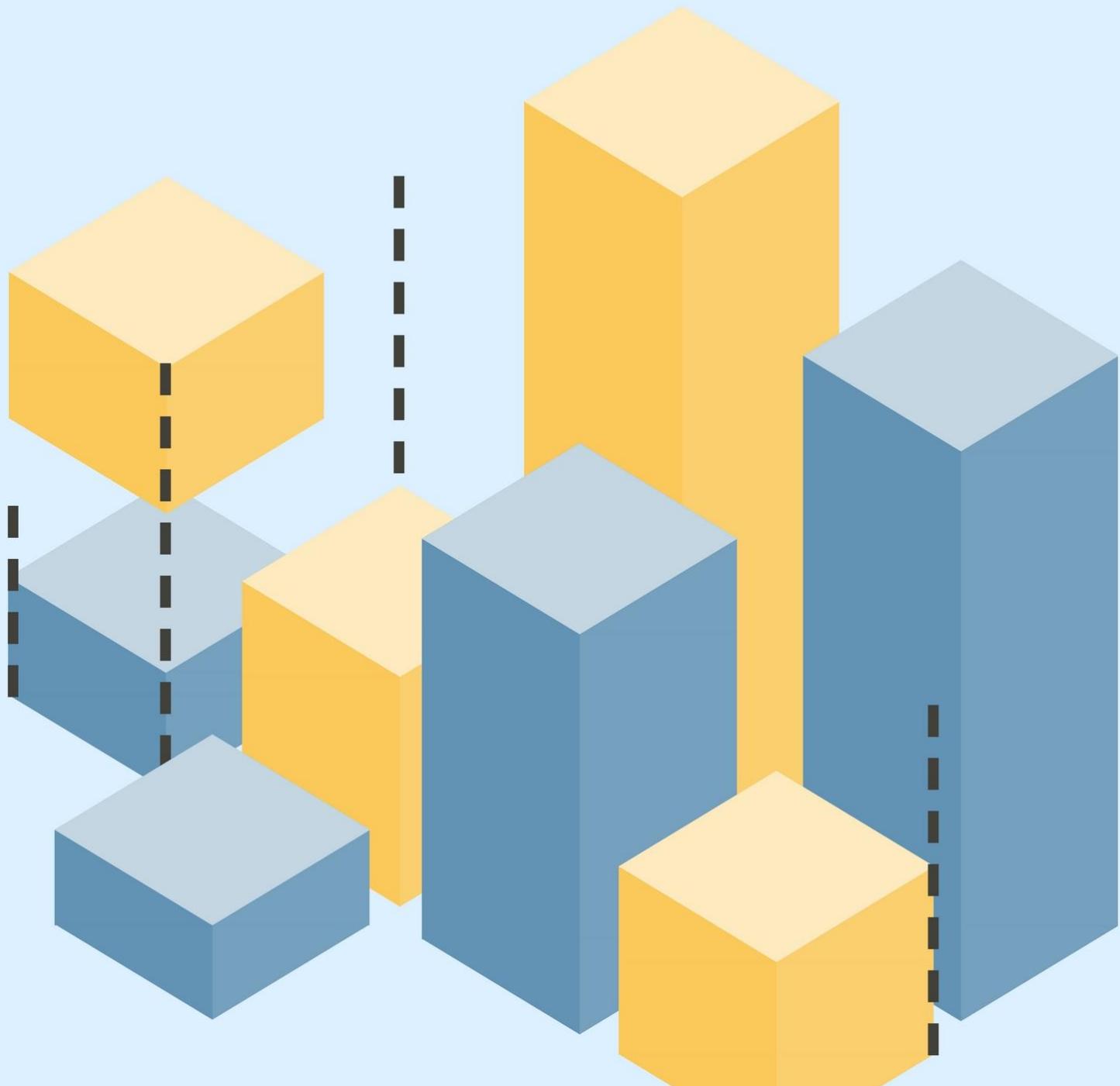


# **Building Age-Friendly Communities in Victoria's Northern Metropolitan Region: Issues, Approaches, and Recommendations.**

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October 2017



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## **Executive Summary**

This report examines current efforts to build age-friendly communities in Victoria's Northern Metropolitan Region. In particular, this report explores the issues affecting older people in the region, including housing options, transport services, the accessibility of outdoor spaces and buildings, and social participation, and evaluates the age-friendly approaches in place to support senior residents.

This report finds that local governments in Victoria's Northern Metropolitan Region have made notable progress in creating age-friendly communities. Specifically, in the areas of social participation, and urban design for outdoor spaces and public buildings, councils have had a positive impact on the lives of older residents. However, in the domains of transport planning, community transport services, and housing options, additional work and support is required to ensure that older residents can age comfortably within their communities.

In addition, this report finds that there is a significant absence of policy and funding support from the State Government, making it difficult for local councils, and organisations like the Council on the Ageing Victoria, to have a lasting and meaningful influence.

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Population Ageing in Australia and Victoria**

The Australian population is ageing. Due to increasing life expectancy, and a sustained low fertility rate that has resulted in fewer children being born, the Australian population is growing increasingly older.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the year 2011 marked a milestone in Australia as the oldest of the post-war Baby Boomer generation turned 65 years of age.<sup>2</sup>

Over the last 20 years, from 1996 to 2016, the proportion of the population aged 65 years and over increased from 12% to 15%.<sup>3</sup> In 2016, 3.7 million Australians were aged 65 and over, with this forecast expected to continue to grow into the future.<sup>4</sup> It is anticipated that by the year 2055, the number of Australians aged 65 and above will be more than double its current figure.<sup>5</sup> By that time, the proportion of adults aged 85 and above is projected to reach 4.9% of the population, accounting for around two million Australians.<sup>6</sup>

The population of Victoria is also growing older. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of people aged 65 and over increased by 18%.<sup>7</sup> During the same period, the median age in Victoria rose, reaching 36 years of age in Melbourne, and 41.9 years in rural areas.<sup>8</sup> In 2016, 15% of Victorian residents were aged 65 years and over.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Allan Borowski and Peter McDonald, 'The Dimensions and Implications of Australian Population Ageing' in Borowski, Allan, and Ozanne, Elizabeth, and Encel, Solomon (eds.), *Longevity and Social Change in Australia* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2007), 21-25.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Butler, *Advanced Australia: The Politics of Ageing* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics Jun 2016* (2016), cat. No. 3101.0, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/featurearticlesbyCatalogue/384EDBC8C1EB7717CA2581470023DAD1?OpenDocument>>, accessed 15 Aug 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Older Australians at a Glance* (2016), <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-peoples/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/summary>>, accessed 10 Aug 2017.

