



Ageing Well – Living Better - Project Update August 2009

We are writing to you to update you with the progress towards developing a multi-agency positive strategic plan across the Macedon Ranges.

The results of Stage 1 (the consultations and literature review) which will support the creation of the strategy have been completed. The executive summary is condensed and is on the reverse of this letter for you. The full report will be available soon on Council's website.

The consultations so far have been a huge success with over 220 people attending one of the 18 consultations and nearly 360 people registering their interest in the project to date. This level of participation has been rarely seen both locally and internationally when it comes to community consultations on positive ageing. With this level of support and participation by the community we are certain that the final strategic plan will reflect the priority concerns for the community.

On July 23rd 2009, the Department of Human Services announced that they will be contributing \$27,500 towards the project to cover the project activities as part of Stage 2 which will run until June 2010.

The second stage of the project will see the creation of draft plans for public consultation and another series of community forums where the priority goals and potential community actions will be canvassed and discussed.

We encourage you to continue to participate in this project and we will let you know when the community consultations and public drafts are made available.

Finally, a very big thank you to all that participated in the consultations. Your time, effort, ideas and discussions are a large part of the plan ahead.

Everyone is excited about the possibilities that can emerge from the plan to support older people across our communities.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Letchford'.

Councillor John Letchford

Mayor

Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Executive Summary

The five leading health service agencies in the Macedon Ranges Shire have collaborated on a multi-agency approach to develop age friendly communities from 2010. The agencies involved are the Kyneton District Health Service, Macedon Ranges Health Services, Cobaw Community Health, Central Highlands General Practice Network and the Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

The strategy development process has been divided into two stages: Stage 1 Research and Community Engagement and Stage 2 Strategy Development and Agency Sign-up. This is a report on the outcomes of Stage 1.

The Stage 1 research highlights the need for action on the issue of ageing well in the Shire. The data shows the number of older residents in the Shire is expected to more than double by 2026 with strong growth expected in the 80 years plus age group. This is likely to increase the need for complex, high level support services. In addition, there is a chronic mismatch between housing need and housing supply in the Shire with limited ability for retirees and the elderly to downsize into towns.

Previous social research work done in the Macedon Ranges (2007) identified some of the key social dimensions to social connectedness for older people in the Shire as having access to a range of social networking opportunities (including volunteering opportunities) and importantly the value of 'neighbourliness' (Caddick 2007 p.9).

The literature indicates that increased awareness, better engagement and innovation could help many older people *without significant expenditure*. Local organisations need to engage with older people in commissioning, designing, and delivering services to the local community. Best practice in developing age friendly communities are:

- Is responsive to changing needs
- Takes a community strengths based approach
- Acknowledges that older people want to be self reliant wherever possible
- Engages stakeholders in development and implementation

The Stage 1 stakeholder consultations were held across the Shire in 7 local towns with separate forums held for service providers and older people. The consultations were followed by 3 large community forums held in June 2009. The community engagement process has seen significant success and currently over 360 people in the community have expressed interest in being involved in further developments.

A wide range of issues, concerns, suggested strategies and actions were developed in the consultation process. These suggestions were highly consistent with the outcomes identified in the research and ranged from improvements to transport, information delivery and service systems to ideas for tackling ageism and the need for enhanced community development approaches. There is now a need to test these ideas with key agencies as part of the next stage of the process in creating age friendly communities. This will occur in Stage 2, Strategy Development and Agency Sign-up.

In Stage 2, a Strategic Plan will be developed and agencies will be encouraged to identify how they can report on their part in delivering on the desired outcomes. In Stage 2, the five lead agencies will hold additional forums for all other participating agencies to better understand and engage with the strategic planning process. The final phase of stage 2 will then focus on eliciting public engagement and the final adoption of the Macedon Ranges Multi-Agency Positive Ageing Strategy.