



COTA NEW SOUTH WALES

Liveable Communities Project Summary Report



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Executive Summary

While an ageing population has been the subject of national and state government plans, it is often at local government level such plans are implemented. Liveable communities are sustainable communities, both socially and environmentally. The focus of this project was on social sustainability rather than environmental considerations such as water and energy conservation.

Overall the workshops achieved the aim of raising awareness of population ageing at local government level. While the workshops were mainly targeted towards council staff, community service providers and community members also benefited from the awareness raising exercises. Community service providers were able to fine tune their awareness of how older people interact with the built environment, and older community members are now thinking more about their future needs and those of their friends, family and neighbours.

The archetypal older person exercise highlighted the lack of homogeneity in the section of the population labelled as 'older' 'aged' or 'senior'. This is an important step in planning for an ageing population as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not counter the myriad of issues facing older people. This means, for example, that zoning for an ever-growing number of retirement villages or manufactured home sites, is not going to suit the accommodation needs of everyone over the age of 55 years. While some older people will continue to choose such accommodation, others will want to stay in their local neighbourhood if not their existing home.

The picture analysis exercise raised much discussion about the day to day activities of older people, such as getting to the shops and medical appointments, and being able to socialise. It was also recognised that design elements that suit older people also suit people of all ages, including parents with prams and people with trolleys and mobility devices. Consequently, it did not have to be 'special' or separate design – just good design.

The third exercise based on the community strategic plan was a more difficult exercise for some participants, particularly community members who were not familiar with the local government planning processes. While the first two exercises generally allowed service providers and community members to explain their issues, this exercise highlighted some of the difficulties in implementing and funding ideas. In some instances this provided an opportunity for groups to have useful discussions about priorities.

The community strategic plans varied considerably in terms of style, content, visions and goals. One of the most consistent themes emerging from all workshops was the need for

council staff to better understand the roles of colleagues from other departments and to facilitate better communication between council and the community.

Being able to get out and about was also a key theme and was reflected in other themes such as health, recreation, leisure, education and the economy. Consequently, transport and transport infrastructure such as footpaths, bus stops and seating featured strongly in discussions. Tourism was a major topic in rural areas as much of their economy depends upon travellers. Linked to tourism was the importance of maintaining heritage buildings and protecting natural environments for the benefit of tourists as well as local residents.

Most councils were also concerned about waste reduction, recycling, and environmental sustainability. Discussions about the difficulties some older people face in manoeuvring waste bins highlighted the fact that issues of ageing affect all sections of local government. Difficulties with this everyday activity served to remind other staff that ageing is the business of all staff across the council.

Although housing was not specifically introduced as a topic for discussion, the link was soon made between being able to get out and about in the public domain as well as being able to live at home. Questions were raised about the suitability of increasing the number of retirement villages as the only solution to ageing-in-place, which led to discussion about providing housing choice for older Australians who want to remain in their current home and locality.

The relatively low cost of promoting services, providing information, and setting up networking groups was perhaps one of the reasons information dissemination featured strongly in the fourth exercise, putting ideas into action. Improved transport options were more problematic, more expensive, and in many cases, required the support of state government. Nevertheless, the importance of this issue in the lives of older people, particularly if they do not drive or own a car, was acknowledged as a major contributor to being independent, maintaining a sense of wellbeing, and being able to minimise social isolation.

Attention to detail in the design and construction of the public domain also received significant attention. Of particular note was the commitment to being more vigorous in ensuring compliance with disability access standards. During this exercise there was some re-thinking about housing and accommodation choice for older residents.

This report focuses on the findings and outputs from workshops. A full report including the methodology and more detailed findings can be accessed via the COTA NSW website (<http://cotansw.com.au/programs/liveable-communities/>).

Background

The aim of the project was to promote and create liveable communities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds at the local government level.

The idea of liveable communities encompasses concepts of social inclusion and healthy and productive lifestyles. Liveable communities are sustainable communities, both socially and environmentally. The focus of this project was on social sustainability rather than environmental considerations such as water and energy conservation.

As many factors are inherent within the concept of liveable communities, several disciplines and stakeholder interests are involved. Housing, public facilities, public transit systems, pedestrian and cycle access, and safe and attractive recreation spaces, all require consideration.