<sup>5</sup> The Treasury, *2015 Intergenerational Report: Australia in 2055* (2015), <[https://static.treasury.gov.au/uploads/sites/1/2017/06/2015\\_IGR.pdf](https://static.treasury.gov.au/uploads/sites/1/2017/06/2015_IGR.pdf)>, viii, accessed 1 Sept 2017

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics Jun 2016* (2016), cat. No. 3101.0, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/featurearticlesbyCatalogue/384EDBC8C1EB7717CA2581470023DAD1?OpenDocument>>, 6, accessed 15 Aug 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2016 Data in Pictures Victoria* (2016), <[http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/CensusOutput/copsub2016.nsf/All%20docs%20by%20catNo/Data-in-pictures/\\$FILE/vicER.html](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/CensusOutput/copsub2016.nsf/All%20docs%20by%20catNo/Data-in-pictures/$FILE/vicER.html)>, accessed 1 Oct 2017.

## **1.2 Ageing in Victoria's Northern Metropolitan Region**

The Northern Metropolitan Region is a large and diverse area of northern metropolitan Melbourne. Incorporating 536 square kilometres, it is one of eight electoral regions in Victoria, and is comprised of the suburbs: Broadmeadows, Brunswick, Bundoora, Coburg, Craigieburn, Epping, Glenroy, Greensborough, Melbourne, Mill Park, Northcote, Pascoe Vale, Preston, Reservoir, Richmond, South Morang, Thomastown, and Thornbury.<sup>10</sup> Responsibility for governing these areas rests with the City of Melbourne Council, the City of Yarra Council, Banyule City Council, Hume City Council, the City of Darebin Council, the City of Whittlesea Council, and the City of Moreland Council.<sup>11</sup> (*See Appendix*)

In line with consistent population ageing throughout Australia and Victoria, residents of the Northern Metropolitan Region are also growing older. In the City of Melbourne, 10% of inhabitants are aged over 60 years old, and this age group is rising faster than any other.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, in the City of Moreland, 15% of people are aged 65 years and older.<sup>13</sup> In Banyule, meanwhile, the number of older adults aged 50 years and over is 41,021, representing 35% of the total population.<sup>14</sup> Notably, this number is expected to increase, making up 37% of Banyule's total population by 2036.<sup>15</sup> In a similar fashion, in the City of Whittlesea, the proportion of residents aged 50 years and over is anticipated to grow by 84% over the next two decades.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> 'Northern Metropolitan Region Profile', *Victorian Electoral Commission* [website], (2014) <<https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/ElectoralBoundaries/NorthernMetropolitanRegionProfile.html>>, accessed 10 Aug 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> City of Melbourne, *Melbourne for all People Strategy 2014-17* (2014) <<https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/melbourne-for-all-people.pdf>>, 7, accessed 1 Sept 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Moreland City Council, *Council Plan 2017-21* (2017) <<http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/globalassets/areas/finance/council-plan-2017-21.pdf>>, 6, accessed 5 Sept 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Banyule Council, *Older Adults Strategic Plan 2017-2021* (2017) <[https://shaping.banyule.vic.gov.au/application/files/3015/0232/2095/Older\\_Adults\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_-\\_2017\\_-\\_Draft\\_Strategic\\_Plan.pdf](https://shaping.banyule.vic.gov.au/application/files/3015/0232/2095/Older_Adults_Strategic_Plan_-_2017_-_Draft_Strategic_Plan.pdf)>, 3, accessed 2 Sept 2017.

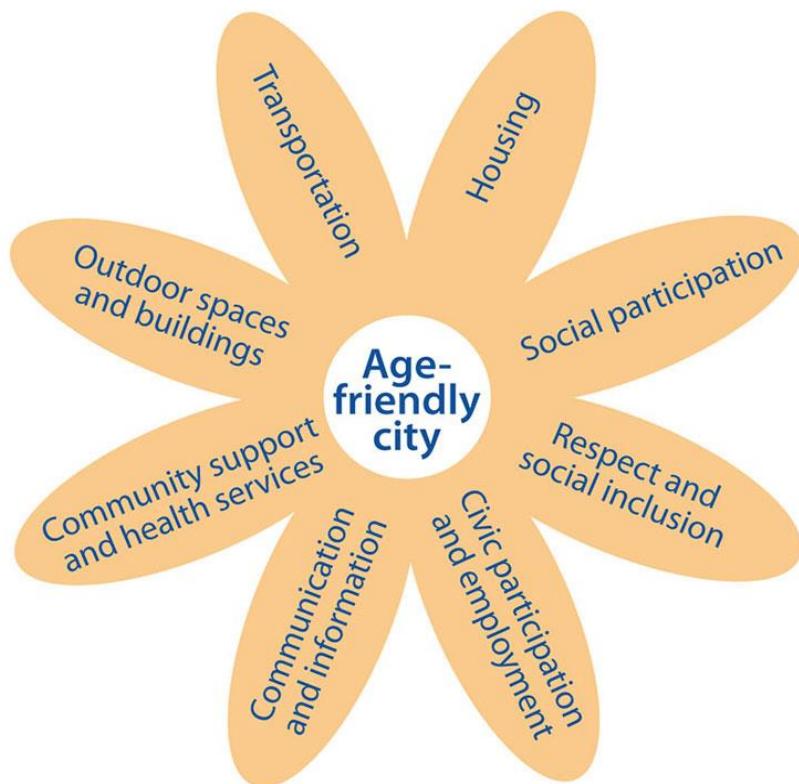
<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> City of Whittlesea, *Council Plan 2017-21* (2017) <<https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/media/2601/draft-council-plan-2017-2021.pdf>>, 7, accessed 5 Sept 2017.

