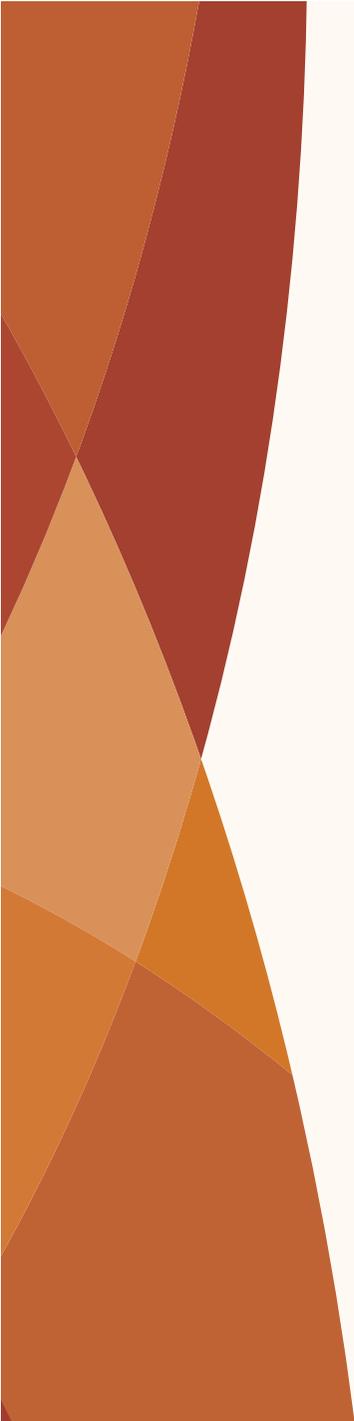




Living
our lives
50+ years

**A Positive Ageing
Strategy for the
Whittlesea Municipality
2016 - 2025**



Thank you

Consultation involving surveys, workshops, focus groups and conversations with residents, Council staff and community organisations, has informed the development of this Strategy.

The consultations captured what life is like for people 50 + years as they age:

- **What makes a ‘good life’ as you age?**
- **What are the strengths of the municipality that support people to age well?**
- **What are the difficulties?**
- **What would assist people to have active and healthy lives regardless of their age or ability?**

Approximately 300 residents and 200 stakeholders including Council staff contributed their views.

The honest, thoughtful and heartfelt contributions from residents have been substantial as well as the interest and attention from Council staff, service providers and organisations. Acknowledgement and thanks are extended to the many people involved.

Terms/definitions

‘Ageing well’, ‘positive ageing’, ‘active ageing’, ‘healthy ageing’ are terms used throughout this Strategy. All of these terms are commonly used to describe quality of life and wellbeing for people as they age. These terms also commonly refer to actions taken by and/or on behalf of individuals to achieve health and wellbeing.

Age-friendly cities, communities and/or approaches refer to the structures (policies, services, settings and infrastructure) that encourage active ageing and optimise opportunities for ageing well. In response to global population ageing, the World Health Organisation (WHO) commenced work in developing the Age-friendly Cities Framework. The WHO continues to lead countries and cities across the world to be age-friendly.

The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the traditional owners of this place.

This Strategy has been prepared by:
City of Whittlesea
Aged and Disability Department
July 2016

Design by ThinkLab Advertising

**A Positive Ageing
Strategy for the
Whittlesea Municipality
2016 - 2025**

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Introduction

This Positive Ageing Strategy is about all of us. Our municipality is rapidly growing and now is an opportune time to ensure that as people age, wherever they reside, they will have the best opportunity to live healthy, active and purposeful lives.

As we grow older, we have hopes for how we will live our lives. This Positive Ageing Strategy will assist people, beginning earlier in life, to understand the opportunities and actions they can take for ageing well.

Residents have given us clear messages about what is important for them to age well. Like any age group, people have expressed their desire to be connected socially with friends, family and community. The loss of social connection and a purposeful life can have a profound impact on daily life, health and wellbeing.

Research informs us of the many barriers that residents can experience in maintaining wellbeing as they age. This Positive Ageing Strategy identifies strategic actions to work towards eliminating these barriers.

Council is committed and excited to be working together with residents, businesses, organisations and the community to make the Whittlesea municipality a place that is age-friendly.

