



Active Ageing Strategy

2015 - 2018

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Executive summary

The Great Lakes Council resident population has the highest proportion of people over the age of 50 years in New South Wales. Consequently, Council decided to take pro-active steps to ensure the needs of this section of the population are recognised and planned for. Utilising the World Health Organization program of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, Council partnered with Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA) to engage with older residents in formulating a strategy and plan of action for the future.

The World Health Organization (WHO) program promotes communities where generations live with greater connectedness and where older people are included, valued and welcomed. Local government authorities that follow the steps set out in the WHO program can apply for membership of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC). The first stage of the program is to set a baseline assessment which requires engagement with older residents. This report is the result of the community engagement process in preparation for applying to become a member of the Global Network.

Seven focus group sessions were held and a survey was circulated to discover the key issues concerning older residents. Focus groups were held in Bulahdelah, Tea Gardens, Stroud and Forster. The survey was distributed online and in hard copy and publicised widely. The results of the focus group discussions and the survey questions were analysed for key themes and issues.

The primary concern for older residents related to transport, which in turn affected access to services, social events, shopping and leisure activities. Access to transport, therefore, is an important contributing factor to remaining active and involved and minimising isolation. Community transport services are available and appreciated, but are unable to assist in all situations.

Access to medical practitioners emerged as the next most important issue. Attracting and retaining general practitioners in small communities is problematic across rural Australia and in spite of the attractiveness of the area, Great Lakes continues to experience difficulties in this regard. Medical specialists are only available in major regional centres, and residents needing regular treatments, such as dialysis and oncology, are required to travel one to two hours in each direction on a regular basis.

Communication and Information was the theme to emerge as the third most important. Great Lakes shares in common with other rural communities a strong and vibrant social connectedness. There are many opportunities to participate in cultural, recreational, sporting, hobby, and lifelong learning groups. However, feedback from the focus groups and survey indicate that these could be better publicised and communicated. Information about community services was also viewed as lacking.

The findings from the research underpin the resulting Great Lakes Active Ageing Strategy and recommended actions. Each strategy is linked to the WHO AFCC program, the NSW Ageing Strategy and Council's Community Strategic Plan while the recommended actions have been divided into three groups: what Council can do, what others can do, and what individuals can do. Once the Active Ageing Strategy has been endorsed by Council, Great Lakes can apply to become a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

The World Health Organization defines Active Ageing as *"the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. It applies to both individuals and population groups."*¹

WHO explains further that *"Active ageing allows people to realise their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout the life course and to participate in society, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need."*

In this context, the word "active" refers to continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. Older people who retire from work, who are ill or live with disabilities can remain active contributors to their families, peers, communities and nations. Active ageing aims to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they age.

Therefore, in line with efforts to shift the way society thinks about ageing, from a medical model of ageing (illness, incapacity, care) to a social model of ageing (inclusion, engagement, enthusiasm, participation, contribution), this strategy is an "Active Ageing Strategy", rather than simply an "Ageing Strategy".



¹ World Health Organization Active Ageing - A Policy Framework, 2002 p12.

http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/active_ageing/en/

Introduction

This report is the result of a joint project between Great Lakes Council and Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA NSW). Great Lakes resident population has the highest proportion of people over the age of 50 years, and as a consequence, Council decided to take pro-active steps to ensure the needs of this section of the population are recognised and planned for.

As a regional community that attracts a relatively high number of new retirees each year, Great Lakes is posed with several challenges that are somewhat different from their urban counterparts, particularly in terms of access to public transport and medical treatment, both of which are outside the direct responsibility of Council. However, similar to other rural communities, Great Lakes has a strong and connected social fabric.

In 2012 Council hosted a COTA Liveable Communities Workshop focusing on age-friendliness. Early in 2014, with the highest population of older people in NSW, Great Lakes Council made the commitment to become recognised as an "Ageing Centre of Excellence"². Developing an ageing strategy is to be the first step, and to achieve this, COTA NSW and Council decided to utilise the World Health Organization's (WHO) active ageing program and Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC) framework.

The WHO AFCC framework has eight topic areas or domains that cover all areas of life: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings; Transportation; Housing; Social Participation; Communication and Information; Respect and Social Inclusion; Civic Participation and Employment; and Social Support and Health Services.

Members of the WHO AFCC network range in size and are located in different countries across the globe. Their desire to become more age-friendly faces a range of challenges resulting from diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts. However what they do have in common is the desire and commitment to create physical and social urban environments that promote healthy and active ageing and a good quality of life for their older residents. Residents who take up opportunities to become involved in their communities and are socially active, are less at risk of social isolation and mental health issues.

The methodology set out in the WHO *Vancouver Protocol*³ provided detailed instructions for researching, reporting and devising an ageing strategy and implementation plan. Seven focus groups were held, and a supplementary survey was carried out to gain a baseline assessment and identify improvements that would make Great Lakes more age-friendly.

The key findings are related to transport, access to medical practitioners and specialist health services, and being informed about community services and local activities. Population statistics suggest that the planned growth areas of Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens and Forster South-Green Point will need particular attention to age-friendliness as these areas are likely to continue to attract a significant proportion of retirees.

The body of the report explains the method, the WHO framework, and reports on and discusses the findings. The key findings informed the resulting Active Ageing Strategy. Other data provided detailed and specific information that can be included in Council's delivery and

² Draft Delivery Program 2013-2017, p 44.

³ World Health Organization, 2007, *Who Age-friendly Cities Project Methodology: Vancouver Protocol*
http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20AFC_Vancouver_protocol.pdf

operational plans. Much of this information is included in a set of appendices to this report and constitutes a useful reference for specific actions.



Background

This project was an outcome of discussions between COTA NSW and Great Lakes Council where it was agreed to pilot the process for becoming a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities⁴. A handful of local governments in other states have achieved membership status, but at the commencement of the project there were none in NSW.

The discussions were prompted by two things: one was a COTA NSW Liveable Communities workshop focusing on an ageing population in the Great Lakes held in 2012, and the stated goal of Great Lakes Council to become an “Ageing Centre of Excellence”. The WHO program provides a ready framework for assessing the current situation and formulating plans and actions for improvements to become more age-friendly. In addition, by following the WHO program, Council could apply to become a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities to gain ongoing support and to share experiences with other councils.

The WHO framework requires a “bottom-up” process that has older people in the centre of the frame, which means they are consulted and included throughout the research, planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. A “top-down” process from Council is also required for strategic responses and actions. Working together, a continuous improvement process is developed so that the outcome is not just a document, but measurable and quantifiable improvements in age-friendliness that link with Council’s community strategic plan.

The WHO program focuses on older people because society has yet to fully acknowledge the value and contributions that older people continue to make in their retirement years. The medical model of ageing where older people are viewed through a lens of ill health and care is still present in society. The WHO program focuses on the many years of activity and contributions that older people make long before they need care and support services – hence the term ‘active ageing’.

A focus on improvements for age-friendliness does not exclude other people. Indeed, older people are parents and grandparents and look for opportunities to share in intergenerational activities. While their adult children and young grandchildren can mostly get out and about and freely participate, it is not always the case for their parents and grandparents if, for example, they have reduced mobility. In essence, becoming age-friendly provides access, convenience and comfort for everyone.

Why become “age-friendly”?

Australia’s population is ageing – we are facing a longevity revolution. People are living longer after they leave the workforce and consider themselves ‘retired’. A new cohort of older people is making itself felt – the baby boomers – those born between 1946 and 1964. This generation is likely to have greater expectations about their quality of life into their later years than previous generations. Governments are also changing their expectations about how to support people in their later years, with the eligibility age for the Age Pension being raised to 67 and possibly to 70 years. Ageing-in-Place policies are now well established; emphasising the shift from institutional care based on the medical model to a community-based model based on rights and inclusion (and a saving on the costs of aged care).

⁴ World Health Organization Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities
http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_network/en/

However, the community model means that a wide range of community facilities and services must be ready to cope. Ageing-in-place is not just a matter of sitting at home 'in place'. 'Place' also includes the neighbourhood, transport services, and social inclusion. Isolation is not a formula for quality of life or good health outcomes. Consequently, both homes and public environments need to be "ageing-ready" if people are to remain active and involved, contributing economically and socially, for as long as possible. Residential care services will still be required, particularly for the expected growth in people with dementia. However, people with dementia can be supported at home and in the community for longer if the built and natural environments are well designed and maintained.

Research papers published by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute⁵ on issues of ageing show that generally, older people want to stay in their current home or at least in their current neighbourhood, where they have their established social networks and familiar surroundings. Retirement villages are still in demand, but becoming less attractive to new retirees, particularly if they require a move to a new location on the fringes of towns and urban areas. However, there is another group of retirees that are wishing to move away from everything familiar and move out of the city to a rural or coastal setting. These are often referred to as "Tree-Changers" and "Sea-Changers". Great Lakes has shown itself to be very popular with this group. However, this group is not always aware that many of the services and conveniences they experience in the city are not as readily available in a regional area.

At age 60 or 65, most people are still active and have a vision of remaining so for many years. Consequently little thought is given to the day when they can no longer drive, which means social activities and medical appointments become more difficult to access. There may even be a time when they can no longer walk up the front steps of their house. These issues then become the concern of service providers for community transport, for home modifications services, and other social services. However with more forethought about the location of the home near to services, particularly transport, and in the design of their home, many older people can live safely and comfortably in-place, thereby delaying the need for significant community support.



