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From bigger baskets to smarter savings: How ageing is reshaping the food and drink industry

Most supermarket aisles look the same until you look at them through older eyes. Packs that are hard to grip, labels that are difficult to read at arm's length, or portions designed for larger households no longer fit the way many Australians now live.

As explored in ANZ's Food for Thought – Summer 2025/26 report, an ageing population across Australia and other developed markets is steadily reshaping what succeeds in food and beverage – and opening new opportunities for companies willing to adapt.

Michael Whitehead, Executive Director of Food, Beverage and Agribusiness Insights at ANZ, said this is not a future trend, but a demographic reality already influencing shopping baskets.

“About 23 per cent of Australians are now over 60, and people are living longer, healthier and more independent lives. As households get smaller, demand shifts from big weekly shops toward practical, right-sized meals that deliver good nutrition without fuss.”

The report highlights that older consumers are far from one group. Those in their late fifties through their seventies are increasingly remaining active longer and want food that supports strength and steady energy. However, individuals in their late seventies and eighties often look for softer textures, easy-to-open packaging and smaller portions that reduce waste.

These needs guide choices such as protein-labelled yoghurts, boneless fish, slow-cook meats, lower-GI bakery goods, clearer hydration options and packs designed for one or two people.

“What older shoppers want is not ‘medical’ food. They want familiar, everyday products – but with enough protein for strength, textures that suit how they eat now, and packaging that isn’t difficult to open,” Mr Whitehead continued.

These demographic shifts are already shaping how retailers and cafés operate. Supermarkets are redesigning to better accommodate older shoppers with clearer shelf tickets, calmer store environments and meal bundles that place everything for a one or two-serve dinner in one location.

Local butchers and greengrocers are gaining traction with half-loaves, portioned vegetables and simple reheating advice tailored to smaller households, and cafés and quick-serve venues are responding to lunchtime peaks among older diners with balanced, protein-anchored meals that suit midday routines.

E-commerce and home delivery models are also adapting to older customers with clearer screens, saved baskets, predictable substitutions and reliable mid-morning delivery windows.

“Australia’s ageing population is a major opportunity. Companies that provide clear labels, easy-open packs and right-sized portions can make everyday decisions easier – whether that is a two-serve cottage pie with a peelable film and clear reheating guide, or yoghurt and snack ranges that spell out the protein content per serve in large type.

“By solving these practical problems, food and beverage businesses can earn lasting trust and loyalty from older customers,” Mr Whitehead concluded.

Further insights can be found in the [Summer 2025/26 edition of ANZ's Food for Thought report](#).

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