An aerial photograph of the Mornington Peninsula coastline. The image shows a large bay with a sandy beach curving along the right side. The water is a deep blue, and several sailboats are visible in the bay. In the background, there are forested hills with some buildings and a lighthouse on top. The sky is a clear, bright blue with some light clouds.

# Mornington Peninsula Aged Care Survey May-August 2023

..... after my enquiry, I was called a  
“scaremongering activist” .....

Instigated by several concerned Senior Citizens from  
Flinders, Victoria



## Preamble

The concept of this survey was introduced at the March meeting of a Flinders senior citizens community group. It arose after guest speakers created a perceived need to give feedback to both the Shire Council and the Federal Government.

This online survey was completely anonymous. No question was compulsory ... like age range for example. As a result, each question should be looked at singularly and not necessarily tied to another question ...the sample size for each question may vary.

Only a few questions cascade or “branch” and it was never the intention to make this survey a definitive survey based on statistical quantitative data... It is a survey which presents qualitative data, [forming a foundation for future informed discussions](#).

This survey asks questions, firstly about Federal Government Aged Care Services and secondly, about the Mornington Peninsula Shire Services.

It is comforting to know that some 180 seniors were able and prepared, to respond to such a questionnaire online!



## Summary

- The overwhelming evidence from this survey is that respondents are confused about available services within the Aged Care Sector.
- Where awareness of available services does exist, attempts to access Government/Council Providers is via a bureaucracy of confusion, complexity and frustration.
- Aged Care has become a commodity and that “one size is supposed to fit all”... if you can actually get it! ... eventually!
- Ongoing care has decidedly decreased in quality and availability.
- Communications and knowledge bases are underwhelming.
- Available Council brochures are tantamount to “propaganda”.



## Setting the scene from actual “Lived Experiences”

4 months

- **9 September 2019** – My husband, a cancer sufferer, had an ACAT assessment in the home. He could not toilet, shower or dress himself and I could no longer assist.
- **5 January 2020**– As no help was available, he went into care at Golf Links Rd. Frankston.
- **15 January 2020** – He died.
- **6 October 2020** – a letter, addressed to him, arrived from My Aged Care informing him that he might expect to negotiate for an Australian Government Care Package.
- The letter stated that he would possibly be assigned a Home Care Package **in about 3 months** but that it may be for a lower level of support than indicated at the time of the initial assessment.

14 months



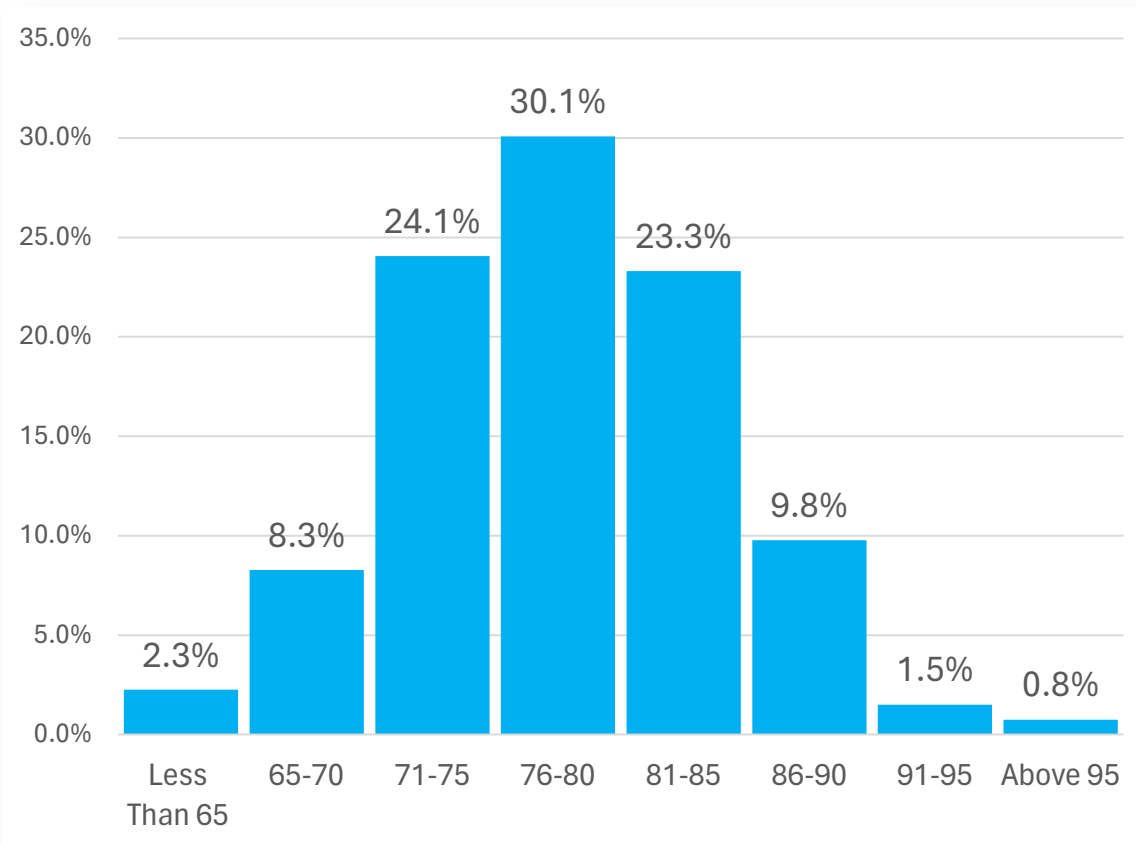
## 2. Postcodes represented in this survey

3199	Frankston/Frankston south
3915	Hastings/Tuerong
3916	Merricks/Point Leo/Shoreham
3926	Balnarring/Balnarring Beach/Merricks Beach/Merricks North
3927	Somers
3928	Main Ridge
3929	Flinders
3930	Mt Eliza
3931	Mornington
3934	Mt Martha
3936	Arthur's Seat/Dromana/Safety Beach
3938	Mccrae
3939	Boneo/Cape Schanck/Fingal/Rosebud
3940	Rosebud West (Capel Sound)
3941	Rye/St Andrews Beach/Tootgarook
3942	Blairgowrie
3944	Portsea
3976	Hampton Park



### 3. Please chose your age range

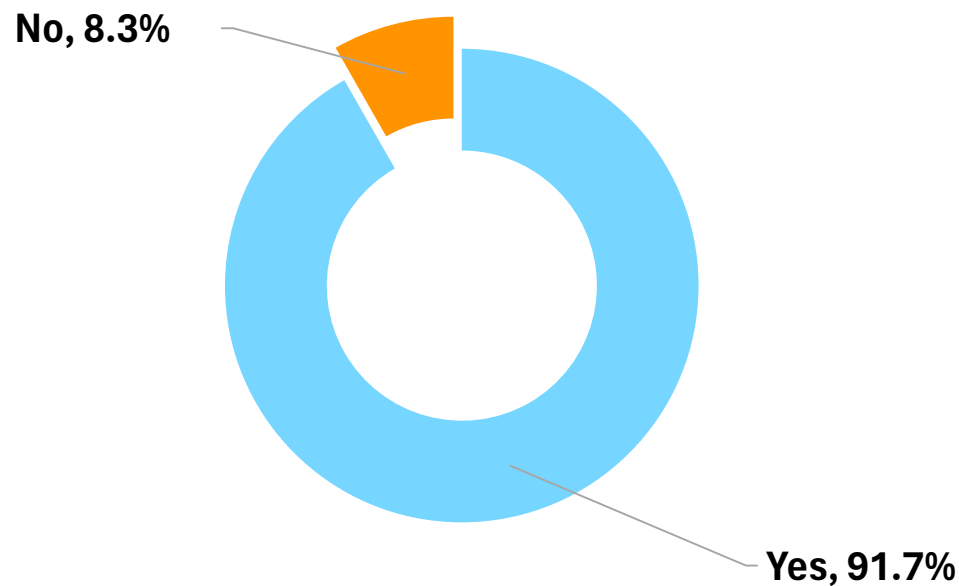
### Observations and Additional Thoughts



- Most respondents are aged over 75, and a significant number are over 80, which is about the age when support/assistance is needed.
- 64.8% are under 80 years of age, indicating concern with future financial and social planning.
- When one reaches 80 all the options for assisted care by Governments should be clearly understood.



4. In your life are you served by MAINLY the Mornington Peninsula Shire?

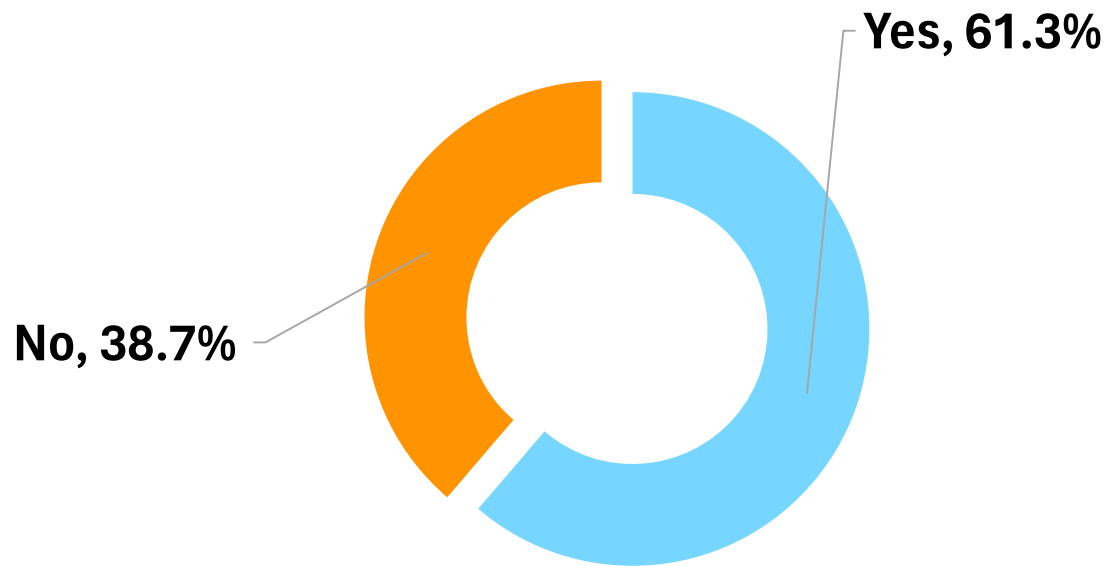


Observations and Additional Thoughts

- The respondents clearly are mainly residents and not “weekenders”.
- Having stated that, every one of the respondents is part of some community organisation on the Peninsula, proving that the data is sourced from permanent residents.