After reviewing several “liveability” checklists currently in circulation it was decided to use workshop techniques as a means of highlighting the issues of an ageing population in a practical and relevant way for council staff.

The workshop method consisted of five main steps which were designed to:

- Step 1: Introduce participants to facts and trends about an ageing population
- Step 2: Heighten awareness of the diversity of the ageing population
- Step 3: Increase understanding of how older people interact with the built environment
- Step 4: Link the issues of an ageing population to the goals in the Community Strategic Plan
- Step 5: Convert ideas into practical outcomes

These five steps were translated to learning outcomes within a framework of adult learning principles. Consistent with such principles, peer learning formed a major part of the workshop process. It was assumed that much of the information and knowledge required was already inherent in the experiences of participants.

The process of learning from peers can often be more influential than learning from designated ‘experts’. A secondary reason for using peer learning methods is that each local government area has features specific to its location and planning policies which would be unknown to an external ‘expert’. The overall approach, therefore, was to maximise the knowledge of workshop participants using techniques to explore and capture this knowledge.

Workshop Findings

1. Older people – who are they?

Using the comments written on the body outlines, a narrative was constructed for each archetypal person developed by the workgroups. These were compared across the workshops but within the same age grouping. As participants were asked to form these archetypes based on the people they know, it is likely that the archetypes contain reflections of their own lives and how they perceive themselves in the future. An overview of each age grouping follows.

55 year old archetypes

At 55 most archetypes were continuing life as before with just a few insights that they are ageing. Still in the workforce and socially and physically active, 55 year olds are mostly thinking of financial security rather than planning for their future living arrangements and proximity to services. Some were grandparents or looking forward to this prospect, while others were still supporting late teenage or university students. Common themes in this age group were:

- Living in their own home, which is freestanding, owned outright or mortgaged
- Supporting late teen/adult children living at home
- Supporting their adult children with informal child care and babysitting
- Still part of the workforce either part time or full time
- Enjoying social and sporting activities, with some mention of volunteer activities
- Concerned about future finances
- Noticing physical changes in their bodies, but either not yet troubled by them or had them under control with medication
- A mention of being carers for ageing parents
- Mostly they were partnered

65 year old archetypes

Lifestyles of this grouping are depicted as busy and sociable, but with growing concerns about their health, particularly those in rural areas who have to travel significant distances for specialist appointments. The desire to travel was one theme continuing from the 55 age group, as was living in the family home. Being a grandparent is expected at this age which also brings child care and babysitting duties as well as care for ageing parents. Concerns about finances at 55 appear to be replaced by concerns about health at 65. Common themes in this age group were:

- About to retire from the workforce if not already retired
- Some partnered, others divorced or widowed
- Beginnings of becoming carers for partners and/or parents

- Health issues becoming more prominent, but under control
- Grandparenthood now established and undertaking regular child care and babysitting
- Volunteering more prominent and first mentions of the Men's Shed and U3A
- Lifestyles still busy with family, social, and volunteer commitments

75 year old archetypes

At 75 years of age, living in one's family home with a long term partner remains a recurrent theme regardless of location. Life appears to be a little more of a struggle as health issues begin to become problematic particularly if one partner needs care support. The need for support services is mentioned in this grouping, but knowing about them or how to apply for them appears to be an issue. Themes at this age are more diverse. Some commonalities are:

- Continuing to live in the family home regardless of location or suitability
- Body functions becoming more problematic, but not yet stopping participation in activities
- Active grandparenting is continuing
- Maintaining social networks and undertaking a physical exercise activity
- Carer duties becoming more prominent, particularly caring for partners
- Likely to be on a full or part Age Pension

85 year old archetypes

A change in living arrangements emerged in the 85 year old age group with the first mention of moving to a self-care unit, or considering this move. Also included in the mix is living in a flat or unit. However, most are continuing to 'stay put', some with the support of community care services. Most are dependent on the Age Pension which means they have to budget carefully and choose free or low cost activities. Between the ages of 75 and 85 the archetypes have become widowed and at this age issues of potential social isolation emerge. Common themes are:

