



Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing

March 2000

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State and Territory
Strategy on Healthy Ageing**

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**Prepared by
the Healthy Ageing Task Force and endorsed by
Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers
responsible for ageing issues**

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This Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing has been endorsed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers responsible for ageing issues. The Strategy was developed by the Healthy Ageing Task Force in response to Australia's ageing population and the need for Governments to plan ahead to meet the challenges of more people living longer. The Task Force comprises senior officials from the Commonwealth, and all State and Territory Governments.

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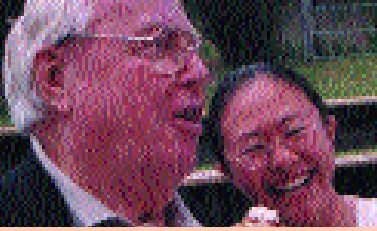
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Introduction

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing - a national response by the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments to Australia's ageing population - was developed by the Healthy Ageing Task Force under the auspices of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers responsible for ageing issues.

The Healthy Ageing Task Force was established by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Health and Community Services Ministers in October 1996 in recognition of the need for a strong focus on ageing, as well as improved planning and co-ordination across jurisdictions, in order to respond to the challenges of an ageing population. The Healthy Ageing Task Force constitutes a member of the Commonwealth agency and each State and Territory agency responsible for ageing issues. The Task Force has undertaken extensive community consultations to ensure the Commonwealth State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing reflects the views of Australian society.

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing is a broad framework identifying areas for action. It provides a planning framework for the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and will form the basis of planning within and between individual jurisdictions over the next five years. It will provide a national coordination point for the considerable work already undertaken in individual jurisdictions.



The Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing aims to foster identification of key opportunities for activities to be undertaken by jurisdictions and to maximise healthy ageing outcomes. It signals the commitment of all governments to work together with the Australian community to develop a planned response to the challenges of an ageing society and people living longer.

The development of the Strategy took place in the United Nations' proclaimed International Year of Older Persons (IYOP) in 1999 and signals a commitment that the IYOP marked improvements for older Australians and that all Australian Governments are working towards achieving the United Nations' theme for the Year - *Towards a society for all ages*.



Vision

The vision of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing is:

A fair society where all older people can lead satisfying and productive lives which maximise their independence and wellbeing.

Principles

Six universal principles of healthy ageing will guide the implementation of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing. They are to:

- support independence;
- encourage a good quality of life for Australians as they age;
- promote fairness and equity;
- recognise interdependence;
- recognise and respond to Australia's growing diversity; and
- encourage personal responsibility while providing support for those most in need.



Scope

Healthy ageing is an Australian outlook on life which recognises:

- that growing older is a natural and positive part of living;
- the interdependence of generations and fosters understanding between generations; and
- the diversity and individuality of older people.

It includes frail or more dependent older people as well as healthy people.

Healthy ageing fosters a positive attitude throughout life to growing older and assists in breaking down stereotypes and changing attitudes to ageing.

It aims to eliminate age as a reason to exclude any person from participating fully in community life and encourages:

- communities to value and listen to older people and to cater for the diverse preferences, motivations, characteristics, experiences and circumstances of older Australians in a variety of ways;
- communities to value the ongoing contribution of older people to the social and economic fabric of our society and to be inclusive of older people; and
- shared responsibility for the achievement of healthy ageing between all sectors, including governments, community groups, service providers, the private sector and individuals of all ages.



It also supports the right of older people to be fully informed of decisions affecting their lives and to contribute to and participate in such decisions.

Healthy ageing aims to promote activities, initiatives and structures which enhance wellbeing and health, choice and independence and quality of life for all ages.



The Need for a Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing

While the projected demographic changes present a long term challenge for Australia, the costs of our ageing society are manageable, provided appropriate policy responses are made now and over the coming years.

Initiatives which aim to improve the health and wellbeing of older people, encourage them to remain productive, continue and extend their contribution to family and community life and plan for later life, will contribute to the cost associated with ageing being minimised and managed over the longer term.