5. Are you responding to this survey as one of two living on your property?



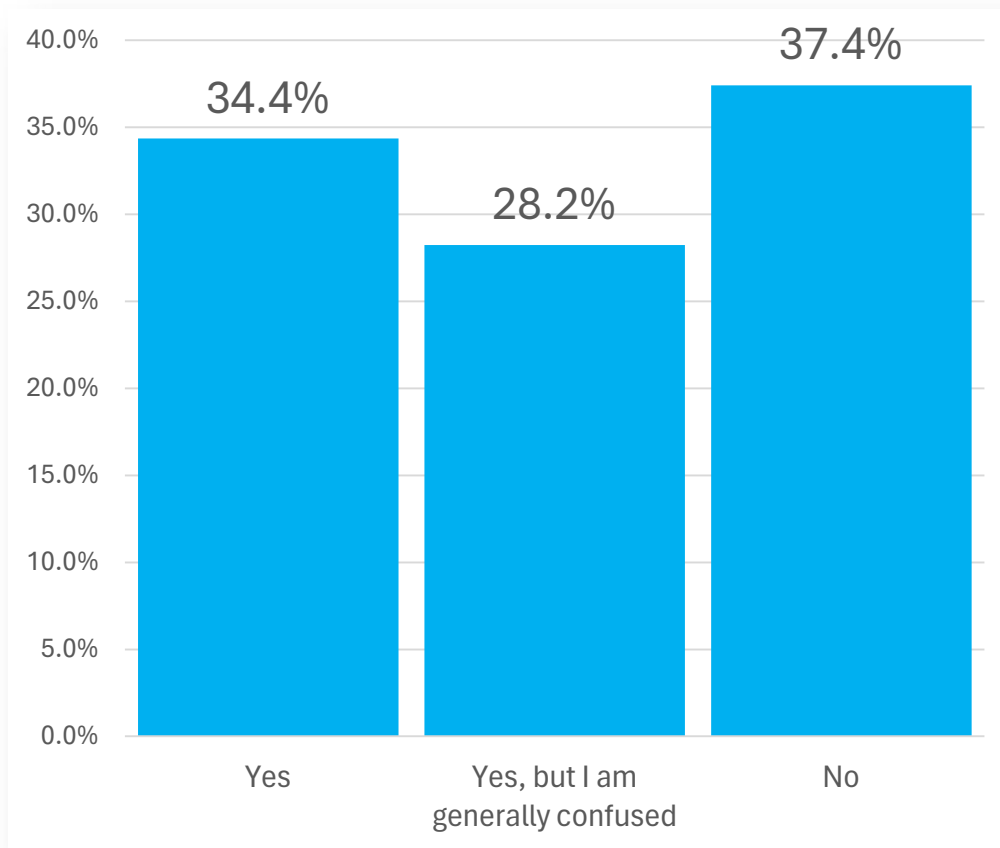
### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- The figures speak for themselves, demonstrating a distribution in the community of elderly people who live as couples or on their own.
- The 38% of people who live alone may be the ones most vulnerable when high care or attention is needed.





6. Do you understand the difference between an Aged Care Package and Home Care Assistance (which has been provided by Council but is now outsourced to a group of private providers)?



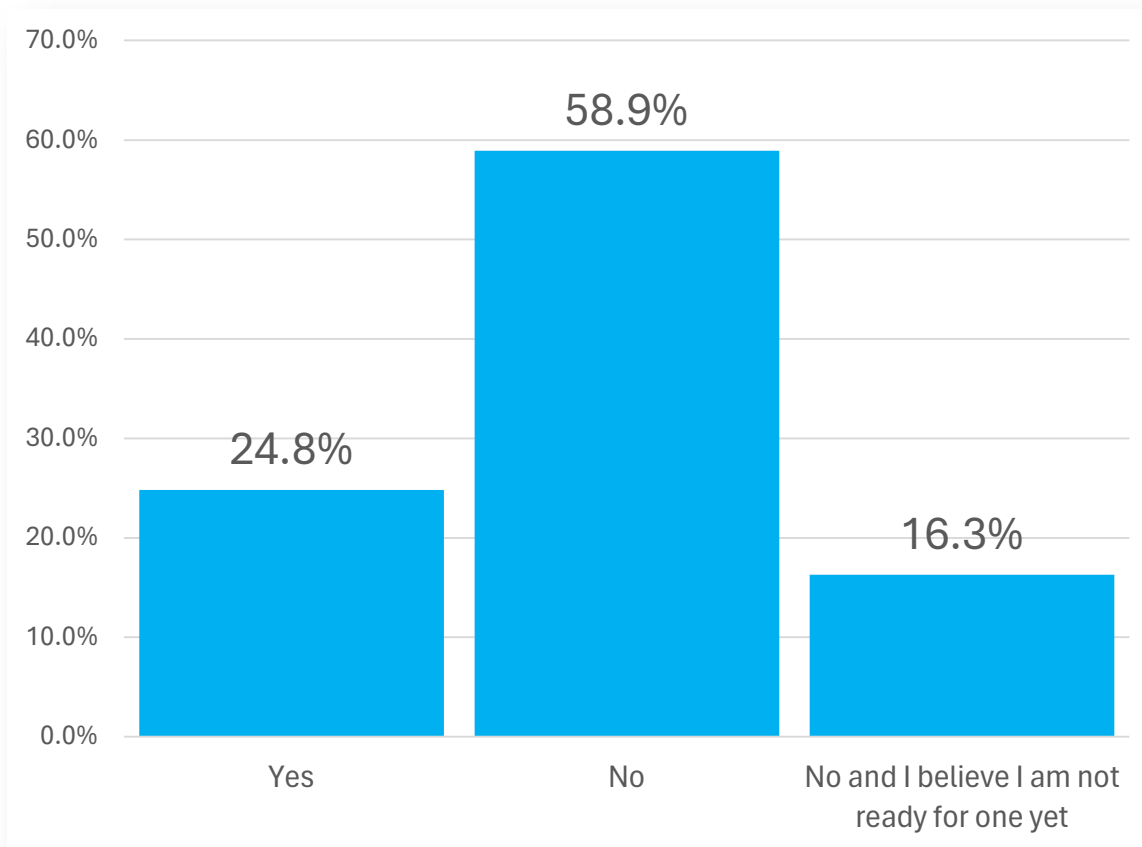
## Observations and Additional Thoughts

This chart is a little concerning, highlighting the level of confusion regarding available services.

- The 37.4% figure is significant and 28.2% people who are confused would suggest:
  - Communications to the community of options and rights are poor.
  - The current system is too complex to fully understand and extremely difficult to navigate.
- Surely the task of all Governments is to provide all citizens with knowledge of processes of speedy access to assistance.
- A transparent system would encourage an individual's anticipation of future needs.
- An on-line portal is no substitute for advocacy from a GP but assessment arrangements from GPs are no longer provided.



## 7. Do you know the eligibility criteria for obtaining a Federal Government, Aged Care Package?

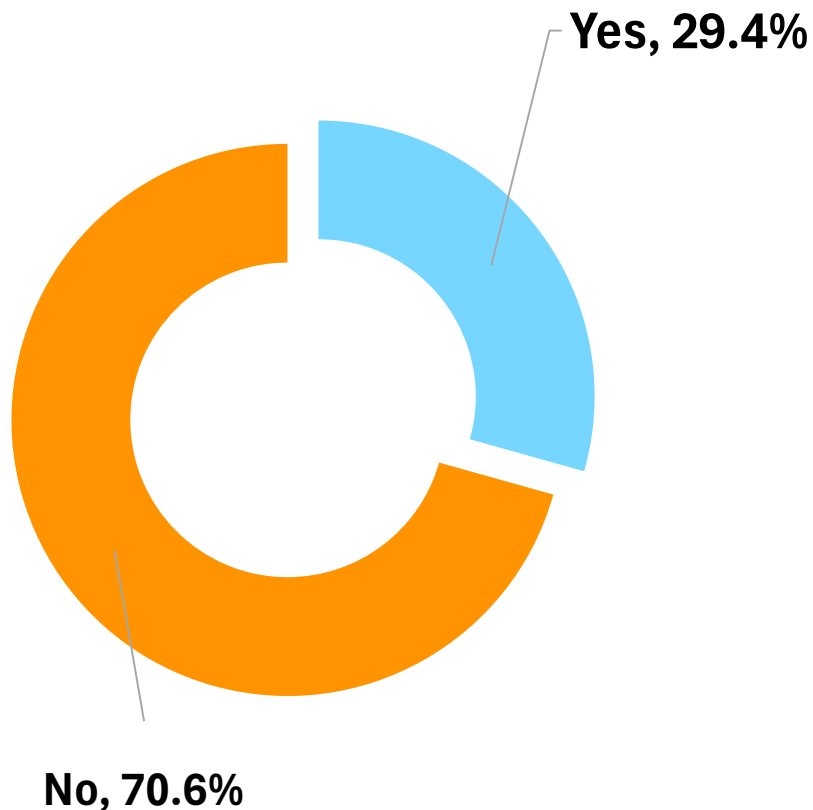


## Observations and Additional Thoughts

- The fact that only 24.8% of respondents know the eligibility criteria is concerning.
- Again, this addresses the obvious case of “not relevant to me” because the complexity of the current system discourages engagement until disaster strikes.
- Surely the task of Government is to ensure that people don’t feel abandoned or distressed when the time comes for them to need assistance.
- Could it be that the Government does not want too many people to really know about the Aged Care Package, as it could never support an avalanche of requests in a frail health system?