### 1.3 The Political Context of This Report

#### Age-Friendly Communities

In a response to worldwide population ageing and urbanisation, the World Health Organization developed the global Age-Friendly Cities project in 2006.<sup>17</sup> In 33 communities around the world, focus groups were conducted with older people, caregivers, and service providers, to identify the key factors that make urban environments age-friendly.<sup>18</sup> In particular, the project identified eight major areas that make a community age-friendly: housing, transport, outdoor spaces and buildings, community support and health services, communication and information, civic participation and employment, respect and social inclusion, and social participation.<sup>19</sup>



Source: World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007).

<sup>17</sup> Tine Buffel and Chris Phillipson and Thomas Scharf, 'Ageing in Urban Environments: Developing Age-Friendly Cities', *Critical Social Policy*, 32/4 (2012), 599.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007) <[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 9, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

Importantly, these aspects of urban city life all overlap with one another.<sup>20</sup> For example, social participation and employment depend on the accessibility of the outdoor spaces and buildings, along with access to adequate transport and information services.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, housing impacts on the need for suitable community support services.<sup>22</sup>

This plan further developed the World Health Organization's earlier work on the concept of active ageing. In particular, active ageing refers to the process of enhancing opportunities for health, participation, and security, in order to improve quality of life as people age.<sup>23</sup> In an age-friendly community, government policies, services, settings, and structures support and assist people to actively age by anticipating and responding to the needs of older adults, respecting their lifestyle choices, promoting their inclusion in society, and protecting those who are among the most vulnerable.<sup>24</sup> To this end, an age-friendly community is a supportive and compassionate environment that allows its residents to age within their families and neighbourhoods, and fosters opportunities for participation throughout society.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Age-Friendly Victoria Declaration**

In April 2016, the Victorian Government, in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria, launched the Age-Friendly Victoria Declaration.<sup>26</sup> In particular, the Declaration created a commitment by the State Government to work together with local councils to build age-friendly communities in their respective areas.<sup>27</sup> As part of this agreement, the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>23</sup> World Health Organization, *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework* (2002) <[http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/67215/1/WHO\\_NMH\\_NPH\\_02.8.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/67215/1/WHO_NMH_NPH_02.8.pdf)>, 12, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>24</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007) <[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 5-6, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Kelly G. Fitzgerald and Francis G. Caro, 'An Overview of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Around the World', *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 28/18 (2014), 2.

<sup>26</sup> 'Age-Friendly Communities', *Municipal Association of Victoria* [website], (2016) <<http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/ageing-disability/ageing/Pages/age-friendly-cities-communities.aspx>>, para. 3, accessed 9 Sept. 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

state pledged to provide \$2.2 million in funding, delivered over four years, for various age-friendly projects directed by councils.<sup>28</sup> (*See Appendix*)

The background to the Declaration first began in 2005, when Victoria was invited to become a key partner in developing the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities project.<sup>29</sup> In particular, the McCaughey Centre at the University of Melbourne conducted research with the City of Maribyrnong, on behalf of the Council on the Ageing Victoria.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, in March 2013 the Age-Friendly Victoria initiative was launched, with the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation providing \$300,000 in initial funding support.<sup>31</sup>

## **1.4 Objectives of this Report**

This report examines current efforts to create age-friendly communities in Victoria's Northern Metropolitan Region. In particular, it seeks to test the age-friendly conditions in the region against the wider body of scholarly information that is available on the subject. To this end, this report explores the issues affecting older people in the region, spanning a range of topics including, housing options, transport services, the accessibility of outdoor spaces and buildings, and social participation, and evaluates the age-friendly approaches in place to assist senior residents. In addition, the report conducts a brief review of age-friendly plans from other countries, in order to draw lessons that can be applied to the Victorian political context. The report aims to determine which age-friendly areas are lacking, or in need of improvement, and to suggest policy recommendations accordingly.

## **1.5 Methodology**

This report draws on a blend of quantitative and qualitative information, including government and non-government reports, books, journals, statistical data, and websites. In addition, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, such as representatives from

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Hal Kendig et al., 'Developing Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Australia', *Journal of Aging and Health*, 26/8 (2014), 1396.

<sup>30</sup> 'Age-Friendly Cities and Communities', *Council on the Ageing Victoria* [website], (2016) <<https://cotavic.org.au/action-advocacy/age-friendly-communities/>>, accessed 9 Sept. 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

the Council on the Ageing, and the Municipal Association of Victoria, along with important staff members from local councils.

### **1.6 Limitations of this Report**

The range of issues that have an impact on older people in Victoria's Northern Metropolitan Region is simply vast. This report could have covered many more age-friendly areas and subjects in depth, but was limited by feasibility, practicality, and word limit. In addition, some of the recommendations inspired by the age-friendly plans in foreign cities may not directly translate to the Victorian political context.

## **Chapter 2: Issues and Approaches**

This chapter examines current efforts to create age-friendly communities throughout Victoria's Northern Metropolitan Region. In particular, it explores the issues that have an impact on older adults in the region, and evaluates the age-friendly plans and approaches in place to assist senior residents. In addition, this chapter considers the current level of State and Commonwealth Government support for age-friendly community projects in Victoria.

