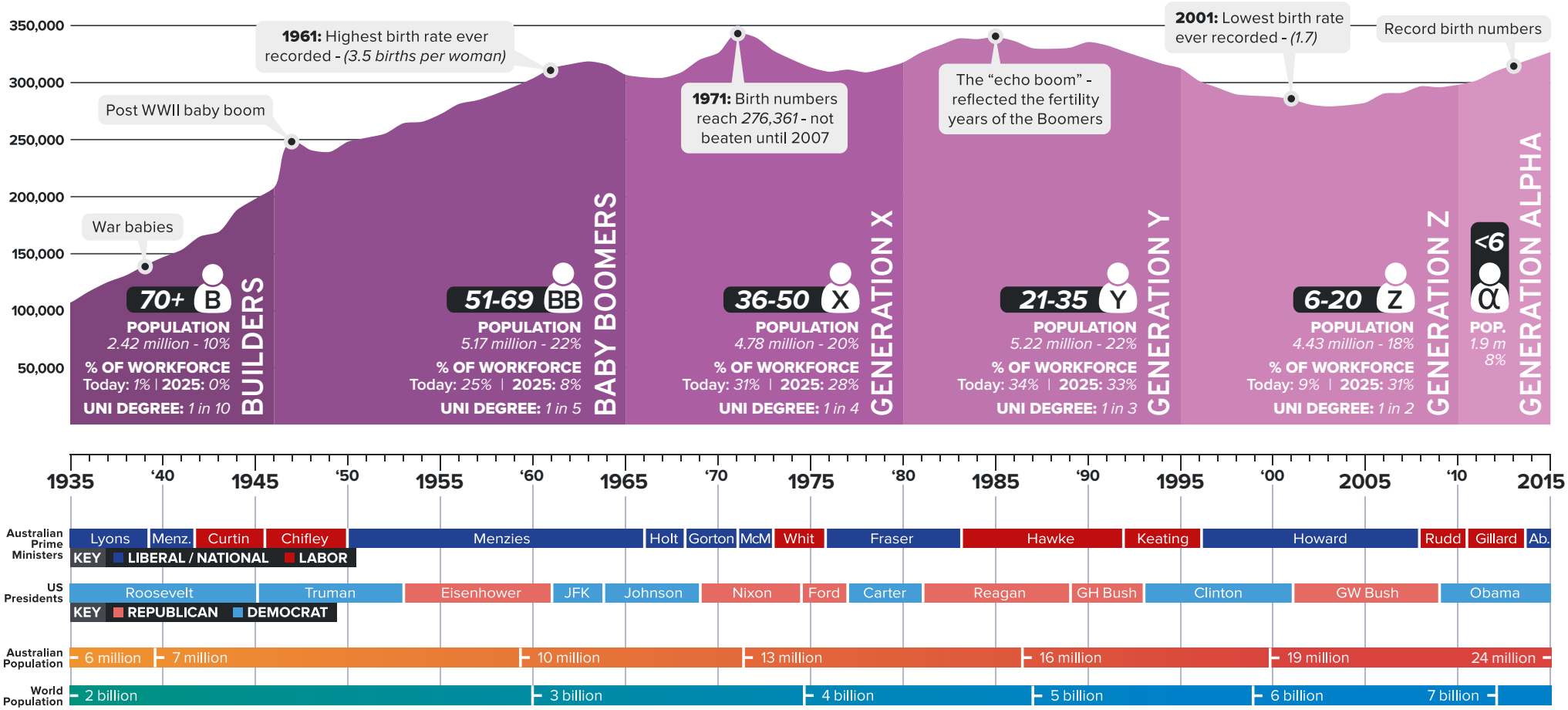

Figure: Courtesy of McCrindle Research.

Generation X

The children of the Leading Edge Baby Boomers dubbed **Generation X**, were born between 1966 and 1981 and grew up, encouraged by their parents, to explore their own interests. Fewer married, they divorced more and remarried in search of more satisfying relationships, and had fewer children. Many rebelled against the conformity of suburban life, having seen their parents experience the Cold War, nuclear threat, the televised Vietnam War, and media exposure of political corruption. They became more cynical, some seeing their parents' materialistic values as hollow and unsatisfying. This generation became wary of accepting the status quo.

Following the sexual revolution, men and women seemed to be having more and more trouble successfully and permanently pairing off. Politically, 'The Left' attributed this to female empowerment and 'The Right' argued that a sexually permissive culture divorces sex from love and tears up the social scripts that might bring the sexes happily together. In fact, it is the product of a number of factors, including lack of affordable housing, health care and child care and the need for women to delay having children to accommodate their working lives and associated infertility. The result is that we no longer replace ourselves; Australia's birth rate currently averages 1.77. This has profound effects on family life. Parents wait longer for grandchildren and fewer will have them in their lives. The single lifestyle, exciting and busy as we venture into the world outside the family, becomes much less involving and satisfying after the age of 40-50, but single households are increasing in number for both the young and the old, with consequent isolation and loneliness.[9]

Gen Y, the Millennials

Gen-Y, the Millennials, born 1981-96, had the turn of the twentieth century as a marker, and new technology impacted their social and work lives in ways not seen before. They were brought up by the Trailing Edge Baby Boomers (born 1956-64), many of whom had been able to afford to allow their children to explore life and delay decisions about their careers and partners. Some chose to remain single. This generation is characterised by some as having a sense of entitlement to the house and lifestyle they believe their parents had at their age. Hence the trope of intergenerational resentment: 'Why can't we have a free education, a job for life, a house and family just like our parents did?'

But Millennials faced a rapidly changing economy – the disappearance of unskilled jobs in manufacturing and the bureaucracy, with the consequent need for further education that was no longer free. The costs of housing were rising, and globalisation and the technological revolution created economic circumstances that went beyond national control. The Millennials, however, did not experience a World War, which would disrupt and take their lives, or inadequate education and health systems, which had previously doomed many to a hard life. They did experience a new threatening rise of terrorism when New York's World Trade Centre was targeted on 9/11, which had a transformational impact on global politics. As well, they are seeing evidence of the damaging effects of global warming, with catastrophic weather events exposing a lack of vision and action from political leaders, which will affect their future lives.

9 Ross Douthat, *The Decadent Society, how we became the victims of our own success*, Avid Reader press, New York, 2020.

Gen Z, the Centennials

Gen Z, or the Centennials, those born after 1996, (some also the children of the Late Boomers) followed. They grew up when the next significant marker affecting life expectations was the global economic crisis of 2008, the GFC. Young people saw many of their Baby Boomer parents' and grandparents' hopes dashed, saw them lose their jobs, their investments collapse, and their life prospects diminish. Some lost their homes. They, like the Millennials, have experienced the rising likelihood of environmental disaster. This generation is said to be marked by a more sober, pragmatic approach to life; they are more cautious, feeling less entitled to enjoy 'the good life', more determined to forge their own way and not trust in institutions.

For many of the Gen Z generation, having 'less' makes for a better life. They want university degrees that lead to a paid job. Having incurred significant HECS fee debt, they are looking for economic security, not the flexibility in life choices expected earlier by the Millennials. They are said to have more mental health problems, they express their anxiety and stress more openly, concerned about finding jobs in the gig economy, the threat of climate change, and the uncertainty of personal relationships exacerbated by their use of social media. Even a university degree is no longer a guarantee of a job, and career planning, not lifestyle exploration, looms large. Trust in older generations and social institutions is lower that it has ever been, informed by the cynicism of Millennials whose hopes were shattered by the economic crisis.

On the other hand, theorists have argued that Gen-Z has a 'more healthy pessimism', a realisation that things do not always work out as you want them to, that you must work hard to achieve your goals, not just feel entitled to reach them. That could mean they will be more productive and more entrepreneurial in their approach to life. They have more of the technological skills needed in the new digital economy, a desire to do something themselves about the world's problems and not just rely on others to solve them.[10]

" Trust in older generations and social institutions is lower that it has ever been, informed by the cynicism of millennials whose hopes were shattered by the economic crisis."

10 Adam Piore, 'Generation Z gets to work', *Newsweek*, 28 June, 2019.

Limitations of generational labels

Such categorisation of demographic groups has limitations. Arbitrary definitions of each age group living in the twenty-first century in different time periods obscure the complexity of their lives lived individually, experiencing a unique mix of socio-economic status, education, gender, cultural and ethnic difference. Attempts to generalise about age groups have led to misleading myths, which we argue are creating unnecessary and damaging conflict between generations. While COVID-19 has altered the very nature of the intergenerational debate, both young and old will carry the 'burden' of its economic costs.

Too often, writers about intergenerational conflict and the relative advantages of Boomers versus Millennials imply that every person within that category has the same advantages and disadvantages. The so-called Baby Boomers, who span the post-World War 2 years from 1945 to 1964, are in fact truly diverse, with variations in their socio-economic status affecting access to education, housing, health, and employment. Such variability is true for every 'generation' that has followed.

As we emphasise in this report, those comparisons are better viewed as class differences, with an elite of Baby Boomers accumulating wealth via education, jobs, housing, and tax concessions, now with assets, but many being left behind. For those women who had a job, discrimination and sexual abuse were common in the workplace, and a firm glass ceiling for those with any ambition. Little surprise then that separation and divorce rates surged in the 1970s when these Baby Boomer females were entering their thirties. Indeed, it was these Boomer women who led the Second Wave charge for women's liberation, pay equity and workplace reform, reforms which have benefitted subsequent generations. These achievements are not always understood or acknowledged by the next generation of Millennials, who themselves have faced gender related challenges, exemplified by the 'Me Too' movement. Women today are still sparse on company boards, in politics and other senior positions, but young women enjoy more equal chances than did women of the Boomer generation. As well, as the Boomer generation aged, males died earlier than females who were left to cope alone, with inadequate savings, little superannuation, and many now suffering neglect and abuse in aged care homes.

"Attempts to generalise about age groups have led to misleading myths.... While COVID-19 has altered the very nature of the intergenerational debate, both young and old will carry the 'burden' of its economic costs."

Recently Adkins, Cooper and Konings, in their book *The Asset Economy*, have proposed a new theory about the basis of class divisions today. They argue the rise of the asset economy, and decades of property inflation, in particular home ownership, has become a significant generator of inequality, producing a new logic of inequality which has redefined prospects for the Millennial Generation and those beyond. They argue, in the present era, the growing importance of intergenerational transfer and inheritance will determine life chances[11]. We return to this discussion later in the paper.

We now examine the reality and the assertions about ageing to help frame a new road map for a multi-generational future.

11 Lisa Adkins, Melinda Cooper and Martijn Konings, *The Asset Economy*, Polity Press, 2020

The 'conflict' debate

As the following statements illustrate, discussion about intergenerational conflict is a disputed space, too often reactive and based on assertions rather than facts:

'A country that makes no room for the young is a country that will forfeit a fair future. This must not become Australia. Today's young Australians are the first generation since the Great Depression to be worse off than their parents. And so, just as we have seen the gap between rich and poor widen over recent decades, we're beginning to see young and old pull apart in ways that will wear at our common bonds.'[12]

'To intergenerational injustice I say bunkum. And good luck to any political party that plans to eliminate legitimate and well-established concessions for retired folk unable to work and adjust their portfolios.'[13]

There is a growing body of literature on how to achieve 'fairness' in a 'just' society. This concerns both justice across social groups (including age groups) in a current sense and ensuring that decisions taken now do not unfairly disadvantage the life chances of future generations.[14]

Every society faces the problem of how best to allocate limited resources, and how to ensure that opportunities are not provided for some at the expense of others. Past injustices may undermine the justice of subsequent generations and much of the literature on intergenerational conflict rests on the assertion that the opportunities afforded to Baby Boomers mean younger generations are put at a disadvantage. The clearest measure of this is the proportion of State revenue spent on children (family benefits, child care, schooling, health costs) compared with how much is spent on older people (pensions, aged care, health costs, tax subsidies, etc.). Analysis of the Australian National Transfer Accounts (an accounting framework of economic flows from one age group or generation to another) from 1981 to 2010 shows that each successive generation has improved their level of well-being relative to the previous years or previous cohorts from 1981 to 1982 onwards. There is also a trend for net contribution to occur later and last longer (that is contributions to the public purse divided by costs, such as education and health care) as children join the workforce later and older adults work for longer.[15]

In Australia, it is difficult to estimate relative proportions of government revenue spent on the young versus the old, because programs on health and education are not exclusively for any one age group. But the federal budget for 2020 shows that $21.6 billion was spent on pensions (96% federal and 4% states and territories) and $8.6 billion was spent on childcare and support payments to parents. Family allowances (means-tested on income) had a base rate of $60.90 per child per fortnight, with a maximum rate of $189.56 per child aged 0-12 and $246,54 for a child aged 13-19 (if still a dependent student). The picture is muddied, however, because $3.9 billion was spent on the NDIS; and by the $19.9 billion spent on schools and $17.7 billion on universities.

The Australian Government Treasury's Intergenerational Reports (2002, 2007, 2010 and 2015) are attempts to assess the long-term sustainability of Commonwealth finances. They identify demographic patterns over time, and the changes that will be needed to manage the social and economic disruption that may follow. They have been based on 'the principle of intergenerational equity - that actions benefitting current generations should not compromise future generations'. This notion of intergenerational equity often focuses on public costs and transfers rather than intra-family transfers and draws policy attention away from inequities arising from other

"Every society faces the problem of how best to allocate limited resources, and how to ensure that opportunities are not provided for some at the expense of others."

12 Jennifer Rayner, *Generation Less: How Australia is Cheating the Young*, Redback Quarterly, Melbourne, 2016.

13 Judith Sloan, 'Let's not fall for this myth of generational injustice', *The Australian*, June 2, 2019.

14 John Rawls '*A Theory of Justice*', Cambridge University Press, 1972, Revised edition 1999.

15 J B Temple, J M Rice and P F McDonald. "Ageing and the economic life cycle: The National Transfer Accounts approach". *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, Vol 36, No 4, December 2017, 271–278.

relevant factors such as class, gender, and ethnicity. The reports also reflect the values and policy direction of the Government in power; thus, their emphasis is not consistent over time. For example, the 2007 report, during Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's tenure, asserted that climate change is 'the defining intergenerational issue of our time'. In 2015, when Tony Abbott was Prime Minister, the commentary was more benign: 'the government will meet its target under the Kyoto protocol in 2020'.[16]

The delayed fifth intergenerational report once again highlighted the ageing of Australia's population as a future burden on younger generations, which will inherit a massive fiscal debt due to the COVID-19 pandemic[17]. Its projected figures differ from those of earlier reports because of lower fertility and immigration rates[18] but, like its predecessors, the report suggests ageing and low productivity will slow future economic growth. It looks only at the 'old age dependency ratio' (actively earning workers cf. dependent older people) and ignores what we could call the 'young dependency ratio' (costs of dependent children, likely to be increased by young immigrant families and largely borne by families themselves and not, apart from formal child care and schooling, a fiscal cost to taxpayers in general). Whereas the ratio of taxpaying workers to aged dependents will fall from 6.6:1 in 1981-2 to 2.7:1 by 2060-61. It assumes workforce participation will stay within the arbitrary below-65 'working age' group, whereas we know many people are staying employed well beyond 65. The emphasis is on improving productivity, with few suggestions on how that might be achieved by Australian businesses, and Treasury rejects any change to the current tax ceiling of 21.6% of GDP. The role of skilled immigration is clear, but there is scant mention of improved higher education for domestic students.