8. Do you know the procedure and processes for obtaining an Aged Care Package from the Federal Government?



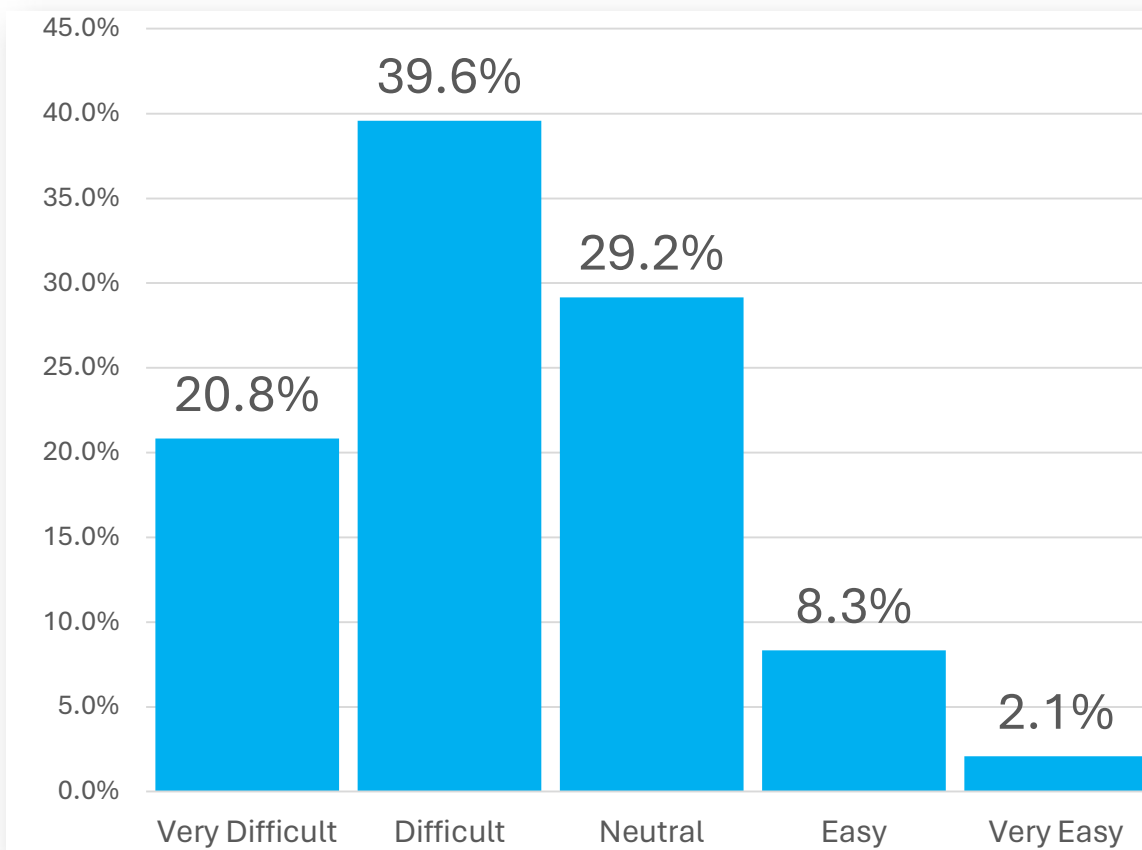
### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Again, echoing the previous slide which indicated that only 24.8% are aware of the eligibility criteria.
- To communicate with “My Aged Care” (if one knows to start there), is almost impossible on-line , due to the Yes/No format . Phone access is discouraged by endless wait times.



8. Do you know the procedure and processes for obtaining an Aged Care Package from the Federal Government?

8.1 If "Yes", how would you rate this process?

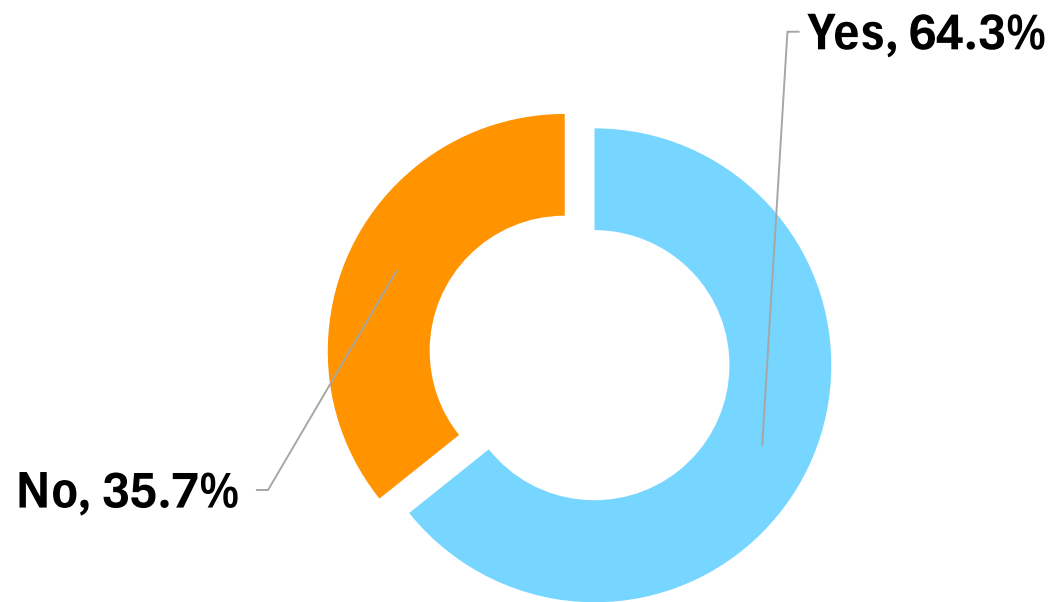


Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Of the 29.4% on the previous slide who understand the criteria for obtaining an aged care package, 60.4% rate the process as difficult or very difficult.
- Emphasises the complexity of the entire system.



9. Do you have a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card?

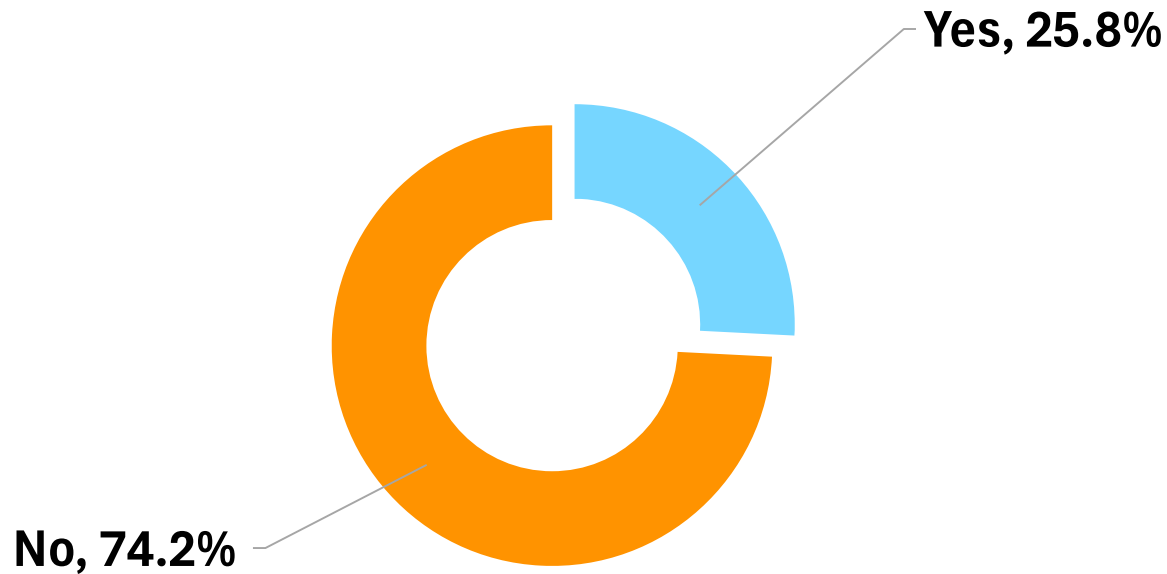


Observations and Additional Thoughts

- 64.3% of people answering this question are more than likely not on the aged pension.
- Given the age group involved with this survey, the 35.7% without Seniors Health Card is of concern. If one is not a Centrelink client, application is extremely difficult and intimidating.



## 10. Do you know the eligibility criteria for obtaining Home Care Assistance?

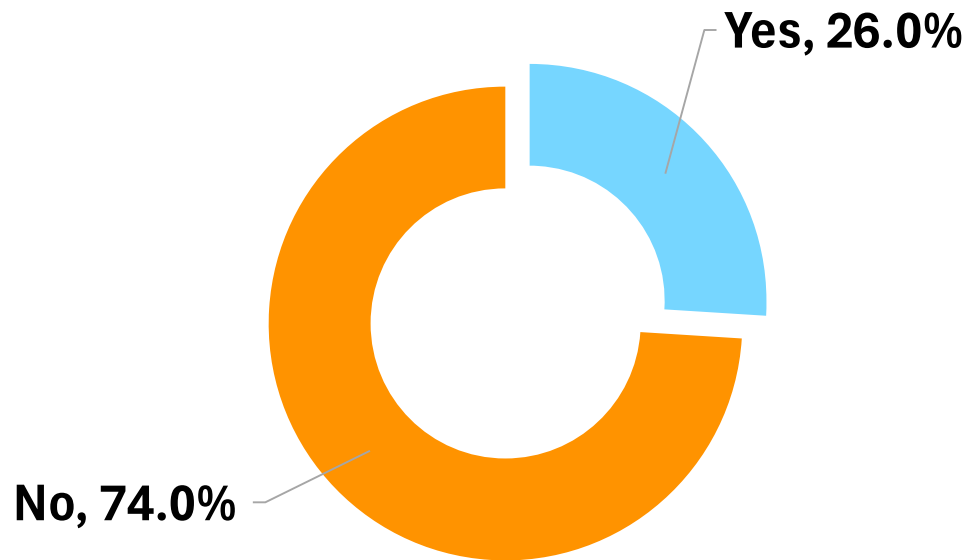


### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Like no.7 – people should know what is available, whether they need it or not.
- Once again, only the mid 20's % of people answering this question knew the criteria for obtaining Home Care Assistance.
- For the 74.2% the lack of knowledge could be because:
  - ⇒ It's not perceived as currently relevant.
  - ⇒ It's relevant but it is confusing and intimidating.
  - ⇒ Home Care Assistance or Home Care Package? Are they the same or not? Which do I need? A bureaucratic nightmare?