Council will be signing the Age-friendly Victoria Declaration to launch this Strategy.

An age-friendly municipality is friendly for all ages.



Cr Stevan Kozmevski
Mayor



Executive summary

Our aspirations

Living our lives 50 + years A Positive Ageing Strategy for the Whittlesea Municipality 2016-2025, is one of many strategies and plans developed by Council that contribute to making Whittlesea municipality a vibrant, inclusive, active and healthy community.

This Positive Ageing Strategy articulates the need for a greater focus on 'ageing' and 'ageing well' from individuals, Council, organisations and the community as a whole.

Our commitment

This Strategy outlines Council's leadership role in assisting residents to live fulfilled lives regardless of age, health or life stage. Council is in the position to capture the research and local experience of ageing and to utilise these to lead and build an all-of-community, all-of-Council response to ageing well.

Our target group

This Strategy is inclusive of the 50+ population and all of the life-stages across this age group. Fifty is not that old, but what happens earlier in a person's life has a profound impact on wellbeing in later adult life. Many illnesses associated with 'ageing' can be prevented or the onset delayed through living active, connected and purposeful lives.

Our context

Opportunities for ageing well are closely connected to the social and built environment in which one lives. Structural and social factors including income, housing, transport, cultural background, gender, connectedness to family and community and access to support services when required influence a person's capacity to age well.

Our evidence

This Strategy has been developed through an understanding of how the social and physical environments impact on daily lives and ageing. Global and local research and development into 'how to make places age-friendly' is embedded across the Strategy.

This Strategy also draws on what the community said about their aspirations, interests, needs and challenges. People's experiences of ageing are diverse however experiences of isolation, exclusion, loneliness, loss of function and a desire to be connected socially with family, friends and community were commonly reported.

Executive summary

Our hopes

This Strategy promotes the many opportunities that an ageing population brings to a society and the vast benefits for individuals and the community when people continue to be active, healthy and participate in the community as they age.

Living our lives – 50+ years hopes to activate opportunities and choices to improve wellbeing for people as they age and to achieve a positive change in the way residents live their lives.

Our role

Within the City of Whittlesea Community Plan, Council has identified three main responsibilities:

- Advocate – Council advocates to state and federal governments for funding of community services and infrastructure projects
- Facilitator – Council supports and works with local community groups, organisations and government agencies to deliver services and infrastructure projects the community needs
- Provider – Council provides essential community services and infrastructure.

As an Advocate, Facilitator and Provider Council has a significant role in supporting people as they age. This includes support in the home and through clubs, groups and activities in the community. To date, the bulk of this work rests with the Aged and Disability Department. This Strategy broadens Council's ageing focus and promotes an across Council response to improve wellbeing as people age.

Our focus

This Positive Ageing Strategy prioritises eight key focus areas for action.

- Friends, connections and a welcoming community
- Active – socially, mentally, physically
- Learning and sharing knowledge
- Getting around
- Informed and having a say
- Feeling safe
- Housing, employment and financial security
- Health and support services when required

Our implementation

The Positive Ageing Strategy will be implemented over ten years through a series of action plans. Action Plan #1 2016-2018 will support Council's 'organisational capacity' to build an age-friendly municipality as well as continue to support people as they age through a diversity of programs and activities.

Our progress

The action plans identify specific areas of actions and measures of progress. A Positive Ageing Advisory Committee with across Council, stakeholder and community representatives will be established to report on the progress of this Strategy.



A photograph of two elderly women shaking hands. The woman on the left has short, light-colored hair and is wearing glasses and a colorful, patterned jacket. The woman on the right has dark hair and is wearing a red and white patterned jacket. They are both smiling. In the background, other people are visible, suggesting a social gathering or event. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Council's longstanding commitment to supporting our older population will be reinforced through the signing of the Victorian Government and Municipal Association of Victoria's Age-friendly Victoria Declaration.

Positive ageing context

‘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 or even 100 years. We need to create communities that respond to this significant social change and better support people as they age.’¹

This Positive Ageing Strategy is developed within an international and local context of population ageing, age-friendly cities and understandings of the factors that contribute to ageing well. The Victorian Government’s recent declaration for an Age-friendly Victoria reinforces the need for a greater focus on ageing and the opportunities as well as the challenges of an ageing population.