- Living alone, mostly in the family home
- Concerns for social isolation
- Greater dependency on home based care services
- Those with a car desire to keep driving, but know this is time limited
- Dependency on others for transportation to activities and medical appointments
- Dependency on the Age Pension

95 year old archetypes

The trend to living in supported accommodation is depicted at this age. However, not all are in this situation. Some are still living in the family home, or living with family. Loss of sight and hearing are mentioned more at this age and all are receiving some form of home

based assistance. Home modifications and assistive technology are mentioned for the first time in this age grouping. All are living alone except one. Common themes are:

- Increasing frailty resulting in loss of confidence
- Eyesight and hearing is deteriorating
- Mobility is more problematic
- Memory loss more apparent
- More likely to be living in supported accommodation
- Receiving home support services
- Enjoy socialising, but also happy to spend time at home

Summary of Archetypes

This activity was successful in drawing participants' attention to the realities of everyday life for older people. Community service providers in each group enhanced the discussion as they could draw on their clients for discussion points. This breadth of knowledge also helped to inform council staff who were less familiar with the needs and aspirations of older people, or the diversity within and between the older age groups.

2. Every picture tells a story

Each workgroup was provided with a set of photographs depicting street scenes, open spaces, public buildings and facilities, and shopping centres and plazas. Participants were able to focus on particular details of the design and/or construction and provide detailed information about the difficulties interacting with the particular location, and in some cases, go beyond the borders of the pictures to explain their experiences.

Pedestrian access and footpaths

Lack of footpaths in both rural and urban locations was a major issue. Footpaths were evident in main streets in all council areas as well as some well-established residential areas. Where grassed areas were intended as these were assessed as difficult for wheelchair use, whether being pushed or self-propelled, mobility scooters, and difficult for people with baby strollers and shopping trolleys. However, even when footpaths were present there were concerns such as:

- A steep gradient towards the kerb
- Incomplete footpaths which end unexpectedly, or do not connect to important points such as bus stops
- Paving with trip hazards and footpaths with overhanging shrubbery
- Kerb ramps, where present, were often steep and sometimes too narrow for a double stroller, or for a single stroller and a small child walking alongside

- Kerb ramps that were poorly finished and were not flush with the roadway or the pavement
- The inconsistent placement, style and colour contrast of tactile ground surface indicators on or near to kerb ramps and road crossings

Steps into to shops and other facilities, or poorly placed and designed ramps were also a common point of discussion. It was interesting to note that several councils have banned the use of sandwich boards on footpaths as these were considered a hazard, particularly for people with low vision. Poor placement and/or lack of pedestrian road crossings were mentioned in all rural workshops.

Seating

Seating to allow a person to rest or wait for a bus was discussed in all workshops. While many main streets provided seats, their placement, height or design was not optimum. Whether the seating faced towards or away from the roadway and traffic depended upon the location. Functional seating was preferred over “funky” seating in all situations, including public places such as shopping centres and libraries. Providing a range of seating types in the one location gives people of all ages and abilities a choice.

Lighting

Lighting is often considered in terms of safety and visibility at night. People with low vision require good lighting to read signs, instructions and keypads. For example, the size of print used in bus timetables was raised in most workshops. Pictures depicting glare from lighting, particularly reflected from flooring was considered an issue as well as random patterning in floor coverings.

Wayfinding

Signage is part of wayfinding: it can direct people to places (toilets and lifts) and label places so people know they have arrived at the right place. Comments about wayfinding maps and signage included: visually confusing, lettering is too small, need reference to landmarks, not just street names, not enough colour contrast, and the need for universal mapping for people who do not have English as their first language.

Toilets

One of the key issues for older people is access to accessible (frequently labelled ‘disabled’) toilets when they have a wheelchair, wheeled walker, or need the assistance of a carer. Parents with small children and/or with children in strollers also find accessible toilets very convenient. The application of the MLAK key was often misunderstood and in many cases the accessible toilets were found to be locked 24 hours a day instead of only the night time hours in the same way as other public toilets.

Summary of the picture analysis

Many aspects of the public built environment were scrutinised and some participants were surprised at how many comments they could contribute. The small group discussion process also allowed peer learning to occur where older community members and community service providers could explain why certain aspects of streetscapes, public buildings, and road crossings were not optimal in terms of safety and/or access, or constituted barriers to access.