11. Do you know the process for obtaining Home Care Assistance from the Council (cleaning, personal care)?

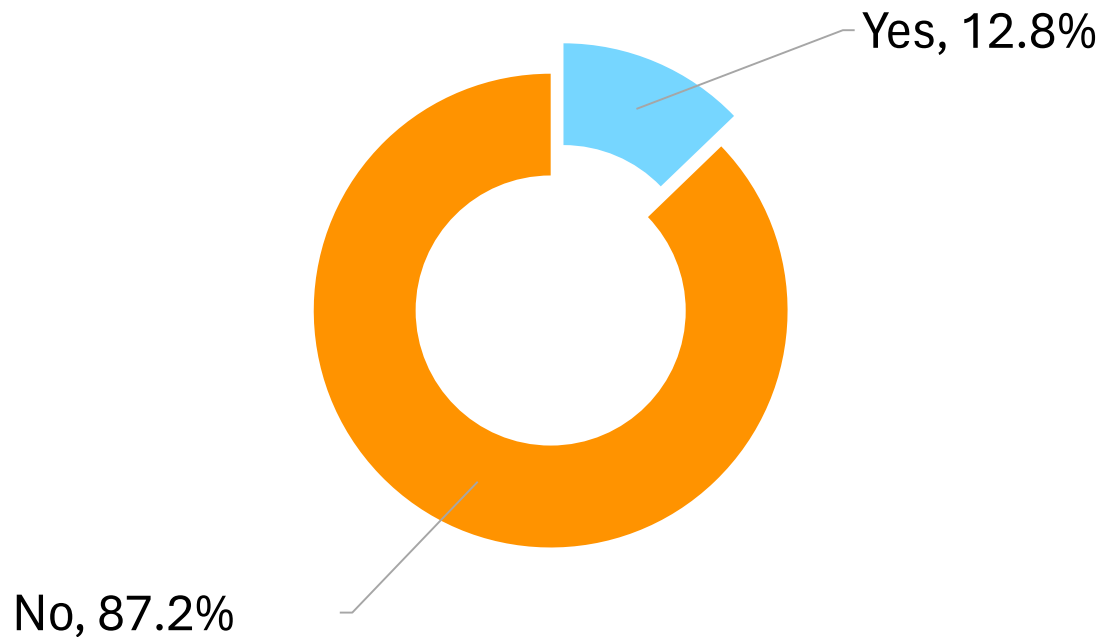


### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Proof of ignorance of Council involvement. There is a message here for Council.
- Once again, the fact that 74%: have no knowledge of access to Home Care Assistance is testament to lack of peoples' engagement with planning for future options.
- Council no longer provides services, having outsourced to private providers, causing suspicion and uncertainty in the community.



12. Have you used any Shire Aged Care Services during the last 12 months?



Observations and Additional Thoughts

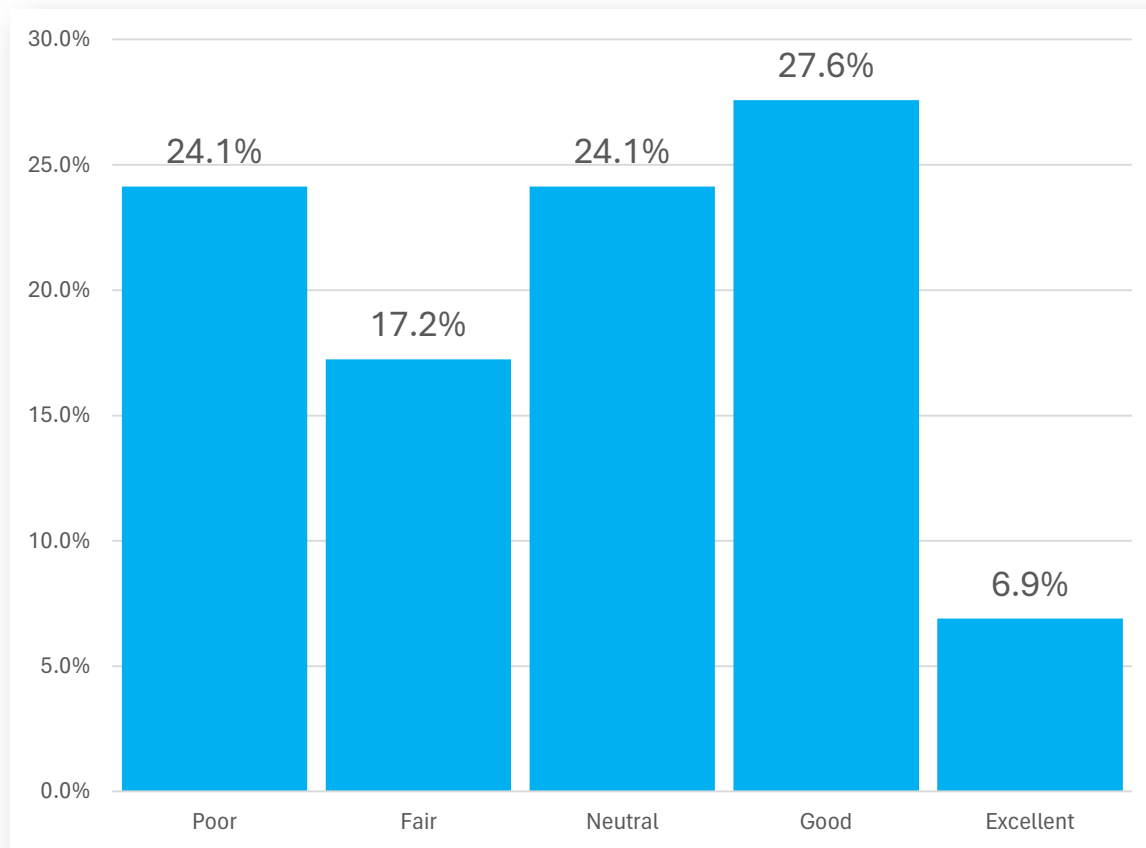
- The 12.8% could be because the Council is no longer providing home care.
- It is not known if this is in line with Community/Council expectations.





## 12. Have you used any Shire Aged Care Services during the last 12 months?

12.1 If "Yes", overall, how do you rate these aged care services?



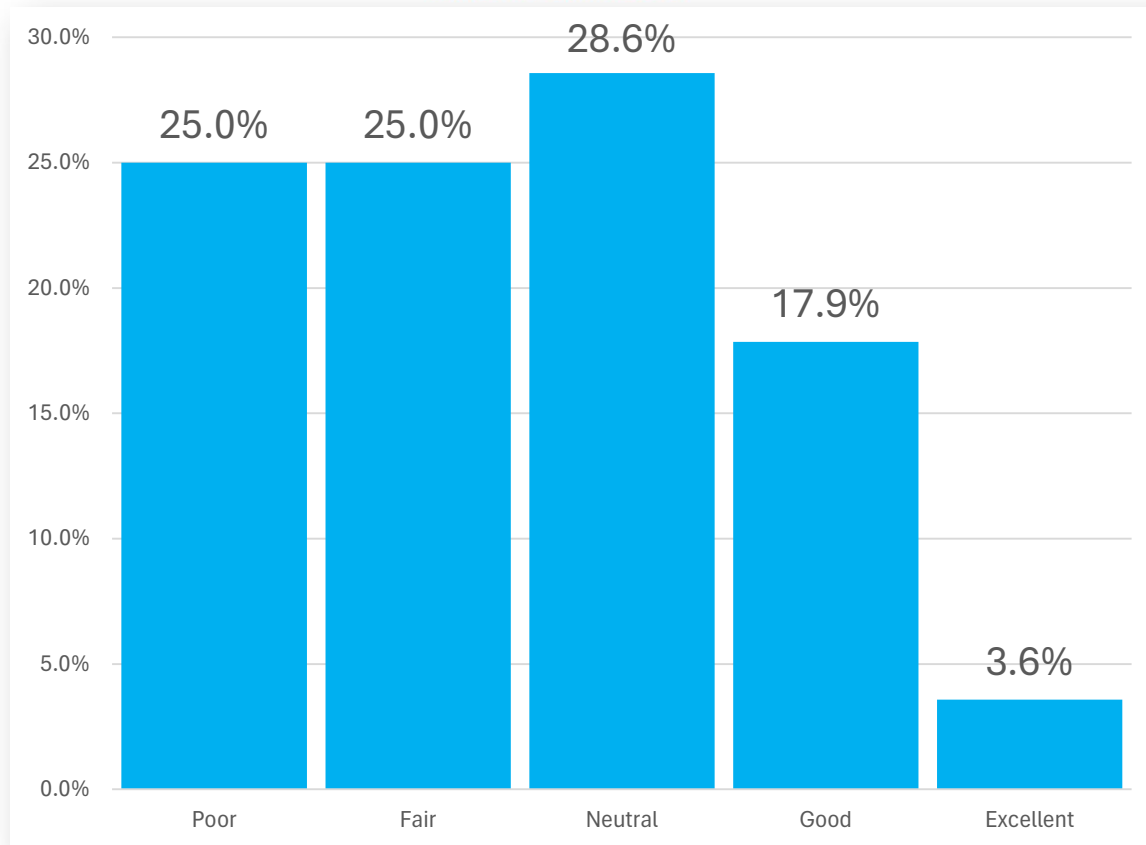
### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Demonstrates that council services were reasonably good (and didn't need to be handed over?).
- Overall, the feedback is quite positive with Fair, Neutral, Good making up 68.9% of respondents to this question.
- As privatisation is recent, these figures may lack accuracy.