⁵ For example: Judd, B. et al., 2014. "Downsizing amongst Older Australians", AHURI Final Report No 214, and Olsberg, D., 2005, "Ageing in Place: intergenerational and intrafamilial housing and shifts in later life" AHURI Final Report No. 088. www.ahuri.edu.au/publications

WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities

One way of an area becoming more age-friendly is to utilise the work of the WHO Age-Friendly Cities and Communities program, which sets some basic parameters for age-friendliness and a process for community engagement, to formulate an ageing strategy and implementation plan. The local government authority can apply to become a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities if the WHO process is followed (older people are the focus of the community engagement process, the ageing strategy is developed and the implementation plan is monitored). This organisation has the registered acronym of GNAFCC.

The WHO GNAFCC project is a global initiative with the purpose of promoting active ageing. It began with 33 cities in 22 countries across the world participating in the development of the program. It builds on WHO's earlier work of the *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework*⁶ in which active ageing is defined as a "process for optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age".

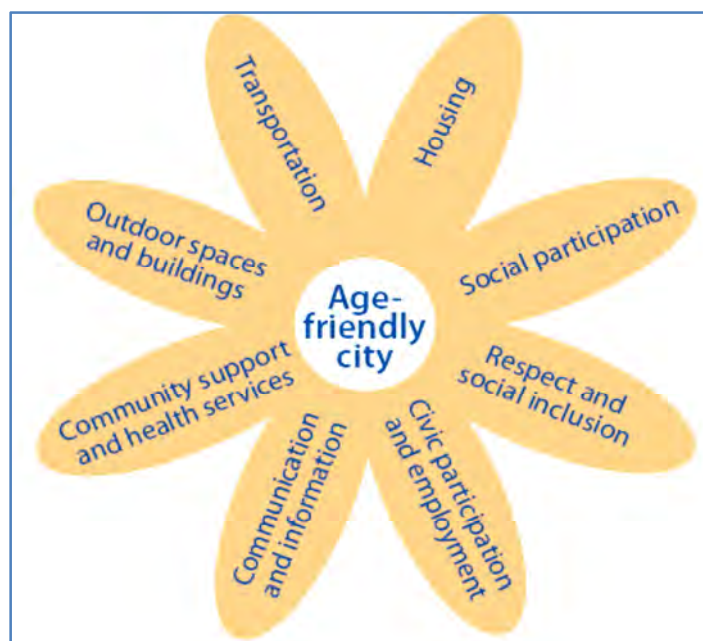
Older people were the main focus group participants in each of the 33 cities, with their views complemented by caregivers and service providers. Australia was one of the participating countries, with two cities: the City of Maribyrnong in Victoria and the City of Melville in Western Australia.

Each focus group was conducted in line with the *Vancouver Protocol* to achieve uniformity in the way information was collected across the world. The same eight topics were explored in every focus group: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; respect and social inclusion; social participation; communication and information; civic participation and employment; and community support and health services. The project produced two key documents: *World Health Organization Age-friendly Cities: A Guide*, and *World Health Organization Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities*⁷. The eight topics cover key aspects of a city, which are interconnected, form the framework for the development of age-friendliness, and are used across the world today. The eight areas, which are referred to as domains, are represented in Figure 1.

⁶ World Health Organization, 2002. *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework*
http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2002/WHO_NMH_NPH_02.8.pdf?ua=1

⁷ World Health Organization, 2007, "Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities"
http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist.pdf

Figure 1: WHO Eight Domains of an age-friendly city



Great Lakes community profile

General characteristics

The Great Lakes Council area is located on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. The appeal of the area is its natural attractiveness, the climate and the significant amount of residential housing opportunities close to the coast. The major population centre is the twin towns of Forster-Tuncurry in the north. Other key centres of population are the coastal townships of Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens in the south, and the rural inland centres of Bulahdelah and Stroud.

The main industry sectors in the Great Lakes include retail trade, health and community services, tourism, fishing and construction. The area has been a favourite holiday destination for generations of Australians and overseas visitors. Due to relatively strong population growth, the area also offers a variety of business, investment and employment opportunities.

Population characteristics

The Great Lakes region had a population of 36,312 as at June 2013 and has experienced significant population growth over the last 10 years, with retirees strongly represented in this growth. Recent population projections suggest that this trend will continue into the foreseeable future with an expected population of 45,850 persons in 2036⁸.

Great Lakes is a large area of 3,375 square kilometres with dispersed population centres. In 2006, 54% of the population was concentrated in Forster-Tuncurry. The other main

⁸ Profile.id Community Profile, <http://profile.id.com.au/great-lakes/population-estimate> (accessed 20 June 2014)

population centres are Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens (12% of the population), Pacific Palms/Smiths Lake (8.6%), Stroud (7.1%), Nahiack (7%), and Bulahdelah (5.1%).

At present, 84% of the Great Lakes population is Australian born, with 3.06% identifying as being Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander. English is the main language spoken by 97.8% of the population, and 3.38% of the population is from a non-English speaking background⁹.

Ageing of the population

The population characteristics show a significantly higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+) and a lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (under 15), compared to regional NSW. People aged 60+ years currently represent more than one-third of the Great Lakes total population at 39.5%, making it one of the oldest communities in NSW, double the state average and well above the regional average of 24.5%.

The population forecast for 2036 is 45,850 persons with a significant 44.7% increase forecast in the older age groups of 60+. Knowledge of how the age structure of the population is changing is essential for planning for age-friendly places and spaces, housing, support services and transportation systems.

In 2011, people aged between 65-69 years accounted for 8.7% of all residents. The largest increase in persons between 2011 and 2021 is forecast to be in the age range 70-74 (8.6% of total persons). Figure 2 shows the projected relative increase in people aged over 50 years.

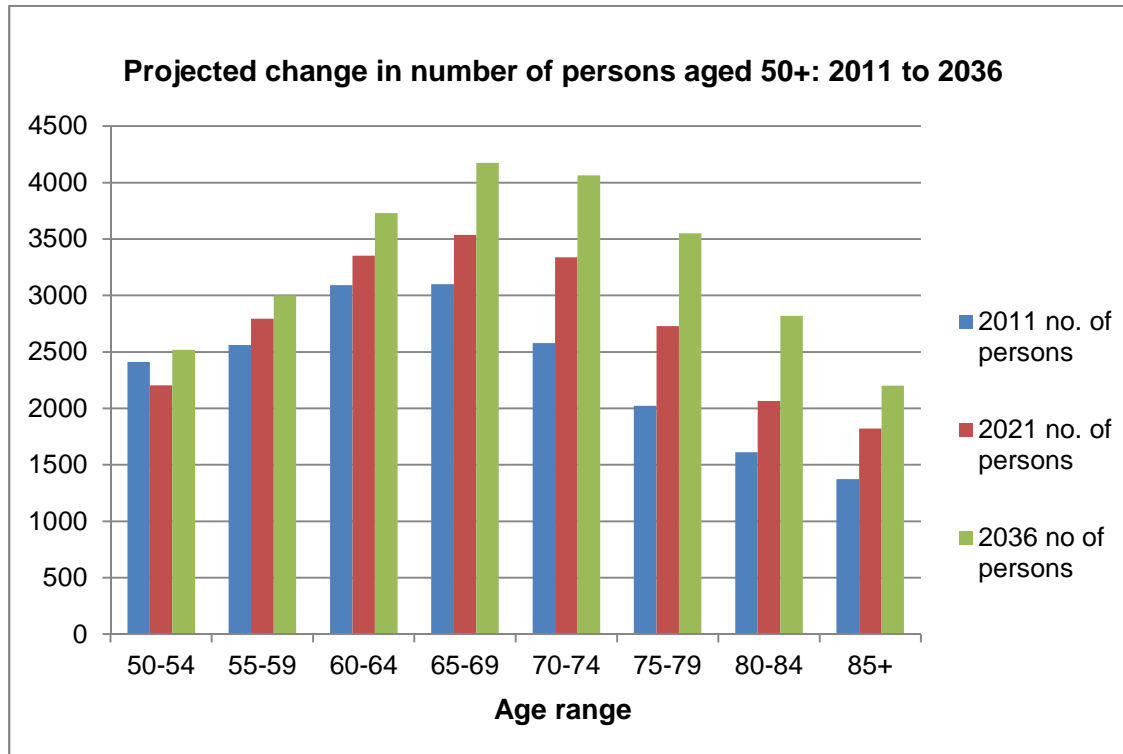
Great Lakes has shown itself to be attractive to retirees, particularly from Sydney and Newcastle. Forster-Tuncurry (including settlements in the outlying areas of Green Point and Smiths Lake) and Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens appear to be the most popular places for retirees to settle.

Using the population summary data from Forecast.id¹⁰ as a guide, the Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens area and the area south of Forster, including Green Point, appear to be the key growth areas for the Great Lakes Council area. Lower growth rates are indicated for other areas. The data do not indicate the level of growth by age, but given the overall expectation that the area will remain popular with retirees, it is likely that much of the growth in the Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens area, and Green Point will attract people from the older age groups. Figure 3 shows the projected total population growth for each of the regional districts of Great Lakes Council area from 2011 to 2036 and gives a guide to the proportional spread of the population overall.

⁹ Great Lakes 2030 Community Strategic Plan, 2011, p 21.