3. Community Strategic Plans

According to the Local Government Act, community strategic plans must address social, environmental, economic and civic leadership issues in an integrated manner¹. Some councils chose to keep these issues as main headings in their community strategic plans while others chose to expand on these. Consequently the number of goals listed in plans varied considerably. For the simplicity of reporting, the ideas from the workshops are collated under the four key issues.

Social issues cover health, safety, built environment and transport; Environmental issues covers all aspects of the natural environment and climate change; Economic issues covers tourism, trade links, and commercial opportunities; and civic leadership covers council's decision making processes, levels of service and ethical practice. A sample of ideas follows.

Social

A recurring theme was the need to design and promote information about existing services and to use a mix of strategies for dissemination, together with the need for greater physical accessibility of the built environment and transport infrastructure. The ideas here are grouped into specific themes for simplicity of reporting.

People

- Create intergenerational inclusiveness – and have more community events in family friendly locations
- Involve younger people to mix with older people in volunteering, such as helping to deliver meals on wheels, and working with schools to promote intergenerational activities
- Have school children interacting with older people at care centres rather than just performing songs and then leaving
- Link service clubs so they can focus on one project or goal to get one project completed sooner rather than having several projects running over a longer period.
- Improve the design of the infrastructure to make it more accessible, including seating, lighting and parking, and for access for emergency services

¹ NSW Division of Local Government, *Integrated Planning and Reporting Manual*, Page 25

- Encourage businesses to improve access to their premises by setting up an awards program, and provide free Council advice for businesses wanting to embark on modification
- Make shopping centre managers and owners aware of access issues
- Investigate what the local large shopping centre can do to help create a sense of community – are their activities that can be done on shopping centre premises and/or car park, especially in the tourist off-season
- Encourage the establishment of a mobile health service for dental, diabetes, ears and eyes and other medical services
- Have a preventative health expo with a focus on older people
- Any arts and cultural activities will need to consider older people more – for films, festivals, and the arts – and to consider easy access
- Hold regular forums and interagency meetings similar to HACC forums so that services know who is doing what
- Ensure existing HACC services are well publicised and promoted and encourage greater agency consultations and collaboration to ensure all services are provided
- Have another name for the “Seniors Centre” to encourage people who did not identify with the term “senior” and have activities such as movie nights and film festivals, exercise programs and yoga, dance nights, speed dating, zoo days, city days, and cultural days and events
- Providing free internet for older people with training in how to use computers and the internet
- Recognise that the role of Librarians is changing to cover more than just books
- The library can also be a place to learn about computers and to get free access to the internet
- Develop an Aboriginal Mentoring Program and work with indigenous elders in the community. Employ Aboriginal elders in roles that require leadership and cultural education
- Have a designated Aboriginal Councillor position
- Council officers to engage in Aboriginal culturally matched service delivery – this needs training and monitoring. Aboriginal Elders can provide cultural respect competence training for Councillors and Officers

Housing

- For housing, ensure appropriate lot sizes in specific areas close to services that would be suitable for all ages including older people. Look at how the BCA can be used to encourage universal housing design and put universal housing in the planning guidelines
- Need a policy that allows subdivision options to downsize (build a granny flat) without penalising pensioners
- Need housing design that creates flexibility in the future as the demographic changes. Some houses need to be large enough to have ageing parents stay

- New developments need to include some affordable housing and allow for ageing in place
- Plan for multi-generational homes and housing and ensure land use zoning doesn't contribute to isolation and exclusion

Places

- More care is needed about the type of street trees planted so the roots do not lift the footpath and make trip hazards
- Connect footpaths and make them a decent width for safety and sharing with mobility scooters.
- Footpaths need to be wider, well maintained and well lit, cycle paths need to be separate, pedestrian crossings need to be safer and have kerb ramps, and street landscaping should allow visibility between traffic and pedestrians
- Parks and open spaces need to be accessible and have good seating with shade, so older people will be encouraged to walk more
- Have creative performance spaces and somewhere to display local culture
- Sporting facilities need more seating and covered areas

