

Liveable Communities Project Workshop Outcomes: Putting Ideas into Action

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

The most often mentioned action from the workshops was taking action to better communicate and promote the existing services within the community. This was followed by investigating the needs of older people aside from care services, and improving cross communication between agencies. Although transport and tourism were prominent in discussions related to the strategic goals, these were not evident to the same degree in the actions people proposed to take.

Not all individual actions are reported here. Absent are comments rather than actions, and commitments to help friends and neighbours. Those that are included here are reported as they were written in the worksheets.

The most relevant commitments are categorised into the following groups:

- Transport
- Public Domain
- Housing and Accommodation
- Provision of Services
- Promotion of Services
- Communication and Information Sharing
- Health and Safety
- Sharing learning from the workshop
- Comments about planning or by planners
- Tourism
- Internet and Communications Technology
- Other

Transport

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

- Look at implementing a shuttle bus for shopping days and/or activity days to help get an idea of who could need help.
- Look at private bus and transport services we can work with
- Promote the community bus service to all
- Get more volunteers to help with transport

- Contact local member about transport for older people and advocate for a bus
- Write a bus application/submission
- Use statistical information to lobby for more funding for transport. Write a tender for funds
- Keep ideas/forefront – work with funding bodies.
- Look at what a free loop bus would look like here in town.
- Active Travel – walking and cycling to recreation and/or chores. Think laterally about ways to engage older residents to leave the car at home, particularly for short trips – 2-3 km. Develop strategies to implement these ideas over the next 6 months
- Gather ideas on transport issues and advocate on their ideas.
- Implementing a shuttle bus for shopping days and/or activity days to help get an idea of who could need help
- Implement a survey on transport needs in out council area
- Write a submission on the Transport Master Plan - write to the Minister for Transport - we need more community transport too - talk to Linda Wirth
- Look at opportunities to expand sustainable transport connection to service the community

Public Domain

Built environment actions covered many of the concerns raised in the picture analysis exercise. Accessibility of the public domain and facilities featured strongly.

Commitments related to the public domain were:

- Continue to speak to managers of some of the ideas brought up on the workshop. eg: More seating required on local roads near shops and in the parks and sporting grounds.
- If I see the footpath or anything damaged that belongs to Council, I will report to Council.
- Be on the lookout for traps of access in the community. Have council check the kerbs in the town centre and elsewhere because they are too steep and scooters scrape their bottoms
- Encourage more older people to use the Eastwood Rest Centre - contact welfare organisations to bring groups to the Centre
- Include "access" issues in program design, include: shade, seating, access to toilets (when developing environmental ed. programs).
- Take access to buildings more vigorously to ensure compliances with disability standards. Enforce disability standards within Council buildings.
- Influence greater fund allocation for maintenance of existing footpaths to eliminate hazards and trip point rather than all funding to new footpaths which currently builds more unsustainable assets. Suggest that council set up an access committee once more
- Encourage the use of the shopping centre as a social hub for older people. Investigate opportunities to reduce social isolation e.g. walking groups (bonus benefit – Health).
- Designing new cultural infrastructure to be accessible for older people
- Can we have a ramp into the local swimming pool for easy access for elderly and disabled (young and old)?
- Escalate the need for a crossing opposite the Admin Centre.

- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to raise awareness amongst their members about making their premises accessible to older people and the opportunities the ageing population presents to business if they can cater for it appropriately.
- civic precinct to give flexible space for public especially the elderly, but also for all
- Ensure that ideas for walkways at aged units are realised - see that council considers it
- Lobby for a walking track around Rotary Place and the Hospital

Housing and Accommodation

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

- Look at ways to retrofit homes before people have a fall
- Diverse land sizes for diverse population
- Promote universal housing policy controls - Development Control Plan - Council Resolution; Promote planning agreements requiring footpath accessibility for manufactured home estates.
- Would like to see micro-villages (for aged from 50 years old) within the community to include doctors, caterers, carers, transport for the resident group).
- Council to make Forster like a "Florida" type area, with more upmarket shops and hospitality industry to make up for the lack of other industry, more local jobs, caters to the elderly but also considers youth and families in the mix.
- Promote and implement more adaptable and Livable Housing.
- Ageing in place - need to look at development plans
- Source a copy of the liveable housing guidelines.
- Consider these issues in the next Development Control Plans, look at my village from today's perspective and suggest we consider this topic for the village plan
- Write to the Minister for Housing about the difficulties of rental accommodation for single older people
- Advocate for better housing and other facilities.
- Encourage more 'long-term' design of dwellings to incorporate any future changes to occupants and their physical abilities.
- Build more units in the town that people could rent and build more hostel accommodation

Provision of Services

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

- Supply supportive information related to clients' needs.
- Re-think how the services can utilise the council services and businesses more for future outings and programs.
- Outreach Services Librarian to attend networking meeting – Community Aid. Discuss Seniors Services with Library Management Team. Promote Library events to Seniors Agencies and Newsletter list.