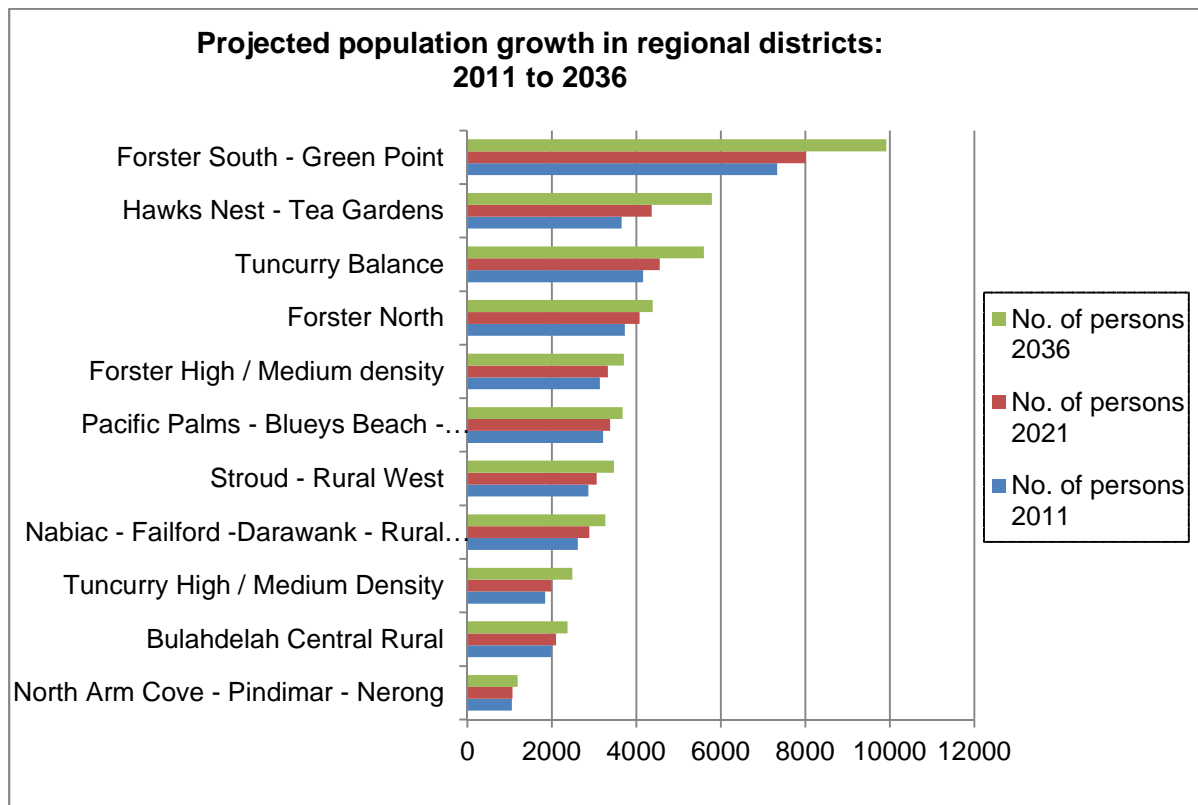
¹⁰ Forecast.id Population Forecast Great Lakes Population Summary, <http://forecast.id.com.au/great-lakes/population-summary>

Figure 2: Degree of change in persons aged 50+ from 2011 to 2036



Source: Forecast.id Population Forecast Great Lakes <http://forecast.id.com.au/great-lakes/population-age-structure>

Figure 3: Total population growth according to district



Action Plan: 8 domains

The tables on the following pages provide information on each of the 8 WHO AFCC domains and summarise the strategic priorities and actions for each. Information includes:

- WHO AFCC overview
- WHO AFCC recommendation
- Overarching goal or vision
- Strategic priorities
- Recommended actions divided into three groups: what Council can do, what others can do, and what individuals can do.

Appendix F has been included to show each domain with relevant elements from the NSW Ageing Strategy and the Key Directions and Objectives from Council's Community Strategic Plan.



WHO AFCC Domain	Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes access to facilities and spaces for leisure, recreation, arts, entertainment and shopping, and enjoyment of the natural environment
WHO AFCC recommendations	Outdoor spaces are clean, pleasant, accessible and safe. There is sufficient seating, lighting, and outdoor toilets, and well maintained dedicated footways free of obstructions. Pedestrian crossings are safe and sufficient in number. Buildings are well signed with sufficient seating and toilets. Services are situated together and are accessible.
Goal	Outdoor spaces and buildings support active ageing and are easy to access, easy to find, and easy to use.
Strategic priorities	<p>Apply universal design principles to the public domain, facilities and open spaces.</p> <p>Ensure full compliance with legislation and regulations for accessibility of the built environment as a minimum.</p> <p>At least one staff member will undertake industry recognised training in access to the built environment</p> <p>Promote access to and protection of the natural environment.</p> <p>Public amenities will be easy to access and in locations suited for people of all ages</p>
Great Lakes 2030 objectives	7, 8, 13
What Council can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Review existing locations of, and plan for new or upgraded public toilets based on assessed needs b Ensure a continuous, level path of travel to key infrastructure c Ensure public spaces are well maintained, clean and safe d Provide street seating along main walkways and outside and within shopping precincts and key infrastructure based on assessed needs e Support a program for residents and community groups to donate street furniture f Ensure all relevant staff understand the importance of facilitating active ageing in the public domain g Ensure all new works and upgrades meet requirements of the Access to Premises Standard and use the Disability Access Standards as guidelines where appropriate h Promote social interaction and active ageing through provision of opportunities for older people to volunteer for activities that suit a variety of interests and experience i Support relevant staff to attend industry-recognised training in access to the built environment to advise on Standards at both planning and implementation stages and to problem-solve difficult situations j Incorporate the principles of universal design into future planning regulations and documentation
What others can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Work in partnership with Council for planned balance in development and conservation of natural areas b Make a donation of a seat or shade tree
What you can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Join a community environment group b Participate in local activities c Utilise public spaces and places d Give feedback to Council about unsafe footpaths or other aspects of the public domain and priorities for footpath/cycleway construction e Participate in a street furniture donation program

WHO AFCC Domain	Transportation
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes public and community transport, road safety, licence retention, parking, footpaths, shared pathways and roadways.
WHO AFCC recommendations	Public transport is reliable and regular, with conveniently located and accessible stops. Community transport is available for people unable to use public transport. Parking and drop-off areas are safe. Sufficient accessible parking spaces are provided. Roadways are free of obstructions that block driver vision. Information about costs, routes and times, is available and accessible.
Goal	Residents move around the community safely and easily and travel to places when and where they want to go.
Strategic priorities	<p>Advocate for improvements to affordable and accessible transport options</p> <p>Increase knowledge and awareness of road and pedestrian safety including users of mobility devices</p> <p>Establish a transport coordination group to better utilise existing transport infrastructure and options</p> <p>Provide an education campaign about licencing and testing for older drivers</p>
Great Lakes 2030 objectives	7, 8, 12, 13
What Council can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Consult with older people about priorities for new footpaths and footpath upgrades b Continue to maintain bus stops, bus shelters, footpaths and cycleways c Provide adequate accessible parking places at shopping centres and key services d Integrate transport planning into land use planning to ensure close proximity to shops and services e Advocate for improved transport options, and improved transport links f Deliver road safety programs specifically designed for older residents g Deliver mobility scooter education programs h Deliver shared pathway education programs and information (DPOP) i Ensure currency of Forster Tuncurry mobility map and develop mobility maps for other areas as resources allow j Seek funding to support mapping of existing transport options
What others can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Ensure effective regulation of transport services b Provide community transport services c Provide health related transport services
What you can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Find out how to use the local bus service or community transport service b Volunteer as a driver for community transport c Attend road safety sessions d Attend mobility scooter awareness training e Consider your transport options in case you are no longer able to drive; find out about getting a restricted driver's licence or how to pass your upcoming driving test f Consider bicycle use for local trips

WHO AFCC Domain	Housing
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes housing choice and affordability, home modifications, ability to age in place, and conveniently located.
WHO AFCC recommendations	Sufficient affordable housing is available close to services and the rest of the community. Interior spaces and level surfaces allow freedom of movement throughout the dwelling. Home modification options are available and affordable. Supported accommodation is available and affordable for older people who are frail or have a disability.
Goal	Older residents have access to housing that enables them to age at home and they are informed about options available if needs change
Strategic priorities	<p>Planning for new housing developments incorporates design features that suit people across their lifespan</p> <p>Encourage developers to build homes to suit the whole of lifespan</p> <p>Support people to age safely in their own home</p> <p>Encourage the supply of affordable housing suitable for older residents</p> <p>Planning for older-age specific developments will be located close to amenities, services, and transport</p>
Great Lakes 2030 objectives	9
What Council can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Encourage collaboration between all sectors involved in the design and development of urban spaces and housing to create more age-friendly places and spaces b Coordinate education programs on home design that facilitates safe and comfortable ageing in place c Market Livable Housing Design Guidelines to the community and provide incentives for local building designers to become accredited assessors d Plan new developments including a focus on an ageing population and incorporate the principles of universal design across the design of neighbourhoods and housing e Seek funding to develop Great Lakes-specific standards (with reference to Livable Housing Design Guidelines) that qualify for incentives under the LEP for high density and business zones f Encourage the development of housing at lower price points to suit people on low incomes
What others can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Developers can support Council in creating universally designed urban spaces and housing b The construction industry can learn more about universal design principles and provide appropriate solutions for clients who want to design for their future needs c Building suppliers and hardware stores can assist customers to choose appropriate fixtures and fittings for their future needs
What you can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Consider your future needs such as transport needs, housing design, access to services and shops when choosing a new home b Consider your future needs when renovating your existing home – include universal design feature where practicable c Take stock of your home to see its suitability for your latter years

