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## Background

- Climate change and extreme weather events such as cyclones, severe storms, floods, heat waves, and bushfires pose serious threats to population health.
- The elderly are particularly vulnerable due to their age-related health conditions, reduced mobility, and social isolation.
- As the global population is ageing rapidly, it is important to address the vulnerabilities and specific health needs of older people.
- Literature suggests that community-directed adaptation can meet the needs of older populations and disseminate the strategies identified in their communities.
- Despite existing studies and resources in building climate-resilient hospitals, literature specifically focusing on seniors in aged care settings remains scarce.

The collage includes several images: a person holding a globe that is on fire, a woman in a dark dress looking up with a distressed expression, a large cyclone or hurricane, a bushfire with flames and smoke, a road completely flooded with water, and a bright orange sky representing a heat wave.

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Devastating NSW floods in 2022

The aftermath of aged care homes

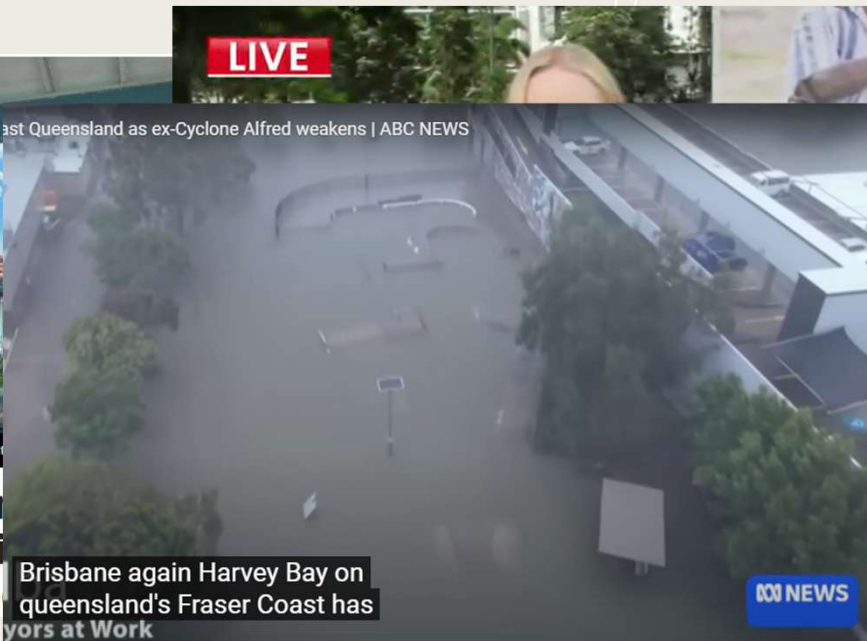
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Aged care home hit by bushfires nationwide seamless fire



