

Ageing well in a foreign land

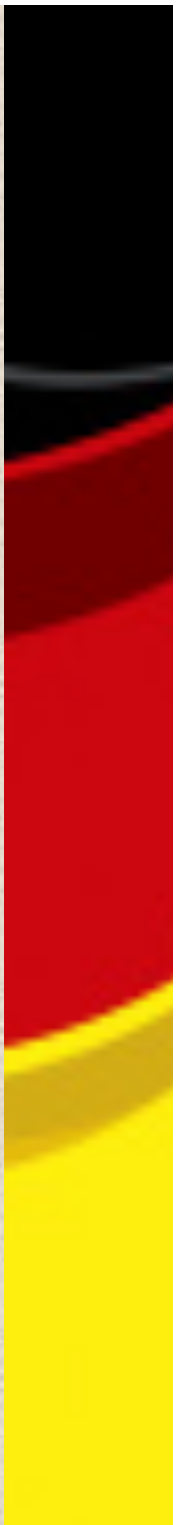
A study by Meg Polacsek

Ageing well in a foreign land

You can access
**Meg's video
introduction** on
the Memories in
my Luggage
website by
clicking on the
photo

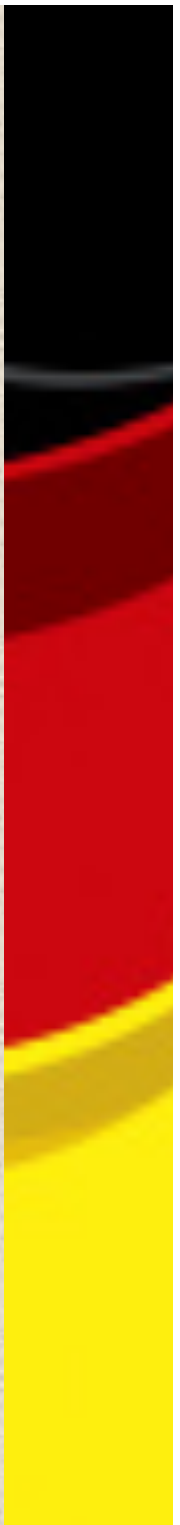


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Background

- Germans have a long history of migration to Australia
- Today, they form one of the largest ethnic groups in the country
- By 2026, Germany is projected to be the fifth most common country of origin for older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Despite these numbers, there is little research into ageing German Australians



Overview of the study

- Explored the needs and preferences of ageing German Australians
- Qualitative study
- Interviewed 15 participants who:
 - Were born in Germany
 - Migrated to Australian between 1945 and 1965
 - Were aged between 65 and 90 years of age at the time of interview

Aims of the study

To understand participants':

- Circumstances of migration
- Sense of identity and culture
- Current and future support needs and preferences

Findings

- Adapted very well to the Australian culture and way of life
- Generally high proficiency in the English language
- Source and engage services without the barrier of language often reported in other studies of ageing Australian migrants
- Little evidence of their need to rely on family to identify, negotiate and manage services

Ageing migrants

- Association between better physical health in old age and English language proficiency
- Make informed decisions about living arrangements and care needs
- Access information and resources that enable them to continue to source and secure services, as needed

Broader context

- Older migrants need to be understood before they can be engaged
- Detailed studies of specific birthplaces or ethnic groups add to an understanding of the needs of different migrant groups
- A life course approach to acquiring the language of the host country may benefit migrants to later negotiate and use aged care services

Key points

- Highlights the diversity within and between migrant groups
- Raises questions about how information is best communicated to an increasingly diverse ageing population
- Individuals' needs may be better served by a greater emphasis on their *personhood*, rather than assumptions about their cultural *differences* or special needs.

In closing

- This study contributes to the body of knowledge on ageing migrants
- Adds to our understanding of older Australian migrants for whom language is not necessarily a major obstacle to obtaining aged care information or services
- Service providers and policy makers should take into account cultural, migration, social network and socioeconomic factors, and not just focus on language.