It feels like home!
It feels like home: understanding the needs of older people provides an overview of the Woollahra Emotion Visualisation Experience (WEVE) project, a partnership between Woollahra Municipal Council, the Big Anxiety, Ageing Futures Institute, and is published by UNSW Sydney

Author: Dr Gail Kenning, Interdisciplinary Fellow, Ageing Futures Institute & fEEL, University of New South Wales

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Kenning, G.
University of New South Wales
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Email: gail.kenning@unsw.edu.au

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Executive Summary

Recommendations

- The Woollahra residents who engaged in the project are a valuable resource. They have a wide range of skills, resilience and experience. These residents are often thought of as the recipients or attendees of activities arranged for them by council. With small changes to how events and activities are arranged would allow Woollahra residents to be proactive in arranging and co-ordinating activities for peers and intergenerational activities.

- Participants in this project were highly motivated and engaged. They wanted more activities that were intergenerational and not only activities for ‘old people’. Therefore, more engagement across generations would be beneficial. Furthermore, with the wealth of experience in relation to work, families, and health the project participants could be used as a rich resource for younger people.

- The participants were politically and environmentally motivated and wanted to be involved in projects that related to the ‘real world’ with time, resources and energy they could be used as advocates for council policy and projects relating to the environmental and sustainability.

- Participants were highly stimulated by two aspects of the WEVE project, the intellectual stimuli relating to psychology and the opportunity to engage in co-design activities that drew on their experiences. More co-design projects focussing on ‘real-world’ issues would stimulate and further motivate this community.

- Many of the activities and projects offered by council are single issue or focus. This group showed that there is an opportunity to combine activities so that participants are not meeting with the same group, for example tech connect ‘students’ could be invited on history walks to learn wayfinding and GPS tagging of interesting sights, classes relating to cooking or food might be carried out onsite at vegetable allotments, and participants my want to suggest activities outside of what is currently being offered by council.

- Participants identified some practical support needs that they as an older community needed the included wanting to know more about the process of ageing, (body and mind) from clinical, social, and cultural perspectives, they wanted a first point of call in relation to technology needs (for example to find out if their needs were simple or they should hire a speciality IT person), similarly they wanted consultants to advise what changes they could make to their existing homes for when they reached advanced old age. All of needs could be supported through ‘drop in’ or on-call ‘clinics’

- It became apparent in conversations that some people wanted to talk about how they were feeling, particularly when they recognised that they may not have a long time to live. They wanted to be able to talk about this but felt ‘censored’ at times. The also reflects the need for engagement activities that allow people to share their concerns and to experience a range of emotions.
Woollahra emotion visualization experience

Project partners:
- Woollahra Municipal Council partners on the project included Lynn Garlick, Director Community Services, Jo Jansyn, Cultural Development Coordinator and Hayley Christofi, Romi Fosco, Lauren Shiels, Olga Avramenko. Project members worked closely with Woollahra Library at Double Bay, Paddington Library and Watsons Bay Library.
- The Ageing Futures Institute (AFI), UNSW is a global leader in ageing research and research translation, making a visible and positive impact on the social, health, wellbeing, design, and economic dimensions of ageing through interdisciplinary research. Interdisciplinary fellow Dr Gail Kenning was the project lead.
- ARC Laureate funded FEE (felt Experience and Empathy Lab) Scientia Professor Jill Bennett from the at UNSW Art and design partnered on the project with WMC and AFI.
- Artists Warren Coleman, Gail Kenning produced the WEVE synchronised multi-screen visualisation and Laura Jade, and Researchers from Gemh Lab (Games for Emotional and Mental Health), Radboud University, the Netherlands, took part in a series of follow up events

Findings
- The Woollahra residents in this project were highly educated with a wealth of experience.
- They were primarily women between the ages of 60-93.
- They had professional careers, families owned their own homes and were primarily financially stable.
- They were highly motivated, engaged, curious and articulate.
- They understand their emotions and had emotional strength and resilience.
- Many have lived through difficult times and talked about divorce, poverty, homelessness, relationship issues, illness
- They were highly stimulated by thought provoking activities that related to 'real-life' and gave them an opportunity to have their say
- The libraries, churches and cultural institutions were at the heart of many of the activities that people engaged in, however they also wanted opportunities for dancing and engaging in activities that were not just with 'old people'
- Many expressed gratitude for what they had, but 'beneath the surface' there was anxieties and great joys, and they wanted to be able to talk about and share the whole gamut of human emotions
- Most of the potential male participants were more interested in current affairs, technology and science and less interested in discussion about experience and feelings.

Evaluation
- Eight pre-workshop drop-ins
- Six Workshops
- Contact details from 58 people
- 30 attendees at workshops
- Six interviews
- Approx. 150 attendees at events
- Total Number of people reached 200+
- Qualitative data was collected in interviews and as part of the Big Anxiety festival
- A digital artwork for ongoing exhibition was produced
- This report can be made available for publication
- Two academic journal articles will be produced
- Dr Gail Kenning has been invited to present this project at a conference in Amsterdam in June
Introduction
Australian society, like many developed countries, is now made up of a greater proportion of older people than at any time in the past. This trend is expected to continue [1, 23]. This creates challenges and opportunities for individuals, communities, and the authorities and organisations providing services to these communities. Many of the social systems, infrastructure, environments, and social norms are predicated on populations with a significantly lower mean age.

It is not only the increased number of older people that will impact society, but also their changing needs. Those entering old age now, and future generations, have very different lives from the pre- and World War II generations before them. Their wants and needs differ significantly. So, how do we find out what older people need, to have a good quality of life as they age? Focus groups, surveys, and questionnaires are commonly used to find out people’s wants and needs. But these approaches have their limitations. This project used a series of innovative creative workshops with older people to explore their wants, needs, joys, and anxieties. The Woollahra Emotion Visualisation Experience (WEVE) It feels like home! focused on people’s emotional responses to how and where they live. The project reached ‘beyond the surface’ to find out older people’s concerns, to understand their views on ageing and to imagine and design community solutions to support ageing well in Woollahra. The workshop culminated in a visualisation artwork of the experiences of older people taking part in the project, and a series of arts events as part of The Ageing program in The Big Anxiety (TBA) a festival of arts science and people.