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing follows recognition by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers of the need for a coordinated and holistic policy and planning framework to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges which are presented by our ageing population.

These policy challenges include:

- encouraging positive perceptions of ageing;
- improving the access of older people to education, employment and other opportunities;
- ensuring that the particular disadvantage experienced by indigenous Australians which results in reduced life spans is addressed systematically and effectively;
- addressing community expectations about levels of support to older Australians and examining individual and community responsibilities;



- extending and developing opportunities for various levels of government to cooperate on policy initiatives both within and between Governments;
- promoting opportunities for Australians to prepare for their own ageing;
- encouraging communities to be accessible and responsive to all people (including those with frailties and disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds);
- focusing on improving our understanding of ageing; and
- developing strategies to assist particularly vulnerable older people including homeless older people.

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing signifies a shared commitment to work together to add value to the work of the individual jurisdictions. The Strategy aims to coordinate policy, programs and service delivery across jurisdictions and agencies, enabling resources to be used as effectively as possible.

Through this Strategy, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments will provide opportunities for older people and other stakeholders to contribute to planning for the future.

Additional initiatives should be developed to address issues such as:

- access to adequate housing;
- transport;
- health services;
- income security;



- employment and training opportunities;
- community participation;
- autonomy; and
- participation in policy and decision-making.

Particular action needs to be taken to address the barriers to the healthy ageing of indigenous older people.

Policies and plans must recognise the impact of shortened life expectancy of indigenous people and the early onset of ageing, homelessness and cultural factors in relation to the health of all vulnerable older people.



Our Changing Community

Demographics

By the year 2041, just under a third of our population (30.4 per cent) will be aged 60 and over, compared to 16.0 per cent in 1997 (Series III Projections from the ABS, Population Projections 1997 to 2051). Among all older people, it is the group aged 85 years and over that is increasing at the fastest rate. It is estimated that the number of people over 85 years will increase by an average of 10,140 a year until 2026, and by an average of 30,032 a year from 2026 to 2041 (Source: as above).

From the age of 60, there are more women than men, and this trend becomes more marked after the age of 80. In 1998, there were 77.8 men for every 100 women in the 65 and over age group, and only 43.8 men for every 100 women in the 85 and over age group (Australian Demographic Statistics, June quarter 1998, ABS).

While consistent with the general patterns of population ageing in the developed world, Australia remains relatively young by international comparison, although more rapid ageing is expected over the next decade. The proportion of older people (aged 65 and over) in Australia is currently lower than many European countries, and is the eighth lowest of the 29 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (OECD Health Data 1998, CD-ROM).

It has been projected that the age group of people in Australia aged 65 and over, as a proportion of the total population, will double to approximately 22.3% by 2050. The projections for countries such as Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United



States of America are that this age group will increase to between approximately 20% and 24% of their total populations by 2050. For countries such as China, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam it has been projected that this age group will treble or quadruple to between approximately 15% and 32% of their total populations by 2050. Projections for other countries such as Greece, Italy and Japan indicate that this age group will increase to between approximately 30% and 36% of their total populations by 2050. (United Nations projections from 'World Population Prospects: The 1996 Revision' in 'Australian Social Trends 1999' ABS).

Cultural Diversity

The proportion of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is increasing as post-war immigrants begin to reach older age. Also, the diversity of cultures represented among older people is expanding, for example with more recent immigration from Asian countries in particular.

Older Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders

While the general population is living longer and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by a "third age", the situation for indigenous Australians is very different. The average life expectancy for Aboriginal males is up to 18.2 years shorter than for their non-Aboriginal counterparts, and up to 19.8 years shorter for Aboriginal females than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. It may also be useful to note the significant health issues faced by indigenous people as they age.



Older People with Disabilities

With improvements in service provision, technology and generally better standards of living, more and more people with disabilities are living into old age. This group of older people with disabilities includes people with long-term disabilities and people who acquire disabilities in life as a result of ageing.

