



What matters to you?

Engagement Report 2018

COTA NSW Consumer Reference Groups





The COTA NSW Consumer Reference Groups

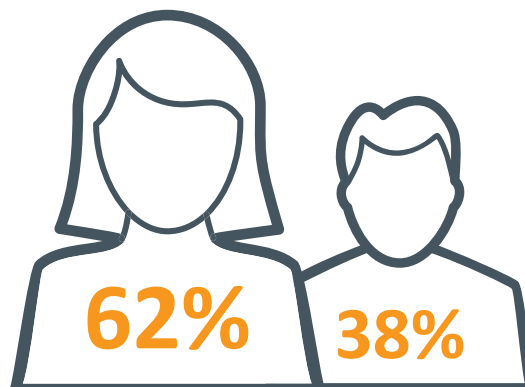
COTA NSW undertakes an annual round of Consumer Reference Groups (CRGs) that provide an opportunity for people over 50 living in NSW to discuss a range of issues that are important to them. Our network of CRGs provides a coordinated, ongoing 'feedback loop' from consumers that contributes to COTA NSW's research and informs our policy and advocacy activities. The information gathered from the consultations is considered along with the quantitative data collected from COTA NSW and COTA national surveys to inform our policy and advocacy activities. That information is integrated into documents such as our annual COTA NSW Pre Budget Submission and for the purposes of this year's consultations to inform the COTA NSW Pre-Election Priorities.

Introduction

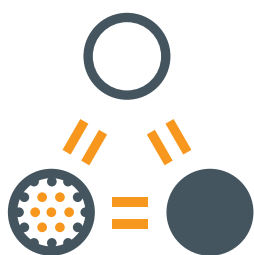
In NSW, people aged over 50 equate to 44% of the eligible voters in the state¹. This is a significant portion of the population. In the lead up to the NSW state election in March 2019, COTA NSW undertook 18 CRGs, speaking with over 300 consumers. Participants attending the groups represented a total of 51% of NSW State electorates. Over a period of six months we visited both regional centres and metropolitan areas to seek the views

of older people on a range of issues. These consultations provided valuable insights into regional and metro differences, areas of priority and personal stories that highlight the impact of existing policy on older people's lives. This report provides a summary of the issues raised at the CRGs. A summary of priority issues discussed at each location we visited is included in the appendix.

Those aged 50+
make up
44%
of eligible
voters in NSW



CRG participants were comprised
of **62%** females and **38%** males



20%
of CRG participants came from culturally
and linguistically diverse backgrounds

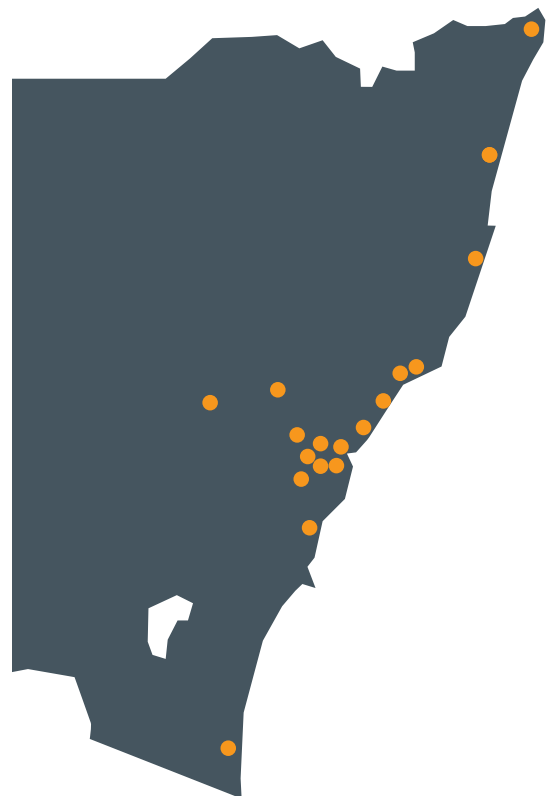
¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census of Population and Housing

Methodology

COTA NSW conducted a series of “What matters to you?” consultations in the locations below, from February 2018 to July 2018. The groups were capped at a maximum of 20 participants, with an average attendance of 15 attendees and an age range from 50 to 85 plus. In the consultations we asked participants to consider what issues matter most to them and their community within a framework of the five

themes of the NSW Ageing Strategy 2016-2020: Health and wellbeing, Working and retiring, Housing choices, Getting around, and Inclusive communities. An additional opportunity was provided to document anything that fell outside these topics, such as Aged Care or other Commonwealth responsibilities that could be recorded and inform policy discussion at a COTA national level.