Johansson, in his comparison of European countries, found generational inequalities in government spending varied according to political ideologies. The Scandanavian 'welfare' states favoured children over the aged, as an investment in future human capital. In Norway, those aged over 67 were 14% of the population, yet received 34% of government net transfers; those aged 0-15 (21% of the total population) got 20%. Danish poverty increases with age, as it does in Finland, Norway and Sweden, with a break occurring in the prosperous 1960s. Child poverty rates vary from 11% in Norway to 14% in Turkey. Poverty amongst older people varies from 4% in the Netherlands to 26% in Ireland; with the UK improving through increased family transfers in the late 1990s. Entrenched family advantages can only be removed via tax and welfare systems, with attempts always provoking heated political debate, but it is easier where there has been a sustained emphasis on social equity and shared societal good luck.[19]

The principle of 'need' is central to any theory of distributive justice. Children's needs must be first met by parents, but the state must step in if parents are unable to meet their children's needs, as with formal education and child protection. Over time, in developed societies, as the workplace demanded better educated workers, the state has increasingly taken over the role of parents. Rawls also sees 'equality' as a basic principle of justice, with children seen as future producers, as a public good, whereas some more conservative approaches continue to see children as a private, parental responsibility. However, the notion of 'equal opportunity' has come to hold sway across almost all political approaches.

In comparing different age groups or generations along these lines, the ongoing debate about intergenerational conflict asserts that the Baby Boomer generation has had both superior advantages in opportunities and in later accumulated advantages including access to jobs, incomes, housing, and wealth.

As Lonergan and Blyth put it, 'An economy where the young have all the liabilities and a fraction of the old have all the assets is a deeply stressful one'.[20]

One important correction to the assertion of unfairness is made by those who write about the 'Tgyh (Thank god you're here) generation' who, it is claimed, will benefit from an ageing demographic, as the large Baby Boomer generation cohort is leaving the workforce.[21]

The valid arguments to make are twofold: Did the Boomers have it easier at a comparable age? And are they still benefitting from society at the expense of younger generations who will grow old in a less advantaged way, with a poorer quality of life than the Boomers have enjoyed? To criticise all 'old people' for having had better 'luck' than today's young people is an ageist response; it is not an intergenerational equity argument.

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16 Australian Government, Treasury, Intergenerational Report 2007 and 2015.

17 Patrick Cummins (2021), "Intergenerational Report warns of economic disaster if we don't act now", *The Australian*, 28 June; Glenda Corporal (2021), "Big firms a brake on the economy", *The Australian*, 29 June; Abul Rizvi (2021), "Frydenberg's fantasy forecast", *The Age*, 29 June; Ross Gittens (2021), "Business resorts to productivity bulldust", *The Age*, 3 July; Tom Dusevic (2021), "OK boomer, it's time to pay for your extravagant ways", *The Weekend Australian*, 3-4 July; Mike Foley & Nick Toscano (2021), "Failure to model future losses beggars belief", *The Age*, 29 June.

18 Tom Dusevic (2021), "Skilled migrants essential: Frydenberg", *The Australian*, 29 June.

19 Vegard Johansen, Children and distributive justice between generations: A comparison of 16 European countries, PhD thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2009.

20 Eric Lonergan and Mark Blyth, *Angrynomics*, Agenda Publishing, 2020.

21 Lisa Denny & Brendan Churchill, 'Thank god you're here; The coming generation and their role in future-proofing Australia from the challenges of population ageing,' *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2014.

The role of COVID-19 and 'Fake News'

Pre COVID-19, it was a fact that Australians were living and remaining active longer and contributing to society in multiple ways, throughout a more healthy and productive life than in any previous era.[22] Attitudes were changing, acknowledging the benefits associated with ageing. Now the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety has exposed the festering, broken system of 'care' for our ageing population. This together with the pandemic has made it more difficult to disseminate the 'good news' aspects of ageing constructively. Horror stories about unimagined negligence and cruelty presented to the Royal Commission led to the release of a special report on the impact of COVID-19 in aged care, which states that the effects of current policies have had 'tragic, irreparable, and lasting effects that must be immediately addressed'.[23]

COVID-19 has also exacerbated another significant problem, the rise in elder abuse outside care institutions. An analysis of requests for help to the Victorian elder abuse response service, Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV), revealed that 91% of reported elder abuse, largely financial abuse, is carried out by a family member, usually a son or daughter.[24] The pandemic increased the risk of family-perpetrated abuse. There were fewer calls to the elder abuse helpline during the lockdown periods, but calls increased sharply when restrictions were lifted. This was most likely due to people being unable to seek help during the lockdowns, especially if they lived with the perpetrator.

While COVID-19 has added a transformational factor to the discussion of ageing, understanding this is further complicated by our news reporting, which has undergone a metamorphosis this century. The standards of mainstream news media have been eroded as digital social media platforms have flourished. Fewer news journalists are now employed across the press and broadcast television sector; they are on lower pay, have less experience and less time to investigate their stories. Editors work hard to grab the attention of fickle consumers who can click and scan. Headlines are deliberately provocative and once a statement is in print or on air it often becomes the verified source, which gets repeated. The longer we are exposed to repeated information, the more likely we are to believe it, even if it is fake or false, and even when we know we can no longer trust what we see and hear in any news format.[25]

The media coverage of stories about ageing and about Baby Boomers versus Millennials fits this pattern. Many people believe there is strong intergenerational conflict simply because they see and hear that proposition stated frequently. The complexities are misunderstood and not explored with any depth.

There has been a torrent of articles in the press and stories on all media outlets with negative economic and political commentary, as well as satirical jokes and cartoons, suggesting there is endemic intergenerational conflict because older people living longer have become a burden.[26]

Rising resentment among the young at their assumed disadvantage is exacerbated by these repeated media stories about intergenerational conflict. Repetition and exaggeration lead to moral outrage at the inequity of current taxation systems and, among the young, an understandable uncertainty about their future prospects. Media reports consistently claim that our current economic system favours the older elites while the future is put on hold for those 'angry' younger generations wanting a better share of societal distributions.

These commentaries are pervasive, insidious, and polarising. They feed confusion, guilt, and anger in older people about their own ageing future and their role in society, uncertainty among employers concerning recruitment of the old and the young, and among politicians responsible for social policies to structure longer life spans. These commentaries are not helping the young either. It is argued that depression is rising among the young, who are being encouraged to believe they are being 'hard done by', carrying education debt as they begin their working lives, finding it difficult to secure jobs and housing, and to move on in life. While there is truth in this, it is not the whole truth.

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22 https://aifs.gov.au/facts-and-figures/older-people#:~:text=These%20older%20Australians%20are%20remaining,to%20contribute%20to%20Australian%20society.&text=Strong%20social%20networks%20are%20associated,to%20be%20in%20good%20health

23 The Australian Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, Interim Report *A Shocking Tale of Neglect*, 31 October, 2019*; Aged care and Covid19 – a special report*, October 1, 2020.

24 Melanie Joosten, Pragya Gartoulla, Peter Feldman, Bianca Brijnath & Briony Dow, Seven years of elder abuse data in Victoria (2012–2019), National Ageing Research Institute in partnership with Seniors Rights Victoria, August 2020, Melbourne, Australia.

25 Nina Schick, Deep Fakes and the Infocalypse. What you urgently need to know, Momoray, a Hachette Company, UK, 2020.

26 For example: Stephen Lunn, 'Home dreams fade by generation' *Australian*, 11 September, 2019; Adam Creighton, 'RBA hits out at wealthy baby boomers' *Australian*, 12 September, 2019; Eryk Bagshaw, 'Baby boomers win the demographic lottery', *The Age*, 19 August, 2019; Danielle Wood, 'Change needed to give young a fair go', *The Age*, 19 August, 2019; Bernard Salt, 'Millennials and the great dividing age range' *Australian*, 13 February, 2020; Ross Gittens, 'The kids are right to revolt', *The Age*, 27 March, 2019; Tracey Burton, 'Ageism Blinds us to Jobs Bonanza', *Australian*, 17 October, 2020.

Confusion about our new multi-generational lifestyle has been exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. Panic about our health system being overwhelmed has led to a debate about the relative value of the life of an older person compared to someone younger. When it comes to the crunch, who should get the ventilator or the vaccine?

The ethicists dispute whether we can or should put a value on human life, but some economists argue costs and utility should be the determining factors, advocating the use of QALYs to judge utility between individuals. QALY is a blunt measure used by economists to describe 'Quality Adjusted Life Years'. If you are aged 80+ and are fit, you may have 10-20 or so years left, but if afflicted with heart problems, diabetes, cancer, etc. your years left of 'quality' living are reduced. A young person is assumed to have many more QALYs left than an older person, so is 'worth' saving from (say) COVID-19 than an older person who has fewer years left of 'value' to society. Obviously, the notions of 'quality' and 'value' are subjective. For example, the current Pope has only one lung and suffers from a variety of illnesses, but in his remaining years may still contribute much that is of 'value' to society.

Deakin University Health professionals describe the QALY as an index used by health economists to measure the impacts on health of medical treatments or health policies in what is called 'cost utility analysis'. It has two components – the average number of life years gained (LY) by averting death and the improvement of quality of life experienced (QA). One QALY represents a full extra year of life lived in perfect health; an extra year of life lived in less than perfect health gives some fraction of one QALY. Thus, a life-saving treatment vaccine or treatment for an early childhood disease might give a recipient 70 QALYs by allowing them to survive to old age in good health.[27]

"Panic about our health system being overwhelmed has led to a debate about the relative value of the life of an older person compared to someone younger. When it comes to the crunch, who should get the ventilator or the vaccine?"

The epidemiologists insist QALYs can only be used validly to investigate health impacts and costs; they are not a moral judgement on the value of people's lives, just a device for quantifying how much their health has improved. But the 'costs' that many economic commentators are referring to are the broad economic and social costs caused by COVID-19 and the health policy responses to them. Put simply, the question becomes should we let older people who contract COVID-19 die without intervention if the demands on the health system become overwhelming?

Today's news gathering processes often reduce this conversation to issues of personal threat and economic burden. It was asserted that people over the age of 70 are more likely to get sicker and die of a COVID-19 infection. However, the need to protect older people from the virus has contributed to the stereotyping of all older people as frail and vulnerable. It has also led to a view that lockdowns are only needed to protect the old, and therefore the young are making sacrifices to their own economic wellbeing for the sake of older people. COVID-19 now seems not to spare the young.

Some economists have argued that as older people no longer work (which is incorrect), they have no further economic purpose, and it is entirely rational to put them aside when medical resources are in short supply. They argue that younger generations should not be carrying an added burden into their futures as the result of the pandemic; a more youthful world would lead us into the new post-coronavirus age of rejuvenation. Economist Gigi Foster, as a panellist in a heated exchange on Q&A,[28] supported a relaxed approach to the body count. The CEO of Virgin Airlines, Jayne Hrdlicka, and Flight Centre CEO Graham Turner were widely condemned for stating international borders should be opened although 'some people may die',[29] a statement Hrdlicka later acknowledged could have been expressed with more sensitivity.

27 Cathy Mihalopoulos, Martin Hensher, and Catherine Bennett, The costs and quality of life, *The Age*, September 26, 2020.

28 Paul Johnson, 'Heated Q + A discussion sees economist Gigi Foster deny she is 'advocating for people to die', *ABC News*, July 28, 2020.

29 Robyn Ironside, Flight Centre boss backs Virgin Chief's call, *The Australian*, May 19, 2021.

In this argument, utilitarian pragmatism vies with a more altruistic valuing of every human life as precious. Health professionals see this as an irresponsible response while much is still unknown about COVID-19, including the real vulnerability of the young and the possible life-long effects that may impact on individuals and on the health system. We do not know if one becomes immune after infection, or whether there will be an effective long-term vaccine developed.

Bad news sells well. But there is good news in that medical advances and universal education can help us work out where we should be heading from here to evolve to a new integrated social order, living with a pandemic. It is possible a post COVID-19 era may see a period of similar rejuvenation and growth to that we saw in the post-World War 2 years. Deloitte partner, Chris Richardson, has said that, despite a devastating recession, 'if things go right, and the numbers go right, you genuinely start to get a beautiful recovery'.[30] Six months on, presenting the budget in May 2021, the Treasurer argued such a recovery was under way.

The key fact is that both old and young people today face a longer life span, and our institutions must change to accommodate and take advantage of what should be viewed as a social and industrial achievement.

30 Patrick Commins, 'Economy set for a 'beautiful recovery', *The Australian*, October 19, 2020.

Tackling some myths about intergenerational inequity

1. Myth or reality?[31]

Health care costs have increased because of a larger ageing population

The ageing of a population obviously incurs some costs, through older people's reduced income, declining health, and the need for support services. But Australia's population aged 65 plus is only 15.7%, well below many other developed nations (e.g., Sweden 20.1% and Germany 21.7%) which are not finding their elders to be an economic burden. Projections of the growing number of future older people may look alarming, but the alarm assumes that nothing else will change. If societies put more faith into the contributions that older people can make to the economy, fears about the so-called 'burden' of the ageing population should be reduced.

Health care costs have certainly risen in Australia (budget estimates for 2028-29 are around $36 billion), but the rise is not due to ageing as such. Japan, with the oldest population on the globe, has moderate health costs, whereas the United States, which has an ageing profile like Australia's, has the highest health costs of all. Systems differ and can be changed. The Grattan Institute estimates ageing contributed about 7% to increased health expenditure between 2003 and 2013, whereas population growth (largely of migrating younger people) contributed 18% and new, improved, and expanded services per person (not just the old) contributed around 70%. Even for people aged 35-44 the number of medical services per person more than doubled. The main cause for the 70% increase in costs is 'new, improved and increased services per person'. Costly new technology and over-servicing by doctors (of everyone, not just the aged) is the major driver of increased health expenditure.[32]

General population growth through immigration has added to costs. And predictions that obesity will add to the health burden (and possibly increased morbidity) is clearly not just attributable to older people. Even frailty in old age is less of a burden today. Just because older people are living longer, does not mean they have a longer period of disability and physical dependence on others. They are fitter than in past decades and more are actively employed, continuing to contribute to the national economy in their later years. Because of this improved longevity and better health, there is a 'compression of morbidity', that is a shorter period of decline before death at a later age.

A longer and healthier life, plus better health services, are hardly something to be deplored. Instead of pointing the finger at older people for rising health costs, attention should be directed to reducing the costs of health services to everyone while maintaining and improving quality, reducing unnecessary services (e.g. over use use of drugs, radiology, unnecessary surgery, etc.) and encouraging advances in healthy living and illness prevention programs.

In short, older people are not to blame for the major increase in health care costs.

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31 Much of the data on which we rely in this section were reported first in Betts, Katherine, *Demographic ageing: progress or threat?* The Australian Population Research Institute, 2019. Other analysis of census data has been undertaken by Jane O'Sullivan.