WHO AFCC Domain	Social Participation
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes a diversity of activities, accessible information about events and activities, lifelong learning, being involved and not isolated.
WHO AFCC recommendations	Venues are conveniently located, accessible and easily reached by public transport. Events are held at times convenient for older people and are affordable. Information about events is provided including accessibility and transport options. Outreach to isolated people is consistent. A variety of activities that appeal to a diverse population are available.
Goal	Older residents have opportunities to participate in social activities and maintain relationships
Strategic priorities	<p>Activities and events are held at times and places that suit older people</p> <p>Activities and events are promoted widely and include information about accessibility and transport options</p> <p>Outreach to isolated older residents continues through existing volunteer groups and community services</p> <p>Utilise volunteer activities as a means of social participation</p> <p>The public domain is designed to encourage informal socialisation</p>
Great Lakes 2030 objectives	8, 10, 13
What Council can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Support and encourage organisations to devise their activities and events to include a diverse range of people b Encourage organisations to promote and advertise their events and activities widely in clear language, and include information about venue accessibility and transport options c Create provision for community organisations to publicise their events on the Council website d Encourage informal social interaction in the public domain through design e Review the suitability of current venues for activities where older people congregate and create a plan for upgrades and replacement f Facilitate partnerships and collaboration between groups to maximise social opportunities g Support groups that provide lifelong learning opportunities h Promote social interaction and active ageing through provision of opportunities for older people to volunteer for activities that suit a variety of interests and experience i Facilitate and encourage provision of outreach services where appropriate
What others can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Community groups can promote and advertise their events and activities widely in clear language and readable formats. Include information about venue accessibility and transport options b Provide clear information about how to become a member of your group c Review the group's promotional material for attractiveness and ease of reading and understanding d Engage with older people in planning events and activities e Work in partnership with Council to address the issues that impact on social isolation
What you can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Start a new member drive for your group: a special morning tea where new members are made especially welcome b Take responsibility for making new members to your group welcome and included c Be open to assistance so that you can participate d Attend a course or learn a new skill e Join a group to challenge your brain, eg bridge club, book club, art group

WHO AFCC Domain	Respect and Social Inclusion
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes consultation, positive imagery and depiction, and intergenerational activities and events
WHO AFCC recommendations	Older people are consulted on how to serve them better. Older people are depicted positively in the media without stereotyping. Community events attract all generations and older people are included in activities for families. Schools encourage involvement of older people and to learn about ageing. Less well-off older people have access to public and community services.
Goal	Older residents are consulted on issues. Intergenerational activities are encouraged and organised.
Strategic priorities	<p>Community consultations will ensure the involvement of older people</p> <p>Community events will be devised in ways to ensure older people can participate</p> <p>People from all backgrounds have an opportunity to participate in activities</p> <p>Media and imagery presents active and involved depictions and descriptions of older people</p> <p>Language and terminology is respectful and represents the diversity of older people</p>
Great Lakes 2030 objectives	5, 6, 10
What Council can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Ensure older people are represented in community engagement activities by holding events at appropriate times and places b Involve older residents in decision-making processes on issues around how to best meet their needs c Ensure community events are devised so that people of all ages can attend and participate d Promote social interaction and active ageing through provision of opportunities for older people to volunteer for activities that suit a variety of interests and experience e Use images in Council documents that depict older people as active and involved rather than frail and needing care f Ensure language used to describe older people is respectful and avoids homogenous terms such as “the aged” and “the elderly” g Celebrate the role and achievements of older people
What others can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Ensure your business or service is welcoming to older people by training staff and thinking about the needs and preferences of older people b Ensure your business or service has premises that are accessible, allow for navigation with a walking frame or cane, and provides seating for resting. c Schools can devise programs and events that include the knowledge and skills of older people
What you can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Participate in activities and events b Participate in community consultations and provided feedback on issues c Encourage others to participate in activities and consultations d Utilise positive and respectful language when referring to older people e Volunteer at a school

WHO AFCC Domain	Civic Participation and Employment
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes volunteering, involvement in community decision-making, and non-discriminatory employment practices.
WHO AFCC recommendations	Options for volunteering are available with training, recognition and compensation for personal costs. Decision-making bodies encourage and facilitate membership of older people. Age discrimination in employment is not practiced and the qualities of older people are promoted. Workplaces are adapted to meet the needs of older people.
Goal	Older residents participate in local decision-making and volunteering. Employment opportunities exist.
Strategic priorities	<p>An older persons' reference group/advisory panel will be established and consulted in decision-making and policy development</p> <p>Older residents are informed about volunteering options</p> <p>Age discrimination in employment is not practiced</p> <p>Council's workforce management plan is used as a model for other businesses</p>
Great Lakes 2030 objectives	5, 6, 13, 15
What Council can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Include strategies in the Workforce Management Plan to retain and attract older workers, and for older workers to transition to retirement so that they can continue to contribute their knowledge and mentor younger employees before leaving the workforce b Promote social interaction and active ageing through provision of opportunities for older people to volunteer for activities that suit a variety of interests and experience c Ensure older people are represented in community engagement activities by holding events at appropriate times and places d Involve older residents in decision-making processes on issues around how to best meet their needs
What others can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Employ older workers b Invest in businesses associated with an older population c Partner with Council to hold a Volunteer Expo d Provide clear information about volunteer roles and opportunities - the tasks and responsibilities
What you can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Plan for your retirement financially and physically: seek financial advice and advice on home design suitable for ageing in place. b Ask your employer about options for transition to retirement c Join a community group d Join a community service group e Help out by volunteering, eg Meals on Wheels, Library, Ageing & Disability Services, local school

WHO AFCC Domain	Communication and Information
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes information in a range of formats, Internet access, suitable placement and timeliness.
WHO AFCC recommendations	Regular and widespread distribution of information is coordinated and reaches residents of all ages. Print and spoken communication uses familiar words in short, straightforward sentences. Printed information has large lettering. There is easy access to computers and the Internet in public places such as libraries and community centres.
Goal	Information is available in various formats and a range of locations, and is easy to read and understand.
Strategic priorities	<p>Social events will be promoted widely in a range of formats in locations frequented by older people</p> <p>Community services will be promoted widely in a range of formats and in locations frequented by older people</p> <p>Internet services will be available to all at an affordable rate and in convenient places</p>
Great Lakes 2030 objectives	8, 9, 13, 14, 15
What Council can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Deliver training for staff on providing information in easy-to-read formats and plain English and invite other relevant organisations to participate b Provide affordable access to the internet in libraries and support training opportunities to assist older people to utilise new technology c Keep the community regularly informed of Council activities through a variety of mediums including website, newsletter, radio and local media d Establish noticeboards in the Great Lakes smaller towns in places that older people frequent, such as grocery stores, and recruit volunteers to maintain their local noticeboard e Support the provision of community information (eg local groups, clubs, organisations, etc)
What others can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Review current information about your service or group for readability and clarity b Attend a training program on promoting services in easy to read formats and plain English c Collaborate with Council by allowing a community noticeboard on your private property d Provide information to Council about activities and events for inclusion on Council's website e Support the provision of community information, eg local groups, clubs, organisations, etc
What you can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Volunteer to maintain your local community noticeboard b Distribute information to others c Create attractive and easy to read information about your group d Check your information is correct before passing it on to others

WHO AFCC Domain	Social Support and Health Services
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes staying healthy, home support services, health services, and emergency planning.
WHO AFCC recommendations	Health promotion services are available. Home support services are available. Services are conveniently located and accessible. Clear and accessible information is provided about health and social services. Services are coordinated and administratively simple. Emergency planning takes account of the capacities and vulnerabilities of older people.
Goal	Residents know how to access community services and health prevention and care services
Strategic priorities	Extend opportunities for health promotion Provide public open space and recreation facilities that encourage older people to participate
Great Lakes 2030 objectives	12, 13, 16
What Council can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Advocate for the expansion of community support services where a shortfall exists b Residents know how to access community services and health prevention and care services c Continue to provide ageing and disability services and advocate for increased recurrent funding d Advocate for the expansion of community support services where a shortfall exists e Collaborate with allied health professionals so that residents know about the options for health prevention, health maintenance and care services f Continue to advocate for increased medical services in the Great Lakes area g Facilitate provision of information about the range of services available to assist people to age in place including contact information of other service providers
What others can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Provide information about community support services in various formats and in a range of locations b Ensure information is easy to read and understandable for people who may not have good literacy skills or have English as a second or other language c Local allied health professionals can organise a special health prevention campaign or week where their skills are highlighted and promoted (e.g. dieticians, pharmacists, physiotherapists, podiatrists, occupational therapists, osteopaths, chiropractors) d Home support services (home modifications, community transport, neighbour aid, assistive technology suppliers, etc.) can stage an annual expo to promote their services
What you can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Stay active, go for a walk, cycle, eat well b Utilise open space, go for a picnic c Find out if an allied health professional can help you stay healthy d Find out where to go to get information about the support services available in your area e Find out yourself if the information given to you casually by a friend is correct – sometimes information is miscommunicated as it passes from person to person f Attend information days and expos about health and wellbeing

Methodology

The methodology for this project involved three stages. First, research into the WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC) project to ascertain the scope and processes required. Second, focus group and survey research was undertaken with residents aged 50 years and older to identify and prioritise potential actions to make Great Lakes more age-friendly. Third, data from stage two was collated and analysed for themes.

The processes documented in the WHO *Vancouver Protocol* were used as a guide for the seven focus groups, which were held in four different locations: Bulahdelah, Stroud, Tea Gardens, and Forster. Separate groups for residents, service providers, business and staff were held in Forster, but mixed groups were held in Bulahdelah, Stroud and Tea Gardens. The number of participants in each group ranged from seven to twelve. A copy of the participant consent form and the participant information form can be found at Appendix D.