51%
of NSW State
electorates were
represented



Wollongong Port Macquarie Penrith Central Coast Rockdale Coffs Harbour

Parramatta Dee Why Bankstown Bega Port Stephens Sydney CBD

Fairfield Bathurst Blue Mountains Newcastle Campbelltown Tweed Heads

Methodology

Participants represented the following NSW State electorates:



Methodology



Methodology

After introducing the purpose of the consultations and providing a brief description of each of the themes, the groups were each asked to consider the same five questions:



Health and wellbeing

What gets in the way of you leading an active, healthy lifestyle and having a good quality of life?
Tell us about your experience.



Working and retiring

Tell us about what's important to you when it comes to work and retirement. Have you encountered any problems?



Housing choices

Tell us about the biggest housing challenges you face.
What is your experience?



Getting around

Tell us about what gets in the way of you getting around your local community?
What is your experience?



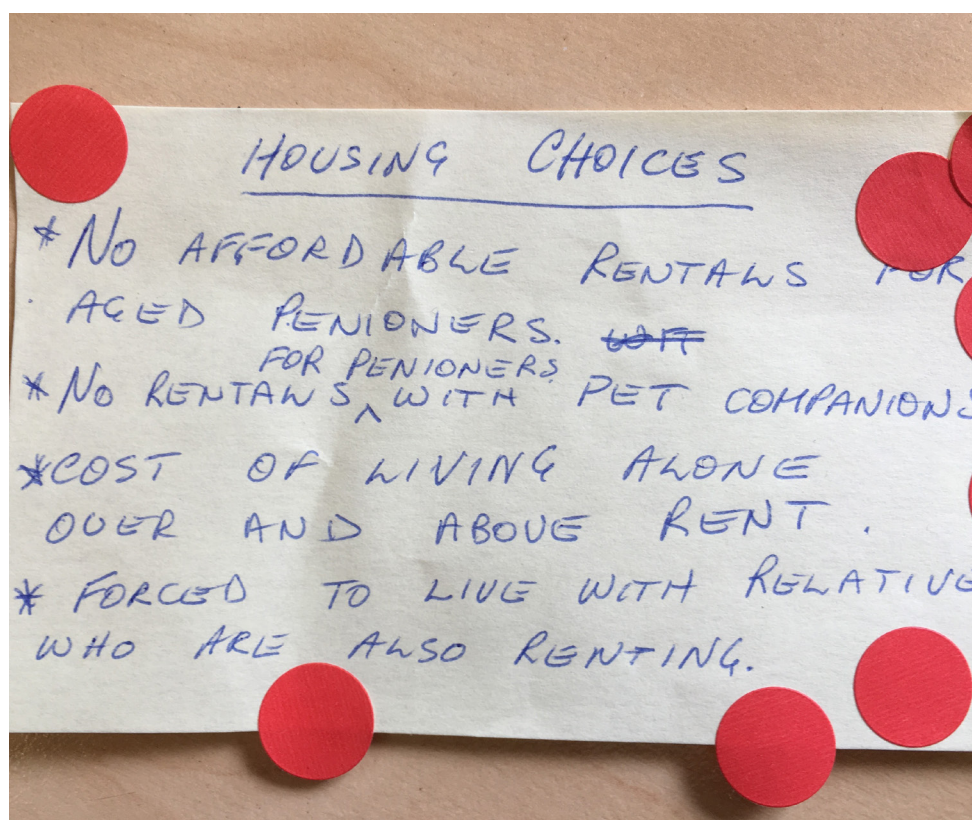
Inclusive communities

Tell us about what is getting in the way of you participating more fully in your local community?
What is your experience?

Methodology

The questions were posted on butcher's paper on the walls around the consultation rooms. Participants were given post-it notes and pens and asked to write down their responses and then place under the appropriate theme. To enable a more focused discussion within the given time, the group was asked to prioritise the issues that they wished to explore in greater depth. To facilitate this, each participant was provided with three dots which they could place in any combination on their own post-it notes or another participant.

The facilitator was then able to discern the priority issues of the group (usually 3). If time allowed, participants were given an opportunity at the end of the session to briefly raise other issues that they wished for the group to explore in greater detail. The facilitator then prompted the group to discuss the priority issues and ideas in more depth. The responses from group members was recorded and transcribed and are summarised under the themes detailed throughout the rest of the report.





Health and wellbeing



There is a clear divide between metropolitan and regional/rural consultations in this theme.

For country areas, access and affordability of medical services, particularly those of medical specialists is a major concern and in many cases a source of stress and financial hardship. The participants at consultations held in Bega, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour described the limitations on access to bulk billing General Practitioners and specialists. In some locations, specialists visited en masse monthly to see patients over the course of a day. In many cases, participants had to travel to major centres such as Canberra, Sydney or Newcastle to receive medical care specific to their condition, such as oncologists, neurologists and endocrinologists, that was not available or unaffordable in their towns.