32 A.O.Okunad and VNR Murphy, 'Technology as a major driver of health care costs: a cointegration analysis of the Newhouse conjecture,' in *Health Economics*, Vol.1, 2002; C. Sorenson, M Drummond and B.B.Khan, 'Medical technology as a key driver of rising health expenditure: disentangling the relationship,' in *Clinico Economics and Outcomes Research*, Vol.5, 2013; I.R, Santana, M.J. Aragon, N.Rice and AP. Mason, 'Trends and drivers of health care expenditure in the English NHS: a retrospective analysis,' *Health Economics Review*, No. 20, 2020.

2. Myth or reality?

Older people are a burden on society because of the rising costs of aged care

Aged care has been very much in the spotlight with the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's final report released in March 2021. The government's response was a key component of the budget released in May 2021. The final report, *Care, Dignity and Respect*, was the culmination of two years of deliberations, over 10,500 submissions and evidence from 640 witnesses. The report is replete with disturbing stories of unacceptable practices and abuse in care homes. They found widespread deficiencies in the quality of aged care accommodation – inadequate funding, misuse of drugs, poorly trained staff, low quality food, and widespread physical abuse. COVID-19 deaths clustered in aged care homes, illustrating the ageism and lack of government and societal concern for older people.

This is far from the first report to identify serious shortcomings in the Australian aged care system and to recommend major reform. These reports gather brief media attention when they are released but are then followed by bureaucratic and political inaction. For example, the 2010 Intergenerational Report was alarmist, flagging dramatically increased numbers in the older and very-old age groups that, if heeded, should have led to better preparation by government in caring for the aged. Dr Sarah Russell (the Director of Aged Care Matters) has said, 'Australia has one of the highest rates in the world of deaths in residential aged care as a proportion of total COVID-19 deaths'. The aged care tragedy has been years in the making.[33]

The May 2021 Budget included the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission recommendations. It promised funding of $17.7 billion over five years across five 'pillars' of reform, including $7.5 billion to improve homecare, $698.3 million to improve governance across the aged care system, and $942 million to drive systemic improvements to residential aged care quality and safety. The pillars include increasing capacity in provision of home care packages, a commitment to a new Aged Care Act, increased funding to aged care providers with a requirement of more minutes of care to be spent with each resident per day, and greater monitoring and oversight, including better mechanisms for reporting and addressing neglect and abuse. Opportunities for input from older people themselves are also part of the response, with additional funding for regular surveys of aged care residents and a Council of Elders to be established to advise on the reform process.[34]

Although these reforms have been largely welcomed by the aged care sector and older person advocacy groups, there has also been criticism that the reforms do not go far enough and/or that they are not sustainable without a defined ongoing source of funding. This is despite both Commissioners recommending some form of ongoing personal taxation (Briggs) or a levy (Pagone) to fund aged care.[35]

While it is not surprising that a Liberal Coalition government would resist a new tax, it is perhaps surprising that almost 50% of the population would be willing to pay more tax to fund a better aged care system, according to a survey of over 10,000 Australians conducted for the Royal Commission.[36] Surprising, until you consider that most Australians, if not needing care themselves, have older relatives or friends who do need care, especially as we see many more intergenerational families. As a society, we clearly want to see our friends and relatives better cared for.

Many people are also surprised to learn that only a small proportion of older people live in aged care homes. People over the age of 65 comprise 16% of the population yet in 2018, only 6% of people aged 65 plus were in permanent residential aged care. Only 7% of those aged 65-69 were in permanent care, with the proportion rising to 8.3% of people aged 80-84 and 44.6% of those aged 90 plus. Critics fail to mention these small percentages. Even for those over 90 years of age, fewer than half are in such care, most preferring to stay in their own homes, with family support and aged care packages to enable independent living.[37]

However, compared to other OECD countries, Australia is over-reliant on residential care compared to home and community-based supports. In order to reduce the number

33 Sarah Russell, 'Aged care tragedy years in the making', *The Age*, October 7, 2020

34 https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/05/australian-government-response-to-the-final-report-of-the-royal-commission-into-aged-care-quality-and-safety.pdf

35 Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect, March 2021

36 Ratcliffe J, Chen G, Cleland J, Kaambwa B, Khadka J, Hutchinson C, Milte R, Australia's aged care system: assessing the views and preferences of the general public for quality of care and future funding. Caring Futures Institute, Flinders University, South Australia 2020

37 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/aged-care

and proportion of older Australians living in residential aged care, there needs to be an increase in investment in home and community-based care. Time (and hopefully rigorous evaluation) will tell whether the promised increased investment by government will go far enough. Critics doubt it as it will barely clear the current waiting list, estimated to be 100,000 people at Feb 2021, let alone address the likely increasing demand from an ageing population.

There is no evidence of preferential treatment in the system towards older people. On the contrary, as the Royal Commission clearly illustrated, to date they have been severely neglected with funding at the level of bare necessity. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a case in point. While it has its critics, it provides a much more comprehensive package of support to people who are eligible than does the aged care system. It is an entitlement-based system like health care, assured of continued funding via a levy, with individual funding based on needs. However, it is only available to people who incur a disability prior to reaching 65 years of age. Once that age is reached, the aged care system is activated, with caps on numbers of home care packages and residential care beds leading to long waiting lists, a limit to the funding amount that can be allocated to each individual and no dedicated funding source.

Aged care has also been open to unscrupulous operators, including the much-publicised Maserati driving owners of a facility in Melbourne that was one of the hardest hit by COVID-19. Forty-one per cent (41%) of residential care is provided by for profit operators and to date there has been little transparency about how they use government funds meant for resident care. This should change post the Royal Commission as the Government has promised increased funding for residential care ($10 per day) and greater scrutiny to ensure that this will be spent on residents, with better food and nutrition a priority.

The costs of aged care are confounded by the fact that the picture emerging from the media about disability care is also confusing. Rates of severe disability have dropped overall, and while it is correct to say that older people are more likely to suffer a disability than young people, nearly half of those classified in Australia as 'profoundly or severely disabled' were under the age of 65, and rates of 'severe core activity limitation' have declined for all age groups (in part because of lower rates of smoking, alcohol consumption, dementia, and better surgical procedures). Growing rates of obesity and diabetes may change that.

In 2016, 5.1% of the overall population were severely or profoundly disabled. Of that group, 9.3% were aged 0-14, 37.5% 15-64 and 53.2% were 65 plus, which means that nearly half of those with severe disability were under the age of 65, and close to 20% of their carers were aged over 65.

The cost of child care confuses the argument even further, as caring for an infant can cost more in time and resources than for an older person. So, taking physical dependency figures alone, 60.4% were aged 0-14 and just 23.7% were aged over 65.[38]

If overall physical dependency is taken to include children, the total care 'burden' in 2016 was 2.8 million individuals, of whom 60.4% were aged 0-14, 16.5% were aged 15-64 and just 23.7% were aged 65 plus. Moreover, the 'burden' of child care is not just that of parents.

The argument that older people represent a burden should be balanced with an understanding of their contributions to care. Grandparents perform 30% of day care for children 0-4 living with one or both parents (enabling them to work outside the home), and 16% of day care for

"The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

- Mahatma Ghandi

38 https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#carers

children aged 4-11. Inadequate funding of child care services and poor training/pay of early childhood workers shows this too is an area of low priority, with the burden falling on older family members, not the overall taxpaying community. Furthermore, older people look after other older people, particularly their spouses or partners. Over a third of primary carers in Australia (36.6%) are caring for a spouse or partner (compared to 27.1% caring for a child) and the rate of caring generally increases with age from 1.0% of those aged under 15 years to 19.7% of those aged 55- 64 years.[39]

Aged care is not just a cost to the community but a potential growth industry. David Haywood, Emeritus Professor of Public Policy at RMIT, has drawn attention to the changes needed and the benefits to be gained by reform of our healthcare and social assistance industry, which now employs 1.7 million people.[40] It is expected to grow by 205,000 over the next five years, more than double the pace of the next fastest sector, education. The National Skills Commission calls it our most COVID-19 resilient industry but much of the work is precarious, casualised, underpaid and done by women (mostly immigrants). It depends on vocational qualifications that have never been fit for purpose. What is needed is a highly skilled workforce able to drive productivity, growth and innovation.

So where is the 'ageing burden'? Talk of costly aged care is one of those mantras repeated in the media which result in public fear of, and antagonism towards, the older generation, which is falsely believed to be an increasing burden, a threat to those younger 'taxpayers' who will, themselves, one day, grow old and need care, accommodation or services. Of course, aged care costs will increase with an older population, but it is not the aged alone who are to be blamed for the increasing costs of care in the community and the debate needs to become a constructive conversation in the interests of all – the cared for, the carers, and the community. Reducing the commentary about aged care to an economic argument obscures the moral obligation that each generation has to look after their elders. We will all grow old (unless we die first) and the current generation of older people have in turn cared for their elders. If, as Mahatma Ghandi said, 'the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members' then we need to do whatever it takes to make sure older Australians get the care they need, when they need it, regardless of the cost, and design a system that will benefit the Millennials and all future generations when their time comes.

39 https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#carers

40 David Haywood, 'The future for social service', RMIT, October, 2018

3. Myth or reality?

Young people are disadvantaged through less and more costly access to higher education, low job availability, lower wages and youth incomes

The major trend affecting young people is towards insecure work, the 'gig' economy, lack of tenure and job-associated benefits. One major disadvantage facing our younger generations is the lag between rising costs of living and increased wages. Casualisation, the gig economy and rising under-employment put more young people in a position where marriage, having children, and housing them, must be delayed. Technological change is rapid as well, producing what is called an 'insecuriat', with few options as life unfolds.

Even this has been overstated as a complaint of the young. Remarkably, the share of temporary agency workers as a share of total employment has been trending downwards, from 31% in 2001 to 24% in 2017 and self-employment as a share of total employment has been trending downwards too, from about 17% in 2001 to 13.5% in 2018, based on the Melbourne HILDA Institute's latest household and income survey[41]. Professor Mark Wooden claims that "mental health and physical well-being were no lower among workers employed on a casual, fixed-term, or self-employed basis".[42] Not everyone agrees.

At face value, Baby Boomers in Australia lived through good times compared with their own parents and previous generations. They had the opportunity to acquire a mostly free education, and gain paid employment in jobs not necessarily requiring a tertiary level degree. They have been the beneficiaries of tax concessions on housing investments and superannuation concessions, advantages granted by previous governments but now rightly challenged because they are having flow-on effects for younger people wanting to establish a home.

Much is made of the so-called 'free' university education enjoyed by Baby Boomers[43] compared with the current 'loan' system of fees paid by government to be repaid once students have entered the job market and are earning above a certain salary. On the one hand, HECS/HELP has helped make tertiary education more accessible. But the nexus between education and jobs has changed, with many of the entry-level jobs once available to graduates disappearing, and the amount owing to government becoming an increasing burden.[44]

Though entry standards have dropped, numbers have been capped and domestic students have had to compete with overseas students who pay the fees up front and have distorted university funding in recent years. COVID-19 has disrupted this business model and universities are facing substantial deficits as enrolment of foreign students has plunged, with government showing no willingness to assist.[45]

The reality was not so rosy for many Baby Boomers. Not all Boomers gained a higher education, and not all who did fared well in the job market. The following Census figures show there is little substantial difference in the employment figures for jobseekers at the peak of their working life across 30 years.

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41 Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey; Statistical Report, Melbourne Institute, 2020

42 Adam Creighton, Information age will soon change how we work, *The Australian*, 24 November, 2020.

43 It is important to note too that free tertiary education in Australia was relatively short-lived, from 1974 to 1989 – all previous generations had to pay fees or win a scholarship.

44 This HECS/HELP scheme was introduced by the Hawke Labor government in 1989 to assist disadvantaged students who wished to enter higher education. It replaced the system of Commonwealth Scholarships and other forms of assistance (such as teaching bursaries) which were effective. Successive governments have kept the scheme, with minor modifications to the pay-back requirements. In 2020, a new way of paying fees, saw humanities, commerce, law, and communication course subsidies reduced, on the spurious assumption that such courses led to jobs less easily than those in the sciences and technology.

45 Alan Morris, C. Hastings, E. Mitchell et al, 'Coronavirus leaves Australian universities in dire straits, study shows', S*outh China Morning Post*, August, 2020.

Table 1: Employment figures for people aged 30-39 by qualification across 30 years

Employed 30-39-year-olds with:[46]	1986	1996	2006	2016
Bachelor's degree or higher	21.07%	29.84%	22.71%	29.48%
Diploma or Certificate	33.75%	31.9%	30.7%	37.3%
No post-school qualification	33.0%	29.9%	34.07%	35.12%

If anything, such figures contradict the idea that everyone today needs a university degree; more of those without a degree have found a job by mid-life.

It is true that, as our economy shifted from manufacturing to services, many entry-level jobs in factories and offices disappeared. Not all could afford to buy a house (see later section) and only a third of Baby Boomers gained a university education. Nor did the assumed nexus between having a degree and getting a good job hold up. The following table shows the percentage of 30-39-year-olds with a Bachelor Degree or higher who were unemployed:

Table 2: Unemployment figures for people aged 30-39 with a degree across 30 years

Year	1986	1996	2006	2016
Percentage with higher degree unemployed	21.7%	29.84%	22.71%	29.5%

These figures make a nonsense out of the Federal Government's attempt to cut the fee subsidy for courses that supposedly led less often to a job, in humanities, commerce, law and communications. The evidence is that employers are now looking for graduates with high skills in precisely those areas of literacy, communication, analytic skills, problem-solving and emotional intelligence, rather than those with a narrow STEM or IT qualification. Ironically, such a policy shift may further entrench any disadvantage young people are suffering in the job market.

Greater flexibility in working from home during the COVID pandemic was enjoyed by many, though not all, employees and may presage a whole re-think of our current workplace relations system. In this, digital skills will be required for home-based working and older workers will be disadvantaged compared with the younger 'digital-natives'.[47]

46 Table derived from confidentialised unit record data on Censuses, ABS, 1986-2016.

47 A New Map of Life After the Pandemic, Stanford Centre on Longevity, 2021.

Measures to ensure casual workers are not exploited by lower pay rates, lack of superannuation instalments from employers and rights to other employment conditions, are not just directed at younger workers, though they dominate the numbers.[48]

Many older Australians are remaining in the paid workforce. But they suffer discrimination in finding employment and receiving on-the-job training. Employers doubt the returns on investing in older workers, though some 81% did provide in-house training and firms such as Westpac Bank, Bunnings Warehouse, McDonalds and Australia Post have recognised that older employees may offer better customer service than the young. The European Union has developed an 'Active Ageing Strategy' to boost older workforce participation rates.[49]

The Australian TAFE sector has moved to offer shorter courses for workers looking to upgrade their skills. The Deakin University/Coles Myer model offers qualifications in retail, finance, hospitality and business management, and more universities will have to move in the direction of 'bespoke' courses for mature-age students if they are to survive.[50]

The disadvantages of insecure and casualised work, the loss of nexus between education and employment, and housing insecurity are not confined to young people. These differences are more a matter of class inequality than a divide between generations, despite the media focus on intergenerational issues.[51]

48 https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/feb/10/anthony-albanese-promises-more-gig-workers-portable-annual-sick-and-long-service-leave

49 Larsson, A., *The road to a society for all ages in an Ageing Europe*, Paper presented at Brussels, OECD, November, 1999.