This Positive Ageing Strategy is closely aligned with the City of Whittlesea’s vision of *creating vibrant, self-sustaining communities together* and key actions from the Community Plan 2030:²

- build an inclusive and engaged community
- places and spaces for people to connect and
- health and wellbeing.

Positive ageing closely links with the social determinants of health as outlined in the Victorian Health Priorities Framework and the City of Whittlesea’s Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Council has a longstanding commitment to and experience in supporting our older population through planning and provision of aged and disability services. This occurs primarily through the Home and Community Care Program, as well as supporting clubs, groups and activities in the community. Council’s Positive Ageing Team deliver a range of activities aimed at supporting older people to maintain a positive attitude, contribute to community, feel good about themselves and keep active, healthy and engaged as they age.

Further context for this Positive Ageing Strategy rests in the need for a partnership approach. ‘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’.³

Healthy ageing (ageing well) is the ability to continue to function mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally as the body slows down its processes.⁴

¹ Victorian Government and Municipal Association of Victoria Age-friendly Victoria Declaration 14th April 2016

² City of Whittlesea *Shaping Our Future Community Plan 2030*

³ Victorian Government and Municipal Association of Victoria Age-friendly Victoria Declaration 14th April 2016

⁴ Hansen-Kyle 2005





A shift in how society perceives 'ageing' and 'older people' is required to meet the challenges of an ageing population and to capitalise on the opportunities and benefits for people to live fulfilling lives as they age.

Our intent

This Positive Ageing Strategy intends to

Influence and stimulate

- an understanding of positive ageing and how to age well
- an integrated and whole of Council response for ageing well
- a reduction in preventative illnesses and demand for services

Facilitate and provide

- a pathway and direction for Council's actions on positive ageing
- an understanding of what Council will do to promote ageing well
- partnership opportunities between residents, Council and organisations to facilitate ageing well

Advocate for and strengthen

- inclusion of people in all aspects of community life regardless of age
- improve planning and local community connections for people as they age
- opportunities for sharing/contributing seniors' interests, skills, learning and wisdom across the community

Our values

This Positive Ageing Strategy is underpinned by human rights, social justice, community building and age-friendly frameworks and principles including the right to :

- fairness – to enjoy a good quality of life in all of life's stages
- respect – to be truly valued, respected and free from discrimination
- empowerment – to have a say in decisions that affect everyday life
- inclusion – to participate and be included in the community regardless of age, wellbeing or ability
- equity – to at times require specific actions to ensure people are not left out
- diversity – to be part of the community regardless of background, interests, beliefs and circumstances.

People of all ages and all circumstances have strengths and capabilities. When these are supported and fostered they build social capital and contribute to a better community for all.



About ageing

People today, at least in the Western world, are living longer resulting in a change to the makeup of the society in which we live. Growing older in the Western world however, is often associated with decreasing capacity and becoming a 'burden' on society.