It is important to note that at the time of writing this report, various councils in the Northern Metropolitan Region have different age-friendly plans in place. Specifically, Darebin Council, Hume City Council, and Banyule City Council have created ageing strategies that include the World Health Organization's age-friendly framework. However, Moreland City Council and Yarra Council have plans in stages of development, while Whittlesea Council and the City of Melbourne have no dedicated age-friendly strategies at this time.

### **2.1 Lack of Government Support**

#### **Absence of Government Ageing Policy in Victoria**

In Victoria, there is a notable lack of policy direction on ageing from the State Government. In particular, at the time of writing this report there has been no statement from either the current government, or the opposition, on what their vision for an ageing community should look like, or what they might be prepared to fund and support.<sup>32</sup> Unlike other Australian states, including New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia, which have firm ageing strategies in place and clear statements on what they aim to achieve, there is no long or short term policy for Victoria.<sup>33</sup> Significantly, this has resulted in the creation of a policy vacuum throughout Victoria, which is having an impact on what local government can do, and how it should think about the future of its ageing communities.<sup>34</sup> However, although there is currently no clear policy direction for an age-friendly Victoria, the World Health Organization's age-friendly concept provides an excellent way forward for Victoria that is based on evidence, shaped by older people, and developed and applied worldwide.

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<sup>32</sup> Jan Bruce, 'Personal Interview', *Municipal Association of Victoria*, 12 October 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

### **Lack of an Age-Friendly Victoria Framework**

Although the 2016 Age-Friendly Victoria Declaration provides a general direction for an ageing strategy in Victoria, it does not set out a clear policy framework in order to create an age-friendly state.<sup>35</sup> In the main, this is because local governments have been conducting work around ageing policy for many years that is not directly related to the signing of the Age-Friendly Declaration, such as creating age-friendly shopping centres, upgrading footpaths to increase mobility, providing plug in points for electric wheelchairs, and getting older people involved in council planning and decision making.<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, the signing of the Age-Friendly Declaration was viewed by local councils as a way to publicly state their intentions to continue to create an age-friendly community, without having to sign up to the formal, World Health Organization network of age-friendly cities.<sup>37</sup> In addition, no councils are held accountable to any particular ageing policy compliance standards, and the Age-Friendly Declaration simply serves as a public statement of intent to continue working in the age-friendly field.<sup>38</sup>

### **Shortage of Funding For Age-Friendly Projects**

In Victoria, there is a lack of state and commonwealth funding for age-friendly projects and organizations.<sup>39</sup> In particular, following the launch of the Age-Friendly Victoria Declaration in 2016, the State Government initially delivered funding to councils for age-friendly programs and strategies in several rural areas across Victoria. However, financial assistance to metropolitan councils has now been placed on hold, and local governments are primarily responsible for funding age-friendly projects through their own resources and means.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the Commonwealth Government does not provide any additional funding support.<sup>41</sup> This is a problem because, when taking into account Victoria's ageing population, there is a clear need for greater acknowledgment and support from the state and federal

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Victoria De Lacy, 'Personal Interview', *Council on the Ageing Victoria*, 21 September 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Catherine Simcox, 'Personal Interview', *Banyule Council*, 27 September 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Jan Bruce, 'Personal Interview', *Municipal Association of Victoria*, 12 October 2017.

governments, including dedicated and allocated funding for organisations that help to foster and develop age-friendly communities, such as the Council on the Ageing Victoria.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.2 Social Participation

The process of ageing takes place within a framework of the family and wider social relationships.<sup>43</sup> In particular, older people are embedded within networks of social connections based around their family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, social participation and social support are strongly linked to well-being and good health throughout life.<sup>45</sup> For older adults, participation in family, cultural, leisure, and spiritual activities in the community allows them to establish and maintain supportive relationships with others, and to enjoy respect and esteem among their peers.<sup>46</sup>

In addition, social participation between older people helps to prevent loneliness and social isolation, which can have a harmful impact on the physical and mental health of individuals. Social isolation can be defined as the absence of relationships with family or friends on an individual level, and with society on a broader level.<sup>47</sup> While social isolation is not unique to older people, its danger can increase through common experiences associated with ageing, such as declining health, or the death of family and friends in a person's social network.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Victoria De Lacy, 'Personal Interview', *Council on the Ageing Victoria*, 21 September 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Christina Victor and Sasha Scambler and John Bond, *The Social World of Older People: Understanding Loneliness and Social Isolation in Later Life* (Maidenhead, BRK: Open University Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>45</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007) <[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 38, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Anne Pate, *Social Isolation: Its impact on the mental health and wellbeing of older Victorians* (2014) <[https://www.cotavic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Working-Paper\\_Social-Isolation.pdf](https://www.cotavic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Working-Paper_Social-Isolation.pdf)>, 6, accessed 30 Sept 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 8.

In an age-friendly community, there must be a range of accessible and affordable options for social participation for older residents.<sup>49</sup> These social activities should be both intergenerational and multicultural in character, allowing seniors to socialise with other age groups and cultures.<sup>50</sup> Further, social events need to be actively promoted by all levels of government to foster participation.<sup>51</sup>

In the Northern Metropolitan Region, Yarra Council funds a multicultural seniors club that helps to encourage social participation for older residents.<sup>52</sup> In addition, council provides funding and support for five Neighbourhood Houses throughout the Yarra region that host a variety of activities for older people, such as walks in the local area, group lunches, classes in information technology and art, and morning teas.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Hume City Council supports learning workshops, seniors clubs, and group physical activities that promote social engagement for older adults.<sup>54</sup> In the Darebin area, council have been working in collaboration with the local library outreach program to ensure that there is access to library services for older people who are socially isolated, have a disability, or may have limited access to transport services.<sup>55</sup> Finally, in the Banyule area, council coordinates and runs a regular bus trip that is entirely funded by older adults.<sup>56</sup> This gives many older people, who might otherwise not have the ability to do so, a means of staying socially connected through outings across Victoria.<sup>57</sup> While these approaches represent notable achievements for the Northern Metropolitan Region, further work can still be done to improve the social lives of older adults.

