

Active & healthy ageing Local government action guide

October 2017

Purpose of this guide

Local government plays an important role in supporting the objectives of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 by protecting, improving and promoting public health and wellbeing within their municipality.

Councils can make an impact on the health and wellbeing of their older residents by creating supportive environments that enable healthier ageing.

This guide outlines current key State-wide active and healthy ageing initiatives. It also proposes a range of evidence-informed actions that councils can consider when implementing their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, Council Plans and other local strategies eg. Positive Ageing or Healthy Ageing Strategies.

The proposed actions are consistent with the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (VPHWP) 2015-2019 that takes a lifecourse approach and identifies that population ageing requires a stronger emphasis on prevention efforts in later years of life.

To ensure a coordinated local prevention effort, it is expected that councils work together with prevention and health promotion funded organisations, other local partners and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to establish a common approach to promoting health and wellbeing.

What is healthy ageing?

The World Health Organization defines healthy ageing as ‘the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age,’ where ‘functional ability comprises the health-related attributes that enable people to be and to do what they have reason to value’.

Healthy ageing depends on genetic and behavioural factors, as well as broader environmental and socioeconomic determinants. Some of these factors are within the control of the individual, usually referred to as lifestyle factors, and others are outside the individual’s control. Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.

Why promote healthy ageing?

The health of the growing number of older Australians is an important economic challenge facing Australia. It is also an opportunity, as extending a lifetime of good health enables older Australians to continue to contribute socially, culturally and economically to the wider community.

Our population is ageing:

- In 2016, 15 per cent of the Australian population (3.7 million) were aged 65 and over. The proportion of older Australians is expected to grow - to 22 per cent (8.7 million) by 2056 and to 24 per cent (12.8 million) by 2096 (AIHW 2017).
- People aged 55 and above comprise more than a quarter of the Victorian population (26.3 per cent) and those aged 65 years and over comprise 15 per cent of Victoria's population (ABS 2016).
- The proportion of the Victorian population aged 65 years and over is projected to increase to 16.4 per cent in 2021 to 21.8 per cent in 2051. The greatest proportional change for any age group is projected to be in the oldest age group: the number of Victorians aged 85 years and over is expected to increase from around 2 per cent of the population currently to 4.6 per cent in 2051 (VIF 2016).

Most older Australians are living longer and more healthily than ever before. Some groups, however, continue to face disadvantage that affects both their mental and physical health and their opportunities for social and economic engagement within their communities. The Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997 defines some populations who have particular care needs that should be taken into consideration - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; veterans; people living in rural and remote areas; people who are homeless; and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI).

Despite the evidence of how older people make a valuable contribution to society, common ageist attitudes about older people still exist and include being frail, out of touch or a burden. This ageism can impact on the health and wellbeing of older people. Stereotypes need to be challenged, the diversity and contribution of older people recognised and a person-centred approach used.

Key State-wide action on active and healthy ageing

- [Active & Healthy Ageing Advisers](#) – working to embed and promote healthy ageing approaches through evidence, networks and building on existing success.
- [Victorian Active Ageing Partnership](#) - increasing opportunities for participation in physical activity for older Victorians, especially in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and among isolated, lonely older people not currently involved in physical activity.
- [Healthy Ageing Online Network \(HANet\)](#) - an online, interactive network for health professionals and service providers to work together, share information and resources, and discuss best practice strategies to support healthy ageing.
- [Age-Friendly Victoria](#) - age-friendly communities encourage active ageing and optimise opportunities for good health, social and community participation for Victorian seniors. The initiative aims to promote the inclusion of older people and support services, business and community leaders to better plan for the needs of seniors and enhance the quality of life for people as they age.
- [Dementia Friendly environments](#) - creating environments that are more friendly, inclusive and supportive for people with dementia.
- Engaging Senior Victorians in Outdoor Activity:
 - An age-friendly resource kit to encourage older people to participate in nature-based activities in partnership with Outdoors Victoria