Transport

- A significant increase in older people means infrastructure has to support parking, access, and scooter use
- Bus stops need to be more accessible with footpath links, shelters and information boards to help visitors and locals – a gap analysis is needed for this
- Bus shelters should be clean and have adequate lighting, seating and access to the bus and around the shelter, a level surface at bus stops to board the bus, and bus stops on both sides of the road, not just one side
- Car parking that is well linked to facilities with good access; and road safety awareness for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooter users is needed
- Need to find ways to encourage more people to use public transport rather than their cars
- Provide transport assistance for people wanting to go to sporting venues and cultural events which must have toilets and easy physical access and have these features advertised as well as the content of the event
- Expand community transport to include shopping and other activities, such as getting to the Senior Citizens Centre, not just health related transport
- Make bus transport more user friendly, with flexible pick-up
- Parking and permits for designated areas for older people, not just people with mobility permits for 'disabled' parking, shuttle buses to shopping and events
- Educate bus operators and drivers to be aware of older passengers

Economy

In rural areas, tourism was the main topic of discussion. In urban areas employment of older people and ways to encourage local spending were considered.

Tourism

- Construct and maintain good amenities for older people at river beaches
- Encouraging older people to be volunteers at the local tourist information centre,
- Bid for caravan, camping and motor home festivals and musters
- Stage big events such as Big Golf Day, Big Bowling Day, String Music Festival
- Make the Shire a Grey Nomad destination (instead of just a fuel stop) with sports packages, face-lift for caravan parks, improved council amenities, water point and black-water dump, access to Wi-Fi, and cheap meals.
- Cater for active holiday-makers with more cycleways and promotion of local walks
- Investigate potential for summer bus services for the main visitor season with mini buses – perhaps do shuttle bus runs that are free

Local economy

- Provide good seating at all markets and access to public toilets on market day and festivals
- Having convenient parking near shops helps encourage local purchasing
- Have a parking system where people over the age of 75 years could have access to easy parking one day a week for three hours without penalty in Council parking spaces. This will help local businesses to survive because not everyone wants to use community transport
- Think about having shops, health services and other services in the same location so they are easy for older people to get to
- Enable zoning changes to encourage small businesses and other businesses to decentralise
- Provide education programs for people who want to set up their own small business, and also to think about businesses that focus on the needs of older people
- Lobby for financial assistance for people to retrofit their homes so that older people could age in place and the construction industry could get a boost
- Investigate potential for an Allied Health Exercise Group – could be a new small business opportunity
- Strategies to encourage older people to work and employers to employ them are needed
- Encourage employers to give ‘volunteering leave’, especially to older employees who are soon to retire so they get involved in community activities before they retire – need a program for this

Environment

Recycling and garbage collection tended to be the main topic of discussion throughout all workshops.

- Establish education sessions on sustainability and advertise it to attract older people to show how it can be done – e.g. car sharing, using available bus services, recycling and reusing things. U3A could help with this.
- Use older people's expertise in recycling, set up a group, like the Mens Shed – a recycling shed – where things could be fixed by volunteers and given to others to use. Council could help set this up and promote it.
- Have tours of the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) located at the landfill site so that older people can see the recycling process – service clubs could assist
- Increasing awareness of recycling – develop an awareness raising program for older people, and have a 'wheel-in-wheel-out' bin service
- Free disposal for appliances and advertising this, especially when purchasing new energy efficient goods.
- Have a facility for collecting old paints and batteries, and encourage people to have garage sales so that more things can be re-used and not go to landfill. Council to offer a service to help older people with this
- Create community gardens for growing food in unused Council space and link to education opportunities
- Older people can be encouraged to participate in environmental protection groups, and also to volunteer for Landcare and Bushcare groups.
- A less car dependent community will benefit older people if there is more public transport available
- Link existing environmental groups with each other and encourage older people to participate

Civic Leadership

Ways of engaging with older residents was the main topic of discussion, together with methods of disseminating information.