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<sup>49</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007) <[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 38-42, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Frances Moloney, ‘Personal Interview’, *Yarra Council*, 19 October 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Hume City Council, *Positive Ageing Strategy 2014-2024* (2014) <[https://www.hume.vic.gov.au/files/sharedassets/hume\\_website/your\\_say/2014/positive\\_aging/positive\\_ageing\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.hume.vic.gov.au/files/sharedassets/hume_website/your_say/2014/positive_aging/positive_ageing_strategy.pdf)>, 22, accessed 1 Sept 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Gillian Damonze, ‘Personal Interview’, *Darebin Council*, 18 October 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Catherine Simcox, ‘Personal Interview’, *Banyule Council*, 27 September 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

## 2.3 Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

The outdoor environment and public buildings have a key impact on the mobility, independence, and quality of life of older people, and affect their ability to age in place.<sup>58</sup> In an age-friendly community, the outside environment should be a clean and pleasant place, with green spaces such as parks for senior residents to enjoy.<sup>59</sup> Pavements and footpaths must be well maintained, because narrow, uneven, and broken pavements create hazards that affect the ability of older people to walk from place to place.<sup>60</sup> Further, the availability of adequate seating options, and safe pedestrian crossing points on busy roads are considered vital urban features for older people.<sup>61</sup> Finally, the design and planning of public buildings needs to consider the accessibility requirements of older people, including those who may be disabled or have limited mobility.<sup>62</sup> This includes important features such as elevators, ramps, non-slip flooring, suitable stairs with handrails, rest areas with seating, and public toilets with handicap access.<sup>63</sup>

In Australia, traditional low density urban development, a characteristic of many communities, has not been particularly age-friendly.<sup>64</sup> Features such as rapid suburb expansion, a lack of adequate footpaths, and a dependence on car use for mobility have often created barriers to the independence of older people.<sup>65</sup> However, well planned and thought out urban design can play a major role in allowing older adults to remain physically active and connected to their communities.<sup>66</sup> In addition, local councils have an important part to play in enhancing the urban landscape, and developing public spaces for the overall well-being and benefit of their communities.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007) <[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 12, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 13-14.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Bernard Isaacs, *Age-Friendly Built Environments: Opportunities for Local Government* (2006),

<[http://alga.asn.au/site/misc/alga/downloads/publications/Agefriendly\\_built\\_environment\\_paper.pdf](http://alga.asn.au/site/misc/alga/downloads/publications/Agefriendly_built_environment_paper.pdf)>, 3, accessed 3 Sept. 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 4.

In the Northern Metropolitan Region, Yarra Council have conducted urban planning to ensure that the seating options they install are spaced no further than two hundred metres apart to provide older people with places to rest, particularly near shopping centres and districts.<sup>68</sup> In the outdoor spaces around city squares, council have been working to make sure that there is adequate shading and public water fountains.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, in the Banyule area work is being carried out to maintain public footpaths and pavements.<sup>70</sup> In addition, council have installed a green-light-cycle system at many pedestrian crossings, which can be activated if an older adult is crossing the road and requires a longer green light pedestrian signal.<sup>71</sup> In Darebin, the Northcote Aquatic Centre is currently being reviewed for an upgrade, and council are making sure that the requirements of older people are being considered in its planning and development.<sup>72</sup> In particular, this includes the need for acceptable seating and shading, appropriate handrails, and sufficient and accessible public toilets.<sup>73</sup>

## 2.4 Transportation

Accessible and affordable transport is a major factor that guides the process of active ageing.<sup>74</sup> In particular, being able to freely move around their community influences the ability of older people to work, access medical services, and engage in social activities.<sup>75</sup> In Australia, driving has traditionally remained an important transport choice for older people, particularly those in the Baby Boomer generation, allowing seniors to retain a sense of independence and purpose.<sup>76</sup> In a recent survey of Victorians aged 55 years and over, the Council on the Ageing Victoria found that when asked how they preferred to move around

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<sup>68</sup> Frances Moloney, ‘Personal Interview’, *Yarra Council*, 19 October 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Catherine Simcox, ‘Personal Interview’, *Banyule Council*, 27 September 2017.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Gillian Damonze, ‘Personal Interview’, *Darebin Council*, 18 October 2017.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007)

<[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 20, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Colette Browning and Jane Sims, ‘Ageing without Driving’ in Currie, Grahame et al. (eds.), *No Way to Go: Transport and Social Disadvantage in Australian Communities* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Press, 2007), 8.

in their community, 71% of respondents preferred to drive themselves.<sup>77</sup> However, this figure decreased with age, dropping from 70% in the group of people aged 50 to 54 years, to 59% in those aged 85 and above.<sup>78</sup> This highlights the fact that as people age, there is a need for a broader range of transport choices, including reliable public transport options.

