

Media Portrayal of Ageing:
A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Media Discourses in
Australia and Malaysia

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Abstract

This study examines media discourses used in the portrayal of elderly people in Western and non-Western/Asian countries, namely Australia and Malaysia, which differ from each other in socio-cultural, religious, regional, and political perspectives. Mainstream newspapers from both countries are selected as a dataset to enable the language used by journalists in constructing identities for older people and an increasingly ageing population to be explored. It draws for its theoretical background on Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis to examine the link between text, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice to understand the hidden meanings of media discourses. The main themes explored in Australian newspapers are (1) marketisation of aged care, and (2) politicisation of aged care. The marketisation of aged care is further divided into sub-themes (a) aged care as a commodity, and (b) the economics of aged care. The politicisation of aged care is branched as (a) quality of aged care, and (b) intergenerational wrangling. While, main themes explored in Malaysian newspapers around the care of elderly people are (1) family support – familism; (2) shift away from familism – detraditionalisation of aged care; and (3) social welfare – nursing homes.

Journalists in both countries have discursively constructed identities for elderly people by making lexical choices in describing elderly people and issues related to them, reporting on certain angles of news story, prioritising certain news actors over others and making some voices louder than others. Identities constructed for elderly Australians directly or by implication in the sampled news articles are (a) users/consumers of aged care – affluent people; and (b) dependent – burden. (c) national/political identity and (d) relational/interpersonal identity. Main identities constructed – directly or by implication – for elderly people in Malaysian newspapers are (a) familial identities, (b) social identities, (c) financial identities, and (d) the elderly as victims.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

This study critically examines and compares media discourses used in the portrayal of the elderly and age-related issues in mainstream newspapers in Australia and Malaysia. The United Nations defines “older persons” as persons aged sixty-five¹ years or over (United Nations 2020). According to the latest World Population Ageing report, globally, there were 703 million people aged sixty-five years or over in 2019, and it is projected that there will be 1.5 billion older people in 2050 (United Nations 2020). The number of senior citizens is increasing more rapidly than any other cohort (United Nations 2015), and it is projected that 1 in 6 people around the world will be aged sixty-five years or over in 2050 (United Nation 2020).

The upsurge in the fraction of older people is the result of several factors, including higher life expectancy around the world and reduction in levels of fertility (Lee & Zhou 2017). The extension of human longevity can be associated with economic and social development (Murphy 2017), and “the advancement of public health, medicine, and their contribution to the control of disease, prevention of injury, and reduction in the risk of premature death” (United Nations 2020, p.1). Increased lifespan has contributed significantly to the number of the elderly around the world as life expectancy at birth, in 2020, has reached 72.3 years globally (United Nations 2020). This also applies to the countries that are the focus of this study – Australia and Malaysia. For instance, Australia has an average life expectancy of 83.2 years, and an average Malaysian may live up to 75.5 years (United Nations 2017). Both Malaysia and Australia, while culturally different, are experiencing a rapid increase in numbers of older people; however, Australia is considered one of the leading countries with sixteen per cent of its population over sixty-five years old (United Nations 2020).

¹ Prior to 2020, at the start of this study United Nations referred to elderly people as individuals who are sixty years old or above (United Nations 2017).

Media institutions play a vital role in representing reality, as Popp (2006, p. 6) argues, “media language choice is an institutionalised means of framing reality”. Turner (1997) contends that media texts provide a significant opportunity to witness culturally constructed meanings of “ideas” which are produced socially right in front of us (Toohey & Taylor 2006, p. 3). The form of media selected for this study is print media, specifically newspapers. The rationale for analysing newspapers is partly a practical one - newspaper archives are easily accessible compared to other forms of media, such as television or radio archives, and it is straightforward to manage selected newspaper articles. Newspapers constitute a major media platform, representing a powerful way of constructing and sustaining public opinion and identities (Richardson, 2007; Landau, 2009; Phelan 2016). Therefore, this transnational comparative study explores (a) the role newspapers play in representing older people at a time when demographic trends are shifting and significant reforms were happening in aged care in both Australia and Malaysia; and (b) how age-linked social identities are constructed in newspapers. The language under investigation in this study is journalistic language, and the corpus for this study consists of newspaper articles. Newspapers’ language, which is used in meaning-making, is considered an important register in the English language as claimed by Biber et al. (1999), who places journalistic language with other three major registers, namely fiction, academic writing and spoken conversations. Fairclough (1995) argues that media texts constitute an adequate gauge of socio-cultural change, and ought to be perceived as valued materials for exploring change (p. 52). This study focuses predominantly on newspaper texts and discursive techniques used in framing older people to explore relationships between media discourses about ageing and the press.

In this study, media discourses about ageing and the elderly in Australia and Malaysia are analysed using Fairclough’s three-dimensional critical discourse analysis. The main components of Fairclough’s approach are (a) description of linguistic properties of texts, (b)

interpretation of discursive practice which consists of the relationship between the text and its production process, and (c) explanation of discursive practices and social practice (Fairclough 1995). An in-depth discussion about critical discourse analysis is at the end of Chapter Two, in section 2.9. In examining discursive practices, it is essential to discuss journalistic practices as well as socio-cultural practices which influence the production of news texts. Discursive practices are defined as “a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period” (Foucault 1994, p. 117). Understandings of institutional practices and cultural practices in both Australia and Malaysia help uncover discursive techniques used in the construction of the elderly.

1.2 Research questions

The study critically examines how media discourses have been used to construct the social identities of the elderly in Australian and Malaysian newspapers.

1. What kind of language is employed in the construction of identities for the elderly in Malaysian and Australian newspapers?
 - 1.1 What identities are constructed in the media discourses about ageing and the elderly in Australia and Malaysia?
 - 1.2 What discursive practices are involved in the portrayal of the elderly, and what are the main themes of the articles written about older people and age-linked issues in Australian and Malaysian newspapers?
2. What are the similarities and differences in media discourses and language used to frame the elderly and age-related matters given the differences in socio-cultural, media policies, journalistic practices, and social welfare policies for the elderly in Australia and Malaysia, and how do these differences impact media discourses about the elderly and ageing populations?

1.3 Aims/ objectives of the project

This research is aimed at the critical examination and comparison of media discourses used in the portrayal of the elderly and age-related issues in mainstream newspapers of two culturally different countries with rapidly increasing numbers of older people.

In order to achieve the aims of the study, the following research objectives have been framed:

1. To micro analyse the selected news reports' language and discursive techniques used in the portrayal of elderly people to explore relationships between media discourses and press to understand the construction of social identities for older people.
2. To analyse the microstructure of media discourses to investigate how media discursively construct shifting demographic trends by examining what has been included/excluded and foregrounded/backgrounded in representing the elderly in newspapers.
3. To compare the construction of media discourses and discursive practices in the depiction of older people sociolinguistically to discover similitudes and discrepancies in both countries and to gauge the impact of culture, media policies and social welfare policies for elderly people.

1.4 Significance of the study

Researchers in both Australia and Malaysia have explored diverse aspects of ageing and age-related issues in fields of nursing, psychology, sociology, and public health (see, for example, Borowski et al. 2007; Coulsen & Minichiello 2005; Kendig et al. 2016; and Leng et al. 2016). In the same way, representation, portrayal and framing of marginalised people and minorities have remained a topic of interest for academics (see, for example, Carvalho 2008; Van Dijk 1988; Teo 2000; Weicht 2013; Wilisńska 2013; Phelan 2009; and Chen 2015). Nevertheless, limited research has been done on the representation of the elderly in the media; particularly the analysis of media discourses used in the construction of age-related identities in Australia

and Malaysia. This research fills part of this gap by critically examining and comparing media discourses about the elderly and age-related issues in the context of the global ageing population. The research is multi-fold and contributes at different levels: (a) academic, (b) applied, and (c) methodological.

Academic significance: The study contributes to the body of knowledge as a comparative analysis of media discourses, in the context of ageing, in Australia and Malaysia has not been done before. The study also reveals new research horizons for future researchers. Interviews and focus groups, for example, could be organised with older people to build an understanding of their point of view about media discourses created about them.

Applied significance: As this research examines and compares media discourses to uncover the implicit meaning hidden in discourses constructed to represent older people in certain ways in newspapers, recommendations may be made for news reporters to change the way they portray the elderly as demographics shift. There are more older people in society than ever before. The research explores discursive techniques used in constructing the identities of older people and helps to provide an understanding of the way journalistic conventions in two culturally, socially, and religiously different countries impact on this identity construction. This comparison may be useful in preparing recommendations for either or both countries about the language used to address issues related to older people.

Methodological significance: This research uses critical discourse analysis and analysis of news values to examine the representation of the elderly in the media. The analysis of news values in the thesis is used as an explanatory tool to explore the discursive practices of journalists from a different perspective. These two research tools have not previously been combined for the examination of media discourses around ageing in a comparative study of Australian and Malaysian newspapers. The application of existing theories and methodological approaches to discourse analysis and analysis of news values during the study may also be of

significant interest for discourse analysts, journalists, sociologists, media analysts and other academics who are interested in topics related to representation, framing and ageing.

1.5 Thesis structure:

In the next chapter, Chapter Two, I examine the key ideas and theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter Two begins with a focus on ageing and ageism as the numbers of elderly people around the world are on the rise, especially in the countries under investigation – Australia and Malaysia. The discussion around ageing in Australia and Malaysia includes the discussion of aged-care policies and different forms of support available to older people. The discussion of ageing then shifts to the construction of identities about ageing in general and particularly the representation of ageing in the media. The literature around ageing and identity is also covered in this chapter. In addition, this chapter discusses journalistic practices in Australia and Malaysia to contextualise the role of journalists in the construction of identities for older people. The context, background, history and significance of news values are also included in this chapter. In particular, Caple and Bednarek's (2016) approach to news values is discussed in detail, as their approach is used in addition to Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis as a key theoretical underpinning of this study. The second half of the chapter provides a theoretical background to this thesis, which begins with an introduction of critical discourse analysis and extends to its significant contributors in general and Fairclough in particular. The rationale to focus more on the latter lies in the fact that Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis approach is used for the examination of news articles selected from the sampled Australian and Malaysian newspapers.

Chapter Three explains the methodology and specific methods used in this thesis. As this thesis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional approach for the study of newspaper texts, the chapter focuses on the specific steps involved in the analysis, such as text analysis, analysis of discursive practices, and the review of social practices. These three dimensions provide the

micro, meso and macro-level analysis. Next in the chapter is the discussion of the time frame and the steps involved in sampling the newspapers in both Australia and Malaysia. Chapter Three also provides an insight into the problems faced during the sampling process due to difficulties in accessing the Malaysian newspapers, online, from Australia.

Chapter Four outlines the results of the analysis of the sampled news articles in the form of main themes about the media portrayals of the elderly in Australia and Malaysia. Dominant discourses explored about the elderly, and an increasingly ageing population, in Australian newspapers are discussed in the first part of the chapter, followed by a discussion of the representation of older people in the Malaysian press. Differences and similarities in the main themes in the media representation in Australia and Malaysia are discussed toward the end of the chapter.

Chapter Five reports the construction of identities for the elderly in the sampled Australian and Malaysian newspapers and highlights the discursive techniques, including the lexical choices made by the journalists in the construction of such identities. Main identities constructed for the Australian elderly are presented in the first half of Chapter Five, while key identities constructed in Malaysian newspapers are reported in the second half of the chapter. Similar to Chapter Four, the differences and similarities in both countries are included towards the end of the chapter.

Chapter Six explores the relationships between media, power and the elderly in Australian and Malaysian societies. The chapter begins with a brief discussion about media power in general and in the Australian press in particular, followed by analysis of discursive practices, including the distribution of voices to different actors and lexical choices by journalists. The second half of the chapter explores the distribution of voices to different actors in the Malaysian newspapers, followed by a discussion about the differences and similarities in discursive practices in both countries.

Finally, Chapter Seven presents the implications of the findings presented in analytical chapters – Chapter Four, Chapter Five and Chapter Six – and provides the conclusion of the study, followed by recommendations for both Australian and Malaysian journalists about their role in reporting issues linked with elderly people and increasingly ageing populations.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature in relation to the theoretical background drawn upon in this study. The aim is to contextualise the analysis that follows in the analytical chapters – Chapter Four, Chapter Five and Chapter Six – and to ground the thesis in existing literature and theory. The chapter begins with a brief presentation of ageing and ageism, followed by a detailed discussion about the ageing process and policies in the countries under investigation – Australia and Malaysia. The discussion of ageing in Australia and Malaysia then shifts to discussion of media discourses about the elderly and journalists’ construction of identities for elderly people. Journalistic practices in Australia and Malaysia are also included in this chapter to provide an understanding of the impact of differences in practice on the discourses constructed for the elderly in their respective countries. The second half of the chapter considers the theoretical framework of the study by focusing on critical discourse analysis and significant contributors to its theorisation and application, particularly the work of Fairclough.

2.2 Ageing and ageism

Age is a chronological phenomenon that can be defined as “a fundamental and organising principle” (Spedale et al. 2014, p. 1586) that shapes the very meaning of being old (Cruikshank 2013), but societal perceptions of ageing are largely constructed. The age of sixty-five itself is a social construction and has been linked to Otto von Bismarck’s introduction of a rudimentary pension in Prussia for people aged sixty-five years (Phelan 2018). As life expectancy has risen, people over sixty-five years have an anticipation of living for a substantial number of additional years. This has caused older age to be further classified, for example, Neugarten (1974) classified older age as ‘young old’ and ‘older old’, and Laslett (1987) used the terms ‘Third Age’ and ‘Fourth Age’ for the classification of older age”. Améry (1994) argues that ageing is not commonly understood as a continuous process; instead, it is expressed as a dichotomy of

the young on one side and the aged on the other side. The world population is ageing, and according to the United Nations (2020), the number of the elderly is rising more rapidly than any other cohort, which may increase the use of age-related stereotypes – generally referred to as ageism – as old age is “characterized by decline, weakness and obsolescence” (Hareven 1995, p. 120), and also due to financial dependency and cost of care on nations (Wilisńska 2013). The expression “ageism” was devised in 1968 by Robert Butler², who defined it as:

Ageism can be seen as a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin colour and gender. Old people are categorized as senile, rigid in thought and manner, old-fashioned in morality and skills. Ageism allows the younger generations to see older people as different from themselves, thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings (Butler 1975, p. 35).

Laws (1995, p. 113) suggested that “ageism, like racism and sexism, is a form of prejudice, a form of oppression that not only limits people who are the object of that oppression but which also shapes perceptions of people, both young and old, who hold ageist attitudes”. Ageism, according to Bytheway (1995, p. 116), is an “ideology upon which dominant groups justify and sustain the inequalities between age groups”. Ageism promotes covertly and overtly held perspectives, predominantly undesirable, about the elderly and ageing populations, including homogeneous traits such as “having poor health, being unattractive, being senile, dependent, unemployable and inactive, asexual, and generally inflexible” (Lyons 2009 cited in Phelan 2018, p. 551).

Ageist stereotypes can be found in generally accepted societal norms (Phelan 2018), such as “an ageist birthday card that may seem funny to family and friends; a comic’s joke on television or an older person’s self-deprecating humour” (Cruikshank 2013, p. 158). Phelan (2018, p.

² President and chief executive officer of “International Longevity Centre” – USA.

551) maintained that “the consequences of ageism are clear: inequality, inequity, a higher risk of maltreatment and disempowerment”. Cruikshank (2013, p. 143) argued that ageist stereotypes depicting the elderly as marginal and that promote “Us versus Them mentality” can be observed in the media, the workplace, the family and also in the law. Similarly, Hazan (1994) argued that societal mechanisms separate the elderly from mainstream society, hence, converting the elderly into “others”.

Dahmen and Cozma (2009) claimed that eighty per cent of elderly people in America had been subjected to age-related stereotypes. The International Longevity Centre in the United States of America published a report in 2006, “Ageism in America”, which documented that age discrimination was “deeply embedded and widespread” in American society (Dahmen & Cozma 2009, p. 8). Cruikshank (2013, p. 137) linked the persistence of ageism in society to “its deep roots in Western culture and the absence of a mass movement of old people, comparable to civil rights, women’s rights, or gay and lesbian liberation, to challenge it”. Similarly, Spector-Mercel (2006, pp. 74-75) claimed that ageism was a result of Western values leading to “ungendered” and homogenised images of older people that blur the differences among the elderly and create “a sort of ageing melting-pot”. In effect, it means that when people turn sixty-five they cease to be Christian or Muslim, Australian or Malaysian – instead, they are first and foremost identified based on their age.

While both Australia and Malaysia have a high life expectancy, there has not been a longitudinal study in either of these countries which explicitly gauges ageism, as has occurred in the USA. The Australian Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ALSA) covered health, age-related diseases and mortality but not ageism (Luszcz et al. 2014). Similarly, O’Loughlin et al. (2017, p. 2) discussed the challenges and opportunities related to ageing and aged care in the Australian context by focusing on multidisciplinary perspectives including “psychology,

sociology, epidemiology, gerontology, economics, demography, medicine, allied health” – but not ageism per se.

In studies about ageing in the Australian context – see, for example, Noone & Bohle 2017; Abrams et al. 2011; and Iversen et al. 2009 – it is argued that issues related to age and ageism in Australia have not received the same attention as issues related to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion and disability. Nevertheless, ageism in the form of age discrimination has been discussed, explicitly and implicitly, in a few studies, such as the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) report that older people in Australia continued to face challenges of “age discrimination, ageism and social isolation” (Australian Association of Social Workers 2013, p. 3). In the Malaysian context, a study by Tohit et al. (2012) reported that the elderly in Malaysia had shown concerns about the attitudes of younger generations towards them that displayed lack of humanity and respect, which could be considered ageism. The following section discusses the ageing and aged care in Australia and Malaysia to observe differences in the way societies in both countries manage the ageing process.

2.3 Ageing in Australia

Australia is a multicultural, multi-ethnic country in the Australian continent. It has six states – Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania – and two major mainland territories, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. Australia has an estimated population of 25.6 million, and in 2019 almost thirty per cent of the Australian population had been born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020). England-born Australians constitute the largest group of overseas-born living in Australia, followed by people from China, India, New Zealand, Philippines and Vietnam (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020). Kendig and Lucas (2014, p. 212) argued that Australia is growing old with a predominantly “Western heritage and an increasingly Asian future”.

Almost 3.3 per cent of the total Australian population consists of Indigenous Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). Indigenous Australians, according to the Australian Government, are defined as “people who: are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent; identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin and are accepted as such in the communities in which they live or have lived” (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017).

Australia has one of the world’s highest life expectancies at birth - 85.5 years - and the highest life expectancy at age sixty-five (twenty-one years), followed by Europe and North America (nineteen years) (United Nations 2020). Sixteen per cent of the total population consists of older Australians, meaning people sixty-five years or above (United Nations 2020). The age range for being old for Indigenous Australians is fifty years and above because the life expectancy of Indigenous Australians is lower than for the non-Indigenous population, and in 2016 only four per cent of Indigenous Australians were aged sixty-five and over compared with sixteen per cent of non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017). The gap in the life expectancy of male Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons is 10.6 years, and for females, the difference in life expectancy is 9.5 years (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017).

Older Australians present a diverse group with different cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds and life experiences. Around thirty-six per cent of elderly Australians were born outside Australia, and over sixty-one per cent of that thirty-six per cent migrated from non-English speaking countries, including Italy, Greece, and Germany (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017). Due to a predominantly “Western heritage” (Kendig & Lucas 2014), Western values, such as “individualism, secularism” (Waisbord 2010, p. 150) are in practice in Australia.

Kendig and Lucas (2014, p. 211) maintain that “the vast majority of older Australians choose to live independently, and they have the means to do so while informal family support networks generally are strong, with support flows both up and down the generations”. The elderly in Australia are generally financially stable as three out of four own a house, and thirteen per cent are actively participating in the workforce (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017). Due to increases in property prices and high homeownership rates, O’Loughlin et al. (2017) argued that the personal wealth of older Australian had increased significantly, particularly between 2008 and 2015. However, around seventy per cent of older Australian received a pension in 2015 to keep their financial independence (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017). The Age Pension – functioning as a poverty alleviation instrument that excludes the rich – for older Australians in 2017 was paid at a “rate equivalent to 27.7 per cent of male average full-time earnings for single pensioners and 41.3 per cent for couples” (Bateman et al. 2017, p. 153).

Moreover, Age Pension receivers are eligible for other benefits, such as assistance with rent and a pensioner concession card (Bateman et al. 2017). Also, the government allocates funding for health and aged-care services for elderly people in the form of general practitioners, medical specialists, hospitals, transition services, residential aged care and community-based services. As a result, nearly seventy-two per cent of older people reported good, very good or excellent health during a 2014-15 national health survey (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017). However, this government spending on the health and welfare of elderly people contributes to widely held negative perceptions about elderly Australians. Kendig (2017, p. 265) argued that older Australians are widely portrayed as a drain on public expenditure and, due to demographic shifts, they are at “risk of being scapegoated”. Such perspectives were also identified by Mark Butler, the former Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, as “the orthodox view of many public commentators and much of Australia’s media is that this trend will cripple

the economy, thin out the labour market, bust the Federal Budget and usher in a gerontocracy, whereby older voters use their weight of numbers to entrench their privileges at the expense of everyone else” (O’Loughlin et al. 2017, p. v).

Theoretically, older Australians have legal support in the form of the Age Discrimination Act 2004, which protects them from any form of age-related discrimination in work, education and other areas (Federal Register of Legislation 2018). In practice, however, Noone and Bohle (2017, p. 130) claimed that “indirect or institutionalised age discrimination was present in Australia’s employment systems”. Similarly, the Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) reported that forty-three per cent of Australians aged sixty-five and above had experienced discrimination because of their age.

Australian aged-care policies are built on the premises of “individualisation and independence” which are fulfilled by an old-age pension, community care and aged-care homes for frail elderly (Gray & Heinsch 2009). Aged-care services for older Australians, including the Home and Community Care (HACC) and Residential Care Program, are funded primarily by the Commonwealth Government and delivered by local and State governments. Home and Community Care provides personal care, domestic assistance, home modifications, social support, access to professional allied health care, transport, and nursing services (Kendig & Lucas 2014, p. 217). While government-funded aged care is for recipients of the Age Pension, part-pensioners and self-funded retirees have to pay to access services.

The current aged-care system began in the mid-1980s when the government established the commonwealth-funded Residential Care Program and Home and Community Care Programs (Jeon & Kendig 2017, p. 240). However, economic rationalist approaches, including means-testing, were introduced in 1990s by the Labor government led by then Prime Minister Paul Keating to restrain public funding on aged care (Kendig 2017, p. 23). Aged-care policies

continued to shift during Howard Coalition government between 1996 and 2007, and the shift benefited the elderly through superannuation, while means-testing to access the Age Pension was relaxed during the 2007-2010 Rudd Labor government (Kendig 2017, p. 23). However, during the Gillard Labor government, tougher means testing was introduced in April 2012. Aged care policies in Australia, also known as the “Aged Care Act 1997”, went through proposed amendments through a “Living Longer, Living Better” report in 2012, and this later became part of the Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Act 2013 (Federal Register of Legislation 2016). The following figure demonstrates a brief history of aged-care reforms in Australia.

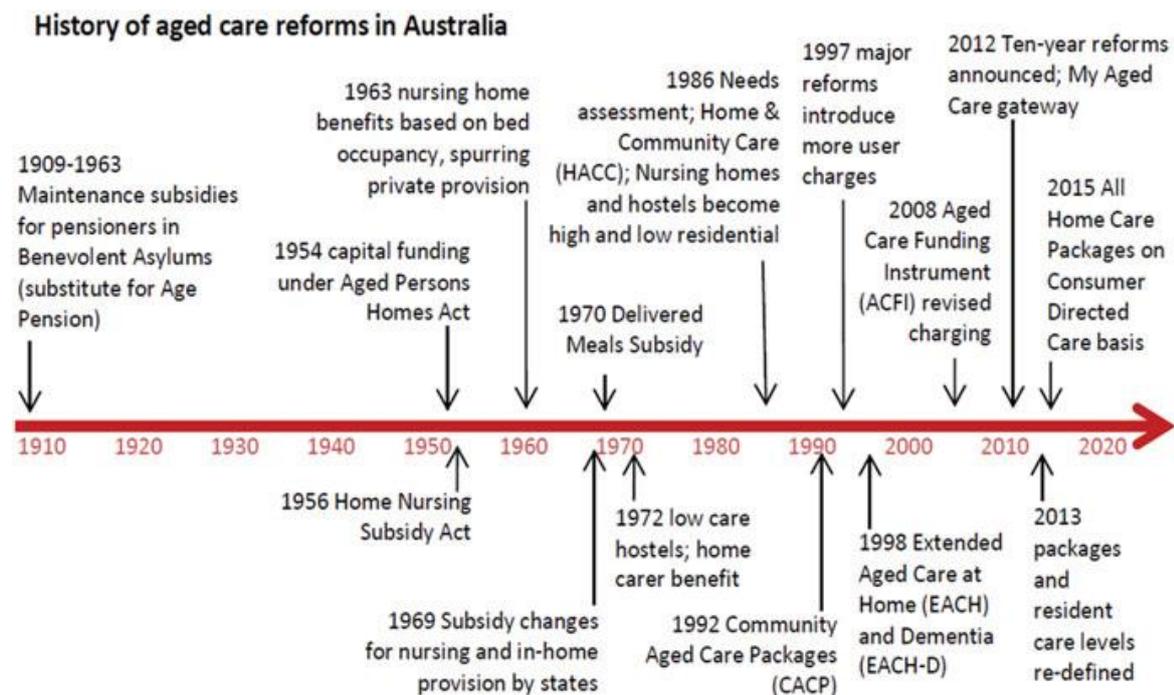


Figure 1: History of aged-care reforms in Australia (Source: Chomik and MacLennan 2014 cited in Jeon & Kendig 2017, p. 241).

Australia plays a vital role in the international development of ageing; for instance, Australia was the Chair and Secretariat for the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, Asia/Oceania region, from 2011–2015. The Australian Association of Gerontology established

the International Longevity Centre in 2014 (ILC-Australia 2014) as part of an international coalition (Kendig 2017, p. 268).

Ageing remains a field of interest for researchers and academics in Australia – see, for example, Coulsen & Minichiello 2005; Borowski et al. 2007; Luszcz et al. 2014; McDonald 2016; Kendig 2010; Kendig et al. 2016; Kendig & Browning 2016; and O’Loughlin et al. 2017. The multi-disciplinary Australian Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ALSA) based at Flinders Centre for Ageing Studies, Flinders University, Adelaide, is one of the longest-running cohort studies of older people in the world as it has been collecting data for twenty-two years to gain insights into the ageing process (Luszcz et al. 2014, p. 2). ALSA has collected and analysed data about “self-reports of demographic details, health, depression, morbid conditions, hospitalization, gross mobility, physical performance, activities of daily living, lifestyle activities, social resources, exercise, education and income” (Luszcz et al. 2014, p. 8). It has found that majority of participants at every wave, during 12 waves of the study, report ageing as a positive process.

Other literature about ageing in Australia includes research by Borowski et al. (2007) about issues linked with elderly health, income, ethnicity, gender and care policies. Minichiello and Coulson (2012) focused on issues linked with aged care and health care workers, while Teshuva and Wells (2014) examined problems of older Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds and argued that general cultural awareness and sensitivity were necessary to fulfil their needs. Kröger and Yeandle (2013) compared family care policy in six countries – Australia, Taiwan, Japan, Finland, United Kingdom and Sweden – focusing on caregivers’ working arrangements, leave provisions and other supportive responses. They found three distinct types of aged-care system: (1) public sector model in Finland and Sweden; (2) family centred in Japan and Taiwan; and (3) liberal democracies in Australia and United Kingdom (Kröger & Yeandle 2013). While this study compares the media portrayal of the elderly and

increasingly ageing population in Australia and Malaysia, the next paragraphs deal with the ageing process in Malaysia.

2.4 Ageing in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multicultural, multi-ethnic country situated in South East Asia that spreads across two regions – Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia on Borneo Island. It consists of three federal territories and thirteen states with an estimated population of 32.6 million in 2019 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2019). The population mainly consists of three ethnic groups, namely, Malays (sixty-seven per cent), Chinese (twenty-five per cent) and Indians (seven per cent) – ordered according to their share in the populace (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2019). There are minor proportions of different tribes of indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak, including Kadazan, Dusun, Bajau, Murut, Iban, Bidayuh and Melanau (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2019). Indigenous tribes and non-Malaysian citizens are referred to as ‘others’ in official documents. Malaysia has a diverse religious following, including Muslim (61.3 per cent), Buddhist (19.8 per cent), Christian (9.2 per cent), and Hindu (6.3 per cent) (Department of Social Welfare 2011). However, all ethnic and religious groups are linked together due to their shared Asian values, such as family as a focal point of social organisation, community over individuals, and political decision-making through consensus rather than confrontation (Robison 1996, pp. 310-311).

The life expectancy of an average Malaysian is 75.5 years (United Nations 2017). A male citizen will live up to 72.7 years on average, and female Malaysians are anticipated to live approximately five years longer, with a life expectancy of 77.4 years. Furthermore, amongst ethnic groups, the Chinese elderly population is increasing more rapidly than other ethnic groups (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2019). While Malaysia is not categorised as an ageing country by the United Nations, it is projected to have fifteen per cent of its population

counted as aged (sixty plus) by 2030 (United Nations 2015) – a significant change in demographics from the ten per cent in 2017 (United Nations 2017).

Historically, Malaysia has shown deep concern for elderly people. It has celebrated a national day of older persons since 1992, a year after the United Nations designated 01 October 1991 as the first international day of older persons (United Nations 1990). Zawawi (2013) argues that the policies relating to older people in Malaysia were prepared according to propositions drawn during worldwide conferences about ageing, particularly the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 is the outcome document of the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid, Spain, in 2002 (Powell 2013, p. 61). Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that

The Madrid Plan of Action offers a bold new agenda for handling the issue of ageing in the 21st-century. It focuses on three priority areas: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. It is a resource for policymaking, suggesting ways for Governments, non-governmental organizations, and other actors to reorient the ways in which their societies perceive, interact with and care for their older citizens. And it represents the first time Governments agreed to link questions of ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights, most notably those agreed at the United Nations conferences and summits of the past decade (United Nations 2002).

Official policies for older people in Malaysia were first introduced in 1995 as “National Policy for Elderly.” The term “elderly” was stated as “persons who are sixty years and above” as defined by the World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna 1982. The national policy aims to ensure elderly people are “independent, honourable and respected” and the government is committed

“to provide efficient and effective services for the individuals, family, and society to ensure a conducive environment for older persons”. The national policy acknowledges the rights of older people, the same as other citizens, to live their lives comfortably and with respect along with their contributions for the progress of the country (Zawawi 2013).

Customarily in Malaysia, care for older people has been the obligation of family members inside the extended family home (Leng et al. 2016). Over seventy-three per cent of elderly Malaysians – 79.5 per cent of females and 67 per cent of males – receive money from their families, as reported by Tey et al. (2016, p. 606). In terms of gender segregation, more female elderly Malaysians rely on their children than their male counterparts. The Malaysian government provides financial and housing support to the elderly who are in need, have no fixed income and do not receive financial support from extended family (Department of Social Welfare 2014). However, Leng et al. (2016) argue that the financial, institutional and support services provided by the government are not enough for the growing needs of the elderly. For instance, the financial support provided by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia to eligible elderly Malaysians is RM 300 per month (equivalent to AUD 100). Institutional services include homes for older people, and support services include artificial devices/equipment to allow citizens to further their lives independently (Department of Social Welfare 2011).

Officially, there are only nine nursing homes for aged citizens throughout the country, and these can accommodate only 1662 people (Zawawi 2013), which is not sufficient given that there are over 2 million elderly people in Malaysia (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2019). Private, as well as non-government, organisations also accommodate older people who cannot live independently, in nursing homes. However, the rates for private nursing homes, according to Leng et al. (2016), are beyond affordability for many retired people as they start from RM 1200 (AUD 400) per month.

Tey et al. (2016, p. 606) argue that over fifty per cent of elderly Malaysians earn less than RM 20,000 (approximately AUD 6000) per year and twenty-two per cent earn less than RM 8292 (AUD 2600), which is below the poverty level. Retired people mostly rely on funds saved during their working lives in the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), which does not include freelance workers. EPF is one of the world's oldest provident funds, established in Malaysia in 1951 under the Employees Provident Fund Act 1951 to help the Malaysian workforce save for retirement (EPF 2019). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ninety per cent of EPF contributors do not have adequate money to survive a simple lifestyle for up to five years after retirement (Leng et al. 2016). Therefore, according to Forsyth and Chia (2009), there is a severe need to develop a system to cope with the demand for care of the increasing number of elderly people in Malaysia and to train more nurses as well as care workers in addition to family members or domestic support workers to look after the elderly in the near future.

As discussed above, there are national policies in Malaysia to protect the rights of elderly Malaysians since 1995; the national policy was modified and developed into the “National Policy for Older Persons” on 5th January 2011, and the “Plan of Action for Older Persons” was also prepared (Department of Social Welfare, 2011). The reviewed plan aims

to develop a caring society, enhance capacity building, advance health and wellbeing, and address the safety and social security of older adults. Strategies that are planned to achieve enabling and supportive environments for older adults include strengthening the human governance and the enforcement of law pertaining to older adults (Department of Social Welfare 2011; Tey et al. 2016, p. 606).

Malaysians are generally characterised as respectful of parents and elderly people, and this is evident in local customs. For instance, children as well as adults customarily use verbal

expressions such as “pakcik” (uncle) or “makcik” (aunty) out of respect to address the elderly. Moreover, non-verbal actions, including kissing the hand of an older person with a slight bow (cium tangan in Malay) as a sign of reverence, are common practices in Malaysian society. Kuang et al. (2012) state that the use of proper titles, such as uncle, aunt, big brother, big sister, and so on, is essential in Malaysian society as these titles create kinship and indicate respect for seniors because Malaysian society follows a social hierarchy in which the elderly and parents are given higher social status. Older people in Malaysian society possess high social status because of their experience and wisdom that aligns with Beauvoir’s (1972, p. 4) argument that the aged are “venerable sage, rich in experience, planning high above the common state of mankind”. Hence younger Malaysians are encouraged to be respectful and courteous. There is a famous cultural saying in Malaysia: “banyak makan garam” (eat more salt), suggesting that older people have consumed more salt, which reflects their experience and knowledge about life (Puteh-Behak et al. 2015). Such social norms are passed on through generations. Puteh-Behak et al. (2015) argue that Malaysian children are taught to be loyal to their parents and obey them all their lives and to consider looking after elderly parents as a duty. There is a contradiction between this cultural approach and a state approach which seems to underfund aged care. This study explores the role of media in relaying such cultural and state approaches to aged care in media discourses in Australian and Malaysian newspapers. The following section presents the literature about the portrayal of ageing in news media to contextualise the media discourses about older people in Australian and Malaysian newspapers.

2.5 Portrayal of ageing in media discourses

The term “discourse” is contextualised differently by different scholars, however, in this thesis, it is defined as a “meaning-making element of the social process” (Fairclough 2013b, p. 179):

Discourse is commonly used in various senses, including (a) meaning-making as an element of the social process (b;) the language associated with a particular social field

or practice (e.g. ‘political discourse’); (c) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (for instance, a ‘neo-liberal discourse of globalisation’). It is easy to confuse them, so I prefer to use semiosis for the first, most abstract and general sense (Fairclough et al. 2004) – which has the further advantage of suggesting that discourse analysis is concerned with various ‘semiotic modalities’, of which language is only one (others are visual images and ‘body language’) (Fairclough 2013b, p. 179).

Media discourses are “interactions through a broadcast platform, oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewers” (O’Keeffe 2012, p. 441) and are considered as “a particular form of social and institutional practice” (van Dijk 2013, p. 2). Like other discourses, media discourses do not exist by themselves; they are carefully designed, shaped, and targeted to the required registers and audiences to achieve the desired results. Fairclough (2001) argues that discourses may represent the social life inherited differently by different people, depending on their social position. Thus, representation, according to (Fairclough 2001, p. 123), is socially constructed in the process of practices. Its construction is reflective of ethnic or cultural difference, gender, and life experience. The term portrayal in this thesis is used interchangeably with representation, which reflects the work of Stuart Hall. He argues that “representation is the process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system) to produce meaning” (Hall 1997, p. 45).

The notion “discourse representation” for discourses in news reporting is used by Fairclough rather than “speech reporting” as he argues that writing can be represented and interpreted “in one way rather than other” (1995, p. 54). The text constitutes social identity through representation, as it sets up identities and relationships, and a system of knowledge of belief (Fairclough 1995, p. 55). In particular, the relation between the use of language and power is often not transparent to the public and appears only after close attention (Fairclough 1995, p.

54). For instance, “ideological representation” is typically not explicit; instead, it is implicit, and is usually rooted in texts and language use in a naturalised way for audiences along with “taken-for-granted assumptions” (Fairclough 1995, pp. 44-45).

The history of exploration of media representation of social issues can be traced back to the 1970s when the Glasgow University Media Group and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies published substantial work on media representations of social issues (Carvalho 2008, p. 161). These studies analysed news reports in-depth and found “less neutrality, partial and restricted reality” (Philo 1999). Similarly, Van Dijk (2007, pp. 2-3) argued that “biased newsgathering, biased language, and biased topic choices” are strategies used in the reproduction of prejudiced belief – the positive presentation of self and negative presentation of others – and inequalities in society.

There is significant scholarship about the portrayal of ageing in the media, dealing with the construction of identities for the elderly in the press, television, social media and advertising – see, for example, Weicht (2013), Wilisńska (2013), Phelan (2009), and Chen (2015) for their work on the media portrayal in the press; Levy et al. (2014) for the representation of older people in social media; and Chen (2016) and Spedale et al. (2014) for their work on the representation of older people on television). The advantage of studying media discourses about the elderly and ageing lies in an enhanced understanding of master narratives and cultural scripts of ageing that circulate in socio-cultural perspectives rather than individuals’ lived experiences of age (Hamilton & Hamaguchi 2015).

Sai-hua Kuo (2009) maintained that elderly people were presented positively in Taiwanese newspapers. In the same way, Chan (2009) argued that due to Asian values, older people in Hong Kong newspapers were portrayed positively. However, Powel (2013) argued that negative portrayal remained prevalent in American newspaper articles. Likewise, Milner et al. (2012) claimed that the media portrayal of ageing was predominantly negative and this

contributed to a culture where people were prepared to develop negative age-related narratives, affecting the ways society treats the elderly and the way older people see themselves. They argued that the negative portrayal of ageing simultaneously reflected and reinforced stereotypes about ageing in the community, while positive ageing³ was portrayed only in anti-ageing messages.

Milner et al. (2012) concluded that one-sided messages from the media misled perspectives on ageing, which resulted in lower expectations for the aged in everyday life. Dahmen and Cozma (2009) argued that the mass media portrayal of the elderly influenced audiences' "explicit and implicit" beliefs about older people and their participation in society (p. 13). They claimed that the mass media were responsible for spreading age-related stereotypes in the United States of America. Hine (2011) argued that Australian women aged sixty and above felt ashamed and embarrassed about their appearance in the media, and were aware that Australian media marginalised them "both as subjects and consumers" (p. 643). The lack of diversity in the media representation of older women was also noted by Cruikshank (2013).

Similarly, Rozanova (2010) found age-related stereotypes in Canadian newspapers. She argued that individual experiences of ageing – successful and unsuccessful – remained the theme for the majority of news articles in Canadian newspapers. The "reduction of diseases, maintenance of high cognitive and physical functioning, and active engagement with life" are requirements for successful ageing (Rowe & Kahn 2015, p. 593), while unsuccessful ageing, according to Rozanova (2010), was seen as a disease that must be prevented. She argued that Canadian newspapers promoted individualistic approaches to ageing successfully or unsuccessfully, and "embody neo-liberal approach minimizing public support and maximizing individual effort" (Rozanova 2010, p. 220). Thus, promotion of successful ageing could be considered as a

³ **Positive Ageing** is a way of living rather than a state of being in later life. It is an approach which recognises how negative mental states (beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and attitudes) can have a detrimental impact on physical and emotional wellbeing as we age. (Positive Ageing, 2018)

political agenda by the Canadian government to save the costs associated with the care of elderly people.

Toohy and Taylor (2006) claimed that media function as gate-keepers when it comes to ageing, determining what is to be viewed, read, and heard in addition to how it is framed (p. 4). According to a survey conducted for TV Land, a US cable and satellite television channel, up to two-thirds of baby boomers, most of them over sixty, reported that the media ignore them. The Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) reported that older Australians were underrepresented across editorials, news, current affairs content and advertising. The report argued that in Australian media, older Australians were portrayed in social and domestic settings. Similarly, Age UK, one of the largest charities in the United Kingdom dedicated to helping older people, found that seventy-five per cent of respondents to a UK survey of individuals aged 60 and above stated that mass media ignored their views (Age UK 2002). David and Alagappar (2013) maintained that older Malaysians were not given space as active members in news articles and that the overarching representation of the elderly is of dependency on children, private organisations or the government for help. Similar findings were presented by Robinson and Skills (1995), who argued that elderly people are mostly unseen in popular media discourse despite being abundant in number and about to outnumber children around the globe (United Nations 2015). Dahmen and Cozma (2009) recommended media professionals proactively combat stereotypes in the depiction of older people.

Milner et al. (2012) also claimed in their findings presented at the World Economic Forum (2012) that a balanced view of ageing was missing in media portrayal, and only the challenges of growing older are depicted in mass media. Milner et al. (2012) argued that the fair and balanced visibility of older people in media would send a positive message to older people that they were part of the fabric of society. O'Loughlin and Kendig (2017) argued that portrayal of the elderly in Australian media lacked the diversity and heterogeneity found in any cohort;

instead, the media represented the elderly either as very healthy, active, affluent and happy or as a burden, poor, frail and dependent. Dahmen and Cozma (2009) maintained that it is the right of the elderly to have their stories and issues portrayed fairly and accurately. Moreover, by not perpetuating ageism, the media can help to transform attitudes.

Milner et al. (2012) recommend that a realistic, effective and accurate depiction of ageing be portrayed rather than negative stereotypes, false perceptions, prejudice, and language by media, including films, newspaper, and television to show many different experiences of ageing without attaching a value judgement. Similar sentiments had been agreed upon at an international level in the form of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 (MIPAA) – the outcome document of the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid, Spain, in 2002 (Powell 2013, p. 61). As specified in MIPAA, media should promote positive images of ageing, highlighting the “wisdom, strengths, contributions, courage and resourcefulness of older women and men, including older persons with disabilities”, and avoid ageism (United Nations 2002).

Overall, it can be noted that for the most part older people are missing in media discourses, and that when elderly people are present in media, they are often associated with negative stereotypes. While the predominant representation of the elderly in media is negative, some examples of previous studies reported positive portrayal of older people. This study focuses on the representation of older people at the time of amendments to aged care policies in both Australia and Malaysia to observe how age-related identities were constructed at a time of intense coverage about the elderly and increasingly ageing populations in both countries. The subsequent section discusses how the use of language constructs social identities in general and the identities linked to the elderly and ageing more specifically.

2.6 Ageing and identity

Construction of identities for older people in Australian and Malaysian newspapers is the main focus of this study. Therefore, it is important to contextualise key terms such as identity, social identity and old-age identities.

Stuart Hall (1996, p. 608) stated that:

Identity is actually something formed through unconscious processes over time, rather than being innate in consciousness at birth. There is always something ‘imaginary’ or fantasized about its unity. It always remains incomplete, is always ‘in process’, always ‘being formed’... Thus, rather than speaking of identity as a finished thing, we should speak of identification, and see it as an ongoing process.

Identity has become multidimensional, multi-layered, and differentiated (Sztompka 2004, pp. 493-494), entailing “individual, interpersonal, and social processes embedded within social structures” (Davis, Love & Fares 2019, p. 1). Similarly, Coupland et al. (1991, p. 193) assert that “identity”, which is often taken as a relatively stable personal or social attribute, is, in fact, variable and contextually constructed. Identities are the product of certain forms of “discursive work”, which can be traced in linguistic data (Coupland, 2009). Social identities are constructed at community levels and, according to discourse theory, discourses are constitutive of communities. Social identity can be defined as “knowledge that [we] belong to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to [us] of this group membership” (Tajfel 1972, p. 31, cited in Bentley et al. 2019, p. 4).

Ainsworth and Hardy (2007) maintain that social identities, including old-age identities, are neither obvious nor natural, but are discursively constructed. Coupland et al. (1991, p. 192) argued that identities linked to the elderly are often manufactured through choices made by their younger conversation partners: in case of media discourses the conversation partner may be a young reporter. Age-related identities are discursively contextualised at all times, and

media projection of age is “unwarrantedly narrow and prejudicial” (Coupland 2009, p. 853). Fealy et al. (2012) examined public discourses concerning elderly people in Irish print media to determine how age identities were discursively formed. They found that elderly people were described using collective nouns; phrases like “little old ladies” were repeatedly used. Five discrete identities represented in news media text were victims, frail, deserving old, radicalised, and vulnerable. The researchers concluded that all five identities suggested an identity of implied dependence as well as otherness. Similarly, Coupland (2009) argued that age-related identities were constructed in reality similarly to other social identities, such as class, gender, profession, religion, and sexuality. However, ageing is still the “unwritten chapter of sociolinguistics” (Coupland 2009, p. 850).

The old-age identity, according to Ainsworth and Hardy (2007), is often linked to health and social services, which results in an identity of dependency. Cole (1992, p. 230) argued that good old age was considered by “health, independence, and economic and social vitality, and bad old age, characterised by illness, physical and social decline, and dependency”. Coupland (2009) suggested that there was a need for sensitivity regarding social accounts of ageing, as language configures meanings of ageing at the broader cultural and ideological level as well as at individual levels. Newspaper text plays a crucial role in constructing social identities (Fairclough 1995). According to Coupland et al. (1991, p. 189), “micro-analysis of texts in context can uncover activation and evaluation of age categorisations, such as personal and social identities. West et al. (2017, p. 1880) argued that the “we” of a community is constructed in relation to its “others in the logic of equivalence and difference” (Glynos & Howarth 2007; Laclau 2005). Power relations are practised not only in media discourses but also in the language used in policies linked to the elderly. Powell (2001) argues that the language used in these policies depicts unequal power relations between professionals and the elderly (Fealy et al. 2012), giving rise to unequal social identities.

The literature cited above shows that a number of theorists have researched the portrayal of older people in the media, especially in the UK, the USA, and Canada. However, the role of media in the construction of identities for the elderly is not comprehensively researched, and less attention has been paid to this topic in Australia and Malaysia. This study aims to fill part of this gap by exploring the discursive techniques used by journalists in the construction of identities of older people in both Australia and Malaysia, and by comparing the findings across the two countries. While both countries are culturally, socially, and religiously different, they have similarities as well: for example, the presence of indigenous people, appreciation for multiculturalism, and increasing numbers of older people. As journalists play a vital role in discursively constructing identities for the older people, it is important to discuss journalistic practices in both countries. The following sections discuss journalistic practice in general and particularly in Australia and Malaysia.

2.7 Journalistic practices

There are many ways that journalism can be understood and interpreted, but not all interpretations and understandings can be covered in this thesis. This section discusses one way of understanding journalism. The International Encyclopedia of Communication defines journalism as “a constellation of practices that have acquired special status within the larger domain of communication through a long history that separated out news-sharing from its origins in interpersonal communication” (Barnhurst & Owens 2008, p. 2557). Journalism, according to Nerone (2012, p. 447), is a “belief system that defines the appropriate practices and values of news professionals, news media, and news systems”. Conboy (2004, p. 4) argues that “journalism can be viewed as an intersection of many conflicting interests,” meaning that many angles to a story, and at times many different incompatible interpretations of the facts, are some of the components of such conflicting interests. The notion of “conflicting interest” is used in this study to compare differences and similarities in reporting on the same topic, such

as aged-care reforms in Australia and the many perspectives that can be incorporated into consideration of this topic. The use of diverse angles for the coverage of the same story by different newspapers indicates the operationalisation of discursive practices. Journalists can position themselves only within the confines of the social space or workspace that surrounds them (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). This means they follow internalised and institutional journalistic practices as well as understandings and conventions of professional practice more broadly – as part of the terms of their employment – which may vary amongst media organisations (Dent 2008).

The range of available literature in critical media and journalism studies indicates the variety of ways in which journalism practice can be understood and interpreted. For instance, scholars including Foucault (1994), Dent (2008) and Carvalho (2008) consider journalism as a discursive formation or reconstruction of reality, while researchers including Lawrence (1903), Weaver and Wilhoit (1986), Beam (1990), Miller (1998), Godkin (2008) and Davis (2010) view journalism as a profession – although there is a great deal of debate over whether journalism could be regarded as a profession (Dent 2008). For this study, journalism is viewed from the perspective of a discursive formation, which means “certain characteristics are to be attributed to journalists and their daily practice in which the discursive formation is controlled and perpetuated” (Dent 2008, p. 2).

MacDonald (2003, p.1) contends that news discourses are the result of “a system of communicative practices that are internally related to wider social and cultural practices, and that help to construct specific frameworks of thinking.” Therefore, the analysis of discursive practices provides an opportunity to establish the role of journalists and news organisations in the construction of identities for the elderly in two culturally different countries. The following section discusses the role of journalists as perceived by some key scholars in the field.

2.7.1 Role of journalists

In journalism studies, there is a considerable body of scholarship on roles of journalists and the functions of the press: see, for example, Rosten (1937), Hocking (1947), Cohen (1963), Janowitz (1975), Schorr (1977), Donsbach and Patterson (2004), Zelizer (1992, 1993, 2010, 2013), Willnat and Weaver (2014), Hellmueller and Mellado (2015), Muller (2016), and Wilding et al. (2018). As it is not possible in a limited space to cover this broad topic and the variety of approaches that can be taken, this section of the thesis focuses on elements of the scholarship that are most relevant to the aims of this study.

Hellmueller and Mellado (2015, p. 1) claimed that the first study on the professional roles of journalists was undertaken by Rosten (1937). The utopian role of the journalist, according to Rosten (1937), was to remain “detached” and anti-utopian practice was to “collaborate with sources and editors as part of their job, and thus have to sacrifice some detachment” (Hellmueller & Mellado 2015, p. 1). Later on, journalists were distinguished as “neutral reporter” and “reporter as a participant” (Cohen 1963, p. 31), “gatekeepers and advocates” (Janowitz 1975 cited in Hanitzsch & Vos 2018, p. 147), active versus passive and advocate versus neutral (Donsbach & Patterson 2004), and fluid in a changing world (Zelizer 2013). Furthermore, Weaver and Willnat (2012), who conducted a survey of twenty-nine thousand journalists from thirty-one countries between 1996 – 2011, noted that “reporting the news quickly, objectively, providing analysis and the watchdog are the most valued roles by the journalists” (p. 536). As a watchdog – emphasising government accountability and transparency in democracies (Coronel 2009) – journalists “highlight problems and weaknesses in government policies and performance” (Romano 2005, p. 8). Watchdog reporting, according to Coronel (2009), examines government performance and helps citizens assess the efficacy of this performance. Nerone (2012) maintains that news media, at least in the Western context, are assumed to be free from the state and journalists are independent agents representing the

people. The role of journalists, according to Wilding et al. (2018), is to monitor and curb power, support and create public debate, and educate and entertain.

In sum, roles of journalists vary according to the expectations of their audiences, location, political systems, socio-cultural expectations and institutional policies, in short, it can be maintained that journalists' roles, in Western perspective, are to report the news quickly, objectively, in a way to support and create public debate, educate and entertain audiences, highlight the weaknesses in government policies and make those in power accountable.

Journalism, as an occupation, displays certain characteristics that require it to keep the implied promises the profession has made to audiences. The promises, considered essential for the healthy functioning of democracy, according to Muller (2014, p. 3) consist of “factual and contextual reliability, impartiality, independence, and separation of factual information from comment or opinion”. Curran (2002, pp. 148-151) contends that certain factors influence media, specifically, state censorship, high entry cost, media concentration, corporate ownership, mass-market pressures, consumer inequalities, advertising influence, a rise of public relations, news routines and values, unequal resources, and dominant discourses. Muller (2016, p. 99) asserts that news content should be prepared independently without any distorting influence of advertisers. Overall, it can be concluded that there is a divergence of opinion about existence or nonexistence of influences on media – see, for example, Muller (2016) and Curran (2002) – even though media needs to be free from external influences to function effectively in modern democracies.

Despite journalistic practices, institutional norms and pressure exerted by economic, political and social actors, a journalist “would be little more than a clerk as in respect to most of the big topics of news, the facts are not simple, and not at all obvious, but subject to choice and opinion, it is natural that everyone should wish to make his own choice of facts for the newspapers to

print” (Lippmann 1922 pp. 221-222). Similarly, Schorr (1977, p. vii cited in Zelizer 2010, p. 188) maintained that news reporting is “not only a livelihood but a frame of mind”. It can be maintained that journalists do not only relay messages and information but also “work in aid of journalistic empowerment” (Zelizer 2010, p. 188). The empowerment, according to Bourdieu (1998), includes the trial of journalistic selection in order to catch the public eye:

Journalists – we should really say the journalism field – owe their importance in society to their de facto monopoly on the large-scale informational instruments of production and diffusion of information. Through these, they control the access of ordinary citizens but also of other cultural producers such as scholars, artists and writers to what is sometimes called ‘public space,’ that is the space of mass-circulation ... journalists exercise a very particular form of domination since they control the means of public expression ... it remains true that, like other fields, the journalistic field is based on a set of shared assumptions and beliefs, which reach beyond differences of position and opinion (Bourdieu 1998, p. 46).

However, the degree of autonomy to make choices depends on the type of news organisation they work for, the type of journalism they produce, and the level at which they operate (Schultz 2007, p. 197). For instance, on different levels of an editorial team, such as senior or junior journalists, some journalists are in a more powerful position than others, and it can be argued that journalists play different roles depending on their institution and institutional hierarchy.

This study compares newspapers based in Western and non-Western/Asian countries, namely Australia and Malaysia, which differ from each other in socio-cultural, religious, regional, political perspectives and journalistic practices. Hence for this study, there is also a need to consider journalistic practices in Asian, non-Western countries - in particular Malaysia - to contextualise consideration of discursive practices. The roles of journalists as discussed above

are considered primarily within a Western framework (Hanitzsch & Vos 2018) and the roles of journalists in Malaysia are discussed in the succeeding section. Even within Western countries there are differences in journalistic practice. For example, Hanusch (2009), who compared journalistic practice among German and Anglo-American journalists, argues that “despite being generally referred to as Western journalism practice, German journalism, on the one hand, and Anglo-American journalism, on the other, display some important differences, which can be located in the respective national cultures” (Hanusch 2009, p. 624). A similar approach is applied in this study to examine the role of national culture in reporting about the elderly in Australia and Malaysia.

a. Roles of Australian journalists:

Australian journalistic practices are derived from those of the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe (Breit 2008). In other words, Australian journalism follows the Western model of journalism, which “assumes that news organisations are relatively autonomous from the state and that individual journalists are independent agents engaged in an agonistic relationship to power while representing the people by, among other things, giving expert accounts of affairs of public importance” (Nerone 2012, p. 446). As earlier discussed, there are multiple forms of journalism and multiple ways that journalism can be understood, such as journalism as people (journalists), journalism as text, and journalism as a set of practices (Zelizer 2004, pp. 38-43). Australian journalists “tend to view journalism as a social institution that defends the public interest and reinforce the idea that journalism is a profession” (Breit 2008, p. 509).

Given that this study could not possibly hope to cover the whole gamut of Western journalism, it focuses on several key definitions/points to establish parameters for the study. After interviewing a hundred and seventeen Australian journalists in both metropolitan and regional areas, Josephi and Richards (2012, p. 124) concluded that “Australian journalists see themselves first and foremost as a watchdog on government”. McQuail (2000) argues that the

“watchdog” press provides a critique of institutions and society and scrutinises politicians and businesses. The watchdog role is embedded as a pillar of democracy – the idea of the press as a Fourth Estate: “The idea of the Fourth Estate signifies that whatever the formal constitution, genuine political power resides in the informal role of the press, which in turn derives from the relationship between the press and its readers” (Hampton 2010, p. 3). The watchdog role is merely one form of good journalism, according to Wilding et al. (2018). They cited six key features of good journalistic practice in Australia as part of the Civic Impact of Journalism project at Melbourne University, which in 2017 submitted to the Senate Inquiry into Public Interest Journalism. CIJP (2017)’s six key features are:

1. to keep the public up to date with what is going on in the world;
2. to provide the public with reliable information on which they may base choices as participants in political, economic and social life;
3. to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions;
4. to be a watchdog on those in power;
5. to help societies understand themselves; and
6. to provide the material upon which members of a society can base a common conversation” (Wilding et al. 2018, p. 20).

Overall, it can be summarised that journalistic practices in Australia are based on Western views of journalism, and Australian journalists consider themselves, first and foremost, as a vigilant watchdog on those who are in power, and then as gatekeepers to relay information based on defending the public interest.

b. Roles of Malaysian journalists:

Journalistic practices in Malaysia are in many ways different from those in Western countries, such as the United Kingdom and Australia. Loh and Mustafa Kamal claim that the Western style of journalism is discouraged as it is deemed to be contrary to Malaysian values (cited in

Ismail & Ismail 2014). Instead, Asian-based development journalism is practised in Malaysia. Chalkley is credited with originating the term “development journalism” in 1968; “the aim was that journalists would focus less on spot or sensationalist news” (Romano 2005, p. 1). Since then, development journalism has remained a topic of interest for academics and scholars, evident in the extensive literature on development journalism, – see, for example, Chalkley (1980), Ogan (1982), McQuail (1991), Galtung and Vincent (1992), Petersen (1992), Hachten (1993), Stevenson (1994), Gunaratne (1996), Bowd (2003), Romano (1998, 2005), Anuar (2005), Manyozo (2008) and Waisbord (2010).

In the development journalism model, the press works as a developmental instrument to support national integration (Anuar 2005) and government policies, discuss matters of local interest (Waisbord 2010), and focus on nation-building (Hachten 1993), rather than criticism, which is “deemed dangerous in the context of politically frail and culturally divided countries” (Waisbord 2010, p. 149), such as Malaysia. Galtung and Vincent (1992, p. 259), offered ten proposals for a development-oriented journalist, including:

There is always the possibility of reporting about development not critically in terms of problems, but constructively in terms of positive programs. Stories showing how things were done successfully will be useful for somebody else in the same or similar situations. Success stories may contribute to a general sense of optimism that can generate more momentum for democracy and development.

While McQuail (1991, p. 120) associated development journalism with developing countries that “limit the application of other theories”, Bowd (2003) found promotion of local concerns – one of the basic principles of development journalism – in local Australian newspapers.

Asian-based development journalism, according to Petersen (1992), emphasises the media’s partnership with government rather than playing the adversarial role of watchdog, and equates

freedom of the press with press–government harmony. Romano (2005) expresses a similar stance about the role of Malaysian journalists, including as nation builders and government partner. The longest-serving (1981 to 2003 and 2018 to 2020) former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, is an outspoken proponent of Asian values and development journalism (Wong 2004), arguing that journalism in Malaysia is considered “constructive, consensual and development-oriented” (Hashim 2012, p. 42). Manan (2001, p. 40) contends that Malaysian newspapers are encouraged to promote a positive image of government and its policies and discourage criticism in the name of development journalism. Journalism in Malaysian universities is taught with the government’s socio-economic development objectives in mind (Anuar 2005a, p. 64).

Malaysian values dominate news reporting to avoid conflict and to support nation-building (Ismail & Ismail 2014). Mass media in Malaysia, according to Ibrahim et al. (2011, p. 4), is anticipated to stay “hand-in-hand with the government’s policies in order to remain viable and survive in the journalism business” along with informing, educating, and motivating the masses toward development goals. Manan (2001, p. 41) claims that critics of government policies are considered “trouble-makers, forces of political instability, anti-national elements and rabble-rousers”.

Furthermore, most Malaysian newspapers are owned and influenced by politicians closely linked with the longest-serving coalition, which ruled Malaysia for over sixty years from 1957 to 2018: Barisan National (BN), Malaysian Chinese Association, and United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) (Manan 2001; Anuar 2005b). As well as political and economic influence from politicians from the ruling party, the government controls the newspapers in the form of an annual permit, which needs to be renewed every year as per the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Sedition Act, and the Official Secrets Act (Anuar 2005b, pp. 29–30). Anwar (1995, p.42) argues that media in Malaysia is controlled and abused to the extent that

“even mild criticism of the ruling elite and critical attitude is viewed with fear, suspicion and sometimes contempt”. While the rights of Malaysian journalists seem to be protected by the National Union of Journalists, which negotiates terms and conditions of employment on journalists’ behalf, Ismail (2013, p. 53) argues that there appears to be a conflict of interest as the government nominates people to head the union.

Overall, it can be argued that there are significant differences in journalistic practices in Australia and Malaysia. Australian journalists follow Western models of journalism and see themselves as watchdogs on the government and people in power, while Malaysian journalists go hand in hand with the government in the name of Asian-based development journalism.

2.7.2 News values

News values are defined as a set of criteria that help to determine which events are worthy of becoming news and which are not (Westerståhl & Johansson 1994, p. 72), and are applied by news workers to choose the structure and order of reporting (Bednarek & Caple 2014, p. 136). Journalists create news by filtering events based on their newsworthiness (Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates 2001). However, the criteria for newsworthiness depend on the economic, political and social context in which media institutes operate (Fowler 1991).

The selection of certain news values over others depends on numerous factors, for instance, the impact of journalists’ schedules, such as deadlines (Schultz 2007); the effect of owners and commercial pressures (Caple & Bednarek 2015); and the influence of “habitus” (Bourdieu & Wacquaint 1992, p. 133). It can be said that news is both an “individual product and an organisational product” (Becker & Vlad 2009, p. 59). Thus, news values may not reflect what the public need, but may reflect organisational, economic and socio-cultural factors (Weaver et al. 2009). Hall (1973) advocates that news values favour powerful elites, and this is backed by findings of a study conducted by O’Neill (2012). She examined popular and quality press in the United Kingdom and concluded that there exists a hierarchy of news values, and that

celebrities dominate other news values. This suggests that news values are not truly objective and involve subjective decisions by journalists (Donsbach 2004).

The study of news values can provide insights into the production of text in media organisations, and can also highlight broader social practices. Cotter (2010, p. 87) argues that news values should be seen as key elements that establish “newsworthiness or what is news.” News values are “qualities of the news” (Hough 1988, p. 3) and ideological factors (Cotter 2010, p. 67). However, there is no single set of values that make “news (worthy)” (Bednarek & Caple 2014, p. 136). While the history of news values is quite extensive, news values as we know today are based on the work of Norwegian sociologists Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge, who presented a “taxonomy of news values” in their renowned paper “The structure of foreign news” in 1965 (Harcup & O’Neill 2001, p. 262). The document listed a set of news factors (values) which made international events news in Norwegian newspapers. The twelve news values proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1965, p. 70) are “frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons, and reference to something negative”. The significance of their work can be seen in the fact that their taxonomy continues to be reviewed, cited, scrutinised and criticised even fifty years after its publication. For instance, Bell (1991, p. 155) highlights Galtung and Ruge’s work as the “foundation study of news values.” Palmer (1998, p. 378) calls it “the earliest attempt to provide a systematic definition of newsworthiness”, while Tunstall (1970, p. 20) describes it as “a classic social science answer to the question – what is news”?

While Galtung and Ruge’s news values may have flaws, they have nonetheless provided the basis for most subsequent conceptualisations of news values. Harcup and O’Neill (2001, p. 277) argue that the “much-cited Galtung and Ruge list of news values should be regarded as open to question rather than recited as if written on a tablet of stone”, and that in some instances,

it is hard to identify some of these news factors, although others are persistently “resonant today”. The most significant criticism relates to their ignoring of daily reporting of “domestic news” and “the visual aspect of news” (Tunstall 1971, p. 21). The importance of visuals in news stories is also reported by Dick (2014), Caple and Bednarek (2015), and Harcup and O’Neill (2017). The big six news values according to Lambie (2016, pp. 36-40) include significance, proximity, conflict, human interest, novelty and prominence. The contribution of many media researchers signifies the importance of news values in the field of journalism. However, variations in these values signal changes in understandings of newsworthiness over time. For instance, a recent study by Harcup and O’Neill (2017) analysed the effectiveness of Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news factors in modern-day journalism.

Their study resulted in a list of news values which includes “exclusivity, bad news, conflict, surprise, audio-visual stories, shareability, entertainment, drama, follow-up, the power elite, relevance, magnitude, celebrity, good news, and news organisation agenda” (p. 1482). The significant difference between Galtung and Ruge’s approach and that of Harcup and O’Neil can be linked to the rise and influence of social media, as news stories need characteristics of shareability and audio-visual elements in the social media era. Other contributors to the conceptualisation of news values include Hough (1988), Bell (1991), Itule and Anderson (1991), Lorenz and Vivian (1996), Mencher (1997), Bunton et al. (1999), Cotter (2010), and Caple and Bednarek (2016). A summary of the sets of news values conceptualised by the above contributors has been presented in Table 1 below.

News Values									
Harcup And O'Neill (2017)	Bednarek and Caple (2016)	Cotter (2010)	Bunton et al. (1999)	Mencher (1997)	Lorenz and Vivian (1996)	Itule and Anderson (1991)	Bell (1991)	Hough (1988)	Galtung and Ruge (1965)
Exclusivity, Bad News, Conflict, Surprise, Audio Visual Stories, Shareability, Entertainment, Drama, Follow-Up, The Power Elite, Relevance, Magnitude, Celebrity, Good News, Organisation Agenda.	Negativity, Timeliness, Proximity, Superlativeness, Eliteness, Impact, Novelty, Personalisation, Consonance, Aesthetic Appeal.	Proximity, Impact, Change, Prominence, Conflict, Timeliness, Usefulness, The Unusual.	Impact, Proximity, Timeliness, Prominence, Novelty, Or Deviance, Conflict.	Timeliness, Impact, Prominence, Proximity, Conflict, The Unusual, Currency (Conscience).	Timeliness, Proximity, Prominence, Currency, Drama, Consequence, Novelty.	Timeliness, Proximity, Conflict, Eminence, Prominence, Consequence, Impact, Human Interest.	Negativity, Recency, Proximity, The Consonance, Unambiguity, Unexpectedness, Superlativeness, Relevance, Personalisation, Eliteness, Attribution, Facticity.	Timeliness, Proximity, Prominence, Rarity, Human Interest	Frequency, Threshold, Unambiguity, Meaningfulness, Consonance, Unexpectedness, Continuity, Composition, Reference to Elite Nations, Reference to Elite People, Reference to Persons, Reference to Something Negative.

Table 1: Prepared by the researcher from the works of all the authors cited above.

While news values are understood partially as a “reflection” of the kinds of reports audiences need or want, they also reflect the media organisation, society, and culture (Weaver et al. 2007 cited in Harcup and O’Neill 2017, p. 1473). It is important to note that in the context of editorial power, “ultimate control lies not with news professionals but with owners whose interest is efficiency and profit” (Bell 1991, p. 38). Thus, this thesis considers ownership of newspapers as a significant contributor to the construction of social identities for the elderly.

The same newsworthiness models can be applied to news reports from different countries (Shoemaker & Cohen 2012). However, there may be differences in the way journalists in different countries report (Weaver 1998), and hierarchies of news values in the Australian and Malaysian press. For instance, news values taught to journalism students at Australian universities may differ from those in the UK, the USA or other parts of the world.

2.7.2.1 Caple and Bednarek's approach to news values

The approach used in this thesis to analyse the news values of newspaper texts is built on the work of Caple and Bednarek (2016). They enunciate their perspective as “a discursive approach to news values” due to their view that “news values are constructed discursively in the course of news production, a perspective that focuses on how news production texts (press releases, interviews, published stories, ...) construct the newsworthiness of an event, issue or news actor through language, photography, layout and so on” (Caple & Bednarek 2016, pp. 437-438). The rationale for applying their method in this thesis lies in the fact that their approach is not only concerned with the newspaper text but also with the visuals accompanying the text to reveal how news values are created in news photography (Caple & Bednarek 2016, p. 435). As this thesis examines media discourses about older people, in order to incorporate discourses that include both text and visuals, a comprehensive approach like that of Caple and Bednarek (2016) is required. The study of photographs can indicate news values attached to them, for instance, aesthetic appeal, personalisation, negativity, and superlativeness. While images are not a central pillar of this project, consideration of some key images is included because of their significant contribution to storytelling. The main reason to analyse images associated with the news text is to explore if images “reinforce, complement or contradict” the language (Caple & Bednarek 2016, p. 435). Hence, this approach is suitable to determine how media texts construct newsworthiness through language and visual images by highlighting (foregrounding) some values and ignoring (backgrounding) other values. This approach is linked to the research objectives of the study.

The set of news values proposed by Caple and Bednarek (2016, p. 439) incorporates negativity, timeliness, proximity, superlativeness, eliteness, impact, novelty, personalisation, consonance, and aesthetic appeal. These can be individually defined as:

1. Negativity - negative aspects such as crises, disasters, injuries and deaths.

2. Timeliness - the most current, recent or ongoing event(s).
3. Proximity - closeness to geography or culture.
4. Superlativeness - larger scopes or scales of issues, such as the biggest problem.
5. Eliteness - the involvement of elite people, elite nations, or elite organisations.
6. Impact - the higher degree of importance of issues regarding effect/consequence.
7. Novelty - unexpectedness of events or issues and or new incidents.
8. Personalisation - the “human” factor in a report, such as eyewitnesses, or people in general.
9. Consonance - stereotypes of a specific social group or an event.
10. Aesthetic appeal - events or issues possessing “aesthetically pleasing aspect” (Caple & Bednarek 2016, p. 439).

As news values are one of the drivers in the selection of news, which are not neutral and reflect the priorities of journalists (Bell 1991), the analysis of news values provides an insight into the operational understandings of journalists, journalistic practice and judgements made by journalists in defining what is and what is not considered newsworthy. As discussed in Chapter One, analysis of news values in action is used as an explanatory tool to support the consideration of discursive practices using Fairclough’s three-dimensional discourse analysis. The next section discusses critical discourse analysis as a theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 2 Part B: Theoretical framework

Critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) presents theoretical foundations and specific methods to analyse newspaper texts. CDA, according to Wodak and Meyer (2009, p. 10), can be used in investigating opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. Fairclough (1995, pp. 132-133) argues that:

Discourse analysis aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that critical discourse analysis involves a detailed analysis of language use in social interaction. Critical discourse analysis developed in the United Kingdom and “mushroomed” in Europe (Kim 2014, p. 223). Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak are considered pioneering scholars who developed theories and methods of discourse analysis, specifically CDA (Wodak & Meyer 2009, p. 3).

The origins of discourse analysis can be traced back to “structuralist and poststructuralist linguistic philosophy” that argues that one can access reality only through language (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 9). Critical discourse analysis draws on several conceptual tools, such as discursive formations (Foucault 1972), habitus (Bourdieu 1974), and critical linguistics (Halliday 1964). Bourdieu (1977) suggests that by declaring CDA critical, we recognise that social practice, as well as language use, is attached with cause and effect, to which we might not be attentive under normal circumstances. Wodak and Meyer (2009) argue that in analysing

power relations in society, critical discourse analysis is influenced by the work of Foucault (1972). For Foucault “discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart” (1998, pp. 100-101). Critical discourse analysis aims to explore the role discursive practices play in maintaining “unequal power relations” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 63), “societal power operations”, and appeals for “social responsibility” (Cotter 2015 p. 799). It is politically committed to social change, often with a focus on oppressed social groups (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Critical discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary approach to discourse (Wodak 2007) which is not aimed at a specific paradigm or discipline (Fairclough 2003); instead, it is oriented to different data and methodologies.

Critical discourse analysis is used in different fields of humanities and social sciences to analyse subtle meanings and ideologies in text. Studies in these fields have resulted in a considerable body of literature on the topic of discourse analysis – see, for example, Fowler (1979, 1991), Trew (1979), Hodge and Kress (1988), Seidel (1985), Janks (1997), Van Dijk (1987, 1988, 1992, 2001, 2003, 2009), Wodak (1984, 1986, 1996, 2009, 2011), Wodak and Meyer (2009), Fairclough (1989, 1994, 1995, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012), Blommaert (2005), Paultridge (2006), Gee (1999), Gee and Handford (2012). However, because this study focuses on media texts, this thesis only considers scholars whose work has direct relevance to the analysis of such texts, such as Fowler (1996), who is mainly concerned with media discourses to “demystify the ideology-laden text” (p. 6), and issues of power and ideology in the analysis of news reports (Fowler 1991).