A supplementary survey questionnaire was constructed and publicised widely in the local print and electronic media. The hard copy version can be found at Appendix E. The questionnaire consisted of two questions for each of the eight domains, one for ranking the current characteristics of the domain, and one to elicit comments for improvements.

Focus groups

Council staff identified active community members aged over 50 years and invited them to participate in the focus group in the district in which they live. Not including the staff focus group session, there was a total of 58 participants for the six focus groups. While the *Vancouver Protocol* encourages wider canvassing for focus group membership the resources available restricted this aspect of the process. To offset this aspect, it was decided to survey the wider community to gain a wider appreciation of the issues facing older people. The survey results and findings are reported separately.

A version of nominal group technique was used to facilitate focus group discussion. The eight WHO domains were discussed in turn, with participants being encouraged to contribute comments regarding each domain, both bad and good. After group discussion, the group was asked for one solution or idea to solve the issues arising.

Each participant was given three votes which they used to indicate which three of the suggested solutions or actions they thought most important.

The staff group was not asked to vote on any suggestion or recommendation as their contribution was to be used as a comparison with resident and service provider feedback.

Survey

Although not officially part of the *Vancouver Protocol*, a supplementary survey was carried out as a means of canvassing comments and ideas more widely. The questionnaire was provided online through SurveyMonkey™ and by mail, and its availability was publicised widely in the local print and electronic media.

The questionnaire was structured around the eight domains with two questions for each domain. The first question sought a five-point ranking from 'excellent' to 'very poor' for the current characteristics of each domain. The second question sought comments for improvements within each domain. Basic demographic information was also sought (age

and gender) as well as the district in which the respondent lives. The survey was carried out during the same time period as the focus group sessions and for one month following. A total of 149 responses were received.



Analysis phase

The comments from each focus group workshop were collated and documented. The number of votes (stars) for each domain were tallied and then compared across all groups to give an indication of domain priorities.

Consistent with the *Vancouver Protocol*, each focus group is reported with three elements against each domain:

- existing age friendly aspects
- barriers to participation
- and improvements.

These three elements form the baseline assessment and inform the overarching strategies and implementation plan, and can be used to monitor progress against the plan. The charts are supplemented with quotes from participants where they illustrated some of the issues or recommendations. These elements are charted in detail at Appendix A.

The survey responses were analysed after the focus group analysis was completed. Responses were divided into two types: one for the ranking responses and one for the narrative responses. The ranked responses were tabulated into charts and can be found at Appendix B. The narrative responses were reviewed for keywords. The frequency of each keyword was recorded and used as an indicator of the level of concern for each issue in each district.

The survey responses were compared with focus group outcomes for similarities and additional information. The responses were categorised by district to match the districts of the focus groups (Bulahdelah, Stroud, Tea Gardens and Forster). An additional group, Pacific Palms and Coomba Park, was added in the survey analysis. Issues specific to Pacific

Palms and Coomba Park were raised in the Forster focus group and sufficient survey responses were received to create an additional grouping for later reference.

In the final stage of the analysis, the focus group findings and the survey findings were merged into one document and related to the relevant domains and linked to the key directions of Council's Community Strategic Plan.



Findings

Focus groups

There was a total of thirty two community participants in the focus groups aged between 50 and 79 years. Sixteen were between the ages of 60-69 years, ten were aged between 70-79, and six aged between 50-59. There were more females (19) than males (13), and most lived with their spouse (27). Two thirds were fully retired (16) and three quarters (25) said they did not have a disability. All but one rated their health as good or excellent, and all except one own their home (or have a mortgage). A typical participant was a retired female aged 65 years in good health who is living with her spouse in a home that they own.

The number of votes for an action in each domain were totalled across all focus groups. This provided an indication of which domains were of greater importance than others to focus group participants.

The total number of votes across all groups showed that Transportation, Communication and Information, and Community Support and Health Services were of the greatest importance. Table 1 shows these figures.

Table 1: Number of votes within each domain (all groups)

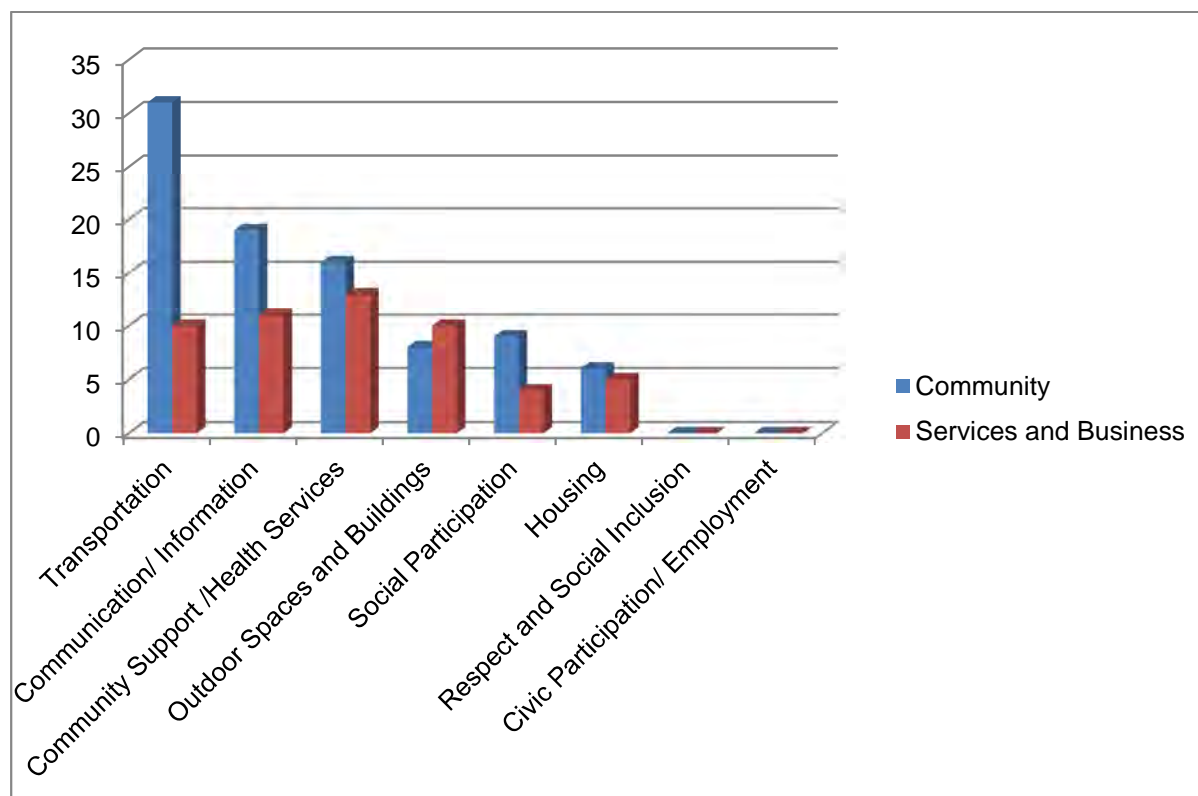
Domain ranking	Number of votes
1. Transportation	41
2. Communication and information	30
3. Community support and health services	29
4. Outdoor spaces and buildings	19
5. Housing	11
6. Social Participation	11
7. Civic participation and employment	3
8. Respect and social inclusion	0

However, when comparing the community member focus groups with the business and service provider groups, some differences emerged. Community members gave most votes to Transportation (31 votes), followed by Communication and Information, and Community Support and Health Services. Business and service provider participants gave most votes to Community Support and Health Services (13 votes), and rated Outdoor Spaces and Buildings higher than the community members. The comparison between the two focus groups is shown in Figure 4.

Because Transport is closely linked with other domains, particularly Community Support and Health Services, Social Participation and Civic Participation, it is more likely to receive more consideration overall. It should be noted that Housing did not receive significant attention in discussions, which may be due to the fact that most participants were home owners satisfied with their current home.



Figure 4: Comparison of priorities: community members with service providers and business



There were no votes for Respect and Social Inclusion or Civic Participation and Employment as participants felt these areas were good or satisfactory and needed little or no improvement. They felt that respect was generally forthcoming and that there were many opportunities for older people to participate in social and civic activities. Given that most participants had retired from the paid workforce, employment did not emerge as a concern in discussions. This does not infer that residents in other age groups don't have concerns in these domains.

It should be noted that some responses cut across domains. For example, cycleways are part of Transportation, but they are also part of Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, and also link with concepts of healthy and active ageing. Although some comments and recommendations may technically belong in another domain, they have been left in the domain where they were raised and discussed by participants.

The following list illustrates some of the key points made (mostly in the words used by participants) during discussions and these serve as examples of the level of detail discussed under each domain.

Transportation (total 41 votes)

Key words: coordination, brokerage, cycleways, linked with socialisation and health

- Map the private and public transport including community transport
- Find ways to make the most of the available transport in the area
- Check feasibility and value of a transport brokerage service
- A shuttle bus on weekdays for local shopping and socialisation is needed from North Arm Cove, Bundabah, Pindamar, Hawks Nest, Tea Gardens

- Cycleway from South Forster to Pacific Palms

Communication and Information (total 30 votes)

Keywords: Newsletters, radio, information centre

- Find out how best to communicate with older people (all people)
- Place newsletters/flyers in strategic places (Library, pharmacy, supermarket)
- Consider communicating by radio more often and at regular times – this needs a dedicated person
- Have a Town Information Centre like tourist information (could combine these?)