50 G. Hanley & T. McKeown, 'You can teach an old dog new tricks: The emerging Australian Grey-collar workforce', Dept of Management Working Paper, Monash University, 2020.

51 Martin Kohli, 'Generations in ageing societies: Inequalities, cleavages, conflicts, 2014, in C. Torp, ed. Challenge of Ageing: Retirement, Pensions, and Intergenerational Justice, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

4. Myth or reality?

Older people are creating an increasing dependency on tax-paying younger workers

There is no clear rationale for taxing older people at a lower rate than younger people. Income is income; income tax rates should apply equally to all who earn above the taxable threshold. Yet Australia in the Howard-Costello years of government enshrined an inequitable system which has now become a contested point of entitlement. This is a clear disadvantage for younger generations.

The first change (in 2000) introduced a lower tax-free threshold for those over 65 – SAPTO – the Seniors and Pensioners Tax Offset. At $32,000 ($57,950 for a couple) this is higher than in any other OECD country and 70% higher than the tax-free threshold for younger people. No rationale was given; it was an electoral ploy for the seniors' vote. Then in 2006, Treasurer Peter Costello removed complicated tax rules for monies withdrawn from superannuation funds after retirement. He exempted earnings in the 'pension phase' so no tax need be paid at all. Extra funds could be tipped into an 'accumulation phase' super account and taxed at just 15%. That meant valuable property could be shifted into the accumulation category and no tax paid on any of it except the annual 'pension' part of super. This fed into a boom in house prices which had multiple causes, but which has certainly disadvantaged young people trying to enter the housing market.

Another concession to the over-65s was removal of the 2% Medicare levy if their taxable income was below $42,172, whereas anyone below that age had to pay it in full after earning $26,668. As well, concessional caps for superannuation contributions by employees have been slashed to $25,000 a year.

In an analysis of tax data to find who benefits from negative gearing on investment property, Eddy and Butt found that for 2016-17, some 10% (1.3 million) Australians used this tax advantage[52]. It was high income earners who benefitted most (22% of those earning more than $180,000; cf. 10% in the $37,000-87,000 bracket), particularly anaesthetists (29%), surgeons (28%) and school principals (25%). Some 22% of police did so too, and the figures ranged over many employment categories. Not unexpectedly, the most likely age group was 45-65, with only 19 people aged under 18 doing so. The numbers claiming tax deductions on investment property had remained flat for the previous seven years.

Capital gains tax is another advantage enjoyed by older taxpayers. Gains and/or losses (cost of improvements, declines in value, legal expenses) can be applied when selling a rental property if it was bought before 20 September 1985.

As the Grattan Institute puts it, senior Australians are the only age group paying lower personal income tax than they did 20 years ago. A parent earning $190,000 supporting a spouse and three children, in contrast, must pay 47 cents in the dollar. For the nation, that means $1 billion a year in forgone tax revenue.

Every society applies a tax transfer system to help the disadvantaged. This includes welfare payments such as unemployment benefits, sole parent supplements, pensions, and the like. It is true that age pensioners are the largest group of welfare recipients in Australia (62%). Overall social security and welfare costs total $180.1 billion (projected to rise to $200.2 billion by 2023), with assistance to the aged comprising about 21% of that total. But the total includes recipients such as families with children, people with disabilities, veterans and their dependants, assistance to the unemployed, Indigenous Australians and other welfare programs, all of which are also predicted to rise as our population grows. There is no more reason to decry rising aged pension costs and other forms of assistance to the aged in comparison to the assistance given to other people in need. That is the whole point of paying taxes and having a tax transfer system.

The current debate about who should pay for aged care has a parallel in the origins of Australia's tax system. Prior to 1900, charitable societies provided some relief for the old and the poor. In June 1908, the Commonwealth Government's Invalid and Old Age Pension Act replaced emergency relief for the poorest seniors. It was a non-contributory tax-funded scheme. In other words, everyone's lifelong income tax contributions entitled them to an aged pension on retirement from work; no special levy was required. Then in 1925, a conservative government changed the Old Age Pensions Act to become a contributory insurance scheme. An extra levy was added to income tax, as in today's Medicare scheme, and as proposed now by some to cover the cost of aged care. The Keating Government's reform of superannuation (1983) added a

52 Rachel Eddy & Craig Butts (2019), 'Who benefits most from negative gearing?' *The Age*, 26 June, 2019.

compulsory extra payment, in part sacrificed from wages by the earner, in part supplemented by the employer. Much praised as an enlightened 'welfare' reform, it was in fact a class-based system by which well-paid employees gained a 'third leg' for their old age, the rest were left with either an inadequate superannuation accumulated over their working life, or just a pension fixed at a proportion of the average wage. Again, an economic rationalist way of saving the government from what was a growing 'burden' on revenue.[53]

Accumulated wealth is often used as a criticism of the Baby Boomers, the top 20% owning two-thirds of all wealth, the bottom two-thirds owning just 1% of Australia's wealth. The Grattan Institute report on 'The wealth of generations' suggests a growing discrepancy between older and younger generations. Household wealth has risen markedly for homeowners, mostly older people, and they argue:

'Governments are also spending much more on pensions and services, particularly health, for older households. In 2010, governments spent $9400 more per household over 65 than they did six years before. Much of the increased spending was funded by budget deficits. Future taxpayers will have to repay the debt. In the past, each generation took out more from the budget over its lifetime than it put in. This 'generational bargain' was sustainable when incomes rose quickly – the norm for 70 years.

The generational bargain is at risk because government transfers from younger to older cohorts are now so large that future budgets may not be able to afford them, and incomes may rise more slowly over coming decades. If so, the last two decades in the United States and Britain illustrate the potential outcomes. The wealth and incomes of younger age groups in these countries have fallen well behind those of their parents at a similar age.' [54]

We suggest this conclusion is misleading because there is no way to forecast the future accumulation of wealth by younger generations, and factors such as the value of housing can rapidly change (as has happened with COVID-19 or would happen with a permanent drop in immigration numbers). In fact, there is likely to be a huge transfer of wealth as the Baby Boomers die. However, the wealth is not shared by all Baby Boomers, many of whom do not own a house and are income poor. Just as not all Millennials are self-centred 'avocado-on-toast' eaters, so too not all Baby Boomers enjoy such 'generational advantage'. The authors also assume the only avenues open to government facing a rising old age population are to increase income taxes or to cut services. But enforcing the payment of corporate taxes or reforms to correct distortions such as negative gearing and capital gains would not be an imposition on the young, and would represent a shift in elite social class advantages, not a whole-of-generation change. To pose wealth differentials as a 'generational' issue rather than one of inequality is not helpful in thinking about policy change. Even what seems to be a generous superannuation scheme, of benefit to those in full-time jobs, gives a class-related picture rather than one which applies to a whole generation. In fact, average earnings seem to peak between age 45 and 50, not later, because of age discrimination in the workplace.[55] [56]

Labor's 2018 proposal to end refundability of franking credits on shares held in superannuation funds raised the question of equity and was soundly rejected by voters, both old and young. Most young people aged 15-19 are still studying full-time and thus are dependent on the older generation, viz. their parents; 35% of those aged 20-24 are also studying full-time; and after that, 20% of women and 12% of men aged 25-64 are either not in the paid workforce or are unemployed. So who is supporting whom?

The assertion that Australia's 'dependency ratio' (numbers in the paid workforce paying taxes which support dependent people) will worsen with ageing, ignores the fact that only 45.2% of federal government revenue comes from personal income tax, and is just part of what pays for dependent people, whether old, young, or disabled.[57] Much of that personal income derives not from paid work but from other sources such as rent, trusts, dividends, all of which could be taxed at a higher rate if necessary. Government revenue for 2021-22 totals $496.6 billion, with total outlays expected to be $589.3 billion, leaving a large deficit of almost $1 trillion by 2025. Much is made of this as a 'burden' on future taxpayers, yet expenditure on all areas (such as 35% on Social Security and Welfare; 5.8% on Defence; 7.3% on Education; and 16.7% on Health) is of benefit to people of all ages not just the old and is better viewed as an investment in the future, not a burden only on future younger taxpayers.

53 Aaron Patrick, Superannuation is stacked in favour of wealthy men like Paul Keating, *Financial Review*, Jan. 27, 2021.

54 John Daley & Danielle Wood, *The Wealth of Generations*, Grattan Institute, 2014.

55 C. Hanna, 'How older Australians captured a growing share of the nation's wealth', *Sydney Morning Herald*, ABS *Household Income and Wealth, Australia 2015-16*, 19 March, 2019.

56 Victor Marshall, 'The generations: Contributions, Conflict, Equity', *Health Canada*, 1997.

57 Budget 2021, as reported in *The Weekend Australian*, May 15-16, 2021, p. 38.

Indeed, when we look at sources of revenue other than personal income tax, we find much of the support for 'dependent' people (via child care, schools, single parents, the unemployed and age pensioners) comes from company and resource rent taxes (17.2%), GST and other sales taxes ($75.9 billion, or 15.3%), customs duty ($18.4 billion, 3.7%), fuel and other excise ($24.8 billion, 4.9%) and superannuation taxes ($15.3 billion, 3.1%). So, there are other ways of increasing revenue to pay for the needs of older people apart from personal income tax. Reportedly, one-third of large companies in Australia paid no tax at all in 2019-20,[58] a disgrace when business leaders claim they cannot afford wage rises and the media repeat the mantra that young taxpayers will carry the burden of an ageing population.[59]

Estimates of rising age dependency costs ($36 billion) assume loss via reduced income tax revenue, yet since many in the so-called working age category do not earn income or pay tax anyway, and income tax is 42.5% of overall government revenue, it will be a relatively small decrease in the scheme of things. If the Tax Office properly enforced company tax, there would be more revenue, and claims of generational disadvantage would be put in better perspective. As well, excise and customs taxes comprise 8.3% of total revenue (5.5% of GDP, down because indexation ceased in 2001).

Older people also contribute a great deal to society through voluntary work: 34.6% of those aged 65-74; 25.5% of those aged 75-84; and 18.9% of those aged 85 plus, are volunteers in their communities.[60] The value of voluntary work is never counted in GDP estimates but has been valued elsewhere as worth over $290 billion.[61]

It is no longer true that older people are non-contributors to the paid workforce and the tax revenues derived from that work. The days of early retirement are over, as older people want to and need to continue participating in paid work. Australians are increasingly working to older ages. In January 2018, Australians aged 65 and over had a workforce participation rate of 13% (17% for men and 10% for women), compared with 8% in 2006 (12% for men and 4% for women). [62] Better education, later age at marriage, reduced birth rates and fewer years spent on child care have led to increases at all ages of women in the paid labour force, but especially for those aged 45 and over, making a huge contribution to Australia's productivity.

"Older people also contribute a great deal to society through voluntary work.... The value of voluntary work is never counted in GDP estimates but has been valued elsewhere as worth over $290 billion."

Moreover, 77% of people aged over 65 are still in paid employment, many of them part-time, but still being 'productive' and not being 'dependent' on the younger generation. Work is, for many, a financial necessity, for others a lifestyle choice, but, given longer life expectancy, active work is likely to be an ongoing feature of the lives of older generations. So, the question is, how to make that possible without seeing it as an obstacle to jobs for younger people.

The critique of older people as 'dependent' on those of working age also assumes that younger people are always more productive than older, yet in the past, young women's lives have been dominated by child-rearing and an inability to participate in the paid workforce. That is no longer true. It also assumes that unpaid domestic and child-rearing work is unproductive, yet without it, the paid workforce would not be possible and the foundations for later education and skills development would not be laid. Smaller family size, better education, and opportunities for women as well as men enables them to engage in useful work outside the family as well, with human resources overall greatly increased. Removing the gender pay gap would increase female workforce participation and increase tax revenue.

58 Robert Murphy, *Government Debt and Future Generations*, Liberty Classics, 2015; T. Ogawa, 'Public debt places no burden on future generations under demand shortage', *ISER Discussion Paper, No. 791*, Osaka University, 2010.

59 Nassan Khadyem, 'ATO reveals one-third of large companies pay no tax', *The Australian*, 2 January, 2020.

60 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/social-and-economic-engagement/civic-and-social-participation

61 'Key Facts about Volunteering in Australia', *Volunteering Australia*, 2015; 'The value of Informal Care in Australia in 2015', Delloitte Access, *Economics & Carers Australia*, 2015.

62 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/social-and-economic-engagement/civic-and-social-participation

Thus, talk of an increasing burden on the young 'working-age' population ignores two things: first that the term itself is outmoded, given the above older-age labour force participation rate changes; and second, that not all people in that 'young' category are actually working and paying taxes at all. Counting those in full-time study, the unemployed or those not currently participating in the workforce, some 16% of people aged 15-64 were not in paid work and therefore were not carrying the burden of costs for the aged.

What is also lost in the discussion about intergenerational conflict is a clear understanding of the purposes of taxation, the proper role of government and the longer-term investments current generations make via taxation to the wellbeing of future generations. What could be called 'the ethics of taxation' should be the focus, not just an assertion that it is older people who benefit, but a targeted critique of those aspects of the tax system which do impact 'unfairly' on younger people, indeed on everyone. Equity issues do arise when tax concessions favor older investors over young adults, as in trying to enter the housing market, and they need to be addressed.

We suggest therefore that tax provisions favouring older people should be targeted (however unpopular that may be), but policy debate should stop using ageist arguments about the dependency ratio to justify such actions. Instead, raise revenue by other means to remove more obvious anomalies such as corporate tax write-offs.

Every government uses taxes to provide services used by every generation, such as education, health, public transport, communication systems, and defence. Taxes are used to build infrastructure and develop services (water, power, sewerage) for the future, not just for current generations. So, it is illogical to argue that the national debt incurred now should not be a 'burden' on the young; it is a benefit that will last into future generations and they should pay some of the cost. Witness the huge costs in the past of building Australia's railways and highway networks, or the Snowy hydro-electric scheme; this infrastructure incurred debt that has been paid off by several generations, and rightly so, because every generation has or will have benefitted.

Economists are pointing out that even with the massive debt now being incurred to prop up employment and business during the COVID-19 crisis (it will amount to some $213 billion of borrowings), the interest bill on those borrowings will be just $1.6 billion a year. Michael Keating, former head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, also calculates that Australia's gross public debt will only increase from 41% of GDP to 50% in 2023 (less than half the present OECD average) and will create no great fiscal burden for future generations.[63]

Keating also points out that although many young people have lost their jobs, the government's financial support package is targeted at them. Jennifer Westacott, chief executive of the Business Council of Australia, reminds those lamenting the fate of the young that it was older workers, not the young, who remained long-term unemployed after losing their jobs in the recession of the early 1990s. She argues for greater cooperation between the generations, through lifelong learning to rebuild the skills and confidence of workers at whatever age.[64]

In sum it is false to claim that employed young people do or will carry the burden of non-tax-paying elders; the fault lies elsewhere in government policy. The whole debate implies that older people are unproductive, yet ignores their significant contribution to society through childcare, volunteering work and a growing participation in the paid workforce until their late seventies.