Another scholar concerned with media is Van Dijk, whose emphasis remains on news texts. He focuses on the “way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk 2001, p. 352). Van Dijk refers to his analysis of news as ‘structure of news’ which includes production

and comprehension of news texts. Tenorio (2011) argues that most of Van Dijk's work is about power abuse by elites, reproduction of ethnic prejudice, and stereotypes. The vital difference between Van Dijk and other discourse analysts is his understanding of the term power. He looks at power as abuse, rather than as productive as in Foucault's sense (van Dijk 2001, 1991). Van Dijk argues that power usually is oppressive and may be used by certain groups on "passive subjects" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 91).

Another group of discourse analysts concerned with the media is represented by Ruth Wodak, who argues that the underlying meanings of text can be understood only by understanding the historical context of the text (Wodak 1996). Wodak and Meyer (2009, pp. 1-2) contend that historical knowledge is understood in four layers: (1) the text level, (2) the extra-linguistic level, (3) the intertextual and interdiscursive level, and (4) the socio-political and historical level. However, the discourse analyst who has designed the most sophisticated and systematic approach for media discourse analysis is Fairclough (Carvalho 2008, p. 161), who examines the association between text, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice to understand the hidden meanings of media discourses (Fairclough 1995, 2012).

2.8 Fairclough's critical discourse analysis

Fairclough (1995) states that critical discourse analysis is the study of the association between text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. The text could be in the form of writing or spoken words, while discourse practice includes the process of production of text by media workers, consumption of text by audiences and its social distribution. Sociocultural practice includes social and cultural activities around the communicative event. A communicative event is every instance of language use (Fairclough 1993), however, for mass media, and especially in this thesis, the communicative event refers to text in the form of news articles. Discourse practice also mediates between the sociocultural and the textual practice (Fairclough 1995, pp. 57-60).

The main components of Fairclough's approach are (a) description of linguistic properties of texts, (b) interpretation of discursive practice which consists of the relationship between the text and its production process, and (c) explanation of discursive practices and social practice (Fairclough 1995a). Fairclough (1992) grounded his text analysis in the linguistic features described by Fowler (1991) and Halliday (2007) with the addition of "interactional control", which refers to links between speakers; it also includes the question of "who sets agenda" for conversation (Fairclough 1992, p. 166ff). Fowler (1991) examines linguistic aspects of language, for example, transitivity in syntax, lexical structure, speech acts, and modality, while Halliday's systemic functional linguistics describes three functions of language: (1) ideational function, (2) interpersonal function, and (3) textual function (Halliday 2007, p. 183). It is in the ideational function that the text-producer embodies in the language their experience of the phenomena of the real world (Halliday 1973, p. 106). The interpersonal function is the "participatory function of language" (Halliday 2007, p. 184), and the textual function is realised in information structure and cohesion (Halliday 2007, p. 184).

While Fairclough draws on the works of Fowler and Halliday, the linguistic feature that differentiates Fairclough's work (1992, p. 166ff) is "ethos", defined as how language is used to construct identities. He sees discourse as a significant form of social practice which is shaped by other practices and at the same time reproduces identities, knowledge and other social relationships. Hence, discourse, according to Fairclough (1995), is in dialectical relationships with other social practices (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 65). However, Fairclough limits "discourse to language and images", unlike other discourse analysts, for example, Laclau and Mouffe, who consider all forms of "social practices as discourse" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 67). The term discourse is used in two distinct ways by Fairclough: (a) discourse as a count noun and (b) discourse as an abstract noun (2011, p. 358). The former is used in differentiating

different types of discourse; the latter is employed for language use regarded as a form of “social practice” (Fairclough 1993, p. 138).

Critical discourse analysis explores the tensions between the socially shaped and socially constitutive sides of language use. The text constitutes social identity through representation, as it sets up identities and relationships and a system of knowledge of belief (Fairclough 1995, p. 55). In particular, the relation between the use of language and power is often not transparent to the public and appears only after close attention (Fairclough 1995, p. 54). For instance, “ideological representation” is typically not explicit; instead, it is implicit, and is usually rooted in texts and language use in a naturalised way for audiences along with “taken-for-granted assumptions” (Fairclough 1995, pp. 44-45).

Fairclough’s analysis of media discourses consists of two main dimensions: (1) the communicative event, for instance, a newspaper editorial or article, and (2) the order of discourse, for instance, arrangement of discourses and genres which creates orders of discourse (1995, p. 56). Fairclough (1995) argues that analysis involves an alternation between them.

a. Communicative event

A communicative event is an instance of language use (Fairclough 1993). For instance, news articles under investigation in this thesis can be referred to as a series of communicative events. Each communicative event is a result of a series of sub-events, and Fairclough (1995) classifies these as internal and external events. The production processes in a media organisation can be considered internal events. External events include the happenings outside of media organisations that are associated with the communicative event. External events work as building blocks of that event, for example, a press conference, a debate, a press release, annual report or policy document. The communicative event works as a type of social practice that reproduces and also challenges the order of discourse, which implies that communicative

events are not only shaped by broader social practices but also contribute to shaping social practices (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

Communicative events in this study are newspaper articles, including both text and images, published during times of policy change related to older people in Australia and Malaysia. This thesis explores whether these communicative events reproduce or challenge social practices, primarily, the identities linked to elderly people.

b. Order of discourse

The second dimension in Fairclough's approach is the analysis of the order of discourse. This analysis reveals the configuration of discourses; how different types of discourses are networked with each other. To obtain this, Fairclough has divided discourses into categories: (1) Direct Discourses (DD), (2) Indirect Discourse (ID), and (3) Free Indirect Discourse (FID) (Fairclough 1995b, pp. 56-57). He defines these discourses in terms of news reporting as:

Direct reporting: Quotation, purportedly the actual words used, in quotation marks, with a reporting clause; Indirect reporting: Summary, the content of what was said or written, not the actual words used, no quotation marks, with a reporting clause, shifts in the tense and deixis of direct reports; Free indirect reporting: Intermediate between direct and indirect – it has some of the tense and deixis shifts typical of indirect speech, but without a reporting clause. It is mainly significant in literary language (Fairclough 2003, p. 49).

The connection between the order of discourse and the communicative event is dialectical. For instance, the communicative event not only reproduces the order of discourse but also changes the order of discourse through “creative language use” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 71). While the primary focus in this thesis is on the three-dimensional approach to CDA, some

attention is also given to the order of discourse to explore how different types of discourses are connected (Fairclough 2013, p. 265).

Critical discourse analysis has been used intensively to explore the ideological representation of conflicting ideas, and to uncover hidden ideological meanings in newspaper language. For instance, Shojaei, Youssefi and Hosseini (2013) analysed news stories published in major newspapers from the UK and the USA to explore ideological characters in news language. They found that discursive practices could lead to legitimisation of the ideological position of some sources and misrepresentation of others. Similarly, Kim (2014) examined news stories published in the US mainstream media to identify discursive practices through the lens of critical discourse analysis and found hidden ideologies used by the US media to divide the world into specific sets of countries, “based on those countries’ political position towards the USA rather than on any geographical or historical relations among the countries themselves” (p. 240).

Teo (2000) analysed news reports published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*, using critical discourse analysis to examine the ideological construction of racism and representation of minorities in the Australian press. He found evidence of racism in the news and argued that there exists systematic othering and stereotyping of ethnic communities in Australian newspapers. His findings of the news content reflected and reinforced the marginalisation of minorities in the community. Similarly, Ramanathan and Tan (2015) reviewed the presence of power and hidden ideologies in media discourses. They argued that mass media tend to marginalise others, as powerless people are restrained from commenting on or debating political issues, hence prejudice and domination over the social context are produced by the media. They maintained that the rationality of an event, the hidden ideologies used to discriminate among the oppressed groups, could be unravelled by employing critical discourse analysis.

In sum, Fairclough's three-dimensional approach is employed in this thesis because it offers a balance of text analysis, analysis of the production process, and consideration of broader social practices. Other approaches to critical discourse analysis, such as critical linguistics and the discourse-historic approach, are not compatible with the aims of the study. For example, critical linguistics use in-depth analysis of text while ignoring broader social practices, and socio-cognitive analysts analyse the effects of society and ignore the study of linguistic features. In contrast, the discourse-historic approach employs a mixture of text analysis and consideration of social practices, but analysis is conducted solely in the context of history. The rationale for using Fairclough's three-dimensional framework lies in the fact that it aligns with the research objectives of the study and has been used intensively for the analysis of media discourses in recent years. Fairclough's approach looks at discourse as a social practice, and takes into account the linguistic features of the text, the discursive practices used in the production and consumption of text, and the effects of wider social practices on texts and of texts on society. In analysing media texts, Fairclough (1995, p. 47) argues, it is essential to compare and evaluate representations: what has been included and excluded, what is foregrounded, what is left in the background and what influences media professionals to formulate and project in a way it is projected. Fairclough's approach is regarded as one of the most sophisticated and comprehensive for analysis of media texts (Carvalho 2008); however, it might not provide full insight into news discourses as media representations of ageing also depend on choices made by journalists, including news values in operation. Philo (2007) states that critical discourse analysis has not been able to explain the complete analysis of news discourse (Carvalho 2008, p. 163), so, to get a full insight of newspaper coverage of the elderly, news values are also considered in this thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The portrayal of elderly people and age-related issues in mainstream newspapers in Australia and Malaysia is examined by employing critical discourse analysis, coupled with the study of news values in operation. The sampled newspaper articles are examined using Fairclough's three-dimensional approach coupled with analysis of news values adopted from Caple and Bednarek (2016). The rationale for analysing news values in this thesis is to observe journalistic conventions in both countries to explore the role of journalists, media institutions, and social factors in constructing the identities of older people. The analysis of news values aligns with and reinforces the interpretation of discursive practices and social practices of critical discourse analysis.

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this project. It begins by outlining the specific steps involved in analysis of newspaper texts using Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis and the analysis of news values. The latter half of the chapter includes discussion of the Australian and Malaysian newspapers selected for the study. Before moving towards the specific steps involved in the analysis, I would like to contextualise my approach and connections to the research in this reflexive statement: I am from Pakistan but have family connections in Malaysia and I am studying in Australia. I have a good understanding of both Malaysia and Australia because of my connections with and experiences of both, but I nonetheless view both societies from the perspective of an outsider to at least some extent because I was not born in either country. This means that as an outsider, I can bring greater objective understanding to the analysis of the data rather than approaching the project from a predominantly Malaysian or Australian perspective.

3.1 Fairclough's three-dimensional approach

Drawing on the theoretical background established in Chapter 2, this section describes the Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to discourse analysis, to establish the methodological

approach to the study. Fairclough's three-dimensional approach entails the analysis of (1) text that can be written, spoken, or in the form of visual images; (2) discursive practice that includes the process of text production and consumption; and (3) wider social practices (Fairclough 1995). As this thesis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional approach for the study of newspapers' text; thus, the following steps are taken.

- 1) Text analysis
- 2) Analysis of discourse practices
- 3) Review of social practices

3.1.1 Text analysis – micro analysis

The first step towards critical discourse analysis is the analysis of the text, which, according to Fairclough (1993), can be in writing, with or without visual images, or spoken language. For instance, “the written documents, interviews and meetings in government or business organisations and websites of government, are categorized as text” (Fairclough 2011, p. 359). The text in this thesis consists of sampled news articles from Australian and Malaysian newspapers. While most of the analysis focuses on written text, some examples of visual images are also included. Text analysis for the corpus of newspapers articles includes linguistic analysis, drawing on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and Fowler's critical linguistic approach, of written text and semiotic analysis of visual images (Fairclough 2011).

The examination of news articles includes the linguistic aspects of language, for example, lexical structure, direct or indirect speech, and lexical choices made by the journalists in describing older people and issues linked with them and the ageing population. The language used by journalists not only indicates the role of language in the construction of identities for older people but also embodies how writers see and portray social issues such as ageing. Fairclough (1995) argues that linguistic analysis of text should focus on the constitution of identities. Examination of the above linguistic features provides insights into how newspapers

texts construct particular social identities related to older people and their relations with society.

Even though Fairclough based his text analysis on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and Fowler's critical linguistic approach, the fundamental distinction between Fairclough's text analysis and the critical linguistic approach is grounded in the idea of linking text with discursive and broader social practices. Fairclough links text analysis with discursive and social practice analysis, which synchronises with the aims of this thesis to look beyond the text and to consider the influence of institutions and other social factors. Thus, the next step in the analysis of newspaper text in this thesis is the analysis of discursive practice.

3.1.2 Discourse practice – meso analysis

The text analysis is followed by the study of the production processes of the newspaper texts. News media texts undergo a series of discourse practices during the production process. Discursive practice is seen as a significant form of social practice that is involved in the constitution of "social identities and relations" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 62). The analysis of discourse practices is critical because it can contribute to the revelation of unequal power relations amongst different social groups (Fairclough 1995). Discursive practices focus on how the author of a text draws on existing discourses to produce texts. Discursive practices are influenced by societal forces, for example, political systems and media institutions (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 62).

Discursive practices vary within mass media as news outputs use a different discursive method to outputs such as documentaries. Even within newspapers, the selected medium for this study, discursive practices are different for soft news, hard news, feature articles, and commentary (Fairclough 1995, pp. 64-65). Fairclough (1995) argues that discursive practices include production as well as consumption of text; however, consideration of consumption is beyond the scope of this thesis. The consumption of text includes 'audience research' to identify reader

interpretations of news texts (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 82): going down this path would take the research in a significantly different direction overall and would expand the project beyond the capacities of a PhD thesis.

Bell (1991) argues that the process of text production is accomplished through a set of “institutional routines” that include collection and selection of material, followed by editing and transformation of source material into finished texts (Fairclough 1995, p. 48). Analysis of institutional routines is also beyond the scope of this thesis as it would require interviewing journalists, news reporters, and editors. Different characteristics of news are analysed using techniques developed by Fairclough (1992, 1995, and 2011), specifically (1) intertextuality, (2) modality, and (3) recontextualization to analyse the production of news texts.

a. Intertextuality

Fairclough (1995) argues that intertextual analysis should be included in the study of the production process. He claims that texts are commonly hybrid intertextually. Kristeva has coined the term “intertextuality”, defined as “the insertion of history (society) into text and of this text into history” (Kristeva 1986, in Fairclough 1992, p. 101). Intertextuality emphasises the social and historical contexts of the text. Therefore, intertextual analysis of media texts in this thesis can help to reveal (a) whether the texts related to the elderly are drawn on existing texts, (b) whether they contribute to the historical development of ageing (Kristeva 1986, in Fairclough, 1992, p. 101), and (c) whether new discourses have been generated about the elderly and ageing issues by transforming and restructuring earlier text (Fairclough 1992).

Newspaper text can be drawn explicitly from other texts, for instance, direct quotes. However, innovations and changes may be made in texts by news reporters or editors during the production of news to convert official discourses into colloquial discourses (Fairclough 1992, p. 117). The changes made to the original statements by news reporters and editors show their

affiliation with the text. The next step in the analysis of the production process looks at the affiliation of editors with the text, defined by Fairclough as the “modality”.

b. Modality

The second feature to analyse in the production of newspaper texts is the attitudes or comments that are used by news reporters along with the statements of others. Fairclough (1992) describes news reporters’ comments as modality, which, according to him, are often presented as facts. In this thesis, modality is measured as the writers’ affiliation to the report (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 83).

The reporters’ affiliation may be of varying degrees, thus resulting in different forms of modalities. Various types of modalities may be used to construct and maintain social relations, for example, the modality of “permission”, “advice”, and “certainty” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002 p. 84). The categorization of different forms of modalities in this thesis is governed by the examples provided by Fairclough (1992) and Jørgensen and Phillips (2002). For instance, “certainty; truth: reporters commit totally to the statements; intonation: the hesitant tone may express distance from the comment; subjective or ‘objective modality: reporters generally use objective modality that may reflect and reinforce reporters’ authority; and permission: where the writer gives the reader permission to do something” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 84).

c. Recontextualization

The third and the final feature that is analysed to understand the production process of newspaper texts in this thesis is the comparison of texts with context in the Australian and Malaysian newspapers. This process is called recontextualisation, which, according to (Fairclough 2011, p. 367), is the comparison of texts in different social fields and at various locations and in different societies to explore how these texts are “recontextualised” as they articulate with existing discourses within a new context. As this study is concerned with two

culturally different countries, recontextualization analysis of the text is important in observing the ‘presence and absence’ of certain discourses in texts,’ and differences in both countries can be identified (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, cited in Fairclough 2011, p. 369).

3.1.3 Social practice – macro analysis

The analysis of social practice in this thesis entails the broader socio-political context (macro-level analysis) within which a text is produced (Smith 2007, p. 62). The analysis investigates the underlying power relations with a focus on the extent to which a given text supports or opposes a particular type of social practice (Fairclough 1992, p. 95). The analysis of social practice in this thesis compares whether discursive practices reproduce or restructure the existing order of discourse. Moreover, it is mapped on to the investigation of the cultural and institutional context of media practices to observe the ideologies and power relations (Fairclough 1995). The association between discourse and other components of social practice is a dialectical relationship; they are different, but not discrete (Fairclough 2013, p. 266). The social practice does not just mirror reality but is in a dynamic relationship with reality, which it also shapes (Fairclough 2001). Fairclough’s three-dimensional approach to critical discourse analysis is used in this thesis alongside a ‘discursive’ approach to news values adopted from Caple and Bednarek (2016). The analysis of news values can help to reveal the discursive techniques used by a reporter at the production level, and the level of social practice, as the ownership of a newspaper can influence its news values.

3.2 Analysis of the news values

To this end, the corpus of newspaper texts is also examined to determine the newsworthiness of the selected news articles. The examination of news values backs up Fairclough’s three-dimensional approach at the discursive practice and social practice levels. The analysis of news values in operation explores news actors, such as elites and non-elites; the impact of news stories on the public, for instance, the increasing ageing population and their families and

carers; unusualness of a particular event, such as aged-care reform proposals; timing, place and people involved; and – in analysing news photography - the construction of aesthetic appeal. In short, the examination of newspaper texts explores and compares the news values in operation against the set of news values identified by Caple and Bednarek - “negativity, timeliness, proximity, superlativeness, eliteness, impact, novelty, personalisation, consonance, and aesthetic appeal” (Caple & Bednarek 2016, p. 439) - in both Australia and Malaysia. The comparison of selected news values in reporting about elderly people in both Australia and Malaysia helps in understanding journalistic practices in both countries.

The discursive nature of Caple and Bednarek’s (2016) approach aligns with Fairclough’s approach to critical discourse analysis as it provides backing to the analysis of discursive practices. As discursive practices vary from institution to institution and country to country, exploration of news values in operation provides an insight into journalistic practices because news values indicate the perceived newsworthiness of an event and the people reported in news articles. Notably, in the examination of issues related to older people, news values indicate whether age-related issues are reported due to the involvement of elites, novelty, personalisation, impact, negativity and so on. Also, the analysis of news values shows the differences in discursive practices due to media ownership within a country, and variations due to socio-cultural, political and journalistic practices in both countries. News values indicate who, when and why some actors in news articles are preferenced over others in news articles.

3.3 Time frame

Carvalho (2008) notes that the majority of media discourse studies examine news discourses for a short period and suggests investigating different stages of issues. Thus, this study aims to cover various stages of aged care policies from their introduction to their conversion into law. The time frame selected for this study is three years – from 01 January 2011 to 31 December 2013. The same timeframe is used for Malaysian newspapers; however, two one-month periods

represent the timeframe for data collection in Australia. The reason to choose this period is based on the fact that significant amendments to aged-care policies were made in Australia and Malaysia during this time.

In Australia, an aged care reform package was introduced in April 2012 in a report “Living Longer Living Better - Aged Care Reform package” published by the federal government (Department of Health Australian Government 2012). The report was converted into an Act of Parliament in 2013, the “Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Act 2013” (The Federal Register of Legislation Australian Government 2013). These governmental activities attracted media attention towards issues related to elderly people which usually are not covered intensively by the press (Kononova et al. 2019). The Australian element of the study focuses on these two events: the introduction of the Australian aged-care reforms package and its conversion into legislation. The debate about the aged-care reforms started in April 2012 when the package was introduced. Media coverage was also intensive in August 2013 when the policy was converted into legislation. Consequently, these two months were selected for the study.

In Malaysia, amendments to policies for older persons were made by the government without the public debate that was seen in Australia. This resulted in a different sampling process for Malaysia. The events selected for this study were the intensive coverage of amendments to the national policy for older persons in Malaysia that occurred on 5th January 2011 (Department of Social Welfare 2011) and ageing-related conferences held in Malaysia or actively participated in by the Malaysian government. For example, Malaysia hosted the 1st World Congress on Healthy Ageing, in cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and The Malaysian Healthy Ageing Society (MHAS) in Kuala Lumpur from 19th - 22nd March 2012 (World Health Organisation 2012). Similarly, the Department of Social Welfare represented Malaysia in the second meeting of the committee on International Cooperation on Active

Ageing in Tokyo, Japan, on 19th July 2013 (Zawawi 2013). During this time public discourses about ageing were prevalent in the media. Hence, the time frame selected for the study is 2011-2013, covering the events discussed above.

3.4 Newspapers as a site of analysis

A mixture of national, regional (in the Malaysian context) and state level metropolitan (in the Australian context) newspapers was selected for critical examination of media discourses about the elderly and age-related issues in Australia and Malaysia. The rationale for analysing newspapers is partly a practical one - newspaper archives are easily accessible compared to television or radio archives, and it is straightforward to manage selected newspaper articles. More importantly, newspapers have been considered as one of the main sites to represent and interpret news stories (Li 2009, p. 85). Newspapers offer a window on public opinion, culture, politics, and social life (Fairclough 1995), are influential in agenda-setting in public discourse and help to form attitudes (Murphy 2004). The goal of using newspapers is their capacity to capture “what is both acceptable and socially thinkable” (Aldridge 1994, p. 35) and what could be seen as reflecting the social mainstream (Mautner 2008).

According to Rozanova (2006), print media are one vehicle through which governments stress individual responsibility for health and wellbeing for the elderly. She argues that issues related to ageing may be more prominent in the press as “commentaries about social trends and reflexive essays on lifestyles” are part of newspapers (Robinson et al. 2004 in Rozanova 2006, p. 116). Moreover, she maintains that newspapers may provide more coverage of issues related to the elderly than television as ageing, being a prolonged process, lacks proximity of sensation, which is crucial for television news.

While there have been predictions about the demise of printed press in the wake of the development of information technology, the circulation of newspapers remains high, particularly in Australia. For instance, according to Roy Morgan, an Australian research

company, over 15.9 million Australians - which is over 64 per cent of the population - read newspapers in some form, and 7.7 million read print newspapers in 2018 (Roy Morgan 2018). Both metropolitan and regional papers have a significantly high readership: in 2018, the readership of metropolitan papers was 10.2 million, while regional papers had 6.4 million readers (Duke 2018). Overall, newspaper readership in Australia increased by 4.7 per cent in 2018 over 2017, as reported by Enhanced Media Metrics Australia (Emma 2018).

Malaysia also has high levels of newspaper readership. For example, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia, from July to December 2017, 2.1 million copies (of all-language newspapers) were distributed, with Malay-language newspapers having the highest circulation compared to English and Chinese publications (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia 2017). Fong and Ahmad Ishak (2013) state that almost fifty newspapers, including sixteen English-language, nineteen in Chinese, thirteen in Malay-language and others in Tamil and other languages, are published in Malaysia. While Malay-language newspapers have higher circulation than English-language papers, this study focused only on English-language newspapers to allow for a more direct comparison of language use with Australian newspapers. Overall, readership in Malaysia is on the decline as audiences shift online, as newspapers' circulation was over 3.6 million in December 2013 (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia 2017).

Despite differences in newspaper readership across the two countries, the study of newspaper language and news values remains significant for media researchers (Harcup & O'Neill 2017) around the world in exploring the role of news language in constructing identities for different components of society, including elderly people. The next section discusses the sampling procedure in both Australia and Malaysia.

3.5 The sampling of newspapers

This study focuses on newspaper texts concerned with policy amendments regarding elderly people in Australia and Malaysia. Therefore, purposive sampling techniques were used in the selection of texts that were subjected to critical discourse analysis. One key selection criterion for the newspapers to be included in the study was language; only English-language newspapers are included. Other criteria were the circulations and readerships of the papers.

The sample for this thesis is extracted from eight major Australian publications and six English-language Malaysian newspapers. Efforts have been made to include state-based metropolitan as well as national broadsheets and tabloids in both countries to achieve national demographic readership. In terms of news reportage, broadsheets and tabloid differ in many ways. For instance, tabloid reporting demonstrates sensationalism and a higher degree of conversationalisation, wherein public discourse is transformed into private language through the use of linguistic features from ordinary conversation (Fairclough 1995) while broadsheets' reporting style is less conversational, less sensational and more objective (Phelan 2016)". However, the sample may not be representative of all national and regional newspapers – metropolitan newspapers in Australia and state-based papers in Malaysia – in both countries because of accessibility issues of certain Malaysian newspapers.

3.5.1 The sampling of newspapers in Australia

In Australia, most mainstream newspapers are published by two major media groups: News Corp Australia and Nine Entertainment Co (formerly Fairfax Media Limited). Ownership switched from Fairfax to Nine in 2018, meaning that the newspapers included in this study were part of the Fairfax group during the sampling period. The dataset consists of newspapers from both media giants, so the role of ownership in the portrayal of the elderly can be considered. The News Corp papers being seen generally as more conservative and the Fairfax papers as more liberal in outlook. News Corp Australia is one of the biggest media companies

in Australia and claims to reach 16 million Australians a month on multi-platform products, including newspapers (News Corp Australia 2020). News Corp Australia distributes national as well as metropolitan newspapers across Australia. It also has other media interests including non-metropolitan newspapers. The News Corp Australia newspapers selected for this study were (1) *The Australian* (national), (2) *The Herald-Sun* (Melbourne/Victoria), (3) *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane/Queensland), and (4) *The Advertiser* (Adelaide/South Australia). The main reason to include these papers in the dataset lies in their wide readership, because readership not only indicates the concentration and reach of papers in communities but also is an indicator of revenue earned from circulation,⁴ and from advertisers, which is closely linked to the size and demographics of the readership (Papandrea 2013). Other reasons for the selected newspapers from News Corp Australia include: competition with Fairfax papers, namely *The Herald-Sun* in Melbourne and *The Daily Telegraph* in Sydney; the only representative paper of News Corp in the state, such as *The Advertiser* in Adelaide; or available nationally such as *The Australian*.

1. *The Australian* is Australia's only national general-interest broadsheet. Being a national publication, in print since 1964, it has readership across the country, and it is available in both print and digital form. *The Australian's* print circulation was 851,000 in June 2019, and it had an audience of 2.42 million across platforms⁵ (Roy Morgan 2019).
2. *The Herald-Sun* circulates in the state of Victoria. It is the only major tabloid distributed by News Corp Australia in Victoria, and its competitor is Fairfax Media's *The Age*. In June 2019, its print circulation for a seven-day week was

⁴ "Although readership and circulation are not synonymous, they are closely related when speaking about print newspapers. Circulation figures are measurable; they are used in estimating readership, which is generally calculated as the total circulation multiplied by the average number of people who will read each issue, or is established by survey" (Thornton 2016, p. 2).

⁵ print, web or app

1,155,000 and it reached 2.72 million people across platforms over the same time period (Roy Morgan 2019).

3. *The Courier-Mail* is the only major tabloid based in Brisbane, Queensland, by News Corp Australia, with weekly readership of 874,000 and reach of 1.74 million in June 2019 (Roy Morgan 2019). It does not have a direct competitor in its market.
4. *The Daily Telegraph* is a tabloid published in Sydney, New South Wales. It had an average circulation of 1,143,000 readers in a week in June 2019 and reached 2.6 million people across platforms during the same time (Roy Morgan 2019). The rationale to include this paper in the sample is to compare its coverage with its competitor *The Sydney Morning Herald*, distributed by Fairfax Media.
5. *The Advertiser* is a tabloid published in Adelaide, South Australia. The justification for including this paper in the sample lies in the fact that – unlike the *Herald-Sun* and *Daily Telegraph* - it does not have a direct Fairfax Media competitor. It is the most circulated paper in South Australia, with 60,000 audience per day in June 2019 (News Corp Australia 2020).

The selected newspapers from Fairfax Media Limited are (1) *The Age*, (2) *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and (3) *The Canberra Times*. The underlying criteria for selection of the first two publications are the same as for the News Corp Australia publications - readership and competition with News Corp - to allow for the observation of any discrepancies in reporting related to ownership. *The Canberra Times* is the sole daily publication in its market.

1. *The Age*, a tabloid based in Melbourne, Victoria, had circulation of 738,000 printed copies and an audience of 2.7 million across platforms for seven days in June 2019 (Roy Morgan 2019).
2. *The Sydney Morning Herald* is the only major newspaper published by Fairfax Media Limited in Sydney, New South Wales. According to Roy Morgan (2019), in

June 2019 it circulated 871,000 printed copies, and had an audience of 4.1 million across platforms for seven days (Roy Morgan 2019).

3. The rationale to include *The Canberra Times* in the sample lies in its geographical position, as a representative newspaper published from Canberra, the capital city of Australia; it is the only capital city that has only a Fairfax publication. It had an audience of 359,000 across platforms for seven days in June 2019 (Roy Morgan 2019).

Articles from the newspapers were incorporated into the dataset through a series of steps in the sampling process. First, a keyword search was conducted on the online archives of selected newspapers. The keywords “elderly”, “ageing”, “older person”, and “aged-care reforms” were used for the search because these phrases were found during the review of the literature discussed in the previous chapter. Factiva, being a useful research tool and home to a global news database, was used to carry out the online search. As the newspaper reports are public data, thus ethics approval was not required for this study.

The keyword search for Australian newspapers was done in two different phases. In the first phase, the date range selected was 1st April 2012 to 30th April 2012. The initial search returned over a hundred articles in the selected newspapers. All the reports were read and reviewed to determine if they dealt with ageing and the elderly in the context of aged-care reforms. The review resulted in the elimination of fifty-one articles because they did not deal with these topics.

In the next step, the retrieved articles were categorised according to mastheads and were reviewed again to eliminate any duplication. At this stage, seven items were found to be identical; the same story by the same reporter was printed in multiple newspapers. Only the first version of the story in the search results was added, and the rest were removed from the

dataset. The final sample consists of forty-nine retrieved articles. The distribution of those articles is as follows:

April 2012				
Newspaper Title	Quantity	Ownership	National/ State	Type
<i>The Australian</i>	10	News Corp Australia	National	Broadsheet
<i>The Courier-Mail</i>	04	News Corp Australia	Queensland	Tabloid
<i>The Advertiser</i>	08	News Corp Australia	South Australia	Tabloid
<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	08	Fairfax Media Limited	New South Wales	Tabloid
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	01	News Corp Australia	New South Wales	Tabloid
<i>The Canberra Times</i>	02	Fairfax Media Limited	Capital	Broadsheet
<i>The Herald-Sun</i>	04	News Corp Australia	Victoria	Tabloid
<i>The Age</i>	12	Fairfax Media Limited	Victoria	Tabloid

Table 2: Australian Newspapers Sample April 2012

The advantage of comparing two major media groups from the same region is that it may provide an alternative construction of the same issue, as different news reporters produce news texts for different media organisations. Similarly, media texts published in the same paper on the same day by different reporters may provide different perspectives on the same issue (Carvalho 2008).

In the second phase for the Australian newspapers, the date range of 1st August 2013 to 31st August 2013 was used. The rest of the steps were the same as described above, and the final sample for August 2013 consisted of twelve newspaper articles. The distribution of the articles is as follows:

August 2013				
Newspaper Title	Quantity	Ownership	National/ State	Type
The Australian	05	News Corp Australia	National	Broadsheet
<i>The Courier-Mail</i>	02	News Corp Australia	Queensland	Tabloid
<i>The Advertiser</i>	04	News Corp Australia	South Australia	Tabloid
<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	–	Fairfax Media Limited	New South Wales	Tabloid
The Daily Telegraph	01	News Corp Australia	New South Wales	Tabloid
<i>The Canberra Times</i>	–	Fairfax Media Limited	Capital	Broadsheet
<i>The Herald-Sun</i>	–	News Corp Australia	Victoria	Tabloid
<i>The Age</i>	–	Fairfax Media Limited	Victoria	Tabloid

Table 3: Australian Newspapers Sample August 2013

The overall sample size for the articles retrieved from both weekday and Sunday editions of the selected Australian newspapers is sixty-one, enough to provide “saturation” that, according to Bradby et al. (1995), is sixty newspaper articles.

3.5.2 The sampling of newspapers in Malaysia

Nain (2017 p. 121) argues that “the media environment in Malaysia remains a heavily controlled and censored one, strictly monitored and policed by an authoritarian regime”. Unlike

Australia, the press in Malaysia is not controlled by only two major groups, but by different pro-government media companies. For example, Media Prima that owns *The New Straits Times* is an enterprise of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the leading political party in the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition. Barisan Nasional has ruled Malaysia since its independence from Britain in August 1957. Likewise, *The Star* is owned by another main party of the BN, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA).

The criteria for the selection of newspapers was their circulation and readership. However, some regional newspapers, mainly from East Malaysia, have been added to obtain a broader picture of media coverage despite having less readership than papers from cities such as Kuala Lumpur. The most circulated English papers in Malaysia are as follows:

1. *The Sun* is a free newspaper, but it is the most circulated and read tabloid in West Malaysia, owned by Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd. The average circulation during Jan-June 2017 was 307,764 copies daily⁶ (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia, 2017). However, it is not circulated in East Malaysia.
2. *The Star* is the most circulated paid English daily in Malaysia with an average circulation, between January and June 2017, of 217,082 copies daily (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia, 2017). *The Star* is available in all states in Malaysia, although it is published in Penang and covers the federal capital city and the state of Selangor. The Star Media Group Berhad owns *The Star*.
3. *The New Straits Times*, owned by Media Prima, is available across Malaysia with an average readership between January and June 2017 of 44,779 copies daily (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia 2017).

⁶ Unlike Australian newspapers, cross-platform audiences information was not available for the Malaysian publications.

4. *The Borneo Post* is the most circulated English newspaper in East Malaysia, with an average circulation of 63,682 copies daily (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia 2017). It is owned by Borneo Post Sdn Bhd, which also publishes *Utusan Borneo*, a Bahasa newspaper, and *See Hua daily news*, a Chinese newspaper. These newspapers are published only in East Malaysia.
5. *The Daily Express* is published only in East Malaysia, and has a daily circulation of 23,790 copies (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia 2017). It is the sister paper of *Overseas Chinese Daily News* (OCDN), which claims to be independent of any political affiliation.
6. *The Malay Mail* is a tabloid published in Kuala Lumpur since 1896ⁱ and owned by Malay Mail Sdn Bhd.

The Star and *The News Straits Times* are considered pro-government by critics, however, *The Daily Express* and *The Malay Mail* claim to be independent newspapers. The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) holds over forty per cent of shares of Star Media Group Bhd, the mother company of *The Star* (Sani 2014).

The corpus of thirty-eight newspaper articles from English-language Malaysian newspapers was retrieved from *The New Straits Times*, *The Malay Mail*, *The Star*, *The Borneo Post*, and *The Sun*. Access to the coverage of *The Daily Express* was not feasible, neither online from Australia nor during a trip by the researcher to The National Library of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur to gain full access to the newspaper's archives. While *The Daily Express* is an East Malaysian local newspaper, it was not held in the library. Overall, the sample of Malaysian articles was smaller than that of the Australian newspapers. There are multi-fold reasons for this: firstly, the inaccessibility of the archives of Malaysian newspapers, especially regional newspapers, through libraries in Australia or online databases. In addition, while The National

Library of Malaysia holds printed and online version of newspapers published nationally and or from the states in West Malaysia, the *Daily Express* is not included in its collection.

The initial keywords searched in Malaysian newspapers - elderly, ageing, older person, and aged care - yielded over sixty articles in the selected newspapers. All the articles were read and reviewed to eliminate any duplication. At this stage, twenty-eight items were found to be either identical – the same article published by two different newspapers – or not related to ageing or older people, for instance, news about ageing aeroplanes, senior professionals and managers and eighteen years old were eliminated from the dataset. The final sample consists of thirty-eight articles. The distribution of those articles is as follows:

2011-2013				
Newspaper Title	Quantity	Ownership	National/ Regional	Type
<i>The Star</i>	08	Star Media Group Berhad	National	Tabloid
<i>New Straits Times</i>	11	Media Prima	National	Compact
<i>The Malay Mail</i>	03	Malay Mail Sdn Bhd	Klang Valley	Tabloid
<i>The Sun</i>	06	Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd	National	Tabloid
<i>The Borneo Post</i>	10	Borneo Post Sdn Bhd	East Malaysia	Berliner

Table 4: Malaysian Newspapers Sample 2011-13

In sum, the dataset for this study consists of ninety-nine news articles retrieved from eight Australian and five English-language Malaysian newspapers published from 2011-2013. There are sixty-one news articles from the Australian press, whereas thirty-eight news articles have been retrieved from the Malaysian papers. There are multiple reasons for the discrepancies in the sample size, including the difference in the number of English-language newspapers in both countries – for example, unlike Australia, where the majority of newspapers are distributed in English, papers in Malaysia are available in the three main languages of Bahasa, English, and Chinese – and access to newspaper archives. Notwithstanding efforts – including a trip to The

National Library of Malaysia Kuala Lumpur after an unsuccessful attempt to access all selected Malaysian newspapers online through the Factiva database – to compile a numerically comparable sample of news articles from the Australian and the Malaysian newspapers, the disparity in the number of sampled news articles from both countries resulted in a discrepancy in the number of examples discussed from each country. However, as this project is qualitative in nature, this discrepancy does not negatively affect the outcomes of the analysis overall.

Chapter 4: Media portrayal of ageing in Australia and Malaysia

This chapter is the first of three analytical chapters that discuss findings of the analysis of media discourses about the elderly and ageing in Australian and Malaysian newspapers. In this chapter, the main themes explored in the sampled news articles are presented to provide an insight into media representations of elderly people in Australia and Malaysia. It is worth noting here that owing to different approaches to aged-care and socio-cultural variances, the explored themes are specific to each country and are presented separately: narratives around ageing in Australian newspapers are discussed in the first part of each analytical chapter, followed by a discussion of the representation of older people in the Malaysian press. Differences and similarities in media representation of older people in both countries are then discussed towards the end of each chapter. Despite differences in specific elements of news coverage, the themes in both Australia and Malaysia reflect and reinforce broader narratives, such as neoliberalism and familism, about elderly people and aged care in the respective countries. This chapter begins with an overview and the background of the findings from the Australian press to establish the grounds for the opening section of this chapter and the first sections of other two analytical chapters, that is, Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

4.1 Findings overview – Australian press

The following passages include an analysis of sixty-one news articles selected for this study published in eight mainstream Australian newspapers – *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, *The Advertiser*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Courier-Mail*, *The Herald Sun*, and *The Canberra Times* – about older people and the ageing population in Australia in the wake of aged-care reforms.

One of the aged-care policies in Australia – the Aged Care Act 1997 – went through amendments as a result of the Productivity Commission’s report on aged care, “Caring for Older Australians” (2011). The then-Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and then-Minister for

Ageing, Mark Butler, announced the proposed reforms – Living Longer. Living Better – on 20th April 2012, and these were legislated into the Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Act 2013⁷ (Federal Register of Legislation 2016).

The announcement of the proposed amendments initiated a debate amongst politicians and other components of society, including economists, analysts, and businesses related to aged care. All major Australian newspapers widely reported the debate. Due to reference to powerful elites, such as the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader, the newsworthiness of the event was increased (Harcup & O’Neil 2001) – guaranteed to have high [news] value (Economou & Tanner 2008) as reference to elite people (Caple & Bednarek 2016) make news (worthy). Thus, this high [news] value event attracted the attention of national newspapers to usually less reported demographics: generally, issues linked with ageing do not make the front pages of the national press (Kononova et al. 2014; Kononova et al. 2019).

As discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.5, there are two major media groups in Australia, News Corp Australia and Fairfax Media Limited (as it was then). Both news organisations provided comprehensive coverage about the reforms, which is evident in the number of articles - sixty-one, including three front-page stories, in two months (April 2012 and August 2013). This is uncommon for non-sensational issues such as health, economics, education, and ageing (Kononova et al. 2014). The analysis of articles shows that in some instances, the content of news articles from both major media groups was almost the same, with the same sources quoted, which may be indicative of the availability of particular sources: for instance, their willingness to speak or promotion of themselves as sources, as well as journalists’ “tyranny of deadlines” (Economou & Tanner 2008, p. 114) and their reliance on official sources (Fisher 2018).

⁷ A detailed discussion about the aged care reforms is in chapter two.

The division of news reports according to ownership shows that two-thirds of all news reports in the corpus are from News Corp Australia, while Fairfax Media published only one-third of articles. Moreover, all twelve articles published in 2013 were from News Corp Australia. Further division of the articles shows that *The Australian* published the most (fifteen articles in 2012 and 2013), followed by *The Advertiser* and *The Age* with twelve articles each, while *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Canberra Times* published the least, with two articles each. *The Sydney Morning Herald* published eight, *The Courier-Mail* published six, and *The Herald Sun* published four articles. Furthermore, forty per cent of Fairfax Media Limited articles were written by one journalist – Mark Metherell – who covered *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and *The Canberra Times* and wrote different material for each publication. The explanation of the sampling process is in the methodology chapter, section 3.5.

The overview of news articles shows that the proposed changes in the aged-care sector generated more discussion than the actual change, as the number of articles in 2012 – when the proposed reforms were announced – was four times greater than that published in 2013 – when the reforms were converted into legislation. Forty-nine reports were published in the former year, and only twelve in the latter.

While the articles analysed for the study were published on different dates in April 2012 and August 2013, there were days when more articles were published than others. For instance, on 21st April 2012, the day after the reforms were proposed, intense media coverage was recorded, with nineteen articles, almost one-third of the total. Intense media coverage indicates the interest of journalists in the topic and the newsworthiness of the reforms, incorporating novelty, human interest, impact, elites, and prominence; five out of “the big six news values” (Lamble 2016, pp. 36-40). Occasionally the same writer contributed multiple articles in multiple publications on the same day, for example, Stephen Lunn from *The Australian*, Phillip Coorey

from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and Michelle Grattan from *The Age* are amongst journalists who wrote multiple articles on 21st April 2012.

News articles ranged from front-page stories to analysis, commentaries, opinion pieces, and feature articles. The inclusion of articles of varying lengths and detailed coverage of the economic, political and to some degree social aspects of the issues linked with the elderly by the sampled Australian newspapers show that the journalists reported on the topic in both depth and breadth. It also indicates the presence of a wide range of media discourses constructed for the elderly in Australian newspapers.

Overall, newspapers from both major news organisations provided coverage of issues related to aged care and the elderly in the wake of proposed aged-care reforms and the Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Act 2013 (Federal Register of Legislation, 2016). The following section explores the main themes in the news articles published by the Australian press during the studied timeframe.

4.2 Main themes in Australian newspapers:

Introduction:

The analysis of news articles reveals that the overarching focus of most Australian newspapers was on financial issues, followed by political debate and the quality of aged care. More than half of the news articles - thirty-five out of sixty-one - focused on the financial implications of the aged-care reforms, whereas thirteen - less than a quarter of the total - discussed the views of politicians about the reforms. The rest - one-fourth of news articles - considered the quality of aged care, intergenerational tussles about care, and the significance of the family home in the wake of reforms. A fraction of news articles - two out of sixty-one - discussed or at least mentioned social issues, including social welfare for older Australians.

The above distribution of the foci of the dataset is based on the dominant theme within each story that was established due to the emphasis of the article on certain issues, such as financial, political or social issues. However, at times an overlap of themes was noticed in the news articles. For instance, eleven articles were found to have overlapping dominant themes, such as political and economic discourses overlapping in six articles, while quality of care and politics overlapped in three articles, and discourses around quality and finances in two. It is worth noting here that even in some of the political discourses and the discussion about the quality of aged care, the financial side of aged care remained the focal point of the discussion, which means monetary issues dominated socio-political issues.

The dominant discourses uncovered in Australian newspapers about the elderly can be split in the following themes: (1) marketisation of aged care, and (2) politicisation of aged care. The marketisation of aged care can be further divided into sub-themes (a) aged care as a commodity, and (b) the economics of aged care. The politicisation of aged care can be branched as (a) quality of aged care, and (b) intergenerational wrangling.

4.2.1 The marketization of aged care

As discussed above, the overall emphasis of news articles under analysis is on financial issues linked with aged care. Within the financial discussion, payment for aged care is at the core of articles, highlighting the marketisation of aged care in Australia. “Marketization refers to the integration of competition and price mechanisms into public services. The most dramatic type of marketization is privatization. Privatization occurs when the state completely abandons the production of a good or the provision of the service by handing it over to the private sector” (Bevir 2009, p. 128).

Jeon and Kendig (2017) stated that aged-care services in Australia were entirely funded jointly by the Commonwealth and State governments until 1992. The incorporation of the aged-care

sector into the commodity market began with the introduction of Community Aged Care Packages in 1992 (CACP). More “user charges” for the aged-care sector in Australia were implemented in 1997 (Jeon & Kendig 2017, pp. 240-241); since this time (Jeon & Kendig 2017), the sector has been considered a business and aged care a commodity. The media broadly refer to aged care as a commodity, and that is evident in the current study through the language use portraying nursing homes in Australia as businesses

a. Aged care as a commodity:

The marketisation of aged care in Australia remains the central theme in most of the sampled articles as aged care is presented as a private good that needs to be acquired by the elderly. The reproduction of statements from government officials, indicating the incorporation of the aged-care sector into the commodity market and the shifting of responsibility of aged care to individuals as a strategy to “cope with a rapidly ageing population” (Lunn 2012a), is a choice made by journalists that indicates the writers’ inclination towards the commodification of aged care.

All of the selected Australian newspapers replicate, relay and construct discourses that position aged care as a commodity. It can be observed from the dataset that the lexical choices made by journalists and replication and incorporation of comments by sources quoted in the articles portray nursing homes as businesses and older people as customers. However, there are variations in the language use in forming and presenting such discourses. These distinctions can be linked back to media organisations and ownership of the newspapers, as media content is influenced not only by journalists and their routines but also by the organisation journalists work for, as argued by Shoemaker (1991, p. 116) that “individual workers and their routines are subordinated to the larger organisation and its goals”. Explanation and examples of such language use are presented in the succeeding paragraphs discussing some of the typical

examples from the dataset that portray aged-care services as a commodity. The first few examples are from News Corp papers, followed by examples from the Fairfax newspapers.

The below excerpt from *The Australian* (2012) is a typical example of the language used in reporting payment choices available to elderly Australians in the proposed aged-care reforms:

The Gillard government's much-anticipated response yesterday to the commission's Caring for Older Australians report did address two key concerns of those entering their twilight years: ensuring more aged-care services are provided at home, so the elderly are not prematurely pushed into a nursing home; and being protected from forced fire sale of their family home to secure an aged care place. Under Labor's reforms, people will have more choice about how to pay for their residential-care accommodation -- either through a lump sum or with periodic rental style payments... The government won widespread praise for dealing with a critical supply-side impediment to providing quality aged care (Lunn 2012a).

Newspapers reproduced official narratives about the payment choices for aged care that represent residential care as a commodity that can be purchased by using different payment options. Payment for aged-care services is indicative of a transition of such services from the government (social) to the private sector, which strengthens the idea of aged care as a commodity to be procured by older people. Payment options for aged care were reported by all News Corp papers as well as the Fairfax media. The emphasis of the papers on the payment options to secure a place in residential care homes highlights aged-care services as commodities that need to be purchased by the elderly either by paying a lump sum or through periodic rental payments. The listing of different payment options hints toward the value and scarcity of these spots (to be bought) in aged care homes.

The *Herald Sun* (2012) included a similar statement to the one reported by *The Australian* about the payment options:

They would have a free choice to pay a daily, weekly or monthly fee for aged care (Hudson 2012).

In other examples, services offered by the businesses are described in detail, for instance, in the following quote from *The Australian* 2012:

Home-Care Packages -- services such as cooking, cleaning and bathing -- from 60,000 to about 100,000, and be “consumer-directed” so older people have more say on the types of care they receive (Lunn 2012a).

This statement identifies different services available to consumers in their own homes rather than residential care. The description of services with varying prices for older Australians, and terming the elderly as “consumers”, contributes to the construction of discourses about the commodification of aged care. Moreover, the term “consumer-directed” supports aged care as something customers purchase according to their needs. Details of services provided by nursing homes are covered in all Australian newspapers regardless of their ownership. For instance, Fairfax Media paper *The Age* (2012) reported an additional “care fee” for in-home care along with the list of other in-home support services provided:

The extra charges will come in the form of a new means-tested “care fee”, which will be added to the existing \$1800 average basic fee for home care. The charges are part of a broad aged care overhaul under which the government ... has promised a 60 per cent boost to 100,000 in the number of people getting subsidised home-care packages. The services provided include personal care, home cleaning and transport (Metherell 2012a).

The expression “care fee” that is used in official narratives and has been replicated extensively throughout the sampled news articles, without any critical engagement by journalists, indicates that the Australian newspapers are replicating official and business narratives about aged care. The lack of critical engagement by the journalists in relaying the official narratives that construct discourses around the commodification of aged care can be considered as implicit support for normalising such discourses.

Moreover, a part of the discourse about the commodification of aged care that is reported in an uncritical manner by almost all the newspapers selected for this study is the proposition to the elderly to sell their family home in order to purchase aged-care services. For example, the excerpt below illustrates the language used by the journalist in relaying this message:

If needed, they [elderly Australians] can sell their home, rent it out, or take out a reverse mortgage with a private lender (Coorey 2012a).

The above quote is a typical example used by journalists in discussion about the mode of payment for aged care. The proposition to sell one's home to finance care is prevalent across the board, suggesting a consensus by the media in the normalisation of aged care as a commodity – one worth trading the family home for. Additionally, elderly Australians are portrayed discursively as being in a position where they have no choice but to pay for their care. For instance, *The Australian* (2012) reported a quote from then-Opposition Leader Tony Abbott:

Many people will be forced to pay more for aged care under Labor's package but the pain will not be felt until after the election, while the Greens warned they would not support cuts to services dressed up as reforms (Balogh & Owens 2012).

The lexical choice “forced” is very strong compared to other suggestive expressions about the payment, which reinforces the privatisation of aged care and depicts the power relations in society where elderly people are represented as having less power than politicians. The above statement also normalises the purchase of aged-care services as the writers have presented it as a follow-up story by using the adjective “more”, which implies that it has been a norm in society to pay (Economou & Tanner 2008).

Other examples from the dataset that normalise and support economic rationalism and individualistic approaches to aged care divide older people according to their financial capabilities; for instance, in an excerpt from *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012):

Self-funded retirees face full cost of assistance⁸

...The interplay between incomes, assets and means tests means calculating individual financial impact is challenging, particularly for the 12 per cent of consumers whose wealth means they could be exposed to the full \$50,000 a year cost (Metherell 2012c).

The above extract represents elderly Australians not only as consumers of aged care, paying the cost for their care, but also as individuals who are categorised according to their wealth.

⁸ To distinguish headlines from the body of news articles, all headlines are presented as “bold” and in a separate line in this study.

The division of elderly citizens according to their financial circumstances strengthens the notion of an individualistic approach to aged care in which individuals are responsible for their own care. Also, the incorporation of the full cost of care for at least twelve per cent of elderly Australians, again termed “consumers”, not only indicates the choices made by the journalist in naming them as such, but also indicates journalists’ role in the normalisation of the marketisation of aged care in Australia.

Similarly, in an editorial – the “only place in a newspaper where the opinions of a paper as an organization are explicitly represented” (Firmstone 2019, p. 1) – journalists from *The Australian* (2012) referred to the proposed aged-care reforms – in which the elderly would be forced to pay for their care – as “a responsible step” in the headline of an editorial reviewing the reforms:

A responsible step in aged care

The Gillard government’s \$3.7 billion overhaul of the sector announced yesterday is a constructive step. It addresses pressing issues... creating a government-backed credit scheme to provide for the use of reverse mortgage facilities on family homes to help fund care costs. What is certain is that the nation faces steep increases in the costs of caring for our senior citizens (*The Australian* 2012).

Editorials – different from other opinion formats such as commentary, analysis, columns, guest contributions, or letters to the editor – are published in the name of newspaper representing the collective opinion of newspaper rather than individual journalists (Firmstone 2019, p. 3). Editorials utilise different frameworks and understandings to news reporting, but this piece nonetheless contributes to broader news media discourses about the marketisation of aged care. The language used by the writers strengthens the idea of newspapers as supporting the consumer discourse.

Likewise, *The Age* (2012) in an analysis piece – representing the views of journalist Michelle Grattan in the below example – described the reforms as sound, fair and consumer-oriented, as can be observed in the following extract:

THE government's aged care overhaul appears to be a sound, fair and consumer-oriented package in an area that is complex, costly and often fraught for decision-makers and families alike (Grattan 2012a).

The language used about aged-care reforms suggests that the journalists are buying into the political rhetoric by replicating the notion of aged-care services as a commodity with different options available to finance those services. As discussed at the start of this chapter, in response to the proposed aged-care reforms, newspapers incorporated statements and views from different parts of the community, including politicians and businesspersons. However, the concerns and interests of aged care providers (businesses) are particularly foregrounded. For example, lead paragraphs in *The Australian*, *The Advertiser*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald* provided platforms for the stakeholders and businesses providing aged-care services to express both positive and negative views about the proposed reforms. The foregrounding of business interests over those of the elderly establishes the implicit support of the papers for powerful elites. In the below excerpt, *The Advertiser* (2012) included a quote from providers' association chief executive Paul Carberry about the effects of proposed reforms on the aged-care sector:

Association chief executive Paul Carberry said the providers were being victimised by the Government. "As for the so-called crackdown, the industry does not condone over-claiming, however, the reality is that of 2736 audits by the Department of Health and Ageing during the current financial year, just 36 (1.3 per cent) have resulted in major funding downgrades," he said. After meeting with his state counterparts yesterday, Mr Carberry said the funding boost was a positive for the aged-care sector but also attacked the Government's decision to take control over how much each provider could charge for a place in their homes. "This is a massive deterrent to the investment that the industry desperately needs. Would you invest if you did not know how much you would be allowed to charge after factoring in all the costs" (McGregor 2012).

The statement is from a news article that discusses the financial implications of the proposed aged-care reforms for service providers, such as the lack of control over the charges for aged care. The excerpt includes negative views from the executives of The Aged Care Association, including their chief executive, which not only indicates the preference of the journalist to relay the sentiments of the capitalists but also demonstrates the exercise of power by the journalist and editors who discuss the "victimisation" of capitalists and not elderly people. It

can also be argued that the reporter may have seen the Aged Care Association's representative as a spokesperson for the elderly, regardless of his views.

The foregrounded interests of the businesses reveal their newsworthiness for the journalists, as in journalistic parlance news text is arranged in "perceived decreasing importance" (Bell 1991, p. 154), that is to say, the most newsworthy information is located at the top and the least newsworthy information at the end of the news article. It suggests that the paper is not only reporting/representing a change but is also acting as a vehicle for change by relaying and prioritising the views of capitalists who perceive aged care as a commodity. Such actions by the newspaper demonstrate ideological synchronisation of the paper and capitalists – both in favour of neoliberal approaches to aged care.

The language and discourse used throughout the sampled articles present aged-care services as businesses and the elderly as customers. Notably, in the example above, the aged-care sector is presented as a business opportunity, which sells services and residential care, to prospective investors from the private sector. The lexical choice "desperately needs [investment from the investors]" shows the gloomy situation and the weakness of the sector, which is echoed in the politicians' statements calling it a "crumbling system". The use of "you" – second-person pronoun – in the direct quote depicts that Carberry is talking directly to prospective business partners. The language used – "to charge after factoring in all the costs, charge for a place in their homes" – can be associated with a business register, as a businessperson is talking about profit/loss in a business campaign. In sum, the language used by the businesspersons throughout dataset in general, in particular as exemplified by the providers' association executive, is similar to that of any businessperson concerned about future endeavours. It is also worth noting the discourses that are not present in the discussion about aged care in Australia – most notably minimal discussion about increasing direct government support for aged care rather than pushing the responsibility of aged care to individuals.

Fairfax Media newspapers, such as *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012) reported approval for the reforms from stakeholders:

The near-universal approval from the myriad stakeholders in the aged-care sector yesterday indicated this was an important policy reform (Coorey 2012b).

Overall, aged care in the above passages is portrayed as a business, and the journalists prioritise the views of the businesses. Such depictions normalise and reinforce the notion of the commodification of aged care, and position aged-care services as a commodity to be purchased by elderly people. Additionally, the language used in the articles is overtly uncritical towards the marketisation and commodification of aged-care services, which may serve to normalise and support existing discourses about ageing and aged care in Australia. Elderly Australians are addressed as “consumers of aged care” with varying purchasing capacity. In terms of newsworthiness of above examples, it can be maintained that journalists used timeliness, impact, and eliteness (Caple & Bednarek 2016) as news values. Most examples revolve around elites, such as politicians and aged care providers, discussing the impact of aged-care reforms. Moreover, politicians and aged-care providers, who were given priority over the elderly, discussed only the fiscal issues linked with aged care rather than the social issues. In a nutshell, it can be maintained that newspapers play a vital role in constructing the ageing process in Australia on a market basis and the aged-care sector as an economic unit. It worth mentioning here that this was an approach adopted by the newspapers generally, despite any perceived political leanings on the part of the newspaper companies. The economics of aged care in Australia are discussed in the next section.

b. The economics of aged care:

The marketisation of aged care is evident in most news articles that portray aged care as a commodity, as discussed above. There are also examples in the dataset that emphasise the impact of aged care on the Australian economy. More than half of the total news articles from

the sample - thirty-five out of sixty-one - focus on the financial implications of aged-care reforms. While commodification of aged care remains the prevalent theme amongst the articles from the dataset that emphasise financial implications, more than one-third - thirteen out of thirty-five articles - focus on the economics of aged care. There is also some overlap in the dataset between the themes of commodification and economic impact.

In discussing the economics of aged care, journalists have constructed older people as an economic unit – (a) that contributes to the economy, or (b) is a burden on the economy – rather than an integral component of society. The following passages include typical examples from the dataset that discuss the economics of aged care, for instance, the below excerpt *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012) included part of then-Minister for Ageing Mark Butler’s statement about the reforms and their effects on the Australian economy:

The means test for residential care will raise \$378 million while the home-care means test will contribute \$183 million towards the \$3.7 billion, which is the cost of the package during its first five years. To help fund the increase in home care, \$1.6 billion will be stripped from subsidies paid to nursing homes for treating high-care patients. These subsidies are forecast to blow out by \$3.2 billion over five years due to what Mr Butler called “a period of unusual claiming”. The net cost to the budget in 2012-13, when the government is aiming to achieve a surplus, is just \$55 million (Coorey 2012a).

This extract is a typical example of language use that portrays aged care as an economic unit, and almost all of the sampled newspapers reproduce similar accounts. The inclusion of such statements from politicians indicates choices by the journalist. It suggests that due to the privatisation of aged care, the ageing population will work as an economic unit, as people with means will pay more for their care and contribute to the economy. Elderly Australians, in this scenario, are constructed as no more than an economic unit. Such discourses reflect the prevalence of the neoliberal approach to aged care and support the narrative of marketisation. Moreover, the dominance of the economic unit in such discourses implies the absence of a social identity for the elderly. Almost all newspapers selected for this study include some discussion about aged care as an economic unit.

Another typical example from the dataset that represents aged care as a financial entity to boost the federal budget is this excerpt from *The Age* (2012):

Better-off people will face tougher means testing and higher charges, in a sweeping reform of aged care that will boost federal funding by \$577 million over five years ... Increased means testing will bring in \$561 million. There will be new controls to stop providers charging excessive bonds. An Aged Care Financing Authority will approve the level of lump sum payment or equivalent regular payment to ensure it reflects value for money (Grattan 2012b).

The inclusion of such statistics indicates the choice of the journalist, who focused on the aged-care sector as a profitable economic unit. Similar narratives are reported in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012) as journalists added a quote from then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard about the link between budget surplus and the aged care package:

The aged care package will be one of the few budget measures to involve any significant new spending because the main theme will be striving to return to surplus... “What we can do as a government is to have the right budget settings for the economy today, and that is to bring the budget to surplus,” she said. “It also means it gives the Reserve Bank more room to move should it choose to do so” (Coorey & Yeates 2012).

The repetition of the part of her statement that links aged care fees with the budget surplus is a choice of the journalists. Replication of such lexical choices portrays the aged-care sector as a profitable economic unit that boosts the federal budget instead of contributing to a deficit. The elderly, as consumers of aged-care services, are thus positioned as contributors to the Australian economy.

In contrast with this perspective, older people are also constructed as peril in a few news articles – articles portraying elderly Australians and the ageing population as a fiscal problem are fewer than those depicting them as contributors to the economy. The element of the discourse that presents elderly Australians as a burden on the economy is recessive compared with the discourses depicting the aged-care sector as a moneymaking business. The examples explored from the dataset and presented below are atypical and are from opinion and analysis pieces rather than news reports. Opinion articles are persuasive in nature are “opinionated genres

intended to persuade the reader” (Biber 1988, p. 148) that form public opinion and influence social and political debate (Van Dijk 1996) and function to “accomplish reader’s agreement or alternatively” (Belmonte 2007, p. 2). For instance, readers were warned about the fiscal consequences of the ageing population in an analysis piece published by *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012):

Same old story: grey growth will push the nation’s economy into the red.

An updated report in 2010 projected that, if steps were not taken, the budget would be in deficit by 3.75 per cent of gross domestic product by 2050 and accumulated net government debt would balloon to around 20 per cent of GDP... Like a slow-moving, grey blob spreading out across the economy “as populations age in the decades ahead, the elderly will consume a growing share of resources” it observed. An ageing population hurts the budget bottom line in two ways, by increasing demands for spending and reducing potential revenue (Irvine 2012).

This is a one-off example by the paper that projects pessimistic views of the ageing population as an increasing burden on the economy, signalling economic vulnerability. The reportage by *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012) reflects and reinforces intergenerational reports by the Australian Treasury (2010, 2015) that state that due to demographic changes and public concern, elderly Australians are seen as a problem. Moreover, the lexical choices, including “grey growth” in the headline and “slow-moving”, “grey blob spreading out across the economy”, imply that older people, their pensions, and aged-care arrangements are behind the budget deficit. Hence, they carry a negative connotation that provides backing to Weicht’s (2013) argument that the dominant Western view of an increasing ageing population is that it drains limited resources. O’Loughlin and Kendig (2017, p. 31) argue that elderly Australians are referred to as a financial “burden” on others, and ill health, frailty and dependency are associated with them. Such discourses at the policy level can be considered as evidence of aged-based stereotypes.

Another example that depicts the aged-care sector as a burden on the Australian economy is an excerpt from a news article in which a journalist from *The Advertiser* (2012) reported the estimated spending on aged care in Australia:

Already governments spend about \$10 billion a year on aged care but this is forecast to grow by 150 per cent by 2050 as the number of Australians aged 85 and over reaches 1.8 million (Lewis 2012).

This excerpt highlights statistics about the annual aged care cost that are not explicitly mentioned in the same way by other papers, which shows differences in journalistic practices and agenda setting by the papers. While the above passage is from a news story about wealthier Australians who will be contributing more towards their care, the recitation of statistics about the cost of aged care is not associated with any of the sources quoted in the article, including then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard and then-Minister for Ageing Mark Butler. It indicates the use of “superlativeness” and “impact” (Caple & Bednarek 2016) as news values by the journalist to relay the cost of aged care and its effects on the budget. Discussion about the consequences of the increasing ageing population in Australia not only portrays older people in a negative way but also shows widespread social attitudes towards the elderly as newspapers can reflect the social mainstream (Mautner 2008) – “what is both acceptable and socially thinkable” (Aldridge 1994, p. 35). Thus, these discourses can be considered as systematic ageism as they tend to normalise inequalities in society.

The discourses of financial burden propagated by the press carry a negative connotation for elderly Australians that have the potential to worsen existing discrimination. For instance, in a research report “Stereotypes of older Australians”, seventy-one per cent of fifty-five years plus Australians reported age discrimination and over sixty-four per cent of aged sixty-five plus reported disrespect and jokes about ageing (Australian Human Rights Commission 2013). The report also concluded that media portrayal of the elderly in Australia is negative as the media

spreads stereotypes about the aged, and the role of media in spreading such stereotypes needs to be challenged (Australian Human Rights Commission 2013).

Like the above-discussed example, the study explored an example from the *Sunday Telegraph* (2012) in which journalists present the increasing ageing population as a financial problem that can be solved by incorporating a user-pays system in the aged-care sector. For instance, the below excerpt from an opinion piece:

Elements of user pays and means testing are important reforms ... when it comes to fiscal challenges facing the nation... the problem of ageing is something we all aspire to ... there is a substantial fiscal cost that goes with it. For a start the aged pension kicks in at 60 for women and 65 for men. It will go up to 67 in the year 2023, but with average life expectancy nudging into the 80s that leaves people dependent on savings or the state for a very long time (Van Onselen 2012).

The language used by the journalist signals encouragement and spread of discourses that contribute towards normalisation of economic rationalism in order to tackle economic problems associated with the rapidly growing ageing population.

From the above examples, it can be maintained that the marketisation of aged-care services is presented as a collective good for the country in two ways: (1) as a profitable entity to boost the federal budget, and (2) to reduce government spending on the care of elderly Australians. The above examples also indicate that journalists used impact, negativity, and consonance (Caple & Bednarek 2016) as news values in reporting the effects of the increasingly ageing population on Australian economy, which also promotes stereotypes about older people.

Overall, aged-care reforms and the ageing population are projected in economic terms in conflicting discourses, for instance, the elderly as contributor and as burden. However, both discourses are relayed in a way that stresses the need for elderly people to contribute to avoid the collapse of the aged-care system and to keep the economy on track. The dominance of economic discourses in news articles undermines the coverage of social issues linked with the growing ageing population. Moreover, it can be maintained that elderly Australians can be

portrayed as a social unit – senior citizens and assets who built and developed Australia, volunteers in almost all sectors of life, including voluntary carers of children and grandchildren – rather than just being represented as a burden and associated with financial liabilities or as an economic unit.

4.2.2 Politicising aged care

The second main theme found in the sampled Australian newspapers about aged care is politicisation, although the discourses around politicisation are recessive compared with economic discourses. This study explored instances from the dataset where statements of political leaders from different parties debate aged-care reforms. As discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.3, the number of older people is on the rise in Australia – sixteen per cent of the total population consists of older Australians, which means they are sixty-five years or above (United Nations 2020). Thus, older Australians constitute a significant proportion of the electorate and, due to Australia’s compulsory voting system, they possess the power to select/reject politicians in elections.

Therefore, aged-care reform remains an agenda item for political debate, which is evident in the form of statements and quotes – both in favour of and against the reforms – from different political parties and their leaders and the presence of political discourses in different articles. Ageing has had little political prominence in the past due to a smaller ageing population - for instance, only two per cent of the population was over sixty-five years in 1870 (McDonald 2017, p. 51), rising to four per cent in 1901 and then gradually increasing to seven per cent in the 1940s, over eight per cent in 1971 and fourteen per cent in 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

The analysis of the articles reveals that the writers gave coverage to almost all political parties regardless of their views about the reforms. However, preference was given to politicians from

the Australian Labor Party because they were in government at the time. Statements from opposition politicians, including then-Opposition Leader Tony Abbott, are backgrounded in most articles – except a lead in *The Australian* – as in most cases they are positioned at the end, the least newsworthy location. Inclusion and placement of different actors' voices in an article is a choice made by journalists, and in this scenario, writers generally decided to include the Opposition Leader's voice towards the end. These journalistic practices reveal that media access and coverage is "not equally available" to all politicians (Economou & Tanner 2008, p. 141). Other possible reasons could be Abbott's opposition/disagreement to the user-pays system as he argues that it would mean "a lot of Australians are going to pay more" (Scott & Brennan 2012). Abbott's argument can be considered as conflicting with broader media discourses as most newspapers and journalists uncritically replicate government discourses about the commodification of aged care. Also, inclusion of Abbott's quotes towards the end of news articles indicates that in the spectrum of power in Australian politics an opposition leader does not carry the same political weight as a prime minister. Further discussion about power relations in Australian politics and the role of media is in Chapter Six.

The subsequent paragraphs discuss some typical examples from the dataset that offer different political discourses about aged-care reforms, for instance, a journalist from *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012) presented the political side of the reforms as can be noted in the below excerpt from an analysis piece:

User-pays at last as opposition falls silent.

Yesterday, Julia Gillard made repeated mention of the way the government's scheme would halt the "emergency fire sale" of family homes forced on elderly people needing aged care. The "fire sales", it seems, have burnt off the opposition to reform in aged care (Metherell 2012b).

The passage is from an analysis piece in which the journalist has presented previous attempts by politicians to introduce a "user-pays" system. The headline of the article that mentions the

silence of the opposition party can be implied as a political triumph for Labor, which has successfully introduced the user-pays system. Also, the lexical choice “burnt off the opposition” indicates politicisation of reforms. It can also be noted in the above example that the political views of journalists are more evident in the analysis pieces than the fact-based reporting as the former indicates “evaluative beliefs” of reporters (Van Dijk 1995, p. 1). Another journalist from *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012) also referred to aged-care reforms as the Prime Minister’s reforms, in a headline on the front page of the paper, rather than aged-care reforms:

No place like home: PM’s aged care plan (Grattan 2012b).

Similarly, other papers linked the reforms to the Labor Party rather than the government. The below excerpt from *The Australian* (2012) is a typical example of language use that refers to the proposed reforms in this way:

AN increase in home-care services is the centrepiece of Labor’s \$3.7 billion package to buttress the sustainability of the aged-care system (Kelly 2012).

It can be noted in the above examples that in the reportage aged-care reforms are linked directly to the Prime Minister or the political party, demonstrating the politicisation of aged care in Australia. Likewise, the newspapers have linked aged-care reforms with the upcoming election in May 2013. The link between aged-care reforms and the election reinforces the significance of the politicisation of aged care. The below examples from *The Age* (2012) and *The Courier-Mail* (2012) exemplify the type of language use in the news articles that present aged-care reforms in political terms:

Pre-budget launch for aged care deal... THE government is likely to release its aged-care reform package before the May 8 budget, so it is not overshadowed by the gloom of the sweeping spending cuts that will help achieve the surplus (Grattan 2012c).

Funding changes a safe bet for Gillard

She has limited the likely political damage from the reforms by rejecting some of the more controversial recommendations from the Productivity Commission such as counting the family home in a means test for fees (Scott 2012a).

Most examples discussed in this section associated reforms with the government, especially the Prime Minister, and official narratives are foregrounded. There is only one news article from the dataset that placed the views of then-Opposition Leader Tony Abbott in a lead paragraph, as can be noted below in this excerpt from *The Australian* (2012):

Tony Abbott says many people will be forced to pay more for aged care under Labor's package, but the pain will not be felt until after the election, while the Greens warned they would not support cuts to services dressed up as reforms (Balogh & Owens 2012).

The above passage is from a news article that includes the views of opposition parties, and the selected excerpt is from the lead paragraph of the news article. While the quote associated with Abbott is not a direct quote, it can be maintained that the journalists associated the quote with him to politicise the event and reinforced it by including the consequences of the reforms – pain – for the public. It can also be noted that writers reproduced the lexis to bring human interest into the news (Economou & Tanner 2008). It can be seen in these examples that the journalist has constructed aged-care reforms in a politicised way by including the views of politicians and by linking the effects of reforms to the election. However, in all the political discussion, the journalists have provided minimal political commentary on the socio-political issues, and mostly ignored the views of elderly people. Dominance of politicians in news stories can be associated with eliteness (Caple & Bednarek 2016), as reference to elite people makes news (worthy), however, the selection and position of the quotes from different actors including elderly people in different newspapers shows their ideology and value of older Australians.

a. Quality of aged care

Quality of aged care was another issue evident in the dataset. Quality can be termed “the extent to which a health care service or product produces a desired outcome/s” (Runciman et al. 2007,

p. 297). The analysis of the articles reveals that there is minimal discussion – from politicians, journalists, and users of aged care – about the quality of care in the proposed reforms. The limited discussion and commentary by the journalists about quality demonstrates agenda setting. Agenda setting occurs when politicians or journalists seek to define which matters should be the subject of public debate (Economou & Tanner 2008), so by not highlighting aged-care quality, journalists are directing public discourse away from this topic.

The lack of discussion and public debate about the quality of aged care shows the exercise of power by the journalists to steer political debate. Further discussion about the exercise of power is in Chapter Six. The quality of aged care is mentioned in only four news articles; however, in two it is mentioned briefly alongside political discourses. *The Age* (2012) included a full article about the quality of existing aged care and the proposed aged-care reforms, with the headline:

Quality of care ‘missing’ from reforms (Wells 2012a).

Similarly, other news articles published by the *Sunday Age* (2012) discussed the quality of aged care in the proposed reforms, for instance, a headline by *the Sunday Age*:

Aged care reform ‘fails to fix staffing shortfall’ (Peatling & Tomazin 2012).