If the state government wants to ease population growth in Sydney they need to provide more health services such as adequate hospitals in regional areas then maybe more people our age would consider moving.

Service delivery and linkages with local transport also arose as a concern in areas outside of metropolitan NSW. In some instances, the hospitals are located outside the town centres that were not on a regular bus route. There were stories of patients being discharged in off-peak hours when public or community transport was unavailable, and the use of a taxi would be cost prohibitive. One participant described an instance when she saw an older woman attempting the 5km walk back to town from the base hospital.

Health and wellbeing

A common complaint from all regions was the need for improved communication training for medical staff, particularly those working in hospitals. It was felt that in many situations staff spoke to older people in a condescending manner or that medical terminology was not explained in plain English to ensure the patient was adequately informed. For attendees from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, written information provided in community languages or access to interpreters is seen as critical, but is often missing.

In urban areas a broader discussion was held regarding the link between healthy, well planned urban environments and health and wellbeing. People are concerned that the pace of development means liveability in communities is reduced. The increase in density and subsequent loss of greenspace impacted their willingness to undertake outdoor exercise and social connectedness in their suburbs.

“Planners just don’t take into account the impact of rapid development or population change on people – particularly older people.”

The affordability and availability of appropriate group exercise classes was also expressed as a hinderance to participating in physical activity. In many instances, there were a number of subsidised or free exercise groups available in their suburbs or towns, but people were not aware of them. The need to promote these groups in a variety of formats or venues was suggested. Some participants do not have access to the internet or they aren’t comfortable with the technology so seek their information from traditional sources such as the local newspapers, local government, libraries or local community services.

“How do you find a gym that will cater for older people? We need professionals who understand our needs with regards to flexibility and strength training. Local gyms do not cater to or understand this at all. Yoga, Pilates are almost impossible to find in Blacktown for older people.”

The importance of access to mental health services for older people was also emphasised, with greater investment in preventative programs to support people experiencing loneliness and social isolation. The need for improved promotion of grief support services was also mentioned in several locations.



Working and retiring



As the consultations were held during the day, the proportion of attendees in the younger age group 50 – 65 was lower than those participants that had retired. Consequently, feedback from those currently employed was limited. However, in four locations the challenges faced by older workers was prioritised by the group.

There was a consensus that older workers have important experience and knowledge that would be beneficial to employers, but felt that older workers are actively discriminated against because of their age. For those seeking employment or further hours finding a job is difficult and dispiriting, particularly in regional centres. In these instances, employment opportunities are often limited to tourism (where younger workers were valued) or aged care (where transport was a necessity

and could be physically challenging). For those seeking work outside these areas there are very few networking opportunities that they can tap into or get past the initial recruitment phase.

One participant who felt that he was underemployed because of his age said:

I have been underemployed as I get older. I had a long and successful career in IT and have recently moved from Sydney to Newcastle but have struggled to find work. No one wants to hire me because I'm too old. I have had to start my own consultancy to earn an income. It has been difficult financially as I am also recently divorced.

Working and retiring

Members of another group expressed concern around changes to the retirement age and inability to access the age pension before 67. Their family and friends who work in factories or in jobs requiring manual labour and are experiencing health challenges that often prevent them from continuing in these occupations. Re-training at this age is often difficult due to English proficiency and educational attainment, resulting in reliance on Newstart payments that is inadequate to support a family.

The need for employers to develop and support policies that allow employees to transition out of the workforce was discussed. Many participants wanted and, in many cases, needed to continue working for the foreseeable future but would like to reduce their hours as they aged, which in most cases was not an option with their current employer.

I would like to have a little paid, part-time work for maybe one day per week, but I am considered too old although I am experienced, capable and reliable.

For those that are no longer in paid employment, the importance of still being able to contribute through volunteerism was raised. The need for organisations that employ volunteers to provide adequate training, conduct risk assessments and utilise skills was highlighted by attendees who were current volunteers.

My voluntary work keeps me alive!



Housing choices



Affordability, availability and accessibility of housing was of primary importance in all the consultations, in both regional and metropolitan areas and all age cohorts.

The inability to access affordable rental accommodation was highlighted as critical issue by participants in locations such as Coffs Harbour, Central Coast and the Tweed – although it was raised in most groups. For older people receiving income support the availability of adequate inexpensive rental accommodation in these areas is dire, with some attendees stating that they had experienced homelessness or were currently relying on friends and family for somewhere to stay.

Case study: Betty², 82, Tweed Heads

Betty is currently living with relatives who are renting, she has no superannuation or savings – and also owns a dog. She has attempted to secure private rental but has been advised that owners or real-estate agents won't approve her due to the dog. She is currently in the NSW Housing Pathways Program, but no progress has been made. The current situation is precarious as her relative's rental situation is also tenuous. The option of renting a van in a Residential Park has become harder as they live in a tourist focused region and many sites are being redeveloped. Betty has also been on the NSW social housing waiting list for 5 years.