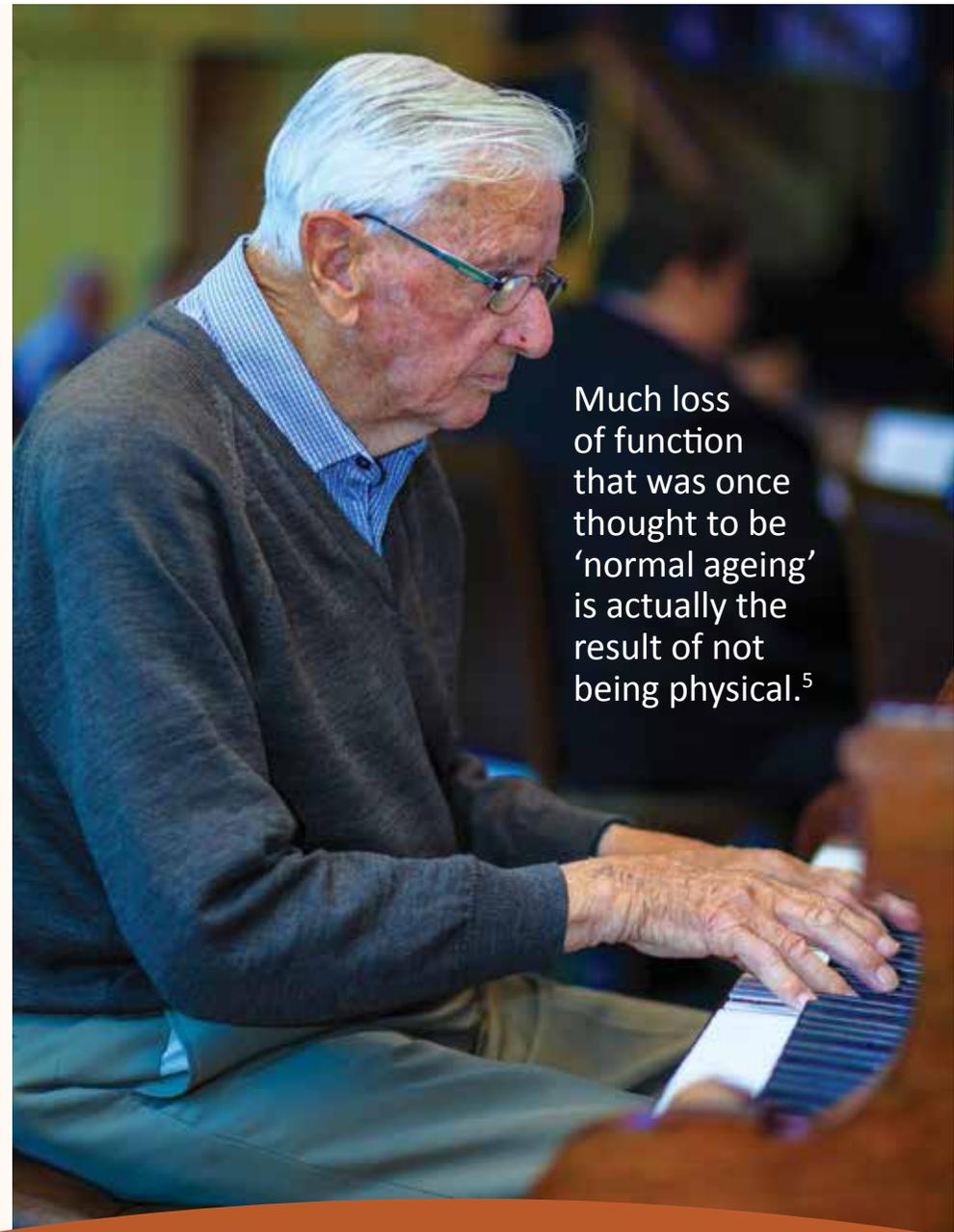
In the Strategy consultations people of all ages talked about the challenges of growing older. They reported that their 'age' should not be the key determinant of how they live their lives. People want to live with a focus on what they can do, rather than what they can't do.

Positive ageing focuses on changing the 'deficit' outlook on ageing and promotes the positives of growing older – time, choices, life-long experiences, life-long skills, leadership, mentoring, wisdom, friendships, family and volunteering, to name a few.

Research identifies significant economic and social capital that older people contribute to their communities.

It is now understood that the built and social environment in which one lives has a profound influence on ageing well. This understanding has inspired cities across the world to become more age-friendly. An age-friendly city is a place that is friendly for all ages.

⁵ Council for the Ageing



Much loss of function that was once thought to be 'normal ageing' is actually the result of not being physical.⁵

Our 50+ population

Whittlesea municipality includes bushland, small rural towns, farming land and established and new growth suburbs. Over 200,000 people currently live in the municipality, however, the population is rapidly growing. Currently Whittlesea is the third fastest growing municipality in Victoria.

At the 2011 census 27% of the total population or 41,914 people were 50+ years – the target group for this Strategy. As a rapidly growing municipality, the proportion of residents 50+ years is not predicted to alter yet the number of people in this age group will increase significantly. This increase is primarily attributed to ‘population ageing’ however it also includes new residents moving into the area.

Residents 50+ years can be described as young, old and everything in between. Diverse languages, backgrounds, faiths, genders, abilities, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, marital status, experiences, skills, interests and aspirations contribute to the make-up of this age group. A feature is the ageing of the wave of migrants who made the suburbs of Whittlesea their home in the 1950’s and 1960’s. The most common (non-English) language groups for residents 50+ years include Italian, Macedonian, Greek, Arabic, Vietnamese and Maltese.