Likewise, *The Australian* (2012) questioned the assurance of the quality of aged care in the reforms:

THE guarantee of quality aged care remains an aspiration for older Australians rather than a Medicare-style entitlement (Lunn 2012a).

In the same article, the writer added a quote from the chairman of the Business Council of Australia that discusses the lack of quality in aged care:

“The changes will not increase access to quality care or boost choice and the overall sustainability of the sector.” Rohan Mead, chairman of the BCA’s Healthy Australia (Lunn 2012a).

The issue of quality in the aged-care sector in Australia has been featured as a concern for elderly Australians in previous official reports, for instance, a Senate Committee on

Community Affairs report, “Quality and equity in aged care” (The Senate Community Affairs References Committee 2005; Jeon & Kendig, 2017, p. 253).

The news stories in this study demonstrate that discussion about the quality of aged care focused on the executives of leading aged-care service providers who are not satisfied with the current quality of care and elderly people who are pessimistic about the reforms. However, most journalists – writers of analysis and opinion pieces discussed – and politicians did not show their concerns about the quality of aged care in these articles. Besides, there is no mention of how quality is measured or defined in any of the news articles or what needs to be changed. Nevertheless, interestingly, this has changed over time as more recently – and outside the dates incorporated in the dataset - lack of quality in aged care has become a hot topic, evident in news coverage and discussion from politicians from both sides of the parliament (see, for example, Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety 2020; Power 2020a; Power 2020b).

b. Intergenerational wrangling:

One aspect of the politicisation of aged care in the sampled Australian newspapers relates to intergenerational wrangling. As discussed above, the ageing population in Australia is considered and reported as an increasing financial burden on the younger generation that might be mitigated by adopting individualistic approaches to aged care, as seen in the earlier discussion about the marketisation of aged care. There are examples in the news articles under examination where this usually unnoticed intergenerational wrangling is evident. For instance, *The Australian* (2012) reported about the young who are funding care for baby boomers – Australia’s baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1966 during the post-war economic boom (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014). A similar sentiment is displayed in an opinion piece published in *The Courier-Mail* (2012), which linked the growing financial

cost of care with the increasing number of baby boomer retirees, as can be seen in the following passage:

As more baby boomers retire, these problems will only increase. About one million people now use some form of aged care around Australia, but this number is set to soar to 3.5 million by 2050. The costs of providing that care will rise exponentially as people live longer and many are hit with diseases of old age such as dementia... The issue is how to pay for it. At present, taxpayers subsidise about 70 per cent of aged care costs, with individuals paying the rest (Scott 2012b).

The above excerpt is a typical example of the language used about baby boomers and the increasing cost of their care. The journalist has constructed a distinction between the elderly and taxpayers, implying that elderly Australians are not taxpayers. However, he fails to mention the financial and other contributions of the older generations in the form of their taxes before retirement. Given that the above excerpt is from an opinion piece, to address elderly Australians as baby boomers and introduce the generational difference in the discussion about aged care is a choice of the journalist that contributes to the idea of generational wrangling.

Other journalists have used the same term, baby boomers, to discuss the elderly. For instance, in another opinion piece published in *The Australian* (2012), the writer has termed the elderly as baby boomers throughout the article, however, the journalist had a slightly different approach:

Baby boomers retire on a reverse inheritance

Baby boomers have financially contributed to a welfare and transfer system on the promise that it will be there for them when they need it. As a result, those now 30 and younger are expected to spend their working life paying pensions for the under-superannuated and the health and aged care costs of baby boomers (Wilson 2012).

Similarly, the below excerpt is an atypical example from the dataset that demonstrates the journalist's opinion about intergenerational wrangling:

Baby boomers retire on a reverse inheritance

The young are funding the old, who should pay their own way. If baby boomers want choice in their retirement, they should be prepared to spend their own money (Wilson 2012).

This excerpt from an opinion piece suggests that baby boomers should spend on their care, an individualistic approach that aligns with the government's approach to aged care. The writer, while using intergenerational terms, is supporting the commodification of aged care and reinforcing individualistic approaches in which elderly people are responsible for financing their own care. It can be argued from the use of dichotomy "young and old" that the writer and the elderly are on the opposing sides; while linking the phrase with broader narratives found in this study, it can be implied that the journalist and the government are on the same side. One underlying reason could be that young journalists, such as the writer in the above example, who represent generation X and generation Y, do not want to fund the older generation, thus creating intergenerational wrangling.

Also, in a news article *The Australian* (2012) replicated a quote from then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard about the contributions of baby boomers to the nation:

In launching the Living Longer, Living Better policy in Canberra yesterday, Ms Gillard said the nation's baby boomers, those born between 1945 and 1965, "clearly want more options and choices than older Australians sought in the past". "The baby boomers changed what it meant to be a teenager; they've shaped our life, changed what it meant to be adult Australians and they will change our conception of ageing as well," the Prime Minister said (Lunn 2012a).

It can be noted from Gillard's statement that positive views about senior citizens have been reported by some newspapers. Discourses about the historical contributions of the elderly and appreciation of their hard work have been reported in other studies as well. For instance, the intergeneration tussle amongst Australian citizens has been reported by Kendig (2017), who appears as an advocate for baby boomers as he notes their achievements:

Their [baby boomers] cohort as a whole has been at the forefront of social progress since the 1960s as indicated by: increasing educational and employment opportunities; the rise of the feminist movement; reduced (but continuing) gender discrimination in employment; choice over fertility and accumulation of superannuation. Their lifelong

orientations, opportunities and resources have increased—with widening variability and inequalities—the personal and socio-economic resources of older individuals. They are challenging traditional assumptions of passive and dependent ageing, which has resulted in concepts such as active ageing and productive ageing being developed and promulgated as baby boomers approached later life (Kendig 2017, p. 20).

Overall, it can be concluded that the newspapers' coverage of aged care draws on the theme of intergenerational conflict. The conflict is grounded in the financial implications of aged care, and reinforces the marketisation of aged care. It can be maintained that journalists and government officials are promoting individualistic approaches to keep the financial responsibility of aged care on elderly people. Such discourses can be considered a strategy by the government to mitigate the economic consequences of the rapidly increasing ageing population in Australia, a perspective propagated by most of the newspaper articles included in this study. It can also be maintained that the major themes found in the sampled Australian newspapers – marketisation of aged care and politicisation of aged care – appear to support the same neoliberal ideology, promotion of economic rationalism, and individualistic approaches to aged care in Australia. Moreover, politicians from both sides of the parliament are working together to reduce public spending on aged care by making elderly people pay for their care. Furthermore, in all this economic and political saga, journalists are not playing their role as a watchdog on the government, instead relaying the government-led narratives uncritically. The scarcity of critical engagement with the information relayed by journalists can be linked to elements of journalistic practice that support the replication of official narratives, reliance on official sources, and avoidance of conflict.

Conclusion:

The analysis of the articles presented in this section of the chapter reveals that most sampled Australian newspapers focused on financial issues, and little attention was paid to social issues linked with aged care and an increasingly ageing population. Media discourses explored in the sampled Australian newspapers represent aged care as a commodity as well as an individual

responsibility. The latter can be linked to individualism – part of broader Western values practised in Australia. Information about commodification of aged care is relayed without any critical engagement by most Australian journalists linked with the sampled news articles. This shows that journalists are not performing their historically critical role as a Fourth Estate in relaying information to the news audience.

Chapter 4 Part B: Is familism dying in East: fate of elderly Malaysians?

Introduction:

This part of the chapter presents findings on the media portrayal of elderly people and the ageing population in Malaysia. Thirty-eight news articles about older people and the ageing population in five English-language Malaysian newspapers were analysed for this study. The outcome of the analysis is reported in the following sequence: the overview of findings is at the beginning of the section of this chapter, followed by discussion of the dominant discourses about the ageing and main themes found in Malaysian newspapers. Identities linked with Malaysian elderly and the ageing population are reported in the second half of the next chapter, and that is followed by the prominent and other voices in Malaysian newspapers and discursive practices of Malaysian journalists at the end of Chapter Six.

4.3 Overview of findings of Malaysian press:

The news articles for this study are selected from five English-language Malaysian newspapers, namely *The Star*, *The New Straits Times*, *The Sun*, *The Borneo Post*, and *The Malay Mail*. They are owned by separate media groups but are part of organisations that publish papers in other languages and have links to government. Newspapers in Malaysia are published in English, Bahasa Melayu (commonly referred to as Bahasa or Malay), Chinese and Tamil. The English-language newspapers make up a significant proportion of media enterprises as their circulation is greater than other newspapers in some urban areas – such as Kuala Lumpur, the national capital and the largest city in Malaysia, and Putrajaya, the federal administrative centre – even though Bahasa and Chinese newspapers lead in terms of overall circulation in the country (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia 2018).

The sample for this study contains both national publications – *The Star*, *The New Straits Times*, and *The Sun* – and regional papers published in different states, namely *The Malay Mail* from Klang Valley and *The Borneo Post* from East Malaysian states (Sabah and Sarawak) that

are part of Borneo Island. The division, according to ownership, of the thirty-eight news articles shows that Media Prima leads the other groups in terms of publication during the selected time period, as its paper *The New Straits Times* published eleven news articles. *The Borneo Post*, the largest and most widely read English newspaper daily in East Malaysia, published ten news articles. *The Star* published eight articles, *The Sun* six, and *The Malay Mail* published only three articles about elderly people from 2011 to 2013.

Most articles explored in the sample are news reports, except four opinion pieces, two of which were published by *The New Straits Times* and one each by *The Sun* and *The Borneo Post*. While reporting on social issues is consistent with national development, deficiency of opinion pieces, analysis, commentaries and editorials about social issues can be linked to journalistic practices in Malaysia that emphasise Asian-based development journalism in avoiding conflict, discouraging criticism of government policies and educating citizens about government actions for the development of the country (Manan 2001; Hashim 2012). Similarly, newspapers have also included news reports directly distributed by the government-controlled Malaysia National News Agency called BERNAMA – **Berita Nasional Malaysia** or Malaysia National News in English – unlike in the Australian sample, where no news agency content was published. For instance, *The Borneo Post* and *The Sun* included two and three articles respectively that were distributed by BERNAMA.

Unlike the Australian sample that orbited mainly around a single news event – aged-care reforms - the Malaysian news articles were selected from multiple events including the World Congress on Healthy Ageing 2012 held in Kuala Lumpur, World Senior Day, National Senior Day, International Population Conference 2012, and Chinese New Year. Chinese New Year signifies the importance of the family and other Asian values, and the nexus between this and filial responsibility is evident in four articles in the dataset. Filial piety – the sense of obligation experienced by adult children to meet their older parents’ physical and emotional needs

(Blieszner & Hamon 1992) – is a key discourse promoted by media for the care of elderly Malaysians (see below for discussion).

4.3.1 Main themes – aged care responsibilities in Malaysia

Dominant discourses in the Malaysian newspapers emphasise filial piety, and aged care is predominantly represented as a familial responsibility. Twenty out of thirty-eight articles, over half of the total sampled for this study, discuss the role of the family in aged care. This theme is followed in frequency by societal responsibility, a kind of holistic approach to aged care promoted by Malaysian newspapers and noticeable in the discussion through the highlighting of donations for nursing homes, and appeals for public contribution for shelters and day-care centres for the elderly. The societal discourses about an increasingly ageing population in Malaysia also focus on the social welfare available and anticipated by the government and society. The use of language such as “donation” and “charitable shelters” in news reports hints that societal discourses about aged care are embedded in financial concerns. However, unlike in the Australian sample, the explicit financial consequences of an ageing population on the Malaysian economy are not found in the sampled newspaper articles.

Prevailing discourses around aged care as a concern for the whole society are found in seventeen out of thirty-eight, almost half of the news articles. Also, a small portion of the sample, five news articles, contributed political discourses about aged care. Healthy ageing, linked with societal discourses, was a minor theme in five news articles. It is worth noting that in the above discussion, dominant discourses in each article are used for their classification. However, there is overlap amongst familial, societal, and political discourses linked to elderly Malaysians. Overall, the number of news articles that focused on familial responsibility for aged care dominates other discourses, but the obligation of the care of elderly Malaysians remains in contention among family members, the government, and non-governmental organisations (NGO). The main themes explored in Malaysian newspapers around the care of

elderly people are (1) family supported aged care – familism; (2) shift away from familism – detraditionalisation of aged care; and (3) government supported aged care – social welfare.

a. Family supported aged care – familism

The examination of the sampled news articles shows that almost all Malaysian journalists whose work is included in the dataset replicated and uncritically reproduced the Malaysian Government's narratives about aged care that encourage the younger generation to take care of their elderly parents – a traditional way of aged care in Asian countries. Encouragement of filial piety can be noted in almost all Malaysian newspapers in this study when it comes to the care of elderly Malaysians. Such discourses indicate an inclination towards familism. Familism is an ideology often practised in Asian societies that emphasises supportive family relationships and family being given priority (Ochiai & Hosoya 2014, p. 20). The promotion of filial piety can be seen in the language used by the journalists in discussions around aged care responsibilities by quoting and reproducing the comments and statements of constituents of Malaysian society including the royal family, political leaders, senior citizens' representatives, social workers and the owners of nursing homes.

As discussed earlier, all the newspapers selected for this study present the care of elderly Malaysians as an obligation for the family. A typical example from each newspaper is included below to show the discursive strategies used by Malaysian journalists in the promotion of familism. It is also worth noting that in most of the sampled articles, the journalists have incorporated the views of newsworthy agents, such as elites, rather than elderly Malaysians, in support of familism. For instance, *The New Straits Times* (2012) included a direct quote from the consort of the sultan of Johor Raja Zarith Sofiah Sultan Idris Shah – of the Malaysian royal family – that emphasises filial responsibility.

Longevity is a blessing from God, and it is something we should look forward to. Nevertheless, we must prepare ourselves to face ageing, either through individual

effort, community facilities or national policies on senior citizens... We are lucky as our culture emphasises filial responsibility, and the care of the elderly is mostly done by their children (*New Straits Times* 2012a).

The inclusion of quotes from members of the royal family, who have a strong influence on the public, not only shows a deliberate choice by journalists to promote filial piety but also reflects and reinforces norms in Asian cultures – traditionally the responsibility of caring for elderly parents falls on the shoulders of the children and extended family and cultural values are passed down through generations. The above quote and others in this section are typical examples of the language used in representation of elderly people and aged care in Malaysia. Other newspapers similarly uncritically reproduced comments from government officials advocating and promoting familism as a key to tackling the problems that arise due to an increasingly ageing population in Malaysia. For instance, *The Sun* (2012) included a statement from then-Prime Minister Datuk Seri⁹ Najib Abdul Razak about the promotion of familial piety in Malaysia:

Although the government was extending various forms of aid for the elderly, the biggest contribution should be coming from their children. “This (caring for the elderly) is what we must instill in our society. Do not send parents to the old folks’ home. Even if it cannot be avoided, at least find ways where they can still spend time with us (the children)” (BERNAMA 2012a).

The excerpt is from a speech at the National Senior Citizens Day celebration, and in including it, the writers have focused on a segment of the speech that not only emphasises filial piety but also discourages the use of nursing homes. The inclusion of such quotes in the press shows implicit support for the government’s narrative about aged care, as the statement can be considered as an official message from the government about the care of the elderly. Moreover, the use of language “the biggest contribution” not only indicates use of news value “superlativeness” (Caple & Bednarek 2016) by journalists to show the scale of care expected from children, but also provides a context for then-Prime Minister quote as the phrase is not

⁹ Datuk Seri – Grand Knight – is an honorary title awarded by the head of state.

associated with Najib Razak. Replication of “must” indicates obligation; there is no option for the children but to care for their parents. Discouragement for sending a parent to a nursing home from one of the highest government officials is indicative of the social norms being represented in the press. Also, that the care of parents is uncritically noted by the newspapers shows journalists are moving hand in hand with the government, indicative of a development journalism approach to news reporting. For a detailed discussion about journalistic practices in Malaysia, see Chapter Two, section 2.7.1. Lack of criticism from the journalists can be linked back to societal norms that dictate not to contest the opinions of leaders (Jeannot & Anuar 2012) and that “juniors do not disagree with seniors (superiors or elders)” (Puteh-Behak et al. 2015, p. 187).

Narratives around obligation towards filial piety to solve social problems are frequently reported by the press. The inclusion and repetition of such accounts not only serves to inform but also to constantly remind readers about familial obligation. For instance, *The Star* (2012) included a direct quote from the president of the National Council of Senior Citizens Organisations Malaysia (NACSCOM) Dr Soon:

“Educate children to care for parents, say, groups. Senior citizen interest groups are calling for education programmes to curb the number of elderly folk being abandoned in hospitals. The education system needs to emphasise the importance of filial piety,” said Dr Soon. The main issue is to promote family values and instil a sense of obligation so they will not run away from their responsibilities,” said Dr Soon (*The Star* 2012a).

Several similar statements were included in the same article from representatives of senior citizens’ organisations who also emphasised enlightening children about family values. However, Dr Soon’s statement was more significant as it was also used as the headline for the article that was published on the main page (page 1) of the newspaper. The inclusion of such statements shows the newspaper’s inclination towards the promotion of familism and can be considered as an indication of social norms. In addition, it can be noted that the use of the professional title Dr to address Dr Soon can be considered as an act to enhance the validity of

his arguments in the article. Because Malaysian society is hierarchical (Puteh-Behak et al. 2015), and elders, parents, and teachers possess a high position, an argument becomes more valid if presented by a person of authority, knowledge and age.

The societal hierarchy in Malaysia which maintains a high regard for “people in authority, such as community leaders” (Puteh-Behak et al. 2015, p. 187) is also evident in the sampled news articles to enhance the furtherance of familism. For example, journalists have included and foregrounded narratives of honorary title holders, as Datuk – a federal title given by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (Malaysian King) supporting familism. The *Malay Mail* (2012) reported the view of Datuk Heng Seai Kie, Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister, about the advocacy of familism in Malaysia, and her quote is used as a headline and also in the lead paragraph of the article that indicates the paper’s promotion of familism.

Take care of your ageing parents, says Heng.

CHILDREN were obliged to take care of their ageing parents and not depend solely on the government, Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Heng Seai Kie said yesterday. “Children should be committed to ensure their parents enjoy a dignified, independent lifestyle and, at the same time, be an integral part of the family unit,” she said when launching the International Population Conference 2012 at the Economics and Administration Faculty, Universiti Malaya (Ismail 2012).

The report is from her speech at an international conference about population, however, in the reportage, the journalist has used a section of the speech that encourages familial piety and discourages elderly Malaysians from relying on the government. Her statement echoes then-Prime Minister’s Najib’s speech, reported earlier in this section. Both statements reinforce the government’s strategy to support familism to reduce dependence on government. Uncritical reporting and propagation of government policies to augment familism by most Malaysian newspapers helps to construct filial piety as the way to deal with an increasingly ageing population.

Some journalists have expressed their thoughts in opinion pieces and feature articles about elderly people and aged care, and their sentiments also encourage filial piety. The following excerpt from *The Borneo Post* (2012) is a typical example of the language used by journalists in opinion pieces and feature articles.

After all, the young will themselves become parents and grow old one day – and quite naturally, also expect their own brood to look after them in the final phase of life. Needless to say, it's important to inculcate filial piety in children at a young age. Wholesome family values such as caring for the elderly spontaneously out of love should be continuously fostered to create a truly caring Malaysian society (*The Borneo Post* 2012a).

The language used in the above instance is similar to that used by politicians and government officials cited in the above paragraphs, demonstrating that both journalists and officials are on the same page when it comes to care for elderly Malaysians. Such statements also act as indicators of the nature of journalistic practices and the relationship between the media and the government. Overall, it can be noted that the journalists have incorporated the views of newsworthy agents, such as the then-Prime Minister, rather than elderly Malaysians. Other news values in operation in the sampled articles include personalisation, and superlativeness (Caple & Bednarek 2016), particularly in the discussion about the role of family members in providing care to older Malaysians. The use and repetition of expressions such as parents, children and filial piety in both opinion pieces and news reports, and the quotes of elites, are indicative of social norms reproduced by the papers signifying family values and encouraging filial responsibility. The focus of media discourses on the family as a unit and filial piety suggests that most English-language newspapers in Malaysia support familism for the care of elderly Malaysians.

b. Shift away from familism – detraditionalisation of aged care

As noted above, the dominant discourses in Malaysian newspapers construct aged care as an obligation for the family that is a norm in Malaysian society. However, the analysis of the

sampled newspapers also highlighted a shift away from the traditional aged-care system in Malaysian society. Media discourses around the slipping of traditional cultural beliefs and moral values, especially a decline in the sense of filial responsibility, are constructed generally in a negative tone. The number of articles focusing on this shift is less than those focusing on the promotion of familism. Seventeen news articles out of thirty-eight promoted discourses linked to the support of familism, but only nine mentioned changes in aged-care responsibility. However, the overlap of both discourses in the same articles is noted in four articles.

In terms of mastheads, only *The Borneo Post*, *The New Straits Times*, and *The Star* included the slipping of filial responsibility in news reports, opinion, and analysis pieces. *The Star* relayed the statements of different sources in three news articles about shifts away from familism, while *The Borneo Post* published three opinion pieces, analysis and two news reports, and the *New Straits Times* incorporated the views of sources and writers in one article. Most articles that covered the trend away from familism presented it in a predominantly negative way. The subsequent section covers some typical examples of the use of language by journalists and sources that construct negativity around the move away from societal norms of care. The journalists explicitly discuss the problems of elderly citizens in Malaysia, in particular, consequences of forsaking the familial responsibility, in a negative tone. For instance, in an editorial published by *The Borneo Post* (2012), journalists present the consequences of giving up filial piety:

The Fourth Malaysian Population and Family Survey was undertaken, over half a million elderly parents were not given financial support by their children. It is, of course, unfair and incorrect to say all young people desert their parents in their old age. What is obviously a disturbing trend though is that a lot of sons and daughters are leaving their ageing parents to die at old folks' homes (*The Borneo Post* 2012a).

The language used by the writers constructs a sense of guilt for those who do not financially support their parents and who send them to nursing homes. Such statements can be considered as an emotional tool used by journalists to encourage familism in society and discourage adult

children from sending their parents to nursing homes, strategies that align with government policy. It can be argued that “negativity”, “personalisation”, and “impact” are used not only to provide a human factor in the story, but also to enhance its persuasiveness (Caple & Bednarek 2016). Similarly, *The Star* (2012) reported the consequences of slipping filial piety in a feature article:

According to the Social Welfare Department, the number of old folk deserted by their families had steadily increased by 1% each year between 2008 and 2011, based on the number of admissions to its nine Rumah Seri Kenangan units (Wen & Meikeng 2012b).

The inclusion of official statistics about deserted elderly parents contributes to discourses that signal a change in societal norms in Malaysia. In other instances, *The Star* (2011) reacted with more robust language and with criticism by quoting different components of society, including a direct quote from Siti Zaharah Sitam – the principal of Rumah Seri Kenangan [aged-care centre] at Mile 12:

“No one in the right frame of mind would choose to send their parents to an old folks’ home... It is morally wrong to send your sick parents to a home simply because you don’t want the burden of looking after them. Don’t leave them alone in their old age. After all, they are your parents and you must love them” (Mail 2011).

The language used in this example encourages familial piety and constructs the shift away from it as immoral. The selection of quotes shows the journalist’s support for disseminating government narratives. In another news article, *The Star* (2012) quoted a government official addressing possible motives for the slipping of filial responsibility in Malaysia.

Change in society’s values is among reasons why children abandon their parents today. National Population and Family Development Board director-general Datuk Dr Aminah Abdul Rahman said some assumed that it was the Government’s responsibility to care for their elderly parents. “That is a worrying trend,” she said. “They may have had traumatic childhoods and want to now pay back’ their parents,” said Dr Aminah. “Such deep-rooted emotions result in children abandoning their parents, especially when the time comes for the offsprings to care for their older folk” (*The Star* 2012b).

The choice made by the journalists to include a justification for the abandonment of elderly parents implicitly conveys a message of filial piety that works both ways, as a young parent for

younger children and the adult children and older parents. Also, the shift in filial responsibility is constructed as a “worrying trend”. Other newspapers reported on financial implications as a possible reason for the change in society. Some journalists have suggested that older persons should be more financially stable, rather than relying on the government. For instance, in an opinion piece published in *The New Straits Times* (2013), the journalists have referred to familism as a thing of past, which hints towards a shift in societal norms:

ONCE upon a time, one’s parental obligations guaranteed old age wellbeing... Things have so changed that even parents must try to be financially independent in their golden years and not be the albatross around their children’s neck so that the offspring may avail themselves of the opportunities for tremendous advancement that modernity offers (*New Straits Times* 2013a).

The above instance is representative of writers’ views encouraging elderly parents to be financially independent rather than a burden on their children. The language suggests elderly Malaysians as an obstacle to their children’s progress. Such discourses depict the elderly parents negatively, going against social norms of respect for elders and parents.

The move away from familial responsibility is also constructed in terms of victimisation of elderly parents, as some papers described it in a way that portrays elderly Malaysians as victims of a broken family system. For example, an excerpt from an opinion piece published in *The Borneo Post* (2012) reported neglect and abandonment of elderly Malaysians as a result of diverting from the traditional aged-care system:

In the old days, the family unit was strong. Today, it is breaking up as young men and women travel widely in search of greener pastures. Normally, what this entails is neglect – with the elderly being left to fend for themselves, most times under very difficult circumstances... Such a situation poses a very real problem for society and it is what the old dread most – being unwanted and uncared for while on borrowed time (*The Borneo Post* 2012a).

The above comments by the journalists not only paint a bleak picture of modern-day elderly Malaysians who are the victims of a shift in social-cultural values but also construct the shift as a cause of abandonment of the elderly. The mentioning of the past and social norms in the

article shows the strength of traditional family ties that kept aged care as a filial responsibility for generations. Omar (2003) argues that Malaysia lays claim to a firm hold on tradition, religious values, and close family relationships. However, the media discourses highlight a change in these traditions and the deterioration of family values.

As noted above, all articles supporting and propagating familism used quotes from newsworthy agents, including politicians. An example of a politician's private life is added in a news article published by *The Borneo Post* (2011) providing a human face to news story:

Thoughts on filial piety in the Lunar New Year... Generally, among Chinese families in Sarawak, filial piety is a culture that has been cherished for generations... Our father had been unwell for the last six years of his life. He withered away and died peacefully in his sleep at home. He was 84. My mother suffered a stroke and was bed-ridden for two years before she passed on – also at home – at 85. My paternal grandparents also passed on in their old age at home... To these two generations in our family, I think the term 'Home for the Aged' did not exist in our dictionary (*The Borneo Post* 2011a).

Inclusion of Deputy Minister Datuk Yong Khoo Seng's thoughts about aged care shows the journalists' choice to demonstrate the importance of filial piety in Malaysian society. While most abandoned elderly Malaysians end up in social welfare homes set up by the government, it can be argued that inclusion of such statements from politicians can discourage slipping of familial piety. Such shifts not only have cultural and social implications, but can also be associated with financial liabilities for the government. It can be argued that politicians such as Deputy Minister Datuk Yong Khoo Seng are not only advocating for filial piety, but also discouraging the concept of nursing homes for elderly people. Encouragement by politicians of familism and discouragement of sending parents to government-run nursing homes (*The Borneo Post* 2011a) can be considered as a financial relief for the government.

There are also other examples of news reports in which the journalists reproduce statements from government officials, for example, Malaysia's Women, Family and Community Development Minister, Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil:

“Filial piety is inherent in our culture and only needs to be encouraged by means other than fines... Rather than a law to punish children who abandon their parents, my ministry believes in engagement via advocacy – by promoting close family relationships and care for the elderly,” she said (*The Borneo Post* 2011b).

As noted in the examples discussed above, the shift away from familism is constructed as an immoral act that is denounced by most journalists who either cited sources or included their own views to convey the message. This is not the only perspective that could have been presented – for example, the government could have been encouraged to take responsibility for citizens. Older Malaysians are eligible for the social security net from the government; however, being a resident of a social welfare home is portrayed negatively by the newspapers. Such discourses construct the elderly with no option other than relying on family.

Scholars have argued that despite the wave of modernity, moral values remain significant in Malaysian society (Omar 2003). The findings of this study indicate that the shift away from the virtues of moral values, traditional values, and cultural values is opposed by opinion writers, people quoted in the news articles and the papers. Journalists not only used persuasive language but also journalistic tools such as negativity, personalisation, impact, timeliness, proximity and consonance (Caple & Bednarek 2016) to paint a pessimistic picture of consequences of moving away from familism. The commentary on this societal change is communicated mostly through opinion pieces rather than news reports, suggesting an active campaign on the part of newspapers rather than just relaying the views of other sources.

c. Government supported aged care – social welfare

As discussed above, the focus of most news articles selected for this study remained on filial responsibility. The language used by the journalists and sources quoted in the sampled articles constructed familial piety as the only solution for an increasingly ageing population in Malaysia. Despite the availability of social welfare services for elderly people, very few articles mentioned the role of government in taking care of elderly Malaysians. The role of the

Malaysian government in looking after the aged is discussed by the journalists neither directly nor by implication through reporting on sources whose comments support the idea of the social welfare state. Instead, almost all of the newspapers, regardless of their ownership and regional/national division, replicated and reproduced quotes from politicians from both sides of the parliament disapproving of the idea of a government role in caring for the elderly. Such official discourses were relayed without any critical engagement by the press.

The reportage about government policies and strategies for elderly people is similar across the board in the Malaysian newspapers. For instance, most newspapers selected for this study reported the words of government officials. The officials quoted in the sampled news articles rejected the idea of taking responsibility for elderly Malaysians under the social welfare system despite having an established social welfare system in the country. The government's position on the social welfare of elderly Malaysians can be seen in the following quote from then-Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak that is reproduced uncritically by *The Sun* (2012):

Speaking at a "Meet-the-People" session and launching of the Caring for Old Folks Awareness Campaign in Taman Desa Rhu, Sikamat here today, Najib said the assistance was part of the government's policies to ensure the social safety net in the country was further strengthened. "We cannot practice a welfare state policy like in western countries which today are facing economic challenges because their governments are no longer able to sustain such a practice. "As such, we cannot choose this path" (BERNAMA 2012a).

The language used is typical of official responses to the question of care for elderly Malaysians.

The example implies that the journalists have not only relayed the then-Prime Minister's message to the public uncritically but also due to the position of the quote in context – "Caring for Old Folks Awareness Campaign" – strategically legitimising the agenda set by the government. It can be implied from the above statement that the lack of social support means elderly Malaysians should rely on family only. Hence, emphasis on filial piety is politically/economically driven as much as culturally – it is in the interests of the government to promote it to avoid financial implications linked with an increasingly ageing population. In

short, incorporation of such statements indicates socio-economic issues linked with aged care that the government does not want to bear, instead transferring these back to the family.

In other words, the journalists are supporting the government strategy to transfer/keep the financial responsibility of aged care with family. The financial aid provided by the government, other than pension, to elderly people is reported in a quote from the Chief Minister of Penang Lim Guan Eng by *The Sun* (2011): “107,638 have each collected the annual RM100 contribution for senior citizens from the state” (*The Sun* 2011). The paper has reproduced the then Chief Minister’s statement without any critique of the payment – the equivalent of roughly AUD30 per annum – an amount that is not sufficient even for a weekly grocery shop. It also shows that the state contribution in looking after the elderly is almost nothing.

Correspondingly, a negative outlook is reported about nursing homes by several newspapers. The following is a typical example of the use of the journalists’ language that constructs nursing homes as a miserable place and reminds readers that government is not responsible for the care of elderly citizens:

The fate of elderly orphans in nursing homes

Caring for the ‘elderly orphans’ should be all-encompassing, taking into consideration their emotional needs as well, like how orphan children are cared for. And one should not forget that taking care of the old is not the authority’s responsibility but it is the family’s responsibility (Hasan 2013).

The construction of nursing homes in the above opinion piece is very bleak. The writer termed elderly Malaysians staying in nursing homes as “elderly orphans”. Such language use ties in with notions of filial piety – by terming elderly people as “orphans”, it plays into narratives around abandonment, which can be contrasted with expectations of family care for the elderly. It can be maintained from the language used by the journalist in the above example that the connotation of the nursing home presented in the media discourses is different in the Malaysian context than in other parts of the world, especially Western countries. Loughlin and Kendig

(2017) argue that involvement in society and the self-esteem of older people depend largely on their social treatment in everyday life. However, by naming nursing home residents as orphans, writers separate the elderly from their self-respect. Moreover, in the same opinion piece, the writers suggest the emotional needs of elderly parents can only be met by close family members:

The writer's visit to St Prichard Home, which has 78 residents, served as an eye opener on the unseen plight of these elderly orphans that desperately need attention. While they may have a shelter, they seriously lack emotional support something that can only come from the family and to some extent from social workers. They are broken hearted, the cry alone and have lost all hope. No one visits most of them, many have been abandoned for good. The home's caregivers also pointed out to this writer that because they were abandoned by their respective families, they also suffer from emotional neglect. They also pointed out that companionship is extremely important for the elderly (Hasan 2013).

The discussion about the emotional support for older people not only provides a "human" factor in a report (Caple & Bednarek 2016) but also promotes filial piety by highlighting the emotional needs, which can only be fulfilled by family, of the elderly. It can be argued that public conceptions of ageing continue to revolve mostly around vulnerabilities to poor health, low income, and loss of family and other social support (Kendig 2017). In another analysis article, the writer has included a comment from an elderly person who mentions that nursing homes are designed for people who have something wrong with their mind:

Many of the elderly keep the problems to their chest fearing that people may think they are losing their mind and they need to be in a nursing home (Hasan 2013)

In another example a journalist included an academic reference to back up claims against nursing homes, as can be observed in an opinion piece published in *The Borneo Post* (2013):

A [Universiti] Malaysia of Sabah (UMS) senior researcher Dr Romzi Otiong noted that moving into a nursing home adds to the depression suffered by many elderly people, apart from the loss of memory and physical ability, chronic pain or illness, death of loved ones and financial insecurity (Hassan 2013).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, most journalists produce, reproduce and relay government-backed narratives, and it is very hard to find instances where journalists have published against government policy in relation to the care of elderly Malaysians. It can be argued that the narratives of abandonment are a powerful way of supporting the stance that families, rather than the government, are responsible for older people, both in a physical and an emotional sense.

The Sun (2011), however, reported a comment from Datuk Seri Khoo Keat Siew about the role of the government in taking care of elderly people. The below excerpt is atypical and the only example from the sampled news articles that relay a message that contradicts prevalent and official discourses about aged care in Malaysia.

Datuk Seri Khoo Keat Siew said there are nine welfare homes catering to poor elderly in Penang. “These homes are run by voluntary organisations and not all receive government grants,” he said, adding that the facilities are in contrast to homes run on a commercial basis for the affluent. Khoo said the government should take primary responsibility for planning health and welfare services so that the needs of the elderly people are adequately met. He said the government should consider setting up day-care centres for old folks as has been done in many other countries (*The Sun* 2011a).

While replicating comments contradicting prevalent discourses indicates a choice by journalists and editors, there is no critical engagement with the statement or expansion on this commentary in the article. It can also be noted from the above excerpt that only elites’ opposing opinions to existing and prevalent discourses are included in Malaysian newspapers. Such practices can be linked back to Malaysian values in which people in authority are always right. The above excerpt also indicates the financial vulnerability of non-government nursing homes, as most nursing homes in Malaysia, except for the nine government-run welfare homes, are run by charities or non-government organisations. The non-government homes rely on volunteers and donations for their operation, rather than government or individual contributions.

Another example reported by *The Borneo Post* (2013) also shows the financial vulnerability of such nursing homes:

A care centre for the elderly, Home of Peace (Hope) needs continued financial support from the community... The home was built by the Catholic Welfare Services of Sarawak, and members of the public can contribute through St Ann's Mission (*The Borneo Post* 2012b).

It can be noted from the above examples that the residents of nursing homes – including the government-run welfare homes and those run by charitable organisations – are termed in negative or derogatory language by the journalists: for instance, “elderly orphans”, “inmates”, “abandoned” and “frail”. The use of such language shows that it is a journalistic and/or social norm to describe poor elderly people in welfare homes using pejorative language to keep older people away with family and away from nursing homes. Also, such lexical choices construct negative identities for elderly people. Further discussion of identities is in Chapter Five. However, the language used for the government's proposed self-paying nursing home residents is different, as explored in two examples from the sampled articles. The journalists have termed elderly citizens as parents whose children will pay for their care, as can be seen in a news report by *The Sun* (2011):

Two centres for fee-paying elderly people will be set up at Rumah Seri Kenangan in Cheras in February, said Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil. She said the centres were meant for parents whose children could pay for their accommodation and services rendered (*The Sun* 2011b).

From the above excerpt, it can be seen that the journalists are supporting the government's plan to keep familism alive even in commercialised nursing homes. The use of lexis such as “parents” keeps a sense of family ties in nursing homes, run by the government but paid for by the public. To sum up, the ongoing debate explored in the Malaysian newspapers can be seen in an excerpt from an opinion piece published in *The Sun* (2012), where the journalist has asked questions that need time to answer. Such rhetorical questions are rare in Malaysian newspapers.

The question remains – who will look after the aged in a society that values filial piety but has inadequate provision especially in a changing society where families are smaller, salaries are insufficient and the setback of brain drain runs deep. The reality is that we are all getting older – if you're still counting months, perhaps you don't feel it,

but our parents and grandparents do. An aging population inevitably affects us politically, economically and even militarily (Ambrose 2012).

Conclusion:

The analysis of the sampled articles reveals that the main focus of most Malaysian newspapers remains on the socio-political, moral and cultural issues linked with aged care, especially the obligation of the care of elderly Malaysians. These issues are grounded in and related to financial implications, although these are not explicitly mentioned by most newspapers. Typically, Malaysian journalists have incorporated sentiments that can be directly or indirectly linked back to the government or which align with government policies on aged care.

Dominant discourses in the Malaysian newspapers represent the care of elderly Malaysians as a filial and moral responsibility and overlook financial liabilities associated with aged care. The study explored media discourses that support familism and oppose the slipping of filial piety, and discourage the sending of elderly parents to nursing homes.

Nursing homes in the sampled Malaysian newspapers are constructed as stigmatised places that have a taboo attached to them. The stigma attached to these homes tends to prevent children from sending older parents there. The role of the state, especially the social welfare department responsible for the welfare of elderly citizens, is not discussed critically in relation to the responsibilities of aged care in Malaysia. Only one example in the sample seems to be advocating for the role of government in setting up more state-run welfare homes to deal with the increasing number of elderly Malaysians.

Overall, newspapers in Malaysia are playing a moral guardianship role by warning readers of the slipping of filial responsibility and the dangers of the alternatives (nursing homes). The papers construct a discourse in support of an established social norm of traditional family roles in caring for elderly people, something the government supports as well as it relieves it of any obligation to elderly citizens.

4.4 Similarities and differences in Australian and Malaysian media discourses

The analysis of Australian and Malaysian newspapers explored the way that aged care is constructed as an issue by the press. Journalists from both countries promote government-supported policies, whether they are about the marketisation of aged care or support for familism. The newspapers represent both the Australian and the Malaysian governments as transferring the obligation of aged care to individuals and their families, respectively. The narratives of newsworthy agents in both countries are prioritised and foregrounded in the sampled news articles.

The focus of the articles from Australian newspapers remains on the financial issues linked with aged care. Within the financial discussion, payment for aged care is at the core of news articles. The dominant discourses uncovered in Australian newspapers about the elderly indicate the marketisation and politicisation of aged care. The marketisation of aged care is evident in the discussion that constructs aged care in Australia as a commodity. The discourses around commodification are more prevalent than those reflecting politicisation. The marketisation discourses are replicated mainly from government officials quoted in the sampled news articles, however, in opinion pieces, some journalists from both media groups have shown support for the official discourses about aged care in Australia. In short, none of the official discourses were dealt with critically by the journalists. The lack of critical engagement and of alternative or opposing discourses from other components of society, such as the elderly themselves, show the exercise of power by the journalists and editorial teams because media discourses are the end product of a series of decision-making actions.

While a few news articles from the sample reported on the quality of care provided to older Australians in nursing homes, intergenerational wrangling, and the effects of the increasing ageing population on the Australian economy, discourses around social welfare and the increased role of government in supporting the elderly are not present in the sampled news

articles. Also, it is worth noting that the dominant discourses across the sampled Australian newspapers are the same, despite differences in ownership. It implies that Australian newspapers are avoiding conflict in relaying and reinforcing prevalent official discourses about aged care in Australia, rather than playing a role in providing a platform for the exchange and plurality of viewpoints.

Prevailing discourses in the Malaysian newspapers are constructed in a way that emphasises the role of the family in caring for the elderly. Newspapers construct aged care in Malaysia as a familial responsibility, and this is evident in the dominance of such discourses in the sampled news articles. The dominant discourses in the sampled Malaysian newspapers promote familial piety and discourage the shift away from familism. This is further developed through discourse that stigmatises nursing homes.

Moreover, discourses around the financial implications of aged care for families, individuals or the government are missing in the sampled Malaysian newspapers. Unlike Australia, where the media promote individualistic approaches to aged care, there is no discussion in Malaysian newspapers about the individual's responsibility. Instead, aged care is constructed as a family responsibility, and family members are encouraged to support the older parents.

News articles focusing on familial responsibility for aged care dominate other discourses. Although only one news article included comments about the role of the government in supporting an increasingly ageing population, it can be maintained from the dominant discourses constructed about aged care in Malaysia that if the family or NGOs stop supporting elderly Malaysians, the elderly will eventually end up in social welfare homes set up by the government. Thus, familial piety is promoted in almost all newspapers. The absence of critical engagement in the repetition and propagation of the government-led narratives by the

Malaysian newspapers can be linked to social norms that discourage challenges to social hierarchy and development journalism.

Overall, financial issues linked to aged care are more prevalent in the Australian newspapers than social issues and vice versa in the Malaysian press. Through the construction and replication of media discourses either in the language of economic rationalism or the promotion and rekindling of familism, journalists in both countries play a significant role in normalising prevalent discourses in their respective societies. It can be maintained that the Australian journalists incorporated and prioritised the views of politicians and aged care providers over elderly people, and those elites discussed only the fiscal issues linked with aged care, rather than the social issues, whereas in Malaysia, politicians, members of the royal family, religious and social workers, and government officials were given priority over the elderly. Hence, it can be argued that in the discussion of issues related to the elderly and aged care, senior citizens are not prioritised by journalists in either country. The preferences given to elites in both countries can be linked to newsworthiness of elite actors. Reference to elite persons remains a uniform news value in both Australian and Malaysian newspapers. Other news values found in examples discussed in this chapter demonstrate that Australian journalists, on one hand, used impact, novelty, consonance, proximity, and negativity (Cagle & Bednarek 2016) in reports about elderly people and aged care. On the other hand, Malaysian journalists focused mainly on personalisation, negativity, and superlativeness (Cagle & Bednarek 2016). The biggest difference in terms of news values is in the use of “personalisation”: this news value is not found in the Australian newspapers discussed in this chapter, in contrast to frequent use of “personalisation” by Malaysian journalists. Malaysian journalists focused mainly on family and Australian journalists on finances.

Chapter 5: Consistently inconsistent identities

This chapter discusses the identities constructed for the elderly in the selected Australian and Malaysian newspapers, and how journalists from both countries construct those identities. It begins with an exploration of links between language, social practices, and institutional practices in the construction of identities in news discourses. Later in the chapter, there is a detailed analysis of examples from the Australian newspapers about the construction of identities of elderly people in news discourses followed by the construction of identities for Malaysian elderly in the Malaysian press. Similarities and differences in the constructed identities are discussed towards the end of the chapter.

5.0 Construction of identities in news discourses

Identities are the product of certain forms of discursive work that may be traced in linguistic data (Coupland 2009). Considering language use as a social act (Austin 1962), Fairclough maintains that “language use is simultaneously constitutive of (a) social identities, (b) social relation, and (c) systems of knowledge and belief – though with different degrees of salience in different cases” (1995, p. 131). Any text, according to Halliday (1985, 2007), enacts ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of language. Fairclough (1993), however, categorised the interpersonal function of text into two sub-functions: the first is “identity function” – text enacts to construct personal and social identities, and the second is “relational function” – text operates to construct relationship in the society (p. 136). The analysis of newspaper texts can uncover the discursive work used in the construction of identities. Hence, this chapter explores how age-related identities are constructed in media discourses linked to the elderly and ageing populations in both Australia and Malaysia.

Chapter 5 Part A: Construction of identities in Australian newspapers

The present study analyses the use of language in newspaper articles concerned with the elderly and the ageing population in the wake of aged-care reforms (2012) and aged-care legislation (2013) in Australia. The selected news articles were published in mainstream Australian newspapers during April 2012 – when the proposed reforms were announced - and in August 2013 – when the reforms were converted into legislation. Explanation of these time frames is in the methodology chapter, section 3.3.

The study of sampled news articles reveals that Australian journalists have discursively constructed an ambivalence of identities for the elderly that can be observed in the news discourses about them. The emphasis on lexical choices across the reporting indicates the consistent or inconsistent discursive patterns that resist or reinforce dominant discourses about the ageing and elderly Australians (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway 2009; Fealy et al. 2012). Specific discursive practices can be compared and contrasted with similar reportage by other newspapers. Richardson (2007, p. 49) maintains that the way people are named in news discourses can have a significant impact on the way others view them in society.

The most persistent pattern in almost all the sampled Australian newspapers is use of the lexis “elderly Australians” that projects older people as a homogeneous group and ignores the diversity found in multi-cultural Australian society. The umbrella term “elderly Australians” has been used widely to describe the elderly in the Australian press. However, less persistent and often contradictory terms have also been used to construct their identities, and these vary from paper to paper — for instance, the division of elderly Australians as pensioners and non-pensioners. Most newspapers represent the elderly as a dichotomy of pensioners and non-pensioners. However, they are more frequently presented as non-pensioners than pensioners. Elderly Australians are described as non-pensioners over forty times in the sampled news articles, more than double the references to receivers of the Age Pension, which is mentioned

twenty times. The “non-pensioners” identity is constructed by using expressions such as “self-funded retirees”, “wealthy seniors”, “richer people”, “wealthy older Australians”, “the wealthiest cohort”, “millionaire”, and “better-off people”. The lexical choices made by journalists to represent the identity “pensioners” include “collective burden”, “burden”, “financial burden”, “tax burden”, and “time bomb”.

It can be maintained that elderly Australians are constructed as either affluent or dependent – both attributes can be linked back to financial independence or dependence. But more articles construct elderly people as rich than as dependent. The dominance of non-pensioner identities can be aligned with the marketisation of aged care, one of the main themes explored in the Australian press (see section 4.2.1 for discussion of the marketisation of aged care in Australia). However, the elderly who do not fall into either category, for instance, part-pensioners, are not discussed as frequently as the rich or pensioners.

Fairclough (1995) argues that naming an individual or a group is a choice, a preference of one identity over another; correspondingly, preferences in naming elderly Australians by different newspapers can be seen in the sampled news articles. For instance, on the one hand, they are represented as affluent, such as “wealthier people” (Johnston 2012), “millionaires” (Grattan 2012), “better-off people” (Grattan 2012), “self-funded retirees” (Lunn 2012; Kelly 2012; Kenny 2012; Scott 2012; Metherell 2012), and “non-pensioners” (Grattan 2012). On the other hand, they are represented as a dependent, such as “pensioners” (Kenny 2012; Metherell 2012; Grattan 2012; Johnston 2012; Morton 2013).

Some of the terms were repeated across the sample, while others were used once by a single newspaper. For example, “wealthy” and “self-funded retirees” are used across the board, but “millionaires” is used on one occasion only, by *The Age* (2012). Similarly, expressions such as pensioners and full pensioners are used by all newspapers, while *The Australian* (2012)

describes the elderly as a demographic time bomb once in one news article. The complete list of lexical choices to describe elderly Australians is in Appendix 2.

In the light of the above discussion, it can be summarised that the key identities constructed, directly or by implication, for the elderly in Australian newspapers are (1) economic identities, and (2) social identities. As noted in the preceding paragraphs, most newspapers described the elderly in economic terms. However, there are examples in the sampled news articles (see, for example, section 5.1.2 in this chapter) that describe elderly people as a part of society, such as terming them as citizens and describing them with reference to their family and the area in which they live. The construction of the sense of belonging to family, local community and country is used in establishing social identities for the elderly.

Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.2, main discourses explored in Australian newspapers about the elderly are marketisation and the politicisation of aged care. The economic identities reflect the marketisation of aged care, one of the main themes found in the news articles, whereas a sub-category political identity “voter” in social identities reflects the politicisation of aged care in the Australian press.

The economic identities constructed for elderly Australians in the sampled newspapers are sub-categorised as (a) users/consumers of aged care – affluent people; and (b) dependent – burden. Similarly, the social identities are divided as (a) national/political identity; and (b) relational/interpersonal identity. The subsequent paragraphs include typical examples of the language used by journalists or quoted sources in the news stories that construct different identities for elderly Australians.

5.1.1 Economic identities

As discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.2.1, the commodification of aged care remains the dominant theme in Australian newspapers, as more than half of the total news articles - thirty-

five out of sixty-one - kept their focus on the economic repercussions of aged-care reforms. Similarly, the economic identities constructed for the elderly dominate other identities as more than half of the sampled news articles constructed elderly Australians in economic terms. The economic identities are fashioned by frequent use of language that constructs a dichotomy of rich and poor, independent and dependent, generating a polarising effect.

For example, recurrent lexical choices such as “pensioners”, “consumers” (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 2012, *The Australian* 2012, and *The Age* 2012), “wealthier people” (*Herald Sun* 2012), and “much better off” (*The Courier-Mail* 2012) have contradictory but economic connotations. Similarly, one-off examples from the news texts, such as “demographic time bomb” (*The Australian* 2012), and “silver tsunami” (*The Courier-Mail* 2013), carry multiple connotations, including economic implications (although demographic time bomb also has health connotations).

While the term “demographic time bomb”, as can be noted in the below example from Maher and Lunn (2012), could have been connotated in social terms, such as a rise in the aged populace, journalists have used the term in an economic context to emphasise the financial cost associated with the increasingly ageing population.

The shift towards greater user-pays in the overburdened sector is designed to reduce the growing long-term costs of aged care as Australia’s population faces a demographic time bomb. (Maher & Lunn 2012).

The following section includes examples from the sampled newspapers that construct economic identities for elderly Australians. These are typical examples that are intended to be indicative of the language used by journalists and sources mentioned in quotes.

For instance, in a news article published in *The Courier-Mail* (2012), the journalists reproduced a direct quote from then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard that constructs elderly Australians as divided into rich and poor:

Seniors will be protected against over-charging ... She [Julia Gillard] defended the new means tests, saying they would ensure people paid what they could afford. "For the first time in aged care, fairness will also get a look in," Ms Gillard said. "For too long, pensioners have had to subsidise those who are much better off. "Those who can support themselves and contribute a bit more should, and we must look after the needs of those who can't" (Scott & Brennan 2012).

The selection of the quote from the then-Prime Minister indicates a deliberate choice by the journalists. Inclusion of such statements in the lead paragraph of an article represents the elderly in economic rather than social terms that can be seen as indicative of the marketisation of aged care. The language used in the above excerpt splits elderly Australians into "pensioners", and "much better off", both lexical choices that connote their financial statuses. The relationship between two groups of elderly Australians is constructed in financial terms, such as pensioners subsidising the better off. Pensioners are portrayed as victims of an unfair aged-care system that would be changed in the reforms, while affluent people are represented as those who are to be blamed for this unfair system.

Moreover, the use of language - in particular, the assertions made by the writers that are not attributed to a source, such as "protected against over-charging" and use of modality verb "defended" with Gillard's announcement of increased payment for aged care - indicates support for the Prime Minister's statement. The selection of the above-cited quote by the journalists is also significant because it is about a move that is presented as mitigating unfairness in the system. Such discourses construct elderly Australians in an unequal power relationship with politicians and journalists who reinforce the power of politicians by supporting and promoting their narratives. These discourses indicate the position of elderly Australians in the societal power spectrum in which politicians are portrayed by journalists as being at the top, as people who have the power to mitigate unfairness from society, while the elderly are positioned at the other end of the spectrum.

Several journalists reported then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard's quote about unfairness in the existing aged-care sector in Australia. The journalists from News Corporation's newspapers, including *The Advertiser* (2012) and the *Herald Sun* (2012), reported it in a similar way, using a direct quote within quotation marks, as discussed in the above example. However, while *The Courier-Mail* (2012) positioned the quote in the lead paragraphs, the other papers positioned the statement towards the end of the article. *The Courier-Mail* (2012) also included a follow-up article about Gillard's efforts to bring fairness to the aged-care system:

JULIA Gillard has presented her aged care package as an attempt to bring fairness into a system that is riddled with rorts and rip-offs. She has limited the likely political damage from the reforms by rejecting some of the more controversial recommendations from the Productivity Commission such as counting the family home in a means test for fees. And she has inserted real safeguards into the system (Scott 2012a).

The above excerpt is from the opening paragraph of a news article in which the writer has used colloquial language. The journalist has constructed Gillard as a saviour, by directly associating the aged-care package with her name, as someone who is preparing to mitigate unfairness and fix the sector, and elderly Australians as victims of a "rip-off" industry. These lexical choices by the writer show how the disproportion of power relations is set up and propagated by journalists.

While both news groups propagate views in favour of a user-pays system, the examples below indicate differences in reporting styles and agenda setting. For instance, *The Age* (2012) reported the same quote about fairness/unfairness, but with a different tone and language compared with the News Corp papers:

The package will swing the system towards user-paying and promote greater fairness by means-testing... Defending the means test, the government will say that ability to pay will be taken into account to increase fairness. Currently pensioners often have to pay more than people with private incomes and assets of hundreds of thousands of dollars. But costs will be capped (Grattan 2012d).

The language used, such as "greater fairness", in the above excerpt by the Fairfax journalist, indicates that there is fairness in the existing aged-care system – in contrast to what is reported

in News Corp papers – that will be enhanced by a user-pays system. Differences in news reporting between two news groups can also be noted in the above examples, as the same event is reported contrarily to each other. The propagation of positive reviews by the Fairfax journalist can be considered as an agent to support the user-pays system – to promote and increase fairness in the aged-care sector. Such discourses can be linked to the marketisation of aged care and division of elderly Australians depending on their means, such as pensioners on the one hand and the rich with hundreds of thousands of dollars’ worth of assets on the other. In sum, in all of the above examples, writers have divided elderly Australians based on their financial capabilities and used quantifiers, such as “millionaires”, “better off”, “bearers of hundreds of thousands of dollars”, and “pensioners”, to differentiate them and construct them in economic terms.

The narrative of fairness/unfairness reported by almost all the newspapers selected for this study establishes a contradiction between the two groups – pensioners and millionaires – and ignores the large numbers of people who fit neither category entirely (for instance, people who are partly self-funded but who also claim a part-pension). Wealthier people supporting the user-pays system are constructed as taking advantage of subsidies from less well-off people. Discourse like this creates division amongst the elderly, and perceptions of the broader population about them, and enhances the individualistic approach to aged care as elderly Australians are charged differently depending on their assets. The lack of critical engagement from the journalists in reporting the reforms and the reproduction of positive language, such as “fairness”, illustrates that the message relayed by the journalists is intended as positive.

The above extracts demonstrate the language used in constructing economic identities for elderly Australians, while the subsequent segment discusses sub-economic identities of consumers of aged care, followed by examples from the news texts that construct the elderly as a financial burden.

a. Consumers of aged care – affluent people:

One of the main economic identities associated with the elderly in more than half of the selected news reports is of consumers of the aged-care system who, according to newspapers, are affluent and can pay for aged-care services. Although the less affluent are also constructed as consumers of aged care, as discussed above, writers have created a distinction between affluent and less affluent elderly Australians and focused on non-pensioners comparative to pensioners. The identity “consumer” is constructed with reference to the utilisation/purchase of aged-care services. The identity “consumers of aged care” reinforces and mirrors the dominant discourses of the marketisation of aged care explored in this study and discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Writers in different news reports have used different lexis to construct this identity. For example, in the lead paragraph of *The Australian* (2012), a journalist has portrayed the elderly as consumers:

The Gillard government’s decision to pour an additional \$1.2 billion over the next five years into overcoming workforce shortages in the aged-care sector was welcomed by providers and consumers as an important move to improve services and help handle future increases in demand (Lunn 2012b).

The above excerpt is from an article that is wholly dedicated to aged-care providers’ views. The writer in the above extract and the whole article dubbed elderly Australians as “consumers” of aged care. Such lexical choices normalise consumerism, but also show how journalists reproduce and propagate capitalist narratives about neoliberalism and privatisation of aged care. *The Australian* (2012) used the dichotomy “providers” and “consumers” to explicitly position aged-care services as a commodity and older Australians as customers.

Declaring aged care providers and the elderly as businesses and consumers also affirms the marketisation of aged care in Australia. *The Australian* (2012) described the response of business providers as “welcomed”. It can also be maintained that the act of increasing government support for the aged-care sector will financially benefit aged care providers more

than the elderly. As discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.2.1, the interests of aged care providers are prioritised over the elderly, and the same narrative can be applied to this statement, as the providers are mentioned before consumers.

Other examples from the sampled newspapers that construct the elderly as consumers of aged care include an excerpt from *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012):

MORE self-funded retirees are likely to pay the full cost of about \$136 a day...The government describes it as “fair means testing” of aged care and this is expected over five years to yield savings to the taxpayer of \$561 million - at the expense of the consumer. And that amount can be expected to grow steadily. But users will have more choice about how they can pay - either by lump sum or by periodic payments – and whether they are cared for in a nursing home or in their own home (Metherell 2012c).

The extract exemplifies how newspaper texts normalise consumerism in aged care by replicating official discourses about the commodification of aged care without engaging with the text critically. The use and repetition of expressions such as “users” and “consumers” indicates how language can be used in propagating and normalising broader discourses about consumerism in Australia. These findings resonate with the study of elderly Canadians by Rozanova (2010, p. 221), who maintains that the “normalisation of consumerism” legitimises social inequalities amongst different components of society. Elderly Australians are constructed not only as consumers of aged care but also as saviours to taxpayers’ savings as aged care will yield \$561 million in savings for the government.

Other newspapers, such as *The Age* (2012) and *The Australian* (2012), reproduced similar narratives of consumerism in multiple articles,¹⁰ including the incorporation of payments and

¹⁰ For instance, But users will have more choice about how they can pay — either by lump sum or by periodic payments — and whether they are cared for in a nursing home or in their own home (The Age 2012) People will be able to pay with a lump sum bond, raised perhaps by selling their home or from savings; or periodic payments, raised by either selling their home and banking the proceeds, reverse mortgaging the property, or from savings or other assets (The Australian 2012).

modes of payment, and choices to purchase required services, as can be seen in the following example from *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012):

To fund their care, people can pay with a lump-sum bond, periodic payments, or a combination. If needed, they can sell their home, rent it out, or take out a reverse mortgage with a private lender. To prevent people being forced to sell their house to secure a scarce aged care spot, there will be a statutory cooling-off period allowing them to take the spot and then work out how best to pay for it (Coorey 2012a).

The elderly Australians in the above excerpt are constructed not only as customers of aged care who have multiple choices to pay for their care but also as an under-pressure cohort who may have to sell their homes. The discussion around the “choices” in mode of payment is presented as reducing financial pressure on the elderly, not eliminating it, which constructs aged care as a financial burden on the elderly. It also highlights the individualistic nature of aged care arrangements – it is not families but the individual people/couples who are required to fund their care. Such discourses show that older people may have to choose between their family home and care. However, the journalists in neither the above example nor other articles that mention selling the family home to secure a place engaged critically with such statements or included a comment from other actors, including the elderly themselves. Recitation of official discourses without critical engagement demonstrates journalistic practices avoiding conflict with government departments.

Instead, the journalists used language that constructs nursing home placement as something worth trading family home for. For instance, the lexical choice “scarce” in the above statement signals competition for limited spots, which in turn suggests that a place in a nursing home is not assured and places may fill up quickly. Rozanova (2006, p. 134) suggests that promotion of aged-care services in the media “empowers” the elderly to “choose the goods, services, and lifestyle that benefit healthy ageing” as a smart consumer. Similarly, Anderson and Kvist (2015) note that in general Western countries offer independence and choice in their neoliberal social policies, including aged care, which according to Gibb (2018, p. 10) is attributable to

“the costs associated with an ageing population and the projected growing demand on aged-care services”. Therefore, to avoid increasing aged care costs, government officials use media as an agent to promote and normalise neoliberal policies, as can be observed in this study.

Another typical example from the sampled newspapers that constructs the elderly as customers who can afford to pay for their care is an excerpt from *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2012) in which the writers paraphrased the key points of the proposed aged-care reforms:

Residents who can afford to will pay means-tested contributions. All new residents of nursing homes will have the choice of paying through a fully refundable lump sum bond or a rental style periodic payment, or a combination of both. Nursing home charges need approval by a new Aged Care Financing Authority. If you are a pensioner you pay a basic fee of up to 85% of the single pension, about \$15,364 a year. If you are on a part pension or a self-funded retiree you pay a means-tested contribution towards the cost of accommodation of up to \$52.80 a day. The “care fee” is a separate fee with contributions of up to \$25,000 a year with a lifetime cap of \$60,000 (Metherell 2012c).

In the above excerpt, the writer replicates and relays the government’s consumer-focused discourse that constructs elderly Australians as consumers of aged care with varying financial capabilities. The term resident in the above extract is used as a synonym for a customer who will pay for their care, including pensioners, part pensioners and self-funded retirees. The use and repetition of words like “pay”, “payment”, “charges”, “paying”, “cost”, and “care fee” enhance and normalise the consumer identity of elderly people. The replication of consumer-focused discourses by the journalists not only strengthens the identity “consumers of aged care”, but also normalises the individual’s contribution to care.

Moreover, the frequent use of second-person personal and possessive pronouns such as “you” in the above example seeks to address readers directly and personally to establish what Fairclough (1989) describes as synthetic personalisation. Synthetic personalisation is use of language features such as first-person plurals (we), and second-person singular (you) that allows a personalised relationship between the producer and consumer - in the case of newspaper articles between journalist and audience - so readers feel personally targeted

(Fairclough 1989, p. 62). Synthetic personalisation is a common technique used in the dataset for this study.

Along with quotes from government officials, newspapers have incorporated quotes from the Opposition discussing the commodification of aged care: for instance, *The Advertiser* (2012) reproduced a direct quote from the then-Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott:

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott said “the Coalition supports a reform process in aged care, but one of the things you’ve always got to be conscious of with this government is announcements are often not quite what they seem”. “More users pay and more means tests mean that a lot of Australians are going to pay more to use aged care facilities than they have in the past” (Kenny 2012c).

The selection and inclusion of statements from politicians who address elderly Australians as users in the news articles indicate the journalists’ choice in reproducing dominant discourses to normalise consumerism in the aged-care sector. The lack of critical engagement by the writers about politicians suggests that the journalists are just relaying dominant discourses to news audiences. By reproducing statements from both sides of parliament, they have identified consumerism as effectively supported by all representatives.

The financial identity users - elderly people capable of paying for their own care - is enhanced by using different synonyms of affluence to define elderly Australians, for example, “richer people”, “asset-rich”, and “income-rich” (*The Australian* 2012), “wealthier people” (*Herald Sun* 2012), “those with the means” (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 2012), “better-off seniors” (*The Courier-Mail* 2012), “better-off seniors”, and “millionaires” (*The Age* 2012). The journalists widely use such depictions of the elderly in the sampled newspapers. As stated at the start of this chapter, a significant proportion of the dataset identifies the elderly as non-pensioners. Affluence is linked with contribution towards the full cost of care. As can be observed in the examples above, almost all the newspapers described the elderly as non-pensioners in the sampled news articles.

The language used about the affluence and assets of the elderly is similar in News Corp and Fairfax newspapers. The below examples from *The Advertiser* (2012) and *The Age* (2012) exemplify the language used in the sampled newspapers that describes and divides the elderly according to their affluence and assets:

Changes to aged-care fees Wealthy seniors must pay...

Thousands of wealthier older people will be asked to contribute to the cost of nursing home accommodation as part of a bold plan to expand aged care facilities. And millions of extra dollars will be pumped into community stay-at-home care as part of a pitch by the Gillard Government for the "grey" vote. In the biggest reforms to aged care for years, the Government is preparing to announce a new era of user-pays, including for residents classified as "high care". The Government is determined to boost spending for aged care amid warnings of a serious shortfall in services as Australia's population ages. The user pays scheme is in line with other budget reforms to crack down on so-called middle class welfare and to take the axe to services such as the Medicare Safety Net. It will only require those with substantial assets to pay for their aged care accommodation, either through a bond or through regular payments (Lewis 2012).

The number of home-care packages will almost double, but better-off people will face tougher means testing and higher charges \$25,000 a year for nursing home care (Grattan 2012b).

The above examples not only strengthen the identity "users" of aged care but also normalise the individual's contribution depending on financial strength that idealises individualism and consumerism. Overall, it can be maintained that the language used by the journalists or reproduced from the cited sources in both news and feature articles constructs elderly Australians as consumers of aged care, who are independent and rich enough to buy aged-care services. This applies to writers from both major news organisations. However, the elderly who are not wealthy enough to pay for aged care, and rely on government support, are constructed as a burden on the government. The articles that construct the elderly as consumers and affluent outnumber those that construct them as pensioners or a burden. The next section includes typical examples from the sampled news articles that present elderly people as a financial burden.

b. Dependent – burden

As noted above, the economic identities constructed for the elderly in the dataset are presented as a dichotomy of non-pensioners and pensioners. The former are depicted as those who yield savings for taxpayers, while the latter are constructed as a burden on the Australian economy. The dependency of the ageing population on taxpayers is constructed in a different tone than the consumers of aged care. Plath (2008, pp. 1355–6) points out that “the identification of elderly people as being dependent does not follow a natural process of ageing but is somewhat based on a social construction maintained by dominant ageist values in society”. For instance, the below excerpt from a feature article published in *The Courier-Mail* (2013) highlights a societal problem of name-calling that gives a sympathetic impression to elderly people:

Could there be a more offensive phrase to older Australians who are anything but lazy, useless and dead-weights in their communities ... One reason for the negative stereotyping is that favoured tool of the economists and demographers: the dependency ratio. It calculates the percentage of the population under 15 and over 64 against the percentage of working age ... yet when it comes to discussions on Australia’s future we’re blithely accepting of the “burden of an ageing population” (Lang 2013).

The rhetorical question raised by the writer in the above excerpt is not attributed to any definite source, but instead is attributed to society overall, reflecting ageist attitudes. While the term “burden” in the above excerpt may be used by the writer to argue against the idea of looking at the elderly as a burden, reference to financial implications and economic dependency constructs elderly people as a financial burden on taxpayers. Wilińska and Cedersund (2010) argue that “older people and old age are applied as fixed social constructs which entail pejorative meaning” (p. 342). The language used in the above example can be linked to broader narratives about the aged in society and reinforces the parts of the discourse that construct older people as a burden.

Ainsworth and Hardy (2007) argue that old age is typically associated with utilisation of health and other services, which discursively constructs the ageing population as dependent. Similar

connotations can be inferred from the above example, as the journalist links prevailing ageist attitudes in society with the financial dependency of older people. In other words, individualistic approaches to aged care and self-funded retirees go against the stereotype of dependency. Similar consumer-focused discourses are promoted by government officials and journalists as noted in discussion of the marketisation of aged care in Chapter Four, section 4.2.1.

The economic dependency highlighted in the above example can be seen in other (multiple) examples from the sampled news texts, including a passage from *The Australian* (2012):

Five people in the paid workforce for every person aged over 65, but that ratio is set to fall to 2.5 workers by 2042... Increasing pressure on the community (*The Australian* 2012a).

The use of “increasing pressure on community” shows a negative tone from the writers who are warning readers about the possible economic consequences of the ageing population. The negative presentation of the demographic shift constructs the increasing number of elderly Australians as a growing burden on the community. Such news stories tend to fuel existing age-related stereotypes and intergenerational wrangling discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.2.2, and to support negative societal beliefs, such as taxpayers having to spend more money for the welfare of the ageing population. The identity “burden” constructed in the above examples aligns with the report of European Commission Active Ageing, 2012, which states that “older people are seen to be a burden to the working-age population¹¹”. Similarly, the findings of the present study of Australian newspapers support results of a study of US newspapers by Powell (2013, p. 53), who maintains that American “newspaper articles also portrayed older adults as a problem by illustrating the high cost to society for their benefits and entitlements”.

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_378_en.pdf

Some journalists used a more dramatic tone in discussing the increasing number of elderly people: two typical examples, one from an opinion piece published in *The Courier-Mail* (2012), and one from a news article published in *The Australian* (2012), are noted below to exemplify the type of language writers have used in discussion of the rise in an ageing population:

By 2050, there will be 6.3 million Australians aged 65 to 84 - more than double the 2.6 million in this age bracket now. AUSTRALIA is facing a time bomb. The job of defusing it will be politically risky but it cannot be delayed any longer (Scott 2012b).

The shift towards greater user-pays in the overburdened sector is designed to reduce the growing long-term costs of aged care as Australia's population faces a demographic time bomb. There is expected to be an increase in the co-contribution, but the contributions will be capped depending on income (Maher & Lunn 2012).

In this study, elderly people are predominantly represented in economic terms, and the aged-care sector is presented using language that shows a wider economic crisis. The above example supports Martin, Williams and O'Neill (2009)'s argument that references made about the ageing population projections are about the financial impact of aged care, such as burden on the economy of the country. The discussion of this crisis and the terming of aged care as an "overburdened sector" implicitly constructs the elderly as a burden on the Australian economy, something that can be reduced only by shifting it to the elderly – the users of aged-care services.

As noted in the above excerpt, the phrase "over-burdened sector" for aged care has been repeatedly used in most sampled newspapers. It indicates an ideological position by newspapers which are buying into the government rhetoric of shifting the "burden" to the elderly. The term "burden" is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "heavy load, a misfortune that causes worry, hardship or distress" (OED 2019). Similar findings resonate in Australian Treasury reports 2010 and 2015, that older people in Australia are depicted as a "social problem" in the reports – the Treasury reports define the term, over-burdened, in the same way – as a consequence of public concern about the costs to government of demographic change and an ageing population (cited in Loughlin & Kendig 2017, p. 29). In sum, the above excerpt

not only includes different identities linked with older people but also hints at a move towards marketisation of the aged-care sector, moreover, it shows the ageist view of the writers towards the elderly as they are represented as a “burden” and “demographic time bomb”. These accounts support the dominant discourses about the marketisation of aged care, which is promoted in order to reduce the load from the over-burdened sector.

Ainsworth and Hardy (2007) state that older people are constructed as dependent and a burden on the community due to their utilisation of social services. Similarly, the term “time bomb” for elderly Australians backs the findings of Fealy et al. (2012), who argue that Irish media portray elderly people in Ireland with a negative tone. The negative tone for the increasingly ageing population is also noted in Canadian newspapers by Rozanova (2006), and the phenomenon is referred to as “apocalyptic demography” (Adams & Dominick 1995; Gee & Gutman 2000), which is defined as “the gloomy forecasts of the collapse of the social security system as the result of the growing proportion of seniors in society” (Lascelles 2004; Rozanova 2006, p. 127).

While most articles supported the discourses that position the elderly either as a burden or affluent, there are some examples in which the journalists highlighted the vulnerability of elderly Australians in a system that is shifting the financial burden of aged care onto them. For instance, the below excerpt from an opinion piece published by *The Australian* (2012) is a typical example of the language use about such discourses:

Shifting more of the financing burden on to care recipients can make sense, but exposes older Australians to significant financial risk, especially as proposed caps on outlays cover care costs but not accommodation... It could also ease eventual inclusion of homes in the pension means test, reducing that distortion too (Ergas 2012).

The language used by the journalist in the above excerpt from an opinion piece not only constructs aged care as a financial burden on taxpayers, but also indicates the writer’s backing in shifting the burden to elderly people. The use of lexis such as “make sense” shows

unconditional endorsement of the government policies and reinforces the discourses around the marketisation of aged care. The uncritical dissemination of information about the shift towards the neoliberal approach to aged care that will make elderly Australians pay for the care can be seen as support from the journalists.

As discussed at the start of this section, some journalists mentioned prevailing ageist views in society. The reflection of such views can be traced in the official discourses, countering predominant views, about the elderly from government officials such as then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard. She can be seen denying and denouncing prevailing societal ageist narratives that portray the ageing as a burden in a speech about the announcement of aged-care reforms:

She [Julia Gillard] will also reject the notion that ageing is simply a challenge to be managed, saying instead that our longer lives should be welcomed, and our ageing population seen in many ways as a gift. “Ageing should never be seen as a burden” (Grattan 2012d).