Woollahra Municipal Council (WMC) partnered with Researchers from the Ageing Futures Institute (AFI) and fEEL (the ARC Laureate Felt Experience & Empathy Lab) at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and older members of the community. In addition, artists Laura Jade, Gail Kenning and Warren Coleman produced and presented artworks and events.

Background
The It feels like home! project sought to engage with older people in the municipality of Woollahra, to understand the lived experience of ageing in this community. Before discussing the project, it is useful to provide some context to this approach.
The ageing population
As a result of medical, scientific, economic and social successes over the past century, more people in the 21st Century, than at any time in the past, will live into advanced old age. Many will live beyond 100 years [23]. By 2050 the proportion of the global population over the age of 60 is expected to be 22% [25].

In many westernised societies ageism exists, and there are few voices that challenge it in daily life [5]. It is fuelled, in part by, what has been the dominant view of ageing over the last century. Shaped by biomedical perspectives, old age is often positioned in terms of loss, lack and deficit. From this perspective ageing and old age is positioned as something to be overcome or ‘cured’. However, such viewpoints do not take into account how we grow, develop and mature with age, gain knowledge and experience, and understand ourselves and others better. [5].

The ‘new’ generation of older people
Current definitions of ‘old’ vary greatly. For example, in some cultures 45 or 55 may be considered old [27]. But, in developed countries being considered old often begins at 65 or 70. With increased life expectancy ‘older age’ may span thirty to forty years. This means the range of people who may be considered ‘old’ ranges from the ‘young old’ in their 60 and 70s, to the ‘old old’ pre-war and wartime generations now in their 90s and centenarians.

Overall, the ‘young old’ have lived very different lives. They have had greater educational and employment possibilities, opportunities for travel, and been part of great economic, social, technological and political change. Older people now tend to be healthier than at any time in the past, they are active and engaged. Many people are beginning to recognise there are advantages that come with ageing and are enjoying their later years. Furthermore, they are used to having their say and being heard and expect this to continue as they enter older age.

However, while we may think of people in terms of generations, individuals within each generation have very different life experiences and we cannot treat generations, or ‘old’ people per se as a single homogenous group.

Wants and needs
The ageing population, changing views on ageing, and the desire of many older people to remain active in the community, presents opportunities and challenges. Many of the societal systems, structures and environments, we negotiate in our everyday lives, were designed at a time of fewer older people with different life expectancy and different views on quality of life. [9, 23, 24, 26].

Governments, organisations and communities are beginning to plan systems, services and infrastructure to meet the needs of older people and the needs of the very different generations to come. But, with increasingly diverse populations of older people how do we understand there wants and needs? How can we make decisions and plan for their
Understanding the needs of older people

future and support older people to age well?

Finding out
Focus groups, surveys and interviews are the approaches often taken by organisations, when trying to understand what people want or need. While these are important and validated methods that can provide important insights, they have limitations. For example, communities may see the same respondents each time, people who want to ensure their voices are heard. In some cases, responses may be ‘practiced’, that is, they have been said many times before. People may have their own ‘pet’ topics they want to focus on. Furthermore, Research shows that people are often not clear about their own wants and needs or point of view on matters. They may need time to think about their response, or to hear the views of others first [10]. If they are not sure of their own response people might say what they think the questioners want to hear. Questions also may pose limitations, not providing opportunities for respondents to air their true concerns. So, if we do not use focus groups, surveys and interviews, how can we understand the wants and needs of older people?

Arts-based engagement and research
Innovative creative approaches are increasingly being used in research to elicit deeply held and authentic responses from participants. These include workshops, discussion groups and creative engagement. They can ‘bring to the surface’ responses that people were not aware of and reveal views that they did not know they held.

This report provides findings from a series of engagements to explore the responses of older people in the Woollahra Municipal Council area. It culminated in the production of a series of events and an artwork.

Project overview
Woollahra Municipal Council (WMC) is divided into five wards, Bellevue Hill Ward, Cooper Ward, Double Bay Ward, Paddington Ward, and Vaucluse Ward. The population of the area is around 52,000 with almost 30% of people over 55, and more than 8% of the population are over 75. It is on the land of the Gadigal and Birrarabirragal people.

WMC frequently engage with the community to understand how council can respond to and support their needs. To extend their understanding of the needs and wants of older people in the community, WMC partnered with AFI, fEEI, UNSW and The Big Anxiety 2019.
The Big Anxiety (TBA) is a month-long Sydney festival promoting mental health and wellbeing through arts projects that combine science and creativity. In 2019 TBA launched its first Ageing Program produced by Dr Gail Kenning. It focused on the wellbeing of older members of the community.

The Woollahra Emotion Visualisation Experience (WEVE), It feels like home! culminated in a synchronized multi-screen digital visualisation artwork which was exhibited as part of the Ageing Program at The Big Anxiety. The project drew on the work of national and international artists and researchers to find an approach that would reach a wide range of people and elicit a wide range of responses [2, 19]. The WEVE project began with a brainstorming session to understand how to engage with the community and how to engage them in the project. Outlines were drawn up and the project was allowed to iteratively evolve in response to the needs of the various project partners and the responses of community participants. The project began by focusing on responses to the environment and then gradually began to focus more closely on the theme of It feels Like Home!

The project focused on the emotional responses of the community to their home and where they live. The aim was to understand the deeply held views of older members of the community. The project generated qualitative data which was analysed and visualised to reveal how the community feels. The data revealed a wide range of issues relating to mobility, loneliness, relationships, illness, bereavement, finances and the joy of living in a beautiful environment, having friends, sharing experiences and being able to travel.

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Understanding the needs of older people

Methodology
The project used a range of methodologies to explore the wants and needs of older people in the WMC region. The aim was to employ deep qualitative approaches which would be enjoyable for participants and respondents to engage with while providing deeply held, thoughts and feelings about ageing [13, 14]. This approach allows for an inclusive, interactive and flexible approach to the collection of reliable data that would form the basis of the public artwork. The project needed to be adapted to take into account the wants and needs of the participants and the wants and needs of the project partners. Therefore, it used a range of ethnographic, participatory approaches [16]. They included participatory action research approaches working with the community to explore what they wanted to say in relation to ageing. The project also used grounded practical research approaches in testing responses with a range of ‘experts’ in the field [10]. These experts included participants with ‘lived experience’ of being older adults, and academics in the fields of ageing and creativity. In addition, the project used visual research methods [17].