Brisbane again Harvey Bay on queensland's Fraser Coast has yors at Work

Cyclone Alfred in SE QLD in 2025

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## Aim & Objectives

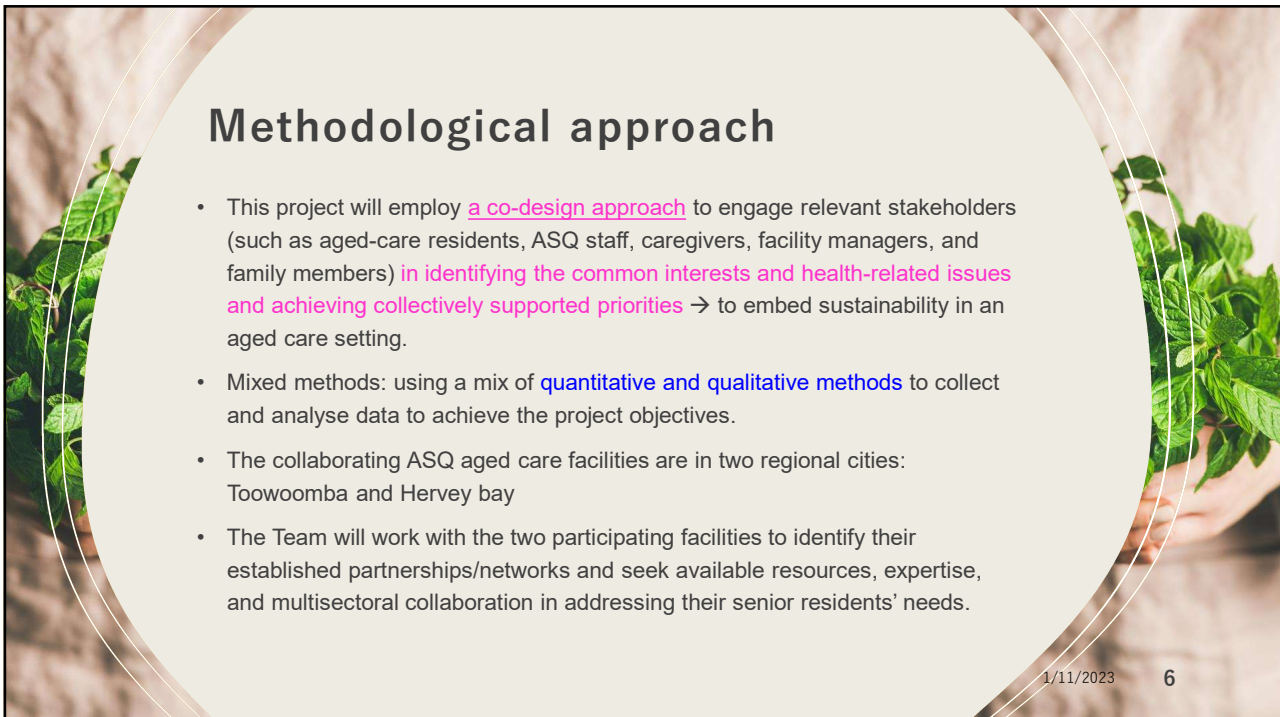
**Aim:** *to address the vulnerability to climate change-related health impacts among senior residents of aged-care facilities and explore adaptation needs to increase their climate resilience.*

**Objectives:**

- To engage relevant stakeholders (ASQ aged care staff, clients and their families) in assessing climate change-related health risks and major challenges facing senior residents;
- To assess existing resources and adaptive measures/capacity in response to extreme weather events/emergencies in aged care settings;
- To address issues and needs in strengthening the climate resilience of ASQ aged care facilities;
- To explore global and local studies on measures/strategies suitable for mitigating climate-related impacts on older populations;
- To empower stakeholders to prioritise the needs of aged care clients and staff, and co-design actionable strategies to enhance their climate resilience.

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## Methodological approach

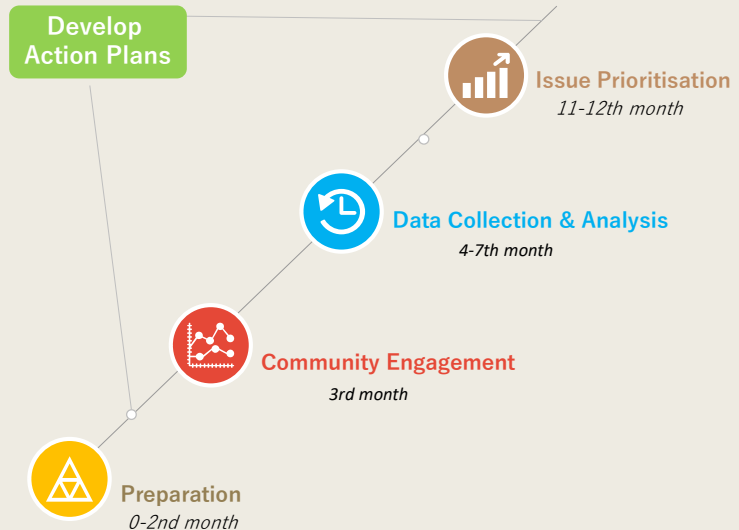
- This project will employ [a co-design approach](#) to engage relevant stakeholders (such as aged-care residents, ASQ staff, caregivers, facility managers, and family members) **in identifying the common interests and health-related issues and achieving collectively supported priorities** → to embed sustainability in an aged care setting.
- Mixed methods: using a mix of **quantitative and qualitative methods** to collect and analyse data to achieve the project objectives.
- The collaborating ASQ aged care facilities are in two regional cities: Toowoomba and Hervey bay
- The Team will work with the two participating facilities to identify their established partnerships/networks and seek available resources, expertise, and multisectoral collaboration in addressing their senior residents' needs.

