

# Media Reporting on ageing in rural and regional north Queensland

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*“Youth is the gift of nature but age is a work of art”  
Stanislaw Jerzy Lee*

# Overview

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Robert Skeffington, writing for the Wall Street Journal stated;  
*“granted we will face an army of the not-yet-dead as opposed to the formerly-dead-but-now-undead, but it’s still a scary prospect”*



Skeffington, R. (2010). The old and the deathless: Australia is bracing for a tide of centenarians. *The Wall Street Journal*.

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# Media Impact

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- The Human Rights Commission reported that across all ages negative attitudes towards older people were mainly attributed to personal experience and media reports
  - Newspapers are a common form of social media with 61-77% of Australians aged 25 years and older accessing this media both in paper and online formats
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# Rural Versus Urban

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- 36% of older Australians live in regional and a rural areas
- Social positioning of newspapers showed that readers differentiated between national and regional newspapers with the former bringing the outside world to them and the latter informing and advising them (Navigator, 2012)



# Method

Review of newspaper articles published in regional north Queensland between January 2011 and October 2014.

179 focused on older Australians. Articles were then reviewed for both content and context and primary themes identified

*Cairns Post, Herbert River Express, Townsville Bulletin, Ayr Advocate, Cairns Sun, Home Hill Observer, Townsville Sun, Bowen Independent, Cairns Weekend Post and Innisfail Advocate.*



# Vulnerable

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“he targets vulnerable victims and that’s clear from their ages”

“senior Australians can be too trusting and confused by technology, so remind them to never pass on banks details, passwords over the web or email”

“Elderly people haven’t grown up with the cynicism needed to survive in this day and age”

“so little old ladies can sleep better at night knowing that you are not out and about to rob them”

“this would have been a terrifying experience for anyone, let alone someone elderly”

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# Deserving and Undeserving

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“too broke and too bored to retire,  
Australia’s grannies are flocking back to  
work”

“ageist culture that is  
accepted and largely  
unacknowledged in  
the workplace”

“heart breaking  
to see pensioners  
struggling to  
survive”

“Increasingly, the lifestyle and the  
savings for superannuation are being  
seen as an opportunity to enjoy a  
few cruises and the luxuries of life  
for a few years until it runs out and  
then people wish to fall back on the  
old age pension”

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# A Burden

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“a major component of bed blockage”

“care for the elderly during summer sizzlers”

“aged care providers in Townsville say they cannot maintain their existing level of service for elderly people unless there is a serious increase in federal funding for the sector”

“bed crisis in elderly care, elderly turned away at aged-care facility”

“looking after the elderly at home”

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# Conclusions

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- Although there is current support for older Australians there is also an underlying age stratification that supports the view that older Australians may be a burden to society through increased welfare and health costs.
- There is disconnect between media portrayals of older Australians and their lived experiences.
- A need to challenge negative stereotypes within the media and promote positive attitudes.



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# Questions

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