- Develop joint projects for a 12 month calendar of events that include activities for people 50+ that are flexible in time and include partnerships.
- Investigate opportunities to reduce social isolation e.g. walking groups (bonus benefit – Health).
- I will concentrate on planning events/functions/activities that will bring together diverse community groups, eg. youth and seniors to promote interaction and engagement.
- Continue to refer clients for services to maintain their independence to live at home.
- Active living while getting older is the focus rather than aged care for my activities.
- Publicise opportunities for women to volunteer at the Rest Centre Tea Room
- Visit the library to experience the set up so I can inform clients and patients of their services
- Transport Training - how to use trains, buses, taxis, walking, cycling: organise an in-service by ACAT at U3A
- Run my workshops again - "Creating the World we Want to Get Old In"
- Support a music group for older people – older musicians getting together. Research arts and culture programs for older people.

Promotion of Services

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

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

Communication and information sharing

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

- Educate the community. Highlight statistics when speaking to groups. Advocate on behalf of services and clients to increase funding.
- Ask for carers and clients to attend the Ageing & Disability meeting for their input. Send email to appropriate person to implement the above.
- Arrange a forum for feedback from clients on a regular basis. Make sure the information creates actions
- Keep networking with Council in ensuring that we offer more lifestyle and leisure activities/programmes for our clients.
- Sharing of information. Agencies – need to have more of a co-ordinated approach. Who is providing what services, what are the gaps
- Council customer service staff to have better understanding of funded services that are on offer for the aged when people make enquiries
- Ensure to contact Council to provide information and obtain information re: services in the council area.
- I am going to probably have a bit more understanding of some phone calls from people who tell me “I am 87” and have this problem and appreciate the “active members” of our population who leave many young people behind with their attitude to life
- Get more research on aged residents from the field, rather than reports or the net/websites. Make contact with local aged groups and arrange a visit.
- Talk to the community to ask what they would like to see – Survey for Over 50’s, Council Meetings. Advocate.
- Broaden communication channels between agencies and community
- Improve council communication and interagency communications to disseminate information
- Feedback to the local vision impaired support group from today – including passing on some contacts from today
- Organise an interagency meeting to exchange knowledge and ideas with other programs, NGOs and Departments
- Develop specific strategies for contacting, consulting, informing, communicating and collaborating with older people.
- Seek information on services already available in Council area (update our information) – for sharing with the clients we see in this area – particularly around access and services
- Organise talks to the local Adult Day Centre Groups (Social) on recycling.
- Follow up with an invitation to the respective “older living” groups to be a guest on ‘B2B’ Aboriginal Community Radio program at Mittagong to promote social inclusion and connectedness

- Include Senior's Officer more actively in plans for Plaza activities and consult with seniors to ensure activities are service friendly and/or designed, designated seniors activities

Health and Safety

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

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

Sharing learning from the workshop

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

- Share what I learned today with my team and discuss ideas.
- I will listen and take on board and where possible implement recommendations from today's workshop.
- The first thing I will do is write a summary report of this workshop and share it with my colleagues at the next staff meeting
- Share information from the issues raised in this workshop with the leadership team
- Bring these ideas up at the Welfare Committee - put forward to form an access committee.
- To raise the awareness of my colleagues at work about the issues that was discussed today.
- Bring the ideas brought up today when making decisions.
- Educate customer service centre on aged services available.
- Encourage all areas of Council to consider and think about older people and issues, concerns, ideas that need to be discussed and planned for before proceeding.
- Report back to manager about these ideas.

- Promote and discuss with colleagues at work re: this workshop and start conversation. Bring awareness.
- Continue to speak to managers of some of the ideas brought up on the workshop. eg: More seating required on local roads near shops and in the parks and sporting grounds.
- Report back to Access Committee and raise the issues of the day
- Discuss the ideas and goals we have discussed today with my fellow members, CWA. Come up with things we can do to help older people socialise, exercise and participate in goals for the future. Be kind to town planners!!