Data was collected in workshops, and through surveys and interviews over a period of six months. The workshop activities were designed to connect with participants and to prompt their thinking and talking about what ageing in their community meant to them. Each of the workshops were audio and video recorded for post-event analysis and to ensure that all comments and non-verbal responses could be captured.

The rationale for this broad approach was to move ‘beyond the surface’ and to gain access to deeply held and felt responses and to allow people to respond and comment however they chose. The aim was to avoid controlling the flow of conversations, and to enable participants to hear what others had to say. This approach sought to broaden discussion beyond the often-rehearsed engagement that can take place between council and the community where, for example, respondents focus on known issues, or ‘pet’ topics [7, 8, 10-12, 15-18, 20, 22].

Participants
The project worked with a purposive sample, recruiting participants using a snowballing approach. Recruitment for participants began in March 2019 with a series of drop-ins at clubs, meetings and events organised by WMC and Paddington Library, Woollahra Library at Double Bay, and Watsons Bay Library and aged care facilities and residential homes. A ‘WordPress’ site was set up online for potential participants to get more information and advertisements placed in WMC What’s on community pages and on the council website.

The criteria for engaging in the project through workshops, surveys and interviews were open and inclusive. People were invited to take part if they identified as a senior, or older member of the community, or as mature adults. It was decided not to make participation subject to a specific age range because of issues around inclusivity and ongoing debate and discussion as to what qualifies as old age [3, 4, 25, 27].
criteria also included anyone who lived, worked, or spent a considerable amount of their time in and around the Woollahra Municipal Council region. Potential participants were briefed about the project and the research that was being carried out alongside the production of an artwork. They were advised that it was not necessary to attend all workshops and that they would be welcome to ‘drop-in’ to just one or two.

**Workshops**

Basic operating procedures were established, including asking participants to ensure they treated other people and their comments, with dignity and respect, and that no topic was ‘off limits’. A series of six workshops took place. There were on average 8-10 people in each workshop, with some participants attending several. They ran for two-hours and included enjoyable, informative, activities. To find out what are the community’s wants, needs, concerns, joys and anxieties. the workshops focused on three topics, emotions, home and community all in the context of ageing and growing older.

A series of workbooks were produced to explore ageing, emotions, home and community. Take-home journals and
workbooks were available for those who wanted them. There were also online surveys to complete and interviews carried out with a small number of key people.

**Emotions**
The first workshops introduced the concept of complex emotions, how we feel, why we feel, when we feel, and how we can use this information for our wellbeing. Participants were given an introduction to emotions using psychologist, Robert Plutchik’s *Wheel of Emotion* [21]. Participants were also introduced to a series of data visualisations of emotions from projects in Australia and overseas. They included works by Christian Nold, Paul Ekman, and Gail Kenning.

Participants were asked to think about their own emotions and respond to a series of questions. They were asked to explore positive and negative emotions and think about places and spaces they associated with these emotions or were aware of feeling them. Once participants had answered the questions in the workbooks they were invited to talk about their responses in more detail with the group. They were also asked to reflect on whether their emotions, and how they felt, had changed as they aged.

**Home**
Some workshops focused on the concept of home. Participants were introduced to the many varied concepts of home. They included Eastern and Western philosophies on home, including for example, house, city, state, country, and ancestors. Participants were also asked to explore the concept of home as place you retreat to or escape from; as a place of stillness and a place to stop; and home sickness. They were also introduced to home as represented philosophically and materially by Gaston Bachelard in *Poetics of Space* [6].

Participants were asked to draw a map of the first home they remember on trace paper. They were asked to plot the rooms, the furniture, the spaces and places they were familiar with. They were then asked to overlay this map with a second piece of trace paper and to draw the furniture and belongings that were important to them. Finally, they were asked to take a third piece of trace paper and map their emotions on to the various places and space of the home. This same activity was repeated in relation to their current home and where they live. As they engaged in drawing the aspects of their first home and current home they were asked to talk about their experiences and share their stories with others. They were also asked to compare the two drawings of their home and to see if there are any similarities, in the types of emotional space or environments they had created.

**Community**
The third topic area explored in the workshops related to community. The workshops explored definitions of community; understandings of what community is; how community is formed; what creates a sense of belonging in a community; how communities change and
adapt and; types of community and motivators for community. In addition, participants were asked to explore aspect of their personal identity using identity wheel mapping and their social identities and how they presented themselves to their communities. Participants were also asked to explore whether they thought that their personal identity and social identity changed as they age.

Interviews
A call for interviews was made through the email list of names provided during the drop-ins and workshops. Five people were invited to be interviewed. Three were regular attendees at the workshops and two had originally expressed interest and then decided they did not want to take part in the workshops. The interviews were one-hour unstructured interviews at a place of the interviewees’ choice.

Online
In addition, to the workshops the It feels like home! project had an online presence with the emotionmap.org website which provided an introduction and overview of the project. A number of Survey Monkey online surveys were set up. focussing on emotions. Each survey was ten questions long and focused on how people were feeling. They were asked to explore their own feelings in relation Plutchik’s Wheel of emotion, which was provided to support their exploration of complex emotions.

Findings
An overview is provided of the findings based on analysis of the data collected. However, in depth analysis and findings are currently being prepared for an academic publication.

Participants – who are they?
Throughout the life of the project, the project partners engaged with in excess of 150 people in a range of ways; as workshop participants, as attendees at events, as interviewees, and respondents to online surveys. Sixty people engaged as workshop participants, some attending frequently.
The drop-ins to pre-existing meetings, clubs and activities at the libraries and residential care facilities were intended to recruit participants to the workshops, it also generated discussion. The opportunity to discuss the research was welcomed with interest, by those who was planning to attend, and those who for various reasons would not be attending. The groups were happy to share their own experience of research and engaging in and facilitating workshops and gave advice as to how the research might be carried out. They also raised topics they thought needed to be addressed in relation to ageing. Some were happy to provide information and contact details but did not attend the workshops, primarily because they were not on at the right time, they were too busy.

A group of eight people became a core engagement group attending several of the workshops, while others attended just one or two. Between eight and ten participants usually took part in the workshops at Woollahra Library at Double Bay, with between two and five people taking part at Paddington and Watsons Bay. While we were able to engage with twelve men at the various drop-ins, three men in total attended workshops, with only one man as a regular attendee.