The socio-economic makeup of residents 50+ years in the Whittlesea municipality includes higher rates of disadvantage characteristics (disabilities, low income, lone person households, not proficient in English) than the total population. Residents 50+ years are more likely to live in the areas with the ‘highest disadvantage’. Across all of these population characteristics there are more females than males.

‘Socio-economic factors including disadvantage are important determinants of health’.⁶

Health and wellbeing data for the municipality indicates key behavioural health risk factors to include physical inactivity, being overweight, obesity and low vegetable intake. These factors can contribute to high incidents of falls, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and a predicted growth in dementia.

By 2036 the population of the municipality over the age of 50 years will almost double to 93,194 people (an 87% increase).⁷

Focusing on residents 50+ years is important for promoting health and wellbeing across many life stages and preventing or delaying the onset of illness (such as arthritis, diabetes, dementia, falls, etc.) commonly experienced in later years.

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing *Australia’s Health* 2012

⁷ City of Whittlesea *Place Snapshots* 2016



What our community said

This Positive Ageing Strategy is informed by research and understandings of healthy ageing and learnings from work undertaken in creating age-friendly cities across the world.

This Strategy is also informed by a strong community voice. Residents participated through surveys, focus groups and conversations. Their stories, hopes, aspirations and ideas are central to the key themes and actions in this Strategy. Like any age group, people expressed their desire to be connected socially with friends, family and community. The loss of social connection has a profound impact on daily life, health and wellbeing.

'The hardest things that you experience as you get older' were most commonly reported as:

- loneliness
- isolation
- health issues, in particular loss of function
- not being able to get around.

'A good life as you age' was commonly reported as:

- having connections to family and friends
- having good physical and mental health
- participating in the community, getting out and about, having interests and something to do
- not having to worry about finances.

For the majority of people there were many strengths and advantages to living in the Whittlesea municipality. Overall residents rated the municipality as a 'very good' place to stay active and healthy and a 'very good' place to stay socially connected and participate in community life as you age.

Many residents value the support Council provides for groups and activities in the community as well as the support for people to continue to live at home.

Suggestions for making the municipality a better place for people to stay active and healthy were many including; improvements to public transport, more intergenerational opportunities, age-friendly parks and walking tracks and a broader range of social opportunities, activities and connections.

Whittlesea (municipality) has great parks and great playgrounds but we cannot use them because there are no public toilets.

Resident, Lalor Community Connections Day 2016

As I have been a carer all my life, I haven't been able to go out and make friends. I believe getting out, talking and having a laugh now and then makes you feel better. Being at home all the time, you sit too much, and that's not good for your health.

Female, 65-69 years, Wollert 2016

What is good about Whittlesea (municipality) for me is that... I can go to the library and read the paper or go on the computer and play games. I can go for walks. I can visit people and chat.

Male, 65-69 years, Whittlesea, 2016

There is a lot happening in Whittlesea (municipality), but if you don't have good communication you miss out. There does not seem to be anywhere that you can go to get information about what is on in the whole of Whittlesea.

Resident, Volunteer focus group 2016

Our policy principles

A shift in how society perceives 'ageing' and 'older people' is required to meet the challenges of an ageing population and to capitalise on the opportunities and benefits for people to live fulfilling lives as they age.

Opportunities for residents to age well and live fulfilling lives will be enhanced by:

- Individuals taking responsibility and action to maintain wellbeing across all life stages
- Council taking a leadership role to build an age-friendly municipality
- Council building an evidence base and a good understanding of the population including diversity of needs, backgrounds, abilities, living arrangements, interests and aspirations
- Council, residents, businesses, community organisations and communities working together with an age-friendly approach
- Embedding positive ageing across all of Council roles and business
- Removing barriers to older peoples' participation and fostering local place based and intergenerational connections in the community
- Promoting and fostering the strengths, capacities and contributions of all older people in the community.

Council's leadership role in building an age-friendly municipality is central to supporting the growing ageing population, now and into the future.

These policy principles are aligned with Council's Community Building and Positive Ageing Policies.



Our age-friendly approach

Implementing age-friendly principles, thinking and approaches to all of Council business is fundamental to achieve the intended outcomes from this Strategy – improved opportunities and choices for residents 50+ to age well.