For a community to be considered age-friendly, public transport services should be both available and affordable for senior residents, with cost seen as a significant obstacle that affects older people's transport use.<sup>79</sup> Further, transport services should be frequent and reliable, and include age-friendly vehicles with accessible features such as floors that lower, and low steps.<sup>80</sup> In addition, the design, location, and accessibility of transport stations and stops should be considered, in order to ensure that they are placed close to where older people live, and include ramps, escalators, and accessible platforms.<sup>81</sup>

In the Northern Metropolitan Region, Darebin Council recently encountered a transport planning issue with the age-friendly, low-floor trams in the area.<sup>82</sup> Although there are many of these trams available, there are not enough stops to accommodate them.<sup>83</sup> This meant that people with limited mobility, including seniors and those with a disability, have not been able to get off where they want.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, council had a concern with Melbourne Water who are upgrading a water pipe that runs down St Georges Road in Northcote.<sup>85</sup> In order to carry out this work, a bike path which follows the length of the road had to be fenced off.<sup>86</sup> However, by sectioning off the path, older people who were trying to cross the road to access trams stops had to walk to the closest intersection.<sup>87</sup> For seniors with limited

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<sup>77</sup> Council on the Ageing, *50+ Consumer Survey 2016-2017: Focusing on older peoples' access to their community and information* (2017) <<https://cotavic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/20170602-COTA-VICTORIA-50-REPORT.pdf>>, 3, accessed 21 Aug. 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007) <[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 20, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 21-22.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>82</sup> Gillian Damonze, 'Personal Interview', *Darebin Council*, 18 October 2017.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

mobility, this presented a significant problem.<sup>88</sup> These issues help to illustrate the point that the age-friendly requirements of older people must be considered when planning for transport services.

### **Community Transport Services**

Community transport services offer a valuable transport alternative for older people. In Victoria, community transport is provided in many communities to supplement limited, or non-existent public transport options.<sup>89</sup> In particular, these services help to meet the needs of older residents who are often unable to access other forms of transport, and are funded and supported by local councils.<sup>90</sup> However, a 2009 report by the Municipal Association of Victoria found that community transport services in 84% of Victorian councils do not adequately meet needs of older residents.<sup>91</sup> A key issue is the fact that community transport is underfunded in Victoria, with the lack of a coherent policy framework around the role and function of services.<sup>92</sup> Further, the provision of community transport is under pressure from rises in fuel prices, and a shortage of secure funding for the purchase, maintenance, and insurance cover of vehicles.<sup>93</sup> Combined, these factors make it difficult for local councils to provide effective community transport services for senior residents.

In the Northern Metropolitan Region, Banyule Council currently owns no community transport vehicles.<sup>94</sup> A third party operator provides senior residents with transport, however, there is an eligibility criteria that is based around availability, and at present there is a greater demand than available services.<sup>95</sup> In the Yarra area, council funds a community transport service that is free for older adults to access.<sup>96</sup> Seniors are transported to and

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Municipal Association of Victoria, *Community Transport Research Report* (2009) <[http://www.tpmplanning.com/uploads/3/8/3/6/3836891/mav\\_community\\_transport\\_report\\_april\\_2009.pdf](http://www.tpmplanning.com/uploads/3/8/3/6/3836891/mav_community_transport_report_april_2009.pdf)>, 4, accessed 4 Oct. 2017.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Council on the Ageing, *Older Victorians Will Decide: COTA Victoria State Election Platform 2014* (2014) <<https://cotavic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/FULL-COTA-State-Election-Platform-2014.pdf>>, 7, accessed 20 Aug. 2017.

<sup>93</sup> Municipal Association of Victoria, *Community Transport Research Report* (2009) <[http://www.tpmplanning.com/uploads/3/8/3/6/3836891/mav\\_community\\_transport\\_report\\_april\\_2009.pdf](http://www.tpmplanning.com/uploads/3/8/3/6/3836891/mav_community_transport_report_april_2009.pdf)>, 5, accessed 4 Oct. 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Catherine Simcox, ‘Personal Interview’, *Banyule Council*, 27 September 2017.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Frances Moloney, ‘Personal Interview’, *Yarra Council*, 19 October 2017.

from gyms, hydrotherapy sessions, exercise groups, and cultural activities.<sup>97</sup> These examples highlight the varied experience of community transport services in different parts of the Northern Metropolitan Region. In addition, they point to the wider need for state funding and policy support to ensure that an essential transport option can continue to be effective.

## 2.5 Housing

The home environment has a major impact on older people's ability to participate in the community, and to uphold their sense of meaning in life.<sup>98</sup> In particular, the home is connected to the key activities of everyday life, such as sleeping, cooking, and spending time with family.<sup>99</sup> For this reason, secure and appropriate housing is an essential element for the security and wellbeing of older adults, allowing them to age comfortably within their own communities.<sup>100</sup>

In Australia, data indicates that home ownership is declining at a faster rate for older adults than among the rest of the population.<sup>101</sup> In 2006, 63.8% of people aged 55 years and over owned their own home.<sup>102</sup> By 2011, this figure had dropped to 60.5%.<sup>103</sup> In addition, Australia's stock of affordable social and public housing is decreasing, and as of September 2015, there were 34,726 people on the public housing waiting list in Victoria.<sup>104</sup> Further, there are increasing numbers of seniors living in insecure private rental accommodation, where they pay on average 65% of their income in rent.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Catherine Bridge and Hal Kendig, 'Housing and Older People: Environments, Professionals and Positive Ageing' in Minichiello, Victor, and Coulson, Irene (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Gerontology: Promoting Positive Ageing* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 144.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007)

<[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 30, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>101</sup> Aged and Community Services Australia, *The Future of Housing for Older Australians: Position Paper* (2015) <<https://www.acsa.asn.au/getattachment/Publications-Submissions/Submissions/2015-submissions/ACSA-Housing-Position-Paper-January-2015-1.pdf.aspx?lang=en-AU>>, 6, accessed 2 Sept. 2017.