**Busy**
There was a lot of interest for the project. However, it also became apparent that many of the people attending meetings, clubs and activities that we ‘dropped-in to had a full social calendar, seemed to be very busy, were travelling overseas, were concerned they would not be able to attend the entire course of workshops, had family commitments, or medical concerns. In picking a day and date for the workshops it became apparent that it was not possible to suit everyone and some people who would have liked to attend would not be able to.

**Want to know exactly what?**
While many of those who showed an interest were not sure if they could attend one or more workshops because of their other commitments, they were keen to know in advance when workshops would be happening and what would be involved in each. Many asked for detailed information and were perturbed by the iterative developmental approach being taken. Many people’s experience of research had been clinical or medical in nature and were not aware of arts-based research projects and their expectations were shaped by this.

**Don’t trust this type of research**
There was some scepticism about this type of research. Many of the people attending were highly educated. Many had been researchers themselves and were familiar with quantitative research and qualitative social science approaches. The men’s chat group were particularly critical towards this approach and did not want to engage, particularly in discussion of emotions.

**What shall we call you?**
Each of the workshops began with a discussion about what people wanted to be called, i.e. senior, older person, mature person, elder, elderly, in old age. This also generated a good deal of discussion. But, no consensus was reached as to how to refer to older people. Some participants said they really didn’t care what people called them, while others were happy with ‘old’, ‘after all, I am old’. A frequent comment was that participants did not feel old and there was a good deal of commentary about what age they felt (see themes). Some participants wanted to be called ‘mature adult’ or ‘mature age person’. However, a frequent response to this was ‘makes us sound like cheese or wine!’ Several people commented they would like to be called ‘Aunty’ as occurred in, for example indigenous, Chinese and
Vietnamese cultures. But they recognised that this was not likely to develop into a standard form of address generally in Australia. Several participants suggested they simply wanted to be called by their name and their age not referred to at all.

**Workshops**
Participants arrived at the workshops eager to be involved and find out more. It became apparent that as groups they liked to have some structure and to be advised what they were going to do. However, as the workshop were adapted to suit the needs of who was in the room, they were often changed ‘on the fly’ and participants became comfortable with this. The workbook and drawing activities were used to get people thinking about their own views and responses, and to encourage conversation and talking between participants. They were very keen to talk and ‘robust’ conversation on topics often arose.

**Reflections on emotions**
Participants were introduced to Plutchik’s Wheel of Emotions and given an overview of the basic, intense and mild emotions and the complexity of what we feel, how we feel it, and the impact it has on us. They were asked to complete some of the workbook and then discuss their responses. Very quickly the conversation turned to how people feel and the emotions they were feeling.

*Very stressful. Stressful time.*

This participants husband had been recently diagnosed with dementia, the impact was already starting to show in his behaviour, and they were now planning a trip overseas ‘while they still could’

The stress came about because she had to,

*keep an eye on him*

and his response was to say,

*You’re not my mother.*

She found it ‘very challenging’ especially as he had angry outbursts sometimes. She went on to talk about her emotional journey

*I’m feeling very sorry for him. It is very frustrating for him because he can’t remember things.*

Another participant worked in aged care and a discussion ensued about dementia, symptoms and diagnosis. There was a good deal of sharing, sympathy and advice across the group as they shared their experiences. The support in the group ranged from practical and functional support such as the response to the question,

*Can I get a little bracelet where I can track him when we’re overseas?*

*Yes, I think you can get it from Alzheimer’s Australia. They’ll provide you one and then you can have it.*

Her response was to acknowledge serendipity suggesting

*Oh, I was meant to come here this morning.*

As the group continued to support and give ‘a few tips’ around her. The support also included emotional support with one person who, had recently retired as a care director at a residential care facility with a good deal of experience of working with people living with dementia, taking her off to have coffee and talk over her feelings and concerns.

The group were very interested to hear about the theories of emotions and then to think about their own experiences

*it was very interesting for me to hear the way you were speaking today about the combination of the different emotions and what triggers them and the different*
intensity of the emotions. It’s very, very interesting for me.

They began to talk about their emotions in the moment

I guess I feel interest and anticipation and wondering what’s going to happen next and what you’re going to ask us to do. And I think that’s very exciting and being and meeting new people who are outgoing and interested in giving to the community is a, is a wonderful feeling and ah, I wish we had more.

The theme of meeting people resonated with the group and it came up often. This was sometimes contrasted with discussion of feeling lonely and sad. This was discussed frequently, but the conversations about loneliness were kept very short.

Lonely… I remember her saying, and I remember saying, “Well, was it lovely?” and this other thing and she said, “Yes, but you know, when I come home and I close the door, like that’s it.”

The conversations often changed direction very quickly as an immediate response to any suggestion of sadness was countered:

I’m by myself and I can come home and close the door and feel quite good.

I mean, I’m not sad and lonely because I’m like yesterday, I had a lovely chat with my daughter who was overseas and her daughter, she’s almost 6 now, and they were going to swimming and you know, so we had a lovely chat and she, the daughter, chatted for about at least 20 minutes and blah, blah, blah and then they go off to swimming and I think, but I used to go to all the swimming classes with my children and you know, I want to be doing that with them.

So, it’s only knowing that really that you’re missing out on all those.

You’ve got to be honest too.

Acknowledge that.

Acknowledge it.

Yes.

It’s only just coming out how important it is to acknowledge it. All the time of trying to press it down.

Yeah, exactly.

Takes too much emotional…

You’ve got to accept it and move on.

Yes.

Do something about it.

The conversation lifted and participants began to ‘count their blessings’ and focus on what they had and what they liked.

It’s very, very um, it’s wonderful, yeah, and I, I love Woollahra and …And I love now we’ve got this beautiful library.

Isn’t it good?

We’re so blessed to be living here. We really are.

It became evident that many people focused on the positive as a strategy. Reaching retirement or feeling down was taken ‘as a challenge.

To find new things.

Exactly.

Don’t sit at home thinking… I’m sad, oh, I’m retired, everything’s gone.

Exactly.

Think of what I’m going to find.

…And gratitude, I think is so important, I think.

The problems that we have, but we are all still so blessed. Focus on the positive.

Yeah.

And not on the negative.

Exactly.

And what you focus on grows.

That is it.
And I think the brain is like a garden, you can plant weeds or you can plant flowers.

It takes a little time.

It takes a lot of time.