Both within Council and out in the community, building capacity to implement age-friendly approaches is a priority. Applying an ‘age-friendly lens’ – *How will this (decision) impact on an older person? Is this (promotion) welcoming for and inclusive of an older person?* – across programs, decisions, design and services, will make a difference to daily life.

The World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Age-friendly Cities Framework and work already undertaken throughout the local government sector will assist and strengthen Council’s work in positive ageing.

This Strategy has identified eight strategic focus areas for action. These focus areas have been developed from drawing together:

- what the community said, and
- key influences on ageing well as identified in the research and WHO age-friendly cities.

The focus areas have been developed with considerations for what is realistically achievable over the life of this Strategy within current resource levels.

The eight strategic focus areas will be implemented through a series of action plans. Action Plan #1 2016-2018, will also focus on building Council’s ‘organisational capacity’ to lead the implementation of this Strategy and to apply an age-friendly approach across all of Council business.

Two further action plans (2018-2022) and (2022-2025) are envisaged.

The action plans identify specific areas of action and measures of progress. A Positive Ageing Advisory Committee with across Council, stakeholder and community representatives will be established to report on the progress of this Strategy.

Local government plays a key role in planning and establishing age-friendly communities.⁸

⁸ Victorian Government and Municipal Association of Victoria Age-friendly Victoria Declaration 14th April 2016

I attended a 'getting ready for retirement session' at my workplace which gave me the idea of joining a club. After retiring I joined a bushwalking group and I love it. Before I never even walked to the milk bar. It has changed my life and we go to some beautiful places in the bush and I have met some great friends.

Resident, Volunteer focus group 2016

Our Mens Shed is located in a school. School classes are now held with the men in the shed. There was initial apprehension as to how this would work, but it is working very well. The students love it and the blokes are able to show students some skills and methods with woodwork. Both are really enjoying it. The Mens Shed has built shelves and rails for the school. The partnership works well – school has needs and the Shed has skills and can do the job at a significantly reduced cost.

Resident, Lalor Community Connections Day 2016

Four years ago I moved to Mernda. I had been involved in singing where I used to live but discovered when I came to Mernda, there was nothing like that here. So I thought I would just have to start one.

The Community Centre helped me to distribute flyers and get the word out. We have about 20 members who come together weekly to sing. Now there is also a ukulele class that meets before the singing group.

Resident, Mernda Community Day 2016



Our focus and strategic approach

Eight strategic focus areas are presented below. These areas are closely linked and have inter-related factors that can apply across multiple focus areas.

Positive Ageing in the Whittlesea municipality		
Council role	Focus areas	Outcomes
Advocate Facilitator Provider	Friends, connections and a welcoming community	Residents 50+ years will have improved opportunities and choices for ageing well
	Active – socially, mentally, physically	
	Learning and sharing knowledge	
	Getting around	
	Informed and having a say	
	Feeling safe	
	Housing, employment and financial security	
	Health and support services when required	

Our focus areas

1. Friends, connections and a welcoming community

Improve wellbeing for people as they age through social connections and an inclusive community.

Key issues and considerations identified through consultation and research

- Social isolation
- Loneliness
- Ageism
- Exclusion
- Lack of respect
- Diverse experiences of ageing
- Lack of connection in the community

Strategic focus

- 1.1 Actively promote and facilitate 'positive ageing' and inclusion in the community
- 1.2 Increase older people's participation in community events, programs and activities
- 1.3 Increase opportunities for older people to meet and socialise in their neighbourhood

2. Active – socially, mentally, physically

Increase opportunities for people to remain active and engaged and maintain functional health, wellbeing and independence for as long as possible.

Key issues and considerations identified through consultation and research

- Reducing health and functional capacity
- Increasing dependency on support and services
- Inactive and sedentary life styles
- Barriers to leading active lives include transport, costs and ageism
- A need for a greater variety of activities, clubs, interest groups and social opportunities
- Affordability of activities, programs, leisure and recreation centres

