

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Improving food experiences in aged care? – ask the cooks**

Apart from the people who eat it, the people who know most about food in aged care homes are the ones who prepare it, and Flinders University researchers want to know what they think.

As part of a national project to improve nutrition in aged care homes, researchers from the Discipline of Nutrition and Dietetics, led by Professor Michelle Miller, have designed a draft questionnaire which asks cooks and catering staff about their levels of satisfaction with food services at the homes where they work.

The overall project is being run by the Nutrition and Dietetics Discipline at Flinders in partnership with the Maggie Beer Foundation, which is providing support and access to cooks and chefs working in aged care settings.

Honours student Jude Hamilton said a draft questionnaire was sent to selected aged care homes for feedback.

A final questionnaire is now being circulated to aged care homes around Australia.

Ms Hamilton says the questionnaire for cooks and caterers is part of a range of surveys that will explore the experience and perceptions of residents, management and care staff in aged care homes.

Ms Hamilton says that residents and staff of nursing homes constitute a population that is often not listened to.

“If staff in aged care homes have an opportunity to voice their concerns about food and nutrition through a well-developed questionnaire then this information can be used to inform real and beneficial changes.”

Ms Hamilton said there are a lot of factors in play with the quality of food and the experience of eating in nursing homes: “There is the culture, the budget and resources, and training – it’s a very complex issue, because every facility is different.”

Ms Hamilton says the researchers are not suggesting that the management of Australia’s 2,000 aged care facilities are doing a bad job, but that the project is looking for ways in which food services can be improved.

Ms Hamilton says the ultimate aim of the project with the Maggie Beer Foundation is not only to improve the nutritional value of the food, but also to make the whole experience of eating more enjoyable.

“The Maggie Beer Foundation is looking to find all the examples of great aged care and put them in one place, so that they can act as an inspiration to management, to challenge existing ideas and improve them.”

Once finished, the questionnaire has the potential to change the way aged care homes receive feedback from their staff, which can improve the food experience for everyone involved.

If you are a cook, chef or part of the food service team at an aged care facility Ms Hamilton invites you to complete the questionnaire. For more information please contact:

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