² Name changed for privacy

Housing choices

These same regional areas, where the perceived lifestyle benefits often attract retirees, are also experiencing high rates of homelessness, particularly amongst older women. Together with a lack of affordable rental properties there were also long waiting lists for social housing and insufficient community housing. This results in many older people sleeping in cars or couch surfing. Another participant in Coffs Harbour had also experienced homelessness and resorted to sleeping in her car due to the affordability of properties in the area and limited income. She had managed to acquire share accommodation and to get back on her feet. Older people in regional areas stressed the importance of ensuring that the community, politicians and decision makers understood it to be an issue that impacts beyond the Sydney metropolitan area, which is often the focus of the media and government departments.

The decrease in the number of Residential Parks in coastal areas was raised in several locations. In many cases this was one of the few options left to older people on fixed incomes - but have become scarce in areas such as the Central and South Coast.

For those participants who live in social housing, there is an acknowledgement that they feel fortunate to be living in secure and affordable housing – particularly as they aged. However, a number of concerns were raised about the difficulty in obtaining support from NSW Housing in relation to anti-social behaviours and maintenance. It was noted that some older residents do not feel safe in some locations, and are becoming increasingly socially isolated as they are fearful of leaving their homes.

There is broad support for ageing in place – remaining in communities and close to family, friends and familiar services. For some this meant remaining in their own homes, for others downsizing into a smaller property or moving into retirement living.

“It is important to be able to stay in your own home as long as you are able. I want to be near my friends and family.”

Housing choices

Participants understood the importance of improved housing design that included accessible and adaptable features to support them to live in their homes for longer. It was suggested that NSW Housing could support this concept by ensuring that all new social and community housing was designed and constructed based on universal design principles.

“There is a lack of two bedroom and one bedroom units at ground level or ramped units other than retirement villages.”

There were mixed experiences for those attendees residing in retirement living complexes. Many were happy with their decision and enjoyed the social aspects of this model and felt confident that they understood the financial and legal implications of such a move. For others, there was a fear of the legal and financial complexities of moving into a retirement village and some were unclear about where they could seek independent advice.

The possibility of downsizing was discussed in a couple of locations. In some situations, for those that had downsized into a unit, villa or townhouse, the cost of increasing strata fees and unexpected sinking funds had not been fully considered when they had

purchased their property and consequently was causing financial hardship to meet these costs. There was also a concern that the costs of moving – including buy/selling fees and stamp duty – were a disincentive to downsizing, and that often there aren't suitable and well-designed properties available to downsize to.

There was broad support for the need to explore innovative housing models to meet the needs of an ageing population and the issue of housing affordability. The idea of co-housing was suggested as an alternative model that may be of interest, particularly amongst older women on fixed incomes. There was a call for greater discourse and financial investment (both public and private) about these models to raise awareness and support of these innovations.





Getting around



Issues relating to the theme of getting around dominated most consultations in both metropolitan and regional areas.

Poor footpaths are not only a trip hazard for ordinary folk but a problem for those using a walking aid.

A consistent theme for participants across many of the groups is that their greatest impediment is the lack of footpaths and/or poor footpath maintenance. In some locations where there are no footpaths, people are forced to walk on the roads. Pedestrian-friendly footpaths was regularly highlighted as a much-needed amenity that most participants believed would improve their

ability to get around, particularly enhancing their ability to walk for leisure and exercise and to get to and from shopping and public transport hubs. Many attendees said that they did not feel confident or safe walking in their neighbourhoods without paths and this influenced their willingness to leave their homes and contributed to a feeling of social isolation. The compliance with Australian Standards in the Access Code for paths and kerb ramps was a major issue. Some examples were provided of members of the public who use wheel chairs or scooters that fell out onto the road due to the steepness of the ramps.

Lumps and bumps or cracks in footpaths make it difficult if you are in a wheelchair.

Getting around

I know I'd go out more if we had better footpaths in our area.

In Sydney metropolitan areas, the Blue Mountains, Wollongong and on the Central Coast the accessibility of public transport and lift access at train stations were frequently cited by participants in these groups as a major barrier for older people needing to travel in this manner. Access to upgraded train stations with lifts on the same line is not always easy due to connecting bus services or insufficient parking. There was confusion amongst participants regarding the criteria used by Transport for NSW to determine priority of upgrades which led to a belief that upgrades to stations were not based on community need. Changes to bus routes and the removal of bus stops in both Sydney and Newcastle was also highlighted as confusing and frustrating for local public transport users.