Australia still a good country, I’m still healthy, so come on, it’s really within yourself.

Yeah.

Makes you happy.

Make yourself happy.

You have to get out there.

You have to get out there. Yes.

Sometimes it can take a little time.

A good deal of conversation was focused on the many different activities that people did. Keeping active and busy often appeared to be a strategy to keep people busy, and to ensure there was no time to dwell on problems.

I love history, absolutely love history....’

‘Woollahra Library and Paddington Library, I see what is there, so I search things and um, keep on doing what I’m doing, which is my painting, my drawing, also yoga, I’m very active in yoga. Um, yeah, so just, just go with the flow, whatever comes and um, I personally feel whatever ah, I, I’m still very blessed with whatever I have and really, it’s really up to me.

This need for activities particularly came up in conversation in relation to what happens in retirement.

Yeah. Yeah. So, I’ve, I, I, I didn’t prepare for it, I just knew that I’ve got to resign...anyway, here I am, and I just accept it.

There was an understanding of how exercise contributed to wellbeing, particularly because of the interests of one participant in particular who was 93 who had completed a PhD and run a marathon in her seventies.

Yeah, well, I’ve been to the gym this morning and then wandered around filling in time and...I wanted to show um, the government that they should be promoting psychological wellbeing, so that’s why I did my research, because I’ve been sort of teaching exercise and fitness for 30-odd years and you see it happening to the people and how they feel better...And so, and that’s why I wanted to do, and so that’s why I was studying psychology.

The need to be with other people came up frequently, and importantly this was also like-minded, educated and people they could share experiences with.

But it’s also just being with other people, Absolutely. Being with other people is so important for older people. And sharing feelings, sharing um, background, your background.

You get together in groups, it’s sort of going out of community living because we’re, you know, we’re becoming more isolated.

Stories abounded of older people being active and healthy.

...And played piano professionally, who died at 94, she was still playing the piano, she was still going to people’s retirement homes and playing the piano for them...And talking about the old people. She was 94.

They talked about the difficulty of getting out sometimes

Coming here, to be quite honest, I felt a little anxious, I wasn’t feeling that well...But I thought, I still want to go.

I, I thought no you can do it and um, and then I’m always happy when, when I do.

The hardest step is the first one out the door.

You’ll feel good once you do it.

Reflections on home
And then the going back home and how important that was for them.

For me, it’s opening the door. It’s not the building at all. Because I moved to an apartment so it’s not the apartment.
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So, it’s actually opening the door.

Opening the door.

Every part of the home [is great].

Being on your own is nice too.

I mean, I like being part of groups and with lots of people and outgoing, but I also enjoy being by myself.

So um, yeah, I already said, my serenity, sense of belonging, sense of security for home.

But how I feel about home only serenity comes on your emotional wheel but, but I, you know, that’s how I feel. Maybe the elderly people feel differently. Maybe we could add to it

Conversation turned to family. Many were on their own, and for others there was only a husband at home.

Well, husband was part of the home and the family.

but now this stage husband and you, it’s probably just the two of

Reflections on community

After being given an overview of the different understandings and concepts of community, participants engaged in discussion. Discussion about the community was wide reaching. Participants were from a range of ethnic backgrounds. They identified as Italian, American, Irish, Chinese, Australian and Greek. Discussion took place about how communities formed according to ethnicity and how people ‘stayed in their groups’. Participants were both supportive of this, suggesting that as people migrated to Australia they tended to live with people with similar philosophies on life.

I feel that in all big cities, they are all about locations. You have the Greek community, the Chinese community. They went on to discuss how there is increasing assimilation and so in a couple of generations it will be unlikely that there will be ethnic specific locations. ‘I think it is becoming a melting pot, because there is the older generation who are sticking to the same, but our children are now mixing with all different nationalities and they are now more transparent. They’re not as keen to stay in one area like our generation was. So, I think the next generation, not our children’s generation or the next one down from that, it’ll be a totally different word because they’ll all be mixing with everybody else and there won’t be discrimination.

Importantly the group observed that they belonged to many groups and communities—some obvious and others not so

Yeah. And then what we often find is that we’re moving across these different types of communities because of doing that, we might meet one group of people because of identity and it’s a sense of who we are. But then we might meet with other people in terms of location and we might meet other people because of our interests.

Participants viewed Sydney and people in Sydney as having a strong sense of geographical location which they suggested had ‘tribal areas’.

I mean I used to feel that if I went outside the Eastern suburbs I was out of my tribe. This tribal aspect they put down to public transport and how some places were harder to get to and therefore it was not necessarily easy to get ‘connections between villages’

they added

Sydney is a collection of villages, It's more location based than other places.

They also acknowledged, however, that they also wanted difference. That they did not

just look for people that are similar to me but look for people that had other interests.

I mean isn’t that the way everybody grows even as you get older, you know?

This prompted one of the many conversations about intergenerational engagement

…and keeping in touch with your grandchildren as they’re teenagers.
Discussion turned to what made a community and while it began with discussion of

*beautiful big houses and trees*

one participant suggested that what they had discussed so far were

*clubs or, or little identity groups and not community*

to which someone responded

*Don't you think that what makes a community?*

The first speaker talked about an experience overseas, of time in Italy and the sense of community he experienced there.

‘I’ll tell you a story. In between the last meeting and this, I spent two weeks in Southern Italy. It’s a poor, poor town, but it has the most wonderful community sense of community. It was one of my main beefs about being an old off, it’s going at night, night time in Sydney, a dead zone today as far as a senior person. The millennials get out there and drink themselves to death. There’s nothing like that in this small town, you’ve got tourists there and a lot of community. But everyone just gathers, whether it’s seven o’clock in the morning, 12 o’clock lunch… I felt really comfortable at all hours. There were children out, parents, young kids and grandparents all at the same time in the community sipping, an aperitif having dinner’. He continued. That’s the community. You feel relaxed, you feel like you belong, whether it’s winter or summer people want to be out any age, at all hours. I feel inhibited here’

Discussion turned to places in Sydney where they felt that the town centre ‘worked’ and where there was a sense of intergenerational engagement as a community

*That’s like the village square, and then there’s Leichhardt*

However, they observed that it is not the same as happens overseas with a sense of community as

*We don’t have that here. Work stops at five o’clock so that’s it. People go home and you don’t go out. Overseas, they come out at four o’clock and shops are open to 10 o’clock at night and of course people are going to come out. So, you’re going shopping. So, it’s like having two days in one.*

**Drawings**

While there was some reluctance from participants to engage in creative activities other embraced it. Most drawings began with the caveat ‘I can’t draw’. However, often people were engaged in drawings for the full two hours of the workshop. These drawings formed the basis for the images used in the WEVE synchronised multi-screen-visualisation
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Writing
The workshops prompted some participants to write about their feelings and emotions. They were shared with the researchers. Participants suggested that women were always ‘paddling furiously like a duck to keep everything afloat and to appear ‘serene’’. They talked about the ‘anxiety of everything crumbling and falling apart’.