## 12. Have you used any Shire Aged Care Services during the last 12 months?

12.2 If "Yes", how would you describe the information and processes used to access specific aged care services?

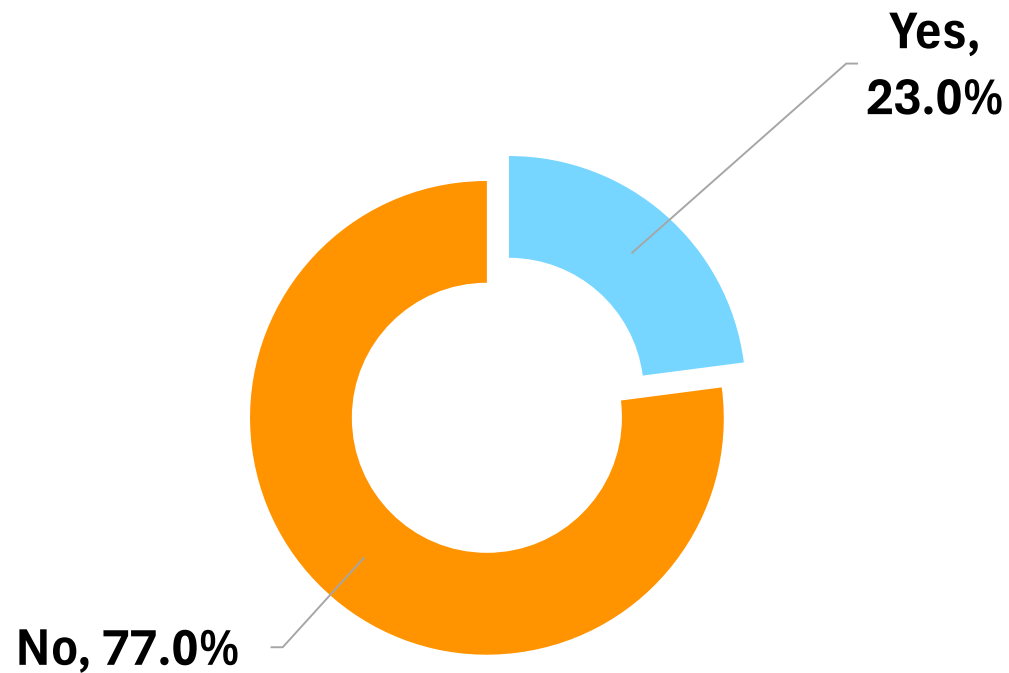


### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Given that only 12.8% of respondents have used Services, it is of concern that 78.6% of those have answered Poor, Fair or Neutral.



13. Have you been affected negatively by recent changes through the council outsourcing to Private Providers?



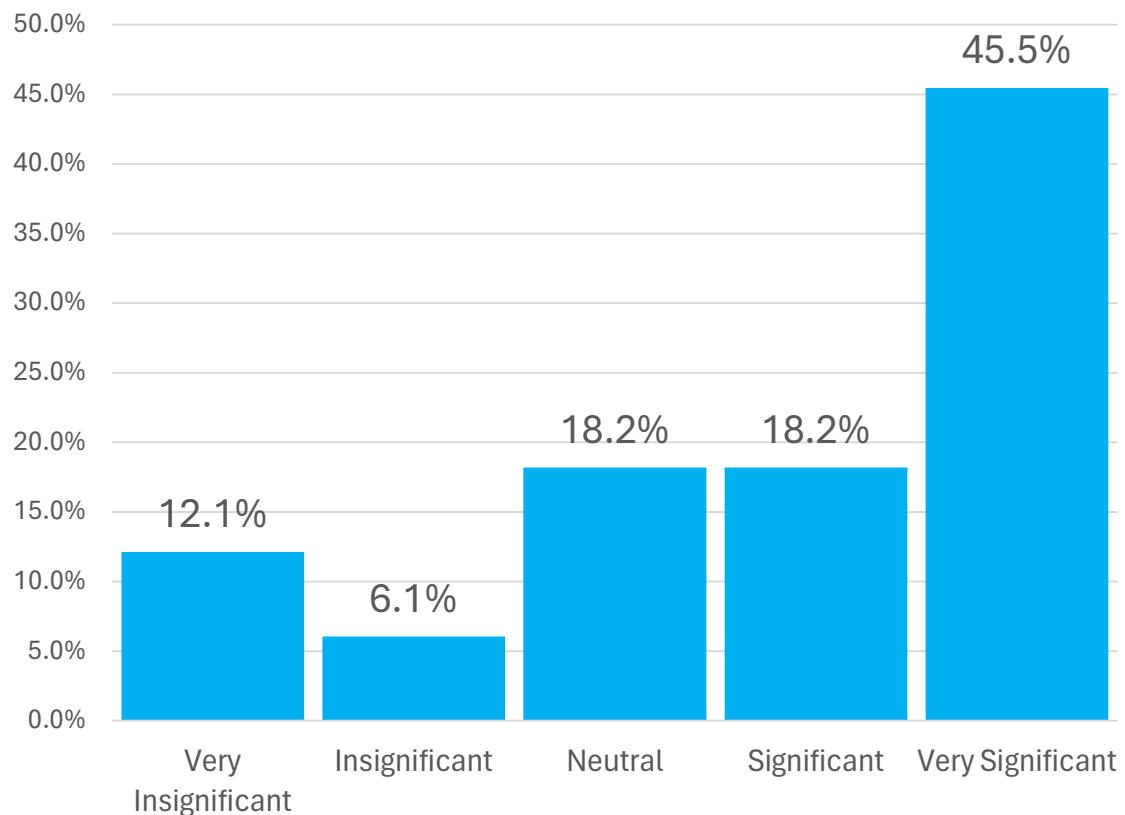
### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- The assumption can be made that the 77% not affected have not needed to access assistance.
- Looking at the 23.0% in the light of next sub-question clarifies some issues.



### 13. Have you been affected negatively by recent changes through the council outsourcing to Private Providers?

13.1 If you answered yes, how significant have these changes been?

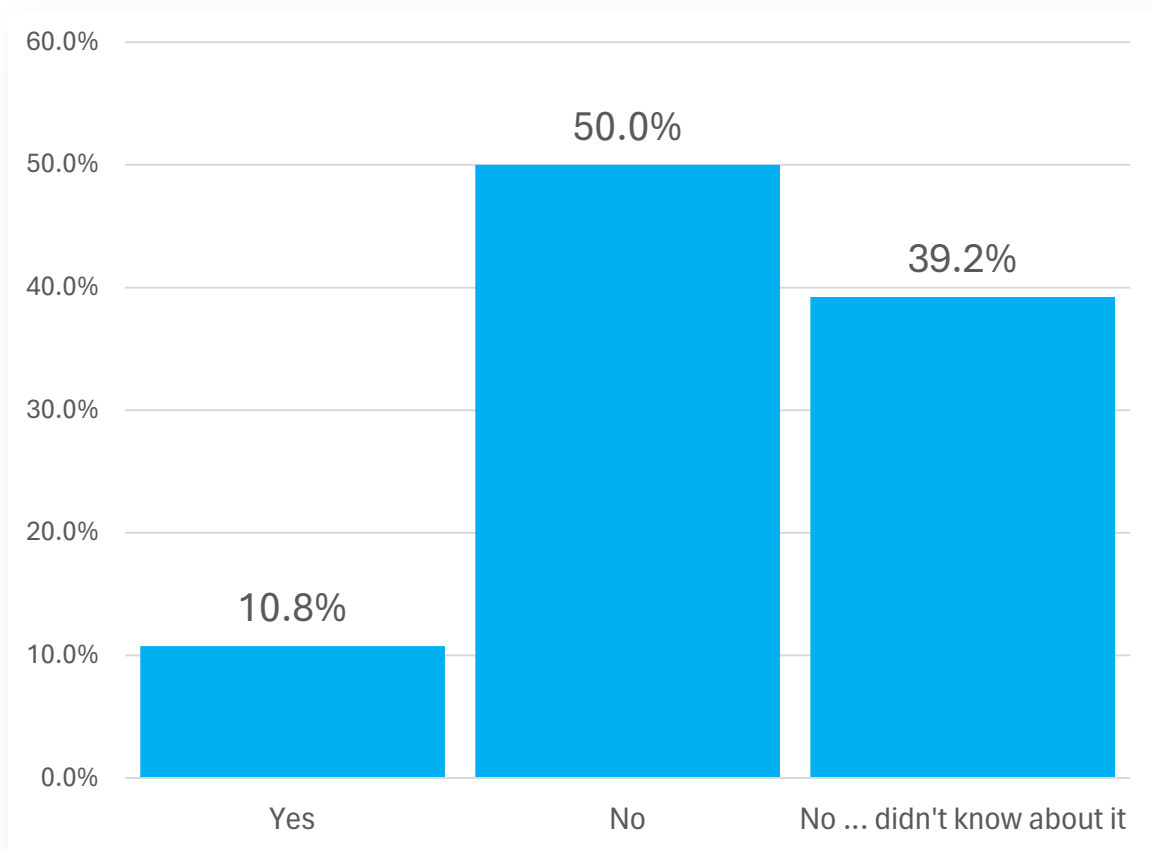


#### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Clearly shows the effect on those who had been using council help.
- 63.7% felt that the changes were Significant/Very Significant
- The companion remarks from "Lived Experiences" indicates some of the feelings and attitudes.
- Obviously, this opens the door for the Council to undertake its own research.