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## Project Timeline & Key deliverables

- Analyse community climate vulnerability and health concerns.
- Conduct stakeholder workshops for project co-design.
- Develop an action plan for solutions targeting prioritised issues.



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## Potential Benefits

### Benefits to residents & participating aged care facilities

- Increasing climate resilience and healthier ageing
- Sustainable practices
- Promoting social connectivity and a sense of belonging
- Better community engagement

### Benefits to Anglicare

- Cost savings: Sustainable practices and healthier residents can reduce utility costs and healthcare expenses
- Reducing carbon footprint and improving climate-related emergency responses
- Increasing corporate reputation
- Long-term viability in facing population ageing and environmental challenges

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## NHMRC HEAL Innovation Project (2024)

### Paving the way towards building resilience: co-designing an integrative climate-resilient and health-promoting aged care community

A/Prof Patricia Lee, Dr Connie Gan, Dr Dung Phung, Dr Sebastian Isbanner, Dr Ishani Majmudar, Peter Hennessy, Prof Scott Baum



#### Climate Change Related Health Vulnerability Assessment Tools for Elderly Population

Pratik Sohaliya



#### How a Community-Based Aged Care Organisation is Collaborating with Food Rescue Organisations to Redistribute Food for Clients Vulnerable to Food Insecurity: A Case Study

Rachael Madders

**Supervisors: Assoc. Professor Patricia Lee & Dr Connie Gan**

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#### Health impacts

- Heat-related: dehydrated, heat stroke, heat fatigue, exhaustion, affecting sleep & diet, confining in the house, reducing exercise, affecting mobility, sweating more → skin excoriation → wounds
- Floods/storms: health & safety, mental health issues (stress, anxiety, panicking, fear), isolation, access to food and medications, risk of falls, mould growing in house
- Cold waves: inability to warm, risk of getting cold or infections
- People with cognitive impairment may not be aware of their risks/harms (e.g. hydrating during extremely hot days → risk of UTI)
- Burn offs: smoke, pollutants (respiratory)

#### Perceived climate change/experienced events

- Heat: hotter & longer
- Floods: more frequent
- Storms: seeing a lot more
- Seasons have changed (autumn and winter not cold)
- More pollutants in the air
- Aware of bushfires, not a concern in Community's catchment



#### Identified Themes

#### Challenges during extreme weather events

- Heat: it is risky to provide services in homes in very hot/humid conditions
- Storms/floods: road closures, safety concerns for staff providing home care/services, interruption of regular medications or treatments for some seniors, getting enough food & essentials, tall trees posing risks in storms

#### Social and economic vulnerabilities

- Some seniors are single/alone/isolated, don't have a car
- Can't afford aircon or fans or heaters; or don't turn them on → cost of the bills
- Can't afford housing improvements (better insulation, solar panels, etc) they are renting the houses
- Not showering daily due to the cost of hot water bills
- Keeping doors/windows: concerning increasing crime (breaking homes)
- Storm warnings leading to panic buying → later they don't have enough money for food & necessities

#### Communify's support during/post events

- Heat: reminding clients to keep hydrating, ensuring cooling devices on, proper clothing (those cognitively impaired), attending Communify classes or going to shopping centres to stay cool. Similar responses applied to cold days.
- Floods/storms: wellbeing checks, sending clients home early if they are at Communify venues for activities, in touch with clients' families, helping them clean the house, fridge, etc (after the storm), helping clients to access government payments. Communify's role as a disaster management hub

#### Individual coping strategies

- Heat: Lying on the cement floor in the laundry; going into the basement, having enough cold water in the fridge
- Storms/floods: using towels to prevent window leaks, getting enough supplies/food, getting mentally prepared

#### Organisational/governmental support & resources needed

- No government support mentioned by many senior participants
- Flood recovery funding (federal provides \$1000)
- Lack of preparedness: Brisbane City Council disseminated a disaster preparedness manual (however, it's hard to plan, depending on road conditions. No list of evacuation centres provided) → improve awareness for preparedness
- Protecting and providing support to those most vulnerable (grants/ funding schemes)

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