They reflected on how harsh or inconsiderate words from family members, could impact their emotions and feelings. In these narratives there was a strong sense of the need to ‘not drop your bundle’. They revealed how they cried at times when they were alone. They talked about how they threw themselves into work, or how work ‘saved them’, and how they missed work when they retired.

The writing spoke of wanting to talk to people on the street for company and of offering help to others for attention. Many of the stories tell of how ‘sad stuff comes flying back at you’, and issues with mental health at a time when a common response to the lived experience of mental health was, they were ‘putting it all on’.

Online Surveys
Response rate was low, but the responses that were received suggested there is more to be explored through this quick survey mode, which provides further access to people for more in depth engagement. The respondents were between 61 and 90 years of age. All responses were anonymous and therefore it was not clear if respondents were also attending workshops and interviews. The only information requested of respondents were their postcodes to assess if they were WMC residents.

The first question was: Based on Plutchik’s wheel, (or add one of your own) what emotion are you feeling right now?

The most frequent response was joy, but responses varied between fear, surprise, sadness, and anger.

The survey continued with a series of questions about what emotions were felt and if respondents knew why these emotions were triggered.

Why do you think you feel like that?
Responses included:

- God is in my life;
- Pleasant day planned;
- I am organised;
- So far, today has been better than expected;
- Incompetency;
- I am happy with my life;
- Getting over ‘lurgie’;
- I am curious about what new adventure each day holds;
- . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
In your day-to-day life what three emotions do you feel most often?

Anticipation (27%)
Joy (20%)
Trust (14%)
Other (13%)
Sadness (7%)
Surprise (6%)
Anger (5%)

What three emotions do you feel most intensely or strongly?

Other (25%)
Joy (20%)
Anticipation (17%)
Sadness (14%)
Anger (9%)
Fear (8%)

What triggers these intense emotions?

Everyday life as grandmother, mother, friend;
Memories, technology, family;
Circumstances in the day;
Many things;
My connection with family and their state of being at any time;
My daily faith;
The ignorance of the general public of what is happening to our planet;
Life events.

What triggers these emotions?

Sadness for my daughter who is a single parent;
Family, friend;
Technology;
Events of the last day week or month;
Reading the news;
My daily faith;
Having a secure home, I enjoy being in;
Being powerless over the health of friends and family;
A new day, Sunshine;
People on their mobile phones;
Anticipation and surprise from work, anxiety from a difficult relationship;

In your day to day life, what makes you anxious? Responses included:

Anything that adversely affects my children lives;
Not being able to cope when the computer goes wrong;
Slight anxiousness at times because of events;
Health problems;
Fear of falling over in the street;
Getting somewhere on time;
Loneliness;
Having no plans;
A family member I cannot help;
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What makes you happy? Responses included:

- Children, grandchildren, friends, social activities;
- When family and friends visit;
- Many little things, hearing from children, grandchildren, friends, a good book, music, beauty of nature;
- Playing bridge;
- Being alive;
- Sunshine and connecting with family;
- Knowing my loved ones are healthy and secure, having a home that suits me and is a pleasure to be in;
- Volunteering, meeting friends, reading a good book;
- Being outside, sitting on the balcony, fixing things, cycling, swimming;
- Exercising;
- Anticipation;
- Optimism;
- Interest;
- Amazement;
- Ecstasy;
- Joy;
- Love;
- Trust;
- Admiration;
- Anger;

Looking at the emotions in Plutchik’s diagram, are there emotions that you felt more intensely when you were younger than you do now? What are they?

- Optimism had not been dulled by reality;
- Learned to trust my feelings;
- Anger never disappears you learn to live with it;
- Youth;
- Youthful;
- Single;
- Had career;
- Was the age of seeing new things;
- Age;
- Early married years;
- Large social life;
- Good health;
- More mature;
- Was learning to be an adult;
- More awareness of world problems;
- It was an age when you were vigilant about your surroundings

What age do you think you felt these emotions most intensely? Respondents suggested, primarily between 25-35, with some intensity of feeling under 21 and between 35-50.

Why do you think you experienced them so intensely at that age? Responses included:

- Resignation;
- Aloneness;
- Humility;
If you were to redesign Plutchik’s ‘Wheel of Emotions’ to reflect the feelings of mature adults what emotions would you take out?

Loathing;
Contempt;
Ecstasy;
Disgust;
Rage;
Terror;
Aggression

If you were to redesign Plutchik’s ‘Wheel of Emotions’ to reflect the feelings of mature adults what emotions would you add?

Disappointment;
Humility;
Faithfulness;
Understanding;
Pain;
Justice;
Curiosity.

Themes
The discussion from workshops, interviews, writing, drawings and in spontaneous discussion between researchers and participants was audio and video recorded, and journal notes, debriefings and drawings were made. The recorded data was analysed using Nvivo9, excel, and word applications for discourse, themes, and text.

Forty primary themes were identified in the data (as shown). Within the 40 themes were a series of sub-themes (480 in total), drilled down into the concerns of the community. For example, activities was a strong theme. People were concerned about ‘keeping busy’, ‘doing things’ the importance of being active their own mental and physical health and wellbeing. Participants focused on exercise, cultural activities such as writing, singing, book club and, socialising in meetings, social gatherings and events. This was important to all participants and was seen as a way of ensuring that people were not in a situation of having ‘nothing to do’ it was reinforced in concerns about the need to ‘keep busy’, and was seen as a means of ensuring that people did not let depression ‘get to them’. 
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A sample of the sub themes (40 in total) for activities are shown above. Similar sub-themes were created for all primary themes.

Family and relationships were a key theme. This was an area of great joy to people and great anxiety.

People were very aware of their health and were concerned that they were both unaware of the ageing process, not knowing what is ‘normal’ and what is ill health and wanted more general information.