## 14. Have you researched “Positive Ageing” on the Council’s website?

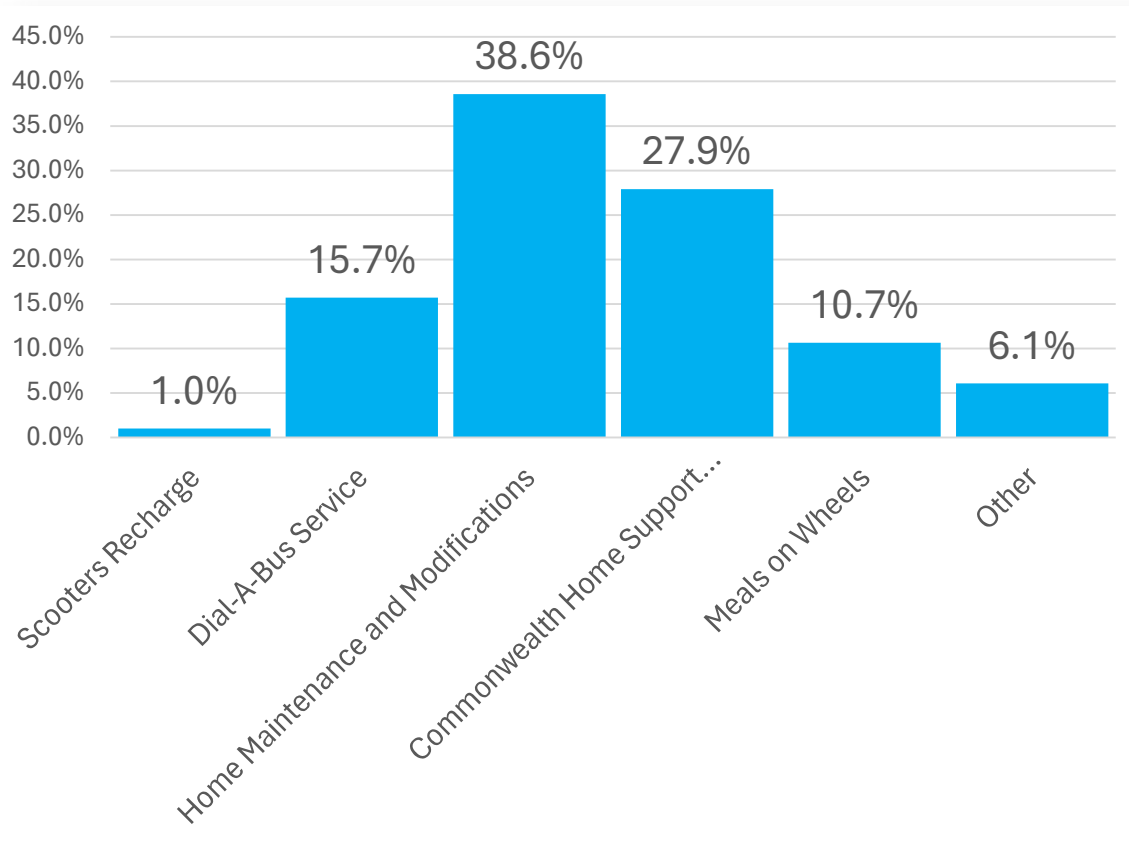


### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Why would anyone look at this if they didn't know it was there? This cohort are much more likely to phone the council to enquire than go to a website.
- This indicates clearly that communication from the Council is poor.
- “Positive Ageing” on the Council’s website is a digital version of their colourful, 17 page booklet, “Our positive Ageing Strategy – 2020-2025”, which is a collection of Aspirations, Objectives and Strategies. The “Strategies” are merely sub-sets of “Aspirations” without a single word of methods of access to services.



15. What Council services are you likely to need now or in the foreseeable future in order to “Age Happily at Home”?

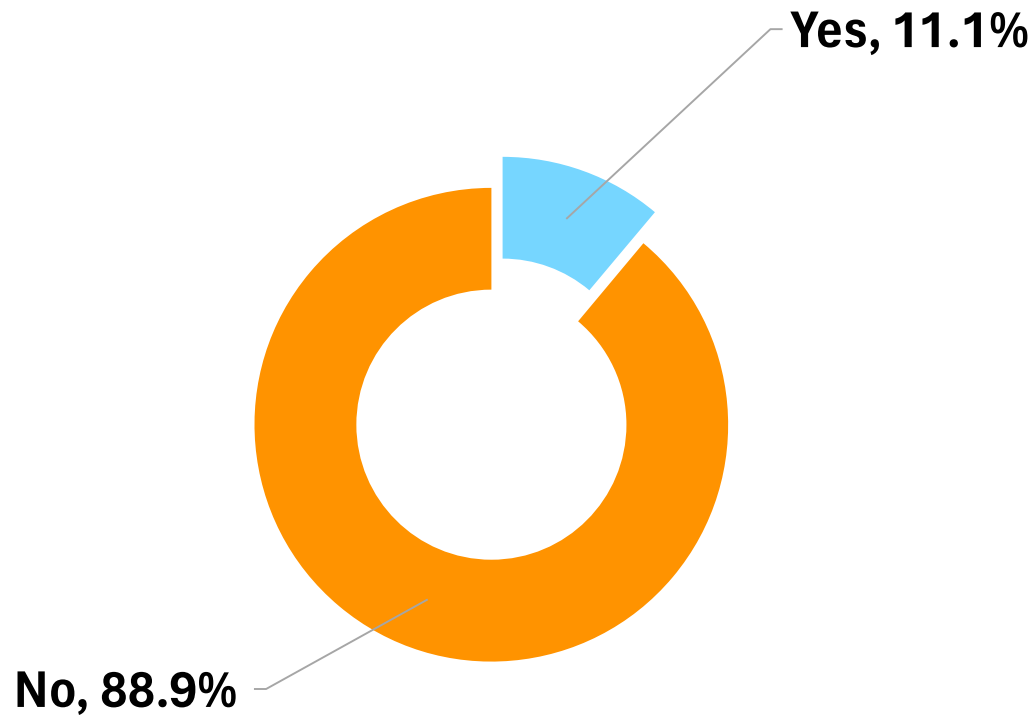


Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Council need to know the likelihood of demand.
- This does indicate some priorities for areas of need.
- It would be interesting to see if this matches current Council research?



16. As a specific do you know how to access Dial-A-Bus?



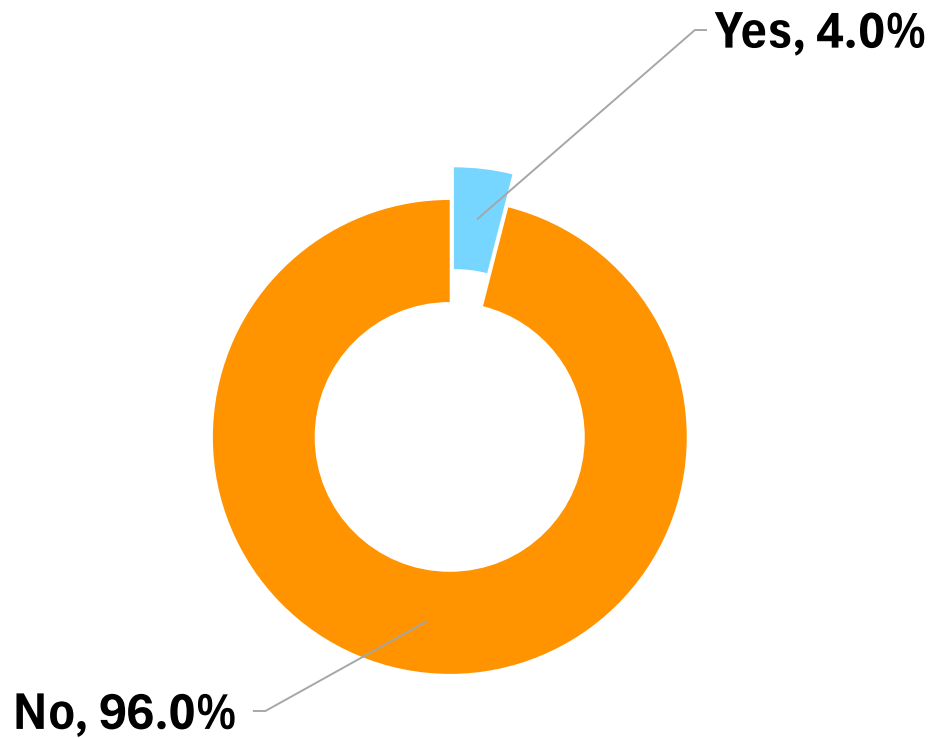
### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- Generally, there is not a lot known about Dial-A-Bus.



16. As a specific do you know how to access Dial-A-Bus?

16.1 Do you happen to know whether there is any assessment for using Dial-A-Bus?



Observations and Additional Thoughts

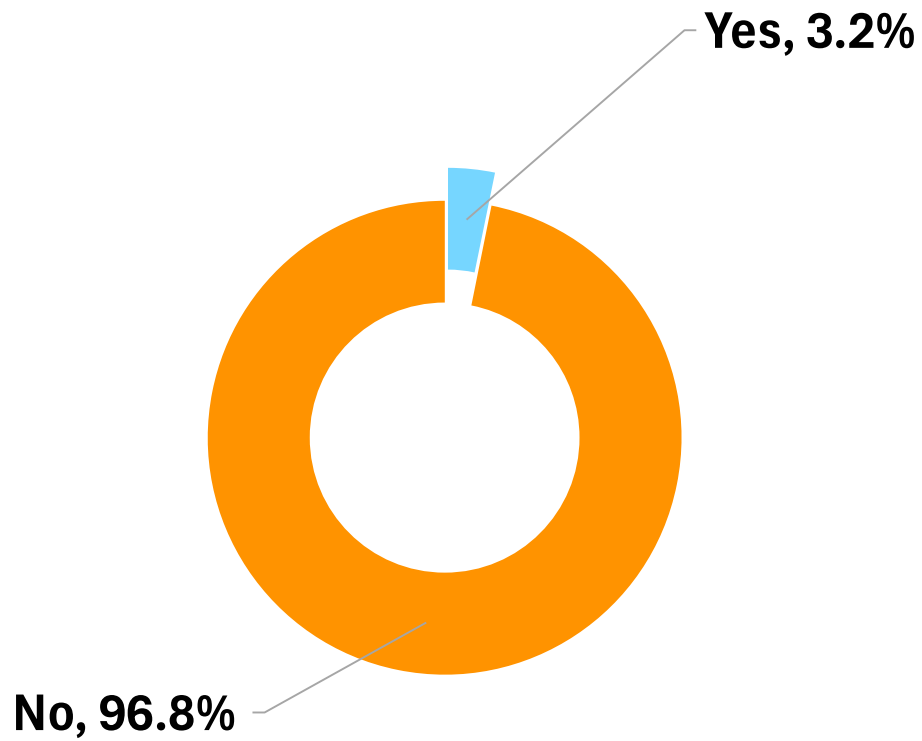
- If you don't know about a service, then you are not going to use it.