Community Support and Health Services (29 votes)

Keywords: access, availability, prevention, navigating system

- Need a broker-type person to help people navigate the system
- Circulate the 1800 022 222 “telephone doctor” phone number on a fridge magnet
- Focus on health promotion and illness prevention (Great Health Great Lakes project was popular)
- Find ways to attract more GPs to the area, particularly outlying areas

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings (total 19 votes)

Key words: toilets, meeting places, walking tracks/footpaths

- Toilets need to be strategically located and accessible by all (no steps). Specifically, middle of Blueys Beach, Wharf Street Forster, Bungwahl, Burgess Beach
- Street furniture design and locations should consider accessibility
- Extend the coastal walk
- New footpaths should link with existing footpaths – this needs to be done at planning stage
- Pedestrian crossings where people want to cross
- Audit current and potential community group meetings/activities and try to better match with existing infrastructure in Bulahdelah (think outside the box)
- Expand the library building in Bulahdelah
- Replace the hall with a larger community centre that will cater for more activities and be more inviting in Tea Gardens
- Seating at the Stroud showground and the shopping area

Housing (11 votes)

Keywords: choice, education, planning

- Publicise the home modifications scheme
- New developments to include more choice and universal design
- Council planners to encourage “future-proofing” homes
- Educate residents about factoring later life into their renovations or new home purchases
- Educate the building professionals about incorporating age-friendly features into renovations

Social Participation (11 votes)

Keywords: passive socialisation, links to transport and information

- Seating to be strategically placed to encourage casual socialisation (village settings)
- Something like a Hyde Park chess set can assist casual socialisation
- Dependent on transport and knowing what is happening

Civic Participation and Employment (3 votes)

Keywords: consultation, information, volunteering

- Recruit older people to Council committees and working parties to be involved in decision making
- Council to develop a 'mature worker' strategy that could potentially be used as a model for business
- Have an annual Volunteer Expo to acknowledge and recruit volunteers across sectors

Respect and Social Inclusion

No specific ideas or recommendations emerged from discussion on this topic as most people thought that they were respected and included in day to day interactions.

Survey responses

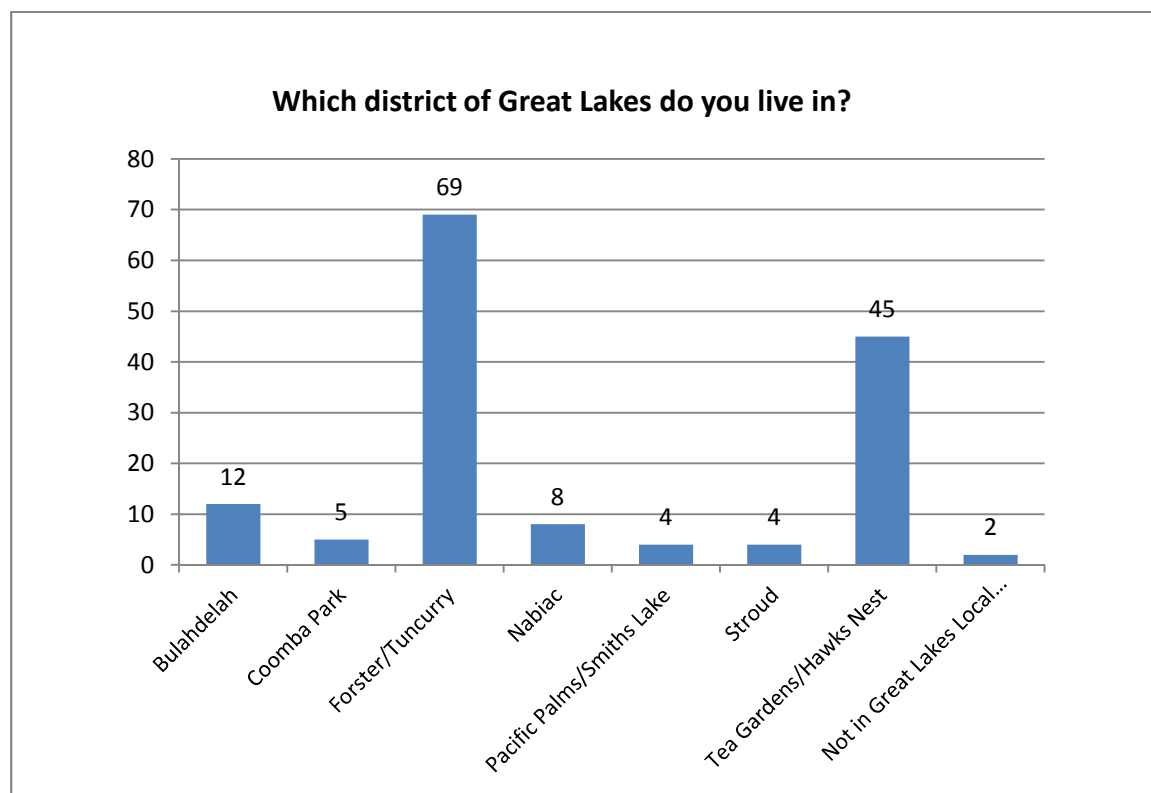
The survey returned 149 responses. Sixty-two percent of respondents were female and 38% male. The majority (77%) of respondents were aged between 60-79 years (60 aged 60-69; 55 aged 70-79). There were twenty five respondents aged between 50-59 years, and nine respondents aged 80 years or more.

Forty-six percent of the respondents lived in the Forster-Tuncurry district, with 30% in the Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens district. The remainder were spread across the other districts (Bulahdelah 8%; Nabiac 5%; Coomba Park 3%; Pacific Palms/Smiths Lake 3%; Stroud 3%). Figure 5 reports the number of respondents from each district.

Overall, the survey responses reflected the key issues arising from the focus groups, in regards to transport (including footpaths and cycleways), information provision and local medical services, particularly in Tea Gardens and Bulahdelah. Housing received more attention in the survey responses than in the focus groups, mostly indicating concern about new developments needing to have housing designs suited for "ageing in place", but not necessarily specialised retirement developments.



Figure 5: Districts respondents live in



There was considerable cross over between some of the domains, for example, within the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings domain there were 80 mentions of footpaths that technically belong in the Transportation domain. This number of mentions also means that more than half the survey respondents mentioned footpaths in their comments. Comments regarding seating, cycleways, lighting, and toilets, reflected much of the discussion from the focus groups. Table 2 shows the domain ranking by the number of keyword mentions under each domain. Because of the number of specific topics mentioned under the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings domain, Table 3 was constructed to show the top five keyword mentions within this domain. Greater detail of the narrative responses from the survey can be found at Appendix B.

Table 2: Domain ranking by number of keyword mentions under each domain

Domain ranking	Number of mentions
1. Outdoor spaces and buildings	268
2. Transportation	121
3. Social Participation	95
4. Housing	87
5. Community support and health services	80
6. Communication and information	58
7. Civic participation and employment	53
8. Respect and social inclusion	23

Table 3: Ranking within the Outdoor spaces and buildings domain

Ranking of keywords	Number of mentions
Footpaths	80
Seating	41
Cycleways	41
Lighting	38
Toilets	34

Satisfaction ratings across all domains for all districts

Overall, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings had the highest satisfaction rating followed by Social Participation. Transportation received the highest dissatisfaction rating followed by Community Support and Health Services – access to general practitioners being the main concern. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Civic Participation and Employment, and Social Participation all received ratings above 10% for excellent.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings received the highest satisfaction rating overall with 44% of respondents rating it as good and 19% as excellent.

Transportation received the highest dissatisfaction rating overall with more than half of respondents rating it as either poor (28%) or very poor (24%). Transportation was the only domain to receive a rating above 5% of very poor.

Housing was rated by half the respondents as good (51%) and almost one quarter as average (24%).

Respect and Social Inclusion was rated as either good (48%) or average (32%).

Social Participation was rated as good (48%); average (27%); and excellent (11%).

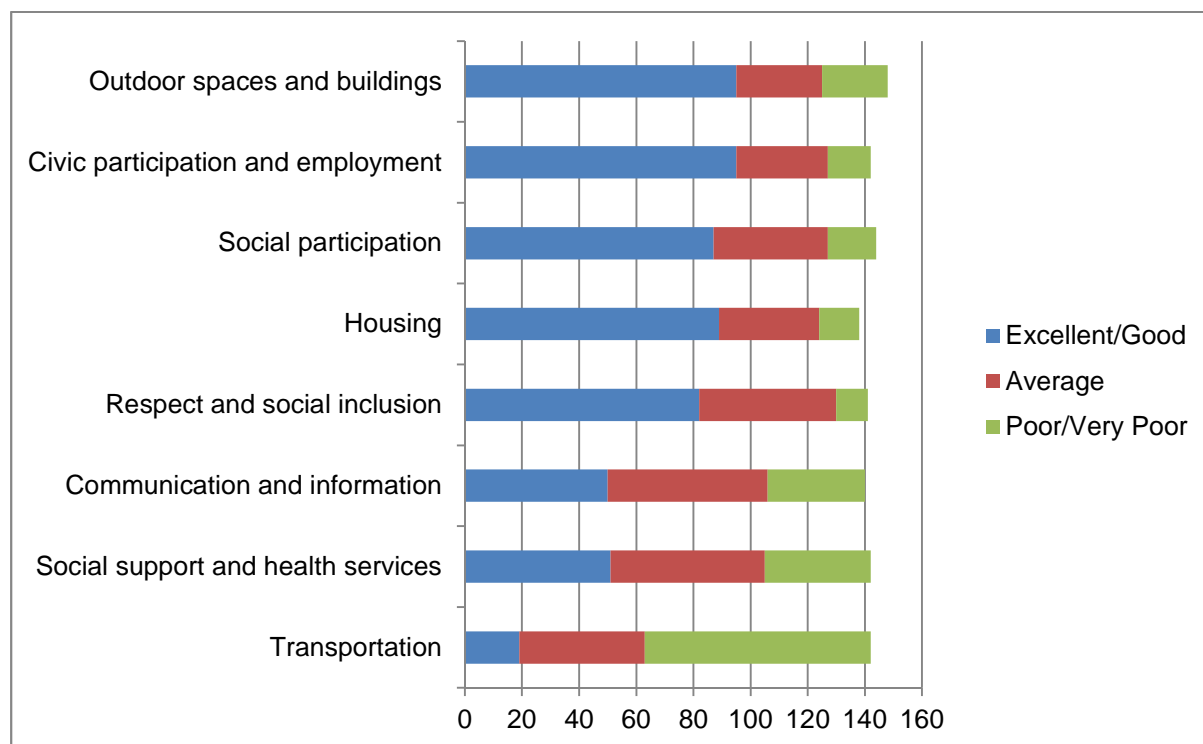
Communication and Information was rated as average (38%); good (29%); and poor (17%).