Mobility was a particular concern for many. Some recognised that they were getting unsteady on their feet and might fall. Others were concerned about the embarrassment of falling in the street. The difficulty of getting around the city was also a concern as people used public transport less and less. This gave rise to concern about autonomy and individual agency.

Other concerns related to people recognising they would need to downsize, move house or prepare their homes for old age. This also led to concerns about their autonomy and ability to make decisions about their own lives.

Discussion

Overall the project made some important observations and findings which will be written up in academic journals with an overview provided here. While the project had been informed by similar projects in Australia and overseas, it became apparent that the project needed to be flexible and able to adapt to the many partners involved and the different communities of Woollahra.

The project changed focus early on in its development. The initial idea began as a geolocation mapping and a citizen science project to explore emotions. However, this could impact an existing WMC project and it was decided to shift the focus of the project. It was apparent that the men had been attracted by the thought of engaging in citizen science and were less interested in ‘talking about emotions’.

Participants

The participants were primarily highly educated women, who were physically and mentally active. Most were financially independent and appeared highly motivated. Many had professional careers and had jobs with responsibilities, they included radio and TV producers, writers, airline staff, artists, scientists and researchers.

Many had families which included children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. However, many were now living alone, with a spouse, or in a retirement home. In general participants had a group of people they associated with as friends or through activities.

In excess of fifty people registered their interest in taking part and attending the workshops. Twelve were men. The actual attendance at workshops by men, however, was lower, with just three men attending on several occasions. One man wanted to attend more but had work
commitments and one man had been attracted by the references he had seen to citizen science and really wanted to pursue something more ‘scientific’.

Naming older people
As no consensus was found for what people want to be called, in this report we have used the term ‘older’ people as discussed by Ashton Applewhite who uses the terms ‘olders’ [5]. Her argument for this term is that it is relative and can be seen as part of the spectrum form younger to older. We also where possible in workshops and mailouts ensure that we address people by their given names.

Flexibility, knowledge transfer
It became apparent early in the project that many potential participants had busy lives and they wanted to know exactly when and where the workshops would be happening, so that they could plan. They often also wanted to know the exact content of each workshop. Often the limited information provided was perceived as a lack of planning rather than part of a participatory approach, which resisted locking down content and timing of events until participants were beginning to engage. Some began to enjoy the flexibility this offered (in that they did not have to attend all activities), for others this remained a source of frustration.

Knowledge and intelligence.
The participants were well-educated and travelled. They were wary of being patronised, eager to give their viewpoints and mostly hesitant when any discussion of creativity or artmaking arose. Although, many were consumers of art and regular attendees at art galleries, the opera house, and local and national theatre, they were more willing to engage though discussion rather than through tactile materials, and the workshop content was adjusted accordingly.

Participants were keen to engage with theories, particularly in relation to emotions, philosophies on home, what constitutes a community, and aspects of personal and social identity. They were keen to engage in the activities provided. For the most part the activities were a means of focussing thought and preparing responses through doing (writing, drawing, answering questions) The discussion that ensued was stimulating for participants and yielded a richness of data

Distrust of research
This response is not surprising when working with a general public on research projects. Many people, including some in academia, are not familiar with deep ethnographic and qualitative research approaches, and not clear about the findings they yield. The type of project and research were off-putting for some, however, many of those who began attending and engaging recognised the value in the process, and had discussions with other people outside of the project, which validated the approach and helped them to enjoy the experience.

Their lives
For the most part, participants were happy with their lives and frequently talked about being happy, lucky and blessed. However, it was apparent that many people had lived through difficult personal times. Several people were homeless when they were young, had nomadic lifestyles because of parent’s work, or lack of work, or did not live with their parents and felt a sense of neglect. Participants had experienced violence in their early lives and in their adult lives. Several people reported on how alcohol impacted their families and relationships.

Family
Family and relationships served as a joy to most people and they were quick to comment, but even so most conversations
quickly turned to the difficulties of engaging with families and revealed levels of dysfunction including personality clashes, arguments over money and property, divorce and remarriages, and sibling rivalries. The relationships between mothers and daughters, in particular, revealed intense joys and frequent anxieties, but most people, it seemed had learned to ‘put up with it’.

Having a spouse at home could also be difficult. While the conversation often began with noting how good it was to have company, partners’ behaviours could be frustrating. One participant talked about how she and her husband had only recently split up and what a relief it was and that it ‘should have happened years ago’. They were waiting until the children had grown up, until they could divide their assets and both be financially stable, and until their parental commitments were reduced.

Another participant who seemingly, at the outset of the conversation had a happy marriage, noted that her husband had never really helped much with the family and now didn’t want to go anywhere. Whereas she now wanted to ‘get out and about’.

Health issues were the greatest strain on relationships with deafness or dementia meaning that one person unwittingly became ‘carer’. This often meant taking on being their partners emotional support and being responsible for keeping them socially connected to other people.

‘Pleasantville’
Many of the stories of current and past difficulties were ‘sandwiched’ between affirmations of ‘shouldn’t complain’, or ‘I’m very lucky’. Current difficulties were discussed far more briefly than difficulties in the past. It was frequently noted they had ‘come out the other side’, or could distance themselves from those difficulties because, ‘That is all in the past now’.

Participants did not seem to feel they had ‘permission’ to air their current difficulties and felt at risk of being labelled a ‘moaner’, miserable or old and ‘grumpy’.

It became apparent that many wanted to share their sadness and anxieties, and in some cases, they wanted to talk about how they had had a good life and ‘were ready to go’. But, they felt that families would not allow them to air these views, suggesting they were being morbid, ‘upsetting the kids by being miserable’ or just simply they should ‘get a hold of themselves’ or ‘cheer up’.

This suggests that in engaging with older people we need to create opportunities for people to engage with the whole gamut of their current emotions and experiences.

Beneath the surface
It was apparent that many of the difficulties and trauma that people discussed in workshops and interviews were still painful and uncomfortable to talk about. While they would suggest ‘that’s all in the past now’ emotions came quickly to the surface. In most cases participants wanted to talk about the difficulties they had in their lives, and why they had made the choices that they did.