## 16. As a specific do you know how to access Dial-A-Bus?

### 16.2 Have you used Dial-A-Bus?



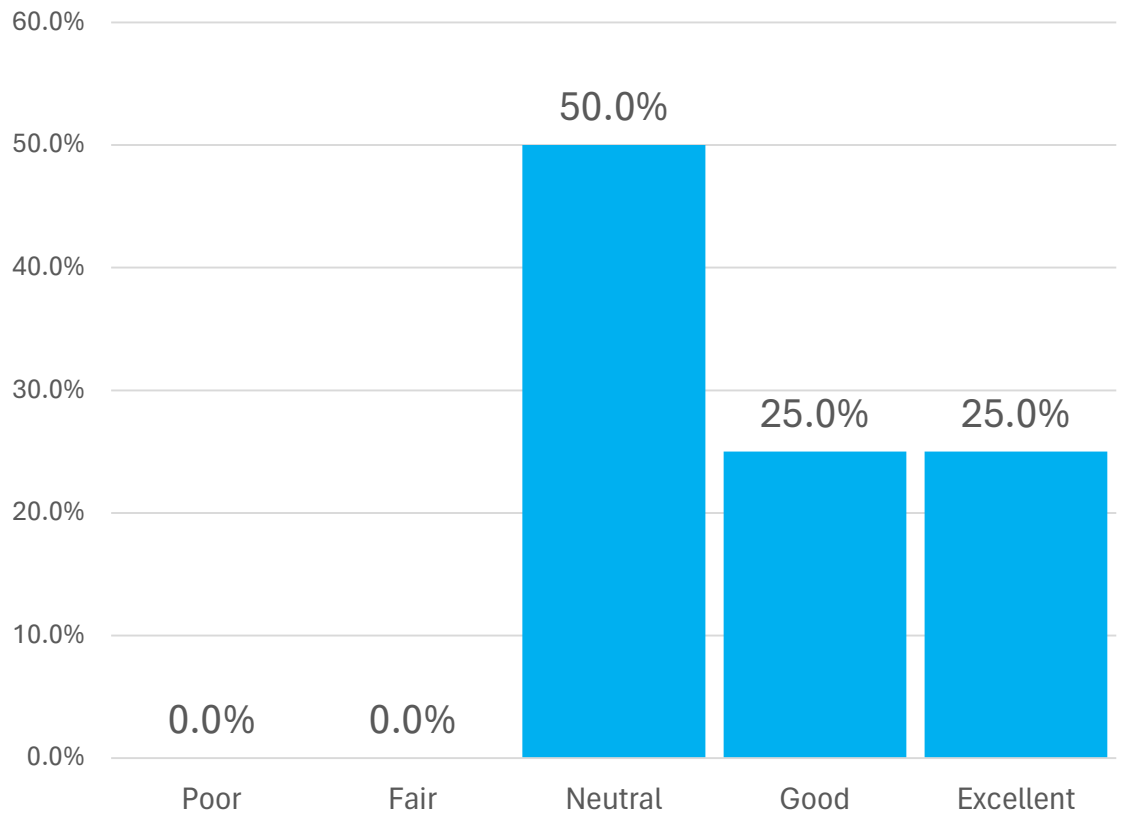
### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- If very few people are using it, then that's not many people telling others about it.



## 16. As a specific do you know how to access Dial-A-Bus?

### 16.3 What do you think of the service if you have used it?



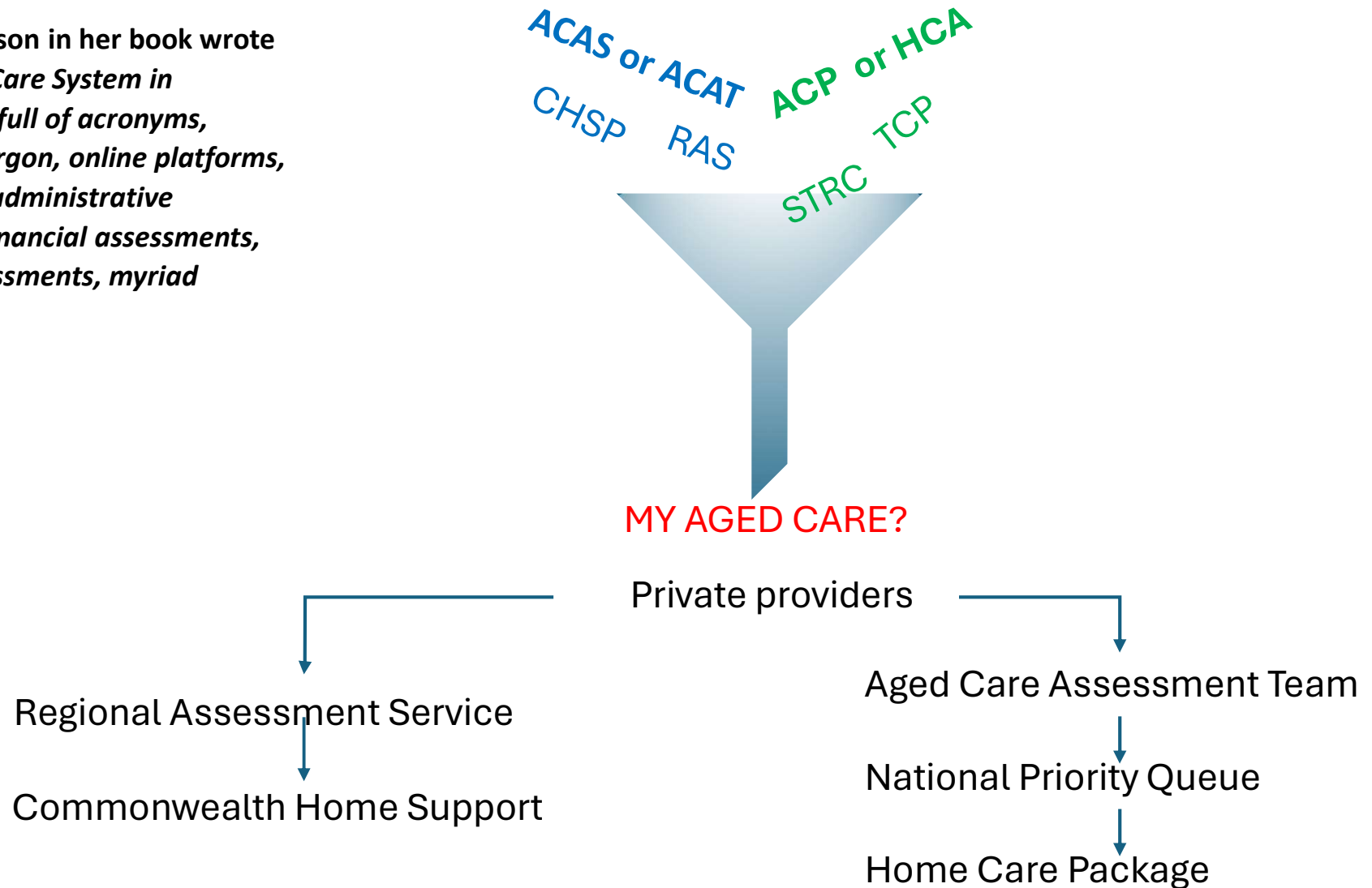
### Observations and Additional Thoughts

- For the small number of people who have used it there is general satisfaction.



Nothing in this survey is news! Ageing Happily at Home? ....  
Aspiration or Reality? Possible or Impossible?

Coral Wilkinson in her book wrote  
" *The Aged Care System in Australia is full of acronyms, confusing jargon, online platforms, convoluted administrative processes, financial assessments, clinical assessments, myriad options* "





## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 1 ACAT Assessment

**9 September 2019** – My husband, a cancer sufferer, had an ACAT assessment in the home. I was caring for him but he could no longer manage the stairs to the bedroom or living room so already had a hospital bed downstairs. He could not toilet, shower or dress himself.

**5 January 2020**— As no help was available, he went into care at Golf Links Rd. Frankston.

**15 January 2020** – He died.

**6 October 2020** – a letter, addressed to him, arrived from My Aged Care informing him that he might expect to negotiate for an Australian Government Care Package.

The My Aged Care letter, 9 months after his death and 13 months after his assessment, stated that he would possibly be assigned a Home Care Package in about 3 months but that it may be for a lower level of support than indicated at the time of the initial assessment.

The letter arrived 9 months after his death and 13 months after his initial assessment.

His care package would “possibly” be available 12 to 16 months AFTER his death!



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 2 Respite

Mother-in-law is 91 years old and lives in a retirement village in her own apartment. She's very independent and until recently has continued to drive locally as needed. She has had 3 falls at home b/w mid Dec 2022 and April 2023, each resulting in hospitalisation.

The latest hospitalisation was associated with a further, more serious, fall whilst an in patient [3 broken ribs, pneumothorax, infection, extended hospitalisation, contracting covid from her attending physician, etc].

Attempts to secure aged care support for her to enable her to return home have been limited to fortnightly cleaning and access to volunteer help to do shopping for her.

She's not at a stage requiring admission to an aged care facility but, even if this was wanted, efforts to secure an aged care assessment have been greeted with inaction and forecasts of 6 months plus before an appointment for an assessment could even be considered.

Access to respite is unavailable until she has an aged care assessment.... Essentially, nothing is available unless she's readmitted to hospital and is deemed to be sufficiently serious to warrant an emergency aged care assessment with the intent of her being admitted [permanently] to an aged care facility.



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 3 Aged Care Assessment

**October 2021** ... GP suggested that I apply for Aged Care Assessment for my husband who is living with Parkinson's, as it takes some time. He predicts that we will need some assistance in the future and will need a Client ID.

Several attempts to complete on-line questionnaire but my husband's condition does not correlate with the specific "yes/no" format, so I am blocked.

**November 2021** ... Several attempts to phone 1800200422 – "Unprecedented demand – please phone back at another time". ..... (*repeated many times over*)



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 3 Aged Care Assessment

**December 2021** .... GP is not permitted to intervene since these services have been privatised but our GP did provide me with another phone number. ....Success!