> *" It is illogical to argue that the national debt incurred now should not be a 'burden' on the young; it is a benefit that will last into future generations and they should pay some of the cost."*

63 Michael Keating, 'Covid-19 and inter-generational equity,' in John Menadue's blog *Pearls & Irritations*, 28 April, 2020; Economist Chris Richardson agrees. Quoted in, Jessica Irvine, 'Where will all the money come from to fund the stimulus?' *Sunday Age*, 5 April, 2020.

64 Joe Kelly, 'Older, unqualified at risk of retrenchment', *The Australian*, 27 April, 2020; Jennifer Westacott, 'Recraft a society that values work and aspiration,' *The Australian*, 27 April, 2020.

5. Myth or reality?
Housing costs are excluding the young from the 'Australian Dream'

Home ownership

Perhaps the main complaint about intergenerational unfairness involves home ownership. Tax concessions for investors and those who already own a home, plus a rapidly increasing population, have driven house prices up so far that many young adults cannot afford to buy and establish themselves as independent homeowners. Older people are accused of having had it easy and of now monopolising separate family-sized houses, locking out the young, but an increasing number of generational properties are being sold, with some Baby Boomers using the family home as their superannuation, selling up and cashing-in to fund retirement.[65]

Housing affordability in Sydney and Melbourne is, according to Birrell and Healy, 'close to the worst in the developed world', with the ratio of median house prices to median household income 12.9 in Sydney, and 9.9 in Melbourne. Even in more affordable areas, a dual-income couple aged between 25 and 34, each saving one-fifth of their post-tax income, would need to save for six years to come up with a $116,500 deposit for a property priced at $582,500.[66]

To buy in an area such as the City of Boroondara, a middle-ring suburb of Melbourne, it would take 16 years to save a deposit for a $1.6 million house. Few first home buyers can pull together a 20% deposit without assistance from their parents or elsewhere.

The statistics show that the proportion of people aged in their early thirties (the key child-bearing years) who owned their own home (with or without a mortgage) fell by 23 percentage points, from 64% in 1981 to 41% in 2016. Home ownership for people in their early 50s fell by 10 percentage points, from 76% in 1981 to 66% in 2016. Parallel with this drop, house prices have risen markedly, from an average value in 1994-5 of $250,000 to a median value of over $850,000 in December 2020[67]. Weekly housing costs, including rentals, have also increased, making it harder for younger generations to save for a deposit and buy their own home. In 2017-18, single-parent families with dependent children spent 24% of their income on housing, while couples with children spent an average of 14% of their gross household income. The COVID-19 pandemic and the trend to home-based working has led many city-dwellers to shift to regional areas where housing has been cheaper. But an unintended consequence is that regional house prices (and rent) have increased as well.[68]

Moreover, shortage of supply (both vacant land and built housing) continues to drive up housing costs for new entrants to the housing market. The 2011 Census showed that households aged 50 plus occupied round half of all existing detached houses in those capital cities, and many are unlikely to sell up and downsize, with an increasing shortage of 'family-friendly' detached housing for the next generation, unless building supply is markedly increased. The 2021-22 Federal Budget has proposed incentive measures to encourage downsizing with superannuation concessions after age 60. There is also support for additional building trainees, but property prices are likely to remain high.[69]

Young couples are either being forced to buy in cheaper outer-suburban areas where facilities and services are often lacking, or stay renting, often in apartments that are unsuitable for those wanting to start a family. There seems to be an increasing concentration of migrant families in the outer suburban areas (up to 30% in places such as Laverton, Tarneit, and Truganina in Melbourne). In Sydney, the proportion of 30-39-year-olds renting has jumped from 36% in 2011 to 41% in 2016; in Melbourne it jumped from 32% to 36%.[70]

The 2021-22 Budget proposes further measures which may help young people enter the housing market: help for 10,000 single parents to buy with only a 2% deposit; tax cuts for low and middle income couples and singles; childcare assistance up to $2200 a year to help women remain in the workforce; and a superannuation provision

65 Melissa Heagney, 'Going, going, gone, the generational home', *The Sunday Age*, 16 May, 2021.

66 Domain Group estimate, based on ABS data, as reported by Alison Worrall, in *The Age*, 28 June, 2018; Bob Birrell and Ernest Healy, Immigration and the Housing Affordability Crisis in Sydney and Melbourne, The Australian Population Research Institute, July, 2018.

67 https://www.9news.com.au/national/australia-house-prices-2020-national-average-hits-record-high-as-lockdowns-ease/bf8383a8-c4c4-4345-9f7f-4976437621e4#:~:text=Domain's%20quarterly%20House%20Price%20report,lift%20in%20just%20one%20quarter.

68 Diana Warren & Lixia Qu, *Families then and now: housing*, AIFS Research Report, July, 2020; 'Regional house prices outstrip capitals for the first time in 16 years,' *Real Estate View, The Age/CoreLogic, Surf Coast Times*, 12 January, 2021.

69 Budget 2021 Guide, *The Weekend Australian*, May 15-16, 2021.

70 Bob Birrell and Ernest Healy, *Immigration and the Housing Affordability Crisis in Sydney and Melbourne*, The Australian Population Research Institute, July, 2018.

> *" Despite some generational 'luck', it needs to be remembered that close to a third of those aged over 65 do not own houses, 21% are still paying off a mortgage, and 22% are still having to rent."*

to encourage older home owners over the age of 60 to downsize and leave their large family home for younger families to buy. Whether that will work, given the costs of alternate housing, stamp duty, etc., remains to be seen and the ability to pay the 'gap' money from downsizing into superannuation could be seen as yet another unfair concession to older people.

It is misleading, however, to cite figures on relative 'wealth' as evidence for intergenerational inequity: we cannot know what housing values will be in another decade or estimate comparative asset wealth for young people today compared with their current elders. Because of a rising population through high immigration, and reflecting a shortage of available housing, Australian housing costs have increased substantially in the last decades (meaning that 'wealth' figures are somewhat distorted, because many older home-owners are 'asset rich, but income poor'). By 2017-18, half of all Australian dwellings had a value of over $600,000, and half of all mortgage-holders had a mortgage debt of at least $260,000. Calls for older people to draw down on their housing assets ('reverse mortgages') to pay for their own retirement ignore the facts that such income is finite, values could drop with changes to the economy, and higher housing costs apply also to older people wishing to downsize and buy somewhere else to live. More effective policies might include reducing stamp duty costs (as in NSW and Victoria in 2020) or replacing stamp duty with land tax or a fixed 'Transfer Charge'.

Despite some generational 'luck', it needs to be remembered that close to a third of those aged over 65 do not own houses, 21% are still paying off a mortgage, and 22% are still having to rent. Some 1.2 million older people live in poverty, with a third having less than $5000 in liquid assets to meet any emergency. Over 77% rely on social security benefits such as pensions and, of those, 59% are women and 58% are living alone. Though over 80% of aged couples are homeowners, few have other liquid assets and not all have families to support them through their old age. Not all enjoy franking credits on shares. Nor does every older person wish to follow exhortations to eat into their housing equity and/or their superannuation savings to fund a better retirement lifestyle.[71]

In fact, past Census data show that outright ownership of a home has always been for a minority, not the majority, of so-called Baby Boomers. For the Australian population, the proportion of households who owned their home outright increased from 33% in 1981 to 41% in 1991, but has declined since 2001. The proportion in 2016 was 31%. Those owning a home but still paying off a mortgage fell from 33% in 1991 to 26% in 1996 and has risen since, with 34% of households purchasing their own home with a mortgage in 2016.[72]

More to the point of intergenerational inequity is a comparison taking Census data for 30-39- year-olds (the age at which one would expect home ownership to be common for couples with children). We see the following:[73]

71 Jennifer Duke, "Empty nesters rule the roost as retired tenants fall behind," *The Age*, 23 November, 2020; Judith Sloan, "Deep flaws were built into compulsory superannuation," *The Australian*, 21 November, 2020.

72 'Families then and now", AIFS, 2018.

73 Based on ABS confidentialised unit record data for Census years 1986, 1996, 2006 and 2016.

Table 3: Residential status of people aged 30-39 across 30 years

Residential status of 30–39-year-olds	1986	1996	2006	2016
Owned outright	19.2%	22.7%	8.9%	5.8%
Paying off Mortgage	55.3%	42.0%	50.9%	61.1%
Renting	25.6%	26.2%	31.1%	30.0%

The trend away from outright home ownership for those aged 30-39 clearly reflects the later age at which people marry and have children but is no doubt also due to the increasing cost of housing and difficulty in obtaining a deposit for a housing loan in the first place. These data also show that the proportion of household income spent on housing has increased over time. Ownership of a home is the key to avoiding poverty in later life, and more action is needed to make housing more affordable for younger generations.[74]

Purchasing a home is increasingly difficult for young people, and this is the basis of many complaints about intergenerational inequity. Those in their early 30s who owned their own home, with or without a mortgage, fell by 23 percentage points, from 64% in 1981 to 41% in 2016. The burden of mortgage payments falls particularly on young families with children, partly because they buy houses with more bedrooms. Single parents spend a higher proportion of their income on housing (24% in 2017-18) and, overall, the percentage of households that spent at least 30% of their gross household income increased from 14% of households in 1994-5 to 17% in 2017-18.[75]

The recent Retirement Income Review argues: 'The home is the most important component of voluntary savings and is an important factor influencing retirement outcomes and how people feel about retirement'. But the review also notes that others are disadvantaged here, not just the young, such as, 'involuntary retirees who lose their jobs and cannot find another before reaching pension age'. Given current age discrimination in the workplace, many such 'Boomers' will be disadvantaged, not just younger people priced out of the housing market.[76]

To add to the complexity of the arguments, some researchers question the validity of claims about generational home ownership. Judith Bessant, for example, argues that Census data based on 'head of household' assumptions are misleading because home ownership – the great Australian dream – is no longer a rite of passage like it was in the post-War years.[77]

While successive governments have introduced incentive schemes to help first home buyers, such as the First Home Super-Saver Scheme and the First Home Loan Deposit scheme, little action has been taken to help older people wishing to move out of rental housing.

Still living at home?

Other questions must be asked about this apparent housing problem. First, are these older homeowners really living alone, or are they in fact helping the next generation by allowing their offspring to live at home while they save up, providing not just shelter but also income-supplement and subsidised services such as meals, laundry and social companionship?

In fact, the 2016 Census showed that 43.4% were still living at home at age 20-24; 17% at age 25-29; and of those aged 20-29 and living independently, only 6% owned a home outright, 26.4% had a mortgage and 6.8% were renting. In 2019, the Australian Institute of Family Studies reported that the number of 20-24-year-olds living with their parents had increased from 36% in 1981 to 43%. Those aged 25-29 still living at home had increased from 10% in 1981 to 17% in 2019. That means 60% of the younger generation are being supported by the older generation until their thirties while they go to university, search for a job, work to save money to buy or move out into independent housing.

74 Eric Lonergan and Mark Blyth, op cit.

75 AIFS, using ABS confidentialised unit record data.

76 Jennifer Duke, 'Empty nesters rule the roost as retired tenants fall behind', *The Age*, *23* November 2020.

77 Judith Bessant, 'Dream On: Declining homeownership among young people in Australia', Housing Theory & Society, RMIT, June 2020; J. Baxter & P. Macdonald, 'Home ownership rates among young people in Australia: In decline or just delayed? NLC Workshop, University of Queensland, June, 2004.

Second, it seems not every younger person in the next generation wants to marry, have children, and live in a stand-alone house of their own. Australia's marriage rate hit its lowest point in 2017, down to 4.6 marriages for every 1000 residents. Values about marriage and family have changed.[78]

The problem remains that housing costs have risen so much that for young people to buy their own home they will have to save for many more years than their parents did. Hence the electoral appeal of proposals to allow first home buyers to borrow for a mortgage with only a 15% deposit instead of the standard 20%. That would reduce the number of years taken to save for a deposit, but may lead to negative equity if the housing bubble bursts and strong competition from young buyers in the market may lead to yet another increase in house prices.

The latest HILDA survey found just 7.6% of renters transitioned into home ownership from one year to the next, down from 13.5% between 2001 and 2004. And home ownership is becoming less common across all age groups. Renters are more likely to move often, with more housing stress than homeowners. Many are still in higher education, many move between their parents' home and separate rentals, with new migrants more likely to rent in new apartments[79].

Figures are not available to correctly describe people's 'housing careers', which are delayed as the changing nature of young people's transition to adulthood (influenced by factors such as further education, diverse patterns of mobility, low wages growth and shifting values about marriage and having children) affect their choices regarding home purchasing. Bessant argues there have been major shifts in 'identity choices' and, though there are clear increases in house prices and interest rates, that does not mean permanent exclusion from home ownership.[80]

The positives of living at home longer need to be factored in. It may lead to a better intergenerational understanding, with more adult to adult interaction, and parents acting more like peers/friends. This is already foreshadowing a big change in intergenerational relationships, with mutuality growing.

Attitudes may also change as more immigrants arrive from countries where private home ownership is less common and less of a cultural aspiration. A 2019 AIFS study showed that more young adults from an Asian, Middle-Eastern, African or south-eastern European ancestry were likely to stay living at home with parents than those with Australian, north-western Europe or New Zealand backgrounds. The former are traditionally more likely to live in large extended families and, as more recent immigrants, more likely to rely on the cultural support of their family. In contrast, fewer Europeans living in cities own a detached dwelling, with planning more focused on providing family-friendly services and facilities in the inner-city areas than Australia has so far achieved. Public squares and parks, median strips where children can play, watched over by other adults, not just their parents, can be a sensible substitute for a barren suburban backyard or street. And pressure is growing to ensure better infrastructure is provided in Australian cities.

The housing difficulties of young people must be acknowledged and that access to home ownership is contributing to a growing class inequity. The better off have 'the bank of mum and dad' to call on.[81] There will be a huge transfer of wealth when the elders die[82], although this will happen later as people live longer, and may not benefit younger people when they consider they need the help most. The current situation is fluid. Many Baby Boomers do not own a home, some still have a mortgage. Home ownership does not in itself provide liquidity for living expenses over a 20-30-year period when older people are no longer earning. So, with interest rates at an all-time low people are dipping into their capital to live. Downsizing is one strategy to unlock the market value of the home, another is to sell up the home and move in with adult children, consolidating the intergenerational household balance sheet. Others are re-mortgaging their houses. The need to stay afloat is a stark reality for most people in the context of mortgage debt payments, stagnant wages and depreciating human capital. The family operates as a key source of economic security.

78 Relationships Australia, 'Contemporary views of marriage, online survey. An AIFS survey in 2019 found 59% of females and 45% of males saw marriage as less relevant now than they did previously, with 75% less committed to the idea of marriage and males seeing more positive benefits to being married (63%) than females (54%), April, 2019. See also Qu, L & G. Soriano, 'Forming couple relationships: Adolescent aspirations and young adults' actualities', Family Matters, 68, 2004.