Resilience
The people engaged in this project recognised that there was greater understanding of the ‘lived experience’ of mental health issues in society today. They made comments about how ‘in their day’ there was no support, that in the past you might be accused of ‘it being all in your head’ or that you might be labelled ‘crazy’. Some told of their own mental health difficulties and others talked of family members and friends. Few of those
engaged in the project had had professional support or help in times of crises and trauma, ‘it just wasn’t done’. Many conversations demonstrated their resilience and it became apparent how people had dealt with functional and dysfunctional families, abuse, violence, neglect, homelessness, and good and bad relationships.

They all had a sense of self that recognised what they had come through and what their strengths were. They also recognised and acknowledged their loneliness, anxieties, sadness, difficult relationships. They all talked about the need for dignity with ageing and in their treatment, particularly towards end of life.

A valuable resource
We recognised that the people that we met with were potentially a valuable resource that the council could work with and that we as researchers wanted to keep in touch with. They had a wealth of experience of family, professions, activities, local knowledge and history and could be an asset for engaging with other members of the community, particularly when addressing mental health and wellbeing across the community as a whole.

They have a vast array of life experiences, have an awareness about their sense of self, wellbeing and what they have lived through, with limited professional support. They are articulate and able to communicate.

Learning and teaching
Many of this group have skills that could be shared. Existing research shows that the desire to teach remains as people age and even through ill health. This group of participants have pragmatic knowledge in relation to how to read, write, cook, communicate, they also have tacit knowledge about themselves and living, and experiential knowledge of growing older.

Activities - Writing reading and books
Activities and having things to do were of primary importance to this group of people. Importantly, for many participants reading, writing and stories was important to them. The library was a hub where they got access to books and information, it was also a social place where they looked for information on activities to do. Many of the participants were in book clubs, wrote, or were considering writing their life story or a book. This also makes these participants a valuable resource to the community because of their ability to communicate and articulate their concerns.

Knowing more about ageing
Many participants were concerned that they simply didn’t know enough about how bodies age and expressed a wish to know more about the ageing process. Women particularly were very aware of the wealth of information about puberty, pregnancy, menopause. But, so little about the older female body post menopause. Many wanted to learn from others about ageing, but also want to share their experiences.

Future living
Most of the conversations that arose with participants focused on future events. They were very keen to talk about places they would be travelling to, people they were going to meet, and cultural events they were going to. Discussion of the past only occurred when prompted by the activities, which for example, some focused on early experiences and early home life. When the past was discussed it was often thought about in terms of what could be ‘done’ with memories and many participants suggested that they may write a book.

Overall response
The project was received well by the community and participants frequently
commented on how they enjoyed the project, the workshops, being asked about their lives. The harshest critics, at the outset of the project, became its greatest supporters and wanted ‘more of this type of thing’. The feedback suggested that they enjoyed being able to contribute to activities and be listened to. They enjoyed being able to learn new things, the sense of connection with others, and feeling they were contributing.

Events

The overall project engaged with a wide range of people through workshops, discussions, interviews and a series of events. The events aimed to further engage and explore the needs and wants of older people in the community and provide updates about the project. It was also an opportunity to share the findings with participants and the general public.

Most of the project engagement had centred around the local libraries, so it was decided that the events would also take place in the libraries.
Four events took place across 4 days in October and November 2019. They began with an intergenerational project, facilitated by international researchers from Gemh Lab, in the Netherlands, followed by viewings of the WEVE visualisation artwork, and an interaction with Laura Jade’s Brainlight.

**WEVE: Synchronized Multi-screen Visualisation**
The WEVE Synchronized multi-screen visualisation was developed by artist and researcher Dr Gail Kenning and Digital artist Warren Coleman. It was exhibited at Paddington Library, Watsons Bay Library and Woollahra Library. It was shown on two levels of Woollahra Library at Double Bay in the form of a 10-screen display on level one and an 8-screen display on level two.

The work consisted of scrolling texts of the words, sentences and phrases of participants, categorised according to topics, accompanied by a soundtrack of ambient sounds. The beginning of each new topic was introduced by a digitally modified image of the drawings made by participants in the workshops.

Each screen was synchronized to show different words and phrases relating to the same topic. Viewers were invited to browse the screens to, read the words of participants, and listen to local soundscapes.

At Paddington library WEVE was shown across four screens and at Watsons bay library the works was shown on hand-held iPads which could be handed to people as they entered the library space.

The onscreen text was verbatim responses and comments from participants in the study. The categories and topics discussed were preceded by images developed from participants drawings and writings about their emotional connection to home and where they live.

In keeping with how the data had been collected in the library spaces, the work was designed to integrate with the library spaces, rather be an intervention. It took on the form of the text and screen-based information that surrounded it and became part of it.

**Brainlight**

*Brainlight* is an artwork by Laura Jade, artist in residence in Woollahra. It explores how technology can aesthetically interface with the mind. It integrates biology, lighting design and BCI technology into an interactive brain sculpture, laser cut from transparent Perspex and engraved with neural networks. The
installation is controlled with a wireless EMOTIV EPOC+ EEG headset which detects and outputs live neural activity, translating electrical signals from the user's brain, into a vivid and dynamic light display within the brain sculpture. In real-time Brainlight visualises the brain frequencies of theta, as green light, alpha as blue light and beta as red light.

Brainlight gives adults and children a unique sensory entertainment experience that goes deeper than just being a spectacle. Brainlight shows users their thoughts and emotions in a fun, educational way that can be shared.

The work was shown alongside WEVE both works focusing on joys and anxieties and how we can take control of our emotions. It provided opportunities to engage with older people and to create intergeneration interaction. Importantly, the conversations that took place around the Brainlight created a sense of connection and engagement. People began to tell stories of joys and anxieties as they begin to try to control the colours of the Brainlight with their thoughts.

**Gemh Lab**

Professor Isabela Granic and Hanneke Scholten explore the impact of digital games on anxiety at the Games for Emotional Health (Gemh) Lab, the Behavioural Science Institute, Raboud University Netherlands. At Woollahra Library at Double Bay they introduced members of the public to games that promote deep breathing. Working with the Big Anxiety team they engaged with younger adults in the library, who were primarily there to study for their HSC. It was also an opportunity to introduce older adults to immersive computer games. Participants engaged with DEEP an underwater navigation game which was adapted so that the navigation through the games is by means of a chest brace. By regulating and controlling breathing the viewer can explore the landscape in the game. In excess of fifty people engaged with the game by watching the event or directly taking part and playing the game.
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