In regional areas, the availability and cost of public and community transport was highlighted as a barrier to getting around. Public bus services that connected town centres with education and medical precincts – that were often located on the outskirts of towns – was often limited, if it existed at all. Older people who no longer drive have to rely on booking community transport or a taxi service. Again, in many regional areas the geographic coverage of community transport was restricted making it difficult to attend medical appointments in other towns or regional centres.



Inclusive communities



The method by which participants wished to receive or seek information about the services and activities available in their communities arose as a key issue across the consultations. There was a general frustration that in many instances information is solely located online. Attendees felt that this is excluding, in particular for those without internet access or who did not feel technologically proficient in this space (this feedback was particularly common in the older 75+ participants).

In many locations it was apparent that there was a belief that certain activities or services are not available in their local area, when the opposite was true. An example of this was the availability of low cost exercise options for the over 50s. After further group discussion, it was clear that the method in which information was provided did not

include traditional avenues such as local newspapers, council newsletters or library. The availability of local neighbourhood centres and council Aged and Disability Officers as a source of information and referral was not well known and possibly an underutilised resource in many communities.

A lot of older people don't have access to the internet so can't look things up on a computer. Low cost printed information would be useful.

Inclusive Communities

Communication with government departments was cited as a stressful experience as in many cases written correspondence did not provide a phone number to call for assistance, or information is only found online that exclude many older people in the community. Government forms are often difficult to complete, especially for those from non-English speaking backgrounds. Further, availability of plain-English forms and fact sheets and supported by face to face contact is preferred. The implementation of the Service NSW Centres elicited positive feedback, with some participants suggesting this concept be expanded to include co-location with Commonwealth services to facilitate a one-stop shop service and enable face-to-face interaction which is strongly supported.

**“We are being left behind.
Everything is moving online.”**

When exploring the concept of inclusive communities with the groups, the issue of loneliness and the ease of interacting with other people in their local areas was discussed. The methods of promotion of available social groups was again highlighted as a barrier, with many asserting that there are limited options for the younger cohort (50 – 65) to connect in their communities.

“I am part of a good church community, but not so much a town community, apart from my friends. It’s very different in a town which has a community or neighbourhood centre.”

For regional areas that attract large numbers of retirees, some participants described the challenges of breaking into existing friendship groups and networks as they are often seen as outsiders.

In two locations, the need to explore and implement the ‘dementia friendly communities’ program in their local areas was raised. The program developed and supported by Dementia Australia aims to encourage organisations, businesses and the broader community to make practical changes that will assist people living with dementia and their carers to support their continued involvement in their local communities. There was a recognition that the prevalence of dementia will increase in the coming years and that it was important that their relatives are supported to stay at home as long as possible – dementia friendly communities was one avenue to enable this to happen.

Appendix

Summary of Findings by Location

Bankstown

State Electorates of Participants

Auburn
24% aged 50+

Bankstown
30% aged 50+

East Hills
34% aged 50+

Lakemba
28% aged 50+

Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Information Provision

Promotion of local services for older people and social groups through traditional means such as: Council newsletters, dedicated space in Library and the local newspaper. Face to face contact for referral to government services is preferred.



Transitioning to Retirement

Some participants found this challenging, still wanting to contribute to the community through volunteerism or working part-time but often encountered ageism.



Liveable Communities

There is a reduction in the general amenity of suburbs caused by overdevelopment. An increase in density has resulted in loss of greenspace, parking spaces and an increase in rubbish in the neighbourhood.



Communication

Government departments and corporations exclude some older people by assuming technological access and proficiency. Traditional communication methods are still needed.

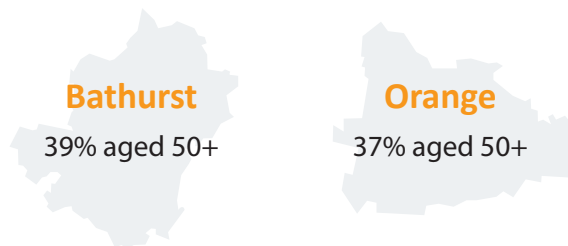


Accessibility

Some of the train stations in the Bankstown/Canterbury region are still inaccessible for older people and for people with disabilities.

Bathurst

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Employment

Many participants would like to transition to retirement with reduced or flexible hours, or a part-time job – which was difficult to find.



Information Provision

Inability to understand the pathways to services for older people.



Housing

Improved design and adaptability of housing for older people based on universal design principles.



Housing

Insufficient availability of social and community housing.

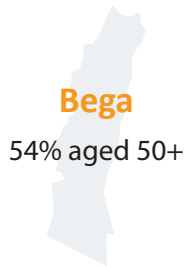


Health

Access and affordability of medical specialists.

Bega

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Transport

Availability and cost of public and community transport, particularly to South East Regional Hospital and coastal towns.