79 Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey; Statistical Report, Melbourne Institute, 2020

80 Judith Bessant and J. Baxter & P. MacDonald op. cit.

81 Adkins, Cooper and Konings, op. cit. 2020

82 Tony Kaye, 'The inheritance generation: preparing for jump in transferred wealth', *The Weekend Australian*, May 22-23, 2021.

6. Myth or reality?
The prospects for young people are poor

There is no question that young people will face a different set of constraints on life prospects from that faced by the Baby Boomers. How could it be otherwise, given the decades of post-War growth and prosperity, the major advances in technology, and the impact of a global pandemic? But whether they will be unfairly disadvantaged remains to be seen. Future shocks will affect the young, but not them alone. Witness COVID-19, summer bushfires and extreme weather events. Younger generations face a vastly different world from that experienced by their parents. But that has always been true and makes any talk of comparative advantage or disadvantage rather meaningless.

The Australian Actuaries Intergenerational Index tracks 24 indicators across six broad domains that relate to wealth and well-being. They are Economic and Fiscal, Housing, Health and Disability, Social, Education, Environment, taken across three distinct age groups, 25-34, 45-54, and 65-74 years. The New Index Report (May 2021) found there has been a reduction in inequality between age groups. Older Australians outperform on wealth measures including the value of their home and savings, but the younger groups now have a longer life expectancy, a lift in first home buyers, and ramped up federal assistance for workers. There is also a rise in homelessness among older people as housing costs are affecting the whole population. The $90 billion JobKeeper scheme has helped many young people, while new training and mental health programs will also assist them.

However, a huge future deficit could affect them severely.[83] The impact of COVID-19 has made future predictions about all generations uncertain. There is dispute among economists about the truth underlying the budget deficit.[84]

The biggest threat today's young people will face is probably climate change and its damage to our shared environment. Certainly, it can be argued, much of the responsibility lies with past and current generations of 'older' decision-makers about the use of non-renewable coal and oil as our key sources of energy, but younger generations have been bigger consumers, more frequent travelers and users of polluting products than their forbears were. And how far back are we to go to blame the old? The industrial and agricultural revolutions were very disruptive to older people and opened new opportunities for the young, at a time when the science of climate change did not exist, and it is our more experienced scientists who are driving efforts to address the issue, not just young activists.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has surely altered the life prospects of younger generations, but it is too early to tell whether they will be unfairly treated by older decision-makers. The Australian Government's easing of restrictions on bank lending practices could lead to another 'boom and bust' if unrealistic taking on of debt by young people furthers the shift from housing as a home, to housing as a tradeable commodity. The pandemic at first resulted in a drop in house prices, because of reduced immigration and demand, but pent- up demand and continuing low interest rates have driven housing prices up dramatically. The shift to seeing housing as a commodity/investment rather than as a home, a basic right to shelter, will doubtless continue.[85]

It is, perhaps, the failure of imagination on the part of many Australian politicians and business leaders that serves as a roadblock for younger people. Over-reliance on mineral resources and on China as a market, and lack of effort being put into value-added industries will disadvantage young people trained in technology, IT and the STEM skills. Here, education policy is seriously flawed, with TAFE funding reduced, and the universities' over-reliance on overseas student fees and reduced teaching quality leaving many young people unprepared for work of any kind.

The reality is that older people too will have to be re-educated over the life course, as will the young, so higher education will need to be reframed as 'lifelong learning' where old and young are being educated together.

83 Jennifer Duke, 'Young and old wealth divide narrows', *The Age*, May 12, 2021.

84 Ross Gittins, 'Truth about federal cash splash', *The Age*, May 19, 2021.

85 Simon Benson, 'Unshackled banks told: go for loans', *The Australian*, 5 October, 2020.

Facing a new social order

From the evidence above, not all comparisons show intergenerational disadvantage. We argue it is more of a class distinction than a generational difference. But it does show two linked shifts in life expectancy which underpin the need to rethink how younger and older citizens interact.

Firstly, young people are having their years of dependence extended to acquire the education and skills necessary to work and adapt to a rapidly changing technology-driven world where the population is growing exponentially, and competition is fierce.

And secondly, older people are facing a longer life, where having a job and an adequate income is just as essential as it was in their younger years, and they are a larger group than ever before. Most live productive lives for at least seven decades before becoming anything like 'dependent' on younger income-producing adults.

The 'normal' stages of the life cycle (schooling, jobs, marriage, children, retirement) have changed inexorably, from multiple causes, and young people face a vastly different life course that can never be the same as that experienced by their parents. We cannot, as a result, discuss 'intergenerational conflict' in the same terms as we have in the past.[86]

What do we mean by 'the social bargain' struck between generations?

While details of the social bargain between the generations have changed, in every era there are some key elements that always must be met.

At its core, it is to pass on our genes to the next generation, the drive to reproduce common to every species, that which gives continuity to human existence. Those who choose not to (or cannot) have children thus take themselves outside this initial generational task, but they still have a stake in the wellbeing of other people's children because the whole of society, not just the parents, benefits from their later contributions. Then, it is to nurture (protect, feed, clothe, house) our offspring so they can thrive and attain a healthy physical adulthood and perhaps also reproduce. Parental neglect and abuse are the worst forms of denial of this part of the bargain, and the wider community then must intervene and pick up the pieces. Moreover, social conditions can limit the extent to which parents are able to adequately fulfil their obligations.

Nurture is not enough; our offspring must be 'socialised' to become social human beings, able to interact positively with others and cooperate in joint endeavours of mutual benefit. No person can survive without the support of others, so learning the social norms and laws of the community we live in is essential for survival. Parents who fail to socialise their children in this way (based on 'childhood freedom', children's 'rights', or sheer anarchism) are breaking the generational bargain, not only with their children, but also with the wider society.[87] 'Conformity' and 'cooperation', though they can become oppressive and usually reflect current power structures, are essentials of all human interaction. While every child needs to grow and become a self-controlling, decision-making adult, the so-called 'autonomy' thus achieved is based on the social contexts in which they have learned.

86 Victor Marshall and M.Mueller, *Rethinking social policy for an ageing workforce and society: Insights from the life course perspective*, Discussion Paper W/118, National Centre for Vocational Training, Canberra, 2002. Note: Principles underlying the life course perspective are (1) ageing involves biological, psychological and social processes (2) human development and ageing are lifelong processes (3) individuals' and cohorts' life courses are embedded in and shaped by historical time and place (4) the timing and consequences of life transitions and events vary according to their timing in an individual's life (5) lives are lived interdependently and (6) individuals construct their own life course within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances.

87 Bronfenbremer, Urie, 'The Ecology of Human Development', Harvard University Press, 1979; Sheridan, S. M., R.Cowan & T. Megan, 'The times they are changing: A review of raising children in a socially toxic environment, School Psychology Quarterly, vol. 14, no.4, 1999, 428-432; J.Garbarino, 'Raising Children in a socially toxic environment', Transaction Publications, 1995; P. Amato, 'Children in Australian Families: The Growth of Competence', *AIFS/ Prentice-Hall*, 1987; V. Zelizer, 'Pricing the Priceless Child: The changing social value of children', Princeton University Press, 1994; Don Edgar, 'The changing ecology of Australian Childhood', paper to 10th Annual Children's Services Conference, Jabiru, Northern Territory, May 1991; and D. & P Edgar, *The New Child: In search of smarter grown-ups*, Wilkinson Publishing, 2008.

Socialisation therefore involves 'education' in the broadest sense; it is not just 'fitting in' to and conforming to the rules of society, it's understanding how and why they arose, learning to think, evaluate, and eventually to become active agents making our own decisions in choosing our path forward. Children not taught to think for themselves and to accept that they are responsible for their actions have also been short-changed in this intergenerational bargain.

In the past, much of that socialisation and education took place within the confines of the family and the local community – the parent-child-grandparent-neighbour nexus that conveyed what being a member of the tribe involved. It often meant over-conformity and was not conducive to effective operation in the wider world outside the immediate neighbourhood or community.

As societies became more complex, more connected with 'strangers' from outside through commerce, travel, war, new forms of socialisation and education had to be provided. The child could not expect to grow up and stay near the familiar home; wider skills and broader understanding became necessary. So, education moved outside the home and schools *in loco parentis* took over much of the job of preparing the next generation. It is often forgotten that this shift in intergenerational relations was resisted by many parents because it meant their half of the bargain, the return benefits to them from child labour, had to be delayed or put off altogether. School work replaced home work on the farmer's plot or in the cottage industry and the exploitation of child labour (either by parents or in the new factories of the industrial age) was now seen as evil. Nor was the motive for such a change purely philanthropic or enlightened. Society (or at least those most likely to profit) saw childhood ignorance as bad for the economy, and school work became an obligation on the part of children in return for being kept alive and educated as factory fodder. But childhood gained a new status in society and children were regarded in a more sympathetic, even romantic, light. Some writers such as Zelizer suspect this idealization of childhood has gone too far.

As well as mandating education the state also provided for more formal childcare arrangements where parents were working outside the home. Parallel with this went other forms of state welfare intervention such as controlling the sale and adoption of children, and legislating against child abuse. Such reforms were not easily won, with strong resistance from vested interests gradually losing out to new arguments for valuing children.

That process of broadening the social investment in children is now losing ground as fewer people are having children, often as a choice. Investing in children as a public good has been undermined by the paradigm of market capitalism, private enterprise, and the ability to control fertility. There is also an increasing gap in funding public versus private schools, which exacerbates inequality.

Beyond childhood, changes in work and the need for more specialised education have prolonged the period of adolescence into a hiatus time of extended youth and 'midult' suspension between sexual maturity and prolonged financial dependence on parents. Thus, the notion of 'transition' between life stages – school, work, marriage, parenthood – has become blurred. Many young people move out of and back into the parental home; many earn some income while studying; many have sexual partners but live separately; marriage and having children are delayed until the 30s; and owning a home has receded in favour of renting and workplace mobility.

Perhaps the most profound shift has been in the nature of work. Previous unskilled and low-skilled jobs in industry and the bureaucracy have disappeared, to be replaced by low-paid, casual, or part-time jobs in what is known as 'the service sector' or, more recently, the 'gig economy'. While many such jobs do provide a meaningful service, others are menial tasks that have little purpose and offer scant satisfaction. As well, the gap in income has widened between those with a tertiary qualification and those without further education, so what is referred to as the Millennial generation is by no means uniform in terms of life chances.[88]

Such shifts mean that, when we hear talk of 'intergenerational conflict', we need to be aware that the life cycle has been transformed and understand why the young are feeling mistreated. But at the same time we must challenge the assumptions about intergenerational exchange that underlie such claims and look for new ways in which society could restore that sense of balance, of 'justice', that should underlie the social bargain between the generations.

88 Edgar, Don, 'Children, Youth, Elders. Re-linking the Generations,' *Children Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Vol.15, no. 2, 1990. Republished from *Family matters*, AIFS.

The answer must be a social approach to youth issues which gives them a stake in Australian society, a sense that they are responsible not only for themselves but also for others, that others rely on them to pull their weight. We need a sense of caring and sharing rather than a competitive ethic which pits each of us against everyone else. It can be done by regenerating the links between younger and older generations, by rekindling a sense of mutual and reciprocal usefulness. We later look at examples and suggestions about how this can be done.

"When we hear talk of 'intergenerational conflict', we need to be aware that the life cycle has been transformed and understand why the young are feeling mistreated. But at the same time we must challenge the assumptions about intergenerational exchange that underlie such claims and look for new ways in which society could restore that sense of balance, of 'justice', that should underlie the social bargain between the generations."

Forging new intergenerational links for the future

The Madrid International Plan on Ageing states that 'solidarity between generations at all levels – families, communities and nations – is fundamental for the achievement of a society for all ages, yet policies related to ageing stand alone in many countries and have not integrated other family members' needs and concerns'.[89]

This plan had three priorities:
(i) older persons and (economic) development,
(ii) advancing health and wellbeing into old age,
(iii) ensuring and enabling supportive environments.

Spain has established a rule that every policy change must look at its effect on various age groups. In Australia we are not at first base in thinking about better links between age groups. Our policies are 'ageist' in that we have separate children's policies, school policies, youth policies, disability policies, workplace policies, unemployment policies, aged care policies, but little about intergenerational policies, lifelong education, sharing our resources in new ways that transcend current institutional barriers. There are few opportunities outside of the family for intergenerational connection.[90]

Our institutions and laws are fixed around different age groups, not recognising that we all must learn and relearn throughout an extended life, that family welfare needs change by circumstance (such as divorce or premature death), and that we all have skills and resources to offer at every stage of a longer life course. We cannot assume a sentimental and unrealistic view of harmonious, intergenerational family living arrangements when the realities of family life in Australia are so different and changing. Cultural differences and traditions are obviously important, and a nation such as ours cannot impose one intergenerational framework on all.

However, negative language around 'ageing' persists in Australia, and we lose the industry, wisdom and experience that could be a major resource for others. People are expected to retire around age 65, yet increasingly they have another 20 years of potentially productive life ahead, not necessarily in paid work, but in useful exchange with others in need of support and guidance. Society could benefit greatly if only we were to encourage their ongoing contribution and responsibility for future society.

Governments have a responsibility for the welfare and quality of life of citizens of all ages, considering everyone is living inter-dependently across the life course. In order to fulfil this responsibility:

- The concept of lifelong learning should inform all education policies, from early childhood to university and beyond
- A framework of lifelong health would ensure greater attention to preventive approaches through diet, exercise, and lifestyle rather than costly remedial interventions once ill health demands treatment
- Employment policy should ensure security and continuity of superannuation and leave entitlements
- Ageing policy should consider the diversity of needs with an ageing population, not just policy on pensions and aged care accommodation.

As we have argued, a longer life expectancy and an ageing population should be a matter for celebration, not a cause for concern, but governments and the community must face up to and plan for their consequences, not retreat into complaints about a 'rising burden' on younger people who will, themselves, be old one day. There is an urgent need to acknowledge the value of improved intergenerational relationships. We need new mechanisms, both within and beyond the family, that promote intergenerational understanding and cooperation to ensure social cohesion, solidarity, and cultural continuity.

89 'The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing', *United Nations Organization*, 2002.

90 Dow B, Joosten M, Biggs S and Kimberly H, 'Age Encounters: Exploring age and intergenerational identity', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2016, p.104-118.

Policies and programs to foster positive intergenerational relationships

All policies that aim to foster intergenerational relationships have as their starting point the essential inter-dependence of each generation for them to survive and thrive. The meaningful bonding between family members and age groups promotes social cohesion, unity, and shared responsibility.

Increased longevity has meant government promises made earlier, when life expectancy was shorter, no longer suffice. In much of the Western world, prolonged education and youth unemployment have led to longer periods of dependency on adults and led to more young people moving back to the parental home. In the U.S. it produced 5.1 million multi-generational homes; 82% say that this move has increased social bonds, but 78% say it has increased stress. In Europe, a quarter of all households are of one person only, divorce rates are high, and a third of children are born outside marriage, reducing the family as the first line of defense, in rapidly ageing populations. Nevertheless, downward support for children remains more common than upward support to elders.