I had a long conversation with Greg Holding from Rosebud. At this time my husband was fitted with a catheter for over 3 months and some assistance would have been a relief and possibly avoided two visits to Emergency and two to the Red Hill Medical Centre Nurse . We managed the catheter alone.

**December 18 2021** ... Receive an Aged Care Client ID in the mail.

**January 10 2022** ... Email confirming "My Aged Care Assessment" has been completed and a tele-assessment will be made in 2 to 4 days.

**January 30 2022** ... No action so I phoned Greg's personal number which he had provided in December. No Answer. ....(repeated many times over)

**February 2022** .... phoned the 1800 number several times – "phone back at another time".

**March 2023** ... Still no assessment.



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 4 Privatisation

Age 93 .... Aged Pensioner

Had Council Home Help until June 2022 for 1½ hours a fortnight.

Transferred to Bolton Clarke in August 2022 for 1 hour every 4 weeks.

No garden help allowed so pays a commercial gardener who is available only on Fridays and only in fine weather.

Has been waiting for 12 months for an assessment from My Aged Care.

Finally, a phone assessment, not a visit, resulted in disqualification for a Package which could only offer services which she did not need...vis ... showering & dressing. No cleaning or gardening.

Relies on daughters to help with shopping, garbage bins and cleaning.

*"I feel cheated by government encouragement to older people to age at home with support as an alternative to Residential Care but then they do not deliver".*





## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 5 Seniors Health Card

Having been warned that applying for a Seniors Health Card was very complicated, I was advised to use "Retirement Essentials" to check eligibility. We were found to be eligible.

[23/11/22](#) ... paid \$196 to Retirement Essentials to check all the forms which I had filled out. They provided a list of documentation required by Centrelink before both of us presented ourselves at Centrelink Rosebud. R.E. stated "As you & your husband do not have a tax return/notice of assessment, please complete & submit attached form "Non-Advice Lodgment" to the ATO. You DO NOT need SA 330.

[12/12/22](#) ... Accountant provided the required information.

[13/12/22 - 20/12/22](#) ...Repeated attempts to make an appointment at Centrelink all unsuccessful "unprecedented demand for services. Phone back at another time". On-line communication is not possible as we do not have Centrelink Numbers (CRN).

Regular attempts through January - same result.



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 5 Seniors Health Card

31/01/23 ... Our son has a CRN so, using that, we attempted on-line application but were denied access because we did not have our own CRN's.

We then spent 3 hours on hold with Centrelink Help Line .... Finally, "Rueben" answered. Unfortunately, he had great difficulty understanding our accents. (We are both teachers and accustomed to public speaking)

We were required to spell our names, places, dates, maiden name, over and over again . To convince him that Rosebud WAS a place with a Centrelink Office was very difficult. Next problem was to explain that I have no CRN but need to obtain one. This is beyond comprehension .."You have forgotten your number?" "No, I do not have one" "You have forgotten ....." (repeated again and again)

I ask to speak to his Superior.... All too busy ... We wait .... 15 minutes later, he returns with instructions on method of creating a CRN ....more spelling of names, place of birth, address.

Finally, success! – I now have a CRN which means I can go to Centrelink!



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 5 Seniors Health Card

Can we now create a CRN for my husband? My husband is required to speak to verify his ID but Rueben can't understand him so I must spell out all the details.

Driver's Licence number is unreadable, so the Marriage Certificate is produced but, in 1964 when we were married, there was no code number included. Perhaps a University certificate might do? What about the OAM Award?

Success! After 5 hours, we now both have CRN,s and Rueben makes an appointment at Rosebud Centrelink.

03/02/23 ... We both present, on time, at Rosebud but they have no record of our appointment. So, we wait ... another hour.

"Penny" inspects all the forms and ID documentation. Not satisfactory – we DO need SA300 from the ATO, despite RE's advice. (Why did I pay them \$196?) We need to return to our accountant.

Penny did display some empathy and certified our ID's, meaning that my husband does not need to be present next time.



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 5 Seniors Health Card

15/02/23 ... Impossible to make an appointment; I just turn up and wait 30 minutes. Present the completed SA300 and told it all looks OK. Everything is scanned and submitted.

28/02/23 ...Communication by post – application denied as there are no records of overseas income or tax. (We both last worked in UK in 1970 and do not receive any pension)

06/03/23 ... I take this letter to Centrelink, wait 40 minutes, to question this new requirement. I am told I need a full Bank Statement of all accounts for the last 2 years.

Phone NAB for an appointment. My NAB consultant spends some time scanning all details and I return to Centrelink, wait 30 minutes, and have records checked. They would like Nathaniel to be present. I protest that his ID is verified. This is checked again, and our application is re-submitted.

17/03/23 ... I receive text message from Centrelink indicating a successful application but instructing me to check on Express Plus app.

My Gov. password is denied and also my email address.

Give up ... wait and see.



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 6 Carer Observations

At the outbreak of Covid19 my elderly spouse showed distressing signs of a difficult to diagnose and rare terminal disorder MSA. This was on top of managed illnesses of Diabetes Type 1 and Rheumatoid Arthritis. At that time, we received help from the Mornpen Shire in the form of cleaning and personal assistance of 2 hours per fortnight. No other assistance was available.

Patient Care needs, while under Covid restrictions, increased to 24 hours a day. An application was made in January 2021 for extra assistance through MY AGED CARE. The process of application involved taking my husband (who could no longer drive, walk unaided or spend long periods of time alone,) multiple times 35 mins away by car to the nearest Centrelink and to the Diabetes Educator, MRI's and to COVID vaccinations. My husband, while seeking diagnosis during Covid, was taken to different 4 Specialists all one hour drive away by me, the carer.

Following a tentative diagnosis of MSA an appointment for a telephone interview was made in [July 2021](#) with MYAGEDCARE . My husband was not interviewed.

The meeting concluded with a promise of Level 1 assistance 4 months hence ([November 2021](#)).



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 6 Carer Observations

In [August 2021](#) my spouse was admitted by ambulance with medication induced hemorrhaging to an under-staffed Public Hospital. Basic patient care such as use of hearing aids and assistance to bathroom were neglected and sedatives were administered to keep my husband from leaving the bed.

This resulted in prolonged hospital stay with delirium. Only with insistent and informed advocacy by me and a neurologist, was attention paid to this inordinate waste of the human resources used to care for delirium, which was caused by neglect and sedation.

The resultant response was a meeting with District Hospital support systems on discharge and involving home visits from Diabetes Educator, physiotherapy, occupational therapy over an 8 week period. These visits concluded in [November 2021](#).

At that time Mornpen withdrew all household assistance. I called on a semi-govt Agency who provided 6 hours per week, for a limited period, giving me an opportunity for personal care, exercise, medical attention and household shopping. At that time Nursing Homes were visited and a place was booked for 6-9 months hence, when it was anticipated further home care may not be available.

In [December 2021](#), and only with determined intervention from my husband's GP, was another interview granted for MYGOVCARE . This time the interview was on ZOOM with my son as witness. A level 3 package was offered, followed 2 weeks later by a Level 4. A list with a choice between 140 Govt approved providers, was emailed. Many agencies were inappropriate or were 2 hours distant meaning that 50 percent of finance meant to be dedicated to Home visits, (which were integral to the Care Package), would be consumed by provider travel expenses. Places in preferred local agencies who were recommended were all wait-listed .

2 of 4 ... continued



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 6 Carer Observations

Some 2 months after receiving the package in [February 2022](#), a local Agency I had contacted commenced providing 12 hours a week assistance in Home Care. The care provided was invaluable allowing supervision of a big exercise program which kept diabetes controlled and mobility enhanced. However, the needs for more care were increasing and the agency was reluctant to provide more hours given the paucity of Helpers during Covid.

There was more than sufficient money available to increase the hours. When I (the primary carer) contracted Covid 19, my relatives were obliged to come for 4 days in the absence of the Agency.

In [July 2022](#) the hours were increased to give me one night (3 hours) a week out (the first in 3 years) At that point my husband's GP insisted that I was in no position to give round the clock care without further help. The GP advised that, should my husband need to go to hospital, he was to remain in hospital until a nursing home bed became available.

My husband was admitted to Hospital in [August 2022](#) with a diabetes related illness. The chosen Nursing Home (pre booked) refused to take the patient on discharge because the situation was considered High Care and they only offered Low Care. (This despite the nursing home accepting financial assistance from the Federal Govt, and advertising High Care available, and taking a booking.) This rebuff necessitated interview appointments with 12 Nursing homes over a 100 sq Km area . Only 3 were open to new admissions.

One nursing home accepted my husband in mid [September 2022](#). Without a personal assisted exercise program in the nursing home, he lost mobility and rapidly deteriorated physically, [dying in mid October 2022](#).



## LIVED EXPERIENCES

### Story 6 Carer Observations

#### Overall Conclusions:

The Mornpen Shire withdrew assistance to the elderly without replacement services available. Privatisation of services to the elderly such as under MYGOVCARE leaves the system open to abuse. Assistance offered to keep elderly in their own home such as the government Care packages and Allied Health Services appear to be predicated on a base of caring for patients with dementia.

Apart from auditing expenditure there appears to be no oversight of subsidised services and service allocation. Generous Government packages are commonly eaten up in administrative and travel costs. Private provider administration, which works client packages on an annual basis, regulates and routinely limits provision of client services on a monthly basis in order to guarantee income from year to year. This attitude is not responsive to the client's immediate needs. Hence the situation arises, and it is widely noted, that clients are hospitalised and die after insufficient services are provided at home thus leaving large residual packages which return to Government coffers

Making decisions about care by and for the elderly is a minefield. Much information (usually dementia related) is tendered after the need for assistance is officially recognised. Being able to access those services offered often depends on the carer's ability to sort through competitive tendering of services, of geographical location, accessibility and availability of public transport, the diagnosed disability and recognition that these services are run for profit. Overnight respite care facilities are limited in scope. Insulin supervision and/or administration is not available. Complex illnesses without dementia and which require provision of physical assistance in the home are misunderstood by health services .





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