Information Provision

Promote free or subsidised exercise classes and social groups through a range of methods, including non-electronic.



Health

Access and availability of medical specialists. Many of the participants had to travel to Canberra, Melbourne or Sydney to access specialists such as oncologists, neurologists and endocrinologists.



Health

The community has been advocating for the reintroduction of the Neurological Nurse Specialist position in the Southern Local Area Health District to support the significant number of residents with neurological conditions.

Blue Mountains

State Electorates of Participants

Blue Mountains

42% aged 50+

Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Community Transport

For people needing to go for day surgery, the last pick-up time from Westmead and other hospitals & those further away from Penrith is 3:30pm. There would be some patients living further up the mountains who cannot access community transport to get to the hospitals that they need to get to.



Social Isolation

Access to community groups and affordable entertainment for older people on fixed incomes.



Employment

Many participants would like to transition to retirement with reduced or flexible hours, or a part-time job – which was difficult to find.



Housing

Greater availability of affordable housing, including social and community.

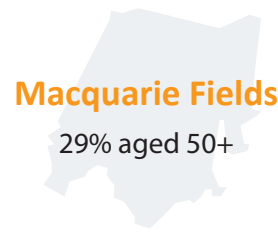
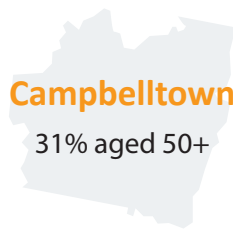
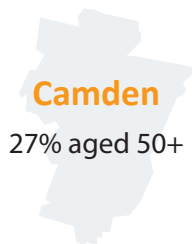


Health

Access and affordability of medical specialists.

Campbelltown

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Inclusive Communities

The importance of providing support to people living with dementia and their carers to remain in their homes as long as possible and for the community to implement the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative.



Information Provision

Promotion of local services for older people and social groups through traditional means such as: Council newsletters, dedicated space in Library and the local newspaper.



Health

Improved training for hospital staff as participants felt that patients were spoken to in a condescending manner or too fast with excessive use of medical terminology.



Public Housing

Older residents feel unsafe, socially isolated and unsupported.

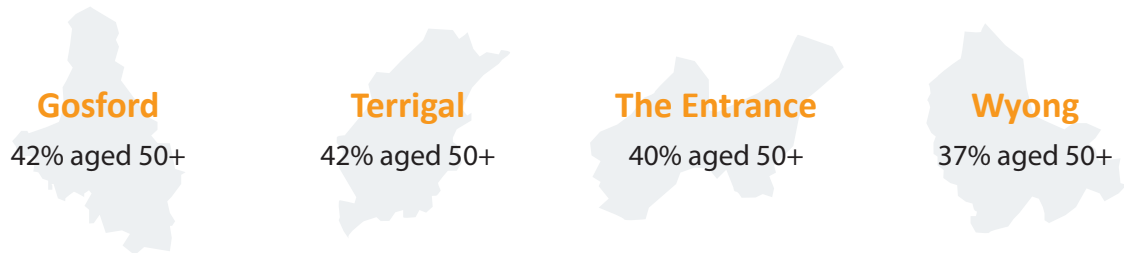


Accessibility

The need for a lift at Macquarie Fields train station and kerb ramp compliance to Australian standards.

Central Coast

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Transport

Many parts of the Central Coast are inaccessible by public transport so makes getting around difficult for older people who cannot drive.



Accessibility

Some of the train stations on the Central Coast are still inaccessible for older people and for people with disabilities.



Housing

Affordability of rental properties on the Central Coast and traditional sources of affordable housing such as residential parks are disappearing or being redeveloped.



Footpaths

Coverage and maintenance.

Coffs Harbour

State Electorates of Participants

Coffs Harbour

43% aged 50+

Oxley

48% aged 50+

Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Health

Improved training for hospital staff as participants felt that patients were spoken to in a condescending manner or too fast with excessive use of medical terminology.



Health

Access and affordability of medical specialists. Many participants described travelling to Newcastle or Sydney to access more affordable medical care.



Housing

Affordability of rental accommodation was a major issue in the town as was homelessness, with increasing numbers of older women living in their cars or couch surfing.



Public Transport

Connecting outlying suburbs and towns to Airport and TAFE.

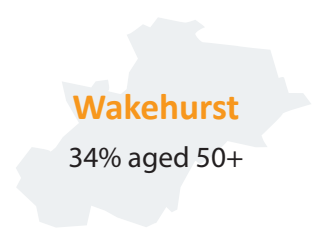
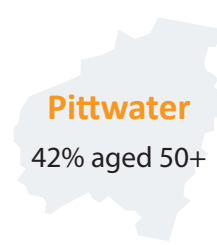
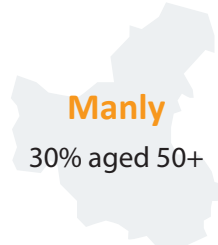
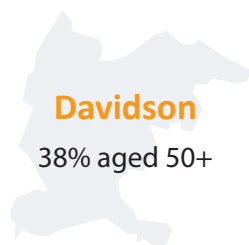


Footpaths

Coverage and maintenance.

