

Media Release

October 2022

Different Languages, Same Aged Care: Consumer voices help redesign multilingual support

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing, supported by Benetas, worked together with leaders at Belvedere Aged Care, an aged care provider in South-East Melbourne, to co-design multilingual communication cards with their residents from culturally diverse backgrounds. The residents helped to improve the existing multilingual Communication Cards of the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing (The Centre) by creating new meaning and phrases. It was the residents themselves who took the initiative and talked to the leadership at Belvedere Aged Care to customise the Communication Cards. The residents provided advice and feedback on new words, phrases and phonetics based on the existing Communication Cards using Italian as an example.

The Centre's Inclusive Service Standards assist aged care providers in the development and the delivery of inclusive services to all consumers. They provide a framework for providers to adapt and improve their services and organisational practices so they are welcoming, safe and accessible. Performance Measure 2.4 of the Inclusive Service Standards recommends that a system is in place for receiving feedback from consumers from special needs groups and using this feedback to improve services. The co-design project between Belvedere Aged Care and the Centre demonstrates how Performance Measure 2.4 can be applied.

As a result of the consumer feedback residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia and internationally will be able to benefit from the initiative. The [Communication Cards](#) are one of the Centre's most popular resources with the current total of over 15000 visitors across Australia and internationally. Furthermore, the Italian communication phrase cards will be used as a prototype to develop a further 67 in-language Communication Phrase Cards. Providers may wish to build on the project's learnings and engage in similar type co-design activities with their consumers. The project demonstrated that applying inclusive approaches and co-designing resources with aged care consumers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can significantly improve the quality of aged care services.

Some of the new phrases that the residents added included:

- "Come si sente oggi? – How are you feeling today?"
- "Mi farebbe piacere se me aiutasse – I would love you to help me."

The phrase cards also included phonetics as requested by providers.

Belvedere resident Lucio Piastrino, participant and supporter of this project told the team that "You've got to give us Italians (residents) respect when you communicate. This is good to teach staff how to speak to us and understand our language".

Karin Blavo, Lifestyle Manager, Belvedere Aged Care, stated that:

“This activity has highlighted the importance of listening and working with our residents to ensure their daily interactions with staff is a positive experience. Co-designing the communication cards with our residents, I’ve seen our residents feel empowered as they provide insights into how they would like to be communicated with especially when they have limited or no English language abilities. Our aim is to ensure residents, despite language barriers, are provided opportunities to communicate with each other and staff in a respectful way.

The project commenced with our Italian residents seeking more phrase-like interactions when engaging in daily activities and support with staff. This includes common requests, directions and tasks that can be translated and interpreted in a conversational way rather than our current one-word flash cards. This project aligns with the values of Belvedere Aged Care to ensure that all residents are treated with dignity and respect by having their needs heard and access to tools and services that assist two-way communications that support them in their ageing.”

Karin Blavo also commented on the project collaboration: “The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing provided existing templates and translation resources that helped us kick-start the project and assist our Italian residents identify words and phrases they’d like communicated on a daily basis.”

Lisa Tribuzio, Manager, Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing, emphasised that:

“This project came about through feedback from a resident at Belvedere Aged Care. The Centre took this feedback very seriously and worked with the resident and Belvedere to co-design the Italian communication cards into phrases. The Centre will now use this feedback and apply it to 67 other languages in the hope that they will benefit many more seniors who are needing language services and to support their right to communicate in their preferred language”.

If your organisation has residents or clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who wish to have a voice in shaping multilingual aged care resources, please contact the Centre or make use of the Government’s free translations in aged care project titled “[Different Languages, Same Aged Care](#)”.

-ends-

For more information or interview requests, please contact Lisa Tribuzio, Manager, Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing, on info@culturaldiversity.com.au

Benetas is a leading for-purpose organisation with a mission to provide older Victorians, their families and carers with a full range of quality community-based services, primary care and residential homes and apartments. To reflect its Anglican heritage and commitment to social justice, Benetas contributes a social dividend which sees any profit reinvested into growing and expanding services and initiatives, including our dedicated research and advocacy agenda, which provides broader benefits to people within our communities.