Older People in Rural Communities

Rural communities are ageing at a faster rate than urban communities. This is creating considerable pressure on the formal and informal infrastructure in these communities which help support older people to remain active.

Work Patterns

The family, social and work patterns, established over several generations, have changed significantly in the past two decades. People now have greater choice and flexibility about their roles throughout life. However, economic reforms and the need to compete in the global environment have created a labour market where older workers' experience, maturity and commitment appear to be undervalued.

Among OECD countries, Australia has one of the lowest workforce participation rates of males and females aged 55 and over. Participation rates for men aged 55-59 have fallen from 91.2 per cent in 1970 to 71.8 per cent in 1991, although there was a slight increase to 72.7 per cent in 1998. Even though the participation rates for women aged 55-59 have increased from 29.1 per cent in 1970 to 35.6 per cent in 1991 and 43.1 per cent in 1998, their workforce participation is still low by comparison with other similar OECD countries. Moreover, 91 per cent of men and



97 per cent of women have left the workforce by the age of 65 (Sources: The Labour Force Historical Summary, 1966 to 1984, ABS; Labour Force Australia 1978-95, ABS; Labour Force Australia August 1998, ABS).

In addition to trends toward early retirement, the continuity of full-time employment has also decreased over time, with increases in the levels of unemployment and the growth of casual and part-time work.

Education Issues

Older people are under-represented in the formal education sector. In the community education sector, people over 65 make up about 7 per cent of total community education enrolments. The growing support for lifelong learning demonstrates the desire of many older people to be able to participate more fully in community life and to enhance the quality of their own lives.

The need for education and training in new technologies, in adapting to the rapidly changing work environment, and in equipping older people to cope with retirement are some of the factors leading to this support.

Economic Considerations

Clear economic and social benefits can be made from a strategy which:

- promotes the adoption of lifestyles that keep older people healthy for as long as possible;
- reduces hospital use by older people and provides optimum quality of life in later years; and
- encourages older people to remain participating, contributing members of society.



There is no doubt that the ageing of the Australian population will have financial implications for all levels of Government, the community and individuals. However, the perceived economic cost of ageing is a factor which receives much, and possibly disproportionate, attention.

Almost one third of total Social Security portfolio outlay in 1997/98 was paid to recipients of the age pension (Department of Social Security Annual Report, 1997/98). This proportion is likely to increase as the number of older people in receipt of an age pension increases. However, the increase will be offset by the increasing number of superannuants and partially funded retirees.

Most of the costs of ageing are associated with:

- adequate retirement incomes;
- appropriate standards of health; and
- long term care.

The potential benefits of continual advances in medicine, technology and a healthy approach to ageing will contribute to future management of the costs of our ageing society. Patterns of health expenditure on older people are distorted by significantly higher outlays in the last two years of life rather than as a result of sustained high usage throughout older age. While the cost of health care for all Australians has increased as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over time, only a fifth of the increase seen from 1982/83 to 1994/95 was due to ageing (Australia's Health 1998, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).

People continue to make significant contributions as they age through a range of activities including volunteering and care giving - both of which substantially reduce the demand on Government outlays.



A recent Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of volunteering found that one third of voluntary work was contributed by people aged 55 years and over (ABS Voluntary Work Survey, 1995). Similarly, older people (aged 65 and over) make up one fifth of all people who act as the principal carers of people with disabilities (Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia, 1993, ABS). The incidence of older people who act as carers tends to increase with age. It has been estimated that two thirds of all child care is provided by grandparents (Year Book Australia, 1999, ABS).

Older people are also an important market force. They have particular needs and often make significant contributions to the economy through their combined expenditure as consumers. Some people (as they age) will have levels of disposable income not previously available to them and, as a result, have attracted particular attention from business providers as an important new market.

With the ageing of the so called “baby boomer” generation, and particularly as the incidence of retirement provision through superannuation increases, the importance of the older market will increase.