Comments about planning or by planners

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

- Read the Town Plan and make sure it is discussed at council meetings
- Include my ideas on access in Council's DCP
- Consider these issues in the next Development Control Plans, look at my village from today's perspective and suggest we consider this topic for the village plan
- We are currently reviewing our 2012/13 operational plan. More significantly Council will be reviewing its 20 year community strategic plan with the newly elected Council in 2012/13 and ensure this issue is well reflected, particularly as it's a 20 year plan and consideration of our demographic. I can review that to see where our gaps maybe in catering for our ageing population.
- Be aware of needs of the elderly and disabled in the assessment of DA's. Notwithstanding, assessment requirements are governed by statutory processes
- I do not believe that we should be looking at the provision of facilities as a singular task, but improving on the public space with better access, lighting, accessible playgrounds, picnic shelters etc. everyone benefits. We need to integrate these services "better". It was interesting hearing comments back on the public seating, eg. needing arm rests etc. – which is a small thing and easily fixed.
- Promote universal housing policy controls - Development Control Plan - Council Resolution; Promote planning agreements requiring footpath accessibility for manufactured home estates.
- Plan for seating, toilets, security in my development. Think more about the diversity of needs within the "aged residents" group
- Incorporate older community into my DA Program. Take into consideration older people when designating new access paths under disability access program for Council's open spaces.
- Consider the elderly when doing design for Row Street Upgrade
- Think about strategies to encourage Council staff to change their practices/thinking to be more realistic regarding the increasing proportion/numbers of old people and plan for the people better. Encourage my unit to take more responsibility to think about and include more older people in strategies and activities.
- The first thing I will do is write a summary report of this workshop and share it with my colleagues at the next staff meeting. Perhaps they will have something to say, too, to add to what has already been discussed. Whatever their feedback

is, I will relay this to the Council Worker on Aged and Disability. I would like to reach out to the elderly and those living with a disability on the grassroots level to inform them of services available to them and to find out what help they need from Council and other agencies. Wishful thinking? Perhaps.....

- Being on the frontline of Council I can gather information or feedback on issues for the older population and report it to the relevant Department.
- In reviewing, planning project, activities, ask, "how is this inclusive of older people's needs?"
- Currently working on strategic plan for the library - include longer term strategies for growing the library as a place for people to go/contact to find out about the range of services available
- Encourage council with their planning for the main street upgrade
- Ageing strategy – ensure outcomes are fed into this. Ensure Council is aware of changing demographics
- As the coordinator of Council's building surveying (certification) team I can research the link between public and commercial buildings and the public domain and improve access to buildings and associated facilities, and coach my staff to improve the standard of access to building from the public domain.
- In my design work, understand the importance for older people to have access to the community and therefore design projects that will enhance this opportunity.
- Encourage other people in my team to look at the need to provide for older people in their design work

Tourism

As mentioned earlier, tourism was an important topic of discussion but was perhaps too difficult for individuals to tackle.

- Look at Grey Nomad marketing or activity plan
- Have a sign as you come into town that in effect says we welcome "Grey Nomads" and that older citizens are respected.

Internet and Communications Technology

Country areas are keen for the arrival of the National Broadband Network with the hope that some medical services can be provided from major centres to local centres via the Internet. They also recognise that overcoming the digital divide is important if rural areas are to keep up with technological advances, and use internet communication to stay in touch with family members.

- Look at ways of getting the National Broadband Network sooner and utilising it to best advantage locally
- I will look into ways to provide free internet training for older people
- Apply for funding to do a needs analysis for IT hardware and software and training to use computers for residents and the local aged hostel

Other commitments

- Investigate developing Age Friendly Environment Awareness training for Councillors

- Actively promote the town to highlight the positives of living in a smaller community; work to promote greater employment opportunities, which in turn will assist with providing resources to the elderly community
- COTA needs to be more proactive in getting the right people to these workshops. Identify the typical roles within Councils that have influence over the planning and delivery of Council services that impact on the aged, i.e. Library co-ordinators, recreation planners, strategic planners, etc. When identifying a person within Council of sufficient influence who will support COTA's work and who will compel these people to attend future workshops. Otherwise, you are leaving too much to chance.
- Comments about councils owning and operating different forms of accommodation for older people with the expectation that council will make a profit which can be used to improve infrastructure etc.

Summary

This exercise received a good response and most participants engaged with enthusiasm. Whether participants follow through with their commitment is not the main point of the activity. Rather, the exercise was designed to review the key points of the day, consolidate their increased awareness of older Australians, and to empower participants to take action where they can. However, this activity revealed that many things can be done at low cost to make an area more age friendly – all that is required is an awareness of what is needed.