Dee Why

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Housing Choice

Insufficient over 55s complexes in the area, which have accessible 1 and 2 bedroom units available.



Transport

Options decline as you move north on the peninsula, for example it is difficult to get a taxi north of Newport.

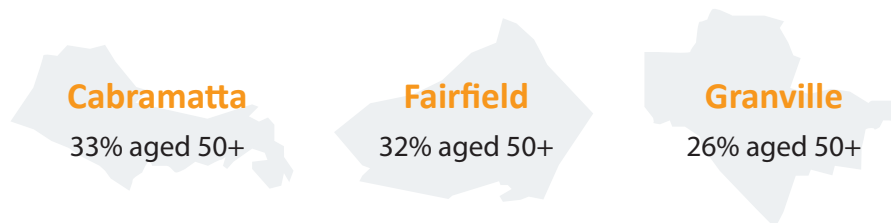


Information Provision

Promotion of local services for older people and social groups through traditional means such as: Council newsletters, dedicated space in Library and the local newspaper.

Fairfield

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Accessibility

The need for a lift at Canley Vale train station and coverage of footpaths.



Getting Around

Removal of bus stops and inadequacy of replacement signage is inhibiting older people's ability to get around.



Employment

Concern regarding increase to the retirement age and inability to access the age pension before 67. Their family and friends who worked in factories or in jobs requiring manual labour were experiencing health challenges that often prevented them from continuing in these occupations.



Homelessness

The experience of older people who have lived with family members where there has been conflict and they are unable to remain living there.

Newcastle

State Electorates of Participants

Charlestown

37% aged 50+

Lake Macquarie

43% aged 50+

Newcastle

36% aged 50+

Swansea

44% aged 50+

Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG

Wallsend

33% aged 50+



Getting Around

The privatisation of the bus service in Newcastle has caused great confusion for older people. The bus routes have been changed and new numbers given to bus routes.



Footpaths

Coverage and maintenance.



Employment

Many people in the group felt they were underemployed and that was affecting their health and wellbeing in their later years. For those who were unemployed it was very difficult to find a job in the area for their age group.

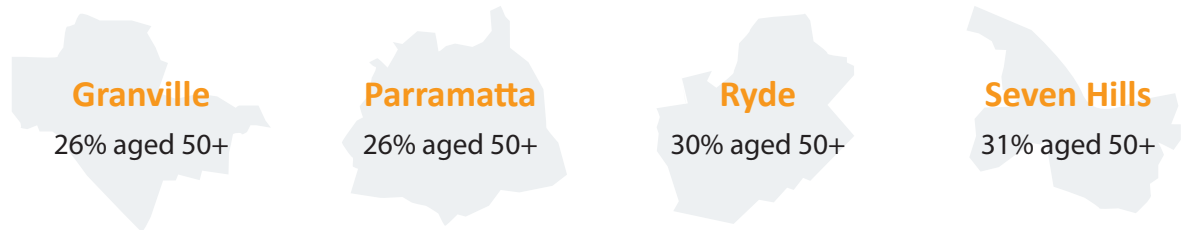


Information Provision

Promotion of local services for older people and social groups through traditional means such as: Council newsletters, dedicated space in Library and the local newspaper.

Parramatta

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Parking

A lack of parking in the Parramatta CBD and a need for more accessible parking close to public transport.



Footpaths

Coverage and maintenance.



Liveable Communities

Insufficient infrastructure such as footpaths, parks and open spaces to accompany fast paced development in the area. More seating in public areas for people to stop and rest is needed. The group discussed the link between healthy, well planned urban environments and health and wellbeing.

Penrith

State Electorates of Participants

Hawkesbury

34% aged 50+

Londonderry

28% aged 50+

Mulgoa

28% aged 50+

Penrith

32% aged 50+

Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Transition to Retirement

Providing people with a range of supports to assist with this adjustment.



Health

Accessing community health providers is challenging for people on low incomes.



Housing

The costs associated with buying and selling is a disincentive to downsize. They also wished to remain in their communities as long as possible to be near family, friends and services. The group discussed the link between healthy, well planned urban environments and health and wellbeing.

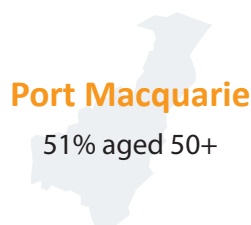
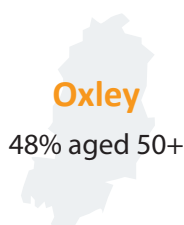


Footpaths

Coverage and maintenance.