Furthermore, superannuation investment forms an important asset base in the Australian economy. Reforms over the past decade have had a significant impact upon the level of superannuation assets in the Australian economy - increasing from \$40 billion in 1983 to about \$365 billion in 1998.



Key Result Areas and Actions

A number of actions have been identified in key result areas for implementation by individual jurisdictions in ways that are appropriate for their circumstances. Jurisdictions could collaborate where appropriate.

Community Attitudes

Outcome sought: Improved community attitudes to ageing and older people.

Ageing is not usually viewed positively in Australian society. Older age is generally seen as a time of mental and physical decline, resulting in loss of independence and productivity. Therefore, older people are often portrayed as a financial and practical burden on society.

The reality is very different. Many older people participate in work and community life. Most older people are well and lead active lifestyles - only a small percentage are frail.

Research has shown that older people contribute a wealth of skills and experience to the broader community and to younger generations. In fact, older people are more likely to provide care than to receive it. For example, much of the care for grandchildren, financial assistance and other support for families is provided by older people.

The persistence of negative community attitudes has contributed to limiting the opportunities for older people to participate in the workforce and community life.

Conversely, the relative absence of older people from areas such as employment and education, possibly resulting from those barriers, limits the opportunities for such stereotypes to be challenged.



This discrimination needs to be addressed and action taken to remove the barriers to healthy ageing and to encourage and recognise contributions by older people.

Areas for Action

- Undertake community awareness programs to promote a balanced view of ageing. This would include the development of role models and intergenerational targeting.
- Establish a strategy to highlight the contribution of older people, and the role of groups such as the media and advertisers in shaping positive attitudes to ageing.
- Undertake research on the costs and benefits of an ageing population.
- Facilitate opportunities for older people to be involved in their communities through, for example, education, training, the arts, recreation and employment.
- Aim towards balanced messages about ageing reaching all people, including younger people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living in rural and remote communities. It is important that these messages are presented in accessible formats where appropriate.
- Aim to achieve national consistency and effectiveness of age discrimination legislation.



Health and Wellbeing

Outcome Sought: Improved health and wellbeing for all older Australians.

Initiatives which encourage older people to remain active, to continue their contribution to family and community life and plan for later life, will contribute significantly to their health and wellbeing. These will also contribute to the costs associated with ageing being minimised and managed over the longer term.

Programs of health promotion, prevention, maintenance of function and rehabilitation in assisting wellbeing for all age groups will need to receive higher priority.

Reassurance about the accessibility and adequacy of care available in times of need is important to any generation, but is a particular issue for older people - as the likelihood of illness and disability increases with age.

The proper resourcing of acute health care, the prevention of unnecessary hospital admissions and the promotion of appropriate and, where necessary, supported discharge from care are all important.

The premature ageing and death of Aboriginal people represents a particular challenge to the community. Aboriginal wellbeing is very much tied to the social and cultural position of Aboriginal people. Health intervention strategies alone are unlikely to make inroads into improving Aboriginal longevity.

Areas for Action

- Develop health and wellbeing promotional initiatives targeting older people and health professionals. This should include physical, psychological, social and emotional factors.



- Develop a range of health promotion initiatives which incorporate the benefits to healthy ageing of physical activity, sport, recreation and leisure activities.
- Establish links with other initiatives relevant to the health and wellbeing of older people (Active Australia, for example).
- Promote the provision of information to older people about, vision, hearing, dental hygiene, foot care and the management of incontinence.
- Develop initiatives to improve the transition between acute care and long term care where needed.
- Develop initiatives which improve the responsiveness and flexibility of the health system to older people.
- Develop initiatives that will address the life-expectancy and health status of the indigenous population.
- Develop initiatives which focus on older people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and older people with disabilities.
- Improve access to mental health promotion and services for older people.
- Improve access to all health and wellbeing services for older people living in isolated communities.
- Provide rehabilitation for older people.



Work and Community Participation

Outcome Sought: More older people in employment and community activities.