Civic Participation and Employment was rated as good (49%) and average (21%). This domain received the second highest rating of excellent (15%) after Outdoor Spaces and Buildings (20%).

Social Support and Health Services were rated as average (36%) and good (25%), with 20% of respondents rating this domain as poor.

Details of the percentages for each domain are provided at Appendix B, and Figure 6 shows the overall satisfaction rating for age-friendliness in each domain.

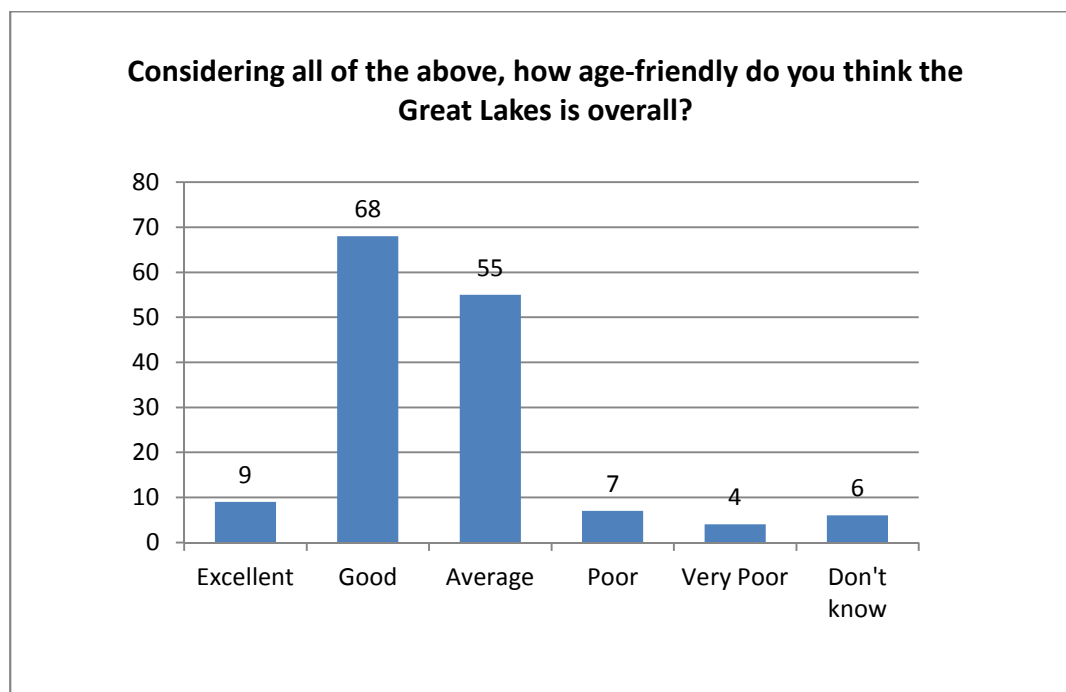
Figure 6: Overall satisfaction rating for age-friendliness in each domain



Overall age-friendliness of Great Lakes

Almost half the respondents (46%) rated the age-friendliness of Great Lakes as good, with just over one third as average (37%). The number of responses for each rating is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Overall rating for the age-friendliness of Great Lakes



Discussion

Focus group participants tended to represent older residents who are active and involved, and who live in their own home with another person. While participants did not generally represent isolated residents or those who have difficulty participating in activities, many were active volunteers in organisations that either involve other older people, or in organisations that provide community services such as adult day care and meals on wheels. It is acknowledged that overcoming social isolation and gaining involvement by people who are socially isolated is problematic. Consequently, the participants for this first community engagement process were deliberately chosen for their connections with others who are less involved in community activities.

Overall the survey responses confirmed the themes that emerged in the focus groups. The satisfaction rating questions provided a guide to overall concerns, but the narrative responses provided an information-rich context that can inform strategic planning processes and the Delivery Program. This information is provided separately at Appendix B.

Areas of similar concern between the focus group participants and the survey respondents are transport and access to medical services. Information provision in various formats (written, verbal, plain English) and available in a range of locations was also a key issue for both focus groups and survey respondents. Housing issues were more evident in the survey responses including overall affordability, rental affordability, and housing choice. All focus group participants, except one, owned their own home and this is a likely reason for housing not being raised as a major issue in discussions.

Affordability of social activities was also more prominent in the survey responses suggesting that a proportion of survey respondents were on restricted incomes and therefore not enjoying the same level of activity and socialisation compared with focus group participants. This is an element that will need to be followed up in subsequent community engagement processes. Discussion on the key issues follows and suggested actions linked to Council's Community Strategic Plan is at Appendix C.



Access to transport

Transport was clearly the most concerning domain for participants. Comments related to use of footpaths or cycleways, access to community transport, being able to maintain a driver's licence, but most of all, having services that take you where you want to go, when you want to go if you do not own or drive a private vehicle.

While there is a good community transport service in operation, there are restrictions on who can use it, and when they can use it. There is no train service in the Great Lakes, forcing residents to travel to Taree in the north, or Newcastle in the south to access this form of transport. In the town area of Forster-Tuncurry there is a public bus service and a bus to Newcastle and Sydney. However, this is insufficient to meet the everyday needs of residents who want to shop locally, visit friends in hospital, attend gatherings and participate in activities and events. Secure parking at bus and train stations was also raised as an issue as a visit to Newcastle or Sydney usually necessitates at least one overnight stay.

This is a difficult area for Council to address, as public transport is not within its area of responsibility. However it was mentioned in discussions that there are many buses and transport organisations in the district, and that perhaps they were not organised and coordinated in the best possible ways. This lent itself to the suggestion that the best way to solve some of the transport issues is to map the existing situation (buses, services, and travel needs) and develop a plan for future action and advocacy on transport.



Access to medical services

Access to medical services is problematic for any resident without access to a private motor vehicle. Many rely on family, friends and neighbours to transport them to medical appointments. The nearest public hospital to the north is in Taree. There is an ambulance station at Tuncurry, but this service experienced cuts in 2011, resulting in the potential for a 40 minute wait before an ambulance arrives from Taree to respond to an emergency call.

There is an ambulance service in Tea Gardens, so response times are relatively good in that area. However the closest public hospital is in Newcastle, an hour's drive away. Several

respondents mentioned the need for an emergency department to be established locally because of this issue.

Community transport to Port Macquarie and Newcastle or Raymond Terrace for specialist appointments is available, but may not be widely known or have sufficient capacity. However, there may be one car with one volunteer driver taking one person when they could be taking two or three people if appointment times were coordinated.

The Tea Gardens district in particular appears to have difficulty in attracting and retaining medical practitioners who are prepared to stay long enough to establish a relationship with patients. Also, waiting times are extended, especially for the longest-serving doctor who is booked out a month in advance. (This is an indicator of how important it is for people to see the same doctor). Consequently, those with access to private transport travel further afield for medical services. This was a major concern for participants in the Tea Gardens focus group and was confirmed in the survey responses from that district. Residents in the Bulahdelah district also have similar difficulties accessing medical services.

Residents in the Stroud district currently have good access to medical services. However, the local medical centre is owned by a practice based in Gloucester and this does not guarantee an ongoing service in Stroud.

Access to medical services, particularly specialist and hospital services continue to cause difficulty for many because of a lack of suitable transport services. It should be noted that there are very few specialists who are prepared to travel to any of the Great Lakes towns, so almost all specialist appointments require at least one hours travel, and waiting times are very long compared to city counterparts.

Finding ways to attract and support medical practitioners and their families in the Great Lakes area is a key challenge along with ensuring residents can access medical appointments when and where they are needed. It should be noted that compared to their city counterparts, many residents, with or without private vehicles, incur additional travel costs with specialist appointments, making a visit to the doctor not only a difficult experience but also an expensive one.

Access to information

Having the right information in the right place, in the right format, at the right time, for the right person is a perennial problem facing all information service providers. It is not until people need to know something that they then start to look for it. This is the critical point in the information cycle – where to start looking.

Visitors to any area in Australia know to look for the local tourist information centre which is usually well signed at the boundaries of the town and signed onward to the entry. It was suggested that a similar 'place' was needed for information about community services, activities and local events. It was also suggested that the current tourist information centres within the Great Lakes area could also be providers of local information and promoted as such. There was also a suggestion that some people feel stigmatised by using a service that is designated as “welfare” or “social service” although these services are usually very good providers of information.

Government services and others are becoming increasingly reliant on providing information via the Internet, and in some cases it is not available in any other format. This reliance on

the Internet is not only unsuitable for rural communities as Internet connections are very slow, it is unsuitable for many older residents who have never learned to use a computer, do not have access to the Internet, and as time goes by will remain disconnected to electronic formats. It was raised in one discussion that some older people feel pressured into learning this new communication environment when they would be happier following familiar communication methods.