Port Macquarie

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Rural properties

Those people wanted to remain living on their rural properties but considered that they were not well supported to do so. They cited the asset test for the aged pension regarding rural properties and said it was inequitable when compared to suburban properties.



Employment

Many people in the group felt they were underemployed and that was affecting their health and wellbeing in their later years. For those who were unemployed it was very difficult to find a job in the area for their age group.



Hospital Discharge and Duty of Care

Discharging older people in the middle of the night or without checking whether they have a way of getting home.



Private Health Insurance

A third of the people in the group did NOT have health insurance because of perceptions of low value or due to the high costs involved.



Information Provision

Promotion of local services for older people and social groups through traditional means such as: Council newsletters, dedicated space in Library and the local newspaper.

Port Stephens

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Housing

More accessible housing is needed for the areas ageing population.



Public Transport

There is very little public or community transport in the area for older people who do not drive, yet it has a high percentage of older voters.



Footpaths

More footpaths are needed in the Port Stephens area to facilitate older people getting out and about and remaining active and engaged in their communities.

Rockdale

State Electorates of Participants

Maroubra

33% aged 50+

Rockdale

31% aged 50+

Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Information Provision

Promotion of local services for older people and social groups through traditional means such as: Council newsletters, dedicated space in Library and the local newspaper.



Footpaths

Maintenance and provision, including kerb ramps that comply with access standards.



Navigating the System

Unsure of where to go to obtain assistance with job seeking for older workers. Government forms are often hard to understand, and no assistance is provided.



Housing Choices

Legal contracts of retirement villages are complex and daunting. Deters a move from the family home.

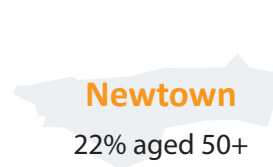
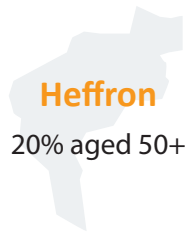
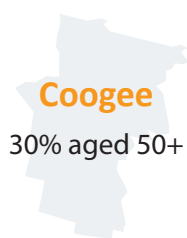


Social Inclusion

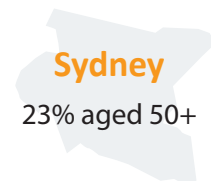
Availability and promotion of social groups and activities for the 50 – 70 age cohort.

Sydney CBD

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Retirement Villages

The challenge of navigating the legal and financial aspects of moving into a retirement village.



Getting Around

Removal of bus stops and inadequacy of replacement signage is inhibiting the older people's ability to get around.



Inclusive Communities

The need to ensure adequate training, risk assessments and insurances are paid by organisations for their volunteers.

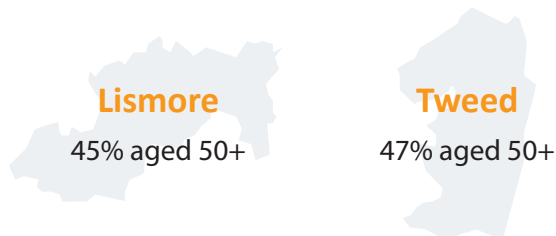


Information Provision

A central place where a standard list of services, fees, costs can be compared from retirement village to retirement village.

Tweed Heads

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Promotion and Education

The need to promote a range of physical and social activities to the community through non-electronic means.



Loneliness

As a location that many older people retire to, the difficulty in breaking into existing social networks. Participants thought there weren't many options for younger older people i.e. 50 – 65 years.



Housing

There was a crisis in the availability of affordable housing in the Tweed for older people. Participants felt that there was inadequate public and community housing, and what was available had long waiting lists. There were also few options to rent. Homelessness was also a major issue in the region. The need to plan for climate change when designed and locating housing was also raised as needing consideration.

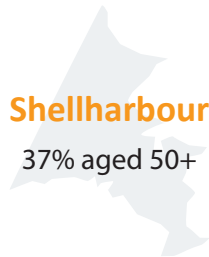


Employment

There were participants that were actively looking for employment but did not feel that there were existing networking opportunities that they could tap into. There were also limited industries in which to find work in the area.

Wollongong

State Electorates of Participants



Priority Issues Identified by Participants of CRG



Public Transport

Frequency and capacity of intercity services.
Buses did not stop at train stations.



Footpaths

Coverage and maintenance.



Accessibility

The need for a lift at
Unanderra train station
and kerb ramp compliance
to Australian standards.



Promotion and Education

The need to promote
a range of physical and
social activities to the
community through
non-electronic means.



Public Housing

Older residents feel
unsafe, socially isolated
and unsupported.