A 2011 initiative called *Generations United* called for four principles to guide social policy:

1. Make lifetime wellbeing the highest priority
2. Consider the impact of every policy on each generation
3. Unite, not divide the generations for maximum social and financial impact
4. Support each generation's ability to contribute to the wellbeing of their families and communities.[91]

The goal of the initiative is to deepen cultural transmission of knowledge to the young, a goal that might now be better framed as to deepen the mutual transmission of knowledge between young and old. One example using the four principles is the US Congress Lifespan Respite Act, (2006) aimed at supporting caregivers for all ages.[92]

Several countries have already faced up to the consequences of an ageing population and devised policies and programs based on intergenerational cooperation. But the picture varies across different countries and different cultures.

Japan, which has a demographic profile much older than ours, is aiming to build social solidarity through an integrated family policy approach – linking education, health, social security, law, and employment programs to community development, drawing on the resources of all generations to enhance social cohesion. Exhortations to marry and have children who would care for their elders have fallen on deaf ears, especially those of young women who refuse to marry into the traditional family situation of male dominance and matriarchal control of the household. So, there are fewer grandchildren and fewer intergenerational households. But attempts to link young and old in other ways have proved fruitful, reducing intergenerational conflict by creating new opportunities for young and old to meet, interact and enjoy reciprocal support, meeting needs for affiliation and cultural identity.[93]

Singapore offers tax relief for the carers of grandparents, accompanied by a punitive Maintenance of Parents Act, punishing offspring who shirk their responsibility to care for their elders. Western equivalents would be paid parental leave and flexible work times to assist carers of dependents of all ages. Pensions help grandparents contribute to family care needs.

Several European countries have also recognised the value of improved intergenerational relationships for social cohesion, economic and social wellbeing. Kaplan outlines "The benefits of intergenerational community service and the value of such programs to promote intergenerational unity, community activism and cultural continuity".[94]

91 Family Matters: Multigenerational Living is on the rise and Here to Stay, Generations United, USA. 2011.

92 US Congress S.995 - Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2019.

93 Kaplan, M, I.Tsuji & S. Hisamichi, 'Intergenerational Programmes in Japan: Support for Children, Youth and Elders', State University of New York Press, 1998.

94 Kaplan, M. Journal of Gerontological Social Work, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1997.

This contrasts with the emergence of individualism with a youth counter-cultural revolution in the Western 1960s, along with a market-induced aversion to growing old.[95]

Boomers were a crossroads generation in terms of attitudes and lifestyles. The Third Age emerged both as a new lifestyle and as a source of market segmentation. While the Third Age fostered a range of new activities, the ageing Boomers experienced a decline in aged self-worth, more loneliness, and more age-segregated living alongside a rise in youth self- absorption. Such trends underscored the need for new intergenerational initiatives to combat what has become an artificial generational conflict.[96]

Norway has altered its pension provisions to increase the attractiveness of continuing to work, their IA agreement – A More Inclusive Working Life - allows people to retire at any time after 62, but they are able to continue working for reduced hours, reduced wages, with reduced payroll tax for employers. This reform came after a longitudinal study found 57% of older workers were having difficulty coping with elder care and wanting reduced working hours, but they were discriminated against by managers.[97] The reforms aimed at both improving workplace conditions, including home-based working, and developing 'learning cultures' where older workers could be retrained and not just treated as mentors for their younger colleagues.[98]

In Sweden, longer life expectancy has led to an increase in intergenerational spacing, with later childbearing, but more intertwined life trajectories with longer years of shared lives between the generations. Almost half (47%) of 55-year-olds have living parents; 80% of young adults live close geographically to their parents, and there has been a 25% increase in the number of four-generation households. Three quarters of grandparents have one grandchild living within 50km of their home, but because of later marriage and childbearing, only 18% experience grandparenthood while their own parents are alive. Separation and divorce make some intergenerational contact more difficult and living close by or together can lead to conflict rather than family harmony.[99]

> *" Both young and old possess skills and life experience that could be of value if systems were restructured to allow sensible exchange."*

Africa has a young population profile with 44% aged below 15 years in 2004. The Zulu word *Ubuntu* stresses the concept of social solidarity; 'I am a person, you are a person, all related and interconnected, so there is mutual solidarity'. But this philosophy is under strain given poverty and high unemployment. And in Latin America, where by 2040 some 18% of the population will be under age 14, there is a tradition of family-centred, intergenerational solidarity, so government spending favors families with young children and youth, not the aged.

Paul Higgs cautions against sweeping judgements about the relative advantages of Baby Boomers and more recent generations, claiming many differences are just the cumulative advantages and disadvantages of class.[100] Our Australian evidence supports that view.

Several social scientists support the argument that good intergenerational programs should address major social problems, rebuilding relationships that are mutually supportive and beneficial, and helping communities to design programs that suit local needs.[101]

One key to better policy integration is to treat older people as a resource rather than a burden. Both young and old possess skills and life experience that could be of value if systems were restructured to allow sensible exchange.

95 Higgs, P & C. Gilliard, "The Third Age and the Baby Boomers," *International Journal of Ageing & Later Life*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2007.

96 Butts, D., L.L. Thang & A.H. Yeo, "Policies & Programmes Supporting Intergenerational Relations", 2011; Luscher, K., et al, "Generations, intergenerational relationships, generational policy, 'A Multilingual compendium'", *European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, 2017.*

97 NorLAG, the Norwegian Ageing and Generation Study, 2002-7.

98 Tove Midtsundstad, *National Report, Norway,* Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Berlin, 2015.

99 Vlachantoni, A., Evandrou, M., Falkingham, J. and Gomez-Leon, M., 'Caught in the middle in mid-life: provision of care across multiple generations' *Ageing & Society*, vol. 40, no.7, 2020, pp.1490-1510.

100 Paul Higgs & C. Gilleard, op. cit, 2007.

101 C. Ventura-Merkel, D.S. Liederman & J. Ossofrsky, 'Exemplary intergenerational programs,' 2008; P. Stearns, 'Historical trends in intergenerational contacts,' 2008; M. Kaplan, 'The benefits of intergenerational community service: Implications for promoting intergenerational unity, community activism and cultural continuity,' *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1997.

Conclusion

Many journalists and politicians talk glibly about 'generations' ('Boomers' vs. 'Millennials') as if every person within each generation is the same, equally rich or disadvantaged, equally educated, equally fit and healthy.

Such rhetoric assumes that the increasing numbers of older people are responsible for increasing health costs, raising the spectre of a rising group of older unemployed who will be dependent on the Millennials who, this suggests, will be carrying the aged as an economic burden into their futures. We argue that we need to examine the contradictions within the generational stereotypes discussed earlier, including the economic contributions of older people through their increasing participation in the paid workforce, and through their voluntary and caring work, and the relative costs of the dependency of children and young people on society. They cite the unfairness of wealthy Boomers living comfortably in valuable houses compared with the rising inability of Millennials to buy their own homes. We hear little about structural solutions which would help establish new and more appropriate health reform measures, access to cheaper education, housing and community development policies that would better meet the needs of both old and young.

Overall, governments fail to understand the reality that our Australian society (like others around the world) has changed dramatically in the way people of all ages navigate the life cycle, with the need for more prolonged, indeed lifelong, education, a shift towards later leaving of the parental home, entering marriage and childbearing, and a more precarious pathway through the paid workforce, needing continual retraining and reinvention.

Jobs in manufacturing and agriculture have declined as we entered the competitive global trading world, as have unskilled jobs not requiring an extended education. Our younger generations are better educated and supported by their parents for longer than ever before, and, with a longer life expectancy will inevitably reach key transition points later than most of their parents.

With a larger population, a longer life expectancy, a technological revolution, and a changing world order, it is irrational to think that the next generation will (or ever could) live the same sort of life, with the same expectations and opportunities, as older people today have lived. The structure of the education system and the workplace, medical progress, the technology revolution, gender equality, the sexual revolution, globalisation, and travel, have all changed society dramatically. Those changes inevitably have resulted in markedly different life patterns and the taking on of adult responsibilities.

At the centre of all social exchange and inter-dependence sits the family, that unavoidable institution into which individuals (with very few exceptions) are born and raised.

The family as an institution is important precisely because of its central role in the reproduction and socialisation of new members of society, and with relationships over time, including both material and cultural transfers across generations. With so much debate now about independence, the self, individual rights, and the specialisation of labour, we may forget that the family sits not only at the interface between the individual and society. It establishes not only links between and across generations, but links that constitute the continuity of society itself. And to discuss social policy issues as though each 'generation' sits alone and has its own concerns, separate from those of past and future generations, is not just misleading but also damaging to the cohesion on which society itself relies. Mutual respect is the name of the game.

In this paper we have explored the ways in which so called intergenerational advantages or disadvantages are being portrayed in the media and other commentary. Most of these have some basis, but we argue that framing these as intergenerational rather than intragenerational class distinctions is counterproductive and damaging to both older and younger cohorts. Rather we call for a more nuanced discussion of 'the ageing problem', or the so-called 'intergenerational conflict', and for policies aimed at removing inequality across the entire system as many people of all ages are suffering disadvantage in what is an inequitable economic system.

Society does not function through paid work alone, but through the networks of social support (family and community-based) which enable the economy to operate. A more positive view of ageing would lead to a kinder, more productive society which recognises the 'longevity dividend' and caters for intergenerational activities, drawing on the experience and resources of older people.

Appendix A

Exemplary Intergenerational Projects

The United Nations Organisation has long been aware of the need to rethink our attitudes to an ageing population. By 2050, one in every six people in the world will be aged over 65, up from one in 11 in 2019. Globally, there will be 703 million over that age, so all societies are experiencing a 'longevity revolution'. October 1st was designated International Day of Older Persons to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. This has the broader aim to promote longer term thinking and action in what the UN calls The Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2020-30. The UN Department of Economic and Social Development is the focal point, to 'celebrate ageing, not fear it', calling for worldwide action on positive ageing and 'to build a society for all ages', with the World Health Organisation (WHO) leading a campaign 'Towards an Age-Friendly World'.

The WHO advocated a more integrated approach in 2007 called *Age-friendly cities and Communities,* which builds on the WHO's active ageing framework and was based on the estimate that three out of every five people will live in an urban area. It makes sense that action should be taken at the local government level. The WHO Guide calls for local communities to address several areas of possible action to create a truly age-friendly city and community, including transport, housing, outdoor spaces and buildings, social participation, respect and social inclusion, communication and information, community support and health services, civic participation and employment.

Countries such as Canada and the USA have developed programs for 'age-friendly cities and communities', often at a local level but supported by funding from the provincial/state and national levels. They stress that it is not funding as such that is needed so much as a shift in attitudes and a more integrated approach to social and economic policy.[102]

Australia has also picked up this idea, with a study of age-friendly cities and communities.[103] The aim of the study is to present case studies and assess the impact of political, policy, consultative, and research processes used to implement Age-friendly Cities (AFC) initiatives in Australia. A review and interpretation were conducted based on public documents, community consultations, survey analyses, and participant observation. At the end of 2009, the Minister on Ageing launched the ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010-2014: Towards an Age-friendly City. The Strategic Plan set seven goals that drew on community consultations and aligned with the WHO Age-friendly Checklist. Implementation of the first action plan, covering early 2010 through mid-2011 included the establishment of a Canberra Age-friendly Cities Network comprised of representatives from each ACT Government agency in partnership with the ACT Ministerial Council on the Ageing. In reporting on the first Action Plan in June 2011, the ACT concluded that progress on the strategic plan had been 'very good' for one category (Health and Wellbeing) and 'good' for the remaining six. It noted progress in implementing a public transport smartcard system for bus travel (MyWay), a Seniors Card increasing access to affordable events and activities such as Grandparent's Day, and an online senior's information portal.[104]

Governments in Australia have drawn on WHO concepts to establish AFC initiatives. In Melbourne, state political leadership established Positive Ageing plans that have reinforced local government actions. In Canberra, a baseline survey and an Older Persons Assembly were followed by modest positive ageing plans. In Sydney, a State Ageing Strategy developed a whole-of-government plan that has yet to be incorporated into budget processes. AFC initiatives in Australia have had promising and varied starts with some aims to benefit disadvantaged older people. Notwithstanding the potential benefits, AFC influence on mainstream actions of government has been limited by uncertain political commitment and growing fiscal austerity.

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102 M. Scott Ball 7 K. Lawler, 'Changing practice and policy to move to scale: A framework for age-friendly communities across the United States,' 2014; K.G. Fitzgerald & F.G. Caro, 'An overview of age-friendly cities and communities around the world', both articles in the *Journal of Ageing & Social Policy, Vol. 26, Issues 1-2, 2014.*

103 Kendig H, Elias A-M, Matwijiw P, Anstey K, 'Developing Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Australia', *Journal of Aging and Health*, vol. 26, no. 8, 2014, p.1390-1414, doi:10.1177/0898264314532687

104 Kendig, H. Elias, A. Matwijiw, P. Anstey, K., "Developing Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Australia," *Journal of Ageing and Health*, Sage, Vol 26, 2014.

The BIG Project

In 2018, a major Australian attempt to mount an intergenerational project at a suburban level failed for lack of funding. This was called the Boroondara Intergenerational Partnerships (BIG) initiative, a joint project between the City of Boroondara in suburban Melbourne and NARI, the National Ageing Research Institute. We see this as a potentially universal model. The aim was to build on an already-active program for seniors in the area by linking them with schools and colleges teaching relevant skills and understandings. Its starting point was to identify and acknowledge the 'resources' held by older community members – abilities in the arts, in gardening and nutrition, in business and in local history. Older people were to be matched with younger students who may also have skills they could share (such as technology and multi-media communication). Starting with 'resources' rather than 'deficits' or even 'needs' was important, to give the program a positive orientation, recognising mutual capacities and broadening young people's attitudes to older people. The basic 'need' of older people was better social interaction, to keep lonely seniors connected with their community and enhance social cohesion across the whole municipality. Three focus points were chosen:

(i) *Trans-generational Technology Partners*, where tech-savvy young people could help older people use new technologies more effectively for online shopping, banking, bill paying and access to health information. BIG was to include digital storytelling as part of that exchange.

(ii) *Arts Expression Partnerships*, where old and young work on a shared visual arts or music project. This could include painting significant local landmarks (trees, shops, houses) and forming a local intergenerational choir or orchestra.

(iii) *Happy and Healthy Life Partners*, where older people living alone could teach gardening and cooking skills to young people and the young could help them maintain their large gardens and grow vegetables.

Such mutual exchange of experiences aimed to:

(a) promote positive attitudes towards ageing

(b) build on and build up the skills of old and young to widen their life opportunities and sense of purpose

(c) keep seniors connected with their communities, and

(d) enhance social cohesion across the whole municipality.

Despite lack of funding, bureaucratic obstacles, and some resistance from schools to an extension of their set curriculum, some aspects of this BIG Project did develop, with positive outcomes for both old and young participants. The model could be applied in any municipality with a high proportion of older citizens.