The above excerpt is an atypical example from the dataset as this portion of then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s speech is reported in only one news article by *The Age* (2012). To select this quote from her speech is a choice made by the writer who highlighted a prevalent societal issue linked to the elderly. It can be maintained that by replicating Gillard’s statement, the journalist is relaying a message to the readers that “ageing should never be seen as a burden”. However, the example also hints towards the existence of ageist societal views that consider ageing as a burden; otherwise, the then-Prime Minister would not have mentioned it.

To sum up, it can be maintained that the use of language by different newspapers and the journalists has constructed a paradox of several different and contradictory identities, for instance, “wealthier people” (*Herald Sun* 2012) and dependent, specifically “pensioners” (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 2012, *The Australian* 2012, and *The Age* 2012). Elderly Australians are depicted as both (a) consumers of aged care, and (b) a burden on exchequers. However, the consumer identity dominated, as more newspapers portray the elderly as users of aged care

than as a burden on the economy. In terms of ownership, the News Corp newspapers portray elderly Australians as a burden three times more than the Fairfax papers (twenty-one references compared with seven), which reflect what would be expected from each group.

The construction and variations in the identities indicate tacit discursive strategies and the exercise of power by journalists and the role of media ownership. The economic identities – a dichotomy of affluent/burden – discussed above support Loughlin and Kendig’s (2017, p. 40) argument that media portrayal of older people is either very positive (affluent, healthy, active, happy) or negative (burden, sick, frail, poor, dependent), rather than depicting the heterogeneity and diversity that would be found in any other group in the population.

Overall, it can be concluded that Australian newspapers have constructed multiple identities for elderly Australians. Dominant among them are consumers of aged care, which backs up the main theme found in the study, followed by discourses of dependence, homogeneity and a burden on the exchequer. However, the examination of news articles also found other identities, including the elderly as wealthy, which is consistent with consumers of aged care and opposite to discourses of dependence and frailty. In short, elderly Australians are simultaneously presented as both wealthy and dependent, and depictions ignore people who do not neatly fit one of these categories.

5.1.2 Social identities

While the main identities constructed for the elderly in the sampled articles from Australian newspapers are economic identities, thirteen out of sixty-one news articles discussed the elderly in socio-political settings, for instance, as citizens, voters, parents, and grandparents. The language used in such articles constructs the elderly as part of society. The analysis of the sampled news articles identified social identities of elderly Australians that can be divided as (a) national/political identity – voters, and (b) relational/interpersonal identity. The former links

older Australians back to society and country, while the latter is constructed for the elderly when they are discussed in relation to other Australians, especially relatives and close family members.

A crossover between social and economic identities is also noted in six news articles in the sample. For example, in one of the opinion pieces published by *The Australian* (2012), journalists have constructed elderly people as a part of society and also a financial problem for the whole society (nation):

What is certain is that the nation faces steep increases in the costs of caring for our senior citizens... In view of its budgetary position and the challenges of an ageing society, the Gillard government had no choice but to means-test home-based care subsidy packages, with the family home exempted from the means test. (*The Australian* 2012a).

The lexical choices made by the journalists depict the elderly as a part of the whole (nation), creating a sense of belonging with the nation. For instance, in the above example writers have addressed the elderly as “our senior citizens”, which links them to the nation. The use of “our”, first-person pronoun, creates a personal link between the journalists, elderly people, and the nation, constructing older people as part of the fabric of society rather than as consumers, users, millionaires, wealthy people, or residents. However, elderly people are also constructed as a social problem for the whole society. It can be observed that even when elderly people are talked about in a societal setting, there is also an element of financial burden, implying that the nation suffers due to one cohort of the population.

a. National/ political identity – voters

The national identity constructed for elderly Australians depicts them as an integral part of society. This national (social) identity is constructed in news texts by referring to them as “older Aussies” (*Herald Sun* 2012), “elderly Australians” (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 2012, *The Age* 2012), “older Australians” (*The Australian* 2012), and “Australians” (*The Australian* 2012,

Herald Sun 2012). The *Herald Sun* (2012) used the national identity “older Aussies” in a headline and lead paragraph, which enhances the significance of the national identity.

Older Aussies to get care at home Revamp junk bond system.

OLDER Australians will have more chance to avoid being forced into nursing homes thanks to sweeping changes to aged care. New caps have been developed so Australians pay a maximum of \$25,000 a year or \$60,000 in a lifetime for residential care costs (Johnston 2012).

This is a typical example of reporting in which elderly people are described as “Aussies” and “Australians” in discussion about payment for aged care and the care fee. Such examples also indicate the crossover of social and economic discourses, however, unlike the prevalent language used to address elderly people – consumers and users – in the above extract and the article from which it is drawn they are constructed as Australians. The term “Australians” links older people back to the nation, but it also associates them with the fabric of society, implying a sense of collectiveness and community rather than individualism. Such lexical choices carry a different connotative meaning than defining older people as consumers of aged care.

There is also an overlap between the national and political identities constructed for the elderly in the selected Australian newspapers. The political identity is not as explicit as the financial or relational identities. However, there are examples in the news articles that construct the elderly as players in Australian politics. Also, as discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.2.2, the politicisation of aged care is the second main theme in the sampled Australian newspapers as aged care is represented as a subject of political debate amongst different political parties. The reason for the focus on the elderly as political players could be due to the fact that the number of older people is on the rise, and it is compulsory for Australian citizens to vote in elections. An increase in the number of elderly Australians means more voters who fall into the category of the elderly. While not all elderly Australians vote due to health issues, the elderly in Australia possess considerable electoral power, and their votes can alter results (Kendig 2017). Kendig

(2017, p. 24) states that in the 2013 election of the Abbott Government, voters aged 65 years and over were strong supporters of the Liberal-National parties (56 per cent) in contrast to voters aged under 25 years (35 per cent), 25–44 years (42 per cent) and 45–64 years (45 per cent). Thus, it can be maintained that the comments of Australian politicians in a debate about aged-care reforms can have consequences in elections.

The electoral power of older people is evident in the sampled news articles due to the language used, such as describing elderly citizens as voters in the debate about aged-care reforms. For instance, *The Courier-Mail* (2012) reported the elderly as voters in the below extract:

Gillard has also bought some time by delaying the new fees until July 1, 2014 - more than six months after the next election is due. But she could still face a backlash from voters if they feel they will take an unfair hit to their hip pockets after a lifetime of working hard and paying taxes (Scott 2012a).

The above excerpt is a typical example from the sampled newspapers that constructs a political identity for the elderly. The language used by the journalist presents elderly Australians as voters and then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard as a politician thinking of the next election. It can also be maintained that the statement is not necessarily meant for older voters: it could also be forward-looking for others who will be elderly in coming years as the policies will also affect future elderly Australians. The inclusion of a statement such as “lifetime of working hard and paying taxes” contradicts texts from other newspapers which construct the elderly only as a burden. Therefore, it can be noted that when elderly Australians are constructed as voters, they are also constructed as taxpayers, unlike the economic dependency discourses.

Another example from the sampled news articles includes the below excerpt from *The Advertiser* (2012) that refers to older Australians as the “grey vote”:

Thousands of wealthier older people will be asked to contribute to the cost of nursing home accommodation as part of a bold plan to expand aged care facilities. And millions of extra dollars will be pumped into community stay-at-home care as part of a pitch by the Gillard Government for the “grey” vote (Lewis 2012).

The phrase “grey vote” signifies characteristics of old age that, in turn, suggests an action to single out elderly voters because of their age. Similarly, the journalist presented the proposed aged-care reforms as a political move by then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard to get the vote from elderly Australians. Description of elderly Australians in political language not only enhances their political identity but also indicates the power they hold as an increasing cohort of Australian voters. The journalist has enhanced the electoral power of the elderly by the use of lexis such as “a pitch by the Gillard Government”. Although the language use in the above excerpt, and in other articles that describe elderly people as voters, is political in nature, it can still be argued that the journalists have represented the elderly as an important part of society. Despite being recessive in the sampled newspapers, such discourses enhance the social identity of elderly Australians.

Other examples from the sampled news articles that link elderly Australians to society include the below excerpt from *The Advertiser* (2012):

Services for the nation’s burgeoning grey population are in a “state of crisis” with many people denied the quality of help required and demand for community care packages “far exceeding” supply, the Federal Government has acknowledged (Kenny 2012b).

Similar to the example about the grey vote, the journalist has used the term “grey population” to describe the elderly. While these lexical choices have different connotations, in both cases elderly Australians are singled out due to their age. However, it can be maintained that a growing ageing population can also be seen as a growing vote from the elderly that indicates their enhanced electoral power. Overall, it can be argued from the above example that elderly Australians are, to some extent, portrayed as a part of broader society, rather than just in relation to their financial capabilities as seen in the discussion about the pensioners and non-pensioners earlier in the chapter.

b. Relational / interpersonal identity

In addition to the main identities, elderly people are represented with reference to their geographic locations (home towns/suburbs) and their families. Also, in some instances, they are constructed as frail and/or dementia patients. The number of news articles that mention the elderly as individuals constitutes less than ten per cent of the total dataset.

The following examples provide an overview of the language used by journalists to construct interpersonal social identities – a dominant theme among the sub-set – for elderly Australians.

For instance, *The Australian* (2012) published a front-page story, “**Family home safe in aged care overhaul**”, and a central image of an elderly couple under the headline. The following excerpt is used to introduce them:

Brisbane retiree Reg Hotchman, 78, has been married to wife Del for 54 years and knows that while they are both fit and well now, the coming years will see them needing more and more aged-care services. “We’ve got good neighbours on both sides. We know the local area well. Our children and grandchildren know this place. We would prefer to stay here and have services brought in. I know cooking meals and doing the cleaning will get harder and harder into the future, and that's where we'd like some assistance” (Maher & Lunn 2012).

The couple is linked to Brisbane – locating them geographically – with other social characteristics, for instance, a married couple, parents, grandparents, neighbours, and local. It presents a picture of a typical Australian family that values healthy relations with children, grandchildren, and neighbours. The identities are enhanced using familiarity tactics and human touches, such as short names (Reg and his wife Del), their ages, their married life. Moreover, the addition of an image of Reg Hotchman and his wife Del sitting in the comfort of their family home, which according to the headline of the article will be secured during the reforms, shows the significance of family. The comparison of this example with others highlighted earlier in the chapter constructs a discourse that suggests that as long as retirees remain independent, active and in their family homes, like Reg and his wife Del, they remain woven into the fabric of society and are not considered a burden on society.



Figure 2: Reg and Del Hotchman, in Brisbane's Bracken Ridge yesterday, welcome measures that will help them live in their own home as long as possible. Picture: Lyndon Mechielsen (*The Australian* 2012)

The inclusion of a happy couple on the front page of the national newspaper can be linked to the findings of Cummins et al. (2013), who argue that “a central message on ageing is the fact that, in Australia, older people consistently emerge as happier and report higher levels of subjective well-being than other age groups, the happiest group is comprised of those over age 76, living with a partner and in good health with average or higher living standards” (Cummins et al. 2013, p. 156). In other words, writers have used a humanising tactic to construct an ideal elderly couple by using the example of Reg and Del. However, when they need care, in their homes or a nursing home, their identities change — the social identity of parents and grandparents changes to consumer identity — that is, wealthy seniors who should spend their money on their care. In the same news story, a shift can be observed in the language when journalists broaden the scope and start discussing the elderly in general – “People's ability to pay will be taken into account in setting aged care costs” – using generalised identities such as “people”, ignoring diversity and assuming homogeneity, and using commercialised

identities “users” of the aged-care system with an assumption of aged-care services as commodities, to be purchased by older people by selling their properties (*The Australian* 2012).

Similarly, in the following extract, *The Courier-Mail* (2012) used name, age, and place:

New Farm resident Maida Lilley, 78, has been living independently for more than 25 years and welcomed aged care shakeup (Scott 2012c).

The journalist’s use of language constructs the elderly woman as an independent individual who is also part of the community of New Farm. The journalist has constructed a personalised identity that implies that living independently, like Reg and Del or Maida Lilley, warrants a personalised identity in the press. However, as noted above, there is a shift in the construction of identities in discourses about older Australians when they become “users” of the overburdened aged-care system, as can be noted in an excerpt from the same article that includes Maida Lilley’s account:

People who rely solely on the aged pension, who make up about 51 per cent of those in aged care now, will not pay any extra fees above current basic charges of up to 17.5 per cent of the single pension (Scott 2012c).

In another example, *The Advertiser* (2013) mentioned not only names and ages but also children and grandchildren to enhance the interpersonal identities:

With 10 children and 14 grandchildren the McGraths, both aged 70, have strong family support as the life-changing event left Mr McGrath with limited mobility and Mrs McGrath as his carer (Crouch 2013).

The use of phrases such as “children and grandchildren” constructs the elderly couple’s identity with reference to their offspring and association with younger generations and the wider community. Weicht (2013, p. 191) also notes that older people are often linked to other family members in public discourses, including media discourses that position them within the family unit and wider society.

Conclusion:

The analysis of the sampled news articles shows that the language used by journalists from both major media groups constructs different identities for elderly people. These identities represent elderly Australians mainly as a part of the economic system – an economic entity – rather than as part of a social system. The economic identities constructed for older people include users (paid users of the aged-care sector/customers), burden (constituents of the overburdened sector), demographic time bomb, pensioners, and wealthy seniors. In short, the language used by writers constructs elderly people as “other” and outside mainstream society. Other identities manufactured for older Australians include social identities, which are recessive as more articles focused on the economics of aged care than on social issues linked with ageing. This shows the power of journalists who describe the narrative of the aged care package from economic and political perspectives. In short, media discourses associated with the elderly in Australian newspapers signal neoliberal, individualistic approaches which naturalise the marketisation and commodification of aged-care services.

Overall, the above examples indicate that journalists have used personalisation, proximity, conflict, consonance, negativity, eliteness and aesthetic appeal (Caple & Bednarek 2016). However, a closer look at news values shows that values used in the discussion about economic identities have negative connotations, such as negativity, consonance, and impact (consequences), whereas news values used in construction of social identities have positive implications, such as aesthetic appeal, personalisation, and proximity. Reference to elite persons remain constant in almost all the examples discussed in this thesis, not only this part of the chapter.

Chapter 5 Part B: Consistently inconsistent identities

Introduction:

This part of the chapter discusses the identities constructed for the elderly in Malaysian newspapers and how journalists construct those identities. “Age-related identities and age attributions are always matter of discursive contextualisation, and their values have to be constructed and read relative to particular social contexts – particular communicative roles and relationships, particular architectures of situation, genre and purpose – and set against particular social norms and assumptions” (Coupland 2009, p. 853). To recognise the social norms and social context in which identities for elderly Malaysians are constructed, see Chapter Two, section 2.4.1. This part of the chapter starts with an overview of the identities identified during the analysis of the sampled Malaysian newspapers, followed by an in-depth discussion of the discursive practices and language used by journalists to construct identities for Malaysian elderly people. Comparison of identities constructed for Australian and Malaysian elderly people in their respective countries’ newspapers is reported towards the end of this chapter.

5.2 Identities constructed for Malaysian elderly: overview

As discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.3, the dominant discourses explored in Malaysian newspapers stress filial piety, and aged care is predominantly represented as a familial responsibility: over half of the total news articles sampled for this study - twenty out of thirty-eight - discuss the role of the family in aged care. These social norms are reproduced by at least two-thirds of the news articles, showing that newspapers reflect and reproduce socially established identities linked with older people in Malaysian society. These findings endorse Omar (2003), who argues that Malaysians characteristically respect and revere old age for the experience and wisdom it brings. As discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.4, generally in Asian cultures, and particularly in Malaysia, older people, especially parents, are treated with great respect and are considered as the heads of the family who are wise because of their experiences.

Notably, elderly Malaysians are regarded for their hard work to build the nation and help reduce poverty from 49.3 per cent in 1970 to 1.7 per cent in 2012 (Economic Planning Unit 2013). However, this study also exhibits the flip side of Malaysian society, as the language used by some journalists and the sources quoted in news texts portrays elderly Malaysians as “victims”, “burden”, “frail”, and “abandoned”, which is contrary to their normative social position – namely respected, honoured, and head of the family or household. Malaysian journalists used different lexis to create identities for elderly Malaysians. The discursive strategies used by writers manufacture a paradox of identities for elderly Malaysians. The main identities constructed – directly or by implication – for the elderly in Malaysian newspapers are (a) familial identities, (b) social identities, (c) financial identities, and (d) the elderly as victims. Familial identities link the elderly back to their families, social identities portray a bond between older Malaysians and society, whereas financial identities in almost all the newspapers are constructed in relation to donations for the welfare of elderly Malaysians. The language in the reports about the abandonment of the elderly constructs them as victims.

The division of identities in the dataset indicates that the most prevalent identities constructed in the sampled Malaysian newspapers are familial identities, and then social identities, followed by financial identities. The portrayal of the elderly as victims is reported in the fewest news articles. Familial identities are constructed in seventeen news articles, social identities in sixteen, while financial identities are presented in twelve articles, and the elderly as victims in only nine. Overlap in construction of identities is noted in the dataset; journalists construct multiple identities such as familial, social and victims in a single article. Moreover, familial identities and social identities have both positive and negative attributes attached to them; however, financial identities portray elderly Malaysians negatively, that is as a financial burden that can be a cause of abandonment of older people. The following sections include typical

examples from the dataset that show the language used by journalists to construct a paradox of identities for the elderly.

5.2.1 Familial identities:

The analysis of the sampled news articles indicates that most Malaysian journalists, government officials, and politicians reiterate that the family is and will be the central site of caregiving and support for ageing parents. The consensus of journalists, government officials, and politicians indicates a top-down reflection of established societal norms about aged care in Malaysia. It also shows the role of media in perpetuating official rhetoric and hints towards “development journalism”¹², which is widely practised in Malaysia. As noted in Chapter Two, section 2.7.1, Malaysian journalists strive to avoid conflict between the media and the government.

Asian values and well-established societal norms about aged care, such as ideas of familism and filial piety, are represented and reproduced in the media narratives. Such approaches to aged care are also prevalent in national policies about older people. For instance, one of the significant amendments in national policy for older persons in Malaysia emphasises inter-generational solidarity (Mohd Hashim 2014), which means the role of the young in caring for the elderly. Similarly, the National Welfare Policy for older people in Malaysia maintains that the family plays crucial roles in providing care for older people (Lim et al. 2014). In alignment with official policies, newspapers replicate and relay discourses that promote inter-generational solidarity and familial piety as a response to the perceived slipping away of these values as discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.3.1. A typical example is noted in a news article published by *The Malay Mail* (2012) that includes a quote from the Deputy Women, Family and

¹²Petersen (1992) argues that Asian-based development journalism gives emphasis to the media’s partnership with the government rather than playing the adversarial role of watchdog and equate freedom of the press with the press–government harmony.

Community Development Minister Datuk Heng Seai Kie that constructs the familial identity for the elderly:

Heng said children should not forget the sacrifices their parents had made when they were young and should be responsible by taking care of them when the time came. “The elderly parents should be looked after just as their parents had looked after them when they were young,” she said. “That is also why the government always emphasises the need to instill virtues and respect at an early age” (Ismail 2012).

The above excerpt exemplifies the language used by Malaysian politicians and journalists. The selection of the statement from the minister that presents the elderly as a part of a family is a choice by the journalist, and can be linked to the rekindling of filial piety. Focusing on the part of the minister’s speech that discusses maintaining well-established social norms and hierarchy about “virtues and respect” links elderly Malaysians to family.

The familial identities for Malaysian elderly are constructed using dichotomies, such as parents and children. In particular, the expression “elderly parents” remains the focus term – in almost all papers – providing a sense of connectivity and showing the writers’ choice in reproducing social norms. Such lexical choices not only enhance familial identity but also indicate the role of journalists in preserving social norms and Asian values about family. It can be argued that such choices suggest a role for journalists in the propagation and reinforcement of familial piety in society in order to reduce the reliance of the elderly on the Malaysian government – a typical example of Asian-based development journalism.

This perspective resonates with the results of earlier studies by Hamid et al. (2004); Tengku Aizan and Nurizan (2008); and Jariah et al. (2012), who argue that the family has continued to play a significant role in providing care and support for the aged in Malaysia. Similarly, Croissant (2004, p. 512) argues that due to the limited public pension system and old-age security in Southeast Asia, the burden of older people falls on the family and charitable organisations instead of the state.

Similarly, in a news article, *The Borneo Post* (2013) reproduced a quote from Minister of Women, Family and Community Development Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim about the filial responsibility of children and in doing so represented elderly Malaysians as a part of a family. Kang and Marks (2016) state that filial responsibility refers to an internalised sense of obligation to take care of ageing parents' needs. Filial duty is embedded in Asian society as can be observed in the following extract:

Not right to abandon ailing and elderly parents — Rohani.

Elderly parents are not to be treated like extra baggage or unwanted pets to be dumped in front of old folks' homes such as Rumah Seri Kenangan like what some individuals have done Minister of Women, Family and Community Development Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim said, children of these old folks, those sickly or bedridden should take it upon themselves as their filial duty to shower them with love and care... The opportunity to take care of your parents are limited, therefore, grab the remaining time to take care of them like how they took care of you before," said Rohani (Irene 2013).

There are two noteworthy points to discuss in the above report. Firstly, the focus on the parent-children relationship, which is evident in the headline, indicates a choice of the paper, as headlines are often written by editors rather than reporters. The language used in the headlines indicates the paper's stance on the issue. Also, headlines are the most immediately evident to readers because of their type size and prominent placement, so could be seen to encapsulate the message being conveyed. In this instance, the message is the official stance on aged care. Secondly, the language used in the above statement is strong – “extra baggage” and “dumped” – comparative to other examples discussed above. The lexical choice “dumped” for elderly parents indicates abandonment of the elderly, which is against social norms in Malaysia. While the expression “dumped” is initially used by the minister and directly quoted by the writers, it is reproduced multiple times by journalists – not only from *The Borneo Post* but also from *The Star*¹³ – indicating a repetition of such lexical choices in the language used about elderly people.

¹³ no elderly person (especially a sick one) ought to be dumped in any old folks' home. For one thing, “dumping” is a nasty act, especially when it is done to a human being. To dump is “to get rid of” or “discard”

Furthermore, the use of lexes “should take ... as their filial duty” constructs aged care primarily as children’s responsibility that should be fulfilled rather than the responsibility of elderly people, the government, or shared (individual, state and children). Moreover, such lexical choices reveal power relations – the government is constructing a narrative that leaves adult children with little choice but to take on familial responsibilities, and the journalists are disseminating this rhetoric without criticism. The lexical choices in the above quote – “shower them with love and care” as opposed to “abandon ailing” – about the current situation of the ageing population in Malaysia indicate a developing tension between established and desired social norms and moves away from them. It can be argued that Malaysian newspapers are reproducing and reinforcing Malaysia’s official rhetoric around promotion of familial piety that can be observed in the website of Family Health Development Division Malaysia. For instance, an illustration, Figure 3, used by Family Health Development Division Malaysia portrays a young woman holding a baby in the centre of the family, while an elderly couple is on one side and a person who uses a wheelchair is being pushed on the other side.

One reason is “granny dumping”, which is when an elderly person (especially a woman) is abandoned by uncaring family members. Rumah Seri Kenangan has such a case....



Figure 3: Family Health Development Division Malaysia (2019)

The image depicts a system where family members – customarily female family members – provide care for children, disabled family members or elderly parents. However, if elderly parents do not receive the socially anticipated care, they may be considered unlucky, as can be seen in some examples from *The Borneo Post* in which writers have categorised them as fortunate and less fortunate depending on the care they receive from their children. For example, in an opinion piece published in *The Borneo Post* (2012), writers establish a distinction between the lucky and otherwise elderly parents:

The more fortunate ageing parents may have a child or two staying with them while the less lucky ones may have to live out their lives in an old folks' home – or in their empty house after all the children have flown the roost and may only return to visit once in a blue moon... What is obviously a disturbing trend though is that a lot of sons and daughters are leaving their ageing parents to die at old folks' homes (*The Borneo Post* 2012a).

As the above excerpt is from an opinion piece, the construction of identities can be associated directly with the writers. The writers have constructed the elderly with relation to their family, but the lexical choices in the extract also point out the stigmatised nature of nursing homes and their residents in Malaysian society, saying that fortunate parents do not end up in a nursing home. Kang and Marks (2016) claim that filial piety in eastern cultures connotes the degree to which children of all ages respect their parents and accept responsibility to provide for their

needs. It can also be noted that writers have used emotional language to explain the breaking links between family members and to remind about intergenerational contracts; the writer has used the terms “sons and daughters” rather than “people” or any other lexis. Moreover, the use of lexis such as “die” not only informs readers about the consequences of sending an elderly parent to a nursing home, but also depicts the notion of guilt – making people feeling ashamed and guilty for sending family members into nursing homes.

In sum, it can be concluded that the journalists from almost all newspapers in the study have constructed familial identities for Malaysian elderly, representing them as a part of a family. Journalists have done this by selecting and including quotes from elites, including political leaders – leaders possess a higher position than ordinary people in Malaysian hierarchical society – and government officials that support elderly people as a part of the family. Also, the use of emotive language in opinion pieces and analysis depicts a bond between elderly parents and their children. However, there is no mention of older people who have never married or have no children to look after them – such elderly Malaysians have no choice but to rely on social support from the federal or state governments.

5.2.2 Social identities – senior citizens:

Social identities, according to Carter (2014), can be best explained in relation to groups that allow people to create a sense of unity with others and provide “mutual reinforcement” during interactions. The analysis of articles indicates that along with filial identities, elderly Malaysians are portrayed as a part of the broader Malaysian community. The lexis that constructs the elderly as a part of the community is “senior citizens”. This phrase is repeated over eighty times – by journalists and politicians, including the then-Prime Minister, federal ministers, and government officials – in the sampled articles, including two headlines and eight times in the lead paragraphs of news articles. Placement in the lead – the most newsworthy part of the article – boosts the significance and prominence of the identity. The term “senior

citizens” is the second most frequent term - preceded by “parents” - used by journalists and sources to describe elderly Malaysians. It can be maintained that the social identity enhances and backs up the filial identity – family being a basic unit of society– hence this links the elderly back to their family and the wider community, indicating layers of networks among the elderly, family, and society.

Coverage of Senior Citizens Day – which is celebrated internationally since 1991 and in Malaysia as a part of government policy to appreciate the service of elderly Malaysians – by different newspapers indicates positive attributes linked to the elderly, and these reflect the social-cultural position of the elderly in society. The language-use “senior citizens” to portray the elderly in the articles reflects social norms. For instance, a direct quote from then-Prime Minister Najib Razak’s speech during at the 2012 National Senior Citizens Day celebration is reproduced in a news article by the *New Straits Times*:

“The development and success of our nation is of course due to the hard work and contributions of our senior citizens. They are an important asset to the nation for their invaluable experiences and on behalf of the nation, I thank all senior citizens for their sacrifices and hard work in building this nation. He also stressed that the responsibility of caring for senior citizens should not only rest on the government but also the community... This is part of the country’s preparation and plans to face the challenges of becoming an ageing nation. However, based on the projection, Malaysia is expected to reach the status of an old nation only by the year 2030 when 15 per cent of the population are senior citizens” (*New Straits Times* 2012a).

While the above excerpt is a statement from the then-Prime Minister’s speech, the selection of a quote that depicts elderly people as part of the community indicates a deliberate choice by the journalists. The repetition of the phrase “nation” highlights the connection between senior citizens and the nation – constructing a national identity for elderly Malaysians. The use of national identity denotes a sense of belonging and is meant to unite people (Hummel 2017) representing the elderly as a part of society and reinforcing their role as citizens. The reproduction of such discourses by journalists can be linked to the nation-building role of Malaysian journalists, as Romano (2005) argues that Malaysian journalists can be seen as

nation builders and government partners, and this in turn can be linked back to development journalism principles.

It can be argued that the language in the above extract constructs and reinforces social identities where elderly Malaysians are constructed as an asset for the nation, however, by doing so the government is shifting responsibility for them towards the community. This constructs aged care as a communal responsibility, including both community and family, and indicates that filial and social responsibility – but not government - need to go hand in hand in looking after the elderly.

Reporters, in this case, reproduced prevailing political discourses without raising questions about the government's contribution to the welfare of the elderly, which shows the exercise of power by journalists in deciding what issues to report and an uncritical engagement with political rhetoric. One reason for the lack of discussion about the role of government in the care of the elderly may be self-censorship, which is widely practised in Malaysian newspapers. The underlying reasons for self-censorship include, but are not limited to, strict rules set by the government to renew newspapers' annual permits, and advertising revenue from government departments. Anuar (2005, p. 63) maintains that a factor built into the Malaysian journalistic fraternity is the hierarchical nature of Malaysian society, where respect and deference are given to political leaders, particularly by journalists who may abandon the responsibility of asking the hard questions for the benefit of their readers. Along with self-censorship, Malaysian journalists have to face strict censorship laws. Malaysia has a history of exercising those censorship laws, resulting in it being ranked 145th out of 180 countries in 2018 in terms of the freedom of press (Reporters Without Borders 2018). Above all, most newspapers are owned by politicians from the political coalition that has ruled Malaysia for seventy years. Further discussion about ownership of the Malaysian press is in Chapter Three, section 3.5.2.

However, despite unfavourable conditions for reporters in Malaysia, some journalists, particularly from *The Borneo Post*, have voiced their concerns about the problems of elderly Malaysians and asked for a solution at the national level. The decision to include alternative suggestions and opinions can be linked back to discursive practices and agenda setting by the newspaper, as other newspapers did not include discuss the issues as explicitly as *The Borneo Post*. It is worth noting here that *The Borneo Post* has been ranked third amongst all Malaysian media outlets, including television and internet, and number one amongst Malaysian newspapers, in terms of trustworthiness by news audiences in Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2018 (Reuters 2018).

The below excerpt is a typical example of the language used in discussing the problems faced by the elderly in Malaysia:

The fate of elderly orphans in nursing homes

Nevertheless, with the rise in the greying population, Malaysians have to find ways to better accommodate senior citizens within the society instead of just leaving their fate with the nursing homes (Hasan 2012).

The excerpt is from an opinion piece in which the writer has reported problems of elderly Malaysians in nursing homes built for people who have been abandoned by their families. The lexical choices made by the journalist, in the whole article and particularly in the cutting, for instance, "Malaysians", "senior citizens" and "society", not only relate the elderly to society – backing up social and national identities – but also support official rhetoric and approaches to aged care in which family and society have to take responsibility for care.

The backing for the official discourses is shown by addressing "Malaysians" and not the government to find ways to accommodate the greying population. Therefore, it can be argued that journalists are reinforcing societal perceptions about aged care in Malaysia, and the press and the government are on the same page when it comes to care – family and community based with a limited role for the state and social welfare. However, such narratives create financial

strains for the elderly and their families. The following section discusses finance-related identities for Malaysian elderly people.

5.2.3 Financial identities – burden:

As discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.4, the welfare policies in Malaysia share common roots with Britain as a legacy of the colonial era during pre-independence days. A residual concept of social welfare means that economically disadvantaged older Malaysians are expected to seek assistance through private means before turning to state aid (Hamid & Tyng 2017). State aid is provided through the Department of Community Welfare, Malaya, first established in 1946 to address the problems of post-war displaced and distressed victims, before it became a “permanent base for various social welfare services” (Doling & Omar 2003, p. 85). Later, the department evolved into the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development that is responsible for looking after the need of older people along with other vulnerable Malaysians.

The only financial support provided by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development to older Malaysians is RM 300 (\cong AUD 100) per month – if the receiver has no next of kin and is not receiving any financial aid, such as a pension or Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF). Employees’ Provident Fund is a federal statutory body under the purview of the Ministry of Finance, Malaysia, which manages the compulsory savings plan and retirement planning for private-sector workers in Malaysia (EPF 2020).

In short, the elderly who have worked in the public sector and receive a pension or those who have worked in the private sector and get EPF are not eligible for the social pension. Hence, the number of older people who receive the pension is half of the total number of Malaysians aged sixty and above. The Malaysian government spent RM 22.8 billion or 10.5 per cent of the Total Current Expenditure (TCE) on pension and gratuities in 2019 (Ministry of Finance Malaysia 2019).

Correspondingly, there have been discussions in the public sphere about the expenses of aged care, and the analysis of newspapers in this study reveals that Malaysian journalists have constructed financial identities for elderly people. As discussed at the start of this chapter, section 5.2, the financial identities constructed for the elderly in Malaysia are not prevalent. However, there are examples from the dataset in which the journalists have constructed the elderly in financial terms. For instance, the *Malay Mail* (2012) reproduced official discourses of burden without critique, as can be noted in the below excerpt – a quote from Datuk Heng Seai Kie, Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister, about the government’s contribution to the welfare of elderly Malaysians:

Although the government provided infrastructure and the support system to ease the burden of elderly people, they should only be treated as a last resort... Heng said there were nine old folks homes and 22 daycare centres in the country catering to the needs of the senior citizens under the purview of the ministry (Ismail 2012).

The above example is typical of the type of development journalism practised in Malaysia, where journalists relay and promote government narratives without critically engaging with the information. Instead of raising a question about the possibility of accommodating even a small fraction of over three million elderly Malaysians in nine nursing homes, the journalist reproduced the official discourses without independently investigating and evaluating the facts. Such reports exemplify the type of development journalism practised in Malaysia, where journalists and the government move hand in hand and support each other. Besides, journalists who are critical of government policies or actions are termed as “trouble-makers, forces of political instability, anti-national elements and rabble-rousers” (Manan 2001, p. 41). Thus, the journalists and the newspapers would not, or at least are unlikely to, risk their jobs and businesses to draw attention to the plight of elderly people. This indicates both the power of government over press and journalists and elite capitalists’ power over the public.

The language used by the Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister indicates easing the burden of elderly people, implying that older people are already a (financial) burden. However, at the same time, it is suggested that government-provided infrastructure should not be used except as a last resort. Such official statements represent the elderly as an unwanted burden, and the lack of critique from the journalists reinforces such discourses as social norms. Such journalistic practices can be seen as indicative of development journalism and support for nation-building goals by Malaysian journalists.

The infrastructure provided by the government as mentioned by the minister consists of only two out of three types of accommodation available for elderly Malaysians, namely (1) residential care homes for elderly people, and (2) nursing care homes. Both types of facilities are subsidised by the government, while the third type of accommodation available for the elderly is day care centres, which are mostly run by non-government organisations (NGOs) and religious charities (Lim et al. 2014). The government-subsidised infrastructure for elderly Malaysians is not sufficient for the increasingly ageing population as, according to official statistics, there are only nine public residential care homes for over three million elderly Malaysians (Chen, Ngoh & Harith 2012), two nursing homes and twenty-two day care centres (Mohd Salleh 2017) for the elderly that provide care, treatment and shelter to needy people aged sixty and above. Hence, it can be argued that the lack of government facilities for older people contributes to official strategies in shifting care responsibilities to families and lowering expectations about access to state-sponsored nursing homes.

Some papers mentioned the government's financial contribution towards the welfare of senior citizens; for instance, *The Sun* (2012) reported then-Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak in a news article that centred on his speech about financial support for the elderly, people with disabilities and single mothers:

RM1.4b allocated for elderly, disabled and single mothers – Najib.

The government has allocated RM1.4 billion to assist the elderly, disabled and single mothers this year, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak. He said of the sum, RM478 million was allocated to assist 135,000 senior citizens whereby they received RM300 in monthly payments (BERNAMA 2012a).

The writers have included the funding news in the article and the headline. However, the government's contribution, as noted above, is not sufficient even for a week, yet reporters have reported the allocation of money without critique. Also, it can be maintained that the lack of funding and infrastructure for elderly Malaysians seem to be official strategies to keep elderly people with their families.

Along with political discourses about the elderly as a burden, some articles in the dataset provided coverage to the financial implications of charitable nursing homes – what most newspapers described as shelter homes for the elderly. Below is a typical example of the language used in constructing older people as a financial burden in a non-state-funded nursing home. *The New Sunday Times* (2012) included a quote from the home's caretaker, M. Yogarani:

Yogarani said the home ran on limited resources, namely her own income and donations from generous members of the public. Funds from the state Welfare Department had yet to be approved even after eight years. With no funds to hire extra help, Yogarani had to rely on her children to care for the residents and run errands around the house. The house itself costs RM1,000 to rent every month, in addition to the RM2,000 for daily expenditure (*The New Sunday Times* 2012).

The above excerpt is from an article that discusses the problems of the elderly in non-government-supported nursing homes. The journalists have replicated the caretaker's views to highlight the financial issues. However, despite reporting about the elderly as a burden on social workers and charitable homes, the government's role in taking care of citizens is not mentioned by the journalists. Most papers kept the focus on family in discussion about the abandonment of elderly Malaysians in hospitals, while discourse about the role of government and social welfare is missing (see, for example, section 5.2.4 for examples).

The language used in the above example is typical and has been replicated by other newspapers in discussion about the life of elderly people in non-government-funded nursing homes run on donations and charity. The elderly residents of such homes are constructed as a communal financial burden and the victims of a wrangle between family, community and government, because the official narratives push the responsibility for aged care onto the family and community. In some cases, older people are being abandoned. The following section includes more examples of victimisation of the elderly in Malaysia.

5.2.4 Elderly people as victims

As discussed in the above sections, the prevalent identities constructed for the elderly in Malaysian newspapers are familial, which are supported by the government and the newspapers. However, the abandonment of the elderly is also reported nine times in the sampled newspapers, compared with familial and social identities being mentioned thirty-three times. While the identity of “victims” is not as prevalent as familial identity, the examples of victimisation of the elderly in the dataset can be linked to a shift away from familism and a flip side of familial identities. According to Rainey (2010), the relationship between older and younger generations, such as parents and children, is regarded as reciprocal in Asian societies as both should show benevolence and respect to each other at different stages of life and put others’ interests before their own. However, analysis of the sampled Malaysian newspapers shows erosion of filial piety in contrast to socially anticipated behaviour. Reporting of the slipping of social norms away from familism is constructed with a negative tone by journalists. For instance, in an opinion piece, *The Borneo Post* (2012) journalists described the shift in language that constructs the elderly as victims of family neglect:

There are other problems old folks face but none can be as painfully heart-breaking as the indifference and neglect shown them by their own flesh and blood. The infirm and frail elderly are usually tolerated as a liability or nuisance, and with self-esteem ripped

away from them, they suffer in silence as they go through what is left of their twilight years (*The Borneo Post* 2012a).

The language used in the above extract shows a divergence between historically well-established cultural norms of family caregiving and current practices of aged care in Malaysia as the elderly are portrayed in miserable conditions – they are “tolerated” by family and community rather than loved and cared for as anticipated. The transition from socio-cultural traditions portrays the elderly as victims who are considered a liability by both the family and the government. It can be noted that in the above excerpt, journalists have constructed the relationship between elderly parents and their children as “old folks” and “own flesh and blood” to enhance the persuasiveness of the argument presented in the article. The writers have constructed the children as neglectful and the elderly as the victims. However, like other examples from the dataset, there is no mention of social welfare provided by government.

As discussed above, victimisation of the elderly is reported as abandonment of elderly parents. For instance, a news story was published on the front page of *The Star* (2012) with a central image, Figure 4, of an unnamed forsaken elderly person in a welfare home next to the headline “Old and forsaken”. The position and prominence of the photograph empower it with the ability to tell the story itself, but as Caple (2006) maintains, multimodal texts are a prominent means of conveying news. The headline, in this case, works to concretise and reinforce the image and hence the identity of forsakenness. The photo and caption are aligned rather than leaving the picture to be interpreted by the readers, as images could be polysemous (Barthes 1977). The inclusion of such stories in newspapers, especially on the front page, shows meaningful choices made by the paper as the image seems to reinforce urgency, danger, and the need to prepare for future ageing problems.

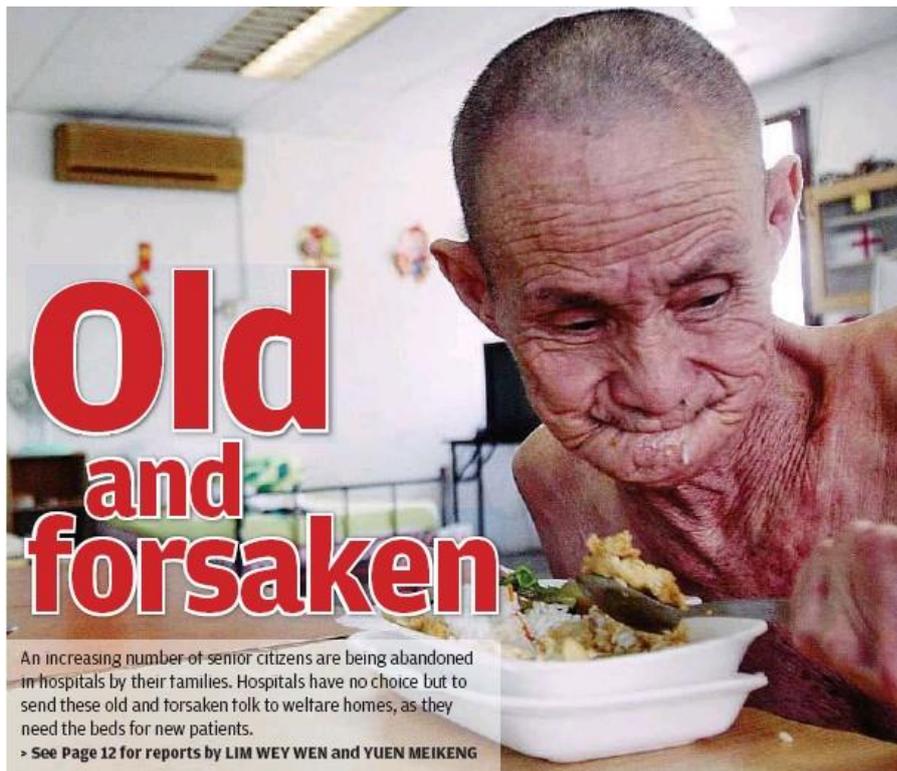


Figure 4: *The Star* (2012)

The selection of an individual (from all the elderly residents of welfare homes) and decision to shoot a close-up of the upper body (focus on the wrinkles, a sign of ageing to synchronise with wording of the headline) with a blurred background at a specific time (the elderly man eating without a shirt) depicts the power of the journalists/editors who used the image to enhance the effect of the story describing the misery of older people living in welfare homes. The angle of the image, with the older person not looking into the camera, represents a lack of interest in (or consent for) being photographed or perhaps lack of awareness (no permission) of being shot. There is no way of knowing whether the photographer sought consent, or whether the person photographed was able to give informed consent. However, the possibility that the elderly person was photographed without consent of any kind is problematic in itself. Further, it contributes to understandings of relationships between media and older people and the perceived place of older people in society – objectification of older people. Another important

aspect about the image is the primacy of the image over the text on the front-page, and the way the image and text complement each other.

A lead paragraph in the same news story published by *The Star* (2012) constructs the elderly as victims of the shifts away from familism:

More senior citizens are ending up in welfare homes after being abandoned by their families at public hospitals. Hospitals, especially those in the Klang Valley and other urban areas, have little choice but to refer them to shelters run by the Government or NGOs, as they need the beds for new patients. Hospital Kuala Lumpur's medical social work department head Hasnah Sulaiman said that up to June this year, 157 patients above 60 were abandoned by their families at hospital. A total of 205 senior citizens were abandoned last year¹⁴. Hasnah said 95% of those abandoned came from poor families. More senior citizens are ending up in welfare homes after being abandoned by their families at public hospital (Wen & Meikeng 2012b).

The above example is a part of a news article that was published on the front page of *The Star* (2012), and it led to public debate. Journalists from several newspapers wrote opinion pieces on the topic, and some papers reported other cases in follow-up stories. The above passage is a typical example of the language used by other papers, as all blame adult children for the neglect and abandonment of elderly people. The language in the article constructs older people as victims of children's neglect. The writers have linked the senior citizens back to their families, and responsibility is transferred to undisclosed family members, rather than being a national identity (senior citizens) as at the start of the sentence. Statements such as those above construct a pessimistic filial identity for the elderly that indicate the flip side of informal aged care.

While the journalists have included a statement from a government official that discusses the financial implications of aged care by mentioning that the majority of the cases are from low-income families, writers have chosen not to expand on the topic as it may lead to conflict

¹⁴ The news of abandoned elderly was exclusively covered by *The Star* only – in several different articles – and there is no mentioning of such news in other papers published on the same day, however, other papers quoted *The Star* about the abandonment of elderly in Malaysia.

between the media and the government. The rationale of avoiding conflict can be linked with journalistic practices as Malaysian journalists are discouraged from criticising the government (Manan 2001) and are encouraged to support nation-building (Ismail & Ismail 2014). Such discursive constructions affirm the power of journalists to select “what is and what is not news and what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and what will not be discussed” (Clarke 2005, p. 594).

While *The Star* (2012) provides extensive coverage of the abandonment of the elderly, similar reports have been published by other newspapers, such as *The Borneo Post* (2011) reporting about the neglect of elderly parents:

1 in 3 Malaysian elderly abandoned

About 675,000 – or nearly 30 per cent – have been abandoned and receive no financial support from their children, according to the recently released Fourth Malaysian Population and Family Survey conducted by the National Population and Family Development Board (*The Borneo Post* 2011b).

According to the Social Welfare Department (2012), the number of old folks deserted by their families steadily increased by 1 per cent each year between 2008 and 2011, based on the number of admissions to its nine Rumah Seri Kenangan units – old folks’ homes. This study also explored lexical choices by Malaysian journalists to address elderly people who live in welfare homes. For example, journalists from *The Star*, *The New Straits Times*, and *The Borneo Post* referred to the elderly as “inmates” multiple times in the dataset as can be observed in the below two examples:

Owner Cheong Loy said most of the 52 inmates were sent to the centre... Inmate Mun Ah Pun, 70, handles most of the cooking (Wen & Meikeng 2012a).

Each inmate of the home aged 60 to 86 received... Another inmate, Lye Chong Chow, 86, said this Chinese New Year was more special to him and his friends (*New Straits Times* 2011a).

The term “inmates”, a prevalent lexical choice made by the journalists for the elderly living in nursing homes, is more often (at least in a Western setting) used to refer to prisoners, implying

that older people are held, perhaps, against their will (or any other option) in the “charity home”. In other words, welfare houses are connoted as prisons, places of confinement, for the elderly. The title “inmate” for older people does not coincide with the social status of elderly people; in fact, it stands in opposition to local customs in which elderly Malaysians are supposed to be addressed as uncle and auntie as a gesture of respect. The dehumanising description “inmate” also carries a connotation of having done something wrong. Moreover, the lexis “sent” hints that they have no power or choice to decide about their whereabouts. Given the overall rejection of residential care, which is viewed as a symbol of neglect, isolation and the abandonment of older people, it is not surprising that only a few newspapers portray nursing homes as a viable option.

Writers at *The Borneo Post* (2012) voiced their opinion about increasing abandonment of the elderly as a societal problem. Below is an excerpt from an opinion piece:

Such a situation poses a very real problem for society, and it is what the old dread most – being unwanted and uncared for a while on borrowed time (*The Borneo Post* 2012a).

The language used by the journalists, such as “unwanted and uncared”, to describe elderly Malaysians in the above extract portrays a pessimistic image of the elderly in society.

In sum, the language used in the sampled articles is not representative of socially perceived, highly valued older people. The lexical choices made by the writers position the elderly where they are not supposed to be – hapless people who live in miserable conditions rather than being cared for with respect in family homes. Such language use reveals a notion of contrast in the perceived (historically practised) and current status and circumstances of the elderly in Malaysian society. From the hints towards the financial implications in the discussion about the abandonment of the elderly, it can be maintained that due to changes in demographics and an increase in the cost of aged care, younger generations may be denouncing their role,

generating tension between the government (social security), younger generation (filial piety) and the rapidly growing ageing population.

Discourses around mutual or shared responsibility amongst different institutions, including family, government and community, are missing in the discussion about aged care. The findings of the present study affirm the argument presented by Cuddy and Fiske (2004) about elderly Americans, that “elderly people are subject to a paternalistic breed of prejudice; they are pitied but not respected” (p. 17). Similarly, because of socio-cultural shifts, today’s elders are portrayed as low in status compared with their historical predecessors. The findings in this section also confirm an earlier study by Prieler et al. (2017, p. 80), who argue that unlike the general perception of elderly people being treated with respect and care, older people in Asian societies are “greatly marginalised”.

Conclusion:

In the light of all the arguments and examples presented above, it can be concluded that the Malaysian journalists have played a vital role in constructing an array of identities for Malaysian elderly people by making and replicating lexical choices in the sampled news articles. While journalists are not the only influence on published content – for example, the editing process also contributes to the finished product – they are one of the key forces in the creation of media discourses.

As noted throughout this section, most of the quoted sources in the sampled news articles are elites, and journalists generally perpetuate their discourses uncritically, which indicates the outcomes of the kind of development journalism practised in Malaysia. However, this to some extent is also happening in Australia, with a different model of journalism. Detailed discussion about similarities and differences in journalistic practices in both countries is in Chapter Six, section 6.4.

The prevalent identities constructed for the Malaysian elderly are familial, which implies that the cultural norms of family care are strongly upheld as the fundamental source of care for most Malaysians. The notion of family being the primary source of care enhances the significance of familial identities constructed for Malaysian elderly.

Moreover, familial identities reflect and support main themes in Malaysian newspapers, that is, familism – a global concept used to denote normative feelings of loyalty, attachment, commitment, solidarity, and identification with nuclear as well as extended family members (Kang & Marks 2016, p. 1). The identity “elderly people as victims” is constructed as the least prevalent identity for the elderly in Malaysian newspapers. While social and financial identities are also constructed, it can be noted that all identities constructed for elderly Malaysians in the sample newspapers seem to be part of the same discourse – promotion of filial piety, which in return saves government from spending on aged care. Familial identities directly and explicitly promote and support familism. Discussion about the abandonment of elderly people and elderly people as victims indicates consequences of shifting away from familism. In other words, if familial piety is not practised, the increasingly ageing population may end up abandoned. While there is no discussion about aged care as an individual responsibility, there are examples promoting communal responsibility, particularly in social and financial identities – discussion about day centres run by NGOs and religious groups. In short, construction of familial, financial and social identities for elderly Malaysians can be inferred as a strategy promoted by newspapers to save government spending on welfare of elderly people as journalists in Malaysia see themselves as government partners in the development of the country.

5.3 Similarities and differences between Australian and Malaysian elderly’s identities

Coupland (2009, p. 855) states that “identities are complexes of meaning potential, waiting to be triggered or activated or made salient under particular circumstances and in the flow of social life and social interaction”. By looking at the construction of identities for the elderly in

two different countries, Australia and Malaysia, it can be noted that social, cultural, journalistic, and economic forces affect how the media construct elderly people. As discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.3, most elderly Australians are financially stable, three out of four own a house, and thirteen per cent are actively participating in the workforce. Around seventy per cent of older Australians received a pension in 2015 to keep their financial independence (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017) and unlike Malaysia, pensioners in Australia do not necessarily rely financially on adult children or other family members. However, in Malaysia, over seventy-three per cent of elderly Malaysians – eighty per cent of females and sixty-seven per cent of males – receive money from their families (Tey et al. 2016, p. 606). In sum, the study explored some similarities in representations of the elderly; for example, in both countries, elderly people are constructed as a burden. In Australia, government narratives encourage neoliberal and individualistic approaches, which keeps the burden away from government. In Malaysia, government policy encourages traditional aged care, which in return saves the government from building welfare homes.

The financial dependence of the elderly on government or family plays a significant role in the way older people are perceived and constructed by the media in their respective countries. For instance, most Australian newspapers sampled for this study represent the elderly as a dichotomy of pensioners and non-pensioners. Even though the majority of older people rely on a pension, non-pensioner identities are more prevalent in the newspapers in this study. Most newspapers described the elderly using expressions such as self-funded retirees, wealthy seniors, richer people, wealthy older Australians, the wealthiest cohort, millionaire, and better-off people. The identity “pensioners” is represented as a financial burden, tax burden, and time bomb.

Despite the division of the elderly as pensioners and non-pensioners, all Australian newspapers sampled for this study constructed and presented the elderly as individual consumers of aged-

care services. The identity “users” of aged care dominates other identities, such as national or relational identities, constructed for the elderly in Australian newspapers. Prevalent identities are economic, while social identities are recessive. However, in Malaysia, due to the financial reliance of the majority of older people on family, most of the papers selected for this study constructed familial and social identities for the elderly, while financial identities were recessive. Expressions such as “elderly parents” are widespread in Malaysian newspapers, presenting elderly people as part of a family and contrasting with the widespread term “users” in the sampled Australian newspapers.

Unlike the Australian press, most Malaysian newspapers do not construct older people as rich. Instead, elderly Malaysians are constructed as dependent on their children, communities and charities. The financial burden of the elderly is constructed for family and society, not for government. However, in Australia, the financial burden is either to be carried by the elderly themselves or by the government. There was not a single occasion in the Australian dataset which reported donations for the elderly or nursing homes.

Another noteworthy difference in both countries is about nursing homes and their residents. In Australia, nursing homes are constructed as businesses, and residents are referred to as users/customers of care. The consumer identity for the elderly is constructed as a norm. However, the nursing homes and their residents in Malaysian newspapers are constructed as stigmatised places/shelters and inmates/orphans, respectively. In sum, being a resident of a nursing home is a norm in Australia, while in Malaysia, it is a taboo to be in such places.

The press works differently in both countries. In Australia, journalists consider themselves a watchdog on government action and policies, while in Malaysia, development journalism is practised, emphasising nation-building and journalists working hand-in-hand with politicians.

Despite differences, journalists from both countries construct and propagate narratives that seem to absolve the government of any responsibility in aged care provision.

Media reproduce and proliferate stereotypes about the ageing and the elderly. Below are images of front pages from both countries' datasets. The rationale to use these two front pages lies in the fact that they provide a typical portrayal of the elderly in both countries. The images possess striking differences in the construction of identities for the elderly. Older people in Australia are portrayed as affluent and asset-rich, while their Malaysian counterparts are portrayed as the opposite.



Figure 5: Front pages of *The Star* (2012) and *The Australian* (2012)

On the right, *The Australian's* (2012) image on the front page of Reg and his wife Del in their family home highlights the importance of the family home – short names (familiarity tactic), independent, a happy couple and not poor. The inclusion of direct and indirect quotes in the article as well as the image reflects the human face of an ageing population – a typical tactic

of journalists. On the left, an unnamed, lonely person, uninterested in being photographed, is shown as shirtless, dependent and poor.

The above two images also indicate news values in operation in Australia and Malaysia. Journalists from both countries discursively choose the news values to be used in news articles. Australian reporters used personalisation, aesthetically appealing effect, and proximity, whereas their Malaysian counterparts used negativity, impact, personalisation, consonance and superlativeness (Caple & Bednarek 2016) to enhance the effects of news stories. Selection of certain news values and angles to a story shows discursive control by journalists. The next chapter discusses discursive practices and the exercise of power by journalists in using discursive controls.

Chapter 6: Media power and the elderly

This chapter explores relationships between media power and the elderly in Australian and Malaysian societies. Building on the discussion about journalistic practices and media power in Chapter Two, it presents an analysis of discursive practices, including the exercise of power in the distribution of voices to different actors and lexical choices made by journalists in news articles. The chapter begins with an investigation of how Australian journalists disseminate voices to different actors, in particular, to the elderly. The second half of the chapter contains an analysis of discursive practices in Malaysian newspapers with a focus on the voices of elderly Malaysians. It concludes with a discussion about differences and similarities in discursive practices in Australia and Malaysia.

Chapter 6 Part A: Australian journalists and the elderly's voices

As discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.7.1, one of the six key features of good journalistic practice in Australia compiled by the Civic Impact of Journalism project at Melbourne University is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions (Wilding et al. 2018, p. 20). This forum is to provide “a plurality of viewpoints” (Norris & Odugbemi 2010; Hanitzsch & Vos 2018, p. 150) to all citizens free from the domination of one actor over another (Thompson 1991). Journalists, being mediators, are capable of shaping the debate as they play a key role in the articulation of different actors' views (Hanitzsch & Vos 2018; Zelizer 1993). They do so through discursive practices, which empower them to include or exclude, classify and order actors' voices in a news story (Foucault 1981, pp. 52-56).

Nevertheless, journalists are not the only decision-making power in relation to news stories. As Curran (2002, pp. 148-151) contends, there are a range of factors which influence media, specifically, state censorship, high entry cost, media concentration, corporate ownership, mass-market pressures, consumer inequalities, advertising influence, a rise of public relations, news

routines and values, unequal resources, and dominant discourses – these factors are still relevant in 2020.

Molotch and Lester (1973) argue that journalists are not always objective reporters of events but are active players in “the constitution of events” (Becker & Vlad 2009, p. 62). Richardson (2007) maintains that the language used in newspapers is rarely neutral. He states that “it is through the use of language that we grant meaning to our actions; equally, it is through our use of language that we can attempt to remove meaning from our actions” (Richardson 2007, p. 10). In the case of news texts, news conventions around hierarchies of information that convey a normative element to news reporting also grant and remove meaning from actions.

Journalists often position themselves as speaking for the people by giving them a voice in the news (So & Chan 2007, p. 156). Analysis of the Australian newspapers selected for this study reveals that the voices of older people are missing in most articles – eighty-six per cent – which shows an unbalanced view of ageing in Australia. Even though the body of news reporting in this study specifically relates to older people, their voices are largely excluded. Given the overwhelming lack of elderly people’s voices in news articles, it can be maintained that elderly Australians are under-represented in Australian newspapers.

The most distinctive aspect of the media discourses on ageing in Australian newspapers is that the aged, to an extent, are excluded from the debate about aged-care reforms as they are rarely given a voice. Across the large body of articles about the elderly and aged-care reforms analysed for this study, there is little inclusion of older peoples’ views, as only eight out of sixty (13.3 per cent) news reports include their voices. Instead, most news articles focus on elites – for instance, then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard, government officials, opposition leaders, providers of health care, and business experts – who are debating reforms. The results of this study endorse the findings of Weicht (2013, p. 195), who contends that “others define

needs of care for the older people”. The unequal distribution of voices represents and reproduces social dominance and hegemony (Van Dijk 1995).

Moreover, the findings resonate with media theorists such as Hall et al. (1978) and Fowler (1991) who maintain that mass media reproduce the status quo by supporting the interests of those already in power. The insignificant space given to the elderly tends to portray them as voiceless – having no chance to express views and preventing them from active participation in the debate about aged-care revamp – and passive as they are talked about but not talked to by other actors. The underlying reason to keep elderly voices insignificant may be to preserve the dominant views – overwhelming support for the marketisation of aged care by elites – as Foucault (2003) proposes that “opening up” the possibility of pluralistic views may challenge prevailing views.

As discussed at the start of this chapter, only eight out of sixty articles include the voices of elderly people, and these articles were fairly evenly distributed across the publications: *The Australian*, *The Courier-Mail*, and *The Age* published two pieces each, and the *Herald Sun* and *The Advertiser* published one item each. It is worth noting that all news articles were different from each other, and there was no replication of stories across the publications. Five articles added the elderly’s voices during debate about the proposed reforms in April 2012 – giving them a say about the changes – and three added their views once the proposed amendments had been converted to legislation in August 2013. Although eight articles included the views of elderly Australians, not all of the articles prioritised their voices over other actors in news stories. For instance, two out of eight news articles placed the elderly’s statements towards the end, two included them in the lead, and four distributed their quotes throughout the second half of the articles. Such “classification, ordering, and distribution” of information is one of the discursive controls used by journalists to position different actors in news reports (Foucault 1981, p. 56).

The following sections include analysis of the eight articles which provided a platform for elderly Australians to have their say on aged-care reforms, followed by examples from the rest of the dataset in which actors other than elderly people are debating the reforms.

6.1 Views of elderly Australians – the elderly as active

In the opinions of scholars researching aged care, the split between active members of society and passive recipients of care is expressed by the distinction between the Third Age and the Fourth Age (Gilleard & Higgs 2010, p. 122). The concept and the term “Third Age” in Anglo-Saxon scholarship was introduced in 1987 by Peter Laslett, a historian from Cambridge University. Laslett (1987) argues that one’s life comprises four ages – “First Age: Immaturity, dependence, socialization and education. Second Age: Maturity, independence, child production and child-rearing, responsibility, earning and saving. Third Age: Era of personal fulfilment. Fourth Age: Final dependence, decrepitude and death” (Laslett 1994, p. 439).

In his later work, Laslett (1994, p. 443) argues that it is not a “straightforward matter” to decide who is and who is not in the Third Age as it is not based on “count of birthdays”; instead it is based on social engagements and being active. Nevertheless, in government reports – such as “Carnegie Inquiry into The Third Age, Life, Work and Livelihood in the Third Age, Final Report of the Inquiry, Carnegie United Kingdom” – people in the age bracket 50 to 74 are considered to be Third Agers (Laslett 1994). He also maintains that due to better economic conditions and population ageing, the Third Age occurs in developed countries only, while in developing countries there is a direct shift from the Second Age to the Fourth Age (Laslett 1994). Baltes and Smith (2003) similarly suggest that Third Agers are active members of society as opposed to passive and infirm, characteristics linked to the Fourth Age.

In Australia, a developed country with an increasingly ageing population, the notion of the Third Age is appropriate to consider in this study because the Third Agers are supposedly active

members of society who may engage vigorously in societal debates. It is worth noting here that the Third Age also includes people aged 50-65 years, who are not covered by the definition of elderly people used in this study. The analysis of newspapers in this study shows that elderly Australians are not constructed as active members of society; instead, in most news articles, they are represented as passive receivers of care.

The distinction between active and passive members of society in this study is made in relation to participation in debates about aged-care reforms. For instance, if elderly Australians are given space in news articles to convey their messages and voice opinions – either in favour of and against the government policies – about aged-care reforms, they are considered active. However, they are considered as passive if their problems are discussed by other actors without their voices being included. In sum, discursive controls¹⁵ by journalists in mediating the active participation of the elderly and other actors construct them as active or passive participants. Active participation is represented by the inclusion of differing opinions from older people as direct quotes with quotation marks and indirect quotes.

The following excerpts from the news articles selected for this study provide examples of the elderly as active participants in the discussion about aged-care reforms¹⁶ proposed by the government. The first example is from *The Age* (2012) including the views of elderly person:

"I [Marjory Chamberlain] moved into this house with my husband after the Second World War." "It's a long time and there a lot of memories here. I just couldn't stand to live anywhere else now." The 92-year-old is among a growing number of older Australians choosing to stay in their home in preference to going into an aged-care centre. Marjory Chamberlain has lived in her Brighton East home for 64 years and doesn't plan on going anywhere any time soon (Wells 2012b).

The above quote shows the significance of the family home and an unbreakable bond with her community. Marjory, in this article, is characterised as an example of a growing number of

¹⁵ Further discussion about discursive control and exercise of power by journalists is towards the end of this chapter.

¹⁶ Detailed discussion about aged care reforms in in Chapter Two.

elderly Australians who prefer to stay in the family home. She is constructed as a part of a community as she expresses an emotional attachment to the area. It can be maintained that the writer of the article has chosen a direct quote from an elderly person and an indirect quote “home for 64 years and does not plan on going anywhere any time soon” to show a sense of belonging to the area. The incorporation of private accounts – “moved with my husband” and “memories here” strengthens her emotive plea and represents accounts of other elderly Australians who want to stay at home, rather than in an aged-care centre. The writer in the above excerpt used personalisation and proximity to add the “human” factor in the report and to show geographical closeness of news actors (Caple & Bednarek 2016) to the news audiences, indicating the significance of the family home. Such narratives align with the proposed reforms by the government, which it is claimed will let elderly people stay longer at home.

The Australian (2012) included a similar account using the same news values, about the significance of family home and social networks:

Brisbane retiree Reg Hotchman, 78, has been married to wife Del for 54 years... “It's really about your independence,” Mr Hotchman said. “This is your comfort zone. We've got good neighbours on both sides. We know the local area well. Our children and grandchildren know this place. We would prefer to stay here and have services brought in” (Maher & Lunn 2012).

While the above excerpt is an atypical example from the sample, it is significant because of its location in the paper. As noted in the previous chapter, it is from a news story published on the front page of the paper along with a photo of the couple in their home (see p. 181). The emphasis of the couple remains on the family, family home, neighbours and local community, and their preference for care at home instead of in nursing homes. Although their narratives align with a section of the proposed reforms – “more people will get to keep their home -- and more people will get to stay in their home” – neither the writers nor the couple supports or condemns the reforms in the news story.

The study explored examples of the replication of quotes from elderly people that are either affirmative or critical of the reforms, for instance, the following three examples from *The Courier-Mail*, the *Herald Sun*, and *The Advertiser* include positive feedback from elderly people, while *The Age* included a negative review of the reforms. The inclusion of such views in the articles indicates the discursive practices of the journalists. The example below includes a positive review from Maida Lilley in *The Courier-Mail* (2012):

New Farm resident Maida Lilley, 78, has been living independently for more than 25 years and welcomed the aged care shakeup. “I think it's fair and means testing is sensible . . . it's got to be realistic. Homes aren't as valuable on paper but they're still your home,” Mrs Lilley said (Scott 2012c).

This excerpt includes the appraisal of reforms by an elderly person in a direct and an indirect quote, which demonstrates the journalist's choices to include positive remarks about the reforms. Such choices align with the overall tone of the news reporting about the reforms, as most journalists appeared to relay the commodification of aged care without any critical engagement. Likewise, *The Herald Sun* (2012) reported affirmative views of an elderly couple described as “The super-fit couple”.

Mr Rosario, 81, and his wife Prisca, 80, applauded the Gillard Government's initiatives to keep people in their own homes for longer by doubling the number of Home Care packages...as they would like stay out of care altogether, or at least avoid a long stay (Ife 2012).

Additionally, once the proposed reforms were implemented in August 2013, *The Advertiser* (2013) conveyed another positive review about aged-care reforms from Mrs McGrath, in her 70s, as a direct quote:

“We had no idea about the home care system and didn't even know we had a budget until we were involved in the pilot scheme which has been excellent” (Crouch 2013).

It can be maintained that, in most examples, the active subject position is uncommon in the portrayal of the elderly. Instead, journalists often exclusively focus on people's independence (Reg and Del & Maida Lilley), physical health (fit and super-fit couple), and role within the social (Brisbane retiree) or family context, that is, husband, wife, children, grandparents,

grandchildren (Breheny & Stephens 2012) in the construction of elderly Australians in the corpus of articles.

As argued earlier, elderly people are considered active in this study when their voices – feelings, emotions, opinions (both positive and negative) – are included in news articles. However, analysis of the voices in the articles indicates that most newspapers, except *The Age*, incorporated affirmative views of the elderly about the reforms. *The Age* (2012) added the voice (disappointment) of Mrs Clohesy:

“They [the government] have said that staffing ratios are a fairly blunt instrument for ensuring quality care ... I can't see why they aren't introduced it into nursing homes. It just seems like a given, especially when I see how short-staffed some of these facilities are. When you've got a whole system that is in total chaos . . . I'm disappointed that so much of it [the reforms] was about money and not a lot of it is about the quality of care” (Wells 2012a).

The above statement is an atypical example from the sampled news articles that shows the dissatisfaction of some elderly people with aged-care reforms and the quality of care in nursing homes. Mrs Clohesy termed the whole aged-care system as “in total chaos.” The inclusion of negative comments from the actors in a news story and the evaluation of government policies confirms the role of journalists as a watchdog on government actions.

The Australian, *The Courier-Mail*, the *Herald Sun*, *The Advertiser*, and *The Age* included the voices of elderly Australians in eight news articles out of sixty selected for this study. However, News Corp's newspapers included only positive accounts about the reforms and avoided negative comments from the elderly. *The Age* included the one example above of a dissatisfied elderly person who criticised the aged-care sector, and particularly, aged-care reforms. While one example of a dissatisfied elderly person may seem insignificant, the significance of the statement becomes apparent when compared with the overall trend towards positive reporting by the News Corp newspapers. The discrepancy in the distribution of positive and negative remarks about government policies can be linked to subtle institutional strategies and the

influence of ownership. Such discursive controls suggest the role of the press in gatekeeping and shaping the debate in a preferred way, which results in the construction of identities for actors, such as elderly people as active participants or passive receivers of care. There was no evidence in this study of more significant negative reaction from elderly people.

Moreover, it can be concluded that lack of pluralistic views of elderly Australians and the focus of newspaper articles on other actors - mainly elites – discussing elderly people’s needs and problems, portrays them as passive. The following section examines the pacification of elderly Australians in news articles as voices of other actors dominate the debate about issues linked with aged care and the proposed reforms.

6.2 Views about the elderly – the elderly as passive

As explained above, only a handful – eight out of sixty – news articles provided a voice for older people. Instead, they are talked about by a wide range of other actors, including politicians (such as then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard, then-Minister for Ageing Mark Butler, then-Opposition Leader Tony Abbott), and leaders of different organisations (such as Aged and Community Services Australia and the Business Council of Australia). Most of the actors mentioned above are prominent news actors, and their actions are considered newsworthy (Galtung & Ruge 1965). As argued in Chapter Two, newsworthy events and people make the news. Hall (1974) maintains that elite sources have the capacity to over-access news media; thus, they have a greater presence in newspapers, as found in this study. Similarly, the findings of this study support McNair (1995)’s argument that critical sources, such as political parties, in and out of government, are primary sources of news, because politicians and elites remain prominent news actors despite the sampled articles mainly focusing on aged-care reforms and the problems related to an ageing society.

The following two excerpts from *The Courier-Mail* and *The Australian* include typical examples of language used by the newspapers and cite sources that present elderly Australians as passive. The actors in the examples are speaking for and about the elderly, but not to the elderly, except as readers, as elderly people's voices are not included in most articles. For instance, a hypothetical example presented by former defence chief Peter Cosgrove, 66 – also a former governor-general – indicated elderly Australians as passive receivers of care (*The Courier-Mail* 2013):

“The scenario of the 98-year-old mum and the 78-year-old-daughter both in an aged care facility is not at all outlandish. The mum might be in high care and the daughter in low care, but they are both requiring some form of care ... Both sides of politics appear to avoid talking about aged care and seniors' issues in the election campaign, yet caring for the elderly will soon be one of the nation's most pressing social issues” (Madigan 2013).

The discussion of the elderly's problems by the former governor-general, an elite, who is dubbed “a poster boy for senior citizens” by *The Courier-Mail* (2013) portrays elderly Australians as passive, as others talk about them. Although Peter Cosgrove is an older person, the inclusion of his statement in the article is due to his former role as governor-general of Australia, rather than an average older Australian.

Similarly, Greens leader Christine Milne's statement was included by *The Australian* (2012):

“We absolutely need reform of aged care, and we need to be listening carefully to the sector, but we don't want to see cuts to aged care dressed up as reforms,” Senator Milne said. “We want people to be able to be supported at home, with as many services as can be provided to do that” (Balogh & Owens 2012).

In statements such as the ones above, politicians debate the elderly's problems, focusing on political/economic issues.

Although the journalists included voices from a wide range of politicians, then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard's voice was the loudest of all, followed by then-Ageing Minister Mark Butler.

Gillard is quoted in eleven articles, including five headlines – a front-page headline in *The Weekend Australian*, three headlines in *The Age* and one in *The Courier-Mail* – six times in lead paragraphs of news articles and more than a dozen times in the corpus. The headlines citing the then-Prime Minister include:

- 1) PM's bid to avert crisis in aged care (Lunn 2012a).
- 2) No place like home: PM's aged care plan (Grattan 2012b).
- 3) PM to unveil user-pays changes to aged care (Probyn 2012).
- 4) PM pushes home care for dementia victims (Grattan 2012d).
- 5) Funding changes a safe bet for Gillard (Scott 2012a).

She is discussing aged-care reforms and talking about the problems faced by the elderly, ultimately portraying them as passive receivers of care. The inclusion of her statements in the most newsworthy sections of articles, such as headlines and the lead paragraph, depicts the discursive controls by the journalists who have chosen to prioritise her voice over those of other actors, particularly elderly people themselves. This reinforces her authority and power over other actors, a finding consistent with Fairclough's notion (2013) that the media promote the power of dominant people.

Moreover, the statement from Gillard which is used as a headline – “No place like home: PM's aged care plan” (Grattan 2012b) – supposedly depicts the significance of the family home in the proposed aged care plan. However, the word “home” in the article is used more as a synonym of “house” – bricks and mortar, as an asset – which is to be prevented from a “fire sale” to pay for nursing home care (Grattan 2012b). This indicates a disconnect between the headline and the text as the use of lexis such as “fire sale” and “to pay” reinforces the notion of the home as an asset, rather than an intangible “family home” where elderly Australians have spent their lives, have memories and emotional attachments (Grattan 2012b). In sum, the focus of discussion remains on the economic aspect of the house, not on the social or emotional aspect. Similarly, there is no mention of emotional or social consequences of selling or leaving family homes from journalists in the whole corpus of news articles selected from Australian

newspapers; except in a direct quote from an elderly woman who was not willing to leave her home and expressed her emotional belonging to the family home of 64 years. Thus, the focus on economic and political issues, and the lack of social issues, exhibits the discursive controls of the journalists in shaping the discussion.