- Establish monthly meetings for people to meet with Council officers in different areas
- Have Council online forums
- Meet with captive audiences in places where older people congregate and in shopping centres
- Council to take advice from aged people (as representatives on planning boards, etc) and include them in consultations at the beginning of the process, and also have an access team or access auditor involved

- Council could be more proactive in private developments – not just stick to the regulations, but be more creative in how to serve the community better
- Need to have collaboration with community services and other Departments on health and transport, and developers need to include appropriate facilities when planning new estates
- Encourage good communication between Council and older age groups and between Council and other government departments in the planning process - plan to incorporate the needs of older people
- Consider all people when planning infrastructure and events – children, parents with prams, older people and people with a disability
- Council can communicate activities and events via a newsletter, the website and the local media and through the library and to support services
- Make sure information is in community languages
- Older people don't use the Internet for their information, they like paper versions they can keep and look at again and again.

4. Putting it into action

This exercise was designed to be a review and summary exercise so that participants could reflect on what they had learned and how they could put it into action. The main targets for this exercise were council staff, but community service providers and community members were also able to identify an action they could undertake. The most relevant commitments are categorised as follows:

Transport
 Public Domain
 Housing and Accommodation
 Provision of Services
 Promotion of Services
 Communication and Information Sharing
 Health and Safety
 Sharing learning from the workshop
 Planning

Transport

Transport actions fell into two categories, those relating to acquiring improved services, mostly by bus, and those relating to community transport. Lobbying for funds was a regular a feature. Examples of commitments related to transport were:

- Look at implementing a shuttle bus for shopping days and/or activity days to help get an idea of who could need help.
- Look at private bus and transport services we can work with

- Promote the community bus service to all
- Get more volunteers to help with transport
- Use statistical information to lobby for more funding for transport. Write a tender for funds
- Keep ideas/forefront – work with funding bodies.
- Look at what a free loop bus would look like here in town.
- Active Travel – walking and cycling to recreation and/or chores. Think laterally about ways to engage older residents to leave the car at home, particularly for short trips – 2-3 km. Develop strategies to implement these ideas over the next 6 months
- Implement a survey on transport needs in our council area
- Look at opportunities to expand sustainable transport connection to service the community

Public Domain

Built environment actions covered many of the concerns raised in the picture analysis exercise. Accessibility of the public domain and facilities featured strongly. Examples of commitments related to the public domain were:

- More seating required on local roads near shops and in the parks and sporting grounds.
- Be on the lookout for traps of access in the community. Have council check the kerbs in the town centre and elsewhere because they are too steep and scooters scrape their bottoms
- Include “access” issues in program design, include: shade, seating, access to toilets (when developing environmental ed. programs).
- Take access to buildings more vigorously to ensure compliances with disability standards. Enforce disability standards within Council buildings.
- Influence greater fund allocation for maintenance of existing footpaths to eliminate hazards and trip point rather than all funding to new footpaths which currently builds more unsustainable assets. Suggest that council set up an access committee once more
- Investigate opportunities to reduce social isolation e.g. walking groups (bonus benefit – Health).
- Design new cultural infrastructure to be accessible for older people
- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to raise awareness amongst their members about making their premises accessible to older people and the opportunities the ageing population presents to business if they can cater for it appropriately.

Housing and Accommodation

Housing and accommodation was raised in almost all workshops either as specialised housing in retirement villages and low care facilities, or in terms of more choice in housing type and encouraging house designs that suit people across their lifespan.

- Promote universal housing policy controls - Development Control Plan - Council Resolution; Promote planning agreements requiring footpath accessibility for manufactured home estates.
- Would like to see micro-villages (for aged from 50 years old) within the community to include doctors, caterers, carers, transport for the resident group).
- Promote and implement more adaptable and Livable Housing.
- Ageing in place - need to look at development plans
- Consider these issues in the next Development Control Plans, look at my village from today's perspective and suggest we consider this topic for the village plan
- Encourage more 'long-term' design of dwellings to incorporate any future changes to occupants and their physical abilities.
- Build more units in the town that people could rent and build more hostel accommodation

Provision of Services

Developing events and activities fell into two categories – one for older people specifically, and others that encouraged intergenerational interaction. Developing programs and activities to reduce social isolation were a major feature.