- Seniors Card is working with Sport and Recreation Victoria, Australian Camps Association and Outdoors Victoria to provide more [age friendly camping and outdoor adventure activities](#). Camping and outdoor activity providers throughout Victoria have signed up to offer discounts. New resources have been developed to help operators welcome and cater for older Victorians.
- The [Participation for CALD Seniors Grants Program](#) offers small grants to organisations to create or expand community participation opportunities for socially isolated culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) seniors .
- The Integrated model of care for responding to suspected elder abuse is being trialled at a number of Victorian health services including Melbourne Health, Monash Health, Latrobe Community Health Service and Western Health. The last health service is yet to be determined. It aims to create multiple entry points for older people (both men and women), their families and carers to access specialist support services and is based on a least restrictive framework, which is client-centred and family-inclusive. The model includes workforce development, an elder abuse liaison officer located at the Aged Care Assessment Service to provide secondary consultation to services requiring advice and referral, and counselling and mediation services located at the health service.
- Ten elder abuse prevention networks will be established across Victoria to undertake work on community based primary prevention of elder abuse. So far, Ballarat Community Health, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Mpower - Warrnambool and Eastern Community Legal Centre have been selected to establish a network. Further sites will be announced in coming months and five will be linked to the health service sites trialling the integrated model of care for responding to suspected elder abuse. [Seniors Rights Victoria](#) will be working with these organisations to develop this work.
- Wellness and Reablement Consultants support agencies to embed Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP). Wellness and Reablement priorities including: client and carer outcomes; consumer engagement strategies including co-design and co-production; embedding Wellness & Reablement approaches in Service Specific Assessment, Service Planning & Service Reviews; transfer of Wellness and Reablement Learning into Practice; and implementing Initiatives from 2017 (Active Service Model) plans.
- VicHealth have undertaken research to identify key segments of Victorians based on their levels and type of physical activity - [Physical activity across the life stages](#).
- VicHealth work to promote good health and prevent chronic disease, some projects have a focus on older people, for example, the [Alcohol Culture Change Initiative](#).
- VicWalks are involved in advocacy and research on [older pedestrians](#).
- Beyondblue recognise the importance of good mental health throughout life - [keeping mentally and emotionally well after sixty](#).

Opportunities for councils to promote healthy ageing

1. Support inclusive and liveable communities

Age friendly and liveable communities refers to physical and social environments that enables people of all ages to actively participate, live safely, have good health and be part of decision making. Environments encompass physical (streets, buildings) social (attitudes and relationships with others) services, political systems and policies.

Local government can:

- As a demonstration of commitment, the Victorian Government signed an Age-Friendly Declaration with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) on 14 April 2016. The Declaration means the Government and MAV are committed to planning for and establishing age-friendly communities. Sign up your local council or your organisation to the [Age-Friendly Victoria Declaration](#) and show your commitment to creating liveable communities for older Victorians.

- [Increase walkability of neighbourhoods for older people](#) with safer footpaths, street lighting, seating, public toilets and increased time for crossing at lights.
- Tackle ageism and promote positive images of older people in council resources. Examples of positive promotion of older people include [Victorian Seniors of the Year Awards](#) and beyondblue's "[Over Bl**dy Eighty!](#)" (OBE) campaign.
- Understand [Age](#) and [Dementia Friendly](#) design and how they complement and supplement the Environments for Health planning framework
- Actively engage older LGBTI people in consultation and programs and show inclusiveness by including images of same-sex older couples in promotional materials. See <http://www.valscafe.org.au/>

2. Increase participation in physical activity

Physical activity is essential for maintaining abilities and independence as people age. It can also maintain or improve brain health. Being active can provide health benefits, even for those who become physically active later in life. However, those aged 65 and over are the least active age group and spend the most time sitting.

Local government can:

- Use the 2016 [Victorian Active Ageing Partnership \(VAAP\) Physical Activity Audit and Gap Analysis](#) to identify existing physical activity programs and gaps in your area.
- Encourage fitness facilities and auspiced Neighbourhood Houses to use the [VAAP](#) self-assessment tool to explore good practice and areas for improvement in opportunities for older people to engage in physical activity.
- Use the VicHealth [research on attitudes and barriers to physical activity](#) for Victorians to consider what would motivate them to change their existing behaviours.

3. Support healthy eating

As we age we need to eat better, not less. Nutritional needs change across the life span and emphasis should be placed on eating and drinking to maintain function and independence rather than weight management in our later years.

Local government can:

- Encourage seniors groups and sport/recreation facilities to consider the [nutritional needs of older people](#).
- When providing catering for community events and prepared meals, understand [changing nutritional needs as people age](#).

4. Decrease unintentional injury – transport accidents, pedestrian safety, falls prevention

The cessation of driving can have significant impact on an older persons health and ability to maintain their independence. Access to other modes of transport can often be difficult and pose a safety risk, including pedestrian and motorised scooter safety. The risk of falls increases with age, but is not an inevitable part of ageing. There is proven evidence that demonstrates multiple strategies can reduce the chance of falls including: strength and balance exercises, reducing medications, addressing vision impairment, home modifications to reduce trip hazards and local walkability.

Local government can:

- [Consider older people in road safety, active transport, walking, cycling and open space plans and strategies.](#)

- Encourage council run fitness facilities to [participate in training](#) and include specific balance challenge and strength exercises in classes targeted at mid to older ages.
- Focus on communicating with older people about staying strong and being your best rather than specifically mentioning falls prevention.