As previously noted, then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard is cited in more than a dozen news articles in the dataset. One quote from her speech on aged care was replicated in almost all the sampled newspapers – consequently, it stands out from others in the analysis. According to Bagdikian (1997, p. 180), “the safest method of reporting news was to reproduce the words of authority figures”, such as the then-Prime Minister in this study.

This quote was:

“If you want care in the home, we will make it easier to get that care” (Maher & Lunn 2012; Coorey & Yeates 2012; Grattan 2012d).

In this quote, Gillard appears to be directly addressing elderly people. The category subject “we” as mentioned in the above example is considered “problematic” by Fairclough (2013) as it is not clear who is included in this category. For instance, “we” if only used for her government implies authority and “we” used for the government and young citizens creates a division between them and the elderly. However, it is apparent that elderly people are not included in this category of “we”; therefore, it creates an identity of otherness for them. Also, the language used by the then-Prime Minister is of the typical political discourse, which tends to be future-oriented (Van Dijk 1997).

Furthermore, Julia Gillard and her actions are reported differently by different papers; for example, in four out of five headlines – from *The Australian* and *The Age* – mentioned above, the phrase “PM” is used to address her. However, *The Courier-Mail* addressed her as “Gillard” in the headline and “the Gillard Government” in most of its articles. The *Herald Sun*, *The*

Australian, and *The Sydney Morning Herald* made similar choices, as “Gillard Government” was repeated eighteen times throughout the corpus. Some samples can be seen in the following:

The Gillard government’s decision to pour an additional \$1.2 billion ... (Lunn 2012b)

The Gillard Government’s \$3.7 billion reform package... (Johnston 2012)

The Gillard Government’s initiatives (Ife 2012).

The Gillard government’s much-anticipated response yesterday to the commission’s Caring for Older Australians report (Lunn 2012a).

\$3.7 billion overhaul of aged care announced by the Gillard Government yesterday (Scott & Brennan 2012).

That was a step too far for the Gillard government (Metherell 2012b).

The word choice “Gillard Government’s” in the above statements not only represents her authority and power over other actors, including the elderly, but also indicates the discursive controls, as the writers have deliberately chosen to use this expression, instead of Labor government or just government. It could also be said to be less formal than “Prime Minister” or “Prime Minister Gillard”, an issue faced by many female politicians. Moreover, the statements mentioned earlier are about aged care and older Australians can be noted. However, the accounts are all centred on the then-Prime Minister, an authority figure, who is talking on behalf of elderly Australians. Such examples reinforce the dominance of elites and the pacification of elderly people. A comment added by *The Australian* (2012) creates a tussle between Gillard (rather than government as used extensively in the other articles, which indicates writers’ ideological and political stance) and the experts:

JULIA Gillard’s aged-care overhaul will ignore expert economic advice (Maher & Lunn 2012).

The phrase “ignore” demonstrates a lexical choice by the journalists to exhibit the power of the then-Prime Minister. This may be an indication of a strategy to separate her from her government, a way of personalising the government, because of a stance the paper disagrees with – in other words, indicating that the program is her “fault”. Similarly, the writers (Maher & Lunn 2012) called her actions a “capitulation” to national seniors, signalling weakness and

contradicting her prominent voice. The examples above demonstrate that the newspapers and journalists are discussing the issues related to aged care in the political debate without mentioning the elderly who the reforms will affect. Such examples indicate the imbalance of power in society and the position of elderly Australians in the power spectrum.

These strategies by the journalists portray the elderly as passive because all political actors discuss them without their involvement in the discussion. Moreover, the direct and indirect statements from the then-Prime Minister – such as “Ms Gillard insisted”, “Ms Gillard argued”, “Ms Gillard criticised”, and “Ms Gillard said” – mark her as the focus of news articles rather than elderly people, which depicts the dominance of one social group over another. The use of modality verbs in the above example, such as “insisted”, “argued”, “criticised”, and “said”, with Gillard’s quotes indicates the writers’ affiliation to the reports (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002) and they vary from article to article.

The politicians from the Opposition are given a nominal voice in most newspapers, demonstrating government dominance and political imbalance. Such actions show the discursive controls by the journalists in steering the debate in a preferred way. For instance, then-Opposition Leader Tony Abbott is mentioned only eleven times in the whole corpus and more than half of his quotes are placed at the end – the least newsworthy space. He was quoted in the lead paragraphs in only three instances. These findings support the results of a multi-country study by Tiffen et al. (2014) that explored and compared sources of news in eleven countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom, and India. They argue that opposition voices are much less present in this domain, with seven of the nine countries having eighty-eight per cent and above government source citation. Furthermore, their study maintains that “at the national level, in all countries government sources outnumber opposition sources, and by a broad average of two to one, because governments make policies, take actions that affect the wider society, and make many announcements” (Tiffen et al. 2014, p. 382).

In sum, it can be concluded that in most news articles elderly Australians are portrayed as passive, and are overshadowed by elites, especially political leaders from the governing party who define and debate the needs and problems of elderly people. The findings support Weicht (2013 p. 192), who argues that elderly people are “often described as passive or not identified as actors at all.” The pacification of elderly Australians not only shows a societal power imbalance, but also indicates that journalists are not providing a forum for an exchange of different views. That, in turn, shows the exercise of power by the journalists in not incorporating the pluralistic views of older people.

The use of certain verbs, adverbs, adjective, and other lexical choices by writers to describe the situation or actions of different actors demonstrates an ideological position (Fairclough 1995). Certain verbs have normative implications rather than being merely descriptive, for example:

The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, promised to reform aged care before the election (Coorey & Yeates 2012).

Julia Gillard has pledged to reform the crumbling aged-care system in this term of government (Dunlevy 2012).

The lexical choices “promised” and “pledged” have a different effect on the reader than “announce” or any other verb to describe the then-Prime Minister’s actions. The use of these expressions contributes to the writers’ interpretation of the speaker (Machin & Mayer 2012), and a specific angle to report news (Bell 1991). It depicts the power relationship in a society where politicians inform older adults and others – their relatives and carers, including their family members and aged-care staff – about the overhaul which will fix what are seen as existing problems.

The promise by the then-Prime Minister to reform the aged-care system indicates political expediency, and the elderly are positioned as political subjects who are talked about in the media and elsewhere by politicians but are not heard. The number of elderly people is rising, and older Australians constitute a significant proportion of the electorate. Thus, older persons

had the power to select/reject politicians in the election being held the following year (September 2013). It can also be argued that text has the potential to shape understandings – transforming official discourses into public discourses – and often, these transformations benefit elites (Richardson 2007), such as Gillard in the above example. The findings of the study are consistent with Wodak (2011), who argues that lexical choices may normalise the power of particular groups over others.

Other lexical choices made by writers in the above headlines include labelling the aged-care system as “crumbling” (Dunlevy 2012), which indicates that the system is decaying under the current government, rather than saying “not functioning properly,” and this positions the elderly as victims of the crumbling system.

Moreover, at points in the corpus, the boundaries between a quote (from an actor) and the writer’s opinion are blurred, for instance, the *Herald Sun* reported in the lead paragraph

Older Australians will have more chance to avoid being forced into nursing homes thanks to sweeping changes to aged care (Johnston 2012).

In the above statement, the writers have used the expression, “sweeping changes”, without quotation marks, although the quote is from the account of then-Minister for Ageing Mark Butler published in *The Australian* on the same date (Grattan 2012b). It is significant to note that the writers have chosen to use the same words to define the reforms as the Minister, rather than their own words, which not only represents an interpretation which tacitly supports proposed reforms but also reinforces the government’s stance towards privatisation of aged-care services. Similarly, the word choice “thanks to sweeping changes” (Johnston 2012) – although it could be being used sarcastically– in the lead of the article signals the ideological inclination of the writer for whom the reforms to aged care are to be applauded.

Conclusion:

Overall, the analysis of the sampled news articles indicates that Australian journalists have used their discursive controls in allocating voices to different actors. The distribution of these voices represents and reproduces the power relationships in society and constructs elderly Australians as active and passive members of society. For instance, examples in the corpus of the active participation of elderly Australians are fewer than their construction as passive, with only eight out of sixty-one news articles allowing elderly Australians to express their views. Most news articles focus on the dominant elites who discuss the problems of elderly people rather than elderly people being part of the discussion. As noted in earlier analytical chapters, reference to elite people is the most prominent news value in the sampled articles. Proximity, superlativeness, timeliness and personalisation are also used by journalists in the above discussed examples.

Similarly, the analysis of the sampled articles has shown that journalists have exercised their power in making lexical choices by replicating quotes that portray the elderly in a particular way. At times, they have tried to remain detached from the statements through the use of quotation marks or by citing the sources, but there are instances where the boundaries between the reported and the reporting speech are blurred.

The next section examines discursive practices in Malaysia to establish how journalists construct Malaysian elderly people as active or passive by giving or denying them a voice. As discussed in Chapter Two, journalistic practices in Malaysia are slightly different from those in Western countries, and are considered “constructive, consensual and development-oriented” as once suggested by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed.

Chapter 6 Part B: Elderly Malaysians and the media

As discussed in Chapter Three, the corpus of Malaysian news articles for this study consists of thirty-eight news articles. The articles were selected from six leading English newspapers, namely, *The Star*, *The New Straits Times*, *The Malay Mail*, *The Sun*, and *The Borneo Post*. This section includes the analysis of discursive practices and the distribution of voices to different actors in the Malaysian newspapers. The focus remains on the voices of elderly Malaysians as compared to other actors and the language use by the journalists in constructing the elderly in the press.

6.3 Malaysian journalists and the elderly' voices

The investigation of news articles confirms that in reports about the elderly and aged care, elderly Malaysians are not given primacy in terms of their voices. The most prominent and vocal actors in Malaysian newspapers are government officials and elites, for instance, then-Prime Minister Najib Razak, the Minister, Deputy Minister, and other representatives of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, mayors of different cities and even members of the Malaysian royal family. However, the voices of elderly Malaysians are excluded from most news articles, with only five out of thirty-eight – 13.1 per cent – including the views of elderly people. Of the five news articles that include the elderly's views, *The Star*, *The New Straits Times*, and *The Sun* published one item each while *The Borneo Post* gave space to elderly voices in two articles. Analysis of the elderly people's opinions included in Malaysian newspapers is in the following sections.

a. Views of the elderly Malaysians – the elderly as active

Similar to the criteria used for the Australian newspapers, the distinction between active and passive members of society in this section of the study relates to their participation in debates about aged-care issues. When given a platform to express their views and experiences of being elderly in Malaysia, the general sentiments from the elderly were negative comments about

aged care. The dominant discourses about being old in Malaysia highlighted melancholy and despair and the newspapers portray elderly Malaysians as victims and helpless. For instance, *The Borneo Post* (2013) reported a story of an elderly man referred to only as James, who is staying in a nursing home in Sabah:

In a feeble voice, the senior citizen replied that his family had kicked him out along with his disabled son who was on a wheelchair. As James had no place to go, he surrendered himself to the nursing home run by the Sabah General Welfare Services Department along with his son... “Here, I realise that I do not have a home anymore. Now, that I am in a nursing home, everything is gone. Here, you are literally in God’s waiting room finishing the vestiges of life,” said the dejected senior citizen (Hasan 2013).

The representation in the above passage is that of a deserted person, as the writer made lexical choices such as “dejected” to describe him, “feeble” for his voice, “kicked out” (colloquial language) for departure from his home and “surrendered” for admission to a nursing home. He has also added melancholic expression by speaking about the deprivation of “everything”. This statement supports the finding in Chapter Four about the stigmatised nature of nursing homes in Malaysia as James describes them as “God’s waiting room”. The most moving quote from James in the same article by *The Borneo Post* (2013) highlights an overall concern of Malaysian elderly people in nursing homes:

“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is the worst thing that can happen to anyone,” he said in a voice choked with emotions (Hasan 2013).

Similar sentiments by the elderly of being unloved and unwanted are reported in *The Star*, *The Sun*, and *The New Straits Times*. It is not just the alliteration that makes the account expressive and full of emotion but also the writer’s description of his views as “choked with emotion.” It can be observed that he employed the term “forgotten by everybody” rather than mentioning his family or relatives, which can be counted as a grievance towards the whole society, including the government. However, there is no further discussion from the writer about the role of government in looking after the elderly, particularly when they are barred from their

family homes. The control and steering of the discussion illustrate the discursive control and exercise of power by the journalists.

Another example includes the views of Ibu Mariana, an 83-year-old woman, who expressed her thoughts:

“I have a daughter who has not seen me for five years and it appears that she does not want to know about me anymore,” says Ibu Mariana who spends her time watching television and reading at the home... “Sometimes I just cry in my bed all night. I try to put up a brave face, but sometimes I just have to cry,” said Ibu Mariana (*The Borneo Post* 2013).

The statement of the mother abandoned by her daughter highlights a decline in familism, a shift in social norms in Malaysia. Her citing of “cry in my bed” demonstrates the emotional and psychological impacts of this. Tey et al. (2016) argue that it is not socially acceptable for Malays – the largest ethnic group in Malaysia – to send parents to nursing homes. Further discussion about familism is in Chapter Four, section 4.3.1. The writer develops her story by adding that:

“The 83-year-old lady receives no visitors, not even during Hari Raya” (*The Borneo Post* 2013).

The lack of visitors on Hari Raya – also known as Eid, an annual festival celebrated by Muslims around the world during which all family member gathers together or visit each other - contributes to the notion of loneliness. There are other examples in the sample in which elderly Malaysians mention loneliness. For example, *The Star* includes the views of Liew Moi, a 74-year-old woman, at the Tong Sim old folks’ home. She maintains that:

“But it is only normal to feel lonely at my age,” said the childless widow. “But I get very excited when volunteers take us on trips,” she said. Liew, who used to wash dishes for a living, said she had been moving from one charity home to another before coming to the centre. “I moved so often that I did not bother to tell family members where I was. I don’t want to disturb them as they are all busy with their careers,” she said (Wen & Meikeng 2012a).

This statement hints towards societal perceptions that it is normal to be old and lonely. The notion of loneliness is enhanced by use of the phrase “childless widow”, which is a choice that

journalists have made in describing the elderly; such lexical choices depict the discursive control of the journalists (Van Dijk 1995). Moreover, she mentions her family and their busyness in their careers, along with her intent not to disturb them. This indicates broken family ties and that family members are putting career above family – which in turn demonstrates a shift in societal norms. In all of the above quotes from older people, journalists have included the part of their conversation that revolves around family, indicating the expectations of elderly people of family members in Malaysian society. The included voices of elderly Malaysians indicate the slipping of familial responsibility in Malaysian society.

For example, *The Star* reported views of an elder who was referred to as “Uncle Lim”:

[When] “Uncle Lim”, asked where his family members were, he said cynically: “They are all rich and highly educated.” Asked what was his dearest wish was, he said: “I just want to take life one day at a time” (Wen & Meikeng 2012a).

The use of the title “uncle” in addressing Lim indicates the socio-cultural norms of Asian societies, such as Malaysia; however, this is only a one-off example in the whole sample, indicating a shift in such norms. It can be argued that financial imperatives could be a reason for some children to abandon their parents, as discussed in Chapter Four. However, Uncle Lim’s statement shows a flip side, where his children are wealthy and highly educated but have still abandoned him. Generally, Malaysian Chinese – who hold a similar Confucian identity as the populations in East Asia – keep the family size small for the better and higher education of children for fiercely competitive job fields (Kono 1986 cited in Tey et al. 2016, p. 604), and to have a secure future during old age. However, the case of Uncle Lim represents a narrative where parents provide higher education, but in return are abandoned by children. The inclusion of this statement in the article signals writers’ support for affluent adult children caring for their aged parents. However, it also conveys a message to readers, including the elderly and their relatives, about the normalisation of loneliness and misery of older people in nursing homes.

In sum, it can be concluded that Malaysian journalists have included the views of elderly people in relatively few news articles. Where they are included, most elderly Malaysians expressed cynical views towards their family. While most journalists used negativity, impact, consonance, proximity, and personalisation (Caple & Bednarek 2016) in relaying the messages of older people, negativity dominates all other news values in the above examples. The role of the press as the fourth pillar of democracy is to hold those in power accountable to the public, especially in situations when some citizens are living in wretchedness. However, the silence of the papers towards the role of government, in such circumstances, may signal self-censorship of Malaysian media. These findings can be linked back to broader socio-cultural practices and government policies in which the care of elderly parents falls on the shoulders of adult children rather than the state. The journalists, hand-in-hand with government, present elderly Malaysians as victims of family neglect by using emotional language and quoting the emotional accounts of the elderly to promote filial piety. This strategy – to rekindle sympathy, care, and love for the elderly in society – aligns with government policy of keeping elderly people with family and promoting familism.

b. Malaysian elderly as passive

As discussed at the start of the analysis of discursive practices in Malaysia, the issues related to ageing and aged care in Malaysia are mostly discussed by elites, including politicians and other government officials. For instance, the then-Prime Minister Najib Razak, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and representatives of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, mayors of different cities, and even members of Malaysian royal family were prominent and vocal actors in Malaysian newspapers.

Political leaders and members of the royal family, being elites, are considered prominent news actors, and their actions are newsworthy (Galtung & Ruge 1965). Similarly, Anuar (2005) argues that in Malaysian newsrooms, leaders of the ruling political party and “captains of

industries, are among other powerful people who make news” (p. 67). This dominant news value amongst Malaysian journalists tends to silence those who are not conceived as newsworthy or who are seen as less newsworthy, such as the elderly. The findings of this study affirm the findings of both Anuar (2005) and Galtung and Ruge (1965), as the voices of elderly Malaysians are excluded from most news articles – over 86 per cent of the articles selected for this study revolve around the statements and actions of elites. Overall, it can be maintained that Malaysian journalists have discursively constructed elderly Malaysians as passive spectators as the debate about aged care in the news articles is conducted without consulting them.

The pacification of elderly Malaysians is prevalent in the sampled news articles, compared with the elderly as active. The following section includes examples in which newspapers have constructed Malaysian elderly people as passive receivers of care who are talked about by other actors; for instance, journalists from *The New Straits Time* (2011) included an account about a former sawmill labourer:

Choy Pak, 84, a former sawmill labourer in Setapak, ended up at the home when he retired 10 years ago after the sawmill shifted to another location. When he did not have the financial means to take care of himself, neighbours referred him to the centre (*New Straits Times* 2011a).

In the above example, the elderly man is reduced to his past – former sawmill labourer in Setapak – and a passive receiver of care, who is sent to the aged-care centre as he cannot take care of himself. Even his referral to the centre was done by neighbours, which portrays him not only as a passive member of society but also without the capacity to make decisions. Similarly, in another example reported by *the New Straits Times* (2011), a group of elderly Malaysians is described as residents of an aged-care centre – passive receivers of care.

The home has 23 residents, most of whom were relocated from Tengku Ampuan Rahimah Hospital, and many of them do not possess identification documents or have relatives to care for them (*New Straits Times* 2011b).

Parallel to the first case, the elderly in the above example are not only represented as passive receivers but also as people with no documents and no-one to care for them, with the suggestion that they are completely dependent and unable to make their own decisions. The inclusion of such statements by the journalists indicates the severity of the consequences of the slippage in familial piety but also demonstrates how the aged-care system is failing elderly Malaysians. *The Borneo Post* (2013) described elderly people without siblings or children as “elderly orphans” who, according to their report, are on the rise.

And with more Malaysians enjoying better life expectancy, without a living spouse, without any biological or step children, and without living siblings or half-siblings, the problem of ‘elderly orphans’ is expected to be compounded further by the year 2020 (*The Borneo Post* 2013).

While the term “elderly orphans” is not used in broader Malaysian society, it was used multiple times in the sampled news articles. The term “elderly orphans” is a lexical choice by writers that highlights the problems of the elderly but also enhances their passivity. *The Star* (2011) reported Siti Zaharah Sitam – the principal of a government-funded aged-care centre in Kuching – discussing conditions for placement at government-funded aged-care centres, including that elderly people should be “childless”, akin to elderly orphans, to receive care in government-funded aged care-centres.

“If a senior citizen is truly childless and still healthy, it is all right for the home to take care of him or her. After all, the home has been assigned to care for this category of citizens,” she [Siti Zaharah Sitam] said. She said it was not good for people to leave their sick parents at old folks’ homes and expect the staff members to take care of everything. Only when it has been established that nobody in the family is capable of caring for them, should the idea of putting an elderly parent in Rumah Seri Kenangan or another home. Siti Zaharah said that, even then, the elderly must be healthy and independent at the time of placement (*The Star* 2011).

Her statement presents elderly Malaysians as passive receivers of care, preferably by family members, as for government-funded care elderly people have to meet the required criteria – truly childless and healthy. Conditional aged care provided by government classifies elderly people with reference to their health and children. This also indicates government strategies

about promotion of filial piety and the role of journalists in propagating such policies uncritically.

However, *The Borneo Post* (2012) included an opinion piece featuring the writer's views about the problems of the aged in Malaysia:

Elderly need care, not neglect and indifference... This busy world is certainly not looking too kindly on old folks. Crossing the road is just one problem the elderly encounter, another is getting onto a bus. The old timer is usually the last to get on. And even if he manages, he very likely will have to stand. Rarely does anyone care give up his or her seat for an old man or woman (*The Borneo Post* 2012a).

Like other examples cited above, this excerpt represents elderly Malaysians as passive members of society whose problems are discussed by others. The examples so far in this chapter portray the Malaysian elderly as passive receivers of care, people without the capacity to make decisions, and without choice, which challenges established societal and political perceptions. Other examples include statements about elderly people and their problems from political leaders. The statements from leaders are typical examples of language use, for instance, the below excerpt is from Rosmah, the then-Prime Minister Najib Razak's wife, who was reported by the *New Straits Times* (2012) speaking to delegates at The First World Congress on Healthy Ageing 2012 being held in Kuala Lumpur and themed "Evolution: Holistic ageing in an age of change":

"We need to move away from the notion of ill health, wrinkles and loneliness when we talk about ageing" (*The New Straits Times* 2012c).

The reiteration of such statements by the journalists not only indicates the pacification of older people as politicians and their spouses discuss the problems of the elderly, but also demonstrates existing societal stereotypes associated with old age. The excerpt reinforces the imbalance in voice distributions of the elderly and the elites; the voices of political elites dominate the elderly. Other examples of the pacification of older Malaysians include political statements and promises about the welfare of the elderly in Malaysia. In some examples,

elderly Malaysians are also appreciated as those who served the country well, for instance, in the below excerpt from a news report by *The Borneo Post* (2012):

Just like those in the other age groups, the welfare of senior citizens and retirees in the country continue to be looked after by the federal government led by the Barisan Nasional...The 2013 Budget tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, last Friday proposed several incentives specifically for the senior citizens and retirees, thus providing an inspiration to these groups who had served the country well to enjoy a more comfortable life in their old age (BERNAMA 2012b).

The language used in this excerpt contradicts other examples in which elderly people are constructed as dependent and without the capacity to make decisions. Despite positive perspectives about older people this example, like other discussed in this section, contributes to the passivity of older Malaysians. The journalists report the affirmative views about the elderly in reference to the political discourses coming from the head of the Barisan Nasional. The mentioning of the political party by the journalists indicates that they are relaying the political message to the public. Also, it can be noted from the above report that even in political discourses, which tend to be future-oriented (Van Dijk 1997), about the welfare of the elderly, the passivity of elderly Malaysians remains salient. The use of positive language by the journalists in including the incentives for the elderly not only enhances the pacification of the elderly but also demonstrates that journalists are relaying a sense of optimism to community members.

This excerpt is additionally indicative of the way that the political discourses about the elderly and aged care in this study orbit around the statements and actions of the then-Prime Minister Najib Razak, who is framed as the most important actor in the news articles – he is mentioned twenty-two times in seven articles, including three headlines as:

1. RM1.4b allocated for elderly, disabled and single mothers – Najib (BERNAMA 2012a).
2. PM: Centres for the elderly soon (*New Straits Times* 2012a).
3. Najib shares Winter Solstice joy with elderly (BERNAMA 2011).

Other than three headlines in three different papers, journalists focused on the then-Prime Minister while he interacted with elderly people or discussed issues related to elderly people. For instance, the below example from *The Sun* (2012) is typical of the language used for politicians:

Joy and happiness were clearly reflected in the faces of the residents of the home for the elderly in Kampung Baru Jalan Sungai Way here when they were joined by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to celebrate the Winter Solstice celebration today. Looking cheerful in his light blue shirt and purple tie, Najib spent about 30 minutes mingling with the residents and even took his time to enjoy a Chinese dessert known as Tang Yuan or Kueh Eeh (BERNAMA 2011).

In the above report, journalists have, on the one hand, discursively constructed elderly people as passive actors and reduced them to a collective noun “residents”; and on the other, highlighted details of Najib’s attire of “light blue shirt and purple tie”. The contrast between the emphasis on the outfit and the dismissal of the residents in one word demonstrates the role of journalists in foregrounding and backgrounding different news actors and unequal power relationships in different societal groups (Fairclough 1995), such as political leaders and elderly people. The presence of the then-Prime Minister may have increased the newsworthiness of the story. However, the passivity of the elderly residents indicates that older people are largely invisible in the presence of dominant elite people. These findings line up with the results of other article analyses discussed above as the media promote the dominance of one social group over another.

Other politicians who are reported by the newspapers discussing the issues linked with elderly Malaysians include the national chairman of the opposition party. *The Borneo Post* (2011) included the statement of Karpal Singh, chairman of the opposition party:

Karpal Singh, the national chairman of opposition party DAP, yesterday called for the government to make it a crime for children to abandon their elderly parents, reported online portal Free Malaysia Today.... “It is imperative, having regard to the survey, for the government to forthwith enact a Maintenance of Parents Act to arrest the problem,” said Karpal, who first called for such a bill in June (*The Borneo Post* 2011b).

Like the statements from politicians from the ruling party, the above statement presents elderly Malaysians as passive members of society who are being debated by authority figures. Karpal's argument, about enforced care of elderly parents by children, was countered in the same article with a statement from a government official:

Malaysia's Women, Family and Community Development Minister, Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, said filial piety is "inherent in our culture" and only needs to be encouraged by means other than fines... "Rather than a law to punish children who abandon their parents, my ministry believes in engagement via advocacy – by promoting close family relationships and care for the elderly," she said (*The Borneo Post* 2011b).

However, both opposition and the ruling coalition parties have a uniform approach when it comes to aged care in Malaysia – to instil filial piety in society (Ismail 2012) – and Malaysian newspapers are acting as a vehicle to promote these approaches. It can be argued that politicians from both sides of parliament, journalists and members of the Malaysian royal family are working together to propagate familial piety. While politicians are advocating for the promotion of familism to uphold socio-cultural norms and to avoid expenditure on aged care, especially at a time when the number of older people is on the rise in Malaysia, the journalists are playing their role as partners with government to relay the developmental messages to the public.

Conclusion

The analysis of discursive practices indicates that in the sampled articles about the elderly, the proportion of the elderly voices is lower than for other actors cited in the news articles. The vast majority of news articles, over eighty-six per cent, excluded the voices of elderly Malaysians; instead, journalists prioritised elites, including political leaders, which aligns with journalistic practices in Malaysia. Their problems are discussed by other actors; the elderly are talked about but not talked to. The exclusion of the elderly from discussion about their issues not only indicates pacification but also shows the exercise of power by the

journalists in distributing voices to different actors. Thus, exclusion of the elderly's voices from the discussion about aged-care problems constructs elderly Malaysians as passive spectators.

Even in the articles where elderly people are given voices, the journalists have focused on the parts of their statements in which they discuss their family problems. Most cited elderly Malaysians complain about their family members. The journalists have neither included a statement from an elderly person that contradicts broader discourses around ageing and familism, nor a statement about expectation of care from the government. Such a gatekeeping role again points towards their role as development journalists who aim to avoid conflict with the government.

In sum, it can be concluded that dominant discourses in Malaysian newspapers do not construct elderly Malaysians as active participants in the debate. Instead, they are presented as passive receivers of care, without the capacity to make decisions, and without any choice.

6.4 Differences and similarities in discursive practices in Australia and Malaysia

As mentioned in Chapter Two, journalism is practised differently in the two countries in this study: journalists in Australia generally consider themselves a watchdog on government, but in Malaysia, Asian-based development journalism is practised, meaning that government and journalists work together for the development of the country. Due to a lack of criticism by Malaysian journalists of official policies, it can be argued that the discursive practices explored in this study support existing theories about journalistic practices in Malaysia. However, the discursive practices of the Australian journalists do not match with their watchdog role and their role to provide a uniform forum for the exchange of ideas, as elderly Australians are given limited opportunities to be active participants.

Despite the differences in journalistic practices in Australia and Malaysia, this study finds both similarities and differences in discursive practices of journalists when it comes to media discourses about ageing. For instance, one of the differences in discursive practices between Australian and Malaysian press is the reportage by specialists such as political, health and social correspondents. The discursive practice – prevalent in Australian newspapers and absent in Malaysian press – for these non-generic journalists is mediated by the specialist frame of reference, they align themselves with. Journalists from both countries have exercised their power in the dissemination of voices to different actors in news articles. There is a substantial disparity in the proportion of the voices of the elderly and the other actors in the selected news articles which primarily discuss the problems related to older people and aged care. Eighty-six per cent of news articles in Australian newspapers selected for this study, and eighty-six per cent of news articles in Malaysian papers, exclude the elderly's views. Instead, newspapers in both countries focus on the statements and actions of elites and politicians. Considering the elderly in both countries are excluded from active participation in the discussion about aged care in their respective countries, it can be established that both elderly populations are constructed as passive. In sum, it can be maintained that the disproportion in the voices of the elderly and elites imitate the early days of the bourgeois public sphere composed of the “propertied and educated” (Calhoun 1992, p. 3), while the poor and uneducated were excluded from contributing.

Even in the articles that include the views of elderly people, there is a lack of plurality of views. For instance, the Australian newspapers tended to incorporate more affirmative views by the elderly about aged-care policies in Australia. However, Malaysian journalists focused on the dissenting views of the elderly. The incorporation of positive and negative comments by the journalists can be linked back to broader social practices in the respective countries. In Australia, aged care is considered a commodity, and most newspapers included stories that

support the marketisation of aged care. Thus, the positive views of the elderly support the overall narrative of the papers. In Malaysia, care of elders is traditionally and ideally performed by family members, which according to some news articles analysed for this study is shifting. Therefore, Malaysian newspapers working side-by-side with the government's policies encourage filial piety by reporting pessimistic views of elderly Malaysians which portray them as victims of family neglect – instead of a lack of social welfare policies. Malaysian newspapers remain focused on social issues related to aged care, whereas Australian newspapers keep the emphasis on financial issues.

Another similarity in discursive practices of the Australian and Malaysian press is the disproportion in the voices of politicians from the ruling parties and the opposition about aged care. In both countries, opposition leaders are given less space than their counterparts in government. However, the discrepancy is higher in the Malaysian press than the Australian as the Malaysian opposition leader is mentioned once in the dataset compared with the Prime Minister, who was quoted twenty-two times. In Australia, the opposition leader was quoted eleven times, mostly at the end of articles, compared to the Prime Minister, who was cited more than twenty times, including headlines and front-page coverage. The imbalance in press coverage for politicians in opposition and government indicates the role of journalists in supporting those in power and maintaining the status quo, however, the disproportion between the opposition and government leaders' views is significant in Malaysian newspapers compared to their Australian counterparts.

In short, journalists from both countries remained concentrated on politicians. While elites are important newsworthy actors, journalists have used other news values in the examples discussed in this chapter. It can be concluded that journalists in Australia used proximity, negativity, personalisation, consonance and timeliness in the reports, however, proximity and personalisation were used more frequently than other news values. In the Malaysian sample,

negativity dominated personalisation, proximity, consonance and impact. Reference to elite sources remains the most frequently used news value in both Australian and Malaysian newspapers, indicating the role of journalists in maintaining the status quo and imbalance of power in society.

Furthermore, it can be noted that neither the Australian nor the Malaysian press criticised or questioned government policies about aged care or included critical comments from the elderly, demonstrating the exercise of power and the gatekeeping role of the journalists. Overall, both Australian and Malaysian journalists promoted government-led strategies for aged care.

Conclusion:

This chapter discussed the relationship between the power of journalists and the elderly in Malaysia and Australia to analyse how Australian and Malaysian journalists used discursive controls to shape the debate about aged care. The analysis of news articles selected for this study affirms that journalists have exercised their power in controlling and prioritising the voices of different actors in news articles, for instance, elites are preferred over the elderly in both Australian and the Malaysian press. Moreover, lexical choices by journalists and the cited sources in news articles, in conjunction with the exclusion of the elderly from active participation in the debate, construct the elderly in Australia and Malaysia as passive rather than active participants of society.

Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusions

The preceding three chapters explored the main themes, key identities, news values in operation, and power relations amongst the elderly and the media in Australian and Malaysian newspapers. This chapter focusses on the broader implications of these findings within the context of socio-cultural practices and the role of journalists in the portrayal of elderly people in both countries. Macro-level issues are translated into micro-level by the use of language and through discursive practices. The language used by the journalists and cited sources in Australian newspapers propagates financial issues and financial identities for the elderly, whereas Malaysian journalists present elderly people within the context of social issues and social/familial identities.

In terms of lexical choices, elderly Malaysians are referred to as “parents” more than a hundred times, while Australian newspapers used such terms only six times in all sampled news articles. Similarly, Malaysian newspapers used the term “senior citizens” to address the elderly more than eighty times, compared to just two times in the Australian newspapers. In the Australian press, the umbrella term “elderly Australians” has been used widely, followed by a dichotomy of pensioners and non-pensioners to describe elderly people. However, Malaysian newspapers did not categorise the elderly as pensioners or non-pensioners. Such lexical choices not only demonstrate discursive practices by the journalists but also mirror broader discourses about aged care in the respective countries. In Australia, aged-care policies are designed around individuals, who are responsible for their own care, whereas in Malaysia, aged care is considered a family matter. In sum, it can be concluded that journalists from both countries promoted broader governmental and societal discourses about aged care in their countries.

In terms of analysis of news values, it can be argued that the Australian journalists used eliteness, timeliness, conflict, personalisation, and aesthetic (Caple & Bednarek 2016). The reference to elite people, in the context of this topic, remains the most significant news value

in the Australian press, as the loudest voices in the Australian press are those of the elites. However, timeliness remains the second most used news value, due to the up-to-date coverage of the reforms. Personalisation and aesthetic are used recessively and are found in a few examples: the most prominent example from the sample news articles is that of Reg and Del, in the story published by *The Australian* (2012) and discussed in section 5.3. However, in Malaysian newspapers, eliteness, negativity, human interest, appeal, and proximity are the most used news values. Eliteness is due to the dominance of the voices of elites, including political leaders, in the news articles. Negativity is used mostly in news stories about abandonment of the elderly. The journalists used news values such as personalisation and impact (Caple & Bednarek 2016) in the articles to provide a human face to the news stories and to persuade readers in discussions that mainly focus on familism and consequences of the shift away from familism.

Journalistic practices in both Malaysia and Australia differ: for instance, in Malaysia, Asian-based development journalism is practised, and in Australia, journalists consider themselves as watchdogs on government policies. Newspapers reflect public attitudes toward older people (Powell 2013) and also influence the construction of social identities for older people (Harwood 2008). The findings of the study suggest that despite an increasing number of older people around the world, they are underrepresented in the media in Australia and Malaysia. Instead, media discourses on ageing in both countries revolve around powerful elites, who discuss the issues in primarily economic/political terms. Such actions indicate strategies of media institutions that are used in sustaining unequal power relations (Fairclough 1995). It can be argued that newspaper texts construct, sustain and reproduce social inequalities, and media discourses can be considered a site of power relations (Wooffitt 2005).

The uniform trends – under-representation of the elderly and dominance of powerful elites - in the sampled newspapers from both countries indicate that media, regardless of geographical

location, foreground the interests of elites. The findings also suggest that journalists in both countries, to some extent, perpetuate official rhetoric about aged-care policies, and play a key role in the construction of particular identities for the elderly and ageing population.

The following section discusses the implications of the findings in detail, considering the socio-cultural practices and the role of the journalists in portraying the elderly in the press. The first half discusses the implications of findings from the Australian press and the second half focuses on the Malaysian press.

7.1 The Australian press and the elderly

Dominant discourses around ageing in the sampled Australian newspapers are in the language of economic rationalism, and aged care is constructed as a commodity. Elderly people are constructed mainly as consumers of aged care, reflecting and reinforcing official narratives towards the marketisation of care. The study found that most Australian journalists not only relayed official messages about the commodification of aged care without any critical engagement, but they also chose not to include many opposing opinions. Aged care cost the elderly a considerable sum of money; for instance, in 2016-17, elderly Australians paid approximately \$4.4 billion, excluding lump sum accommodation deposits, towards their living expenses, care and accommodation in residential care (Aged Care Financing Authority 2018). The absence of critical engagement from journalists for such actions can be seen as conflicting with their “first and foremost [role] as a watchdog on government” (Joseph & Richards 2012, p. 124). Other key roles for the press include providing a platform to exchange opinions (Hauser 1998) and holding those in power accountable to the public, rather than presenting their sentiments without significant criticism. Thus, the use of uncritical language by journalists in covering such issues normalises the structuring of discourses about ageing and aged care – such as promotion of neoliberal approaches to and marketisation of care – and indicates the

ideological approach of the papers. It is worth mentioning here that the papers do not necessarily follow the same ideological lines overall, but they appear to in this instance

While the prevalent identities constructed for elderly people in Australian newspapers are as consumers of aged care, newspapers also construct the elderly and an increasingly ageing population as a burden on the Australian economy. Inclusion of such discourses plays a vital role in spreading age-related stereotypes and can marginalise elderly people. While the Australian element of this study focused on newspaper coverage of aged-care policies and found that elderly Australians are represented as a financial burden, similar results are reported for health and social policies in Australia. For instance, Loughlin and Kendig (2017) argue that discourses of an ageing population as a burden are evident in health and social policies in Australia as elderly people are constructed depending on the finances of others, despite them financing their own care. Minichiello et al. (2000) cited in Loughlin and Kendig (2017, p. 30) argue “stereotyping and associated discrimination can be more damaging to an individual than the experience of ageing and older age itself with recognised consequences for age equality and social inclusion.” Similarly, O’Loughlin et al. (2017, p. 2) argue that

while there are many challenges associated with population ageing, there also are opportunities that are often overlooked. Rather than seeing all older people as a “burden” or “unproductive” once they leave the paid workforce, we need to acknowledge the social and economic contributions they continue to make as consumers, carers and volunteers and draw on and put to good use the knowledge, skills and experiences they have acquired across their life course.

It can also be argued that prevalent discourses in the Australian press focus on financial issues, and ignore the social issues linked with the elderly. Despite most elderly people relying on informal care, primarily provided by the family, there is minimal discussion about the role of

family in looking after the elderly (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015). Almost ninety per cent of elderly Australians live in private households and rely on their families for care (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015). According to O'Loughlin et al. (2017, p. 4) "widows and never-married men are the most likely groups to be in residential care, reflecting the importance of family care networks for older Australians". However, the language used by most Australian journalists presents the elderly in predominantly economic terms. For example, a suggestion to sell one's home, quoted in almost all the newspapers, contrasts with the findings of Stones and Gullifer (2016) who note that the preference of an overwhelming majority of Australian elderly people is to remain in their homes and age in place. Ageing in place is defined as "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2013).

Other discourses that are absent in the discussion about aged care in the sampled Australian newspapers are issues linked with elderly people who live in remote parts of Australia. Most examples in the dataset show the broader picture of Australians living in urban areas. However, most newspapers fail to discuss or even mention the problems of elderly Australians who live in remote communities and cannot access well-established nursing homes or other forms of care. Most policies discussed by the journalists directly or reproduced from the cited sources do not address the issues of ethnic minorities and people living in remote areas. The exclusion from the Australian press of issues linked to older Australians from ethnic minorities, and those who live away from cities, supports the findings of Gibb (2018, p. 13), who claims that "in Australia, policies governing practical servicing of the needs of aged people in these areas, supporting them to age in place, are virtually non-existent".

7.2 Malaysian elderly, Malaysian newspapers, and the decline of familism

Media discourses explored in this study reflect and reinforce the social norms in the respective countries. Different wording derives from different ideological position (Fairclough 1995b). The language used across the board in Malaysian newspapers represents elderly Malaysians as part of a family, particularly, parents who need to be taken care of by their children in the same way as was done by their parents, which hints towards tacit intergenerational contracts which are reproduced (Lorenz-Meyer & Grotheer 2002) and encouraged by media discourses. The reproduction and reinforcement of social norms by the media affirm Malaysia's National Family Policy which advocates the concept of "Family Well-being" based on family values to impart positive values from generation to generation, in tandem to create a caring society (Mohd Hashim 2014). Moreover, the Malaysian government has introduced tax relief and deductions for the medical expenses of parents, an extension of civil service medical benefits, to reinforce the role and responsibilities of the family unit (Hamid & Tyng, 2017). The prevalent discourses explored in Malaysian newspapers about familial piety can be linked to government strategies to keep the financial implications of the increasingly ageing population within the family. If families, as reported in some instances in the dataset, gave up their roles as carers, the responsibility of such older people may fall on charity homes or government-run nursing homes.

The findings of the study suggest that most Malaysian newspapers discuss social issues linked with the elderly and ignore the financial implications associated with the care of elderly people. The study explored news stories about the abandonment of the elderly in hospitals and accounts of some elderly people who had been abandoned by their children. The reasons for the abandonment are not explicitly discussed, but may be linked to the financial dependence of older Malaysians. This financial dependence may signal parents' confidence in the existing social norm of familial piety and also a lack of financial preparation for their future. Hamid

and Tyng (2017) argue that only a handful of Malaysians have made adequate preparations for old age, with others leaving it to chance or fate because they do not know how to prepare. However, in all the discussion about aged care, journalists have not mentioned the role of the government in providing social welfare for older people.

The lack of critical engagement by the Malaysian journalists can be linked to social norms that prevent challenges to social hierarchy, which maintains a high regard for “people in authority, such as community leaders” (Puteh-Behak et al. 2015, p. 187). The Asian-based development journalism that focuses on nation-building (Hachten 1993) also discourages journalists from criticism, which is “deemed dangerous in the context of politically frail and culturally divided countries” (Waisbord 2010, p. 149), such as Malaysia. Along with self-censorship, Malaysian journalists have to face strict censorship laws. Malaysia has a history of exercising these laws, which is evident in its low ranking – 145th out of 180 countries in 2018 – for freedom of the press (Reporters Without Borders 2018). Overall, it can be maintained that harmonious relationships between the press and politicians, mostly from Barisan Nasional due to their shares in ownership of most Malaysian newspapers, and the dominance of elite people in news coverage in the Malaysian press can be considered as what Waisbord (2010, p. 155) describes as “some of the challenges that narrow the scope of journalism globally”.

In sum, it can be concluded that the analysis of the sampled newspapers from both Australia and Malaysia indicates that elderly people are not only underrepresented in the media, but also that their issues are not prioritised by journalists in either country. The inclusion and exclusion of certain topics in the news articles in the dataset shows the discursive control by the journalists and also indicates the type of journalism being practised. Unlike the Malaysian press, the Australian newspapers are free from state control and are owned by private companies, rather than by allies of political parties. Still, when it comes to speaking freely about the problems of older people, Australian journalists tend to support government policies

that benefit capitalists. Such practices can be linked with economic elements of newspapers, such as advertising revenue from government departments and businesses (Priest 2011).

The study of the sampled newspapers also demonstrates that overall portrayal of elderly people in both Australia and Malaysia is not positive. The examples examined in this thesis show that due to an increasingly ageing population and cost of care, negative portrayal of the elderly can be found in both Australian and Malaysian newspapers as older people are constructed as a financial burden on exchequers in Australia and on the family in Malaysia. However, according to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 (MIPAA) – the outcome document of the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid, Spain, in 2002 – media should promote positive images of ageing, highlighting the “wisdom, strengths, contributions, courage and resourcefulness of older women and men, including older persons with disabilities”, and avoid ageism (United Nations 2003; Powell 2013, p. 61). Overall, both Australian and Malaysian newspapers fail to implement the MIPAA agenda about positive portrayal of ageing, as none of the positive traits of elderly people, particularly “resourcefulness of older women and men”, are found in the dataset.

7.3 Conclusions and recommendations

This study examined media discourses used in the portrayal of elderly people in Australia and Malaysia. Articles from mainstream newspapers from both countries were selected as a dataset to enable the language used by journalists in constructing identities for older people and an increasingly ageing population to be explored. The dominant discourses in the Australian newspapers promote the marketisation of aged care and the politicisation of aged care. Journalists have made lexical choices to construct an array of identities for elderly Australians: primarily as consumers of aged care, voters and/or a burden on the Australian economy. However, the main discourses in the Malaysian newspapers include familism and the impact of shifts away from it. In short, familial piety remains the focal point in the sampled Malaysian

papers. Correspondingly, the primary identities constructed for elderly people in the Malaysian press include parents, senior citizens and a burden. The difference in the media portrayal of ageing in the two countries indicates that the elderly and ageing population is constructed in financial terms in Australia and social terms in Malaysia – this lines up with both culture and policy in each country. The common identities constructed for elderly people in both countries are financial burden and passive users of care, implying negative representation of older people.

Recommendations

Despite differences in journalistic practices and aged care policies, the study found some common trends in reporting on issues linked with elderly people in Australian and Malaysian newspapers. The commonalities in both countries are in terms of negative language use in describing elderly people and increasingly ageing populations, and representing older people as a burden. Hence, the findings of this study suggest recommendations for journalists in reporting on issues related to ageing and aged care: firstly, general recommendations for both countries, followed by specific recommendations for each country.

As noted above, journalists from both countries presented elderly people as a financial burden, either on government or on their family, and passive users of care. Propagation of discourses about the reliance of elderly people on care exacerbates existing stereotypes associated with old age. Hence, it is recommended that journalists move away from reporting in a way that produces, promotes, and propagates such stereotypical descriptions of older people in news, as well as promoting positive images of older people, reflecting their contributions to the development of nations, or least a neutral representation. It can be argued that it is not possible to entirely avoid negative representation, but it should be possible to promote positive images while minimising negative images. Similar sentiments were expressed by Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations, while marking 1999 as the International Year

of Older Persons that “a society for all ages is one that does not caricature older persons as patients and pensioners. Instead, it seeks a balance between supporting dependency and investing in lifelong development” (Annan 1998).

Secondly, this study found that in the discussion about issues related to elderly people and increasingly ageing populations, voices of elite people remain the loudest in both Australian and Malaysian newspapers, while elderly people are given minimal to no voice. The lack of views from elderly people in the sampled articles indicates that journalists failed to provide a platform for elderly people to express their views, which goes against the notion that the media should provide a forum to all constituents of society (Wilding et al. 2018). Also, such actions indicate strategies of media institutions in sustaining unequal power relations (Fairclough 1995) in society: to reduce – as it may not be possible to eliminate it – unequal power relationships and pacification of elderly people in newspapers, it is recommended that journalists in both Australia and Malaysia incorporate the views of elderly people, especially about issues that directly concern them. Elderly citizens have the same rights as other citizens to be given adequate space in newspapers to have their views heard.

The following section includes specific recommendations for Australian journalists, followed by the same for their Malaysian counterparts.

a. For Australian journalists

The main focus of the Australian newspapers remains on the financial aspects of aged care, and the language used constructs the elderly as users. The dominance of financial issues tends to overshadow social issues. The minimal discussion about the social aspects of aged care indicates that elderly people are, on the whole, not constructed as a part of a broader community. It is more important than ever to construct elderly Australians as a part of community as the number of elderly people is on the rise in Australia. It is recommended to

journalists to broaden the representation of elderly Australians and represent them as they are seen in society, such as neighbours, volunteers, citizens, parents, grandparents, and so forth, instead of just users of aged-care services.

Secondly, the lexical choices made by some journalists to describe the increasingly ageing population in Australia, such as “demographic bomb” and “time bomb”, contribute to the continuation of stereotypes about older people in Australia. The findings of this study recommend Australian journalists avoid using such language.

Thirdly, the study found that most Australian newspapers described elderly Australians as a dichotomy of pensioners/non-pensioners, which detached elderly people from other components of society. It is recommended that instead of representing older people as a uniform cohort and limiting them to certain brackets, elderly Australians be represented as they are – diverse and non-uniform – just like any other cohort of population.

Finally, Australian journalists – who “see themselves first and foremost as a watchdog on government” (Joseph & Richards 2012, p. 124) – were not found to be engaging critically in conveying official discourses in this study, particularly in discussing marketisation of aged care. Instead, most promoted official rhetoric about aged care in Australia as journalists prioritised the views of politicians and aged-care providers over elderly Australians. Overall, this study recommends Australian journalists broaden the representation of elderly Australians to diverse and non-uniform, avoid pejorative language use in describing the increasingly ageing population, and reinvigorate their role as a Fourth Estate of democracy to make those in power accountable for the welfare of older Australians.

b. For Malaysian journalists

This study found that main focus of Malaysian newspapers remains on social issues linked with elderly Malaysians and that journalists relay messages that encourage filial piety and promote

familism. Little attention is given in Malaysian newspapers to the financial implications of aged care, as family members are mostly responsible for care. Promotion of filial piety and familism by the Malaysian press is done not just to preserve historically practised Asian values and norms, but also to provide financial relief to the Malaysian government – preservation of familism spares government from spending on care for the increasingly ageing population. This study demonstrates that Malaysian journalists promote government-led narratives, which is indicative of development journalism, and which affects older people adversely. The analysis shows that welfare of older Malaysians remained at stake in a shift away from familism, but Malaysian journalists avoided mentioning the possible role of government in looking after older people even in the reportage about abandonment of elderly people by their families. This study recommends Malaysian journalists rethink their role as government partner and consider alternative approaches to journalism as development journalism does not seem to be appropriate to report on the issues related to the welfare of elderly people at a time when number of elderly people is rising in Malaysia. The findings of this study suggest a greater shift away from development journalism and towards the role of journalists as watchdog on those in power, for the welfare of citizens, especially older people who are not only suffering due to a shift away from familism but also due to the silence of journalists about government aged-care policies that are failing elderly Malaysians.

Secondly, this study found insensitivity in reporting about elderly people and their issues by journalists and sources cited in some of the news reports examined in this study. Terms such as “inmates”, “elderly orphans”, and “abandoned” are used in news articles to refer to elderly people. These terms are not socially accepted in Malaysian society, as historically and customarily, older people in Asian society have been treated with respect, evident in the social norms of bowing while greeting and kissing their hands. Therefore, it is recommended that

journalists use language that portrays elderly people in more positive ways which are socially and culturally acceptable and preserve the social status of elderly Malaysians.

Conclusion:

This research critically examined and compared media discourses used in the portrayal of the elderly and age-related issues in mainstream newspapers of two culturally different countries with rapidly increasing numbers of older people.

In order to achieve the aims of the study, the following research objectives were framed:

1. To micro analyse the selected news reports' language and discursive techniques used in the portrayal of elderly people to explore dialectic relationships between media discourses and press to understand the construction of social identities for older people.
2. To analyse the microstructure of media discourses to investigate how media discursively construct shifting demographic trends by examining what has been included/excluded and foregrounded/backgrounded in representing the elderly in newspapers.

Journalists in both countries have discursively constructed identities for elderly people by making lexical choices in describing them and issues related to them, reporting on certain angles of news stories, prioritising certain news actors over others and making some voices louder than others. Vasterman (1995) argues that journalists do not just report news, they “create news”, they create facts, statements, and “a context in which these facts make sense”, in short, “they reconstruct ‘a’ reality” (pp. 509- 512). Even the recitation of ‘facts’ in a news story is subject to the choices and opinions of journalists, as journalists are more than clerks (Lippman 1992, p. 342), but also interpret and prioritise information.

This study attempted to answer the following research questions about the portrayal of elderly people in Australian and Malaysian newspapers.

1. What kind of language is employed in the construction of identities for the elderly in Malaysian and Australian newspapers?

The language used to describe elderly people by journalists and the cited sources in the sampled articles differs between Australian and Malaysian newspapers due to differences in socio-cultural practices and variations in journalism practice in the two countries. For instance, Australian newspapers more often than not used “users/consumers” of aged care and “elderly Australians” for elderly people, while Malaysian newspapers frequently referred to elderly people as “parents” and “senior citizens”.

2. What identities are constructed in the media discourses about ageing and the elderly in Australia and Malaysia?

Identities constructed for elderly Australians directly or by implication in the sampled news articles are (a) users/consumers of aged care – affluent people, and (b) dependent – burden, (c) national/political identity, and (d) relational/interpersonal identity. Main identities constructed – directly or by implication – for elderly people in Malaysian newspapers are (a) familial identities, (b) social identities, (c) financial identities, and (d) the elderly as victims.

3. What discursive practices are involved in the portrayal of the elderly, and what are the main themes of the articles written about older people and age-linked issues in Australian and Malaysian newspapers?

Discursive practices involved foregrounding the voices of elite people, especially politicians, and backgrounding and in instances omitting the voices of elderly people in the discussion of issues linked with older people in both Australian and Malaysian newspapers. This study also suggests that news values influence discursive practices, as reference to elites exceeds other news values in both countries.

4. What are the similarities and differences in media discourses and language used to frame the elderly and age-related matters given the differences in socio-cultural, media policies,

journalistic practices, and social welfare policies for the elderly in Australia and Malaysian, and do how these differences impact media discourses about the elderly and ageing populations?

The differences in socio-cultural environment, media policies, journalistic practices, and social welfare policies for the elderly in Australia and Malaysia resulted in different themes in both countries. The main themes explored in Australian newspapers are (1) marketisation of aged care, and (2) politicisation of aged care. The marketisation of aged care is further divided into sub-themes (a) aged care as a commodity, and (b) the economics of aged care. The politicisation of aged care is branched as (a) quality of aged care, and (b) intergenerational wrangling. Main themes explored in Malaysian newspapers around the care of elderly people are (1) family support – familism; (2) shift away from familism – detraditionalisation of aged care; and (3) social welfare – nursing homes.

In sum, it can be concluded that elderly people in both Australia and Malaysia are underrepresented in the media and that the portrayal of elderly people is not positive. The examples analysed in this thesis show that due to an increasingly ageing population and cost of care, a negative portrayal of the elderly is found in both Australian and Malaysian newspapers as older people are constructed as a financial burden on exchequers in Australia and on the family in Malaysia. The findings of this study support previous studies, such as The Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) and David and Alagappar (2013), by demonstrating that older people are underrepresented in Australian and Malaysian media and that media portrayal of elderly people in both countries is negative. Similar findings were also reported by studies in America, Canada and at the global level, such as Powel (2013), Rozonova (2010) and Milner et al. (2012). It can be argued that ageism is a global issue as ageist stereotypes are found in media discourses from different parts of the world. The study suggests that newspapers play an important role in propagating negative views about the elderly and in

keeping their respective governments away from the financial burden of care by promoting individualistic approaches to care in Australia and familial approaches in Malaysia.

While this study suggests recommendations for journalists in both Australia and Malaysia to promote a fairer, balanced and more positive representation of elderly people, it can be maintained that these recommendations may not immediately change media representations of elderly people in both countries from negative to positive but can help to minimise negative portrayal of older people and increasingly ageing populations. Especially, a much-needed shift away from development journalism could bring a significant change in ways issues associated with elderly people are discussed in the media.

While this study examines only two countries, focuses only on newspapers, considers a limited number of media owners, and includes a set period of time – all of which could be considered limitations - it explores key themes related to the coverage of elderly people in news media and suggests questions for future research, particularly incorporating the views of elderly people themselves about their media representation. This could be undertaken through interviews and focus groups with elderly people in both countries. The study also suggests questions about the representation of elderly people in other forms of media, such as social media, television, and films, to construct a clearer picture of media portrayal of ageing in Australia and Malaysia. Also, future studies can be broadened to other countries, and can focus on elderly people from ethnic and religious minorities and other marginalised groups – such as Aboriginal elderly in Australia, Malaysia, and Canada – to observe how mainstream media in different countries portray older people from certain minority groups.

To conclude, this thesis critically examined and compared media discourses used in the portrayal of the elderly and age-related issues in mainstream newspapers of two culturally different countries with rapidly increasing numbers of older people. The study used Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis to examine links between text,

discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice and explore hidden meanings in the media discourses. This study found that journalists in both countries have discursively constructed identities for elderly people by making lexical choices in describing them and issues related to them, reporting on certain angles of news stories, prioritising certain news actors over others and making some voices louder than others. In particular, prevalent identities for elderly people in the Australian press are constructed in financial terms, while social terms are used by Malaysian journalists to construct identities for elderly Malaysians. The differences in the media portrayal of ageing in the two countries line up with both culture and policy in each country.

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Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Sample news articles – Australian press

April 2012

Local

Family home safe in aged care overhaul

Sid Maher, Stephen Lunn

ADDITIONAL REPORTING: AAP

926 words

20 April 2012

The Australian

AUSTLN

1 - All-round Country

1

English

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JULIA Gillard's aged care overhaul will ignore expert economic advice that the family home be included in an assets test to rein in ballooning costs in the \$12 billion-a-year sector.

The Prime Minister will today unveil her plan for the crumbling care system but will shun the Productivity

Commission's advice to include the family home when assessing the cost of care.

The decision spares the government from a political row over measures that might have forced Australians to sell their family homes and marks a capitulation to warnings from lobby groups, including National Seniors, against "blindly" following the commission's blueprint.

Instead, the government has decided to make it easier for people to hold on to their bricks and mortar assets and use them to finance their care.

Ms Gillard is expected to outline the policy with the Minister for Ageing, Mark Butler, in Canberra today with the assurance that nobody would be forced into an "emergency firesale" of their home.

"If you want a nursing home place, we will make it easier to get one," the Prime Minister will say. "If you want care in the home, we will make it easier to get that care.

"More people will get to keep their home -- and more people will get to stay in their home."

Brisbane retiree Reg Hotchman, 78, has been married to wife Del for 54 years, and knows that while they are both fit and well now, the coming years will see them needing more and more aged-care services.

He welcomes measures that would boost the chances of those services being provided in their home for as long as possible.

“It's really about your independence,” Mr Hotchman said. “This is your comfort zone.

“We've got good neighbours on both sides. We know the local area well. Our children and grandchildren know this place.

“We would prefer to stay here and have services brought in. I know cooking meals and doing the cleaning will get harder and harder into the future, and that's where we'd like some assistance.”

Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 1

The Productivity Commission's final report called for radical investment plans to reshape the sector, warning that annual federal outlays on aged care would grow five-fold to \$50bn by 2050.

Labor needs to address a \$1.9bn blowout in aged care costs caused by a new method of assessing whether residents require higher care and thus higher government subsidies.

The government's response will offer those entering residential care a choice of either paying through a lump sum, such as a bond, or a periodic payment or a combination of both.

One element of the package will see the allocation of \$268.4m over five years for people with dementia. More than half the funding will assist people receiving home care packages and those in residential care, with the government announcing increased support for doctors to undertake more timely dementia diagnosis, and a stronger focus on people with younger onset dementia.

The government estimates nearly one million Australians will have dementia by 2050.

The government's last round of aged care allocations assessed 24,000 elderly people as requiring help to stay in their own homes but only 1800 places were allocated.

The shift towards greater user-pays in the overburdened sector is designed to reduce the growing long-term costs of aged care as Australia's population faces a demographic time bomb.

There is expected to be an increase in the co-contribution, but the contributions will be capped depending on income.

The Australian understands the package will include a relaxation of some income restrictions for those pensioners entering residential care.

People's ability to pay will be taken into account in setting aged care costs. Extra funding is expected to be allocated to innovative in-home care programs through a crackdown on subsidy

orting by aged care operators, efficiencies from having a single national regulator, and wealthy seniors paying a larger share.

Government sources said there had been spikes in unusual subsidy claims for high-care residents, particularly in Queensland and South Australia, and identifying them could redirect money to where it was needed most.

The package includes an increase in home care packages that provide help with cooking, cleaning and shopping and nursing, and are aimed at allowing tens of thousands more older Australians to stay in their home while they are receiving care.

Sources in the aged-care sector said the government was acutely aware of the entrenched resistance older people have to including the family home in any asset test to decide their contribution to aged care, and it is likely to be seen as too difficult to sell in the current political climate.

The commission called for an end to government caps on the number of aged care beds that could be offered under existing licenses, arguing this would free up supply. And it outlined a series of steps that would end the current reliance on big upfront bond payments for older Australians to get a place in an aged care facility, in many cases forcing them to sell their family homes.

The government was urged to create a scheme called an aged care home credit, which would allow older Australians to use a government line of credit to realise some of the value of their family home, although the funds could only be used for aged care.

THE AUSTRALIAN



CRUISE SHIPS TO BE BANNED FROM AUSTRALIAN WATERS BY 2015, GOVERNMENT SAYS

NBN rival has merits: Telstra

Telstra has said it will support the National Broadband Network (NBN) but also believes it has merits of its own. The company says it will continue to invest in its own fibre-optic network, which it says is faster and more reliable than the NBN. Telstra also says it will continue to offer its own broadband services, which it says are more affordable than the NBN. The company says it will continue to offer its own services, which it says are more reliable than the NBN.



Small image caption text.

Telstra's chief executive, Andrew Mackenzie, said the company was committed to providing the best broadband services to Australians. He said the company would continue to invest in its own network, which it says is faster and more reliable than the NBN. Mackenzie also said the company would continue to offer its own services, which it says are more affordable than the NBN.

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Budget axe looms over super breaks

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The government is expected to announce a budget that will include a new tax on superannuation. This is a vertical column of text on the left side of the page, likely a continuation of an article or a separate short piece.

Family home sale in aged care overhaul



The government is expected to announce a budget that will include a new tax on superannuation. This is a vertical column of text on the left side of the page, likely a continuation of an article or a separate short piece.

Condition's environmental one-stop shop

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Gourmet Traveller Wine's highest rated new wine release

Small text and graphics at the bottom of the page, including a bottle of wine and promotional text.

The Australian

Local

People will have to pay more, Abbott says THE OPPOSITION - AGED CARE OVERHAUL -

STEFANIE BALOGH, JARED OWENS

393 words

21 April 2012

TONY Abbott says many people will be forced to pay more for aged care under Labor's package but the pain will not be felt until after the election, while the Greens warned they would not support cuts to services dressed up as reforms.

Speaking in Brisbane, the Opposition Leader conceded the \$12 billion a year aged-care sector was "under strain" but said the Coalition would take time to respond to Julia Gillard's reforms. "Obviously if there's going to be more means testing and more elements of user pays in this system, lots of Australians are going to pay more," Mr Abbott said.

"That is a fact of life, given that the government is proposing to go down this road."

Opposition spokeswoman for the ageing Concetta Fierravanti-Wells said while Labor's headline figure of \$3.7bn for a five-year package sounded impressive, the new money was \$577 million.

"The rest is a result of means-testing and of simply cutting funding from one part of the sector and redirecting it to another," she said.

"Everyone, except for full-pay pensioners, will now pay more for their aged care. The changes won't start until after July 1, 2014, so the pain will not be felt until well after the next federal election."

Greens leader Christine Milne was more positive, saying her party would support Labor's reforms as long as they did not reduce entitlements.

"We absolutely need reform of aged care, and we need to be listening carefully to the sector, but we don't want to see cuts to aged care dressed up as reforms," Senator Milne said.

"We want people to be able to be supported at home, with as many services as can be provided to do that."

Greens spokeswoman on ageing Rachel Siewert said the government's increase to home-care places from 59,876 to 99,669 over five years reflected changing attitudes in how services were delivered for older people.

"Home care is an important component of an effective aged-care system and helps people to remain in their own homes and in familiar surroundings for longer," Ms Siewert said. "The contribution this makes to a good quality of life cannot be overestimated."

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Local

Increase in services key to \$3.7bn plan NUTS AND BOLTS - AGED CARE OVERHAUL -

JOE KELLY

500 words

21 April 2012

The Australian

AN increase in home-care services is the centrepiece of Labor's \$3.7 billion package to buttress the sustainability of the aged care system.

The number of home-care packages will be lifted from 59,876 to 99,669 over the next five years, and the government will enforce stricter means-testing from July 2014 to reduce its funding contribution from 84 per cent to 76 per cent. Full pensioners will not be asked to pay a care fee, while annual caps of \$5000 and \$10,000 will apply to part pensioners and self-funded retirees respectively.

Under the package, \$1.9bn will go towards creating better access to aged-care services, \$1.2bn to tackling shortages in the aged care workforce, \$54.8 million to support services for carers and \$268.4m to handling dementia.

Nursing homes places will be lifted from 191,522 to 221,103 over five years. The package will combine the income and asset tests in what is being described as an equity measure to ensure asset-rich and income-poor people do not pay for all their accommodation costs while income-rich and asset-poor people pay for care but not accommodation.

The family home is excluded from the means test, and residents' annual contribution will be capped at \$25,000 while a lifetime cap of \$60,000 will apply.

New payment flexibility measures will be implemented from July 2014 to ensure people can pay either in a lump sum or in periodic rental payments to secure a place, rather than having to pay a bond of up to \$2.5m, which is sometimes financed by selling off the family home. Aged care providers will not be allowed to give preference to people according to their payment method.

A further \$486.9m will be provided to increase the accommodation supplement for those who cannot afford to meet their accommodation costs. By cracking down on rorts from providers claiming unnecessary federal subsidies, the government hopes to claw back about \$1.6bn through the Aged care Funding Instrument.

A new \$26.4m Aged care Financing Authority will be established to provide independent advice on pricing and financing issues, including subsidies, with an eye to ensuring the ongoing sustainability of the sector. It will consist of a committee of independent experts as well as representatives from industry, consumer groups and government.

To combat high staff turnover rates and increase numbers from 304,000 to the 827,100 needed by 2050, an advisory group will develop a "workforce compact" to attract and retain staff.

The compact will increase wages for carers, enhancing their training and education as well as career opportunities and look at ways to improve work practices.

The chairperson of the advisory group will be appointed by Workplace Relations Minister Bill Shorten, in consultation with Minister for the Ageing Mark Butler and new Fair Work Australia president Iain Ross.

Document AUSTLN0020120420e8410000u

Local

PM's bid to avert crisis in aged care MORE CHOICE BUT BEDS NOT GUARANTEED

STEPHEN LUNN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS WRITER

1,049 words

21 April 2012

The Australian

THE guarantee of quality aged care remains an aspiration for older Australians rather than a Medicare-style entitlement after Julia Gillard yesterday unveiled her new "user-pays" plan to cope with a rapidly ageing population.

Both the Business Council of Australia and the peak aged-consumer group, COTA Australia, raised concerns that the government had missed the opportunity to implement key elements of the comprehensive aged care blueprint laid down by the Productivity Commission eight months ago.

The Gillard government's much-anticipated response yesterday to the commission's Caring for Older Australians report did address two key concerns of those entering their twilight years: ensuring more aged-care services are provided at home, so the elderly are not prematurely pushed into a nursing home; and being protected from a forced fire sale of their family home to secure an aged care place.

The plan also rejected the commission's recommendation to include the family home in calculating a person's capacity to contribute to his or her care under the new user-pays model.

The recommendation had sparked widespread animosity among senior Australians since the commission handed down its report last August.

Under Labor's reforms, people will have more choice about how to pay for their residential-care accommodation -- either through a lump sum, or with periodic rental style payments.

That will end the bond-style system that the Prime Minister pointed out ran to as much as \$2.5 million, and bore no resemblance to the actual cost of accommodation provided. The government won widespread praise for dealing with a critical supply-side impediment to providing quality aged care -- low wages -- with a \$1.2 billion injection of funding into the carers workforce over five years.

The commission had called for an end to the rationed system of residential places and care packages, to be replaced by a basic "entitlement" to approved aged-care services wherever a person lived.

While the government committed yesterday to 40,000 new in-home care packages and put in place measures to deliver 30,000 additional residential-care places in its new package, it stopped short of ending the ration system.

Ian Yates, chief executive of COTA Australia, said: "We are a little disappointed that the package falls short of giving older people an entitlement to aged care. We hope the proposed five-year review of the package will be the opportunity to revisit this issue."

Rohan Mead, chairman of the BCA's Healthy Australia Taskforce, said it was disappointing the government did not fully commit to the commission's "widely supported reform prescriptions" for the sector.

Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 1

"Services will still not be available on a needs-basis," Mr Mead said. "For example, with over 130,000 people turning 75 in 2012-13, only 4901 additional home-care packages will be provided. Next year, over 95 per cent of people born in 1938 will be denied access to home care, even if they have high needs.

"The changes will not increase access to quality care or boost choice and the overall sustainability of the sector."

In launching the Living Longer, Living Better policy in Canberra yesterday, Ms Gillard said the nation's baby boomers, those born between 1945 and 1965, "clearly want more options and choices than older Australians sought in the past".

"The baby boomers changed what it meant to be a teenager; they've shaped our life, changed what it meant to be adult Australians and they will change our conception of ageing as well," the Prime Minister said.

Her government's new aged care package, touted as a \$3.7bn plan, will increase the number of Home-Care Packages -- services such as cooking, cleaning and bathing -- from 60,000 to about 100,000, and be "consumer-directed" so older people have more say on the types of care they receive.

It will become a "user-pays" system by introducing a means test to determine how much part-pensioners and self-funded retirees will contribute to their aged care needs, both in home care and then later in residential care, to a lifetime cap of \$60,000.

A safety net will be maintained for pensioners and the new means-testing arrangements won't be introduced until July 1, 2014. Running counter to the recommendations of the Productivity Commission, the means test will not include the value of the family home. Mr Yates said while the government had accepted a Productivity Commission's case for richer people to pay more of their aged care costs than full pensioners, it had shied away from including the family home in the means test for political reasons. "A lot of anxiety was generated about that issue and it became clear it was simply too hard for a minority government," Mr Yates said.

Ms Gillard acknowledged the government's new aged care package contained little new money and would be funded largely through redirecting money between existing services. As such it would not be a major expenditure item in the upcoming budget. "It's not a budget measure per se," Ms Gillard said.

"There's some new funding here, but for the most part the funding for the package comes from a combination of redirected funding and means-testing."

Martin Laverty, chief executive of leading aged care service provider Catholic Health Australia, noted the lack of new money in the package.

"It's a very modest increase in the amount of funding going into the aged-care sector, around \$115m a year," Mr Laverty said. He said an increase in the accommodation supplement to aged care providers from \$32.58 to \$52.84 a person a day would help aged care homes "concentrate on providing quality rather than just keeping the front door open".

National Seniors chief executive Michael O'Neill said the package was "good news for the average punter who wants to stay in their own home for as long as they can".

Tony Abbott said means-testing would mean many Australians would pay more for their aged care.

Document AUSTLN0020120420e84100002

Local

\$1.2bn for workforce welcomed THE PROVIDERS - AGED CARE OVERHAUL -
STEPHEN LUNN

ADDITIONAL REPORTING: AAP

540 words

21 April 2012

The Australian

THE Gillard government's decision to pour an additional \$1.2 billion over the next five years into overcoming workforce shortages in the aged-care sector was welcomed by providers and consumers as an important move to improve services and help handle future increases in demand.

Catholic Health Australia, the nation's largest network of non-government aged-care services, said the introduction of new payment options would improve the quality and sustainability of residential aged-care services.

Industry groups welcomed the plan to spend up to \$1.2bn to tackle labour shortages in the sector.

"This package will lift wages and begin to attract workers back to the industry and encourage others to stay," said Louise Tarrant, national secretary of United Voice, the union representing aged care workers.

The Council on the Ageing was disappointed the government had not taken up a recommendation to make aged care an entitlement similar to Medicare.

"Until we do that, we've still got to be having concerns there'll be people missing out," said chief executive Ian Yates.

Dementia care is set for a \$268.4 million boost over five years, with Alzheimer's Australia saying the package would go a long way towards meeting the needs of the rising number of sufferers. "The government's decisions are both a reward and a relief to those 280,000 Australians with dementia and their 1.2 million carers," president Ita Buttrose said.

Aged Care Association Australia chief executive Rod Young said the proposals were not perfect, but did recognise that most people wanted to stay in their homes for as long as possible.

"It was a shame the government has not been prepared to adopt all of the reforms recommended by the Productivity Commission -- however, the package announced today does achieve many of the policy objectives sought by aged care providers," Mr Young said.

“The package appears to provide a solution to the perennial issue of insufficient capital whilst recognising that most Australians wish to stay in their home for all their lives and remain independent for as long as possible.”

The new policy provides a strong safety net for those with limited means, he said.

Australian Nursing Federation federal secretary Lee Thomas said the proposed measures were a “victory for hard-working nurses and care staff” across the country.

Ms Thomas said the nurses would be relieved extra funding would go towards higher wages, improved career structures, better training and education, and workforce planning.

“This is the largest investment in Australia's aged care workforce and is a significant victory for the sector's underpaid nursing and care staff,” Ms Thomas said.