Examples of intergenerational projects focusing on specific areas of interest:

The Performing Arts

In a project initiated in Sendai City, Japan in 1975, community residents (mostly senior adults) who are specialists in 'shishi odori' and 'kenbai' (two traditional Japanese dances) taught these dances to sixth grade students from Fukuoka Elementary School. The students then conducted performances at school and community festivals, senior adult day care facilities, subway stations, and other community settings. The senior adult kenbai instructor said when interviewed that the students are not only learning the dancing, but also about its historical and cultural significance, the benefits of 'doing something seriously' and the importance of politeness and respect.[105]

Elders Share the Arts (ESTA), a New York City based community arts organisation, developed an intergenerational theatre arts approach called 'Living History'. It brings people aged 3-18 and senior adults together on a weekly basis to share and find meaning in their life stories. The group publicly presents its work in the form of a performance or festival. It has worked well in scenarios where it was launched as part of a partnership between senior centres, schools and arts groups in the same neighbourhood.[106]

The Centenarian Portrait Project by Teenagers was an intergenerational arts initiative that took place from 2017 to 2019 in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. In each city 100 skilled teenage artists were matched with 100 centenarians, each pair met multiple times to get to know each other and share stories before the young artists completed a portrait of their partner. The portraits were then shown in exhibitions before being gifted to the centenarians. The project was successful; participants found they had more in common than they expected, and many intergenerational friendships were formed.[107]

Social Participation, Inclusion and Learning

There are many examples of early childhood centres visiting old people's homes to sing, make art and talk to elders who suffer from lack of social contact. Schools can also be a focus for interaction. For example, the Brussels City Council 'Senior Service' formed in 2007 with three members and reached seven members by 2013. It has developed interventions that aim to link the needs of younger and older people, for example, by involving older adults in guiding children in their school activities, accompanying them to the swimming pool by bike, and related activities.[108]

In projects implemented over 10 neighbourhoods on the east coast of the US, the intergenerational component has promoted enriched conceptions of community life and ideas for improvement. Participants learn that generations are interdependent and the young and old have many shared concerns about the quality of life in their communities. They also get more of an awareness of the temporal dimension of community life. For example, young participants in Hawaii learnt that the current lack of recreational facilities was not always the case as the decline of resources occurred in conjunction with the closing of the sugar plantations.[109]

The 'Seniors' Integrated Home-Assessment and Home-Maintenance Program in Toronto teaches high-risk, unemployed youth how to assess seniors' homes, make repairs and do cleaning and painting. It results in household improvements that enhance security, safety, energy conservation and overall quality of life for the senior adults.[110]

I Wish I'd Asked is a Victorian country initiative founded by Eva Gruen and Danny Finley in November 2017 in response to the growing issue of loneliness facing our communities. In association with David Earle of Rotary, a pilot program is being conducted in Shepparton with the participation of schools, aged care facilities, industry, and community groups. The program aims to develop connections, communication skills, organisational skills, and problem-solving skills through the exchange of personal stories.

105 Kaplan, M. Kusano, A. Tsuji, & Hisamichi. S., Intergenerational programs; Support for children, youth and elders in Japan, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1998.

106 Perlstein, S. & Bliss, J., "Generating Community: Intergenerational Partnerships through the Expressive Arts," NY: Elders Share the Arts, 1994.

107 Lloyd, S., "Art project connects 100 teens with centenarians for lasting friendship," ABC News, 13 August, 2019

108 Buffet, T. McGarry, P. Phillipson, C. De Donder, L. Dury, S. De Witte, N. Smetcoren, A. Verte, D., "Developing Age-Friendly Cities: Case Studies from Brussels and Manchester and Implications for Policy and Practice, *Environmental Gerontology in Europe and Latin America*, Springer, 2016.

109 Kaplan, M. & Thang, L., Intergenerational programs in Japan: Symbolic extensions of family unity,' *Journal of Ageing and Identity*, Vol. 2, No.4, 1997

110 Varley, P., "A Society for all ages," *Transition Magazine*, The Vanier Institute of the Family, Vol 2, No. 4, 1998.

The challenge is to present the life of their subject in a manner which is authentic, sympathetic to the subject and of interest to the viewer. It is hoped engagement with the seniors will help reduce stereotypes towards ageing through observing and connecting with diverse older people, and learn that life has a course, or trajectory, and they are on it.[111]

Reading groups

A 2014 study in Tokyo by Japanese researchers sponsored by the government sought to clarify the effect of an intergenerational program on elderly people's symptoms of a depressive mood, and in improving their sense of coherence. The intervention group received weekly intensive training in book reading projects, whilst the control group were discouraged from any intergenerational interaction at all. The intervention group then read picture books in kindergartens, elementary schools and child-care centres. The study found both groups' sense of coherence and meaningfulness were strengthened, affecting their depressive mood, suggesting that not only had reading to the children positively impacted their mental health, even the mere participation in the study had boosted their sense of meaningfulness.[112]

Technological skills development

Students teach elders

One area where the skill set is heavily weighted to young people is social media. Many students are even more accomplished than their teachers using digital media. The older an individual, generally the more they feel alienated by technology. While the desire for communication with grandchildren has motivated many grandparents to use tablets and Skype, COVID-19 with its demands to isolate away from the community, has exposed a significant digital divide. Shopping, ordering groceries, and buying goods online presents a huge challenge for older people, as does use of essential services like telehealth and banking, or ordering books from a library. Without internet and/or broadband access, life can become a lonely experience. Young people are an important resource for older people in this area. IT help is happening informally as children are assisting parents and teachers solve technological problems they can often solve intuitively, but there is a need to structure and formalise technical assistance programs.

Research at Stanford University in the US has found that, 'The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into stark relief two already disturbing trends from the last couple of decades. First as the population ages, many older adults find themselves socially isolated, often with life- threatening, consequences. Second, older adults have lagged behind the rest of the population in having the means and ability to access the Internet'.[113]

Not all older adults want to go online, so there are other projects developing which are pairing older adults with younger workers and college students who share common interests. Papa Pals is an organisation, founded in Florida in 2017, whose mission is to support families through the ageing journey. Papa Pals pairs older adults and families with Papa Pals for companionship and help with tasks such as transportation, household chores and running errands. Papa Pals and seniors also spend quality time talking, playing board games and assisting with technology as a way to help with the loneliness many seniors feel. Research shows that as visits between partners increase, the length of the visits also increases.[114]

Elders teach students

The AARP Foundation Experience Corps is an intergenerational volunteer-based tutoring program to provide mentorship and help children improve their literacy. Experience Corps connects students with volunteers over 50 who provide a combination of tutoring and wisdom that comes with life experience. The program, which operates in over 20 cities in the USA aims to inspire and empower adults over 50 and disrupt the cycle of poverty for America's younger generations. Participants experienced positive changes in areas such as personal responsibility, relationship skills and decision making. [115]

111 https://www.iwishidasked.com.au.

112 Yoh Murayama, Hiromi Ohba, Masashi Yasunaga, Kumiko Nonaka, Rumi Takeuchi, Mariko Nishi, Naoko Sakuma, Hayato Uchida, Shoji Shinkai & Yoshinori Fujiwara, The effect of intergenerational programs on the mental health of elderly adults, *Ageing & Mental Health*, Vol. 19, No.4, 2015.

113 Https://longevity.stanford.edu/the-pandemic-has-accelerated-the-need-to-close-the-digital-divide-for-older-adults/.

114 Https:// www.joinpapa.com.

115 https://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/experience-corps-volunteer/

Elders Mentoring Youth

On the job training

Our current system of apprenticeship is a clearly effective model for intergenerational cooperation and learning, but most businesses offer workers new skills through on-the-job training.

In Germany's *Project Hürdenspringer*, mentors from various professions make use of their experiences and contacts by supporting the entrance of young migrants into employment. Mentoring plays an increasing role in the integration of migrant youth into the community at large.

The association *Jung+Alt=Zukunft zusanmen e.V.* (young + old = future together) was founded in 2001 by professionally experienced older people. They support young people (particularly from lower secondary school) on their way to employment. Pupils attend different sets of modules and meet different mentors.

CENO, the Centre for Orientation in Post-employment in Köln, offers volunteering options for older people and is dedicated to communication and support. The figurehead of the centre is the project *Der Pate* (the mentor). Experienced older mentors cultivate the integration of young people (mostly migrants or people whose family are migrants) into employment and provide one-to-one, long-term support in all concerns of daily life.

Since 1997, through a program called *Alt hilft Jung im Jugendbüro Neu-Isenburg* (Old Supports Young in the Youth Office in Neu-Isenburg), older people have supported younger people with low educational achievements on their way to employment. Older mentors have provided training sessions in schools, helped with job application forms and job interviews, established links with companies, and supported young people's individual needs. Over 50% of mentees in these projects go on to training courses or find employment.[116]

Education & Training

In 2006, an intergenerational science program, Project Serve, placed trained senior volunteers in elementary and junior high science classrooms to assist teachers and augment instruction. They spent 10 hours a week in the classrooms over a period of 14 weeks doing things such as moving table to table clarifying teachers' instructions, and helping students with assignments. Even though the goal was not specifically to address attitude change, the program found that the seniors' presence in classrooms had a positive effect on children's attitudes towards the elderly.[117]

In a 2007 study in Melbourne, Australia, two academics from Monash University studied children's everyday interactions with their grandparents. They found that the children in the study developed rich, everyday concepts and creative thinking through their participation in shared, informal activities with their grandparents. In simple activities such as gardening, cooking and going to the beach, children's understanding was being developed and transformed through participation in these mutually enjoyable and relevant activities. The activities provided the concrete experiences necessary for activating the scientific concept they will encounter at school.[118]

The Setting Priorities for Retirement Years (SPRY) Foundation in 2002 developed a program called Science Across Generations (SAG) and implemented it at various locations in the U.S. from 2002 to 2005. Primary school aged children and adults over 50 were paired together in workshops and tutorials and engaged in co-learning activities based on predetermined science modules. Older adults reported positive changes in their knowledge and attitudes towards science, and also increased their ability to relate to children. The children themselves had significant science knowledge gains, and enjoyed the sessions immensely.[119]

The non-profit organisation BackTrack has set up a program where unemployed/unemployable young people provide important bushfire recovery assistance, like repairing and replacing fencing on farms after bushfires. Many farmers were older people lacking the resources, time and energy to redo the many kilometres of new fencing needed. Helping the farmers gave the young people a sense of purpose, value, and achievement. Through education and training, BackTrack assists young people who have fallen through the cracks of society, often finding themselves in trouble at school and with the law.[120]

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116 Schlimbach, Tabea, "Intergenerational mentoring in Germany: older people support young people's transitions from school to work," *Working with Older People; Brighton*, Vol. 14, Iss. 4, 2010.

117 Dunham, C. & Casadonte, D., "Children's Attitudes and Classroom Interaction in an Intergenerational Education Program," *Educational Gerontology, Vol.* 35, No.5, 2009.

118 Jane, B. & Robbins, J., "Intergenerational learning: grandparents teaching everyday concepts in science and technology", *Asia-Pacific Forum on Science Learning and Teaching*, Vol. 8, Iss. 1, Art. 3, 2007.

119 Morgan, R. Bertera, R. Reid, L., "An Intergenerational Approach to Informal Science Learning and Relationship Building Among Older Adults and Youth". *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, Vol. 5, No.3, The Haworth Press, Inc., 2007.

120 https://backtrack.org.au/

Shared housing

A Capital Gains Tax exemption for granny flats is expected to start in July 2021. It is limited to family arrangements where the flat is supporting an ageing or disabled relative and will require a formal written agreement. It is expected that 3.9 million pensioners will benefit from a written agreement as it is legally enforceable and would help protect vulnerable granny flat occupants in the event of a family or relationship breakdown. NSW already has a fast-track approval process and Victoria has started a fast-track pilot program.[121]

Since its creation in 1996, the program Viure I Conviure (Live and Live Together) by the Caixa Catalunya Foundation has been dedicated to alleviating the solitude of old people and providing young university students access to decent, affordable housing in Spain. The foundation gives some financial assistance to the elderly participants in the ViC program to cover the extra expenses (e.g. water, gas) incurred as a result of having students living in their homes. By providing the elders with frequent contact with students, it boosts intergenerational solidarity and their sense of meaningfulness, which are both associated with healthy ageing. The majority of students also recognised that their relationships with older people are better and see them in a more positive light.[122]

Canada HomeShare is an intergenerational home-sharing program launched in Toronto by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE). The success of the pilot program in 2018 led to it being launched as a City of Toronto program in 2019. Older adults (55+) with a spare room in their home were matched with university students. The older adults obtained additional income, companionship, and assistance with completing household tasks while the younger people gained affordable accommodation. Many participants reported experiencing benefits from their participation, such as a decrease in social isolation and financial burden.[123] Australia has a similar HomeShare program.

The Gold Soul Companionship program run by the University of Sydney provides free rent and meals for health students in that program who live in the Scalabrini Bexley aged care village during their studies. They eat with, chat with, and walk with the aged care residents, with results showing improved wellbeing for both older and younger groups. This is an example of intergenerational exchange that is helping to transform the often lonely and negative experiences of people in aged care, while at the same time giving trainees a more realistic experience of what caring for the elderly involves.[124]

Humanitas is a non-profit organisation that operates across the Netherlands. One of their many programs is an innovative intergenerational housing plan in the city of Deventer. University students receive free accommodation at a retirement home in exchange for spending 30 hours per month with the elderly residents. The founding principle – and only rule – is to be "a good neighbour". Budget cuts and lack of subsidies have led to an excess of rooms in some aged care facilities. The pilot program, which started with one student staying for one month has now been expanded into an ongoing program with six students. The students share their day-to-day experiences, which helps residents to connect with the outside world. They also assist with technology, play board games, and go shopping together. Humanitas also receives visits from a group of children with autism.[125]

Health

REPRINTS (REsearch of PRoductivity by INTergenerational Sympathy) is an intergenerational health promotion program for older adults that has been active for over ten years in Kawasaki City, Japan. It involves activities such as seniors reading to children. The older participants were given health check-ups at the beginning and end of the project. The results found that those who participated in the study the most showed improved self-rated health and were more active in their communities. Studies have shown it strengthened the community intergenerational ties in the city and built social capital in local-residents, which reduces/prevents social isolation amongst elders in the area, helping them to age gracefully.[126]

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121 https://www.theage.com.au/money/planning-and-budgeting/granny-flat-boost-pigues-interest-but-lacks-detail-20201009-p563kh.html

122 Sanchez, M., Garcia, J., Diaz, P., & Duaigües, M., "Much More Than Accommodation in Exchange for Company: Dimensions of Solidarity in an Intergenerational Home-share Program in Spain," *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, Vol. 9, Iss. 4, 2011.

123 Mirza, R., Martinez, L. *et al.*, "More than just a room: Results from an intergenerational home sharing program in Toronto," *Innovation in Ageing*, Vol. 3, Issue Supplement 1, 2019.

124 https://journalofdementiacare.com/gold-soul-companionship/

125 Marlous Elisabeth Arentshorst, Roy Reinier Kloet & Alexander Peine Intergenerational Housing: The Case of Humanitas Netherlands, Journal of Housing For the Elderly, 33:3, 244-256, 2019

126 Murayama, Y., Murayama, H., Hasebe, M. *et al.*, "The impact of intergenerational programs on social capital in Japan: a randomised population-based cross-sectional study," *BMC Public Health*, Vol. 19, 2019.

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