- Re-think how the services can utilise the council services and businesses more for future outings and programs.
- Outreach Services Librarian to attend networking meeting – Community Aid. Discuss Seniors Services with Library Management Team. Promote Library events to Seniors Agencies and Newsletter list.
- Visit the library to experience the set up so I can inform clients and patients of their services
- Develop joint projects for a 12 month calendar of events that include activities for people 50+ that are flexible in time and include partnerships.
- Investigate opportunities to reduce social isolation e.g. walking groups (bonus benefit – Health).
- Active living while getting older is the focus rather than aged care for my activities.
- Transport Training - how to use trains, buses, taxis, walking, cycling: organise an in-service by ACAT at U3A
- Run my workshops again - "Creating the World we Want to Get Old In"
- Support a music group for older people – older musicians getting together. Research arts and culture programs for older people.

Promotion of Services

Promotion of existing services was a popular topic in all workshops and particularly with community members who work for services voluntarily. The actions largely related to distribution of brochures and promotional material in more places more often.

- Easy to follow and understand brochures, signage, stickers, distributed to all households at regular intervals, e.g. every three months.
- To inform older people of the service provided by waste management of the wheel-in wheel-out service to help older people with their garbage bins for a small fee.
- Deliver promotional material to community aid, library, and seniors centres.
- Extend publicity of CWA and the Tea Rooms and the benefits to older people - use brochures and posters and speaking to people
- Continue to provide information to GPs and Nurses regarding services and general information on ageing and community issues.
- Consider producing separate “aged” brochure.
- With the monthly mail out and placing an ad in the local paper, I would like to add a flyer to make people aware and perhaps to “Dob-a-Senior-in-your Street in” and gently make the senior aware of activities that they may or may not know about
- Promote the Men’s Shed with brochures
- As part of standard service provision ensure older persons are informed of when and how to contact their local council
- Utilise Council libraries for distributing information

Communication and information sharing

This topic was a major theme across all workshops: services and government departments communicating and sharing information more effectively. While most councils support a local interagency, it appears that these have either lapsed or are poorly attended. However, they were recognised as an effective means of keeping abreast of activities of the local services and to help reduce duplication. Communicating with client groups and older people are also reported here.

- Arrange a forum for feedback from clients on a regular basis. Make sure the information creates actions
- Keep networking with Council in ensuring that we offer more lifestyle and leisure activities/programmes for our clients.
- Sharing of information. Agencies – need to have more of a co-ordinated approach. Who is providing what services, what are the gaps
- Council customer service staff to have better understanding of funded services that are on offer for the aged when people make enquiries
- Get more research on aged residents from the field, rather than reports or the net/websites. Make contact with local aged groups and arrange a visit.

- Talk to the community to ask what they would like to see – Survey for Over 50’s, Council Meetings. Advocate.
- Improve council communication and interagency communications to disseminate information
- Organise an interagency meeting to exchange knowledge and ideas with other programs, NGOs and Departments
- Develop specific strategies for contacting, consulting, informing, communicating and collaborating with older people.
- Organise talks to the local Adult Day Centre Groups (Social) on recycling.
- Follow up with an invitation to the respective “older living” groups to be a guest on Aboriginal Community Radio program to promote social inclusion and connectedness
- Include Senior’s Officer more actively in plans for Plaza activities and consult with seniors to ensure activities are service friendly and/or designed, designated seniors activities

Health and Safety

Road safety, avoiding falls and provision of exercise equipment are the key actions listed:

- Public exercise equipment is needed - Explore options for outdoor multipurpose exercise equipment - Investigate potential – seek information and research – look at existing facilities and explore possible location
- I am now aware of a project that involved seniors which may be suitable for my work with older drivers. I will now try to include seniors into the Road Safety Officer program
- To improve and educate the public on accessibility and what they can do to improve safety on shared cycle ways
- Report to The Senior Falls & Access Committee on the importance of intergenerational involvement.
- Continue to advocate for a hydraulic weight lifting facility for aged people to help build their core body strength
- Carry out a safety audit of Council’s footpaths, ramps, parking areas

Sharing learning from the workshop

Several participants noted that key people from their council were not present at the workshop and that the information they had gained was pertinent to the work of their colleagues. Community volunteers also committed to providing feedback to their various organisations.

- Share what I learned today with my team and discuss ideas.
- I will listen and take on board and where possible implement recommendations from today’s workshop.