The participation rate of older people in employment has decreased, and while there is broad acknowledgment about the issues related to youth unemployment, unemployment among older people has received less attention.

In many instances, early retirement may mask unemployment among older people. The commonly held view that early retirement is desirable only serves to reinforce the perception that the productive activity of older workers is no longer needed.

Early retirement also has an impact upon the costs associated with an ageing community. This was recently recognised by the Commonwealth Government, which now offers the deferred pension bonus plan for people remaining in paid work beyond the age pension age. Older people will also benefit from the provisions in the Workplace Relations Act, 1996 which specify that an employer must not terminate a person's employment because of age.

Education has traditionally been driven by the requirements of the paid workforce and there has been a growing recognition of the notion of "life-long learning" to enable all people to meet the responsibilities attached to their diverse roles. Despite this recognition, older people are not strongly represented in either the tertiary or community education sectors.

There are many other areas of community life in which older people are already participants — notably recreation, volunteer work and care. Large numbers of



older people contribute to the Australian community through volunteer work. The economic value of volunteer work in Australia was estimated at more than \$18 billion per annum in 1995 (ABS Voluntary Work Survey, 1995). For some older people however, barriers caused by financial, cultural, distance or mobility factors make access particularly difficult, compounding feelings of isolation and marginalisation.

Areas for Action

- Build on research on employment for mature workers. This could involve work options, flexible work programs, attitudes of mature workers and employers, barriers to employment, and international trends/responses.
- Extend research into the volunteer/community contribution of older people.
- Extend awareness among employers and workers of options for flexible work including tapered retirement and the better integration of work and family responsibilities.
- Model approaches to flexible work options, tapered retirement and the better integration of work and family responsibilities within the public sector workforces.
- Promote targeted training and employment programs for older workers.
- Encourage national consistency and effectiveness of age discrimination legislation.
- Promote the concept of transitions throughout life, as well as retirement planning.
- Develop and promote policies and practices which enable life-long learning, including the use of schools as whole-of-life learning centres.



- Encourage the involvement of older people in the tertiary and community education sectors.
- Extend the models of education provision available to improve access for frail older people, older people with disabilities and isolated older people.
- Facilitate and promote the development of products and services through the Seniors Card scheme to encourage older people to stay active and maintain a positive outlook on life through travel and tourism.
- Encourage the increased use of information technology applications among older people through the provision of training opportunities.

Sustainable Resourcing

Outcome Sought: Governments, communities and individuals provide financial and other support for older Australians in a realistic and fair manner.

As the Australian society ages, there will be more older people who will live longer. They are likely to be healthier and better educated and may have access to more financial resources than their parents. They will be more articulate and are likely to expect higher quality services and greater choice.

As a result, population ageing will have resource implications for individuals and their families, communities and governments. Individuals will need to plan for their own retirement which could be as long as 30 years or more. Communities will need to identify barriers that prevent older people from fully participating in community life, including full or part time employment.

Australia's retirement income system comprises the age pension, the compulsory superannuation guarantee system, and other voluntary savings. The World Bank



regards Australia's system as a model for other countries without any established retirement income system, recognising its comprehensive coverage, long term sustainability and cost effectiveness.

While the age pension will continue to support a basic lifestyle and act as a safety net for people who have not had the opportunity to provide fully for their retirement, people will need to save in addition to their superannuation if they are to maximise their quality of life in retirement.

Areas for Action

- Extend research to identify the incentives and disincentives which affect older people's capacity to undertake financial and related planning.
- Encourage individuals to provide for adequate funds in order to maximise their quality of life in retirement.
- Encourage each jurisdiction to examine ways to promote the financial independence of older people.

Inclusive Communities

Outcome Sought: Appropriate living environments and local communities for older people.

Considerable improvements have been made in urban planning, housing design, safety considerations and transport access to improve the ability of people with frailties and disabilities to lead full lives.

The coordination of urban planning and housing has been significant in improving the capacity for even very frail older people to remain in their own homes.