5. Improve mental wellbeing

Although the majority of older people enjoy good mental health, a significant proportion experience one or more mental health problems. Depression and anxiety the most common mental health problems among older people. In addition, some older people suffer from social isolation and feel lonely, which can affect their mental health. Taking a holistic view of active ageing and having collaborative partnerships with a range of stakeholders can promote good mental health.

Local government can:

- Understand and promote that being physically and socially active can [promote good mental health](#).
- Specifically tailor programs and services within libraries, neighbourhood houses, leisure centres for socially isolated and lonely older people.
- Provide opportunities for mutually beneficial intergenerational interaction.
- Consider implementing [Casserole Club](#) to link generations through food.
- Support [ambassador/champion](#) and leadership programs for older people.
- Recognise and support volunteering opportunities as an important social connection opportunity for older people.
- Identify and recognise agencies and services that support transition to retirement and continued meaningful participation beyond paid work.

6. Prevent Violence and Injury – elder abuse

Elder abuse is a form of family violence where the victim is an older person. It has been defined as any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust which results in harm to an older person. Elder abuse perpetrated by an older person's adult son or daughter often involves financial and psychological abuse that causes lasting harm. Older people can also be subject to physical, social and sexual abuse, including intimate partner violence. As there are many types of abuse that occur in different circumstances, any intervention to address the abuse needs to be tailored to the individual.

Local government can:

- Understand elder abuse and promote opportunities for [staff training](#).
- Consider issues for older women in gender equity plans such as economic participation, leadership, participation.
- Understand and promote key referral points for older people, their families, carers and service providers to access. All older people, both men and women can access [Seniors Rights Victoria](#) for support, advocacy and free legal advice.
- Understand and promote referral points for older women through family violence services:
 - [Safe Steps](#) – Family Violence Response Centre- can support older women experiencing family violence.
 - [In Touch](#) – Family violence support for women from CALD backgrounds.

- [Family Safety Victoria](#) - Victoria's first-ever agency dedicated solely to family violence reform, including establishing a Central Information Point and 17 Support and Safety Hubs across Victoria.
- Be aware of powers of attorney information for older people – [Your Voice – Trust your choice](#).
- [Challenge ageist stereotypes](#) about older people.

7. Reduce harm from alcohol and drugs

Alcohol is the most common drug used by older people and the age group of Australians most likely to drink daily is those aged 70 and older. In recent years, older people have been consuming more alcohol, and this trend is projected to be particularly evident in the baby boomer cohort.

Local government can:

- Be aware of community education on [prescription medication](#) for older people.
- Consider using the [VicHealth Alcohol Cultures Framework](#) to guide work to reduce alcohol related harm for older people.

8. Promote sexual health

Older people can – and do – remain sexually active into their 80s and 90s. Ongoing sexual activity in later life has been associated with health, wellbeing, life satisfaction and lower rates of depression. Many newly single older people do not use condoms and are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS. General practitioners and service providers are reluctant to talk to older people about sexual health issues. Older people are also reluctant to bring up sexual health matters and believe that healthcare providers should initiate these conversations.

Local government can:

- Be aware of issues related to [sexual health and ageing](#).
- Consider older people in any work being undertaken by council around respectful relationships.

References

AIHW Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017). Older Australia at a glance. Web report at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance>

ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). Census accessed at <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/2016>

VIF Victoria in Future (2016). Accessed at <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/land-use-and-population-research/victoria-in-future-2016>

Useful links

Active and Healthy Ageing Advisers	https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care/wellbeing-and-participation/healthy-ageing/healthy-ageing-program
Healthy Ageing Literature Review	https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/healthy-ageing-literature-review
Better Health Channel	https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/healthy-and-active-ageing
Prevention Health Website	http://prevention.health.vic.gov.au/
Healthy Ageing Online Network	become a member and get access to the latest information and networking on healthy ageing http://hanet.health.vic.gov.au
Victorian Population Health Survey data	https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/population-health-systems/health-status-of-victorians/survey-data-and-reports/victorian-population-health-survey
VicHealth Indicators	https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/vichealth-indicators-survey-2015
Age Friendly Cities	http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/ageing-disability/ageing/Pages/age-friendly-cities-communities.aspx
Victorian Active Ageing Partnership	http://www.move.org.au/VAAP
Well for life booklet – English, Italian, Greek, Chinese & Vietnamese	https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/healthy-and-active-ageing
World Health Organization Global Report on Ageing and Health	http://who.int/ageing/global-strategy/en/ http://who.int/ageing/10-priorities/en/
AIHW 2016. Older Australia at a glance	www.aihw.gov.au/ageing/older-australia-at-a-glance/
Council on the Ageing (COTA) Vic Challenging Ageism	http://cotavic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/COTA_Challenging_Ageism.pdf
Seniors Card Victoria	https://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/seniors-card

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