“We are confident this extra funding will now assist in closing the wages gap for aged care workers and will result in more nurses being attracted to and retained in the sector.”

Sandra Hills, chief executive of aged care provider Benetas, welcomed the reforms and said the extra funding for the workforce was “long overdue and highlights the respect our government holds for the thousands of committed, dedicated and caring staff who work in the aged-care sector with passion and pride every day”.

Document AUSTLN0020120420e84100014

Features

A responsible step in aged care

605 words

21 April 2012

Boosting home-based services makes sense

A REVIEW of aged-care services was long overdue. More than a million Australians receive aged care and their numbers are likely to grow to 3.5 million by 2050. The Gillard government's \$3.7 billion overhaul of the sector announced yesterday is a constructive step. It addresses pressing issues such as the increasing demand for home-based care, support for dementia sufferers, attracting more workers to the sector and the need for more respite care, but it remains to be seen whether the promised resources will be adequate, given the growing demand, or whether future governments will need to revisit the Productivity Commission's unpopular but practical option of creating a government-backed credit scheme to provide for the use of reverse mortgage facilities on family homes to help fund care costs. What is certain is that the nation faces steep increases in the costs of caring for our senior citizens. Australia has about five people in the paid workforce for every person aged over 65, but that ratio is set to fall to 2.5 workers by 2042, increasing pressure on the community as costs soar.

In view of its budgetary position and the challenges of an ageing society, the Gillard government had no choice but to means-test home-based care subsidy packages, with the family home exempted from the means test. The indexed annual caps of \$5000 for part-pensioners and \$10,000 for self-funded retirees and the lifetime indexed cap of \$60,000 are not unreasonable, but as Henry Ergas argues today, it would make sense to allow individuals

and couples to insure themselves against such charges in the same way they can insure themselves against health costs.

As more couples and individuals opt to stay in their own homes for as long as possible, it makes sense that the government has almost doubled the provision of home-based care services. Julia Gillard's admission that fewer than 2000 of the 24,000 applications for community care packages received last year were met demonstrates the urgency of the problem. The trend towards home care, however, does not negate the need for residential aged care for many frail and elderly people, and the projected rise in residential care places from 191,522 to 221,103 might not be sufficient. Families who have found suitable places difficult to find for elderly relatives would have preferred to see the government adopt the Productivity Commission's recommendation to deregulate the number of beds, a move that would have encouraged investment in the sector. The process of finding a place, however, will be assisted by the "My Aged Care" website that will offer detailed information on quality.

While the government has shied away from establishing a scheme for home owners to fund their residential care through reverse mortgages, banks and finance companies will continue to develop what has become a growing market, with about 50,000 elderly borrowers already drawing about \$3bn in reverse mortgage loans.

Faced with the need to fund quality aged care, the option is a valid one to be considered and is preferable to the scenario faced by many older Australians, whom the Prime Minister says are forced into "fire sales" of their homes to pay for residential care. At least the government has moved to ensure that those entering aged care can pay a lump sum or make periodic payments rather than pay a bond that forces many to sell their homes. Much remains to be done but the package is on the right track.

Document AUSTLN0020120420e84I00029

Features

AGED CARE PACKAGE BUYS TIME BUT TSUNAMI AHEAD

HENRY ERGAS

1,079 words

23 April 2012

The Australian

The Gillard reforms leave structural problems largely unaddressed

IT is nonsense to talk of population ageing as a problem. Rather, its main cause -- the immense rise in human life expectancy -- is perhaps society's greatest achievement. But it does create challenges, and providing aged care is central among them.

The government's reforms help address that challenge, but fall far short of resolving our aged-care system's difficulties.

The demographic facts are stark. For most of human history, life expectancy was in the order of 25 years. By 1700, it had increased to 37 years in England and The Netherlands. Then, in

about 1820, a steep rise in longevity began that has increased life expectancy in high-longevity countries to about age 82.

Initially, longevity increases were almost entirely because of reductions in infant mortality. Indeed, even taking a period as late as 1921 to 1971, 60 per cent of the substantial rise in Australian male life expectancy came from reductions in death rates under the age of five. Mortality reductions at ages five to 50 accounted for the remainder. There was, in other words, virtually no increase in male life expectancy from reductions in death rates past age 50.

That changed completely in the late 1970s. Since then, about half of the still rapid gains in life expectancy have been due to falling mortality rates at ages over 80.

The result is a marked rise in the numbers surviving to very high ages, with nonagenarians and centenarians being the most quickly growing groups in the Australian population.

Nor is there any sign of those trends abating. Rather, leading bio-demographer James Vaupel estimates 50 per cent of today's babies will reach the age of 102 in Germany, 104 in France and the US, and 107 in Japan. Australia will not be far behind.

But survival to old age does not eliminate normal processes of pathogenesis. Despite medical advances, ageing continues to bring declines in the functional integrity and homeostasis of the body.

Especially in the "older old", those changes lead to ongoing, often substantial, requirements for aged-care services. However, the nature of those requirements is changing.

Traditionally, aged care was used by a small share of the population. Few made it to old age, and those who did had a few healthy years followed by a short, sharp decline. Their care needs were met by relatives, until collapsing health led to hospitalisation and death.

That pattern was especially true for men, who generally predeceased their wives.

The wives, on the other hand, faced lengthy widowhood, and it was typically a deterioration in health during that period that precipitated entry into care. Aged care facilities therefore generally cared for single women, who suffered mainly from frailty, and whose remaining lifespan was in the order of two to three years.

Recently, however, the life expectancy gap between men and women has shrunk dramatically. In fact, among the high-longevity countries, Australia now has the smallest gender gap in life expectancy, and so has an unusually low number of years of widowhood.

Unprecedented numbers of couples consequently survive to very old age, and they naturally seek to remain at home. Moreover, their health is such that they can cope, so long as they have help with more onerous activities. The demand for home care has therefore expanded rapidly, while that for hostels, providing "low-care" services largely to widows, has almost disappeared.

At the same time, however, there has been a sustained increase in the numbers suffering from severe neurodegenerative conditions, whose incidence rises rapidly with age. Those conditions greatly reduce capability, requiring continuous assistance in special accommodation.

But they have little effect on mortality, so assistance may be needed for a decade or more. The result is rising demand for "high-care" services that are increasingly oriented to patients with dementia.

Our aged-care system has struggled to cope with those changes. Regulations restricting the number and location of places, and fixing their distribution as between types of care, have prevented adaptation to the changing level and structure of demand.

Restrictions on charges have worsened the problems, making providers' viability dependent on attracting entrants into residential low care, where entry bonds can be charged, and then migrating them into high care, where bonds are prohibited but daily payments higher. And even then, the entry bond arrangement assumes most residents will die within five years, as that is how long the bonds can be retained, and so is ever less useful as care durations rise.

Adding to the inefficiencies, the commonwealth has forced providers to subsidise full pensioners through charges on residents who pay means-tested fees. As for those fees, the exclusion of the family home from the means tests narrows the base on which they are assessed, creating inequities and encouraging avoidance.

The government's reforms remove some of these inefficiencies, including by eliminating the outdated distinction between high and low care. They also expand the services providers can offer and give consumers greater say over home-care services.

But while the Productivity Commission recommended dismantling entry restrictions and price controls, the government has shied away from liberalisation. Regulations that have impeded competition and adjustment will therefore remain.

Nor has long-run fiscal sustainability been assured. Shifting more of the financing burden on to care recipients can make sense, but exposes older Australians to significant financial risk, especially as proposed caps on outlays cover care costs but not accommodation. The Productivity Commission sought to cushion the blow by broadening the base for means testing to the family home while facilitating access to reverse mortgages. Such a wider base would increase the numbers contributing to aged care costs and allow sustainability to be achieved with lower, less distorting, co-payment rates. It could also ease eventual inclusion of homes in the pension means test, reducing that distortion too.

Instead, by excluding family homes, the government has opted for higher rates on a narrow base, compromising sustainability, increasing incentives for avoidance and distorting decisions between aged care and healthcare, where co-payments are lower.

The proposed reforms are therefore only a useful first step. Yes, they buy time. But they leave the sector's structural problems largely unaddressed. And they do too little to enhance flexibility and competition. Until those issues are tackled, our aged-care system will remain incapable of coping with the demographic tsunami ahead.

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Features

BABY BOOMERS RETIRE ON A REVERSE INHERITANCE

TIM WILSON

904 words

24 April 2012

The Australian

The young are funding the old, who should pay their own way

IF baby boomers want choice in their retirement, they should be prepared to spend their own money.

Earlier this month, Germany's ruling Christian Democrats proposed a generation-specific tax to finance the welfare costs of retirees, under which young people pay while baby boomers collect.

Like Australia, Germany and the rest of Europe is facing an intergenerational challenge caused by increased life expectancy and the largesse of the welfare state.

The important difference is that by avoiding collapse under the pressure of the global financial crisis, Australia has been afforded the time, and opportunity, to start fixing its lot. We should be learning from reform in other countries, such as the Dutch experience in reforming universal healthcare.

Joe Hockey's recent speech to London's Institute of Economic Affairs might come to be seen as the start of mature policy reform, though the way many Liberals ducked commenting on the proposal and hostility from the government are not encouraging.

As the Treasury's three inter-generational reports explain, an ageing population will place considerable strain on public finances as the ratio of taxpayers to welfare dependents declines.

The latest report from 2010 shows health and aged care expenses will roughly double and pension rates will increase by around half by 2050 as a percentage of GDP.

Concurrently the number of people aged 65 and over will more than double in nominal terms and as a percentage of the population.

The most concerning statistic is that the number of people aged over 85 will more than quadruple as a percentage of the population.

They're the least likely to work and most likely to add considerable costs to the health budget.

A Productivity Commission analysis found 20 per cent of a person's lifetime health expenses occurred at the end of their life.

As Hockey put it: "An inadequate level of revenue has forced nations into levels of indebtedness that, in an age of slowing growth and ageing population, are simply unsustainable."

We know we have a cost problem but behind it we also have an intergenerational political problem.

Baby boomers have financially contributed to a welfare and transfer system on the promise that it will be there for them when they need it.

As a result, those now 30 and younger are expected to spend their working life paying pensions for the under-superannuated and the health and aged care costs of baby boomers.

Concurrently, the same working generation is paying their superannuation costs and increasingly, health insurance. Gen Y's incomes are also strained by the financial overhang of the concentration of wealth in the hands of their parents and grandparents.

The situation is particularly prevalent in property where boomers have invested or can outbid those younger for housing stock.

And it will only be exacerbated by the government's excluding the family home from calculating access to aged-care services.

Nostalgia has trumped economic reality as homes sit vacant for non-returning owners, reducing supply.

Meanwhile, rising house prices mean those who inherit homes, particularly in inner cities, will enjoy a wealth advantage against those who do not.

And this further contributes to young families being priced out of the market because of housing under-supply.

Unless Australia follows the disastrous European debt path, we are expecting a whole generation to pay for a structurally flawed (if not quite a Ponzi-like scheme) welfare and transfers system that won't exist when it is their ``turn" to ``collect".

Calls for a rainy day sovereign wealth fund won't solve the problem: we can't accumulate enough and it locks capital away, for the state to use, not for people to spend on their own needs. Only comprehensive public sector reform will, by putting responsibility back on to individuals.

Structurally, the problem with our welfare and public services is that the objective of achieving universal access has equated to the government's financing and providing services.

Government service provision is riddled with inefficiencies and cost. To sustainably provide a universal safety net requires breaking the link between government financing and service provision.

There's plenty of evidence of how it can be achieved.

Monash University's Just Stoelwinder wrote about the reforms to the Dutch healthcare system in his Australian Centre for Health Research paper, Medicare Choice? Stoelwinder says the Dutch reformed their universal healthcare system towards compulsory insurance with the government providing equalisation payments.

These payments provide an appropriate safety net for the poor or those with specific health needs.

A key step for the Netherlands was for the government to get the population to realise that healthcare is expensive, and that preserving universal healthcare would require individuals to shoulder some of that cost.

Alternatively, Australia could consider a system of individual health savings accounts, complimented with

Netherlands-style equalisation payments. Such reforms would mirror the objectives of moving from universal state-sponsored pensions towards our individual superannuation system: universality remains, but responsibility shifts.

Widespread reforms requiring ageing Australians to continue contributing to their safety net might appear frightening but the alternative is growing more dependent on the charity of a generation to a welfare system they don't expect to enjoy themselves.

Document AUSTLN0020120423e84o0001q

Local

Razor gang slices care reforms - EXCLUSIVE -

SUE DUNLEVY

546 words

12 April 2012

The Australian

THE budget razor gang has rejected major aspects of the aged-care reforms proposed by the Productivity Commission as too costly, and the aged care industry is being prepared for a staggered start to changes in the sector.

Aged care providers and the nurses union put up a united front at the National Press Club yesterday, warning that if next month's federal budget did not contain any funding for reform of the sector, elderly people would fill up hospital beds, nurses would leave the sector, there would be 120 too few aged care homes and more people would miss out on needed care.

They told the government they did not want any reforms paid for by cuts to other areas of the industry, as the government tries to wind back a \$1.9 billion blowout in aged care costs caused by a new method of assessing whether residents require higher care and thus higher government subsidies.

Julia Gillard has pledged to reform the crumbling aged-care system in this term of government and the industry is waiting for her response to a Productivity Commission review of the sector that called for greater user charges to be introduced and the family home to be taken into account when assessing ability to pay.

Industry insiders have received departmental briefings that Treasury has baulked at the costly call for a shift from a rationed system of aged care places to an open-ended entitlement system that would allow anyone assessed as needing care to receive it.

In the short term, the government is expected to increase the number of rationed, in-home care places it funds so it can provide more care but control the cost to the budget.

In the last round of aged care allocations, 24,000 elderly people were assessed as requiring home help to stay in their own homes but only 1800 places were allocated.

The Australian reported this week that Treasury was also uncomfortable about a Productivity Commission proposal that the commonwealth run a scheme to allow the elderly to unlock the equity in their homes so they could pay for aged care.

Treasury fears this would turn the government into the nation's largest bank.

Catholic Health Australia chief Martin Lavery said he could not understand this argument as the government already acted as a bank controlling the \$22bn involved in the Higher Education Contributions Scheme.

Council of the Ageing chief Ian Yates said if the government refused to run the home equity scheme, it must come up with another way of helping people unlock the equity in their homes so they could afford to contribute towards their aged care costs.

Minister for Ageing Mark Butler said yesterday individuals were already paying for 30 per cent of the cost of the current aged-care system and, with an ageing population, more funding would be required.

“We certainly need to find better income streams for the system,” he told Sky News's Australian Agenda. “That will either come from the government or families or a combination of both.”

The commission has recommended that high-care residents should contribute towards their accommodation costs for the first time, either through a bond or a weekly charge.

Document AUSTLN0020120411e84c00081

Local

Aged fear rip-offs to fund their care

STEPHEN LUNN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS WRITER

398 words

7 April 2012

The Australian

OLDER Australians are worried about the opaque system they face when it comes time to pay for aged care accommodation, and they want greater control over their own death, including access to high-quality palliative care, a four-month national consultation has found.

To be released by Minister for Ageing Mark Butler today, the Council on the Ageing report collates the views of more than 3400 people who attended “conversations” on aged care around the country, and finds deep concern about what awaits them or their relatives.

Mr Butler said the report would inform the Gillard government's response to the Productivity Commission's report on aged care published last year, a response the sector awaits eight months after its release.

“The conversations point to an industry in crisis,” Mr Butler said.

“The overwhelming message is that older Australians are not getting the quality of care and support that they deserve from the current system.”

Mr Butler said the majority of people wanted to stay in their own homes for as long as possible, with help brought in, but when it was time for them to enter residential care “the price they pay . . . is based on how much money they have in their pockets rather than a reflection of the true cost of care and value for money”.

“Accommodation bonds paid to get into residential care cost an average of \$264,000 but can be more than \$1 million and are usually raised through a forced fire sale of the family home at a time of crisis,” he said.

“Older Australians . . . are prepared to contribute more to the cost of their care, but only if they get a better deal with more transparency, a higher level of quality and choice, as well as access to more services in the home.”

The COTA report finds people are interested in the Productivity Commission's proposals to fund their aged-care services, but are suspicious of the push to have them use the equity in their homes.

“Concerns were expressed about the perceived similarity of the (commission's) proposed credit scheme to reverse equity mortgages and the problems they can create for people who go into negative equity,” the report says.

“There is a mistrust about how such a product would work and the protections for people.”

Document AUSTLN0020120406e8470004b

The Courier-Mail

News

Aged care out of reach for most Aussies

ANNA CALDWELL IN CANBERRA

353 words

7 April 2012

The Courier-Mail

AUSTRALIA'S aged-care sector is “an industry in crisis”, the Gillard Government has warned as it works towards a major overhaul.

Minister for Ageing Mark Butler will today release details of conversations with almost 3500 older Australians, revealing some are being forced into fire-sales of their homes in order to pay more than \$1 million in accommodation bonds.

“For many older Australians, the price they pay to enter care is based on how much money they have in their pockets, rather than a reflection of the true cost of care and value for money,” Mr Butler said.

“Accommodation bonds to get into residential care cost an average of \$264,000 but can be more than \$1 million and are usually raised through a forced fire-sale of the family home at a time of crisis.”

The release of the Council on the Ageing's summary of conversations comes as speculation mounts the Government is poised to boost spending for aged care in the May Federal Budget amid warnings of a serious shortfall in services as the population gets older.

The Government is also believed to be considering a means-tested scheme, where wealthy older Australians pay more of their own care.

These overhauls could free Australians from forced sales of their homes.

Today's survey reveals demand for community care packages is vastly outstripping supply, with most preferring to stay in their home for as long as they can, but unable to because of a lack of support.

It found that while older Australians didn't expect 24/7 intensive care at home, they needed help with things like changing light bulbs or gardening.

He said the nationwide conversations with 3400 older Australians would help form the Federal Government's response to last year's Productivity Commission report on ageing.

That report proposed older Australians should not have to sell their homes to access aged care, but instead have a Government-sponsored line of credit against the equity in their home and pay for aged accommodation like rent.

Document COUMAI0020120406e8470003f

Features

Aged care emergency demands great care and a complete overhaul

787 words

19 April 2012

The Courier-Mail

By 2050, there will be 6.3 million Australians aged 65 to 84 - more than double the 2.6 million in this age bracket now

AUSTRALIA is facing a time bomb. The job of defusing it will be politically risky but it cannot be delayed any longer.

Like many developed countries, our population is rapidly ageing. Advances in medical technology mean many people will live for much longer than previous generations but the aged-care system is stuck in the past.

It's outdated, expensive and over-burdened already. In many parts of the country, it is difficult to get a place in an aged care facility. For many, it means making rushed decisions to sell their family home to stump up the bond required. And for many in care and their families, there are all-too-frequent doubts about the quality of that care.

Surveys by National Seniors Australia found a disturbingly high number of complaints from people who said they feared if they didn't visit their spouse or parent on weekends they could not be sure they would be fed, given their medication or showered.

There is a staffing crisis across the aged-care sector, where poorly trained workers are paid less than supermarket shelf-stackers.

It's worse in many regions in Queensland where there are more retirees and a shortage of people to provide care.

As more Baby Boomers retire, these problems will only increase. About one million people now use some form of aged care around Australia, but this number is set to soar to 3.5 million by 2050. The costs of providing that care will rise exponentially as people live longer and many are hit with diseases of old age such as dementia.

More families will have two generations of parents and grandparents who require some form of aged care.

By 2050, there will be 6.3 million Australians aged 65 to 84 - more than double the 2.6 million in this age bracket now. Over the same time frame, the number of people aged over 85 will more than quadruple from 400,000 to 1.8 million.

These people will need more options for care, both at home and in aged care facilities.

And the cost of aged care will soar from \$10 billion a year currently to \$50 billion by 2050, in today's dollars.

The issue is how to pay for it. At present, taxpayers subsidise about 70 per cent of aged care costs, with individuals paying the rest.

The Gillard Government is about to outline its plans to reshape the aged-care system to meet the needs of our changing demographics.

They have been handed a blueprint by the Productivity Commission and will respond to it as soon as tomorrow.

Labor knows the politically risky nature of these reforms all too well. In opposition they ran a very effective campaign against a proposal by then prime minister John Howard to let nursing homes demand accommodation bonds.

But, as difficult as it may be to sell to voters, the aged care reality for many people will be a user-pays system with more costs across all levels of care.

One option floated by the Productivity Commission is to allow people to access the equity in their family home through a reverse mortgage scheme underwritten by taxpayers. It has also proposed bonds or ongoing charges for people living in high-care facilities.

Another option is to include the family home in an assets test to decide whether people are eligible for government assistance. The Government is believed to have ruled out these proposals, which would be politically unpopular.

But it could back other options such as an income test that would better assess people's capacity to pay for their own care. Privately run reverse mortgage schemes, annuities or insurance could be promoted. A superannuation-style model could also be used.

Minister for Ageing Mark Butler has already flagged a greater focus on community care to help older people stay in their homes for longer. He has also backed the need for better training of aged care workers.

This will also come with demands for higher pay for carers. There will also be calls for importing foreign workers to fill the growing demand for nurses and other aged care workers.

In short, the Government will need to conduct a controlled detonation of our current aged-care system and replace it with a new one.

But it will have to be careful not to hurt the increasing number of Australians who will need it in the process.

Steven Scott is The Courier-Mail's national political correspondent.

Document COUMAI0020120418e84j00013

News

Means test to fix aged care costs

STEVEN SCOTT; additional reporting Rose Brennan

836 words

21 April 2012

The Courier-Mail

SELF-FUNDED retirees and part-pensioners will be forced to pay more for aged care under means tests from July 2014.

But seniors will be protected against over-charging by life time fee caps of \$60,000 and new rules to limit costs.

Family homes will be spared from new means tests as long as they have a family member living in them. The changes are part of a \$3.7 billion overhaul of aged care announced by the Gillard Government yesterday to prepare the "creaking" system for growing demand from ageing Baby Boomers.

Julia Gillard said the changes would address a "crisis" in aged care that saw a massive shortage of care packages and expensive upfront bonds imposed on nursing home residents.

She defended the new means tests, saying they would ensure people paid what they could afford.

"For the first time in aged care, fairness will also get a look in," Ms Gillard said.

"For too long, pensioners have had to subsidise those who are much better off.

"Those who can support themselves and contribute a bit more should, and we must look after the needs of those who can't."

The aged care shakeup would focus on helping older people stay at home and prevent those who go into residential care from being forced into fire sales of their family homes, Ms Gillard said.

More elderly people will be able to live in their homes after the Government creates about 40,000 new subsidised home care packages over the next five years.

But for the first time, people receiving new at-home care will be hit with extra "care fees" of up to \$5000 a year for part-pensioners and \$10,000 for self-funded retirees earning more than \$43,000 a year.

The new charges will only affect people who need aged care for the first time after July 1, 2014. New Farm resident Maida Lilley, 78, has been living independently for more than 25 years and welcomed the aged care shakeup.

"I think it's fair and means testing is sensible . . . it's got to be realistic. Homes aren't as valuable on paper but they're still your home," Mrs Lilley said.

Fee packages will come with cooling off periods in a bid to end the practice of elderly people being forced to sell their homes quickly to secure a nursing home place.

People who rely solely on the aged pension, who make up about 51 per cent of those in aged care now, will not pay any extra fees above current basic charges of up to 17.5 per cent of the single pension.

Accommodation charges and other fees will be assessed by a new Aged Care Financing Authority modelled on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Pricing Authority.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott tentatively backed the reforms but warned they would drive up costs. "Obviously more user pays and more means test means a lot of Australians are going to pay more to use aged care facilities in the future," he said.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

- * Changes take effect from July 1, 2014
- * People already in the aged-care system will not be affected
- * New means-test will apply to at home care for the first time
- * A cooling off period means residents can choose how to pay after they are in care and will not be forced to quickly sell their family homes
- * Lifetime cap for care fees at \$60,000 across both in home and residential care

PEOPLE CURRENTLY RECEIVING AT HOME OR RESIDENTIAL CARE:

No change, will continue paying any existing fees

FULL PENSIONER EARNING UP TO \$23,543 FOR SINGLES:

No extra care fees for at home care or on top of existing basic fees of up to 17.5 per cent of the single pension

Those with assets worth more than \$40,500 could pay accommodation fees if they go into residential care on a sliding scale from 17.5 per cent of assets valued between \$40,500 and \$144,500 up to 2 per cent of assets valued over \$353,500.

PART PENSIONER EARNING BETWEEN \$23,543 AND \$43,000 FOR SINGLES:

Extra care fee up to \$5000 a year for at home care

Extra care fee up to \$25,000 a year for residential care

Lifetime cap on all care fees of \$60,000

Fees based on up to 50 per cent of income over \$23,543 and sliding range of fees based on assets worth more than \$40,500

SELF-FUNDED RETIREE EARNING MORE THAN \$43,000 FOR SINGLES:

Extra care fee up to \$10,000 a year for at home care

Extra care fee up to \$25,000 a year for residential care

Lifetime cap on all care fees of \$60,000

Fees based on up to 50 per cent of income over \$23,543 and sliding range of fees based on assets worth more than \$40,500

Document COUMAI0020120420e8410002y

News

Funding changes a safe bet for Gillard

Steven Scott

289 words

21 April 2012

The Courier-Mail

JULIA Gillard has presented her aged care package as an attempt to bring fairness into a system that is riddled with rorts and rip-offs.

She has limited the likely political damage from the reforms by rejecting some of the more controversial recommendations from the Productivity Commission such as counting the family home in a means test for fees.

And she has inserted real safeguards into the system.

The option for nursing home residents to pay accommodation fees at regular intervals instead of in a lump sum, coupled with cooling-off periods where they can change their minds, will make it less likely people will have to rush into selling their home.

The lifetime fee caps for care of \$60,000 will limit out-of-pocket expenses and could see some people pay less than people are now.

Gillard has also bought some time by delaying the new fees until July 1, 2014 - more than six months after the next election is due.

But she could still face a backlash from voters if they feel they will take an unfair hit to their hip pockets after a lifetime of working hard and paying taxes.

The PM was quick to point out that Tony Abbott had previously offered to back the reforms if they were broadly in line with the Productivity Commission's recommendations.

But Abbott yesterday left room to blame Labor for higher aged costs, which he said were "big new payments, big additional charges".

The Opposition is still seething about a scare campaign mounted by Labor the last time a more user-pays aged-care system was floated by then prime minister John Howard in the late 1990s.

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The Advertiser

News

Changes to aged care fees Wealthy seniors must pay

NATIONAL POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT STEVE LEWIS

389 words

3 April 2012

The Advertiser

THOUSANDS of wealthier older people will be asked to contribute to the cost of nursing home accommodation as part of a bold plan to expand aged care facilities.

And millions of extra dollars will be pumped into community stay-at-home care as part of a pitch by the Gillard Government for the ``grey" vote.

In the biggest reforms to aged care for years, the Government is preparing to announce a new era of user-pays, including for residents classified as ``high care".

The Government is determined to boost spending for aged care amid warnings of a serious shortfall in services as Australia's population ages.

The user pays scheme is in line with other budget reforms to crack down on so-called middle class welfare and to take the axe to services such as the Medicare Safety Net.

It will only require those with substantial assets to pay for their aged care accommodation, either through a bond or through regular payments.

Over time, this will affect potentially 100,000 people who are classified as requiring ``high care" in nursing homes and aged care hostels.

The changes are in line with recommendations from the Productivity Commission and have received near universal support from aged care providers, consumers, and charity groups.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who nominated aged care as one of her top priorities, has been forced to act after concerns from the aged-care sector about major shortfalls in services.

Already governments spend about \$10 billion a year on aged care but this is forecast to grow by 150 per cent by 2050 as the number of Australians aged 85 and over reaches 1.8 million.

Last August the Productivity Commission unveiled a blueprint for reform, including recommendations that people who can afford to pay should.

In a stark warning, the Aged Care Industry Council warned Treasurer Wayne Swan of serious ``shortcomings" in a sector which looks after about 1 million people.

``Services are limited and flexible; there are gaps in services; there are limited choices for individuals and their families; quality is variable, especially accommodation; the system is difficult to navigate; subsidies and user contributions are inconsistent and inequitable," the council said in its letter to Mr Swan in December last year.

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News

Aged care fears mount

POLITICAL EDITOR, MARK KENNY

383 words

7 April 2012

The Advertiser

SERVICES for the nation's burgeoning grey population are in a "state of crisis" with many people denied the quality of help required and demand for community care packages "far exceeding" supply, the Federal Government has acknowledged.

As the world's over-60 population surges past those aged under five in the next few years, a series of interviews with Australian seniors found most want to stay and die in the family home rather than be forced into understaffed institutions.

The ground-breaking survey paints a disturbing picture of aged-care services, featuring mass dissatisfaction, anxiety and resentment from the elderly.

High among the concerns expressed by 3400 seniors and carers around the country are:

POOR and inadequate supply of affordable accommodation types.

SPORADIC attention from aged care staff who are often rushed off their feet.

PRESSURE to leave the family home and to sell it.

POWERLESSNESS over key life and death decisions.

Minister for Mental Health and the Ageing Mark Butler will use World Health Day today to unveil the results of a joint national project between Canberra and the Council on the Ageing.

"The conversations point to an industry in crisis,"

Mr Butler said. "The overwhelming message is that older Australians are not getting the quality of care and support that they deserve from the current system."

He said the Government would use the information to inform its response to the Productivity Commission's "Caring for Older Australians" report.

He said the testimonies suggested a prevalence of fear among the elderly and their families, which was tied to a loss of control over care and accommodation options as people became less equipped to handle all aspects of life for themselves.

This included anxiety over being ripped off when higher levels of assistance were sought.

"For many older Australians, the price they pay to enter care is based on how much money they have in their pockets, rather than a reflection of the true cost of care and value for money," Mr Butler said.

"Accommodation bonds paid to get into residential care cost an average of \$264,000 but can be more than \$1 million and are usually raised through a forced fire sale of the family home at a time of crisis."

Document ADVTSR0020120406e8470003t

Supplement

Speak up now on aged care reform

with IAN YATES, COTA chief executive

418 words

13 April 2012

The Advertiser

TODAY, it's a little over three weeks to the Federal Budget on May 8. The ink is not yet dry but the decisions about what is in and what is out will have largely been made. But not quite.

Aged care reform has always been in the Budget mix. The Government has committed to reform in this term, but key ministers are still holding back.

This is a hard Budget and all ministers have their own spending proposals to advance or defend. After all, what does it matter, some think, if just a few tens of thousands of older people don't get the support and help they need and deserve for another year or so?

For years, they have put up with sub-standard care - with nursing homes that should have been bulldozed a couple of decades ago; with months of waiting for care packages at home while the family struggles to cope and the older person suffers; and with too few care staff being paid far too low a wage.

Of course, if they get really sick because the care is too little, they go off to hospital and the State Government is then left to pay for that. Older Australians have been kept waiting for years for better aged care.

The wealthier are OK because they can afford what the Government calls "extra service" where, if you can afford it, you can have some of the things the Productivity Commission says everyone should have as a right, because in Australia you deserve a fair go.

For the rest of us, governments have been prepared to see you and your family flounder around in an aged-care system designed for the 1960s and with so many band-aids on it that they are now sticking band-aids on the band-aids and they are all peeling off.

Are you happy for your mum or dad to have to wait months for an assessment and months more for support at home?

Are you happy that accessing care is like walking through a maze blindfold?

Are you happy that mum and dad will have little choice and less control over their services?

If you're not happy, then let the Cabinet ministers who decide the Budget know now.

Log on to agewellcampaign.com.au and add your voice to tens of thousands of other Australians who think that older people still matter.

Document ADVTSR0020120412e84d0008a

News

Package to boost care for elderly

MARK KENNY, POLITICAL EDITOR CANBERRA

239 words

20 April 2012

The Advertiser

ELDERLY Australians will get improved in-home care and will not be forced into fire sales of their homes in the biggest overhaul of the over-burdened aged-care sector in decades.

And limited means testing will be introduced for the first time to ensure pensioners and those people with fewer assets are not forced to pay higher fees than those with significant means.

The Federal Government will today unveil its long-awaited aged care package in response to the work of the Productivity Commission and following extensive nationwide consultation with seniors and their families and carers.

The package will feature new arrangements to allow payment for residential places through a lump-sum from the sale of assets, periodic payment, or a combination of both.

But the Government will stipulate that no one will be forced to quickly sell their home to secure a place and people will also have extended cooling off periods to consider the move.

The Advertiser has learned the package will also include a major \$268.4 million package for tackling dementia.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard will release the package in Canberra today.

Tens of thousands of new Home Care packages will be made available as part of the deliberate focus on the elderly staying out of high-dependency residential care for as long as it is practical for them to do so.

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News

Seniors say plan is on right track

POLITICAL EDITOR MARK KENNY

356 words

21 April 2012

The Advertiser

SENIORS groups and unions have given a cautious thumbs-up to the Federal Government's long-awaited \$3.7 billion aged-care reforms - but the Opposition has criticised greater means testing which will force some who can afford to pay more to do so.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Minister for Mental Health and Ageing Mark Butler unveiled the "Living Longer Living Better" plan yesterday in Canberra, billing it as the most comprehensive overhaul of the straining \$12 billion aged-care sector in 30 years.

It includes protections to stop the family home being sold in "fire-sale" conditions to secure a nursing home bed, a cap on overall costs, new flexible payment options, and guaranteed cooling off periods to help families decide on the best course for them.

Ms Gillard said it would provide more choice, improved access, upgraded pay and working conditions for aged care staff, and better care for the growing number of dementia sufferers.

She said the reforms would not only improve the system but ensure it could meet burgeoning demand.

“For the first time in aged care, fairness will also get a look-in,” she said.

“Under these changes, which I emphasise will only apply to new people entering care from July 1, 2014, ability to pay will be taken into account. This recognises a simple reality that those who can support themselves and contribute a bit more should, and that we must look after the needs of those who can't.” That means self-funded retirees for example could be required to pay more for their nursing home places but those costs will be capped at \$25,000 a year.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott said “the Coalition supports a reform process in aged care, but one of the things you've always got to be conscious of with this government is announcements are often not quite what they seem”. “More users pay and more means tests mean that a lot of Australians are going to pay more to use aged care facilities than they have in the past.”

Document ADVTSR0020120420e8410004z

News

Aged care gets physical

KATRINA STOKES

254 words

25 April 2012

The Advertiser

EXERCISE is becoming more spontaneous, less structured and more accessible for older people in the northeastern suburbs.

An outdoor gym, newly built and geared towards the older generation, offers a space that is free and easy to use.

Built in a joint initiative with Campbelltown Council and aged care provider ACH Group, the gym is encouraging elderly people as well as the local community to keep fit in a fun, new way. “People can use it on a whim,” ACH Group innovation and development manager Jane Mussared said.

“We were really keen to look at opportunities for older people to be part of local community.”

The exercise space includes six pieces of equipment, including a cross-trainer, cycle seat and shoulder press.

Gym-goers Marita Gardiner, 67, and Gordon Cumming, 67, tested out the equipment yesterday - proving it is never too late to get out and exercise.

Ms Gardiner, who said she was “never a gym person”, enjoyed going to the gym out in the natural elements.

“It's totally different than an indoor gym . . . the outdoor gym is great for people who can't get to a normal gym because they can go after or before work and on the weekends.”

Since being diagnosed with osteoporosis, Ms Gardiner has been exercising for about a year and said she has noticed results.

“I'm feeling better than ever before, I am stronger and more toned,” she said.

The outdoor gym is at 147 St Bernards Rd, Rostrevor.

Document ADVTSR0020120424e84p0000d

News

Reforms ‘a step in the right direction’

KEN MCGREGOR, CANBERRA

331 words

27 April 2012

The Advertiser

RESTRICTIONS on the number of older South Australians eligible to receive high-care financial assistance need to be abolished, the nation's peak body for elderly care says.

Council on the Ageing chief executive Ian Yates said the substantial aged-care reforms announced by Prime Minister Julia Gillard last week were a step in the right direction but did not go far enough in ensuring older Australians were adequately cared for.

As part of the reforms, high-care financial help ratios were raised from 113 places to 125 places for every thousand people aged over 70.

“Imagine the outcry if someone was assessed as needing financial help under Centrelink but was then told the ratio was already filled so they could not get it?” he said. “Why would you put a cap on something like that? If you are assessed as the 114th person in need then you do not get any help.

“These are people who have been assessed by the Government as needing help, then get told they do not get it.”

He said he would be urging the Government in imminent talks to get rid of the ratios and help every older person who is assessed as needing it.

He said concerns the Government would dilute other promised aspects of the reforms proved to be unfounded.

“There are some significant changes and significant funding boosts under the reforms. We understand that delivering some of those in the current environment is an achievement,” Mr Yates said.

“Overall, the Government has kick-started a process which was overdue and the sector will continue to improve.”

He also commended the Government's decision to inject \$268.4 million into dementia studies and care.

The over-65 population will double over 30 years and dementia sufferers are expected to grow to 600,000 by 2030.

TELL US

What needs to happen to improve aged care?

24-hour news

adelaidenow.com.au

Document ADVTSR0020120426e84r0004o

News

Elderly fears in aged care battleground

CANBERRA, KEN MCGREGOR

950 words

27 April 2012

The Advertiser

SOUTH Australia's peak aged care body has accused the Government of trumping up phony accusations against providers to justify stripping crucial funding for vulnerable older Australians.

The Aged Care Association of SA said the Gillard Government's new \$3.7 billion reforms would neglect South Australians because service providers, such as nursing homes, would face reduced compensation for patients in high care.

Federal Aged Care Minister Mark Butler has attacked the providers, claiming some have been putting the elderly into high-care during "unusual claiming patterns" particularly in South Australia and Queensland.

One of the key measures of the reforms will claw back \$1.6 billion over four years paid to providers when their patient is moved into high care, from less financially compensated low or medium-care services.

"This is money we would be able to redistribute across the sector evenly rather than to those who are trying to get more than they are entitled to," Mr Butler said.

Association chief executive Paul Carberry said the providers were being victimised by the Government.

"As for the so-called crackdown, the industry does not condone over-claiming, however, the reality is that of 2736 audits by the Department of Health and Ageing during the current financial year, just 36 (1.3 per cent) have resulted in major funding downgrades," he said. "So, contrary to the article's assertions of over-claiming, the clear evidence is that such activity is confined to a tiny minority of providers."

After meeting with his state counterparts yesterday, Mr Carberry said the funding boost was a positive for the aged-care sector but also attacked the Government's decision to take control over how much each provider could charge for a place in their homes.

"This is a massive deterrent to the investment that the industry desperately needs. Would you invest if you did not know how much you would be allowed to charge after factoring in all the costs?"

But Mr Butler said the issues were a safeguard against the recent exploitation of vulnerable elderly people who were being forced to pay exorbitant entry fees.

“Some providers are unhappy with this because they have been enjoying the current system - but the current system is unfair.”

The Council of The Ageing has also joined the association in supporting a plan which would allow the elderly to borrow up to \$60,000 against their home to pay for increasing care costs. The money would then be paid back to the Government after their death or if the house is sold.

COTA chief executive Ian Yates said recent surveys showed 60 per cent of older Australians favoured the home audit scheme.

Older Australians would be able to draw a maximum of \$60,000 to pay their aged care costs. Mr Yates said that if the Government was not ready to support it, then it was disappointing that they had not committed to subsidising the private sector so that older Australians could benefit from lower interest rates in that way.

Uniting Communities manager of advocacy and communications Mark Henley said the Government must keep the scheme on the agenda.

“The Productivity Commission does not put proposals up like that without a lot of thought,” he said.

“I think the Government must keep adapting to the needs of the older generation.”

He said the reforms recognised how crucial it was to enable older Australians to be cared for in their homes by increasing the number of home-care packages from 59,876 to 99,669.

Mr Henley said the boost, of which \$577 million would be new funding while the rest would be raised from means testing and stripping entitlements from aged care providers, was a step forward in looking after South Australia's ever-growing older population.

“There are some details to be sorted out but the Government deserves full marks for addressing the aged-care system,” Mr Henley said.

“People forget that not long ago you would have six-eight people in a nursing home all sharing the same veranda, you would not find that now.”

Opposition leader Tony Abbott reaffirmed he was committed to aged care.

But he said he had withheld his judgment until studying the reforms more thoroughly.

The Greens have backed the reforms, meaning they are likely to get through parliament later this year.

KEY POINTS OF REFORMS

The aged-care sector will receive a \$3.7 billion dollar boost over the next five years.

\$577 million of this will be new funding, while the rest will be raised by means testing home-care and residential care assistance eligibility for older Australians and stripping \$1.6 billion from subsidies paid to nursing homes for treating highcare patients.

\$1.2 billion has been earmarked for pay rises and to increase the standards of the aged care carer workforce, while \$268.4 million will be spent on tackling the nation's dementia epidemic.

Home Care packages will increase from 59,876 to 99,669.

Care fees for part-pensioners at home will be capped at \$5000 a year plus a basic fee of \$3135, while self-funded retirees with incomes higher than \$43,186 will pay a care fee on a sliding scale, capped at \$10,000 a year, plus the \$3135 basic fee. Total costs will be capped at \$60,000 in care fees over a lifetime.

The family home, while it is occupied, will not count as an asset in means testing.

To fund their care, people can pay with a lump-sum bond, periodic payments, by selling or renting their home or taking out a reverse mortgage with a private lender.

Document ADVTSR0020120426e84r0004n

Canberra Times

Independent elderly to be slugged

By Mark Metherell

184 words

25 April 2012

Canberra Times

By Mark Metherell

Independent elderly to be slugged

AGED CARE

Elderly Australians on low to modest incomes hoping to stay at home for as long as possible face increases of more than 150 per cent in charges for care services under the government's aged-care reforms. The Gillard government's Living Longer, Living Better policy, proposes a user-pays policy which would lift current minimum payments by more than \$3000 a year for a person on an income of \$30,000 (including pension) and by more than \$8000 a year for those on \$50,000.

To meet widespread demand from older people to stay in their homes as long as possible, the government is promising a 60 per cent boost in the number of people to get subsidised packages for at-home services, such as personal care, cleaning and transport. But a UnitingCare Ageing analysis of the impact of the new means-tested "care fee" reveals that recipients on a \$30,000 income would face minimum total payments of \$5029, compared to the \$1800 basic fee.

Document CANBTZ0020120424e84p0001h

Batting beyond a century

By The Canberra Times

663 words

1 April 2012

Canberra Times

Australians may be living longer but they're not necessarily staying healthy for longer, MEREDITH CLISBY writes

Batting beyond a century

Orin Murphy and Fyfe Atkins, above, and Edna Emery, right. Photos: ROHAN THOMSON, GRAHAM TIDY

WHILE most newborns face a lifetime of unknown possibilities and promising opportunities, today's babies can at least rely on one thing. Life is likely to be long for Orin Murphy and Fyfe Atkins (pictured). The pair of six-week-olds have more chance of surpassing 100 years of age than anyone else who has lived before them. But as our years grow longer, will the number of each person's healthy years be extended as well?

While some health experts have suggested this would be the first generation not to live to the age of their parents, data shows otherwise. Despite obesity rates, diabetes conditions, lack of exercise and poor food choices, the emergence of public health improvements and scientific breakthroughs mean people are still going to keep on living, according to demographer Mark McCrindle. "Almost regardless of personal choice we're living longer," Mr McCrindle said. But there is a dark lining to this silver cloud. While life expectancies had increased, the quality of life had not and the length of the healthy part of life had remained the same. It is expected to put more pressure on national health services. "We might be living longer but the quality of that life doesn't necessarily go along with the length of that life," Mr McCrindle said. Edna Emery is one of Canberra's 48 centenarians. Despite living for so long, it hasn't stopped life's bumps and bruises from hurting her. Ms Emery celebrated her 100th birthday in a Melbourne hospital with a broken arm, and soon after moved to the nation's capital. She will turn 103 in three months and was not quite sure just how she had lived so long. "I guess I've been very lucky with my health - I should have been dead years ago," said the woman who is older than Canberra. Had Ms Emery been born about 40 years earlier she would have been one of only two centenarians in Canberra and of 203 in Australia. Today she is one of 4252 people aged 100 years or over in Australia, according to the latest ABS statistics from a year ago. Australia's ageing population will peak in about the middle of the century.

The latest intergenerational report from 2010 shows that by 2050 about 22.6 per cent of the population will be aged 65 and over. At the same time it is predicted 5.1 per cent of the population will be older than 85. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that in the past 40 years, average life expectancy has risen 10 years. Males born in 1971 could expect to live to about 68 and females to about 75. Now men can anticipate living to 79.5 and women to 84. By the middle of this century Orin Murphy and Fyfe Atkins are expected to be toasting their 38th birthdays. For now Orin's mother Ilinka Budisic just wants him to experience what all mothers want for their children. "I think it's always the same, you want them to be healthy and happy and to be a contributing member of society," she said. Mother Amy Chin-Atkins said she aimed not to be an overprotective "helicopter parent" with six-week-old Fyfe, and the rest of her children Lian, 14, Kira, 10, and Sian, 4. She wants her children to experience life for themselves without her hovering over their every move.

"Children have a very good sense of self preservation," Dr Chin-Atkins said. While it may be hard to predict just how many centenarians there will be in Australia in the year 2112, Orin and Fyfe could well be two of them.

Herald Sun

NEWS

Older Aussies to get care at home Revamp junk bond system

Matt Johnston, national political reporter

352 words

21 April 2012

Herald-Sun

HERSUN

1 - FIRST

7

English

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THE REFORMS

OLDER Australians will have more chance to avoid being forced into nursing homes thanks to sweeping changes to aged care.

The Gillard Government's \$3.7 billion reform package includes changes to the way people pay for care and a big boost to the workforce.

The new model means some wealthier people will pay more for care through a combined income and assets means test -- but the family home remains excluded from asset tests.

New caps have been developed so Australians pay a maximum of \$25,000 a year or \$60,000 in a lifetime for residential care costs.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard said the reforms would change an unfair system where "average pensioners are subsidising the accommodation and care costs of people earning many times what they do".

The reforms would see more people "get to keep their home, and more people . . . stay in their home".

The Opposition said means testing would force more people to pay more for their aged care.

The package includes a centrepiece plan for an extra 40,000 Home Care packages, allowing people to stay at home longer.

It will also provide about 30,000 residential care places over five years, by increasing money paid to operators that build new homes or renovate.

Most of the aged-care sector broadly welcomed the plan, developed in response to a productivity commission report into what Mental Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler said was a sector "in crisis".

People needing to move into aged-care centres will no longer have to pay bonds worth an average of \$236,000 to get a place, with a new system of period payments developed.

A new authority will work out how much operators can charge people for places at their centres.

Aged and Community Care Victoria chief executive Gerard Mansour said the package balanced the needs of people getting care at home with "ensuring we have viable residential aged-care systems for those who need additional support".

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Document HERSUN0020120420e8400035

Herald-Sun

NEWS

Fairer care for aged Means test on nursing home costs, \$268m for dementia patients

Jessica Marszalek

346 words

20 April 2012

Herald-Sun

OLDER Australians will no longer be forced into a fire sale of the family home to pay for aged care but a means test will apply.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard today will announce fairer ways to pay for nursing home places and an expansion of home care that she says will allow tens of thousands more people to keep the family home.

The Government will also give \$268.4 million to boost care for dementia patients.

Ms Gillard said aged care was a fundamental social compact that brought "security and decency to every Australian".

"For older Australians, who have worked so hard, that is something they have earned many times over," she will say today.

Ms Gillard will announce a person's "ability to pay" will be used to set nursing home costs, with a means test that won't include the family home to apply.

The massive shake-up is in response to a Productivity Commission report and comes after Aged Care Minister Mark Butler described the aged-care system as "in crisis".

Ms Gillard will also announce that bonds -- which cost up to \$2.6 million and bear no resemblance to the actual cost of accommodation -- would no longer be the only way to pay for nursing care places.

People would be able to pay by bond, a periodic payment, or a combination, meaning nobody would be forced into a fire sale of their home.

Ms Gillard will speak of the almost one million Australians who will be living with dementia by 2050 as she reveals \$164.3 million for a new dementia supplement over the next five years.

It will give extra financial assistance to people receiving home care packages and in residential care, and would mean an extra \$1340 a year for an 84-year-old pensioner living at home.

A further \$104 million will go into diagnosing the disease and helping people with younger onset dementia.

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Editorial, Page 34

Document HERSUN0020120419e84k0003h

NEWS

LIVING LONGER, LIVING STRONGER

Holly Ife

301 words

21 April 2012

Herald-Sun

HERSUN

LIVING longer better is what Eric Rosario already does.

Mr Rosario, 81, and his wife Prisca, 80, applauded the Gillard Government's initiatives to keep people in their own homes for longer by doubling the number of Home Care packages.

The super-fit couple would like stay out of care altogether, or at least avoid a long stay.

"It should not be assumed that as you get older, you will get weak, you will be infirm, you will go downhill," Mr Rosario said.

Mr Rosario is a member of the Active Ageing Network Committee, run by the Office of Senior Victorians, COTA and YMCA Victoria, which aims to increase the number and range of sustainable physical activity programs for older people in Victoria.

However, he said no amount of healthy living could guarantee they would remain healthy in the future, and welcomed moves to improve the quality of care.

THE CHALLENGES

By 2050, almost one-quarter of Australians will be over 65, compared with 13 per cent today

Workforce needs to grow from 304,000 in 2010 to 827,100 by 2050

One million people are expected to have dementia by 2050 without a medical breakthrough

THE NUMBERS

\$3.7 billion package with \$577 million new funding over five years

\$955 million to help older Australians stay at home longer

40,000 new Home Care packages

\$60,000 new lifetime cap on residential care costs

\$1.2 billion to boost workforce, including to recruit more staff and pay them more

221,103 total residential aged care places in five years, up from 191,522

\$270 million to tackle dementia

\$52.84 government payments to care centres residents who afford to pay, from \$32.58

\$1.6b clawed back by tightening some government funding rules

Document HERSUN0020120420e84100037

NEWS

Aged care in crisis Urgent overhaul needed

Phillip Hudson, national political editor

349 words

7 April 2012

Herald-Sun

THE aged care industry is in crisis and older Australians fear they will not be able to get the care they need, according to a landmark study to be released today.

The report, based on the views of 3400 older Australians and their carers, also shows most people want to spend their final days in their own house and fear they will be forced into a fire sale of their home to pay for emergency care.

It also reveals a growing push for a national Do Not Resuscitate Register.

Minister for Ageing Mark Butler released the report as the Government considers an overhaul of aged-care services in the May 8 Budget.

Mr Butler said that for the first time the world was facing a scenario where there will be more people aged over 60 than aged under five.

The Productivity Commission says the one million people using aged-care services now will climb to 3.5 million by 2050. The cost will rise from \$10 billion a year to \$50 billion.

The study, based on 31 "at the coalface" meetings with groups of older people and their carers – including sessions in Geelong, Ballarat, Berwick and Tottenham -- says people are anxious

about the future and want more information, choice and flexibility so they can stay in their own community as long as possible.

“The conversations point to an industry in crisis,” Mr Butler said.

“The overwhelming message is that older Australians are not getting the quality of care and support that they deserve from the system.”

Mr Butler said the average cost of accommodation bonds was \$264,000 but can be more than \$1 million “and are usually raised through a forced fire sale of the family home at a time of crisis”.

The Government is considering an overhaul in which people will not be forced to sell their home to pay accommodation bonds.

They would have a free choice to pay a daily, weekly or monthly fee for aged care.

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Document HERSUN0020120406e8470004p

The Sydney Morning Herald

News and Features

Aged care revamp will make users pay

Phillip Coorey CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT with Clancy Yeates

667 words

20 April 2012

The Sydney Morning Herald

SMHH

First

1

English

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AN OVERHAUL of the aged-care sector to be released today will enable tens of thousands more people to be cared for in their homes and will inject \$270 million into dementia diagnosis and care.

But the reform, a signature element of the budget on May 8, will introduce a co-ordinated, user-pays system, including requiring those with greater means, such as self-funded retirees, to pay more for their care. Costs will be capped and there will still be a government contribution.

There will also be options to reduce pressure on people to sell their homes to pay for care or secure a place.

People will be able to pay with a lump sum bond, raised perhaps by selling their home or from savings; or periodic payments, raised by either selling their home and banking the proceeds, reverse mortgaging the property, or from savings or other assets. People can combine a lump sum and periodic payments.

To prevent people being forced to conduct a fire-sale of their house to secure a scarce spot in an aged care home, there will be a cooling off period allowing them to enter the home and then work out how they want to pay.

The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, promised to reform aged care before the election after the Productivity Commission found last year the system was ill-suited to cope with a rapidly ageing population.

Under the reforms, money will be taken from funding now used to subsidise care in nursing homes, which has blown out by \$2.3 billion, to fund care services for "tens of thousands of people" who wish to stay in their homes.

"If you want a nursing home place, we will make it easier to get one," Ms Gillard said. "If you want care in the home, we will make it easier to get that care. More people will get to keep their home and more people will get to stay in their home."

Of the \$268.4 million to be set aside for dementia over five years, \$164.3 million will be paid as supplements to those in both aged care facilities and at home. The rest will be used to promote earlier diagnosis of the disease.

The aged care package will be one of the few budget measures to involve any significant new spending because the main theme will be striving to return to surplus.

Yesterday Ms Gillard insisted the Reserve Bank was independent when she was accused of pressuring it to drop interest rates in return for a surplus budget.

"What we can do as a government is to have the right budget settings for the economy today, and that is to bring the budget to surplus," she said.

"It also means it gives the Reserve Bank more room to move should it choose to do so."

As Ms Gillard argued the case for a surplus, one of the world's most influential investors endorsed the government's spending discipline and pledged to continue buying Australian government debt.

Jeremy Grantham, who manages \$US97 billion (\$93.4 billion) as the chief investment strategist at US firm GMO, said Australia's debt was attractive to foreign investors because government spending was sustainable.

"The only bonds we have much fondness for are Australian and New Zealand government bonds because only those countries give a combination of a decent real yield and government spending policies that are sustainable in the long run," Mr Grantham wrote in a note to investors.

Ms Gillard criticised the Minerals Council of Australia for running full-page newspaper advertisements warning the government not to increase the tax burden on miners.

Despite speculation to the contrary, the government has no plans to pare back the miners' diesel excise rebate by more than the already-announced 6.2¢ a litre, nor abolish their exploration or accelerated depreciation concessions.

The Sydney Morning Herald



THE FORM
Doncaster racing special
LAPTOP

CREED HAM
Lonely end for Men At Work star
SERIAL PAGE 1



MURPHY WAGE
Babies need their mothers - it's not rocket science
OPINION PAGE 11



Thomson received secret payment of \$160,000 after he left HSU

Ross McCallum
A Sydney off-camera member of parliament has admitted a secret payment of \$160,000 was made to him by the Health Services Union (HSU) after he left the union to become a member of parliament. The payment was made to Thomson after he left the union in 2008 to become a member of parliament. Thomson said the payment was made to him as a "gesture of goodwill" and was not a bribe. He said the payment was made to him by the HSU's former president, who was a close friend of Thomson's.

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Aged care revamp will make users pay

Philly Evans
Aged care users will be asked to pay more for services as the government plans to revamp the sector. The government has announced a plan to revamp aged care services, which will include introducing user-pays fees. The plan is part of a broader strategy to reform aged care services, which includes introducing user-pays fees. The government has announced a plan to revamp aged care services, which will include introducing user-pays fees. The plan is part of a broader strategy to reform aged care services, which includes introducing user-pays fees.

Fighting heat and food, the marines have landed



Mary Gillman is made welcome by the US Marine Expeditionary Force at its new home in Darwin - just don't call it a permanent base.

The US Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) has landed in Darwin, Northern Territory, as part of a new mission. The MEF is the largest US military unit to be based in Australia since World War II. The mission is part of a broader strategy to reform aged care services, which includes introducing user-pays fees. The government has announced a plan to revamp aged care services, which will include introducing user-pays fees.

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Priest 'a violent bully and coward'

David Hunt
A priest has been accused of being a violent bully and coward. The priest, who is a member of the Catholic Church, has been accused of being a violent bully and coward. The priest, who is a member of the Catholic Church, has been accused of being a violent bully and coward. The priest, who is a member of the Catholic Church, has been accused of being a violent bully and coward.

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The Sydney Morning Herald

News and Features

Self-funded retirees face full cost of assistance

Mark Metherell HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

1,046 words

21 April 2012

The Sydney Morning Herald

MORE self-funded retirees are likely to pay the full cost of about \$136 a day for nursing home care but should face less pressure to sell the family home under long-awaited aged-care reforms. The impact of the changes on the lifetime investments of elderly Australians, flowing from the changes to take effect in July 2014, will mean many people who at present pay little or nothing face higher out-of-pocket costs which will increase with their wealth.

The government describes it as "fair means testing" of aged care and this is expected over five years to yield savings to the taxpayer of \$561 million - at the expense of the consumer. And that amount can be expected to grow steadily.

But users will have more choice about how they can pay - either by lump sum or by periodic payments - and whether they are cared for in a nursing home or in their own home.

The government is to nearly double the number of funded home care packages to 100,000 as part of a strategy to boost support for care at home while reining in nursing home places which are in oversupply in many parts of Australia.

At present, home care can subject many older people who benefit from remaining in their own home to unlimited charges and erratic funding of services. The changes are expected to rectify this.

How this chooser- and user-pays approach will affect individual costs at home or in nursing homes remains unclear. The government has agreed to impose a lifetime cap of \$60,000 on "care" costs. But this may still mean nursing home patients have to continue paying up to \$52 a day for accommodation costs.

The interplay between incomes, assets and means tests means calculating individual financial impact is challenging, particularly for the 12 per cent of consumers whose wealth means they could be exposed to the full \$50,000 a year cost of high care and accommodation, and much more if they choose extra services that are likely to become more available.

Just over half of aged care users qualify for the full pension and in effect pay no out of pocket charges, although up to 85 per cent of their pension is contributed to their care costs. Another 37 per cent part-pensioners would face out of pocket costs running to several thousand dollars a year.

The government says its changes will end the need for people to sell their homes in "emergency fire sales" to raise the funds for uncapped bond payments demanded by nursing homes which now average \$236,000 but can be as high as \$2.6 million.

Instead people admitted to a nursing home will be able to choose whether to meet the cost of their care by paying a bond, which will be regulated, or pay a periodic rental type payment, or by means of a mixture of both.

And they will have a cooling off period to allow them and their families to consider how to pay for their care.

An aged care financial expert, Cam Ansell, said the reforms appear to be the right steps towards a more sustainable industry that will give consumers more choice.

NURSING HOME CARE

Residents who can afford to will pay means-tested contributions. From July 2014 all new residents of nursing homes will have the choice of paying through a fully refundable lump sum bond or a rental style periodic payment, or a combination of both.

Nursing home charges need approval by a new Aged Care Financing Authority.

If you are a pensioner you pay a basic fee of up to 85% of the single pension, about \$15,364 a year.

If you are on a part pension or a self-funded retiree you pay a means-tested contribution towards the cost of accommodation of up to \$52.80 a day.

The “care fee” is a separate fee with contributions of up to \$25,000 a year with a lifetime cap of \$60,000 (indexed).

Home care payments will be taken in to account in calculating lifetime care expenditure.

CARE AT HOME

The government will reduce its overall contribution to the cost of home care packages from 84% to about

76%. But the level of government subsidies for home care packages will range from \$7500 to \$45,000 a year.

Those on higher incomes will have to pay more through an income-tested fee on top of the current basic fee.

The new payments are:

A basic fee of up to 17.5% of the single pension, about \$3135, although many will pay less.

A care fee which full pensioners will not pay, but others will. It will be no greater than the cost of the care, up to \$5000 for part-pensioners and \$10,000 a year for self-funded retirees, with a lifetime cap of \$60,000.

This fee will be calculated on the basis of 50% of income above thresholds of the pension of \$23,540 up to \$43,186 for singles. (\$36,500 up to \$66,134 couples). For those above these incomes, their annual fee will be equal to \$5000 plus 50% of their income above the threshold up to a maximum \$10,000 a year.

ASSETS AND INCOME TESTS

Residents’ incomes will be assessed under same rules as for the pension.

The resident's family home will not count as an asset if it is occupied by a spouse. Where it is counted, the house value is capped at \$144,500 and is only counted in determining ability to pay.

Only income above the maximum full pension of \$23,540, and assets above \$40,500 will count towards the means test. For people with income or assets above these thresholds, the maximum contribution is:

-50% of income above the income threshold PLUS

-17.5% of the value of assets between \$40,500 and \$144,500 PLUS

-1% of value of assets between \$144,500 and \$353,500 PLUS

-2% of value of assets above \$353,500.

The maximum means-tested contribution is to go first towards the accommodation payment and then towards the care fee.

Document SMHH000020120420e84100035

News and Features

Shake-up will help the aged stay in homes

Phillip Coorey CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

648 words

21 April 2012

The Sydney Morning Herald

ELDERLY Australians with means will pay more for their aged care under a \$3.7 billion overhaul of the system which seeks to rid it of inconsistency and keep it sustainable as the population ages and the workforce shrinks.

The package - of which \$577 million is new money - will introduce means tests for people being cared for either in their home or a nursing home and will inject \$1.2 billion towards redressing the shortfall of aged care workers and the low wages they are paid.

The reforms, to begin on July 1, 2014, after the next federal election, include establishing an aged care financing authority, which will approve the bonds and fees charged by providers to prevent people being ripped off.

The reform package was greeted with widespread approval from industry stakeholders, who have been urging the government to fix the system. With baby boomers entering retirement, the package increased from 60,000 to 100,000 the number of home-care packages.

"[The] primary objective is to support older Australians staying in their own home for as long as possible and, if at all possible, for the whole of their lives," the Minister for Ageing, Mark Butler, said. While the cost of aged care will increase for those with means, there will be caps. Care costs in residential homes will be capped at \$25,000 a year and \$60,000 in total for the duration of their stay. For those receiving home care, no full pensioner will pay a care fee.

Care fees for part-pensioners at home will be capped at \$5000 a year plus a basic fee of \$3135, while self-funded retirees with incomes higher than \$43,186 will pay a care fee on a sliding scale, capped at \$10,000 a year, plus the \$3135 basic fee. Again, no one will pay more than \$60,000 in care fees during their lifetime.

The family home, while it is occupied, will not count as an asset in means testing. This means that if one half of a couple is in residential care and the other at home, the value of the property will not count towards how much they pay for residential care. Nor will it count if the property is being rented out and the proceeds are being used to cover care costs.

To fund their care, people can pay with a lump-sum bond, periodic payments, or a combination. If needed, they can sell their home, rent it out, or take out a reverse mortgage with a private lender.

To prevent people being forced to sell their house to secure a scarce aged care spot, there will be a statutory cooling-off period allowing them to take the spot and then work out how best to pay for it.

The means test for residential care will raise \$378 million while the home-care means test will contribute \$183 million towards the \$3.7 billion, which is the cost of the package during its first five years.

To help fund the increase in home care, \$1.6 billion will be stripped from subsidies paid to nursing homes for treating high-care patients.

These subsidies are forecast to blow out by \$3.2 billion over five years due to what Mr Butler called "a period of unusual claiming". The net cost to the budget in 2012-13, when the government is aiming to achieve a surplus, is just \$55 million.

The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, said the package honoured the rights and dignities of older people and was fairer and simpler.

The Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott, at first criticised the reforms for adding to the costs of aged care but later said he would reserve his opinion until he had read the policy.

Document SMHH000020120420e8410003d

News and Features

User-pays at last as opposition falls silent

Mark Metherell

406 words

21 April 2012

The Sydney Morning Herald

ANALYSIS

AT THE heart of the reforms has been the once inflammatory issue of forcing elderly Australians needing high care to pay a bond to get into a home.

It was a step the Howard government dodged, despite the persuasive finding of a report by Professor Warren Hogan, which called for widespread deregulation of the industry.

The crunch that has loomed over nursing homes generated by the ageing population and the rising demand for more intense care once people get to nursing homes, has produced a lop-sided financial structure.

People admitted for low care are obliged to pay bonds, but they make up only 30 per cent to 40 per cent of nursing home residents, leaving proprietors with little incentive to provide services for those most in need of high care.

And meantime, the growing number of elderly who can stay at home, even with chronic disease, is placing mounting pressure on inadequate community-based services - a trend yesterday's measures also seek to remedy.

However, removing the financial barrier between high and low care has become the rallying point for the reform call.

The government announcement won unanimous support from operators and not-for-profit groups, with nary a murmur against the removal of the protection of high care patients.

The reforms have come with the other once-rejected notion of user-pays in Australian aged care. This is to be twinned with greater choice in how aged care residents may pay - by either bond or periodic payment.

Last year's Productivity Commission's report recommended much greater deregulation of the industry, reducing government supervision and suggesting a pensioners' savings account scheme for the government to manage the proceeds from family home sales to finance aged care.

That was a step too far for the Gillard government, which has increased regulatory oversight with the establishment of an aged care financing authority to oversee aged care charges and bonds. Along with the introduction of a \$60,000 cap on lifetime care costs, the government is hoping to keep a rein on user-pays excesses.

Yesterday, Julia Gillard made repeated mention of the way the government's scheme would halt the "emergency fire sale" of family homes forced on elderly people needing aged care.

The "fire sales", it seems, have burnt off the opposition to reform in aged care.

Document SMHH000020120420e84100036

News and Features

Shake-up puts failing aged care on track

Phillip Coorey

325 words

21 April 2012

The Sydney Morning Herald

COMMENT

THE near-universal approval from the myriad stakeholders in the aged-care sector yesterday indicated this was an important policy reform which the government has got right.

In what will be a big tick for the up-and-coming Aged Care Minister, Mark Butler, the government has grasped the nettle and put aged care on a sustainable footing for the immediate future.

Apart from the industry reaction, what set this policy aside was the lack of spin which accompanied it.

The uncomfortable truth facing governments of all persuasions is that as the population ages and the workforce shrivels, those with the means are going to have to contribute more throughout all stages of life, including the final years.

John Howard sniffed the breeze in 1996 when he raised the prospect of selling the family home to fund aged care and was figuratively lynched for it.

Now it is broadly accepted that the aged-care system, last redesigned in the 1980s and concentrated on nursing homes, is dysfunctional and failing badly.

Butler did not try to spin any of this yesterday. He just stated the facts plainly as he unveiled a shake-up that increases the financial burden on the aged but spreads it as evenly and fairly as possible and creates as many funding options as practicable.

Just as importantly, it seeks to redress the hopelessly inconsistent systems of payments and bonds, and makes provision to tackle the crisis in the aged care workforce which has too few people and terrible wages.

The package was worth \$3.7 billion but Butler stated, almost proudly, that only \$577 million was new. The rest came from elsewhere in the sector as well as the means tests.

It is not perfect but it is a clever reform in straitened times. It also shows just what proper policy consultation can achieve.

Document SMHH000020120420e84100037

News and Features

Same old story: grey growth will push nation's economy into the red

Jessica Irvine

461 words

21 April 2012

The Sydney Morning Herald

ANALYSIS

ONLY an economist could turn the prospect of living longer into a looming crisis.

But practitioners of the dismal science have been warning for some time of the disastrous consequences for economic growth and government budgets of the ageing of the population.

The first Intergenerational Report by the federal Treasury, commissioned by then treasurer Peter Costello in 2002, was the first to quantify the yawning fiscal gap looming in federal finances.

An updated report in 2010 projected that, if steps were not taken, the budget would be in deficit by 3.75 per cent of gross domestic product by 2050 and accumulated net government debt would balloon to around 20 per cent of GDP.

This week, the International Monetary Fund devoted a chapter of its Global Financial Stability Report to fretting about the "longevity risk" facing economies with ageing populations. Like a slow-moving, grey blob spreading out across the economy "as populations age in the decades ahead, the elderly will consume a growing share of resources" it observed.

An ageing population hurts the budget bottom line in two ways, by increasing demands for spending and reducing potential revenue.

Older people generally require higher levels of services, putting pressure on hospitals, subsidised pharmaceuticals schemes, and, of course, requiring greater levels of in-home and centre care.

As people live longer, rather than keeling over at the age of 55, they are at higher risk of developing diseases of the mind, not just body, like dementia, which also require high-level, ongoing care. New and more expensive technologies are also becoming available. Meanwhile, a shortage of younger workers means pressure on staffing costs.

On the revenue side, the dwindling proportion of young workers means there is fewer people to pay the income taxes needed to look after the old. In 1970, there were 7.5 working-aged people for each person aged over 65. Today, there are 5. By 2050, there will be just 2.7. A shrinking working-aged population will result in falling working hours and slower economic growth.

Treasury expects real economic growth to slow from an average of 3.3 per cent over the past 40 years to 2.7 per cent in the coming 40.

The new grey economy will spawn new industries and employment in aged care and retirement services.

Keeping up is the ever-present problem.

Yesterday's aged care reform package is a necessary step towards addressing the needs of an ageing population. But there is a long road ahead to put government finances on a truly sustainable footing and keep providing the standard of living we have come to expect.

Document SMHH000020120420e84100044

News and Features

Elderly fear forced sale of homes to meet care costs

Mark Metherell HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

582 words

7 April 2012

THE Ageing Minister, Mark Butler, has talked up the need for aged care reform, pointing to "an industry in crisis" and to the "forced fire sale of the family home" to meet nursing home bonds.

Mr Butler today released reports on his consultations with thousands of people at 31 meetings he held around Australia, where many revealed their anxieties about future care and costs.

"The overwhelming message is that older Australians are not getting the quality of care and support that they deserve from the current system," he said.

The meetings were to gauge community opinion following the Productivity Commission report last year which recommended radical changes to the financing of aged care, including more user-pays and choice in aged-care services.

The government has said it will release plans for change in response to the commission report before the next election. Mr Butler is declining to say whether the government will introduce its plans in the federal budget, as sought by many aged care organisations.

He said that for many older Australians "the price they pay to enter care is based on how much money they have in their pockets, rather than a reflection of the true cost of care and value for money".

He said accommodation bonds which are paid to get into low-level (but not high-level) residential care cost an average of \$264,000 but can be more than \$1 million.

These bonds, Mr Butler said, "are usually raised through a forced fire sale of the family home at a time of crisis".

"As I have travelled around the country attending these conversations, older Australians have been telling me that they are prepared to contribute more to the cost of their care, but only if they get a better deal with more transparency, a higher level of quality and choice, as well as access to more services in the home."

Mr Butler said the World Health Organisation's World Health Day today called on governments to ensure people reach old age in the best possible health.

In the next few years, for the first time, there would be more people in the world aged over 60 years than children aged under five.

Australians were living longer than ever - up to 25 years longer compared to a century ago - and it was important that they could access the care they needed and remain living in their own home.

People had spoken of "an aged care industry in crisis, of their fears of not being able to get the care they want for themselves or their loved ones and of being forced to sell the family home to get care in an emergency".

The Council on the Ageing, which was contracted by the Health Department to arrange attendees for Mr Butler's "engagement" meetings, identified one of the frequently-raised concerns as being the question of how much individuals would have to pay for accommodation and care under the changes.

The council's report said there were "usually one or two people" at each meeting who expressed concern about having to sell their principal residence "but this concern was not generally picked up and supported by the majority of the audience".

Other concerns were the desire to stay at home as long as possible, easy access to support services, and greater choice and control of their lives.

Document SMHH000020120406e8470004p

News and Features

Charges set to rise in aged-care reforms

Mark Metherell HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

611 words

25 April 2012

The Sydney Morning Herald

THE table that accompanied the article "Charges set to rise in aged-care reforms" on April 25 incorrectly described \$23,543 as the level of pension at which the co-payment would not change. That figure is the income threshold at which the means-tested fee component applies.

ELDERLY Australians on low to modest incomes hoping to stay at home for as long as possible face increases of more than 150 per cent in charges for care services under the government's aged-care reforms.

The Gillard government's Living Longer, Living Better policy, proposes a user-pays system which would lift minimum payments by more than \$3000 a year for a person on an income of \$30,000 and by more than \$8000 a year for those on \$50,000.

The government, attempting to meet widespread demand from older people to stay in their homes as long as possible, is promising a huge 60 per cent boost to 100,000 in the number of people to get subsidised packages for at-home services, such as personal care, house-cleaning and transport.

But a UnitingCare Ageing analysis of the impact of the new means tested "care fee", which is to be added to the current \$1800 average basic fee for home care, reveals that recipients on a \$30,000 income would face minimum total payments of \$5029. That could rise to \$6392 if they were charged the full basic fee of \$3163, which is rarely demanded at present.

A government spokeswoman last night confirmed the figures.

People on incomes of \$50,000 would pay more than 20 per cent of their incomes for at home care, the

UnitingCare figures show.

Those on lower incomes receiving the full pension, who comprise 51 per cent of those on aged care, will not have to pay more than the \$1800 basic fee.

The user-pays plan impacts more significantly on many part-pensioners who are on incomes of \$30,000 to \$40,000; many frail people in their 70s and 80s.