- The first thing I will do is write a summary report of this workshop and share it with my colleagues at the next staff meeting
- Share information from the issues raised in this workshop with the leadership team
- Bring the ideas brought up today when making decisions.
- Educate customer service centre on aged services available.
- Encourage all areas of Council to consider and think about older people and issues, concerns, ideas that need to be discussed and planned for before proceeding.
- Continue to speak to managers of some of the ideas brought up on the workshop. eg: More seating required on local roads near shops and in the parks and sporting grounds.
- Report back to Access Committee and raise the issues of the day

Planning

Most of the actions reported here are related to development applications, development control plans, strategic plans and ageing strategies. Thinking about older people when making decisions also features in the listing.

- Include my ideas on access in Council's DCP
- Consider these issues in the next Development Control Plans, look at my village from today's perspective and suggest we consider this topic for the village plan
- Be aware of needs of the elderly and disabled in the assessment of DA's.
- I do not believe that we should be looking at the provision of facilities as a singular task, but improving on the public space with better access, lighting, accessible playgrounds, picnic shelters etc. everyone benefits. We need to integrate these services "better". It was interesting hearing comments back on the public seating, e.g. needing arm rests etc. – which is a small thing and easily fixed.
- Promote universal housing policy controls - Development Control Plan - Council Resolution; Promote planning agreements requiring footpath accessibility for manufactured home estates.
- Plan for seating, toilets, security in my development. Think more about the diversity of needs within the "aged residents" group
- Think about strategies to encourage Council staff to change their practices/thinking to be more realistic regarding the increasing proportion/numbers of old people and plan for the people better. Encourage my unit to take more responsibility to think about and include more older people in strategies and activities.
- Being on the frontline of Council I can gather information or feedback on issues for the older population and report it to the relevant Department.
- In reviewing, planning project, activities, ask, "how is this inclusive of older people's needs?"
- Currently working on strategic plan for the library - include longer term strategies for growing the library as a place for people to go/contact to find out about the range of services available

- As the coordinator of Council's building surveying (certification) team I can research the link between public and commercial buildings and the public domain and improve access to buildings and associated facilities, and coach my staff to improve the standard of access to building from the public domain.
- In my design work, understand the importance for older people to have access to the community and therefore design projects that will enhance this opportunity.

Conclusions

The main challenge of the workshop was to bring about a paradigm shift from “aged care” to one of “age inclusiveness” and from “older people are the aged and disability worker’s responsibility” to one of “older people are everyone’s responsibility”. The responses to the last two exercises showed indications of a better understanding that the lives of older people are broader than providing a community transport bus, a retirement village, a seniors centre, and special ‘seniors’ concerts and events. However, existing notions that older people are the responsibility of aged and disability workers likely caused much of the non-attendance by other key staff members.

Although efforts were made to communicate face to face with council planners and other staff prior to the workshop, this did not always result in their attendance. Circumstances and events on the day, such as sickness or an office crisis are not unexpected. However, across almost all workshops there was a consistent non-attendance by council planning staff on the day in spite of registering for the event. This led to comments by council staff who participated in the full workshop that COTA had failed to have the most important staff at the workshop. Nevertheless, several staff indicated that they would discuss the workshop with colleagues and managers to help raise their awareness of the issues.

The workshop evaluation sheets and subsequent online survey provided consistent results. Apart from positive responses about the workshop process and facilitation, most respondents believed they had learned from the process and now had a heightened awareness of the issues as well as ways in which they might resolve some of these.

Overall the workshop process achieved the desired effect of raising awareness with participants, but whether this is sufficient to bring about the paradigm shift in attitudes and awareness across all council staff and planning processes is not yet clear. However, all change begins with the first step and these workshops could be considered as that first step.

A subsequent follow-up workshop for staff might help improve awareness of the issues now that the topic has been raised by the first workshop. However, workshops for council staff alone are unlikely to result in the same level of success for councils which were not part of the workshop series. The success of the workshops in this series hinged significantly on the input of community service providers and community members to provide the tangible and real life experiences which were essential to the awareness raising process.

The final step in this project was to produce a resource for local government that will assist in dealing with the issues of an ageing population. This resource is in the form of a workshop facilitation guide complete with all the supporting documentation required to plan, promote and implement a Liveable Communities Workshop.