<sup>102</sup> Council on the Ageing, *Homes for Life: Towards an Older Persons Housing Strategy* (2016) <<https://cotavic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Older-Persons-Housing-Strategy-Nov-2016.pdf>>, 2, accessed 2 Sept. 2017.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

In an age-friendly community, there must be a range of affordable and appropriate housing options for older adults.<sup>106</sup> These should be located close to transport and other essential services.<sup>107</sup> In addition, housing options need to incorporate age-friendly design features, such as level surfaces, wide doorways to accommodate wheelchairs, and appropriate bathroom and kitchen facilities.<sup>108</sup>

In the area of age-friendly housing design, a significant Australian milestone was reached in 2010, with the introduction of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.<sup>109</sup> Developed with input from all three levels of government, in collaboration with the aged, disability, and construction sectors, the guidelines provide instruction and technical direction on the key features required to make new homes more accessible for older adults.<sup>110</sup> In accordance with these rules, any new dwellings must be easy to enter, with wide doors and hallways, be simple and cost-effective to adapt and modify, and be able to respond to the changing needs of its occupants.<sup>111</sup> Notably, the guidelines have had a positive impact on a number of new houses currently being developed in the Banyule area.<sup>112</sup>

In the Northern Metropolitan Region, Banyule Council is planning to undertake research throughout the area to locate clusters of naturally occurring retirement communities, where older residents prefer to live and age in place.<sup>113</sup> In these locations, council will determine which essential services are already established, and what needs to be provided in the future.<sup>114</sup> In Darebin, meanwhile, there are a number of sites throughout the area that contain public housing properties.<sup>115</sup> There is currently a drive by the State Government to sell off these houses to private construction firms to be redeveloped into a mix of private

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<sup>106</sup> World Health Organization, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007) <[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)>, 30, accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Aged and Community Services Australia, *The Future of Housing for Older Australians: Position Paper* (2015) <<https://www.acsa.asn.au/getattachment/Publications-Submissions/Submissions/2015-submissions/ACSA-Housing-Position-Paper-January-2015-1.pdf.aspx?lang=en-AU>>, 9, accessed 2 Sept. 2017.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Catherine Simcox, ‘Personal Interview’, *Banyule Council*, 27 September 2017.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Gillian Damonze, ‘Personal Interview’, *Darebin Council*, 18 October 2017.

and social housing stock.<sup>116</sup> However, while this plan would result in new housing options in the area, a large number of current residents, including seniors, will need to be rehoused before being able to return to their new homes.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, in the Yarra area, council has engaged with representatives from the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, and the University of Melbourne, along with policy officers from other councils, to examine the State Government's public housing redevelopment plan.<sup>118</sup> In Yarra, there is a large percentage of older residents who depend on community housing accommodation, and need to be included in any redevelopment plans for social housing.<sup>119</sup> These issues and approaches highlight the various housing concerns facing seniors in the Northern Metropolitan Region. In addition, they suggest that further state and commonwealth government support is required to ensure that older adults can age comfortably in their communities.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Frances Moloney, 'Personal Interview', *Yarra Council*, 19 October 2017.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 3: Looking Abroad - Age-Friendly Plans in Other Countries**

### **3.1 Portland**

As with communities in the Northern Metropolitan Region, the city of Portland is ageing. In particular, between 2010 and 2030, it is anticipated that the proportion of people aged 65 years and over will increase by 106%.<sup>120</sup> To meet this challenge, in 2013 the city of Portland created an Age-Friendly Action Plan.<sup>121</sup>

In the area of housing, the strategy includes streamlined guidance and technical assistance to help developers to construct new age-friendly homes, including information on building codes and zoning regulations.<sup>122</sup> In addition, the plan aims to foster age-friendly housing design by supporting demonstration projects, and promoting home design competitions.<sup>123</sup>

To encourage social participation in Portland, the plan includes the creation of a comprehensive directory of age-friendly activities for both senior residents, and older adults visiting the city.<sup>124</sup> In particular, this includes information on cultural and spiritual activities, and health and life-long learning programs.<sup>125</sup>

### **3.2 Dublin**

The population of Dublin is also growing older. In 2011, more than one in five residents were aged 55 or older, with this figure expected to increase over time.<sup>126</sup> As a result, in 2014 Dublin developed its Age-Friendly City Plan.<sup>127</sup>

To administer and implement its strategy, Dublin created a City Alliance and five Local Area Alliances.<sup>128</sup> Chaired by the Lord Mayor, these alliances bring together key stakeholders, including representatives of older people, and members of the academic, civic, and private

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<sup>120</sup> Portland State University, *Action Plan for an Age-Friendly Portland* (2013) <<https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/home-and-family/livable-communities/2014-01/age-friendly-portland-action-plan.pdf>>, 2, accessed 18 Sept. 2017.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 3-5.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Dublin City Council, *Dublin City Age Friendly Strategy 2014-2019* (2014), 3.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 8.

sectors.<sup>129</sup> In addition, each Local Area Alliance is supported by an Older Persons Council that allows senior residents to come together to share their concerns and inform the policy making process.<sup>130</sup>

In the area of outdoor spaces and buildings, the strategy calls for Dublin Council's planning department to liaise with the relevant Local Area Alliance when creating work plans, to ensure that the needs of older residents are taken into account.<sup>131</sup> Further, companies and service providers who are conducting development, or redevelopment work in the public domain, must consult with an Older Persons Council.<sup>132</sup>

### **3.3 New York City**

New York City is also facing an ageing population. From 2005 to 2030, the number of adults who are aged 65 years and over will grow by 47%, from 922,000 to more than 1.35 million residents.<sup>133</sup> To address this concern, in 2009 New York City introduced an age-friendly city strategy.<sup>134</sup>

In order to enhance public transport accessibility for senior residents, the New York City plan requires elevators and escalators at train stations to be functional and reliable.<sup>135</sup> To this end, the city developed a program to install electronic monitoring devices that would inform transport staff if a lift or escalator stopped working.<sup>136</sup> In addition, the city created an email subscription service for older passengers to receive an email alerting them in the event that an elevator or escalator broke down at a particular station.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Michael R. Bloomberg, *Age Friendly NYC: Enhancing Our City's Livability for Older New Yorkers* (2009) <[http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/age\\_friendly/agefriendlynyc.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/age_friendly/agefriendlynyc.pdf)>, 6, accessed 18 Sept. 2017.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Recommendations**

This report finds that local governments in Victoria's Northern Metropolitan Region have made significant progress in building age-friendly communities. In particular, in the areas of social participation and urban design for outdoor spaces and public buildings, councils have had a positive impact on the lives of older residents. However, in the domains of transport planning, community transport services, and housing options, further work and support is required to ensure that older residents can age comfortably within their communities. In addition, this report finds that there is a notable absence of policy and funding support from the State Government, making it difficult for local councils, and organisations like the Council on the Ageing Victoria, to have a meaningful influence. In accordance, this report makes the following recommendations:

### **4.1 Policy**

The State Government should establish a clear policy direction on ageing for Victoria. In particular, there is a need for leadership, vision, and support to ensure that older people and local councils have a firm understanding of what the future of their communities will look like. This policy should be ground in the evidence based Age-Friendly Cities framework that has been developed by the World Health Organization.