Steve Teulan, director of UnitingCare Ageing NSW/ACT, said the figures would apply nationally. He said while the government's plan to boost home-care numbers was to be welcomed, the impact of the user-pays charges raised the question of "whether people will be able to afford this service, particularly those on low incomes".

There was also the prospect of many people telling care organisations they could not afford to pay for the service.

Mr Teulan said the proposed restructure also put greater onus on care organisations to meet the difference between the total cost and the government subsidy.

A spokeswoman for the Ageing Minister, Mark Butler, said the new means-tested fee system would represent between 16.8 per cent and 21.3 per cent of income for a person on \$30,000, compared to the current fee representing between 6 per cent and 10.5 per cent of income.

But she said under the more intensive home care packages recipients would pay up to 14 per cent of the cost of their care.

HOME CARE COSTS

CURRENT PROPOSED

INCOME CO-PAYMENT** CO-PAYMENT+

Up to \$23,543* \$1800.....	\$1800
\$25,000.....	\$1800.....	\$2529
\$30,000.....	\$1800.....	\$5029
\$35,000	\$1800.....	\$6800
\$40,000.....	\$1800.....	\$6800
\$45,000.....	\$1800.....	\$7707
\$50,000.....	\$1800.....	\$10,207

Impact of aged care changes from July 2014

*Full pension

**This is the average fee paid, although nominal fees can go up to \$3163.

+Aged care changes to operate from July 2014 SOURCE: UNITINGCARE AGEING

Document SMHH000020120424e84p0003u

The Age

News

No place like home: PM's aged care plan

BY MICHELLE GRATTAN POLITICAL EDITOR

784 words

21 April 2012

The Age

AGEE

First

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English

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THE number of home-care packages will almost double but better-off people will face tougher means testing and higher charges, in a sweeping reform of aged care that will boost federal funding by \$577 million over five years.

The government will bring assets — but not the family home if still occupied by a spouse or dependant — into the means test for those entering nursing homes from mid-2014. A new means-tested fee — of up to \$10,000 for a self-funded retiree — will be put on home-care packages.

The \$3.7 billion Living Longer, Living Better plan, widely welcomed by aged care groups, will include \$1.2 billion for higher salaries and better conditions for workers, who are low-paid and have a high turnover.

Increased means testing will bring in \$561 million.

Unveiling the 10-year plan, Prime Minister Julia Gillard said the core features were making sure people could stay longer at home, and protecting them from emergency fire sales.

The Minister for Ageing, Mark Butler, said the reforms were the most sweeping in almost 30 years. A system built in the 1980s around nursing homes was being transformed "to one whose primary objective is to support older Australians staying in their own home for as long as possible and if at all possible, for the whole of their lives".

Aged and Community Services Australia, the peak body representing charitable and non-profit aged care providers welcomed especially the emphasis on home care and greater equity in the way people fund their care.

But the Business Council of Australia said the changes would not increase access to quality care or boost choice and the overall sustainability of the sector. While there was some extra funding, "much of it comes from cutting services to other parts of the sector", and the government was also introducing more red tape in the form of pricing controls.

Ms Gillard said there were huge problems in the present system, including insufficient provision for those wanting to live independently. Last year 24,000 applications were received for community-care packages, but fewer than 2000 were provided. Home-care packages will increase from fewer than 60,000 to almost 100,000, with new packages to better tailor care to needs.

The new means-tested home-care fee will be on top of the existing basic fee. People on full pensions will not pay the care fee but some part-pension recipients and non-pensioners will be charged — with an annual \$5000 cap for part-pension recipients and \$10,000 for self-funded retirees.

The government will increase the maximum level of the supplement it pays for nursing home residents from \$32.58 to \$52.84 from July 2014, saying this will encourage the building of facilities and give the industry more certainty.

There will be new controls to stop providers charging excessive bonds. An Aged Care Financing Authority will approve the level of lump sum payment or equivalent regular payment to ensure it reflects value for money.

To prevent anyone being forced into a "fire sale", the plan will provide more choice in how people pay for nursing home care — by a bond, a regular charge or a combination. At present the average bond is about \$250,000. Ms Gillard said 40 per cent of people were forced into emergency fire sales.

Nobody will pay more than \$25,000 a year for nursing home care with a cap of \$60,000 over a lifetime.

The government has rejected a Productivity Commission recommendation to include the family home in means testing, and for a reverse mortgage scheme.

A crackdown on rorting by some nursing home providers, which has led to inflated claims, aims to claw back \$1.6 billion, although there will be no attempt to retrieve existing overclaims. Mr Butler said some providers "may be unhappy the jig is up".

Ms Gillard said that for the first time fairness was being introduced into the system, which currently had pensioners subsidising the care of millionaires. The reformed system would be based on capacity to pay. But the million people already in the system would not be hit — under the new rules they "will not pay a cent more than they would have under the current arrangements".

While some measures do not start until mid 2014, the first of them will start July 1.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott said more means testing and user-pays would mean "a lot of Australians are going to pay more". The opposition will give a full response when it has studied the package.

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Forgotten Diggers' lone battle

BY MICHELLE GASTON

FORGETTEN DIGGER: A former Australian soldier, Paul Barnes, is seen in a military uniform, standing in a field. He is wearing a yellow t-shirt and black shorts. The background is a dark, textured wall.

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Photo: Paul Barnes is depicted in a military uniform, standing in a field. He is wearing a yellow t-shirt and black shorts. The background is a dark, textured wall.

No place like home: PM's aged care plan

BY MICHELLE GASTON

THE GOVERNMENT will bring forward a plan to build 10,000 new aged care places over the next five years, with the first 2,000 places to be built by the end of 2012. The plan is part of a broader strategy to improve aged care services across the country.

The plan is part of a broader strategy to improve aged care services across the country. It includes funding for the construction of new aged care facilities, as well as funding for the recruitment and training of aged care workers. The plan is expected to create thousands of jobs in the aged care sector.

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MICHELLE
GASTON
More reports

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The Age

News

Quality of care 'missing' from reforms

BY RACHEL WELLS

529 words

21 April 2012

The Age

AGED CARE 'The staff are wonderful but they're run off their feet'

WHEN Bernadette Clohesy put her mother into an eastern suburbs nursing home two years ago, she hoped she would receive the very best of care.

She had certainly paid for it. While her mother, 91-year-old Clare Moloney, is relatively happy in her new home, her daughter feels the quality of her care can be left wanting.

"It's a very expensive facility . . . And the staff are wonderful but they're run off their feet," she says. "I think, 'well, if you can't get the care in a place like that what happens in other places?'"

Mrs Clohesy is disappointed the government's \$3.7 billion overhaul of the aged-care system, announced yesterday, does not include mandatory staff ratios.

"They [the government] have said that staffing ratios are a fairly blunt instrument for ensuring quality care. But it's been introduced in general nursing, it's been introduced in childcare, so I can't see why they aren't introduced it into nursing homes. It just seems like a given, especially when I see how short-staffed some of these facilities are. When you've got a whole system that is in total chaos . . . I'm disappointed that so much of it [the reforms] was about money and not a lot of it is about the quality of care."

Mrs Moloney agrees. "I'm quite happy here . . . but I think more care could be given if they had more staff."

Her daughter did, however, welcome news that an independent taskforce would be set up to look at pay rises, training and education for aged care staff to try to attract more workers. The sector has a 25 per cent rate of staff turnover and is estimated to need 827,100 workers by 2050 — more than double the current aged care workforce.

Mrs Clohesy, who is in her 60s, also applauded the decision to almost double the number of home-care packages to 100,000 in the next five years, to enable more older people to remain in their homes.

"I'm in the eldest group of the baby boomers so I'm kind of the next cab off the rank [for aged care]. I would like to stay in my home for as long as I can," she said.

She also approved the change that will enable people to choose to pay for nursing homes through a lump sum, periodic payments or a combination, so they are not forced into a fire sale of the family home to meet the costs.

"Huge bonds cause a lot of extra stress at an already highly stressful time, so to have the choice of how you want to pay would be very helpful . . . I've also got no objection to means-testing. I think if you can afford it, you should pay for it."

"It's all a little too late for me," says Mrs Moloney. "I was desperate to stay in my own home but at least it's changing now."

Document AGEE000020120420e84100034

News

More choice, but change ratchets up user-pays

BY MARK METHERELL

634 words

21 April 2012

The Age

MORE self-funded retirees are likely to pay the full cost of about \$136 a day for nursing home care but should face less pressure to sell the family home under the long-awaited aged-care reforms.

The impact of the changes on the lifetime investments of elderly Australians flowing from the changes, to take effect in July 2014, will mean many people who currently pay little or nothing will face higher out-of-pocket costs that will increase more with their wealth.

The government describes it as "fair means testing" of aged care and this is expected to yield savings of \$561 million over five years — at the expense of the consumer. And that amount can be expected to grow steadily.

But users will have more choice about how they can pay — either by lump sum or by periodic payments — and whether they are cared for in a nursing home or in their own home.

The government is to nearly double the number of funded home care packages to 100,000 as part of a strategy to boost support for care at home.

Home care can mean many older people who benefit from remaining in their own home are subject to unlimited charges and erratic funding of services — which the changes are expected to rectify.

How this chooser and user-pays approach will affect individual costs at home or in nursing homes remains unclear. The government has agreed to impose a lifetime cap of \$60,000 on "care" costs.

But this may still mean nursing home patients have to continue paying up to \$52 a day for accommodation costs.

The interplay between incomes, assets and means tests means calculating individual financial impact is challenging.

Just over half of aged care users qualify for the full pension and in effect pay no out-of-pocket expenses. Another 37 per cent part-pensioners would face out of pocket costs running to several thousand dollars a year.

AGED CARE PLAN

MAIN POINTS

A total of \$3.7 billion over five years:

- Better access to services

\$1.9 billion

- Strengthen the workforce

\$1.2 billion

- Dementia

\$268.4 million

- Carer support

\$54.8 million

HOME CARE

- Subsidy package to be means tested from July 1, 2014; ‘‘care fee’’ to be introduced.
- Family home will be exempt from means testing.
- Means testing to reduce government funding of package from 84 per cent to 76 per cent.
- Recipients to pay basic fee of up to 17.5 per cent of the single pension.
- Full pensioners will not pay a care fee.
- Indexed caps of \$5000 and \$10,000 will apply to care fees of part-pension recipients and self-funded retirees respectively, together with lifetime indexed cap of \$60,000.
- Care fee cannot be greater than cost of care.
- Annual subsidy will range from \$7500 to \$45,000.
- \$6.7 billion for Home and Community Care Program for older people.
- \$3 billion for joint state-Commonwealth HACC Program in Victoria and Western Australia.
- More than \$5.8 billion for home care packages, supporting 58,000 packages a year.
- More than \$1 billion for the National Respite for Carers Program.

RESIDENTIAL CARE

- From July 1, 2014, residents can pay accommodation costs through fully refundable lump sum or a periodic payment, or a combination.
- Means testing methods will be tightened by combining income and asset tests.
- New measures will mean people with same level of income and assets as other residents will pay the same fee.
- The distinction between low and high care will be removed.
- Providers won’t be able to choose people based on how they intend to pay for accommodation.

- Residents will be able to decide how they will pay once in care.

Document AGEE000020120420e84100036

News

Fine line from care to controversy

BY MICHELLE GRATTAN

356 words

21 April 2012

The Age

ANALYSIS

THE government's aged care overhaul appears to be a sound, fair and consumer-oriented package in an area that is complex, costly and often fraught for decision-makers and families alike.

With its sharper means testing and user-pays approach, this is tough reform. The government deserves praise for courage and minister Mark Butler should get credit for policy skills and marshalling a difficult sector behind change.

The plan emphasises keeping the elderly in their homes — what people want now and will increasingly desire as those assertive baby boomers demand that old age be on their terms.

Having those who can afford it contribute more is reasonable, and necessary with an ageing population. At the same time, people will be protected from providers extracting exorbitant bonds for ordinary accommodation.

The \$3.7 billion blueprint is more about rearranging how aged care is provided and funded than about new spending, but the \$576.9 million new money over five years comes when budget dollars are tight.

The government has mostly followed the Productivity Commission's recommendations, but it has steered away from including the family home in assessing assets, and embracing a reverse mortgage scheme. Apart from anything else, to have gone down those routes would have made for immense political controversy and torpedoed any prospect of smooth reform.

The measures have been widely welcomed by those representing consumers, the workforce and providers (though the government is bracing for a blowback from some providers who have been rorting payments).

The Business Council of Australia, however, is a discordant voice, doubting the reform is substantial.

The issue is a test for the opposition, especially after Joe Hockey attacked "entitlement" thinking. Tony Abbott yesterday said that more means testing and user-pays would add to people's costs. It's an easy shot but he would be wiser to offer the same bipartisan approach that he has on disability insurance. If he becomes prime minister he will inherit the problem — he should beware of any misguided quest for political populism in this area.

Document AGEE000020120420e84100038

News

Elderly to be billed thousands for home care

By MARK METHERELL HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

657 words

25 April 2012

The Age

EXCLUSIVE

HOME CARE COSTS

INCOME CURRENT PROPOSED

PAYMENT* PAYMENT

Up to \$23,543

(Full pension) \$1800 \$1800

\$25,000 \$1800 \$2529

\$30,000 \$1800 \$5029

\$35,000 \$1800 \$6800

\$40,000 \$1800 \$6800

\$45,000 \$1800 \$7707

\$50,000 \$1800 \$10,207

IMPACT OF AGED CARE CHANGES FROM JULY 2014

***AVERAGE FEE PAID, ALTHOUGH NOMINAL FEES CAN GO UP TO \$3163**

SOURCE: UNITINGCARE AGEING

MANY elderly Australians will face thousands of dollars a year in additional expenses to receive care at home under the Gillard government's aged-care reforms.

An analysis of the policy shows people on incomes of as little as \$30,000 a year (including pension) could have to pay more than \$3000 a year extra to receive care in the home.

Those on incomes exceeding \$50,000 could be up for an extra \$8000 a year in home-care costs.

The extra charges will come in the form of a new means-tested "care fee", which will be added to the existing \$1800 average basic fee for home care.

The charges are part of a broad aged care overhaul under which the government — in a bid to meet growing demand from older people to stay longer in their homes — has promised a 60 per cent boost to 100,000 in the number of people getting subsidised home-care packages.

The services provided include personal care, home cleaning and transport.

An analysis of the government's plans by UnitingCare Ageing found people with annual incomes of \$30,000 would face minimum total payments of \$5029 — or well over double what they pay now. That could rise to \$6392 if they were charged the full basic fee of \$3163, although that is rarely charged at present.

People earning \$50,000 would pay more than 20 per cent of their incomes for home care, the UnitingCare figures show.

People living entirely on the pension, who comprise 51 per cent of those on aged care benefits, will not have to pay more than the \$1800 basic fee.

The user-pays plan will impact more significantly on many part-pensioners, whose combined pension payments and independent incomes total between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

A government spokeswoman last night confirmed the UnitingCare figures.

Steve Teulan, director of UnitingCare Ageing for New South Wales and the ACT, said the figures would apply nationally. While the plan to boost home-care numbers was welcome, he said, the new charges raised the question of whether people would be able to afford the service, particularly those on low incomes. Mr Teulan said he was concerned many people would tell care organisations they could not afford to pay for the services they needed. "The amount of money we need to provide services will be reduced because we will need to accept lower fees from clients," he said.

Mr Teulan said the proposed restructure also put greater onus on care organisations to meet the difference between the total cost and the government subsidy when people did not pay the designated charges.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard said the reforms would enable older people to get the help they needed and remain in their own homes as long as possible. The care fee component is capped at a maximum of \$5000 a year for those on less than \$43,000 and \$10,000 for self funded retirees.

A spokeswoman for Minister for Ageing Mark Butler said the means-tested fees would represent between 16.8 per cent and 21.3 per cent of income for a person on \$30,000, compared with between 6 per cent and 10.5 per cent now.

But, she said, under the more intensive home care packages available, for which the government provided a \$43,000 annual subsidy, recipients would only pay up to 14 per cent of the cost of their care.

Document AGEE000020120424e84p0002x

Fire-sales on family homes reveal aged care in crisis

BY MARK METHERELL

496 words

7 April 2012 (The Age)

MINISTER for Ageing Mark Butler has talked up the need for aged care reform, pointing to "an industry in crisis" and to the "forced fire-sale of the family home" to meet nursing home bonds.

Mr Butler is today expected to release reports on his consultations with thousands of people at 31 meetings he held around Australia, where many revealed their anxieties about future care and costs.

"The overwhelming message is that older Australians are not getting the quality of care and support that they deserve from the current system," Mr Butler said.

The meetings were to gauge community opinion in the wake of the Productivity Commission report last year which recommended radical changes to the financing of aged care, including more user-pays and choice in aged-care services.

The government said it will release its plans for change in response to the commission report before the next election. Mr Butler is declining to say whether the government will introduce its plans in next month's federal budget. He said that for many older Australians, "the price they pay to enter care is based on how much money they have, rather than a reflection of the true cost of care and value for money".

He said accommodation bonds paid to get into low-level (but not high-level) residential care cost an average of \$264,000 but can be more than \$1 million.

These bonds, Mr Butler said, "are usually raised through a forced fire-sale of the family home at a time of crisis".

"As I have travelled around the country attending these conversations, older Australians have been telling me that they are prepared to contribute more to the cost of their care, but only if they get a better deal with more transparency, a higher level of quality and choice, as well as access to more services in the home."

Mr Butler said today's World Health Organisation World Health Day called on governments to ensure people reach old age in the best possible health. In the next few years, for the first time, there will be more people in the world aged over 60 than children aged under five. Australians are living longer — up to 25 years longer compared with a century ago — and they must be able to access care and remain living in their own home.

Australians had spoken of "an aged care industry in crisis, of their fears of not being able to get the care they want for themselves or their loved ones and of being forced to sell the family home to get care in an emergency".

A Council on the Ageing report said there were "usually one or two people" at meetings who expressed concern about having to sell their principal residence "but this concern was not generally picked up and supported by the majority of the audience".

Document AGEE000020120406e8470003a

News

PM pushes home care for dementia victims

By MICHELLE GRATTAN POLITICAL EDITOR

562 words

20 April 2012

The Age

TODAY'S federal government aged care blueprint will provide \$268.4 million over five years for dementia, with a new supplement giving financial help to people receiving home care packages and residential care.

The supplement will add \$1341 to the assistance for an elderly full pensioner at home receiving a current government subsidy of \$13,406 a year and making a co-contribution of \$1800. It will cost \$164.3 million of the dementia funds. But the dementia funding, which is not all new money, falls well short of the extra \$500 million called for by Alzheimer's Australia this month.

With nearly 1 million Australians expected to have dementia by 2050, there will be more support for timely diagnosis and a stronger focus on those who get the disease at a young age.

The aged care plan, designed to keep more old people in their homes and ensure people are not forced into a fire sale of their house if they have to go into a nursing home, is a major plank in the government's reform agenda.

The package will swing the system towards user-paying and promote greater fairness by means-testing.

It is worth several billion dollars but is substantially funded by a rearrangement of existing money. The government has said it has not sought to make overall budget savings from aged care.

The government will promise a dramatic increase in the number of home care packages, allowing tens of thousands more older people to remain at home while receiving care.

People will have a choice on how to pay their nursing home cost. Instead of the present bond system, which can range up to \$2.6 million and bear no relation to the real accommodation cost, there will be a choice between paying a bond or a periodic amount, or a mix of the two.

The government will say this means people will no longer be forced into emergency fire sales. They will also have longer to make their choice, with a new cooling-off period.

Defending the means test, the government will say that ability to pay will be taken into account to increase fairness. Currently pensioners often have to pay more than people with private incomes and assets of hundreds of thousands of dollars. But costs will be capped.

Announcing the reforms, Prime Minister Julia Gillard will say: "If you want a nursing home place, we will make it easier to get one. If you want care in the home, we will make it easier to get that care. More people will get to keep their home — and more people will get to stay in their home."

She will say that aged care, like Medicare, is one of the most fundamental parts of Australia's social compact.

"It's one of those pillars that bring security and decency to every Australian, no matter what their circumstances or background. For older Australians, who have worked so hard, that is something they have earned many times over." She will also reject the notion that ageing is simply a challenge to be managed, saying instead that our longer lives should be welcomed, and our ageing population seen in many ways as a gift. "Ageing should never be seen as a burden."

Document AGEE000020120419e84k00034

News

Aged care reform 'fails to fix staffing shortfall'

STEPHANIE PEATLING with FARRAH TOMAZIN

590 words

22 April 2012

Sunday Age

THE federal government's \$3.7 billion aged care reform package has not done enough to attract the 400,000 extra workers the system needs, operators and unions have warned.

The reforms, announced on Friday, allocated \$115 million each year to improve the pay and conditions of some of the lowest paid workers in the country. "We should all have a Bex and good lie down before we think about the benefits that will deliver to the system," Martin Laverty, the chief executive of Catholic Health Australia, said.

There were about 300,000 aged care workers in Australia in 2010. About 100,000 are expected to retire over the next decade. The sector has a 25 per cent rate of staff turnover and is estimated to need 827,100 workers by 2050 — more than double the current aged care workforce.

United Voice national secretary Louise Tarrant said workers were being paid as little as \$18 an hour so they were "not in the industry for the financial rewards". "This modest increase then will help them stay working in a profession for which their primary motivation is their care and commitment to Australia's elderly," she said.

"This is a good start, but there are details to be worked through, and we will be working with the government to ensure the money flows into workers' pockets."

The cost of aged care is expected to go up under the reforms, which increased the number of aged care packages from 60,000 to 100,000.

The changes are designed to allow people to stay in their own homes for longer rather than having to move into aged care facilities. The reforms were expected to be announced in next month's budget but the government instead revealed the changes to the system last week.

Although the package is worth \$3.7 billion only \$577 million of it is new money, a sign of the economically constrained conditions the government is dealing with. Age care home operators had been pushing the government to accept an entitlement model where people would be treated and receive care once they were assessed as being in need. Instead, places were increased, from 113 to 125 per 1000 people over the age of 70 over the next 10 years.

This has raised questions from the sector as to how much relief that will provide for the overstretched system, particularly as the population ages. "When you have an arbitrarily determined increase from a government more concerned by money, there will be a shortfall," Mr Lavery said.

Minister for Ageing Mark Butler acknowledged that the need for aged care would only increase in the future.

"This is the beginning of building an aged-care system for the 21st century, rather than trying to work with a system that was built in the 1980s," he said.

He also said workforce "constraints" meant more places could not be created immediately. Victorian Health Minister David Davis said the state government was still assessing the package, but had some concerns. "There are clearly good parts to the package that we'd welcome; for example, the additional money for dementia support, and greater support for people who wish to remain in their own home," he said.

"However, there are aspects of the package that will require careful examination. In particular, the government is cautious about any harsh imposition of user charges that have the capacity to disadvantage many Victorians."

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News

PM to unveil user-pays changes to aged care

By ANDREW PROBYN

325 words

19 April 2012

The Age

THE older and well-off will be expected to pay more towards their aged care under user-pays reforms to be unveiled by the Prime Minister tomorrow.

While the government will not force older people to sell their homes, it is believed that it intends to expand the aged care means test.

It is believed the government's response to a Productivity Commission's report into the aged-care sector also has a focus on improving care at home and in retirement villages to reduce reliance on nursing homes.

This reflects taxpayer-funded research released by the Council of the Ageing just before Easter showing widespread concern about residential care and a strong preference for living independently at home, albeit with occasional help with domestic chores.

Some of the money for in-home care will come from reducing subsidies for nursing homes. Expanding means-testing for aged care will be the most controversial of the issues to be unveiled tomorrow by Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler. Ms Gillard postponed a \$5500-a-head fund-raiser dinner scheduled for tonight at Woodside Energy's Perth headquarters so she could rush back to Canberra for the announcement.

In its Caring for Older Australians report, released in August last year, the Productivity Commission recommended aged care shift from a rationed system to one that is both means and needs-tested.

It said those going into aged care could pay by using equity in their home, either through a reverse mortgage or through a home credit scheme.

Effectively like a loan, it would be repaid when the home was sold after the person died, unless their spouse or a disabled child was still living there.

The commission's proposed means test — including the family home — would determine how much people could afford for care and accommodation.

Document AGEE000020120418e84j0002t

News

Aged-care reforms under fire

By MARK METHERELL HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

457 words

30 April 2012

The Age

New report blasts government plan

THE prospect of elderly people getting the right aged care at the right price under the Gillard government's aged-care reforms has been challenged in a new industry report.

The report is critical of the \$1.6 billion clawback from nursing home operational funding to finance other changes and describes the proposed aged care costs watchdog "as another layer of bureaucracy" that was unlikely to work.

The critical findings on the future funding and regulation of nursing home care costs follows the disclosure by The Age of big cost increases facing those who need care to stay in their own homes.

The latest report by an aged care industry analysis firm, Grant Thornton, questions whether the proposed changes will meet the demand for a more consumer-friendly and financially sound industry.

The government had failed to implement key recommendations of the Productivity Commission to transform aged care into an "entitlement" system so that funding was allocated to individuals rather than providers. This would have formed "the cornerstone of a dynamic system" that would empower consumers and spur greater competitiveness.

But despite acknowledging these advantages, the government's plan deferred consideration of this critical reform until after 2016-2017, the Grant Thornton report said. It also questioned the plan to establish the Aged Care Financing Authority (ACFA), the proposed watchdog to combat the imposition of "super bonds" and unreasonably high accommodation charges that do not reflect the true value of the service.

But the cost of the various elements that comprise aged care would be difficult to measure constantly across the sector.

"It will be virtually impossible for ACFA to police this effectively," the report said.

The government's plan to strip \$1.6 billion from recurrent funding to nursing homes because of "over-claiming" of subsidies was not based on comprehensive information on costs, and although much of that money would go to boost wage rates, that would not offset the cut in funding.

Reductions in the revenue to nursing homes might result in providers gaining access to the capital required to build new facilities, "only to find they cannot be operated viably. Without certainty around care revenue, it would be inappropriate for providers to progress their extension plans."

The report raises doubts about the extent to which people will be able to stay in their own homes even with expanded aged care support services. It would not be practical or safe for many to remain in their own homes, as they required the ongoing support of spouse, children or friends. But given the composition of the baby boomer population, access to such support would decline.

Document AGEE000020120429e84u0000s

News

Pre-budget launch for aged care deal

By MICHELLE GRATTAN POLITICAL EDITOR

552 words

16 April 2012

The Age

Greater emphasis on flexibility

THE government is likely to release its aged care reform package before the May 8 budget, so it is not overshadowed by the gloom of the sweeping spending cuts that will help achieve the surplus.

The reforms for the aged are set to emphasise community care, flexibility in the system, greater equity in charging arrangements for people needing low and high care, and a long-term shift towards a more user-pays approach.

Minister for the Ageing Mark Butler said the "overwhelming message from older Australians is they want more care provided in their own home".

He said the present system, built largely during the Hawke era, was based on nursing homes and residential care. "What older Australians and their families are telling us is they want to be able to live in their own home for as long as possible and, if at all possible, until the day they die," he told Sky. "But they don't feel they have enough support from the current system to do that."

The government has before it a blueprint for aged care reform from the Productivity Commission, but it will not take up all its recommendations. Mr Butler said the government

had not taken a public view about a taxpayer-underwritten reverse mortgage scheme with concessional interest rates — enabling people to draw on the equity in their home for their aged care costs — which the Productivity Commission advanced. It is understood the government does not intend to pursue that proposal in this package.

Mr Butler said there would continue to be a mix of government and private funding in paying for aged care — at present the Commonwealth paid about 70 per cent and individuals and their families about 30 per cent.

But, strongly implying a shift towards more user-pays financing, he said: "We will continue to have a mixed system . . . but there will be the need, I think, to continue to look at the way that balance is achieved to ensure we have a sustainable system.

"We're going to have a smaller number of taxpayers financing a much larger group of people demanding aged-care services."

He said a central issue in reforming the system would be addressing the "profound equity issue" that currently existed, where people entering residential care had very different financial burdens placed on them, depending on whether they were assessed as needing low care or high care, with no regard to their financial capacity. A low-care person paid an average bond of \$264,000 just to get into a residential home while charges for a high-care person were capped at what would be the equivalent of a bond of \$150,000 to \$180,000.

On the other side of politics, Nationals Senate leader Barnaby Joyce denied a report he wanted the Coalition to double the baby bonus to \$10,000. Indeed, he told The Age, "I've serious concerns about the whole baby bonus idea, because in some instances I don't believe the money is spent on the baby, and where there is a lack of social structure it can inspire people to have a baby for the money rather than for the love."

Document AGEE000020120415e84g00004

News

Home, where the heart is, and older citizens stay put

By RACHEL WELLS

345 words

20 April 2012

The Age

MARJORY Chamberlain has lived in her Brighton East home for 64 years and doesn't plan on going anywhere any time soon.

"I moved into this house with my husband after the Second World War," she says. "It's a long time and there a lot of memories here. I just couldn't stand to live anywhere else now."

The 92-year-old is among a growing number of older Australians choosing to stay in their home in preference to going into an aged-care centre.

Mrs Chamberlain relies on carers such as Dianne Bradley from Senior Helpers, one of a number of companies providing at-home care for the elderly, including those suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Carers from Senior Helpers visit her at least once a week to do housework and odd jobs about the house and to take her to medical appointments. When the time comes, they will also be enlisted to help her with bathing and cooking.

"I haven't got to the stage where I need personal help," Mrs Chamberlain says, "but when I do I will have someone come here to help. I'm not going anywhere."

Senior Helpers director Mike Fuller says Mrs Chamberlain isn't alone. "The demand for our services is huge and growing all the time. The reality is we've got an ageing population and an increasing number of people wanting to stay in their own homes," said Mr Fuller, who attended Carex, an aged care expo, in Caulfield yesterday.

Exhibitors, who showed off personal alarm systems, equipment such as shower chairs and bed lifters, and care services such as in-home physiotherapy, told a similar story.

"Some people have lived in their homes for 50-odd years. They don't want to have to move out into an unfamiliar environment," said Tess McIntyre, of Calvary Silver Circle, a non-profit organisation that provides home care services such as domestic duties and shopping help to companionship.

Document AGEE000020120419e84k0002v

Sunday Telegraph

Features

One flaw will bring down Labor's aged-care reforms

PETER VAN ONSELEN

655 words

22 April 2012

Sunday Telegraph

The aged-care reforms the Gillard government has embarked on fail in one very important respect. They do not include the family home when assessing the cost of care. This is a mistake.

The Productivity Commission in its review recommended reverse mortgages as part of the funding mix for improving aged care. The government has now announced a multi-billion dollar package (on Friday) which largely deserves praise. Elements of user pays and means testing are important reforms, and the opposition leader questioning such particulars is a sign that he, at least, still has his head in the sand when it comes to fiscal challenges facing the nation.

But the centrepiece of providing affordable future care for our ageing society requires people to use the equity in their homes to fund aged care, if people grow old or frail enough to need it. There is no other sustainable way to fund our ageing population. Labor has therefore shirked the most important part of aged care reform.

Lets face it, the problem of ageing is something we all aspire to. The alternative is hardly desirable. But there is a substantial fiscal cost that goes with it. For a start the aged pension kicks in at 60 for women and 65 for men. It will go up to 67 in the year 2023, but with average

life expectancy nudging into the 80s that leaves people dependent on savings or the state for a very long time.

When the aged pension was first introduced average life expectancy was below the age at which it kicked in.

And an ageing society increases health care costs, too. Not only are drugs getting more expensive but living longer means that they are more required to maintain a healthy lifestyle in old age. Again the state bears much of the burden for funding the (legal, of course) drug habits of the elderly.

Don't mistake this article as some sort of assault on the elderly. I hope to be part of that cohort of society myself one day. But like it or not, ageing Australians are going to have to get over their obsession with maintaining full ownership of their family home if they don't have the funds otherwise to pay for care. It's an asset, however emotionally held, and it isn't fair someone can exclude that asset from the overall test of whether they are eligible for state assistance in retirement.

The government avoided the policy the Productivity Commission laid out because it is political poison. Just like Badgerys Creek airport, our political leaders are not prepared to get together and put partisan advantage aside to deliver a policy necessary for a fiscally sustainable future. These are classic policy fields where bipartisanship should dictate policy so that we get national interest outcomes.

Why should younger taxpayers be expected to fund the retirement of older Australians at the same time they are seeking to buy homes of their own in expensive markets like Sydney when those same older Australians are retaining full equity in their own homes, solely so they can leave the asset to their children?

That's not what I'd call fair at all.

Joe Hockey used a speech in London last week to lament the culture of handouts in Western nations. And Western nations far and wide face the challenges of ageing populations. While aged care spending hardly classifies as a handout, per se, it is a drain on the budget bottom line, nonetheless. Which is why means testing and user pays options are good policy changes. But leaving the family home out of the mix of funding for a sustainable aged-care system does one thing and one thing only. It makes aged care unsustainable.

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Australian Newspapers

August 2013

The Australian

Local

Push for better aged care ALLIANCE CALLS FOR END TO RATIONING

EXCLUSIVE, PATRICIA KARVELAS

505 words

17 August 2013

The Australian

AGED CARE providers, medics and professional organisations will join forces today to call on all political parties to commit to end the rationing system that leaves many older Australians without the assistance they need.

In an effort to insert the issue into the election campaign, the 40 member organisations of the National Aged Care Alliance will argue that too many elderly wait too long for care in the home or have to move long distances to get into a nursing home.

Alzheimer's Australia chief executive Glenn Rees said it was time to end the "aged care lottery", arguing the current system is about luck, not need.

"The system is rationed so that today only 116 of every 1000 head of population over the age of 70 get the care and services they need. If you are No 117 or 118 you miss out," Mr Rees said.

Reforms introduced by Labor would only ameliorate the problem. "Recent reforms will lift that to 125, but what happens to Nos 126 and beyond? We still have a system which can't provide care for all who need it," he said.

"Chance plays a huge role in whether or not you can get help to keep living in your own home or access a place in an aged care facility when you need it."

The system was placing huge pressure on families and partners, who were forced to manage the care themselves or put loved ones in a nursing home far from family or in a hospital bed because there was no suitable alternative.

Aged-care services Australia chief executive John Kelly said service providers were hamstrung by the system, with at least a third of older people needing care having to wait more than three months to get it.

"When you are old and needing assistance this is three months too long and sometimes too late," Mr Kelly said.

"Providers of aged-care services are put in a position where they have to constantly turn older people in need away as they are forced to operate in a system that can't keep up with demand".

The Australian Catholic University's Tracey McDonald said access to aged-care services should be the same as access to health or income support for younger people.

"People aren't expected to wait three months to visit a GP or to access the aged care pension," Professor McDonald said.

"Like health services, aged-care services should be available when needed to ensure all older Australians have the best outcomes possible for them."

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation federal secretary Lee Thomas said abolishing aged care rationing was a central recommendation of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into aged care in 2011.

“The federal government has implemented some of the PC's findings but we want to see a commitment to the whole package and are calling for all political parties to end the age-care lottery.”

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Finance

Time to get your head around the aged care overhaul

PAUL DWYER

926 words

24 August 2013

The Australian

IF you think you don't know a lot about the new rules on aged care policy, you are not alone. The recent election debate showed that neither Kevin Rudd nor Tony Abbott was a repository of wisdom on the Living Longer, Living Better package that parliament passed in late June.

The reform represents the first significant changes since 1997.

The government is indicating a total investment of \$3.7 billion for the future of the industry, but it is residential care that will attract the most interest.

For residents who cannot meet all their accommodation costs, government will increase the accommodation supplement paid to providers from \$33.29 to \$52.84 a day, but this will be available only if a significant refurbishment or build was started after April 20 last year.

From July 1 next year, the difference between high and low care will be removed. An aged care assessment is a prerequisite for entering such care. At present an assessment is valid for 12 months, but this will become open-ended.

An accommodation bond (an interest-free loan to a facility) will be applicable for all new residents with the means to contribute to their care. At the moment a bond is applicable only to low-level facilities or those high-level facilities that offer extra services. A wider understanding of this among potential residents will undoubtedly lead to a last-minute rush of high-care applicants ahead of June 30 next year.

An important aspect of the new rules is that all providers must provide transparency with their pricing. The lump sum amount and its daily periodical equivalent must be disclosed on the government's website (My Aged Care) and any other published material such as providers' websites.

A resident entering a facility will have up to 28 days to decide whether to commit to a lump sum, a daily periodical payment or a combination. In 2011-12, 89 per cent of residents entering care that required an accommodation bond chose a lump-sum payment.

Government has decided on a three-tier daily pricing strategy: \$0-\$50, \$51-\$85 and above \$85 a day. The first price point has no requirements, the \$51-\$85 has to follow guidelines and

pricing higher than \$85 will need approval from a pricing commissioner. The lump-sum equivalent of the daily price is calculated by use of the government's maximum permissible interest rate, which is presently 6.82 per cent. The maximum tier-two pricing of \$85 a day allows for a maximum lump-sum bond of \$453,666.

Of concern to providers is the interest rate of 6.82 per cent being at historical lows, but if the MPIR returns to a longer-term average of about 8.8 per cent, the maximum lump sum for a tier-two price of \$85 would be \$351,590. This would induce a rush of applications for tier 3 approvals.

Representative groups and multi-site providers now reliant on accommodation bonds are concerned about the possibility of a significant uplift in periodical payments decisions. Lump-sum amounts are predominantly used by facilities to offset current liabilities with their lenders.

Banks in the aged care market are also concerned about the same potential in payment restructure by residents as it will affect their credit policies, loan-to-value and debt-servicing ratios. The repayments of accommodation bonds to the estate of previous residents may reduce or drain the liquidity of a provider if it is significantly replaced by periodical payments.

Facilities that have not previously charged an accommodation bond will find the new regime administratively demanding but potentially advantageous. The prudential regulations concerning bonds, the reporting to government and residents, and other requirements are in addition to deciding price parameters. Such places are mostly in regional, rural or remote locations.

Providers will no longer be able to receive a monthly retention bond, now set at \$331 a month (up to five years) and accessed from the accommodation bond. For many providers the removal of these monies will be a drain on their cashflow but could be recouped if included in tier 2 pricing.

Consumers will be affected, with a focus on greater co-contribution. Many of the methods used to minimise costs and increase aged-pension entitlements will be unavailable.

The existing income test will be replaced by a means test (incorporating both assets and income). An important change is that an accommodation bond will be assessed under the asset test. Based on current information, the family home will also be assessed, but capped at \$144,500.

A means test will have a long-time cap of \$60,000, part of which may be taken up with community services at home under the Home Care program.

In addressing the issue of an accommodation bond, residents will have other options to consider. First, they may consider borrowing to pay an accommodation bond through a reverse mortgage or accommodation bond loan, and this liability will be an offset in the assets test.

Additionally, some residents may chose to pay periodically, or a combination of lump-periodical. In doing so, the family home can be rented and the rental income is exempted from the income test and the home from the asset test for aged-pension entitlements.

Understanding aged care rules and regulations will become even more important for residents and families from next year.

Document AUSTLN0020130823e98o00050

Local

Home-care crisis hits the elderly

EXCLUSIVE, PATRICIA KARVELAS

415 words

17 August 2013

The Australian

CORAL Rizzalli is tired. The 72-year-old has spent her entire life caring for sick and disabled family members and is desperate for some reprieve, but the system is failing her family.

Ms Rizzalli is the full-time carer for her sister, 67-year-old Dawn Steine who has spina bifida, osteoporosis and other health complications and has been on a waiting list since April last year for full in-home care.

Ms Steine lives in a granny flat on Ms Rizzalli's property where she moved after Cyclone Yasi destroyed the family home.

She has very limited mobility and relies on her older sister to care for her. Ms Rizzalli and her husband Guido, 78, want to continue caring for her and do not want her in an aged care home but they need outside help to ease their burden.

Ms Rizzalli has just finished two years of treatment for breast cancer and recently had a pacemaker fitted.

While her sister was approved for a support package of 20 hours a fortnight in April last year, she only gets an hour because aged care places are rationed.

"All the service providers that I've approached have said they don't have any money. The end result (is) that Dawn gets one hour per fortnight of home help," Ms Rizzalli said.

She said they were willing to compromise and accept two hours a week of care, but even that was not available.

"Look, at the moment I think we can manage if she got two hours a week, not a fortnight, two hours a week to help," she said.

"She can't clean anymore, she can't lift her arms above her waist and her back has deteriorated to the point where she has great difficulty even getting a teacup to her lips and we don't want to take independence away from her . . . but at the same time I've just been through 2 1/2 years of cancer treatment and I've just had a pace-maker fitted.

"I'm older than Dawn and my husband is 78 and at the moment he is very sick with a kidney infection. So we're just finding it extremely difficult to provide the help that she needs. So if we could get that two hours.

"Well, I'm getting to the stage where it's absolutely exhausting to have to look after two people."

Document AUSTLN0020130816e98h00037

Local

Older Aussies lobby for new deal SOCIETY - FEDERAL ELECTION 2013 -

EXCLUSIVE, PATRICIA KARVELAS

405 words

13 August 2013

The Australian

OLDER people will demand "a new deal" from the party that wins the election, with management of the economy topping the list of concerns, and controlling interest rates ranking as the lowest priority.

The peak lobby group for older Australians, COTA, will be launching its election platform today at the National Press Club in Canberra: A New Deal for Older Australians.

It will release results from more than 600 people who participated in the COTA election panel.

While management of the economy scored the highest, 46 per cent, regarding how older Australians would vote, ensuring the quality of Australia's health system scored 45 per cent.

The second-tier issues identified by panelists of what would determine their voting were "Australian jobs and protection of local industries" at 29 per cent, "ensuring a quality education for all children" at 27 per cent, "political leadership" at 25 per cent and "addressing climate change" at 22 per cent. A fair industrial relations system scored at a low 8 per cent.

Controlling interest rates scored the lowest on the election issues at 4 per cent.

On general issues of concern, access to quality health services topped the list, with 72 per cent selecting the issue in their top five priorities.

Having adequate pensions also rated high at 58 per cent, with access to aged care and quality of services at 50 per cent and healthy ageing so older Australian can live longer rating at 47 per cent.

The platform urges all political leaders to support a nationally integrated approach to tackle the barriers that exist for older people.

COTA Australia chief executive Ian Yates said the "new deal" identifies five top priorities for policy action to deliver a better life for older people, including an end to ageism and age discrimination in all parts of Australian society; access to quality health services for all older Australians; access to quality aged-care services when and where they choose; participation in the workforce as long as they want or need to and a reasonable standard of living.

"The negative politics that portrays our ageing society as a 'problem' is outdated and simply incorrect," Mr Yates said.

"Our ageing population provides an unprecedented opportunity if the next Australian government provides the leadership to harness the skills and experience of older people, and change community attitudes and behaviour."

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Local

Coalition finds cash to lure the grey vote SENIORS - ELECTION 2013 -

RICK MORTON, SOCIAL AFFAIRS WRITER

559 words

26 August 2013

The Australian

SELF-FUNDED retirees and dementia research were the big winners at the Coalition's campaign launch in Brisbane yesterday.

Tony Abbott vowed to end 12 years of frozen indexation on means testing for the seniors health card and provide \$200 million for dementia research.

The Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, which allows people aged over 65 who are not on the aged pension access to cheaper medicine and a one-off seniors supplement each year, is currently only available to couples with an annual taxable income below \$80,000 or singles with income below \$50,000.

Those are the same eligibility levels that applied in 2001 when the Howard government set them. Labor further tightened eligibility in 2008 and also opted not to index the income test in two terms.

Mr Abbott's pledge -- worth \$100m over four years -- was welcomed by aged and retirement groups yesterday as a sensible step forward, which might curb some of the damage done by the Coalition's paid parental leave policy, partly funded by a hit on self-funded retirees.

"Most people thought these income levels were generous when they were introduced in 2001, but they're not any more and we've been calling for indexation for many years now," said Council on the Ageing chief executive Ian Yates.

"Seniors are calling on the Coalition to urgently review the funding of the PPL policy as it is likely to cost an average self-funded retiree over \$1000 every year. That makes it harder to ensure their retirement funds last."

Making the announcement to link the eligible incomes to the consumer price index, Mr Abbott said it was important to lift people up. "We must be a country that rewards people for having a go -- but we must never leave anyone behind," he said.

The card, introduced in 1994 with entry limits set at \$35,859.20 for couples, also pays a seniors supplement each year worth almost \$1300 for couples.

Association of Independent Retirees policy director Robert Curley said the policy would most help those who were "just a step above aged pensioners".

"I thought this was a knee-jerk reaction to the heat they took on the parental leave policy, but nonetheless it's something we've been asking for for a long time," he said. "Anybody who says this is middle-class welfare is just wrong; this is a small financial boost for the bottom 20 per cent of self-funded retirees."

However, Mr Abbott took the same promise to the 2010 election. The card was designed for those who were "asset rich" but income poor and is held by more than 270,000 people. The Coalition says this figure will grow by 20,000 in 2016-17. "As well, an incoming Coalition

government will commit an additional \$200m to dementia research to help the 300,000 Australians who have it today and to help the 900,000 at risk of having it in 30 years' time as our population gets older," Mr Abbott said. "The best people to find treatments and cures for this insidious disease are our world-beating medical researchers."

The pledge is worth \$40m over five years and would be "quarantined" through the National Health and Medical Research Centre.

Document AUSTLN0020130825e98q0008x

The Courier-Mail

News

Silver tsunami a golden opportunity

792 words

25 August 2013

The Courier-Mail

WE'RE quick to criticise pre-election debates and policy speeches, to analyse the rhetoric and subtext, yet when it comes to discussions on Australia's future we're blithely accepting of the "burden of an ageing population".

Could there be a more offensive phrase to older Australians who are anything but lazy, useless and dead-weights in their communities?

What an insult to people who've spent the bulk of their lives slogging it out, raising families and paying taxes.

It's true our population is ageing — by 2050 one in four Aussies will be over 65; in 2010 it was one in seven — but why present this as a "heavy load, a misfortune that causes worry, hardship or distress", as the Oxford dictionary defines a burden? Why not embrace it and make it work for us?

In his recent National Press Club address, Kevin Rudd echoed his 2010 speech, which drew on the third intergenerational report Australia to 2050: Future Challenges.

He outlined "Australia's triple dilemma of an ageing population, static to declining workforce participation rates and slowing multi-factor productivity growth".

"Three years later, the three Ps — population, participation and productivity — continue as the core economic agenda." OK then, so let's tackle the population part with an open mind, not an ageist bias.

It's not as if Australia has such a glut of experience and knowledge that it can afford not to cherry-pick from the greater body of seniors with so much to offer.

One reason for the negative stereotyping is that favoured tool of the economists and demographers: the dependency ratio. It calculates the percentage of the population under 15 and over 64 against the percentage of working age. Countries with a high dependency ratio, such as ours, have more people not earning and fewer paying taxes.

What dependency ratios fail to take into account is that not all older people need costly care and support. Not all are happy to move to the sidelines of life, as the word retirement suggests.

Many are active — 382 over-65s have registered for next week's Sunday Mail Bridge to Brisbane fun run — and would work if they could.

Harvard University research has identified a net rise in the number of years we now live without big health problems.

And if there were to be a rise in dependency, it'd be mostly because older folk — booted out of the workforce — have become conditioned to the idea of being “over the hill”.

What a sad state of affairs. The value of work is more than monetary. Think of volunteers — the people who keep community clubs running, help at church, do Meals on Wheels, rally when natural disasters hit.

Most are older Aussies with plenty left to give. They're people like Rick Pethick, band leader at Ascot State School since 1977. “There is a lot of satisfaction in taking young students from knowing nothing to knowing something,” he says. Pethick's age is irrelevant but, for the record, he is 86.

Can't teach an old dog new tricks? Don't bet on it.

A 2012 study at Dartmouth University has shown that provided we keep on learning, the brain “can be just as malleable as when you are a child”.

So instead of deriding older Australians as a collective burden, we should see in them as an untapped resource. Encourage them to stay active, provide incentives to work longer, and acknowledge the costs they are absorbing already as carers for elderly relatives or grandchildren.

The predicted pension bill of \$48 billion in 2016 — up from \$16 billion in 2001 — need not be so steep.

That Australians are living an average of 25 years longer opens up a raft of business opportunities, says Michael O'Neill, chief executive of the National Seniors Australia.

“We need to stop talking about the silver tsunami and appreciate that this is the wealthiest cohort of older people in the history of this country,” O'Neill says.

“Not only are there a lot more of them, but they have had at least some of the benefits of superannuation so they enter their later years better placed financially than previous generations.

“What this means is a whole new economy of opportunity — seniors' gym classes, assisted technologies so people can stay in their homes longer, group travel, the building of retirement villages.” Opportunities are there for those smart enough to grasp them. The “burden” of an ageing population? Watch your language.

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Document COUMAI0020130825e98p0005u

News

Aged care facing two generation onslaught

Michael Madigan

406 words

21 August 2013

The Courier-Mail

TWO generations of the same family living in an old people's home is the looming reality of Australia's ageing demographic, according to Australia's former defence chief Peter Cosgrove.

The former military boss, now chair of Leading Age Services Australia, says the nation is far from battle-ready in coping with the onslaught of old age.

General Cosgrove, whose organisation represents providers of aged care, will be in Brisbane for a fund-raiser for the not-for-profit aged care facility BallyCara on Friday night.

LASA estimates Australia needs 83,000 beds built in the next nine years but construction in the sector appears to have stalled.

It also has data showing that every 71 minutes an elderly Australian needing care is rejected because of a lack of support services.

Yet the hospital beds and aged care facilities are filling so rapidly, parents could soon be joined by their own children.

"The scenario of the 98-year-old mum and the 78-year-old-daughter both in an aged care facility is not at all outlandish," General Cosgrove said. "The mum might be in high care and the daughter in low care but they are both requiring some form of care." General Cosgrove said both sides of politics appear to avoid talking about aged care and seniors' issues in the election campaign, yet caring for the elderly will soon be one of the nation's most pressing social issues.

He said the trend towards home care would continue.

But millions of Australian who hit the age of 60 in the next few years will have several decades of life ahead of them, and many will eventually need high levels of care, most likely in a facility.

At 66, the man tipped to be the next governor-general is something of a poster boy for senior citizens.

General Cosgrove is also part of the "sandwich generation", caring for an infirmed relative in aged care while still having an adult child at home.

He says he and many others in their 60s will take the advice of former treasurer Wayne Swan who warned against bailing out of the workforce at 65.

While he refuses to comment on speculation he will be the next GG, he believes he is capable of taking on a heavy workload well into his 70s. "I have no intention of retiring," he said.

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The Advertiser

Lifestyle

A new deal for seniors

IAN YATES COTA, CEO

382 words

19 August 2013

The Advertiser

LAST Tuesday at the National Press Club in Canberra I launched COTA Australia's election platform, "A New Deal for Older Australians", before a national television and radio audience.

This "New Deal" identifies five top priorities for policy action to deliver a better life for older people over the next term of government.

First, a commitment to put an end to ageism and age discrimination in all parts of Australian society backed by a major media campaign over some years, as we have seen on other major social issues.

Secondly, access to quality health services for all older Australians was a major priority for our election panel members. They want health care that does not have high and unexpected out-of-pocket costs, health services that listen to and work with them to achieve healthier people, and better end-of-life and palliative care that respects their wishes.

Thirdly, and no surprise, older Australians want access to quality aged-care services when and where they choose, which means an end to rationing of aged care and giving the funds to the person who has been properly assessed as in need of care so they can control how they best use those precious funds.

Fourthly, we argue for strong measures to ensure that older people get to participate in the workforce for as long as they want or need to.

The government's Experience Plus programs have made an important contribution but more is needed, including a strong campaign promoting mature-age workers and stronger age discrimination laws. Finally, we argue for a reasonable standard of living for older Australians. Obviously that means maintaining the current pension and superannuation provisions.

We continue to argue for a \$50 per week increase in the Newstart unemployment allowance, with mature-age Australians being one third of the long-term unemployed.

Equally importantly are a series of measures to increase the supply of affordable and appropriate housing before we reach a crisis in housing for lower income retirees. Our ageing population provides an unprecedented opportunity for the next Australian government to show leadership in harnessing the skills and experience of older people, and changing community attitudes and behaviour towards dealing with older people as first-class citizens.

Document ADVTSR0020130818e98j000bj

News

People to have a say in care reform

BRAD CROUCH HEALTH REPORTER

477 words

1 August 2013

The Advertiser

PEOPLE eligible for home care help from the Federal Government will have the choice on how the money is spent under landmark reforms commencing today.

Thousands of people assessed as needing home care will know exactly how much has been budgeted and decide how it is spent.

The changes mean the predominately older Australians eligible for home care have more control over their lives by choosing whether to spend the money on things such as help with showering, handyman work, physiotherapy, transport to shops, cleaning, cooking or a companion.

Four levels of packages help people stay independent in their own homes and from today 10 per cent will operate on the new Consumer Directed Care model - 5800 packages nationally, including 506 in SA – rising to 100 per cent from July 2015.

Today's changes are part of a \$3.2 billion package of aged-care reforms, including \$880 million to increase home care packages from 60,000 to 100,000 over five years.

The CDC reform is modelled on a pilot scheme run in Adelaide by providers such as the ACH Group, whose general manager, Jane Mussared, said it gives people more flexibility.

“They know how much we have to spend on their behalf from the Government, and within guidelines they can say what they want, when they want it and who they want,” she said.

“Everybody's circumstances are different but one thing we find is people want to be independent. Some may have a strong family support network but want lots of physiotherapy to stay physically independent, while others might want help with cooking or cleaning.” Former criminal lawyer Dr Gerard McGrath and wife Annette were fit and healthy when Dr McGrath suffered a stroke 2008, leaving him paralysed down his left side.

With 10 children and 14 grandchildren the McGraths, both aged 70, have strong family support as the life-changing event left Mr McGrath with limited mobility and Mrs Grath as his carer.

As part of the pilot scheme they chose to change a heavy wheelchair for a lightweight model and have a carer regularly take Mr McGrath to the library - giving Mrs McGrath some respite.

“Gerry's hobby was his MG TC so they also sit and talk about it and tinker with it — Gerry can't drive it but just being out there with someone interested instead of me is great for his emotional well-being,” Mrs McGrath said.

“We had no idea about the home care system and didn't even know we had a budget until we were involved in the pilot scheme which has been excellent.” Minister for Ageing Jacinta Collins said the Government is delivering on its commitment to build a new aged-care system to provide quality care to the growing aged population.

Document ADVTSR0020130801e9810002f

News

Help for the elderly

122 words

14 August 2013

The Advertiser

A HANDBOOK launched today aims to support the inclusion of older people with a disability in mainstream community activities.

Council of the Ageing Australia chief executive Ian Yates and Parliamentary Secretary for Disability and Carers Amanda Rishworth will launch the This is Our Space — Ageing with Disability handbook which has information, strategies and tools to help access and inclusion.

The handbook can help cultural and sporting groups, councils, libraries and others offering classes, groups or workshops to make the most of the input of older people with a disability. It also includes information on the benefits of older people with a disability remaining in the community. The handbook is available through COTA, see www.cota.org.au

Document ADVTSR0020130813e98e00057

Lifestyle

Care for aged is inspiring

RICHARD HEARN RESTHAVEN CEO

359 words

26 August 2013

The Advertiser

OLDER people make a significant valuable contribution to our community and deserve a high-quality aged-care system.

More than one million older Australians receive aged-care services, which are generally of a high standard.

However, as community expectations change, improvements are needed, particularly in the context of increasing demand.

By 2050, more than 3.5 million Australians are expected to use aged-care services each year. As people prefer to stay living in their own homes, around 80 per cent of services will be delivered in people's homes.

Recent changes implemented through the Living Longer Living Better government reforms aim to ensure improved outcomes for frail older people.

There will be more choice in service programs and access to flexible support at home.

However, with age and frailty, some people will need more support than can be offered at home. Hence, residential care is an essential component of the aged care service system.

Care of the frail aged is a specialist area. The genuine care and warmth of staff in their work with residents and clients is most inspiring. It affects the daily quality of life of the people receiving services. It also affects the quality of life of their carers and families.

I find inspiration in the positivity, kindness, commitment and dedication of staff, whose work is a vocation.

The quality of care given, often under very difficult circumstances, is mostly of a high standard, particularly given the level of government funding received.

The public should have confidence in the good work of so many staff, despite recent alarming portrayals of isolated and anecdotal incidents. I believe such failures are relatively few.

Should people have any concerns, the Government's complaints processes and procedures are rigorous, as is the monitoring of aged care facilities by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency through announced and unannounced visits.

Document ADVTSR0020130825e98q000b5

\$20m to woo Muslims

Patrick Lion & Adam Widler

318 words

13 August 2013

Daily Telegraph

AT least \$20 million in grants will be given for aged care facilities in western suburbs seats as Labor continues to woo Sydney's Muslim and Lebanese Christian communities.

The government has pledged \$10 million for the Lebanese Muslim Association to build an aged care home, expected to have 80 to 100 beds, near the Lakemba Mosque to help "culturally and linguistically diverse" seniors.

Last night, another \$5 million was promised to the Maronite Eparchy of Australia after earlier giving the same amount to the group's Our Lady of Lebanon Aged Care Hostel in Harris Park and to establish Saint Charbel's Care Centre in Punchbowl.

The moves are being seen as an attempt to protect safe Labor heartland seats, such as Immigration Minister Tony Burke's electorate of Watson, Blaxland, held by Home Affairs Minister Jason Clare, Labor backbencher John Murphy's seat of Reid and Parramatta's Julie Owens.

The government is worried about a repeat of the backlash at the state election, the presence of Liberal candidate and honorary Bangladeshi consul-general Anthony Khouri in Mr Clare's seat and Muslim candidates running for Clive Palmer's party.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show there are 20,853 Muslims in the Lakemba state electorate — almost one in four people. Nationally, Muslims account for one in almost 50 people.

Islamic Friendship Association of Australia spokesman Keysar Trad said, while they were safe Labor seats, the Liberals and Mr Palmer's party had made inroads.

"They probably think this will lock in some votes ... the community has been begging for aged care support facilities for 20 years," Mr Trad said. Labor holds the seat of Watson by 9.1 per cent but is under a significant amount of pressure in Sydney's west amid cost of living and infrastructure pressures and the NSW Labor's ICAC scandal.

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2. Appendix 2: Sampled news articles – Malaysian press

Malaysian Papers 2011-2013

THE STAR

The Star

Old and forsaken 8 Oct 2012 By LIM WEY WEN and YUEN MEIKENG
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

An increasing number of senior citizens are being abandoned in hospitals by their families. Hospitals have no choice but to send these old and forsaken folk to welfare homes, as they need the beds for new patients.

KUALA LUMPUR: Many of the abandoned senior citizens have lost hope of ever seeing their families again, but some have not lost faith in each other.

After arriving at the Tong Sim old folks home from various hospitals, they have put their skills to good use to help one another.

Owner Cheong Loy said most of the 52 inmates were sent to the centre – located above a casket shop in Sungei Besi – when the hospitals could not trace their family members.

“In most cases, family members gave false addresses and contact numbers. The hospitals asked us to take them in,” he said at the home.

However, instead of depending on outsiders to care for them, they now work together to keep the home running.

Although volunteers regularly donate food and help clean up the place, the residents themselves do most of the household chores.

“Those who are fit help to feed and clean the others who are bedridden,” said Cheong.

“Others wash clothes, clean the compound and cook.”

Inmate Mun Ah Pun, 70, handles most of the cooking at the 12-year-old home.

“When I was travelling and doing construction work, I used to cook for my friends,” he said.

“I am doing the same thing today.”

Mun, who lost contact with his family years ago, said he came to the home after a friend urged him to stay there.

Liew Moi, 74, who helps to do the laundry, said she was happy even though there were times when she missed her family.

“But it is only normal to feel lonely at my age,” said the childless widow. “But I get very excited when volunteers take us on trips,” she said.

Liew, who used to wash dishes for a living, said she had been moving from one charity home to another before coming to the centre.

“I moved so often that I did not bother to tell family members where I was. I don’t want to disturb them as they are all busy with their careers,” she said.

Another resident in his 70s, who only wanted to be known as “Uncle Lim”, said he helped to sweep the floor whenever he could.

Asked where his family members were, he said cynically: “They are all rich and highly educated.”

Asked what was his dearest wish was, he said: “I just want to take life one day at a time.”

It was the general sentiment of all at the home.



HUMAN DESIGN

Two architects are creating buildings that place people in the centre of design.



THE TRUE FACE OF NIGERIANS

Nigerians were once welcomed here. Not anymore. So, some Nigerians are trying to show that not all of them are bad. >23

web: thestar.com.my mobile: thestar.mobi.com

facebook.com/theStarOnline twitter.com/staronline

The people's paper Star

SPORTS CARS GO CRASHING

Four people were killed when two sports cars skidded and crashed into trees minutes apart on the same stretch of road. >4



STARBUZ Myanmar telecom race

Myanmar's emergence as an investment destination has been hogging the news. One area of business that holds vast potential is its telecoms market, labelled as the last greenfield telecoms turf in Asia. >1

NATION

Peace talks a success

Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have struck a deal in RL peace talks. >2

WORLD



Jedi wars in Paris

Museum displays toys from 35 years of the Star Wars saga in a special exhibition. >35

iSnap this article for more photos:



By George! It's a supership

The nuclear-powered American supercarrier USS George Washington has come calling. >8



Old and forsaken

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> See Page 12 for reports by LIM WEY WEN and YUEN MEIKENG

SKYFALL
007
JAMES BOND'S CHOICE
OMEGA

Old, abandoned – and they only have each other

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27 NS tra arrested over fight

KUALA TERENGGANU National Service (NS) Cenderawasih Cad Pengkalan Berangan, been arrested over a fight.

Terengganu CID Manoharan said the fight after one group of two groups after a fight.

He said a group of some of them arrested.

1. Mayor: Younger generation should be taught to care for elderly

Sunday, 31 Jul 2011 12:00 AM MYT

COMMUNITY

By Sharon Ling

KUCHING: Caring for the elderly is something which needs to be taught and inculcated in the younger generation, Kuching City South Mayor James Chan said.

He said unlike the maternal instinct of caring for one's children, caring for aged parents or the elderly in society was not a natural instinct.

"The urge to care for our parents and the elderly is a value which has to be taught and learned. Otherwise people may have neither the time nor the reason to want to care for their parents," he said when opening a forum on "Empowering the Elderly" at the Kuching South City Council (MBKS) Auditorium here yesterday.

The two-day forum was organised by MBKS, the Malaysian Healthy Ageing Society (MHAS) and Tena Incontinence Care Solution in conjunction with the Kuching Festival.

He said the number of elderly people in Malaysia was expected to be 3.4 million in 2020, up from one million in 1991.

As such, he said there was a need to create awareness on caring for the elderly.

2. A shelter for the needy Saturday, 20 Jul 2013 COMMUNITY

By Manjit Kaur A shelter for homeless and needy people, especially the elderly, would begin its operations next month. "We have already rented the ground floor of a shophouse and it should be ready soon. "The shelter will open from 8am to 6pm daily," he told reporters at a charity medical check-up event jointly organised by the 1MCA Medical Foundation on Jalan Masjid recently. "We are also seeking donations from the public so we could run the shelter," he said.

Ho also said that the home's committee has been carrying out charitable activities like providing free lunch to the poor and needy near the up-and-coming shelter.

He added that the committee had been relying on revenues from a recycling centre to run the charity programme and hoped the public could donate more funds to help feed the poor.

Present at the event was Chenderiang assemblyman Datuk Dr Mah Hang Soon, who was assisting the medical foundation mobile service vehicle team in offering basic health consultations to the needy.

Dr Mah said the charity activities carried out by the home was laudable, and hoped more non-governmental organisations would follow suit.

“These homeless people have nobody to depend on and if caring people can play a small part it will mean a lot to them.

“So when the idea of bringing the IMCA Medical Foundation team to provide health screenings to these people was suggested to me, I immediately said yes,” he added.

Health workers from the Waller Court Health Clinic and Kolej Sains Kesihatan Bersekutu Sultan Azlan Shah were also assisting the team.



**3. Don't discard the elderly, says Siti Zaharah Saturday, 19 Feb 2011 12:00 AM MYT
COMMUNITY**

By Rintos Mail



KUCHING: The old folks' home, Rumah Seri Kenangan at Mile 12, Kuching-Serian Road must not be treated as a convenient dump for elderly persons.

In fact, as far as the principal, Siti Zaharah Sitam (pic), is concerned no elderly person (especially a sick one) ought to be dumped in any old folks' home, For one thing, "dumping" is a nasty act, especially when it is done to a human being. To dump is "to get rid of" or "discard". Informally it also means "to discard" (again, a nasty act) or "reject unceremoniously" (even nastier).

"No one in the right frame of mind would choose to send their parents to an old folks' home," said Siti Zaharah.

One reason is "granny dumping", which is when an elderly person (especially a woman) is abandoned by uncaring family members. Rumah Seri Kenangan has such a case.

Star Sarawak learned that the elderly person was admitted to the Sarawak General Hospital sometime last year and since then was abandoned by the children.

The SGH contacted the Welfare Department and the person was subsequently taken to Rumah Seri Kenangan, a state government-funded nursing home.

Siti Zaharah said until today the person was under the care of the home as the children could not be traced.

She said although such a case was not exactly common in Sarawak, it was better to stop it now.

"If a senior citizen is truly childless and still healthy, it is all right for the home to take care of him or her. After all, the home has been assigned to care for this category of citizens," she said.

She said it was not good for people to leave their sick parents at old folks' homes and expect the staff members to take care of everything.

"It is morally wrong to send your sick parents to a home simply because you don't want the burden of looking after them. Don't leave them alone in their old age. After all they are your parents and you must love them," she said.

Only when it has been established that nobody in the family is capable of caring for them, should the idea of putting an elderly parent in Rumah Seri Kenangan or another home.

Siti Zaharah said that, even then, the elderly must be healthy and independent at the time of placement.

"If they become sick after being placed in the home, then it is our duty to look after them until the end," she said.

There are 45 men and 40 women residents at Rumah Seri Kenangan. More than half are sick and bedridden.

Set on 23 acres, Rumah Seri Kenangan Kuching was established in 1932 by the Chinese Society of Kuching to cater to the poor.

This multi-racial home currently has 28 workers including a nurse.

Siti Zaharah said it cost the government RM260,000 per year to manage the home, adding that the expenditure was mainly for food and sanitary items.

4. Proposed law will further damage family ties, says Heng

Monday, 5 Sep 2011 12:00 AM MYT

NATION

By **Ivan Loh**

IPOH: A proposed enactment to make it compulsory for children to take care of their aging parents will only cause more damage to the family institution, said Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Senator Heng Seai Kie.

She said such a law was not practical as it would only further strain the relationship between the parents and their children.

"I am of the opinion that the enactment is pointless and irrelevant," Heng said after launching the 1MCA Medical Foundation torch run organised by the Perak Wanita MCA in Menglembu yesterday.

"In our society, it has always been the children's responsibility to take care of their aging parents," she said, adding that they should always honour their parents' sacrifices without having it forced upon them.

Citing an example, Heng said Singapore had incorporated such an enactment.

"The enactment was enforced three years ago but not a single case has been brought to court," she said.

Heng was commenting on a suggestion to have such an enactment due to the high number of abandoned elderly people in the country.

She noted that Malaysia has about 630,000 aged parents that have been cast aside by their children.

Heng said one of the main reasons the elderly were sent to old folks' homes was because of financial difficulties.

"Children who no longer have the ability to take care of their parents were forced to send them to such homes," she said.

She added the Government had relaxed the requirements for old people to get welfare aid.

”Previously, only the elderly without children could apply for aid.

”Now, old folk with children who are unable to take care of them are also eligible,” she said.

5. Why the elderly are not given the time of day today

NATION Monday, 8 Oct 2012

KUALA LUMPUR: Change in society's values is among reasons why children abandon their parents today.

National Population and Family Development Board director-general Datuk Dr Aminah Abdul Rahman said some assumed that it was the Government's responsibility to care for their elderly parents. “That is a worrying trend,” she said.

“They may have had traumatic childhoods and want to now pay back' their parents,” said Dr Aminah. “Such deep-rooted emotions result in children abandoning their parents, especially when the time comes for the offsprings to care for their older folk.”

On the other hand, family therapist Lisa Sum said it was important for society to understand the needs of the youngsters, as times had changed.

Sum said young families also faced financial constraints when it came to taking care of their elderly parents.

“But there are also some who simply do not want to look after the old,” she added.

Sum said problems also arose when the young could not understand the changes in their parents' behaviours caused by insecurity and loss of memory.

She urged these young people to seek out counsellors and therapists who could offer help and advice.

“Sometimes the young families need their space and privacy,” Sum said.

She suggested that “elderly-friendly” houses be built, allowing the older folk to stay close to their children without both parties giving up their privacy.

The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry has set up several activity centres under its Social Welfare Department to encourage children to continue caring for their parents.

The centres, operated by NGOs, include programmes such as aerobics, health talks, religious classes and singing sessions. The volunteers also provide help services to the elderly such as cleaning the house and taking the senior citizens to clinics.

Related Stories:Old, abandoned - and they only have each other Rising number of seniors left behind at hospitals

6. Rising number of senior citizens left behind at hospitals

Monday, 8 Oct 2012 by lim wey wen and yuen meikeng

KUALA LUMPUR: More senior citizens are ending up in welfare homes after being abandoned by their families at public hospitals.

Hospitals, especially those in the Klang Valley and other urban areas, have little choice but to refer them to shelters run by the Government or NGOs, as they need the beds for new patients.

Hospital Kuala Lumpur's medical social work department head Hasnah Sulaiman said that up to June this year, 157 patients above 60 were abandoned by their families at hospital. A total of 205 senior citizens were abandoned last year.

Hasnah said 95% of those abandoned came from poor families.

“In some cases, doctors even called the children personally to tell them that their parents had recovered, but they insisted that the old folk were still unwell,” she said.

Another common excuse was that they did not have the time to fetch their elderly parents back.

She said hospitals usually handed over the neglected old folk to non-governmental organisations. “But even these shelters are now almost filled up.”

Foong Peng Lam, one of the coordinators at Rumah Kasih (an NGO set up to care for abandoned patients in government hospitals), said hospitals often asked him to help find shelters for forsaken elderly people because beds were desperately needed for new patients.

He said Rumah Kasih had helped find sanctuaries for 496 patients from Hospital Kuala Lumpur, Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Hospital Selayang, the Institute of Respiratory Medicine and Hospital Sungai Buloh since the home was set up in 2000.

According to the Social Welfare Department, the number of old folk deserted by their families had steadily increased by 1% each year between 2008 and 2011, based on the number of admissions to its nine Rumah Seri Kenangan units.

The homes, which care for those aged above 60, took in 340 senior citizens last year as compared with 248 in 2010.

Figures from the National Population and Family Development Board, an agency under the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, show that about 675,000 elderly parents did not receive financial support from their children as at 2004 when the Fourth Malaysian Population and Family Survey was conducted.

7. Educate children to care for parents, say groups

Tuesday, 9 Oct 2012

National PETALING JAYA: Senior citizen interest groups are calling for education programmes to curb the number of elderly folk being abandoned in hospitals. National Council of Senior Citizens Organisations, Malaysia (Nacscom) president Datuk Dr Soon Ting Kueh said people needed to be educated on their responsibilities to the elderly. “I am very upset to read of such cases. The education system needs to emphasise the importance of filial piety,” said Dr Soon, in response to a report in The Star on Monday. He added that Nacscom had proposed a law which allows neglected, abandoned or abused senior citizens to take action against their children. “But the main issue is to promote family values and instil a sense of obligation so they will not run away from their responsibilities,” said Dr Soon. Usiama Welfare Society president Jayalatchumy Cumaraswamy said most families abandoned their elders because they do not have the funds to take care of them.

“The authorities should look into day-care centres for senior citizens who can be looked after by community nurses,” said Jayalatchumy.

Meanwhile, Rumah Charis Home for the Aged Kuala Lumpur operations manager Suzanne Lee Mee Chee said old folks' homes should only take in senior citizens who have no one to care for them.

She added that the home receives at least two cases of children wanting to abandon their parents.

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theSun

1. Ageing population spurs need for more hospitals

GEORGE TOWN (Jan 9, 2011): The Penang government wants more wellness services and medical facilities to be set up for senior citizens, as this segment of the population is expected to increase over the next 10 years.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the proportion of citizens aged 60 and above may increase to 12% by 2020, putting pressure on facilities such as homes for the elderly.

“We need to have adequate and accessible facilities to cater to this population segment in the future,” he said today.

It is estimated that the current 130,000-odd senior citizens in Penang make up eight to nine per cent of the state’s population.

Speaking at the opening the Penang Buddhist Association’s (PBA) Senior Citizens Home at Perak Road here, Lim said the state has implemented its Senior Citizens Appreciation Scheme to benefit the rising elderly population.

PBA president Datuk Seri Khoo Keat Siew said there are nine welfare homes catering to poor elderly in Penang.

“These homes are run by voluntary organisations and not all receive government grants,” he said, adding that the facilities are in contrast to homes run on a commercial basis for the affluent.