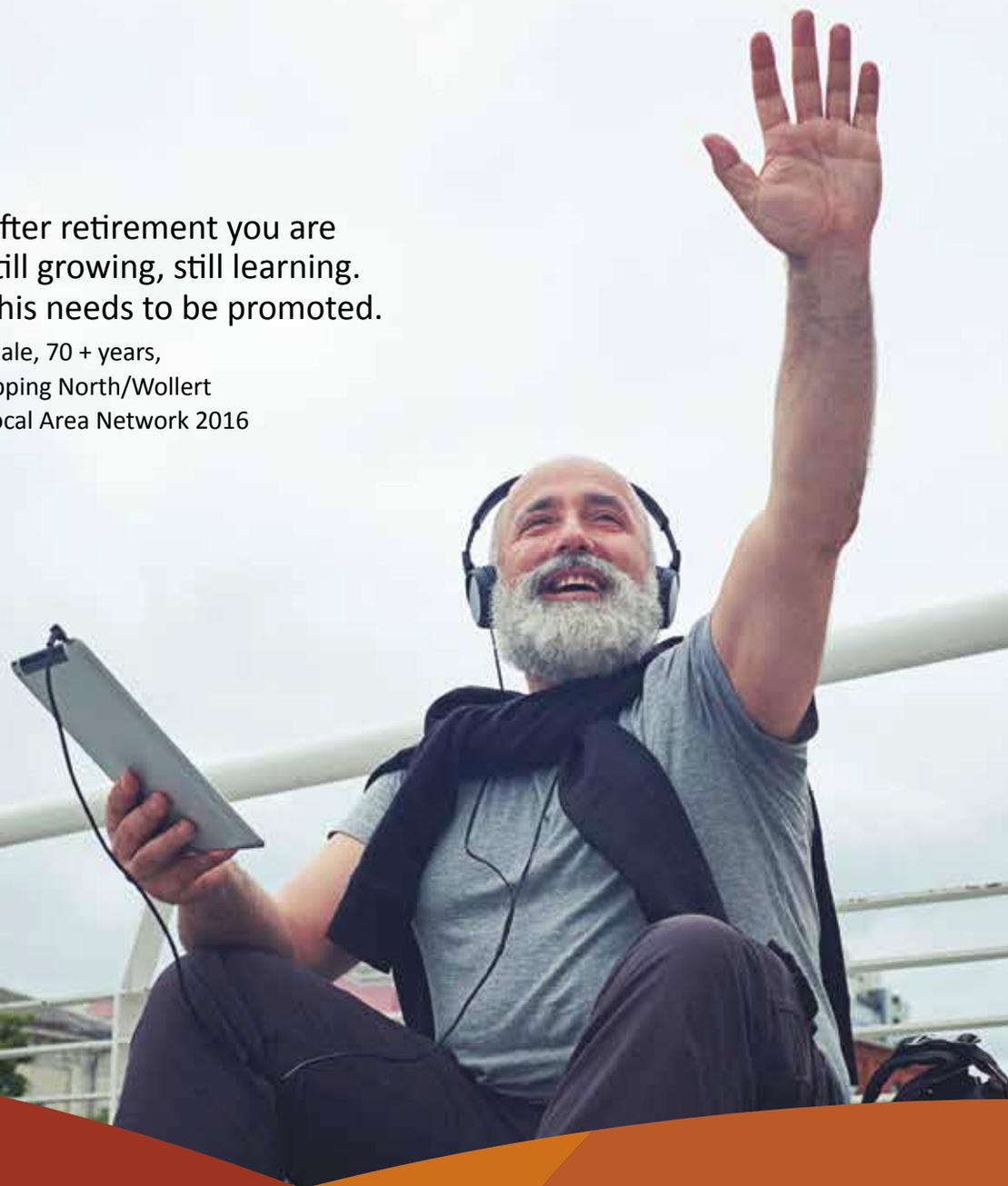
Strategic focus

- 2.1 Ensure a range of groups and activities cater to the diverse 50+ population particularly those most vulnerable to inactivity and isolation
- 2.2 Build and advocate for accessible and affordable social and recreational opportunities, activities and programs that support health and wellbeing
- 2.3 Strengthen residents/community capacity to initiate and develop their own activities, groups and social networks



After retirement you are
still growing, still learning.
This needs to be promoted.

Male, 70 + years,
Epping North/Wollert
Local Area Network 2016



Our focus areas

3. Learning and sharing knowledge

Increase opportunities for people of all ages to continue to learn and actively contribute their skills in the community.