### **4.2 Funding Support**

To foster the development of age-friendly communities in the Northern Metropolitan Region, dedicated and allocated funding support should be provided to local councils, and to organizations that advocate for seniors, at the state and commonwealth level.

### **4.3 Management and Implementation**

This report recommends the creation of a coalition of key stakeholders to oversee and implement age-friendly strategies throughout the Northern Metropolitan Region. Drawing on the work of the Dublin City Age-Friendly plan, this alliance should be chaired by a senior representative of local government, and bring together older people with members of the academic, community, and private sectors.

#### **4.4 Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

Once established, this report recommends that local councils, companies, and service providers in the Northern Metropolitan Region should coordinate with this coalition when developing work plans that impact on the urban environment, to ensure that the needs of older residents are fully considered.

#### **4.5 Social Participation**

To promote social participation, this report suggests the creation of a comprehensive directory of age-friendly activities for senior residents in the Northern Metropolitan Region, and for older adults visiting the area. In line with work undertaken in the city of Portland, this directory should include information on cultural events, health and leisure activities, and life-long learning programs.

#### **4.6 Community Transport**

Community transport provides a key option for many seniors in the Northern Metropolitan Region. To maintain and enhance this service, this report recommends that the State Government provide funding support to local councils and transport providers. In particular, financial assistance would aid in the purchase, maintenance, and insurance cover of vehicles.

#### **4.7 Housing**

To promote the building of new age-friendly homes, this report recommends that local governments provide developers with advice and technical assistance, including information on building codes and zoning regulations. In particular, this should include details on the Australian Liveable Housing Design Guidelines. In addition, in line with work undertaken in Portland, councils should foster age-friendly housing design by supporting demonstration projects, and promoting home design competitions.

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## Appendix



# /AGE-FRIENDLY VICTORIA

## DECLARATION

### Vision

The vision of the Victorian Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria in signing this Declaration is for better state and local planning for the creation of age-friendly communities. This is the focus of our shared activities on common goals and directions.

Population ageing is a world-wide phenomenon as a consequence of increasing life expectancy. In Victoria, people are living longer and many of today's young Victorians will live beyond 90, even 100, years. We need to create communities that respond to this significant social change and better support people as they age.

It is vital that governments focus on the opportunities as well as the challenges of an ageing population. While older people contribute significantly to our communities, there is more to be done to support and develop the roles and contributions of older people. Ageing populations require actions that promote quality of life and wellbeing, value the contributions that older people make to their communities, remove barriers to participation, and enable people to 'age in place' and maintain local connections and community belonging.

Age-friendly communities encourage active ageing and optimise opportunities for good health, social and economic participation and personal security. They recognise the great diversity of our older population, promote inclusion of older people and respect their decisions and lifestyle choices. They involve service providers, businesses, community leaders and older people in planning to meet ageing-related needs. They enhance quality of life for people as they age, and benefit the whole community.

Local government plays a key role in planning and establishing age-friendly communities and has been assisted in this by the Victorian Government in collaboration with the Municipal Association of Victoria. The Victorian approach is informed by the World Health Organization's *Age-friendly Cities* framework, and the experience of councils' use of World Health Organization's information and tools.

Experience shows that the best way to strengthen the age-friendly capacity of local communities is through partnerships between seniors, governments, communities, businesses, services and support agencies. In partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Victorian Government has been supporting local government since 2006 with initiatives aimed at improving their capacity to plan for and support seniors, and to create communities that better accommodate their ageing populations.

This partnership approach has raised the awareness of ageing across both levels of government, improved knowledge and understanding of international age-friendly cities and communities, and created local age-friendly initiatives. This Declaration builds on these strengths and furthers the partnership between state and local government to continue to support and assist Victorian councils to create age-friendly communities.

Martin Foley MP

Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

Date: 14 April 2016

Cr Bill McArthur

President, Municipal Association of Victoria

### Commitment

The Victorian Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria will build the age-friendly capacity of local communities by:

1. **promoting an age-friendly Victoria** through the role and achievements of local government in creating age-friendly communities and providing leadership to encourage local councils and stakeholders to develop the principles of the age-friendly cities and community directions
2. **supporting** state and local planning processes to create age-friendly communities and using the knowledge, information and tools available through the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities
3. **providing** local councils with leading advice, expertise, access to networks, policy information and other support to encourage local age-friendly initiatives
4. **empowering** seniors' involvement in local age-friendly initiatives by assisting councils to develop active engagement structures and models of localised seniors community input
5. **encouraging** seniors to get involved in areas they see as important such as local community transport, volunteering, community participation, diversity of housing options, seniors safety, technology access and lifelong learning
6. **addressing** the built environment, transport, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication, and community support and health services for age-friendly communities as listed in the 2008 World Health Organization's *Age-friendly Cities: A Guide*
7. **valuing** stakeholder engagement and working together to promote and strengthen partnerships with peak bodies, community organisations, businesses, retailers and council-run facilities.

The undersigned council endorses and supports the intention and commitments of this Declaration.

Mayor

Council

Date