Khoo said there is concern that the whole country is heading towards becoming an ageing society.

“It is estimated that those who are 60 years and above will make up 10% of the total population by 2020,” he said in his speech.

“Life expectancy for women is expected to rise to 78 years by 2020, while that for men will be 74,” he noted.

Khoo said the government should take primary responsibility for planning health and welfare services so that the needs of the elderly people are adequately met.

He said the government should consider setting up day-care centres for old folks as has been done in many other countries.

At a separate senior citizens’ function, Lim said a total of 111,106 elderly people have registered for the Penang government’s Senior Citizens Appreciation Programme so far.

Of these, 107,638 have each collected the annual RM100 contribution for senior citizens from the state. A total of 2,155 inheritors of deceased senior citizens have been given RM1,000 bereavement support provided by the state, he added. –

2. Govt to set up centres for fee-paying elderly people

KUALA LUMPUR (Dec 16, 2010): Two centres for fee-paying elderly people will be set up at Rumah Seri Kenangan in Cheras in February, said Women, Family and Community

Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil. She said the centres were meant for parents whose children could pay for their accommodation and services rendered.

"We get many requests from people who are willing to pay for their parents to stay at the government welfare homes.

"These young people, mostly from the urban areas, are tied up with their work.

"But they want the best protection and care for their parents and are willing to fork out the money for their welfare," she told reporters after launching the national Senior Citizen's Day celebration here today.

Fees will be charged for accommodation and services rendered at the two centres, she said, adding that such centres would be set up at eight other Rumah Seri Kenangan nationwide if the response is overwhelming.

Meanwhile, Shahrizat said as Malaysia would likely reach an ageing nation status by 2035 with the number of people above 60 reaching 15% of the population, building structures and infrastructure should take into account the needs of the elderly as well as the low-income group. On the revision of the National Policy for Senior Citizens and Action Plan for the National Policy for Senior Citizens, she said working papers on the revised policy and plan would be presented to the cabinet in the first week of January.

3. Najib shares Winter Solstice joy with elderly

KUALA LUMPUR (Dec 22, 2011): Joy and happiness were clearly reflected in the faces of the residents of the home for the elderly in Kampung Baru Jalan Sungai Way here when they were joined by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to celebrate the Winter Solstice celebration today.

Looking cheerful in his light blue shirt and purple tie, Najib spent about 30 minutes mingling with the residents, and even took his time to enjoy a Chinese dessert known as Tang Yuan or Kueh Eeh.

The Winter Solstice, celebrated on Dec 22 annually, is a day for the Chinese to observe the beginning of winter and a reminder that another year has gone by.

According to traditional belief, one grows a year older after eating the tang yuan. Najib's visit was more meaningful when he also donated RM100,000 for the house, occupied by about 62 elderly people.

Speaking to reporters after the visit, the prime minister's political secretary, Wong Nai Chee, said the visit was planned because of the prime minister's keen interest in Chinese culture, especially the Winter Solstice festival.

Although it was just a short visit, Najib's easy, friendly and cheerful character warmed the heart of Wong Wong Lan, who is in her 90's.

"I am so happy to meet him in person. I think he is a very nice man, friendly and handsome," said Wong, who has lived in the home for seven years.

Wong, who sat next to Najib, said: "Saya tanya perdana menteri dia suka makan kueh (tang yuan) atau tidak, tapi dia kata tak pernah makan, tapi selepas makan dia kata dia suka (I asked the prime minister whether he likes to eat the tang yuan and he said he has never eaten it, but after eating it, he said he likes it)," said Wong with a wide smile.

The Old Folks Home in Kampung Baru Jalan Sungai Way was opened by Najib's father, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, on Feb 26, 1966, when he was the deputy prime minister. – *BERNAMA*

4. RM1.4b allocated for elderly, disabled and single mothers - Najib

SEREMBAN (March 24, 2012): The government has allocated RM1.4 billion to assist the elderly, disabled and single mothers this year, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak.

He said of the sum, RM478 million was allocated to assist 135,000 senior citizens whereby they received RM300 in monthly payments.

Speaking at a "Meet-the-People" session and launching of the Caring for Old Folks Awareness Campaign in Taman Desa Rhu, Sikamat here today, Najib said the assistance was part of the government's policies to ensure the social safety net in the country was further strengthened.

"We cannot practice a welfare state policy like in western countries which today are facing economic challenges because their governments are no longer able to sustain such a practice.

"As such, we cannot choose this path but strengthen our social safety net through the 1Malaysia People's Welfare Programme whereby assistance is extended via home assistance programmes, Care for the Elderly Services Unit and others," he said.

He said, although the government was extending various forms of aid for the elderly, the biggest contribution should be coming from their children.

On the campaign, he said it was very timely as caring for and assisting the elderly should not be shouldered by the government alone, instead it was their children who should be taking up the responsibility.

He said, as children, love and gratitude to parents was a must and that this should never be compromised. "Our parents brought us up with unconditional love, our mothers gave birth to us after nine months of pregnancy, and naturally they will need us in their old age.

"This (caring for the elderly) is what we must instill in our society. Do not send parents to the old folks home. Even if it cannot be avoided, at least find ways where they can still spend time with us (the children)," he said.

Najib also pointed out that in 2010, 2.1 million people or 7.5% of the Malaysian population consisted of citizens aged 60 and above and that by 2020, the figure was forecast to rise to 3.2 million or 9.5 per cent of the population while in 2030, the percentage of the elderly was expected to reach 15%.

"Try to imagine, we will be facing a new challenge in Malaysian society when the percentage of senior citizens is so high. With the better healthcare available in the country, more and more people will grow to a ripe old age," he said.—*BERNAMA*

5. Who will care for our old?

Posted on 9 February 2012 - 03:18am

Natalie Shobana Ambrose

"I'M four years old and seven months," she blurted. Funny how at that age, you know exactly how old you are and every additional month counts. Once gravity hits, things change. Rarely do you hear someone say I'm 35 and a half. On the other hand, I know of a few people who have the power to stop the clock claiming to be 59 for many years, citing "Age is just a number ... mind over matter". As the saying continues, "if you don't mind, it doesn't matter!", though sometimes your knees remind you of how old you are.

When the United Nations Population Fund christened the seventh billion person, the figure was repeatedly drawn on as a shock-warning statement by various well-meaning factions. While most policymakers focused on the issue of over-population and the burden on resources, highlighting issues such as access to food, housing, education, jobs and impact on the environment, one main concern continued to remain on the back bench – an ageing population. Indeed the world's population is increasing. However the issue has shifted. In many parts of the world, a demographic transition has taken place. Population growth has recorded a decline

in birth rates and an increase in longevity, pointing to a rapidly growing greying population – and only some are noticing.

In the developing world, most government policies are concentrated on issues of development and target the younger generation – understandably, especially since the general philosophy is that the young are the future of the nation. However, if a country is faced with a rapidly growing aging population and does not have the foresight to provide adequate infrastructure, healthcare benefits and sufficiently address welfare issues, this shift in demography will detrimentally affect and impact the nation’s workforce and economy.

When we in the developing world think about aging societies, we think of them as a predicament of wealthier, more developed countries, citing the examples of Japan and England. Our understanding of the issue is framed against the backdrop of aging being a rich country’s problem. If only it were.

Perhaps it is for this reason that the developed world has better provisions for the aged. That is because it became rich before it became old, while the developing world became old before it became rich. But this does not omit the fact that Asia and Malaysia have a growing aging population with needs that have yet to be addressed.

Our changing cultural norms have led to a decrease in birth rates and a growing older population. To add, it was reported as at 2011 that one in three elderly people in Malaysia are abandoned. How are we going to cope when we are already in the third stage of the demographic transition according to Unescap with the projection of over 3.4 million older persons by 2020?

Fundamentally the issue of a greying Asia and Malaysia cannot be put on hold until we reach a percentage knighting us a geriatric society. The issues need to be addressed now so as to avoid a danger-zone era of hyperaging and the consequences of it.

Thankfully in Malaysia we do not have too much of a skewed sex ratio caused by selective abortions or a “4-2-1” society where a one-child policy leads to a child providing for two parents, caring for four grandparents and himself. However we are not out of the red as we do not have adequate healthcare facilities, well-equipped aged care homes, elderly-friendly housing and public spaces that cater to the elderly.

Furthermore, we have become trapped in a sedentary lifestyle which means not only are the aged needing more and better healthcare, so are the younger generation. Then the question remains – who will look after the aged in a society that values filial piety but has inadequate provision especially in a changing society where families are smaller, salaries are insufficient and the setback of brain drain runs deep.

The reality is that we are all getting older – if you’re still counting months, perhaps you don’t feel it, but our parents and grandparents do. An aging population inevitably affects us politically, economically and even militarily, according to American demographer Phillip Longman.

This century is touted as the Asian Century, but what many Asian countries are neglecting is the very real issue of a spiralling aging population and the reality that a neglected greying population reads trouble on so many levels.

6. Political commitment needed to help the aged?

Pauline Wong

457 words

21 March 2012

The Sun

KUALA LUMPUR (March 21, 2012): The World Health Organisation (WHO) has called for political commitment as the first step to ensuring that a nation is ready to protect the welfare of its aged citizens. WHO Ageing and Life Course Department director Dr John Beard told theSun yesterday that in order for a country to look after the needs of its older population, commitment must come from the top. However, each nation has different needs and no single solution can be implemented to create what the WHO calls Age-friendly cities which are cities with inclusive and accessible urban environments to promote active ageing. The very first thing (a country needs) is political commitment, at the top. For example, New York city mayor Michael Bloomberg had made the commitment to fulfil the eight domains of the WHO aged-friendly city checklist. The checklist includes accessibility for elderly into buildings and to public facilities, mobility, social participation, communication and health services.

In New York, the city has put in place something called Safe Streets for Seniors at some of the city's busiest intersections. In these intersections, a longer time is given for pedestrians to cross safely, especially the elderly. It was inexpensive, yet it made a huge impact, said Beard at the 1st World Congress on Healthy

Ageing 2012. However, he noted that in southeast Asia, many cities have yet to be deemed aged friendly by the WHO, including Kuala Lumpur. While I haven't got solutions for Kuala Lumpur, the WHO is ready to facilitate between the people who can make decisions and those who need decisions made he said. In 2000, the global population of people aged 60 and over was 600 million; by 2025 there will be 1.2 billion and, by 2050, almost 2 billion doubling the proportion of the global population aged 60 from 11% in 2006 to 22%.

Ageing is inevitable. What is important is to listen to the seniors, and find out what their challenges are, and being able to foster health and participation in older people, Beard said. It is easy to think about cheaper tickets in buses for seniors, or priority seating, but it is difficult to think of how to make sure they have easy access to these buses, he added. Malaysian Healthy Ageing Society president and congress organising chairman Prof Nathan Vytialingam also urged local city councils to look into making their cities more aged-friendly. Simple things like accessibility to buildings and facilities like toilets and proper seating areas can make a big difference, he told theSun, adding that respective authorities should work towards fulfilling the WHO checklist.

Document THESUM0020120323e8310002w

New Straits Times



New Straits Times

PM: Centres for the elderly soon

435 words

18 October 2012

New Straits Times

NSTRAT

2

English

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KUALA LUMPUR: NEW housing projects will have community centres for senior citizens soon.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said such facilities would enable the elderly to participate in social and recreational activities, and interact with other community members.

"Housing developers should consider setting up such centres on a wider scale for the local community, just like the requirement to provide preschool facilities," he told about 500 guests comprising occupants of welfare homes nationwide and pensioners at the National Senior Citizens Day celebration in Seri Kembangan yesterday.

Najib, who is also the women, family and community development minister, said the ministry would utilise 45 halls under the ministry as activity centres for senior citizens.

He added that this was to ensure senior citizens continued to be productive and feel appreciated.

"The development and success of our nation is of course due to the hard work and contributions of our senior citizens.

"They are an important asset to the nation for their invaluable experiences and on behalf of the nation, I thank all senior citizens for their sacrifices and hard work in building this nation."

He also stressed that the responsibility of caring for senior citizens should not only rest on the government but also the community.

"Although the government provides various benefits for senior citizens, it is the younger generation's love and contribution towards them that is more important."

Najib added in ensuring that senior citizens continued to contribute to the nation, the government had adopted several approaches, which included raising the retirement age for civil servants from 58 to 60 beginning this year.

He said the government also formulated the Minimum Retirement Age Act 2012 to set the minimum retirement age for private sector employees.

"This is part of the country's preparation and plans to face the challenges of becoming an ageing nation.

"However, based on the projection, Malaysia is expected to reach the status of an old nation only by the year 2030 when 15 per cent of the population are senior citizens."

This year's Senior Citizens Day was celebrated on a grand scale with the theme "Productive Senior Citizens Chart The Future".

Seven senior citizens who had contributed to the development of the nation and the community were also recognised and given a certificate of appreciation.

Among them were "Queen of the Tracks" Datuk Rajamani Mailvaganam and first Malaysia woman Olympian Annie Choong.

The event was also attended by the prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Heng Seai Kie.

(END)

Document NSTRAT0020121018e8ai00002

1. 'Have better care facilities for elderly'

360 words

17 September 2012

New Straits Times

JOHOR BARU: There is a need for better care facilities for the elderly as Malaysia slowly evolves into an ageing nation, said Raja Zarith Sofiah Sultan Idris Shah.

The consort of the sultan of Johor said studies revealed that 15 per cent of the population would comprise those who are 60 years and above by 2035, as a result of lower birth rate and increase in the elderly population due to better healthcare.

"Longevity is a blessing from God, and it is something we should look forward to.

"Nevertheless, we must prepare ourselves to face ageing, either through individual effort, community facilities or national policies on senior citizens."

Raja Zarith was speaking at the opening of the Johor Baru Alzheimer's Disease Support Association's (Jobada) 10th anniversary celebration-cum-fund-raising dinner on Saturday night.

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, a brain degenerative condition that is usually associated with ageing.

She said there were approximately 20,000 people with dementia in Malaysia today, a figure that would most likely double by 2020.

"Many people think dementia is a normal part of ageing.

"We call dementia nyanyuk in Malay. We always think that it is just a phenomenon that involves the memory only.

"Thus, a lot of our elderly do not receive appropriate or early treatment for this illness."

Not detecting dementia early on could have adverse affects on the individual as there was a risk of prolonged behavioural disturbances or psychiatric symptoms arising from untreated dementia. "Dementia is the leading cause of institutionalisation for the elderly.

"We are lucky as our culture emphasises filial responsibility, and the care of the elderly is mostly done by their children."

Raja Zarith said despite the culture's good filial responsibility, there was still a need for more nursing homes and daycare services to cope with the increasing number of dementia patients.

She applauded Jobada for providing daycare services for the elderly with dementia, and organising health awareness campaigns and dementia screenings for the elderly. Present were Pulaui member of parliament Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed and event organising chairperson Dr Suraya Yusoff.

Document NSTRAT0020120918e89h00027

2. New healthcare plan for elderly

368 words

23 January 2011

New Sunday Times

KUALA LUMPUR: The elderly can now look forward to a healthier lifestyle with the launch of a new healthcare programme by Prince Court Medical Centre. The Senior Adult Wellness Programme (SAWP) is a five-year comprehensive annual health screening programme to promote wellness and independent function focusing on the needs of those 65 years and above by detecting, preventing, treating and managing diseases or disabilities.

The SAWP includes blood and urine analysis, radiology examinations, personalised senior adult assessment, nutritional assessment and dietary consultation as well as holiday, golf and spa packages.

PCMC chief executive officer Stuart JV Pack, the brains behind SAWP, said primary prevention programmes help people make healthy lifestyle choices that would mitigate chronic diseases or delay the onset of diseases.

"People tend to think these group of people don't need to improve on their quality of living. This is one important part of one's life that must not be neglected but enhanced.

"We need to reach out to this group of people so that we can make their senior years more comfortable, healthy and active."

He said PCMC was the first private healthcare facility to launch a wellness programme specially designed for seniors, to complement the government's effort to fight Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and help Malaysia's current three million senior citizens to better understand, anticipate and prepare for the changes of aging.

Pack said this after the launch of SAWP by Tun Rahah Tan Sri Noah, wife of the late Tun Abdul Razak, at PCMC yesterday. About 100 senior citizens and caregivers attended the launch cum public forum where two PCMC specialists gave educational talks on matters related to aging and how care should be given emphasis while aging.

PCMC Consultant of Internal Medicine and Geriatrics Dr Rajbans Singh said as the burden of chronic diseases was bound to increase with the ageing population, it was important to go for annual health screening to detect diseases at an early age and delay its progression by lifestyle changes and proper food intake.

"Early detection, appropriate intervention and management of common conditions, like hypertension and diabetes, can allow people to maintain their health and live independently."

3. Mall shares festive cheer with old folk

375 words

29 January 2011

New Straits Times

SETAPAK: Twelve old folks living at the Siri Jayanti Metta Care Centre were delighted when representatives of Wangsa Walk Mall dropped by and brought some festive cheer into their lives on Wednesday.

It was a small thank-you gesture to the local communities for their support and patronage shown to the mall. "We feel one of the best ways to demonstrate our appreciation is by showing compassion and kindness to these old folks during the festive season," said Martin Tan, senior manager for leasing, who represented Foong Meng Khum, general manager for retail of Wangsa Walk Mall.

"As a responsible member of the community, Wangsa Walk Mall believes that by taking this small step to share the festive spirit of Chinese New Year with the neglected old folks such as from the Siri Jayanti Metta Care Centre, we would bring about a difference in their twilight years, fill the vacuum in their lives and create a sense of joy in them during this festive season," Tan added.

Gifts and ang pow sponsored by MSC Properties Sdn Bhd and the mall were presented to the home before everyone got together for lunch. Each inmate of the home aged 60 to 86 received a hamper worth RM150 containing festive goodies such as biscuits, drinks and instant noodles.

Choy Pak, 84, a former sawmill labourer in Setapak, ended up at the home when he retired 10 years ago after the sawmill shifted to another location. When he did not have the financial means to take care of himself, neighbours referred him to the centre.

Another inmate, Lye Chong Chow, 86, said this Chinese New Year was more special to him and his friends, thanks to the gifts given by the caring management of Wangsa Walk Mall.

Chai Koh Wei, president of Siri Jayanti Welfare Organisation which manages the home, said the home had three full-time volunteers and needed about RM6,000 every month to run it.

"We welcome any help from corporate sponsors and the public to keep this home going. We are also having a special Chinese New Year fund-raising charity dinner on Feb 12," Chai said. For details, call 016-209 0098 or 03-4022 0845.

4. NSTP 'youngsters' bring new year joy to old folk

339 words

30 January 2011

New Sunday Times

KLANG: Smiles lit the faces of elderly residents at Persatuan Warga Emas when 25 "youngsters" visited them at their home here recently. The "youngsters" were staff of the New Straits TimesPress (NSTP) and they brought colourful Chinese New Year decorations, mandarin oranges, ang pow and RM3,750 worth of food, appliances and other necessities.

But the best part, which you could tell from the delighted faces of the seniors, was the time that the group spent chatting with them. "I'm very happy to see the old folk having visitors.

"It's nice to see them interacting with other people," said a 19-year-old volunteer at the home who only wanted to be known as Seri. The home's caretaker, M. Yogarani, 58, said her late husband, a social worker, had taken over the home in 2002.

She took responsibility for the residents' well-being after he died two years ago.

The home has 23 residents, most of whom were relocated from Tengku Ampuan Rahimah Hospital, and many of them do not possess identification documents or have relatives to care for them.

Yogarani said the home ran on limited resources, namely her own income and donations from generous members of the public. Funds from the state Welfare Department had yet to be approved even after eight years.

With no funds to hire extra help, Yogarani had to rely on her children to care for the residents and run errands around the house. The house itself costs RM1,000 to rent every month, in addition to the RM2,000 for daily expenditure. Three staff members from Tropicana Medical Centre in Kota Damansara also dropped by the home to give free medical check-ups and demonstrate simple exercises which, when practiced regularly, could improve the residents' health.

"This visit is part of our corporate social responsibility programme where we try to bring joy into the lives of those who are unfortunate and underprivileged," said NSTP marketing director Zuraida Mohamad.

Document NSUNT00020110131e71u0004k

5. Golden years

434 words

21 March 2012

New Straits Times

HEALTHY ageing is not anti-ageing. The former, according to an Australian government senior citizen website, is about "ongoing activities and behaviours you undertake to reduce the risk of illness and disease and increase your physical, emotional and mental health". The latter, meanwhile, is often focused on the externals: defying wrinkles and firming muscles. In the long term, the latter without the former is a waste of time, especially when anti-ageing focuses on the superficial, such as cosmetic surgery, without an equal or greater emphasis on the deeper aspects of the advancing years. Like everything else in this particular demographic, the part of the beauty industry pertaining to older people is booming. Healthy ageing, however, is actually to stay healthy in spite of mounting age and this is what can be inculcated from early on: habits that grow the body and mind.

The First World Congress on Healthy Ageing 2012 being held in Kuala Lumpur and themed "Evolution: Holistic ageing in an age of change", opened by the prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, on Monday, is a forward-looking exercise in understanding how best the individual, society and the authorities can plan for 2035 when Malaysia attains "ageing nation status". This may sound ominous but ageing in good health can bring enormous benefits in the way of reducing healthcare costs and providing an unusually adept workforce of highly skilled seniors. This is already a fact as the country proceeds to extend the retirement age to 60 to accommodate the demands of a small population in a fast-expanding economy.

An example of one who has gone beyond merely ageing healthily is Adnan Osman. At 69, he is making his way to London on a bicycle for the 2012 Olympics. Braving snow and ice during his journey, he proves that age is no barrier to great things. While at it, he is also raising funds for HIV positive sufferers. Obviously, Adnan has not lost his love of life and the attendant adventures open to those who are willing. But physical drive need not be extreme. That healthy ageing is holistic in approach is reflected in the congress' programme, which includes, other than the obvious, financial and stress management. Given the nature of ageing, which starts at the point of birth, there is a need for parents to understand the importance of sowing the seeds of healthy living in children. Age is not to be feared. Rather it is to be celebrated. For even after falling ill, with the right lifestyle adjustment, full recovery can still mean good health.

Document NSTRAT0020120321e8310000k

6. Malaysia to be ageing nation by 2035

494 words

20 March 2012

New Straits Times

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is expected to attain Ageing Nation Status by 2035 with an increase in life expectancy due to better healthcare and improved standards of living.

It was, therefore, important to teach children about healthy ageing because health in old age was determined by healthy living when young, said Permata Negara Early Childhood Education and Care Programme policy executive committee chairman Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor.

She said children were "our most invaluable assets and our investment in them was our investment in the future of the nation.

"The youth are now heavily involved in activities such as risky road races, excessive drinking and use of drugs, which not only harm society but also their own health in the long run".

Rosmah, who is Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's wife, said it was the task of parents, family members and leaders to influence the people closest to them to observe a healthy lifestyle from an early age.

"Children who receive unconditional love and adequate attention will grow up to be balanced individuals physically, emotionally and spiritually," she said when opening the First World Congress on Healthy Ageing 2012 here yesterday.

An ageing nation is one where 15 per cent or more of the country's population are aged 60 and above. Globally, the United Nations has projected the number of persons older than 60 to reach two billion by 2050 from 606 million today, which is a three-fold increase, and people above 80 to increase five-fold.

Rosmah said growth in global ageing had forced countries to develop proper policies and practices and this was a new phenomenon.

"We are forecasting more middle-aged adults in our population in the next 20 years," she said, adding that ageing shouldn't be seen negatively.

"We need to move away from the notion of ill health, wrinkles and loneliness when we talk about ageing."

Rosmah said the Permata centres were designed to provide opportunities for children from rural areas below the age of 5 and disadvantaged children in semi-urban areas. In five years, the number of Permata centres has grown to 600. The programme has been validated in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

Rosmah said Permata centres had always emphasised that every child in the centre should have a health card with health screening twice a year for early detection of illness. The four-day congress will see 187 speakers discussing world health issues and there will be more than 120 hours of lectures, workshops, forums and seminars.

The congress, themed Evolution: Holistic Ageing in an Age of Change, will be attended by 977 participants from 39 countries. Some of the major issues to be discussed are promoting healthy ageing, stress management, fitness and ageing, elderly care, financial management in elderly care and the psychology of ageing.

The congress will also discuss preventive measures in relation to healthy ageing.

Document NSTRAT0020120320e83k0000k

7. Boosting savings for retirement (HL)

538 words

19 July 2012

New Straits Times

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday launched the private pension framework to help salaried workers and the self-employed have enough savings for their retirement.

He said the move marked an important step in developing a comprehensive multi-pillar retirement framework for the country.

Voluntary private pension scheme, the third pillar in the retirement framework and part of crucial national pension reforms, will enable workers to save beyond their contributions to the Employees Provident Fund and other mandatory pension schemes.

The first set of schemes, comprising 24 funds offered by eight Private Retirement Scheme (PRS) providers, has been approved by the Securities Commission. The funds will be available to the public in September.

PRS allows people who are EPF contributors to save more for their golden years while giving those not on the EPF scheme, such as hawkers and petty traders, a way to ensure their retirement savings are properly managed.

"PRS offers opportunities for the people. For individuals, it provides savings for career mobility while for employers, PRS may be used for retaining and attracting talent," Najib said.

Najib, who is also finance minister, said this at the launch of the Private Pension Administrator and Private Retirement Schemes.

"My fervent wish is to ensure that each and every one of our young productive adults and, indeed, the future generations of Malaysians after them will have enough savings and financial assets to enjoy their retirement to the fullest."

He said the increase of the average life expectancy of Malaysians to 80 years meant that Malaysians, as savvy consumers, must do more to save.

"It means our future generation will live 20 years more after retirement."

Many who contributed to EPF realise that their savings could not last more than three years on average after their retirement, thus, causing hardship to those who want to sustain their lifestyle.

Najib said the private pension scheme was a prerequisite as a country developed economically. "A high-income nation must have a sound and sustainable social framework to ensure adequate retirement savings. This involves the public and private sectors' participation to ensure the nation is prepared for the challenges of an ageing population."

The eight PRS providers are AmInvestment Management, American International Assurance, CIMB-Principal Asset Management, Hwang Investment Management, ING Funds, Manulife Unit Trust, Public Mutual and RHB Investment Management.

To encourage people to save, Najib said those who contributed to PRS would enjoy income tax relief of up to RM3,000. Employers would be given tax deductions for contributions above the statutory rate of up to 19 per cent of the employees' remuneration, he added.

"I urge employers to use PRS to offer more attractive remuneration packages in the form of higher contributions to their workers' retirement benefits, while giving their workers the freedom to decide on the type of scheme they wish to participate in."

Earlier, Securities Commission chairman Datuk Ranjit Ajit Singh said: "Although Malaysia has laid a strong foundation for a multi-pillar pension system, the challenges of pension reform remain without a voluntary system in place.

"It is hoped PRS will address the gaps and provide an alternative platform for retirement savings to complement the existing system." Document NSTRAT0020120719e87j0002t

8. Old, and equal

445 words

2 October 2012

New Straits Times

WHEN it comes to the aged, the value of older people to society is often seen as a cup-is-half-full/half-empty kind of argument. Older people are appreciated for their contributions in the past, and, post-retirement, their usefulness is often viewed in terms of being there to babysit the grandchildren or to temporarily fill in gaps in the workforce. Get old enough and one qualifies to be disrespectfully referred to as an "old fogey" – behind the times and past the use-by date. Seen from the half-empty perspective, older persons cost more in healthcare and welfare, and, as is now acutely felt in China as a result of its one-child policy, a large ageing population is a great burden on the filial support system.

Undeniably, older people are making up more and more of the population. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, there are 810 million people aged 60 and over, and of this, 14 per cent are aged 80 and over. By 2050, there are projected to be more than two billion people aged 60 and over, with 20 per cent of this being 80 and over. In that instant, the number of old people will overtake young people for the first time in history. The continuous decline in the world old-age support ratio (the number of young or working-age people to one old person) will have "important implications for the solvency of social security systems". In Malaysia, the number of people aged 60 and over in 2050 is projected to comprise 20 per cent of the population, while the old-age support ratio will be just four.

Obviously, the idea of sidelining such a large segment of society is absurd, in the future, and now. Older people are persons in their own right, not supporting or bit actors. But as the world population tips towards the other end of the scale, are social norms equipped to acknowledge the ageing population's true value? All three United Nations-endorsed international plans of action for ageing are non-binding, and core international human rights instruments do not prohibit discrimination on the basis of age. Old people are discriminated against in the job sector, which includes the retirement ceiling, when applying for loans and scholarships, charged higher for life and health insurance, or totally prohibited once they get too old, and are often excluded from participating in formulating public policies. It is high time that the aged have an explicit international charter of rights that will ensure them the right and opportunity to lead dignified, independent and autonomous lives.

Document NSTRAT0020121002e8a20000j

9. EPF, retirement plan a must

433 words

9 February 2013

New Straits Times

ONCE upon a time one's parental obligations guaranteed old age wellbeing. The family plot feeds generation after generation and acquiring more arable land is the way to sustenance for a growing family, hence the extended family. Today, for the average urban family - the nuclear family - land is where the house is built on.

Things have so changed that even parents must try to be financially independent in their golden years and not be the albatross around their children's neck so that the offspring may avail themselves of the opportunities for tremendous advancement that modernity offers. For most, the labour market, where one's labour is exchanged for wages that will increase with every promotion, is the ultimate objective.

Malaysians are fortunate in that a wage earner is subject to forced savings through the Employees Provident Fund (EPF). A recent announcement by the latter tells us that the number of EPF millionaires has grown and they can look forward to a comfortable retirement. Unfortunately, they are but a miniscule proportion of the total savers. The majority, although forced to save, is not retiring into a life of financial bliss and leisurely pursuits. This category of savers, namely, those earning RM3,000 and less a month, will withdraw a paltry sum that is unlikely to last and a scaling down of lifestyle is inevitable. This monetary decline is exacerbated when accompanied by deteriorating health, more so when the woes of ageing kicks in. In short, EPF is not every retiree's saviour.

Naturally, therefore, many an old person laments a youth squandered because they lacked the foresight to save for old age. An American woman currently living off social security and her son-in-law's generosity, speaking to Forbes magazine, asks why the education system felt it unnecessary to prepare her for a happier eventuality. Indeed! In a society with rampant consumerism, good grades and high paying jobs is the key to profligacy. Schools should inculcate the saving habit not so a child may buy a desired item, but rather to see the nest egg grow into an investment for the future to ameliorate the inevitable financial havoc caused by emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances. Planning to work oneself to death is not a retirement plan, for when age creeps in the workforce is a hostile place. Consequently, preparations for a comfortable retirement must include a retirement plan which begins as soon as the first job is landed. Squirrelling away a stash regularly that will grow over time with interest payments is the way to go.

Document NSTRAT0020130213e9290000g

10. Grey expectations

437 words

18 October 2012

New Straits Times

THE second part of the theme of Senior Citizens Day - shaping the future - is more than appropriate because the face of the future will certainly be older. To be sure, turning 60 is not considered old enough to enter old age in other parts of the world. We have also not yet joined the ranks of ageing nations, those countries where the proportion of people above 60 is 15 per cent of the population. Nevertheless, as 2.2 million of the 28.3 million Malaysians are aged 60 and above in the 2010 Housing and Population Census, making up about nine per cent of the population compared with 5.2 per cent in 1970, we are on the way to becoming one. Based on projections by the United Nations, we are likely to get there by 2030.

However, though the population will age as people are living longer, as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out on the occasion of this year's International Day of Older Persons on Oct 1, "longevity" should be seen as a "public health achievement, not a social or economic liability", a sentiment which is echoed in the focus on "productive senior citizens" in the first part of the national theme. Certainly, older men and women can lead full and productive lives. They have much to offer society in terms of their wealth of knowledge, skills and experience. Raising the retirement age is one way to do this. This was increased to 60 for civil servants last year and extended to private sector employees with the passing of the Minimum Retirement Age Bill 2012 in Parliament.

But unless they are government pensioners, or have the means to retire whenever they wish, many will want to work even longer because, for most, retirement is a luxury they cannot

afford. However, continuing to work to a more advanced age may be difficult to achieve unless they have scarce sought-after skills, So, policy interventions to encourage employers to retain older workers over the retirement age are very much needed.

But as they live longer, even the most productive senior citizens will become elderly and frail, and will need to be supported economically, socially and, above all, medically. Indeed, as Malaysians above 60 are commonly affected by chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes, developing policy prescriptions to help avoid and lower the risks of such age-related diseases is one of the major challenges. Proactive measures are also needed to help with caring for the aged as it is no longer a given that children will look after their parents.

Document NSTRAT0020121018e8ai0000n

The Malay Mail

1. Take care of your ageing parents, says Heng

IKRAM ISMAIL

298 words

12 July 2012

Malay Mail

KUALA LUMPUR: CHILDREN were obliged to take care of their ageing parents and not depend solely on the government, Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Heng Seai Kie said yesterday.

She said that although the government provided infrastructure and the support system to ease the burden of elderly people, they should only be treated as a last resort.

"Children should be committed to ensure their parents enjoy a dignified, independent lifestyle and, at the same time, be an integral part of the family unit," she said when launching the International Population Conference 2012 at the Economics and Administration Faculty, Universiti Malaya.

Heng said children should not forget the sacrifices their parents had made when they were young and should be responsible by taking care of them when the time came.

"The elderly parents should be looked after just as their parents had looked after them when they were young," she said.

"That is also why the government always emphasises the need to instill virtues and respect at an early age."

Heng said there were nine old folks homes and 22 daycare centres in the country catering to the needs of the senior citizens under the purview of the ministry.

She said although the Malaysian population could still be considered "youthful", the ageing process would pose a challenge once the country became a developed nation.

"Based on the United Nations' forecast, our country will become an ageing nation by 2030, with residents aged 60 and above making up 15 per cent of the population," she said.

Heng said the government was aware of the situation and had approved improvements to the Senior Citizen's Policy and Plan of Action, with emphasis on life-long human capital development.

Document MALMAI0020120715e87c00006

2. Skyfall' windfall for elderly care programme Money raised from charity screening of the latest James Bond movie

Sophia Halim

629 words

2 November 2012

Malay Mail

ABOUT RM40,000 was raised for the Malaysian Healthy Ageing Society's (MHAS) Caring For The Elderly programme next year via a charity movie screening of the latest James Bond movie Skyfall on Wednesday night at GSC Signature in The Gardens, Kuala Lumpur.

MHAS, a non-governmental organisation based in Kuala Lumpur, managed to sell all the seats in the five months leading up to the event, with more than 500 people attending the screening.

Caring For The Elderly was launched in 2011 and is aimed at educating caregivers and the general public on elderly care. The programme includes advice and training from a panel of experts. Next year, the society plans to include talks on the importance of immunisation and health insurance planning relating to issues in ageing as part of the programme.

Before the Skyfall screening, there was a Press conference chaired by MHAS president Dr Lim Poh Him, advisor Associate Professor Nathan Vytialingam and committee member Dr Philip George. "This is the society's second charity movie premiere and our first in 2008 was for a James Bond movie too, that year's Quantum Of Solace," said Dr Lim.

He said many Malaysians find it challenging to take care of their elderly loved ones.

"Often people do not know where to turn to for information and advice. Through this programme, we hope to reach out to more people and train them to be better caregivers through a series of lectures and hands-on workshops," said Lim.

"We bring in renowned speakers of various fields and invite general practitioners to come in and listen to these speakers as they explain the medical advances from various fields. We host these programmes in different parts of the country to reach out to everyone." Nathan said there has been an increase in reports of abandoned elderly patients at hospitals and homes.

"Health care costs are rising and families are struggling to take care of their elderly loved ones. A caregiver has to be equipped with the right knowledge and skills and be aware of the actual physical and mental wellness of an elderly patient so that the right form of intervention can be used," said Nathan.

"Our society seeks partners throughout the country to make this very affordable training programme accessible to anyone with an elderly member at home and who desires to be actively involved." Dr George stressed that many people tend to ignore and neglect their quality of life and that ageing doesn't just start when you turn 50.

"You can age and grow old but do you have the quality of life to get you through that later period in life? We at MHAS want to take a holistic approach towards helping people who are ageing which actually starts from young. We need to address physical, mental, financial and social improvement as all these issues are important as you age," he said.

"You may have good health physically but if you are alone and isolated, then your mental health reduces.

We need to invest in ourselves, our environment and community by putting people into action to help others so that when we each age, we are being helped in return." According to statistics

presented at the Press conference, the percentage of the over-60 population in Malaysia is projected to increase from eight per cent this year to 20 per cent by 2050.

Formed in 2002, MHAS' primary objective is to create public awareness for the enhancement of quality of life and to increase vigilance on the impact of longevity and ageing population on individuals and society if not addressed.

Document MALMAI0020121104e8b20003b

3. 'Prince-ly' programme for senior citizens

180 words

24 January 2011

Malay Mail

KUALA LUMPUR: The Prince Court Medical Centre here is the first private hospital to offer a wellness programme to improve the quality of life of those aged 65 years and older.

Its chief executive officer, Stuart J.V. Pack, said people often overlooked this group of people who needed help to improve their quality of life.

"We need to start helping them and do away with the perception that when one grows old, everything slows down or will be victim to age-related diseases and disabilities. We want all senior citizens to have a healthy, comfortable and active life." The hospital had instituted a five-year one-stop comprehensive annual health screening programme for seniors to detect and prevent diseases or disabilities.

The screening programme covers blood and urine tests, radiology examination, personalised senior assessment, nutritional assessment and dietary consultation.

Consultant on internal medicine and geriatrics Dr Rajbans Singh said the programme was timely as people lived longer nowadays. "To live to a ripe healthy old age, prevention is better than cure," he said.

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The Borneo Post

1. Elderly need care, not neglect and indifference

October 21, 2012, Sunday at 6:17 AM

PHYSICALLY, the elderly are not longer as able and agile as the young.

To most old people, walking can be an ordeal – and crossing the road is even more difficult without help.

While it is already hard for most of the aged to get to the other side of a busy road that has no pedestrian crossing, what is even sadder is that motorists seldom stop for them.

Old people whose sense of judgement is impaired through ageing, are frequently run over on the road. They can no longer handle heavy traffic, and left to their own devices, are likely come to grief.

As one observer notes, it seems modern society is built by the young for the young – a dynamic creation that does not give much consideration to the old, sick, handicapped or disabled.

The infirm and frail elderly are usually tolerated as a liability or nuisance, and with self-esteem ripped away from them, they suffer in silence as they go through what is left of their twilight years.

This busy world is certainly not looking too kindly on old folks. Crossing the road is just one problem the elderly encounter, another is getting onto a bus. The old timer is usually the last to get on. And even if he manages, he very likely will have to stand. Rarely does anyone care give up his or her seat for an old man or woman.

In the old days, the family unit was strong. Today, it is breaking up as young men and women travel widely in search of greener pastures.

Normally, what this entails is neglect – with the elderly being left to fend for themselves, most times under very difficult circumstances.

The more fortunate ageing parents may have a child or two staying with them while the less lucky ones may have to live out their lives in an old folks' home – or in their empty house after all the children have flown the roost and may only return to visit once in a blue moon.

Such a situation poses a very real problem for society and it is what the old dread most – being unwanted and uncared for while on borrowed time.

There are other problems old folks face but none can be as painfully heart-breaking as the indifference and neglect shown them by their own flesh and blood.

Most senior citizens end up in welfare homes because they are abandoned by their families – frequently at public hospitals which, in turn, have little choice but to turn them over to shelters run by the government or NGOs.

In most cases, family members refuse to take their elderly parents back. Invariably, these public hospitals have to hand the abandoned old folks to NGOs. Even so, shelters, run by benevolent societies, are mostly full these days.

According to the Social Welfare Department, between 2008 and 2011, the number of old folks, abandoned by their families, has steadily gone up one per cent each year. Welfare homes caring for the 60 and above, admitted 340 senior citizens last year compared to 248 in 2010.

Stats from the National Population and Family Development Board, an agency under the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, showed that as at 2004 when the Fourth Malaysian Population and Family Survey was undertaken, over half a million elderly parents were not given financial support by their children.

It is, of course, unfair and incorrect to say all young people desert their parents in their old age. What is obviously a disturbing trend though is that a lot of sons and daughters are leaving their ageing parents to die at old folks' homes. Why?

In trying to look for an answer, sociologists argue it is important for society to understand the needs of young people with changing times.

These experts explain that young couples nowadays need to work to support themselves and their own growing families. As such, most not only send their old parents to welfare homes but their own children to nurseries or playschools as well just to keep up with the rat race.

While it's reasonable for young families to want their own space and privacy, there are some who simply do not want to look after the elderly due to what is generally referred to as the generation gap manifesting itself in the lack of understanding and tolerance for the changes in their parents' behaviour which could be caused by insecurity and mental illnesses.

Whatever the reasons that may have caused the young to shirk their responsibility of caring for their elderly parents, they, nonetheless, still have the moral responsibility to support and cherish them.

After all, the young will themselves become parents and grow old one day – and quite naturally, also expect their own brood to look after them in the final phase of life.

Needless to say, it's important to inculcate filial piety in children at a young age. Wholesome family values such as caring for the elderly spontaneously out of love should be continuously fostered to create a truly caring Malaysian society.

2. The fate of elderly orphans in nursing homes

November 7, 2013, Thursday at 1:11 AM Jailani Hasan



LONELINESS: An elderly at St Prichard Home Kinarut Sabah. — BERNAMA photo

LABUAN: The forlorn figure of a 79 year-old frail resident sitting alone in a room greeted this writer at Labuan's St Prichard nursing home.

This writer slowly struck a conversation with the man that the caregivers there refer to as James and inquired how he ended up in the nursing home.

In a feeble voice, the senior citizen replied that his family had kicked him out along with his disabled son who was on a wheelchair.

As James had no place to go, he surrendered himself to the nursing home run by the Sabah General Welfare Services Department along with his son.

“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is the worst thing that can happen to anyone,” he said in a voice choked with emotions.

“Here, I realise that I do not have a home anymore. Now, that I am in a nursing home, everything is gone. Here, you are literally in God's waiting room finishing the vestiges of life,” said the dejected senior citizen.

Another St Prichard nursing home resident, an octogenarian known as Ibu Mariana vouched that family members were neglecting their filial duties.

The 83-year-old lady receives no visitors, not even during Hari Raya.

“I have a daughter who has not seen me for five years and it appears that she does not want to know about me anymore,” says Ibu Mariana who spends her time watching television and reading at the home.

“Sometimes I just cry in my bed all night. I try to put up a brave face, but sometimes I just have to cry,” said Ibu Mariana.

Efforts by the nursing home to contact the daughter also drew a blank.

In reality James and Ibu Mariana are not alone, if you will, as there are probably thousands of other senior citizens who have ended up with the same fate.

With up to 10 per cent of the Malaysian population in the above 60 age group, representing some 3 million people, the number of ‘elderly orphans’ are on the rise as well.

And with more Malaysians enjoying better life expectancy, without a living spouse, without any biological or step children, and without living siblings or half-siblings, the problem of ‘elderly orphans’ is expected to be compounded further by the year 2020.

Many of them want to remain independent for as long as possible, so that they can continue with their daily living patterns, and retain their privacy and dignity.

Yet the ravages of aging often prevent them from living independently, and they end up in nursing institutions.

The writer’s visit to St Prichard Home, which has 78 residents, served as a eye opener on the unseen plight of these elderly orphans that desperately need attention.

While they may have a shelter, they seriously lack emotional support something that can only come from the family and to some extent from social workers.

They are broken hearted, the cry alone and have lost all hope. No one visits most of them, many have been abandoned for good.

The home’s caregivers also pointed out to this writer that because they were abandoned by their respective families, they also suffer from emotional neglect.

They also pointed out that companionship is extremely important for the elderly.

A Universiti Malaysia of Sabah (UMS) senior researcher Dr Romzi Otiang noted that moving into a nursing home adds to the depression suffered by many elderly people, apart from the loss of memory and physical ability, chronic pain or illness, death of loved ones and financial insecurity.

Moreover, many of the elderly keep the problems to their chest fearing that people may think they are losing their mind and they need to be in a nursing home.

“Imagine if you are in their shoes, where you could not talk on the phone, go for a walk, drive to the house of religious worship or read a newspaper.

“Many of your loved ones may have died or moved away. Asking for help is not an option. Just imagine how lonely it would be,” says Dr Romzi about old folks left in nursing homes.

“Some senior citizens have relatives, but none ever visited them. We are often told they could not even remember if the relatives have visited them,” he says.

Nevertheless, with the rise in the graying population, Malaysians have to find ways to better accommodate senior citizens within the society instead of just leaving their fate with the nursing homes.

Caring for the ‘elderly orphans’ should be all encompassing, taking into consideration their emotional needs as well, like how orphan children are cared for. And one should not forget that taking care of the old is not the authority’s responsibility but it is the family’s responsibility. — BERNAMA

3. Number of elderly people on the rise in S’wak — Fatimah

October 9, 2012, Tuesday at 8:01 AM Jonathan Chia, reporters@theborneopost.com



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY: Fatimah (front row, centre) during the cake cutting ceremony. Also seen are Ellis (front row, left), Lions Club District 308-A2 governor Chieng Eu Hea (back row, second left) and council chairman Kenneth Saw (back row, left).

KUCHING: More day care centres would be needed for the elderly in the future as Sarawak is gradually becoming an aging state.

In fact, the state has the fourth highest number of senior citizens in the country, said Datuk Fatimah Abdullah, Minister of Women and Family Development, citing a 2010 census. Based on the census, there are 211,181 elderly people in the state. Selangor tops the list with 334,289, followed by Perak (280,118) and Johor (278,028).

Fatimah said the case for more day care centres for the elderly was also prompted by the increasing number of working people, who leave elderly family members at home.

“Based on a United Nations statistics released in 2009, Malaysia will become an aging nation by the year 2030, where 15 per cent of Malaysians will be aged 60 years and above,” she said at the 20th anniversary celebration of Lions Nursing Home at Sarawak Club on Sunday.

“We thus need to think about other facilities such as housing, buildings and medical care for the elderly.”

On assistance from her ministry, she said the elderly received the most in terms of monthly allowance – RM300 per month.

“For the whole state, the number of people receiving such allowance is 18,258, and the number is increasing.”

On Lions Nursing Home, Fatimah gave them the thumbs up for doing a splendid job over the past 20 years.

“I’m impressed with your level of professionalism and the caring attitude of your staff. That, to me, make a lot of difference,” she enthused.

“Another thing which impresses me is that the home is squeaky clean and odourless.”

Fatimah added that she hope to instil this professionalism and positive attitude among all staff of Rumah Seri Kenangan in Kuching and Sibul. Commenting on the long waiting list which Lions Nursing Home was experiencing at the moment, she advised its management, which is headed by its chairman Ellis Suriyati Omar, to always look at it from a positive perspective.

“The long waiting list shows the public has confidence in what you are doing, so this gives you a good reason to celebrate.”

Lions Nursing Home currently has 56 female and 28 male residents. The number of people on the waiting list is 10.

4. Thoughts on filial piety in the Lunar New Year

February 5, 2011, Saturday at 9:52 AM

LAST week, Deputy Minister Datuk Yong Khoon Seng revealed that the intake in old folks' homes in Kuching was getting less and less.

He made these remarks after giving away Chinese New Year alms and goodies at the premises of the Hun Nam Siang T'ng Welfare Society in the state capital.

I am happy to hear the statement from Yong.

It means that not many aged people from the Chinese community are sent to live in the homes for the aged now.

It also means that more and more children are taking care of their elderly parents at home.

It is indeed heart-warming to know this reversal in the trend among young Chinese families.

Generally, among Chinese families in Sarawak, filial piety is a culture that has been cherished for generations.

Although some young couples have no choice but to admit their elderly parents to old folks' homes out of necessity, many children do prefer to take care of their parents at home during their sunset years.

On this, I'm really proud of my own family and have to give credit to my siblings – a brother and five sisters – who tended to our aged and sick parents at home till they passed on.

It did help that we were from a big family.

Our father had been unwell for the last six years of his life.

He withered away and died peacefully in his sleep at home.

He was 84.

My mother suffered a stroke and was bed-ridden for two years before she passed on – also at home – at 85.

When you have two elderly and sickly parents at the same time to tend to, it was not easy but somehow, my siblings managed the difficult task for many years.

I had not lived in Kuching for quite while, so I was spared the pain and agony of seeing my parents withering away at home.

Today, as I discuss the subject of filial piety, I believe I owe it to my siblings to thank them sincerely for having lovingly tended to our elderly and sick parents for so many years until they left us.

I am also proud to mention today that my father and his siblings had, in turn, also been filial children to their parents.

My paternal grandparents also passed on in their old age at home.

To these two generations in our family, I think the term ‘Home for the Aged’ did not exist in our dictionary.

I am sure it’s the same for many Chinese families in Kuching and all over the country.

Over the Lunar New Year break, I also had the opportunity to read up on Confucianism and the thoughts of the great Chinese thinker and social philosopher, particularly his take on filial piety.

While Confucianism has not been officially taught since the Cultural Revolution in China, the Confucian value of filial piety continues to be passed down from generation to generation – and has even influenced Chinese growing up in other parts of the world.

The Chinese has always considered family value as the fundamental unit of their society.

Filial piety had been praised by Confucius and thinkers of all schools took for granted that a well-run family was one in which parents looked out for the interests of their children and children obeyed their parents and support them in their old age.

During the Han dynasty, the notion of filial piety reached new heights and the brief Classic of Filial Piety was written.

Purporting as the recorded conversations between Confucius and his disciple, Zeng Zi, it informed readers the importance of wholehearted devotion to parents and superiors.

In fact, filial piety as a concept was presented as a political virtue, tied to loyalty to political superiors and up to the Son of Heaven (Emperor).

The success of Classic of Filial Piety paves the way as a primer to educate children on basic moral maxims while they were learning to read.

To quote Confucius, “Filial piety is the root of virtue and the source of civilisation. We establish ourselves and practise the way, thereby perpetuating our name for future generations and bringing glory to our parents. This is the fulfilment of filial piety and it begins with serving one’s parents, our rulers and is completed by establishing one’s character.”

Family values is the fundamental unit of the society in ancient China.

It is the practice of this tradition that ensures the continuity of the Chinese civilisation generations after generations.

This is not only true for the Chinese but for all major civilisations that existed till today.

A writer noted some indications of being influenced by filial piety and I am sure we can all readily agree with his list of some ways filial piety can show itself today:

You feel you have a life-long duty to please your parents.

You feel a strong obligation to fulfill your parents' expectations about your studies and career.

You are not truly successful unless your achievements are appreciated by your parents.

Your parents' expectations, and your desire for their approval motivate your pursuit for success.

If you failed a subject, you would be more worried about your parents being disappointed than your own pride.

If your father committed a crime, you would not feel guilty concealing it from the police.

It means more to you than anything else that your parents think of you as a good son or daughter.

"Do things on that list describe your experience? Now you know where it all comes from," the writer posed in conclusion.

It was kind of nostalgic for me looking at the list.

I must agree with the writer who compiled the indications being influenced by filial piety.

I think those of us who are getting on in years now will wish that our own children will continue to uphold this great tradition of our Chinese culture.

I'm not sure I'll be a happy man spending my sunset years in an old folks' home.

I bet you won't too!

5. Not right to abandon ailing and elderly parents — Rohani

August 12, 2013, Monday at 6:41 AM Irene C

KUCHING: Elderly parents are not to be treated like extra baggage or unwanted pets to be dumped in front of old folks' homes such as Rumah Seri Kenangan like what some individuals have done.

Calling this a worrying trend, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim lamented that this constituted a social problem which should not happen as the nation approaches a developed country status.

In fact, she said, children of these old folks, those sickly or bedridden should take it upon themselves as their filial duty to shower them with love and care.

"The opportunity to take care of your parents are limited, therefore, grab the remaining time to take care of them like how they took care of you before," said Rohani when met at her Hari Raya open house at her house yesterday.

She was among the dignitaries receiving Head of State Tun Datuk Patinggi Abang Muhammad Salahuddin and his wife Toh Puan Datin Patinggi Norkiah in their Hari Raya visits yesterday.

She added that it is very sad to see senile old folks who do not even know their own name and home address being dumped.

When asked about the rules on admitting old folks to the home, she said it would depend on the condition of the persons, like having no living relatives or family to support them.

She, however, advised that sending them there should only be a last resort as the waiting list is long besides it being very disheartening to see children leaving the responsibility of caring for their ailing and old parents to the institutions.

On laws to punish those abandoning their ailing parents, Rohani said it was not feasible to have such laws yet as it would result in congestion in prisons.

She suggested that children send their old parents who are still active to the Old Folks' Activity Centre at Jalan Ong Tiang Swee to occupy their time.

“At the centre, we have various activities to fill up their time while their children are at work. After working hours, they will be picked up by their respective children and brought home,” she said, adding that the centre also teaches the old folks to make handicrafts which are marketed under the ‘Purple DNA’ brand and proceeds would be shared between them.

First opened in Miri, the centre is now available in Kuching, Sibu, Bintulu, Sri Aman and Dalat, Mukah

6. 1 in 3 Malaysian elderly abandoned

December 7, 2011, Wednesday at 10:44 AM

KUALA LUMPUR: A recent report has found that nearly one in three Malaysians aged 60 and above have been abandoned by their children, prompting some to call for a law similar to Singapore's Maintenance of Parents Act, TodayOnline reported.

The 2010 census conducted by Malaysia's Department of Statistics last year showed that there are 1.1 million male and 1.2 million female senior citizens aged 60 and above in the country, the New Straits Times reported yesterday.

Of those, about 675,000 – or nearly 30 per cent – have been abandoned and receive no financial support from their children, according to the recently released Fourth Malaysian Population and Family Survey conducted by the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN).

The figure includes those staying in welfare homes and those abandoned in hospitals.

Malaysia's Welfare Department operates nine homes across the country, which cares for nearly 2,000 senior citizens as of June this year. The ministry also runs 22 day care centres for senior citizens.

Last year, the Welfare Department registered 16 private welfare non-governmental organisations which care for nearly 900 senior citizens in welfare homes.

Karpal Singh, the national chairman of opposition party DAP, yesterday called for the government to make it a crime for children to abandon their elderly parents, reported online portal Free Malaysia Today.

“It is imperative, having regard to the survey, for the government to forthwith enact a Maintenance of Parents Act to arrest the problem,” said Karpal, who first called for such a bill in June.

Singapore’s Maintenance of Parents Act gives senior citizens older than 60 the right to sue their children for maintenance, with unfilial children facing fines of up to S\$5,000 or up to six months in prison.

Last month, Taiwanese Member of Parliament Lai Shyh Bao introduced a similar bill to compel children to support their parents or face a maximum fine of NT\$200,000 or up to a year in jail.

Apart from Karpal, Malaysians the New Straits Times spoke to preferred a different approach.

Malaysia’s Women, Family and Community Development Minister, Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, said filial piety is “inherent in our culture” and only needs to be encouraged by means other than fines.

“Rather than a law to punish children who abandon their parents, my ministry believes in engagement via advocacy – by promoting close family relationships and care for the elderly,” she said.

Legal, advocacy and public education manager for women’s rights group Sisters in Islam, Suri Kempe, said a punitive parents maintenance act will not deter the unfilial from dumping their aged parents in welfare homes or hospitals.

“What should be done is a proper study to identify the root causes of why children are abandoning their parents,” she said. “Positive measures should be identified to enable a healthy relationship between parents and their children.”

Associate Professor Jesjeet Singh Gill, a consultant psychiatrist at the University of Malaya Medical Centre, said an unhealthy relationship could be the reason behind some children choosing to abandon their parents. “Having experienced trauma during childhood from alcoholic or drug-dependent parents are some of the reasons,” he said.

“Resentment from a parent’s divorce or remarrying process could also cause abandonment of elderly parents.” – Agencies

7. One-stop recreational centre for senior citizens

December 3, 2012, Monday at 6:53 AM



IT'S OFFICIAL: Vice chairman of the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye (fifth right) with eight Golden Awardees cutting the ribbon to launch the opening of Autorr Foundation Centre. — BERNAMA photo

KUALA LUMPUR: Working people who are concerned and worried about leaving their parents alone at home can now check out the one-stop recreational centre where senior citizens can enjoy quality time.

The Age Unite To Organise Rest and Recreation or AUTORR Foundation Centre in Ampang, an elders-friendly facility, is equipped with many facilities and activities for senior citizens to socialise, adopt a hobby and learn new skills.

AUTORR Foundation chairman Yap Swee Lin or fondly known as Lin Chua, 68, said the centre that can accommodate up to 100 senior citizens was open to pensioners, regardless of age.

“Working people can send their elderly parents here from Monday to Friday from 9am to 4.30pm.

“We don’t allow senior citizens to stay overnight here because there is a tendency for their children to neglect them and change their contact details.

Furthermore AUTORR Foundation Centre is not an old folks home,” she said at the opening of the centre yesterday.

The centre has 40 toilets, located at every nook and corner of the facility to ensure senior citizens do not have to walk far, meditation centre and health and herbal centre for holistic treatment.

Among the facilities available at AUTORR include walking path, cafe, reading room, physiotherapy sessions and chiropractic sessions while recreational activities include Tai chi, Qigong and meditation.

The senior citizens can also join activities like floral arrangement, balloon sculpture, handicraft, singing and dancing classes.

The centre is situated on a four-acre site donated by Lin Chua, who is the granddaughter of Yap Kwan Seng, a significant leader who played an important role during the early days of Kuala Lumpur.

“We work closely with St John Ambulance Malaysia for any emergency. I am inspired to open this centre after seeing many retirees just sit in front of the television and doze off to past their time,” she said.

Lin Chua said besides activities for elderly parents the centre also offered classes for working people such as workshops on how to care for elderly parents and parenting skills.

Social activist Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye when met at the opening ceremony today said the centre was very much needed as it provided an opportunity for senior citizens to enjoy recreation and learn. — BERNAMA

8. Senior citizens and retirees grateful for benefits provided by govt

October 3, 2012, Wednesday at 9:17 AM

KUALA LUMPUR: Just like those in the other age groups, the welfare of senior citizens and retirees in the country continue to be looked after by the federal government led by the Barisan Nasional.

The 2013 Budget tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, last Friday proposed several incentives specifically for the senior citizens and retirees, thus providing an inspiration to these groups who had served the country well to enjoy a more comfortable life in their old age.

Like a child who appreciates the sacrifice of his or her parents and the older generation, the 2013 Budget is a manifestation of the federal government’s recognition of the older generation’s contribution all this while.

Through the ‘caring for the people’ budget, the government had proposed incentives such as the raising of the minimum pension from RM720 to RM820 per month for government pensioners (including recipients of derivative pension) as well as the payment of a RM500 bonus.

The government also proposed a 50 per cent reduction in the processing fee for passports, the Malaysia People's Welfare Programme (KARISMA) which involves the programmes for assisting senior citizens, the construction of 'Anjung Singgah' or rest area which also includes facilities for the senior citizens, and the payment of the Malaysia People's Aid for the second time.

Based on the definition made at the 'World Assembly On Ageing 1982' in Vienna, senior citizens are those aged 60 and above.

A former official with the Kuala Lumpur Public Works Department, Muhammad Saleh Montel described the pension and the bonus as a recognition and honour accorded by the government to pensioners.

"Personally, I perceive the 2013 Budget as one that is people-friendly where the interest of every strata of society is taken into consideration regardless of race, or whether they live in the urban or rural areas.

"Besides the RM100 increase in the minimum pension, we pensioners will also receive a bonus of RM500 which is of great significance to us," he told BERNAMA.

The 50 per cent reduction in the processing fee for passports would enable the senior citizens and retirees to enjoy old age and travelling to other countries.

Proving the slogan 'Rakyat Didahulukan, Pencapaian Diutamakan' (People First, Performance Now) and 'Janji Ditepati' (Promises Fulfilled), the federal government led by Najib clearly delivered the promises and had endeavoured to ensure a better future for the multi-racial society in the country.

A recipient of the derivative pension, Jamilah Talib, 73, said she was grateful for the incentives provided by the government and was happy that the BN government continued to provide comfortable living and a better future for the people.

"Even when I was younger, I had enjoyed various facilities from the government such as scholarships for my children, fertiliser aid, rubber and oil palm replanting aid, and various other subsidies.

"Now that my children are married, my grandchildren are receiving scholarships to further their studies abroad. My children are working with the government and the private sector ... alhamdulillah, we have a comfortable life," said Jamilah who has 10 children and 50 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. — BERNAMA

9. Home of Peace calling for financial support

July 1, 2012, Sunday at 6:41 AM



FOR HOPE: Yong (left) presenting a mock cheque to Fr Gerard (right) and Frankie.

KUCHING: A care centre for the elderly, Home of Peace (Hope) needs continued financial support from the community.

Situated at Jalan Landeh, Padawan near here, Hope looks after individuals aged 60 and above irrespective of race or religion. It can accommodate up to 30 residents.

The home was built by the Catholic Welfare Services of Sarawak, and members of the public can contribute through St Ann's Mission.

As such, Deputy Works Minister Datuk Yong Khoon Seng has led by example when he pledged a RM20,000 government allocation in aid of the home.

"I understand that Hope offers services free of charge, and that is why it needs to raise funds every now and then to meet the high expenses.

"While taking care of the elderly is never an easy job, what makes running Hope more challenging is that most of those in Padawan areas are not loaded," he said at a charity dinner at the Christian Ecumenical Worship Centre here on Friday.

Yong, who is also Stampin MP, asserted that it would require great commitment to manage a care centre for senior citizens.

He said even the Lions Nursing Home at Jalan Stutong Baru here had to struggle to make ends meet, let alone Hope that did not bill its residents.

In many ways, he said “Hope is important to ensure the poor and the homeless will receive proper care.”

Hence, he hoped that more people would come forward to make donations to the home.

Also speaking earlier were Rector of St Ann Parish Fr Gerard Victor OFM and organising chairman Frankie Bilang.

10. Guardian pays tribute to the elderly on Senior Citizen’s Day

November 19, 2012, Monday at 6:53 AM



REMEMBERING THE ELDERLY: Guardian’s management team presenting a contribution to the Chairman of Rumah Seri Kenangan Cheras, Encik Saiful Bahari (front row, sixth right) and Puan Zubaidah.

KUALA LUMPUR: Recognizing the importance to remember our elderly and show our appreciation for the valuable contribution they have made within the community, Guardian organized visits to three old folk’s homes to mark the International Senior Citizen’s day.

The visits were organized in three main regions where Guardian operates in, namely the Klang Valley, Johor and Penang.

Guardian made a commitment to supporting each home for a period of 6 months with a total contribution RM10,000 per home for their monthly essential needs. The homes adopted by Guardian are Rumah Seri Kenangan Cheras, Rumah Seri Kenangan Johor Bahru and The Penang Home for the Infirm and Aged, Pulau Pinang.

These homes were set up with the same objective; to provide shelter, counseling, medical treatment for abandoned and homeless senior citizens.

3. Appendix 3: Word count and authorship analysis – Australian press

NO	Word Count	Newspaper	Date	Writer
1	393	The Australian	21 April 2012	Stefanie Balogh, Jared Owens
2	500	The Australian	21 April 2012	Joe Kelly
3	1,049	The Australian	21 April 2012	Stephen Lunn
4	540	The Australian	21 April 2012	Stephen Lunn
5	605	The Australian	21 April 2012	
6	926	The Australian	20 April 2012	Sid Maher, Stephen Lunn
7	1079	The Australian	23 April 2012	Henry Ergas
8	904	The Australian	24 April 2012	Tim Wilson
9	546	The Australian	12 April 2012	Sue Dunlevy
10	398	The Australian	7 April 2012	Stephen Lunn
1	389	The Advertiser	3 April 2012	Steve Lewis
2	383	The Advertiser	7 April 2012	Mark Kenny
3	418	The Advertiser	13 April 2012	
4	239	The Advertiser	20 April 2012	Mark Kenny
5	356	The Advertiser	21 April 2012	Mark Kenny
6	254	The Advertiser	25 April 2012	Katrina Stokes
7	331	The Advertiser	27 April 2012	KEN Mcgregor
8	950	The Advertiser	27 April 2012	KEN Mcgregor
1	346	Herald-Sun	20April 2012	Jessica Marszalek
2	301	Herald-Sun	21 April 2012	Holly Ife
3	349	Herald-Sun	7 April 2012	Phillip Hudson
4	352	Herald-Sun	21 April 2012	Matt Johnston
1	353	The Courier-Mail	7 April 2012	Anna Caldwell
2	787	The Courier-Mail	19 April 2012	
3	836	The Courier-Mail	21 April 2012	Steven Scott
4	289	The Courier-Mail	21 April 2012	Steven Scott
1	655	Sunday Telegraph	22April 2012	Peter Van Onselen
1	529	The Age	21 April 2012	Rachel Wells
2	634	The Age	21 April 2012	Mark Metherell

3	356	The Age	21 April 2012	Michelle Grattan
4	657	The Age	25 April 2012	Mark Metherell
5	496	The Age	7 April 2012	Mark Metherell
6	562	The Age	20 April 2012	Michelle Grattan
7	590	The Age	22 April 2012	Stephanie Peatling
8	325	The Age	19 April 2012	Andrew Probyn
9	457	The Age	30 April 2012	Mark Metherell
10	552	The Age	16 April 2012	Michelle Grattan
11	345	The Age	20 April 2012	Rachel Wells
12	784	The Age	21 April 2012	Michelle Grattan
1	1046	The Sydney Morning Herald	21 April 2012	Mark Metherell
2	648	The Sydney Morning Herald	21 April 2012	Phillip Coorey
3	406	The Sydney Morning Herald	21 April 2012	Mark Metherell
4	325	The Sydney Morning Herald	21 April 2012	Phillip Coorey
5	461	The Sydney Morning Herald	21 April 2012	Jessica Irvine
6	582	The Sydney Morning Herald	7 April 2012	Mark Metherell
7	611	The Sydney Morning Herald	25 April 2012	Mark Metherell
8	667	The Sydney Morning Herald	20 April 2012	Phillip Coorey
1	184	Canberra Times	25 April 2012	Mark Metherell
2	663	Canberra Times	01April 2012	

4. Appendix 4: Word count and authorship analysis – Malaysian newspapers

No	Word Count	Newspaper	Type	Writer	Theme	Image/Time
1	190	The Star 31.7.2011	Community News	Sharon Ling	Familial, Parents	
2	270	The Star 20.07.2013	Community News	Manjit Kaur	Needy, Shelter Homeless	Shelter
3	500	The Star 19.02.2011	News Article	Rintos Mail	Familial Old folk's home Discard	(Image) Siti Zahrah
4	300	The Star 5.9.2011	News Nation	Ivan Loh	Family	
5	324	The Star 08.10.2012	News		Family Abandoned	
6	379	The Star 08.10.2012	News	Lim wey wen and yuen meikeng	Family Abandoned Shelter	
7	452	The Star 08.10.2012	News	LIM WEY WEN and YUEN MEIKENG	Familial Abandoned Shelter	(Image) Abandoned man – Front page coverage
8	308	The Star 09.10.2012	National		Familial / Teach kids Funds	
9	375	The Sun 09.01.2011	Penang News	<i>BERNAM A</i>	Shelter home Social welfare funding	
10	255	The Sun 16.12.2010	KL News		Political Family Children To pay fee for care	
11	343	The Sun 22.12.2011	News	BERNAM A	Political Residents of old folk homes Donation (Najib)	Winter Solstice
12	420	<i>The Sun</i> 24.03.2012	News	BERNAM A	Financial leading to familial	

					political	
13		<i>The Sun</i> 09.02.2012	Featured Article Opinion piece	Natalie Shobana Ambrose	Social embedded in economical	
14	457	<i>The Sun</i> 21.03.2012	News	Pauline Wong	Political Social	
15	360	New Straits Times 17.09.2012	News		Social, Health Filial	
16	368	New Straits Times 23.01.2011	News		Health	Chinese New Year: Abandoned elderly are remembered and visited by social workers, politicians and other components of society
17	375	New Straits Times 29.01.2011	News		Social imbedded in financial	
18	339	New Straits Times 30.01.2011	News		Familial Financial and lack of Social support	
19	434	New Straits Times 21.03.2012	News		Healthy Ageing	World Congress on Healthy Ageing
20	494	New Straits Times 20.03.2012	News		Familial Healthy ageing (Rosmah)	
21	538	New Straits Times 19.07.2012	News		Financial Political (Najib)	
22	445	New Straits Times 02.10.2012	Feature		Social Economical (Discrimination)	
23	443	New Straits Times 09.02.2013	Feature		Social Economical (EPF)	
24	437	New Straits Times 18.10.2012	News		Social	World Senior Day
25	435	New Straits Times 18.10.2012	News		Social Familial	
26	298	The Malay Mail 12.07.2012	News	IKRAM ISMAIL	Familial	International Population Conference 2012

27	629	Malay Mail 02.11.2012	News	Sophia Halim	Social Advocacy	
28	180	Malay Mail 24.01.2011	News		Health Social	
29	857	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 21.10.2012	Feature		Familial Social	Post-World Senior Day
30	816	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 07.11.2013	News Article	Jailani Hasan – BERNAM A	Social Familial Economic (Orphans)	(Image) James – Elderly man
31	429	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 09.10.2012	News	Jonathan Chia	Social Welfare from Govt	(Image) Fatimah – Minister WFD
32	1016	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 05.02.2011	News		Filial Piety	Chinese New Year 2011
33	421	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 12.08.2013	News	Irene C	Familial (Parents) Social welfare (Baggage)	
34	543	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 07.12.2011	News	Agencies	Familial Abandoned Parents	
35	419	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 03.12.2012	News	BERNAM A	Familial Social Recreational	(Image) Minister and nursing home managemen t
36	532	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 03.10.2012	News	BERNAM A	Social Welfare	
37	291	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 01.07.2012	News		Social- Financial Ask for donations for centre	
38	175	<i>The Borneo Post</i> 19.11.2012	News		Social- Financial Donations - Guardian	National Seniors day

5. Appendix 5: Coverage dates – Malaysian newspapers

Malaysian newspapers (37)							
No.	Newspaper Title	Quantity	Ownership	Dates	Intensive Coverage dates	National/ Regional	Type
1	The Star	08	Star Media Group Berhad	31/07/2011 20/07/2013 19/02/2011 05/09/2011 08/10/2012 08/10/2012 09/10/2012 08/10/2012	Oct 2012	National	Tabloid
2	<i>The Sun</i>	06	Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd	09/01/2011 16/12/2010 22/12/2011 24/03/2012 09/02/2012 21/03/2012		National	Tabloid

3	The New Straits Times	10	Media Prima	17/09/2012 23/01/2011 29/01/2011 30/01/2011 21/03/2012 20/03/2012 02/10/2012 09/02/2013 18/10/2012 18/10/2012		National	Compact
4	The Malay Mail	03	Malay Mail Sdn Bhd	12/07/2012 02/11/2012 24/01/2011		Klang Valley	Tabloid
5	The Borneo Post	10	Borneo Post Sdn Bhd	21/10/2012 07/11/2013 09/10/2012 05/02/2011 12/08/2013 07/12/2011 03/12/2012 03/10/2012 01/07/2012 19/11/2012		East Malaysia	Berliner

6. Appendix 6: Lexical choices – Australian newspapers

Papers		Non-Pensioners						Pensioners		
Ownership	Masthead	Wealthy	Millionaire	Better-Off	Self-Funded	Non-Pensioners	Part Pensioner	Pensioners	Burden	
News Corp	The Australian	Wealthy Seniors Wealth Advantage Wealth Fund Asset-Rich Income-Rich Richer People			Self-Funded Retirees Self-Funded Retirees Self-Funded Self-Funded		Part Pensioners Part-Pensioners Part-Pensioners	Full Pay Pensioners Full Pensioners Full Pensioners Pensioners Pensioners Full Pensioners Aged Pensioners'	overburdened sector financing burden	demographic time bomb
	The Advertiser	Wealthy Seniors Wealthier Older People The Wealthier			Self-Funded Self-Funded		Part-Pensioners	Pensioners	over-burdened aged-care sector	
	Herald-Sun	Wealthier People						Average Pensioners		
	The Courier-Mail	Wealthy Older Australians The Wealthiest Cohort Of Older People		Better Off	Self-Funded Retirees Self-Funded Self-Funded		Part-Pensioners	Pensioners	over-burdened burden of an ageing population burden collective burden The “burden” of an ageing population	time bomb
	Sunday Telegraph								burden for funding	
Fairfax	The Age	Their Wealth.	Millionaires	Better-Off	Self-Funded Retirees Self-Funded	Non-Pensioners	Part-Pensioners Part-Pensioners	Pensioners Pensioners Pensioners	burdens financial burdens	

	The Sydney Morning Herald	Their Wealth			Self-Funded Retirees		Part-Pensioners		financial burden	
					Self-Funded		Part-Pensioners		tax burden	
					Self-Funded		Part-Pensioners			
					Self-Funded		Part-Pensioners			
					Self-Funded					
					Self-Funded					
					Self-Funded					
					Self-Funded					

ⁱ www.malaymail.com/about