Key issues and considerations identified through consultation and research

- Older people have skills and contributions that are not utilised nor realised
- Volunteering opportunities are limited and do not necessarily always meet the interest and demand from older people
- Barriers to participating in programs can include transport, costs, waiting lists, the program is not of a person's interest etc.
- Opportunities to meet the demand for learning/classes are limited by availability of accessible and affordable options

Strategic focus

- 3.1 Develop more opportunities for residents 50+ years to contribute skills to, and participate in, formal and informal volunteering
- 3.2 Initiate and strengthen intergenerational learning and sharing opportunities
- 3.3 Greater inclusion and access of residents 50 + years to a range of learning/ educational opportunities, including learning computer skills

4. Getting around

Improve access to a variety of transport options to assist community participation, maintain social engagement and access facilities and services.

Key issues and considerations identified through consultation and research

- Car dependency and reduced capacity to drive as one ages
- Lack of infrastructure (eg. toilets, seating, shelter, paths) in public places
- Lack of accessible and affordable public and community transport
- Lack of familiarity/confidence in using public transport
- Affordability

Strategic focus

- 4.1 Continue to advocate for improved public and community transport options that are accessible, safe, affordable and age-friendly
- 4.2 Investigate improvements to infrastructure to support walking and use of public spaces
- 4.3 Apply age-friendly principles to support older people's movements throughout the municipality



5. Informed and having a say

Improve communication and provision of information to increase community participation and connections and support older people to have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

Key issues and considerations identified through consultation and research

- Lack of municipal wide information about what's on
- Need to receive information in a variety of formats and methods
- Significant number of people 50+ communicate in a language other than English
- People do not feel that they are always included in decisions that affect their lives
- Older people do not participate/can be excluded from community consultations, in particular on-line consultations

Strategic focus

- 5.1 People have access to accessible and up to date municipal wide information about what's on in the Whittlesea municipality
- 5.2 Develop the Virtual Village web portal concept as a digital communication exchange hub for residents 50+ years
- 5.3 Create opportunities for older people's voices to contribute to Council business, including positive ageing planning and development

6. Feeling safe

Address perceptions/feelings/experiences around safety to encourage residents 50+ years to remain active and engaged in the community as they age.

Key issues and considerations identified through consultation and research

- Perceptions of/feelings of not being safe in the community, in public places
- Reduced functional confidence (physically, mentally) in a busy place or environment
- Elder abuse

Strategic focus

- 6.1 Continue to strengthen actions addressing elder abuse through the City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy
- 6.2 Continue to engage in WEAAD (World Elder Abuse Awareness Day) events
- 6.3 Apply age-friendly considerations to inform Council's work in creating and planning safe public spaces for all of the community

Our focus areas

7. Housing, employment and financial security

Support housing, employment and financial security for people in their older years.

Key issues and considerations identified through consultation and research

- Lack of affordable housing for low income people
- Lack of choices in housing to enable ageing in place
- Housing stress, in particular people who are renting
- Lone-person households, predominately female
- Experiences of ageism when applying for work
- Daily financial pressure for people reliant on pensions, low incomes
- Gender gap in retirement savings for women
- Affordability of medical services, pharmaceuticals

Strategic focus

- 7.1 Improve access to diverse and affordable housing options to meet the needs of people across life stages as they age
- 7.2 Advocate for flexible employment and transition to retirement options and assist people to make informed work-retirement decisions
- 7.3 Advocate for financial security and assist people to access financial planning and make informed decisions
- 7.4 Develop a policy to assist people who have difficulty paying their rates



8. Health and support services when required

Access to a range of health and wellbeing support when required and assist people to manage/treat their health conditions.

Key issues and considerations identified through consultation and research

- Increasing need for health and support services as people age
- Challenges in understanding and navigating complex health and support services systems
- Understanding aged care and disability services arrangements introduced through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and changes to the delivery of aged care services
- Distances and lack of transport options to medical facilities in some parts of the municipality

Strategic focus

- 8.1 Promote 'positive ageing' at every opportunity throughout health and support services including home and community care
- 8.2 Advocate for health promotion programs and information to assist wellbeing and delay preventable conditions commonly experienced with ageing
- 8.3 Council continue to be a key stakeholder in municipal wide planning for health and support services for people as they age



Age is a number,
not a
determinate
of who we
are or what
we do.

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