Integrated with housing considerations, the more recent challenges have involved the disaggregation of



accommodation and care to create a more flexible range of care options within the community.

The changing nature and profile of the Australian community has already brought about changes in standards relating to access. In the future, it will be important to extend this further to facilitate the capacity for all buildings to be adaptable across the lifespan.

The provision of accessible transport remains a high priority for older people, particularly in country areas.

Areas for Action

- Work towards improving the scope and breadth of planning to provide for increased consideration of the design and safety (and perceptions of safety) of housing, transport, public buildings and other public spaces, with urban and rural developers.
- Promote State and Territory planning policies which encourage medium density and adaptable housing for older people, including promoting nationally the Adaptable Housing Standard.
- Encourage innovative housing designs to suit people of all ages.
- Encourage transport authorities in all jurisdictions to develop an Accessible Transport Action Plan (as required by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission). This should have an emphasis on rural and remote areas.
- Support each jurisdiction to encourage the business community to recognise the value of the senior market and the importance of developing products and services which suit older people.



- Consider the review of regulatory and contractual measures to improve older people's access to public transport.
- Continue and extend programs which facilitate older people building, buying, modifying and maintaining their homes to suit their changing needs.
- Encourage State and Territory housing departments to work with the agency responsible for ageing policy, other relevant State and Territory Government departments and private enterprise to build a display house, featuring adaptability.

Appropriate Care and Support

Outcome Sought: Appropriate and affordable support so that older people can meet their needs and aspirations and remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

Most Australians live in their own homes and never need to draw upon formal care services. However, rapid increases in the numbers of very old people have increased the numbers of older people with support needs.

Traditionally, residential care (nursing homes and hostels) has been emphasised. It has only been in recent years that the focus has shifted to improving the range of support available to older people in their own homes.

There is still considerable scope to improve and extend community care choices and to make information about options more accessible.

A major challenge exists in the articulation of care and support services, both to improve targeting and to enable older people to remain in charge of their own lives, even whilst accepting support services.



Areas for Action

- Give consideration in each jurisdiction to establishing ongoing planning and coordination which brings together agencies covering complementary areas affecting older people - housing, transport, health, care and support, education, training, recreation, arts and culture, and information, for example.
- Support the development of appropriate accommodation and support for people with dementia and/or mental health problems to enable them to live in the community (where possible and appropriate).
- Consider personal approaches to accommodation and support for older people through initiatives such as case management and brokerage.
- Encourage each jurisdiction to develop a response to elder abuse.
- Continue the emphasis on community care and continue to ensure equitable distribution of resources.
- Ensure that population data is used for the planning of residential and community care.

Research and Information

Outcome Sought : Maximise use of good quality data, including older people's experiences.

Research plays an important part in understanding the needs and aspirations of older people. It is important that older people are consulted so that their views can influence policy and program development.

Research on ageing can contribute to the:

- evaluation of support and care services;
- prevention of illness;



- better intervention in treatment; and
- elimination of barriers to participation.

Ongoing research helps to inform Government policies on ageing and improve services.

Areas for Action

- Promote models of effective practice, highlighting innovative approaches for people of all ages.
- Promote symposia and conferences which focus on healthy ageing and wellbeing.
- Build on research with particular reference to:
 - the implications of ageing
 - rural and remote ageing
 - social, health and service needs
 - service standards
 - medication use
 - encouraging younger people to plan for retirement
 - compression of morbidity
 - diseases and functional disabilities of ageing
 - adaptable housing
 - research/health professional development in relation to people with chronic medical conditions
 - ageing populations with particular reference to Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people with disabilities
 - intergenerational relations
 - life-long learning
 - employment



- leisure and recreation
- self-care and negotiated or participatory care models, and
- how to ensure equity of services.
- Encourage researchers and governments to work together to facilitate links between organisations undertaking research.
- Stimulate the involvement of the private sector in sponsoring research and provision of scholarships.