The issue of timely information is also the key to empowerment. Timely information about services can make the difference to staying at home safely and comfortably, particularly if it helps people to plan ahead or utilise services before a crisis occurs. Without information, people can find themselves in a crisis situation where information eventually comes to them in the form of a service provider. The Home Modifications Service for example, is not well known yet it is an important aspect of keeping a home safe and maintaining independence. It was specifically mentioned in two of the focus groups that the Home Modifications Service should become more pro-active, not just in providing a service, but in educating people about age-friendly home design ideas that are not just ramps and rails. There is potential for local hardware and Do-It-Yourself stores to collaborate in an education program with the assistance of the local chapter of the Master Builders Association.

Council's website was commended for containing a wide range of information, but it was considered too difficult to find the desired information within the site. It is understood that Council is currently seeking to improve the website design and meet international standards for accessibility.



Access to suitable housing

As a follow on from information about home modifications, focus group participants spoke of people they knew who have bought homes they believe will be unsuitable for their later years. They cited hilly areas which were bought for the view, double storey and split level homes, all in locations that rely on owning and driving a private vehicle as there are no shops, services or public transport nearby. There was a belief that as these homes become

unsuitable or occupants could no longer drive, residents would move into town assuming that there would be suitable stock available on the private market. Little thought was given to their own situation in these discussions or that when they are older and perhaps more frail, moving would not seem an attractive option after all. As people age the very act of packing up and moving from a familiar home and neighbourhood becomes less attractive and consequently they 'stay put'¹¹. This means that community services might be called upon sooner than rather than later to provide home modifications or supported accommodation.

Several comments suggested that Council's development control plans should allow for more housing choice in terms of home designs suited for older people (along the lines of SEPP Seniors Living), not necessarily segregated living such as retirement villages, and that these be placed close to transport and services. Villa units were specifically mentioned, possibly because they are single level and without large gardens, which were generally considered by focus group participants to be the key factors in being age-friendly design. However, level entry and internal manoeuvrability should also be considered as well as other features that support ageing in place.

Given the expected overall population growth, particularly in Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens, suitable housing for all ages needs to be considered with reference to the design features in the *Livable Housing Design Guidelines*¹². These features are largely cost neutral if designed in at the concept stage and will suit families with small children and visiting grandparents as well as retirees who will eventually want to age in place. With baby boomers indicating a general reticence to enter into specialised developments such as retirement villages, homes designed for the lifespan will become more in demand.

Access to social participation

Overall, focus group participants thought that access to social participation was very good as there is an abundance of groups with which to become involved. Many of these activities could also be classed as civic participation as they entail voluntary work for community services. There was also a cross-over with the social inclusion domain in this regard. However, it should be recognised that focus group participants are themselves very active and involved people and tended to think that those who were not participating were deliberately choosing relative isolation as an option. It is doubtful that this is actually the case for everyone who experiences isolation.

As focus group participants are members of various community groups, they were asked about people who do not choose to join structured activities and what might be available for them. Based on the observation that people like to sit in shopping precincts to "watch the world go by" it was felt that more could be made of this activity with strategically placed seating "village style" to encourage spontaneous and informal socialisation. The local shopping centre manager also commented that the seating area near the food outlets was often frequented by older people passing the time of day. The dog park at Tuncurry was another example of informal interaction, where people are regularly observed chatting with fellow dog owners.

¹¹ Judd, B. et al., 2014. "Downsizing amongst Older Australians", AHURI Final Report No 214
www.ahuri.edu.au/publications

¹² Livable Housing Australia, 2012, *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* <http://livablehousingaustralia.org.au/>

There was greater emphasis placed on this domain by the participants in the community service providers and business focus groups. Indeed, they placed issues in this domain as their highest ranking concern (see Figure 4). A likely reason is that community service providers and some small business operators interact with people who are isolated, without easy access to transport and on restricted incomes. Some of the survey respondents shared these concerns.

Social participation also relies on information, transport, and affordability: knowing what is going on, being able to get there, and being able to pay for it. Accessibility of venues was also raised. It was suggested that promotion for all events also include information about accessibility of the venue (including parking and path of travel from drop off points), and transport options.



Access to outdoor spaces and buildings

Overall access to outdoor spaces and buildings was considered generally satisfactory given the budgetary constraints that Council works within. The issue of footpaths however, was mentioned frequently in the survey and also a topic of concern in the focus groups. The frequent mention of footpaths in the survey responses is possibly due to the prompting in the question that asked respondents to “Consider things like footpaths, steps, parks, cycleways, lighting, seating shelter, toilet and signage.” However despite the prompting on many aspects of the public domain, footpaths received considerably more mentions than other features (see Table 1).

Footpaths will become more important as the number of mobility scooter users increases. If they are to be discouraged from using the roadways, suitable pathways will be required. However, a footpath also needs accompanying kerb ramps. One survey respondent listed several places where improvements to kerb ramps could be made because they are too steep for scooters to negotiate. It was also noted that there are “footpaths to nowhere” and no footpaths linking key infrastructure such as bus stops. Joining existing footpaths is part of

the solution, but new footpath placement should be better coordinated to ensure improved connectivity.

Participants voiced the view that community halls, many of which were built by local communities, have probably reached the maximum length of their lifespan. While it is not feasible within current budgets to replace them all, they are expensive to maintain and upgrade, including upgrading for disability access. The full cost of maintaining halls is not passed on to users, but there is concern that the hire rates are still affecting the affordability of activities. The other aspect of concern is the suitability of these halls for activities for older people, particularly adult respite day care, and that purpose built facilities more suited to the current needs are required. This was particularly mentioned in Tea Gardens and Bulahdelah where there was discussion about the need for more cultural activities such as art and music groups.

Respect and social inclusion

This domain did not generate much discussion in the focus groups as most participants appeared to be confident and outgoing and as a consequence felt respected and included. Inclusion was interpreted as social participation for the most part. Apart from a little discussion about “younger people respecting their elders”, most felt that as Great Lakes is largely a retirement community, people are respectful. With the myriad of activities and community and interest groups operating in the area, there was plenty of opportunity for social inclusion. However, there was a call for more intergenerational activities, not just activities for ‘seniors’ so that younger people and older people had opportunities to do things together and learn from each other.

The survey brought a few different views. The “younger people respecting their elders” comment was also present, and there were other comments that respect is a two-way street. One respondent raised the issue of acknowledgement and inclusion of people from culturally diverse backgrounds and this acts as a reminder that the focus groups largely reflected an Anglo-Celtic Australian perspective. Although 83.3% of the Great Lakes population is Australian born, the minority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally diverse backgrounds should also be considered in future planning.

Nevertheless, respect and social inclusion is reliant on all other domains functioning effectively. Respect is shown in the way that older people are consulted on local issues, considered in the design of homes and public buildings, the design of information, and the way services are provided, and this in turn encourages higher levels of social inclusion.



Civic participation and employment

As mentioned previously, focus group participants were generally active volunteers within their local communities, and consequently felt there was more than adequate opportunity for people to participate in civic activities. However, there was discussion about community services needing more volunteers. It was felt that more could be done to encourage people to volunteer, and that consideration should be given to reimbursing the costs of volunteering (especially travel). Greater publicity and promotion of volunteer opportunities was discussed and it was suggested a “Volunteer Expo” should be staged on a regular basis. This type of event would also provide an opportunity to create activities for volunteer recognition and merit awards.

Close to 70% of participants were dedicated to their retirement (many had come to the area to retire) and had no interest in looking for work. However, it was generally agreed that employment opportunities for people of any age was problematic in the Great Lakes area, and particular concern was raised for younger people in this regard. Nevertheless, it was raised in both the focus groups and the survey that Council might do more to encourage new businesses by minimising ‘red tape’.



An age-friendly strategy

Based on the feedback from the focus groups and survey, there are three key areas that should be a priority for action: transport issues, access to medical services, and appropriate provision of community information. While transport and medical service issues are not the direct responsibility of Council, residents expressed a wish for Council to play an advocacy and coordination role for these issues. Feedback indicated that the provision of community support services was adequate, but that information about services was difficult to find as they did not know where to start looking. Consequently, this is an area in which Council can make significant and meaningful progress without incurring major costs.

Community priorities

Priority 1: Transportation

Transport is the key to other domains, whether it is getting out and about, volunteering for a charity, choosing the location of a new home, or being socially included. While much of the health transport is well managed in the area, transport options other than health transport need further consideration. Cycleways and footpaths were top of mind for many people and this infrastructure requires careful planning to target the most needed areas first.

While cycleways and footpaths are the responsibility of Council, the provision of other transport services is not. However for those services, Council can perform an advocacy role and lobby Government departments for increased services.

There is some merit in the notion of a project officer specifically employed to map the current situation in terms of existing infrastructure and services to identify gaps and duplications, and match these to community needs. This will require the support of the regional transport coordinator from Transport NSW Hunter Region.

Priority 2: Communication and information

Knowing about community services, that is, what is available and knowing where to start looking was a recurring theme. This is another challenge for service providers in an environment where information provision is becoming more reliant on the Internet and online applications, yet the technology for widespread broadband provision has yet to arrive in the Great Lakes area. In addition, the number of older people who do not know how to access the Internet and use a computer, and will never know this, will be substantial for some time to come. The new wave of baby boomers may be “tech-savvy” and these issues may become minimised in the future, particularly when the new broadband network reaches Great Lakes. However, paper-based information, word-of-mouth, radio announcements and placement of noticeboards are all simple technologies that are familiar to all and should be continued and maximised.

Information should be provided in a range of formats allowing for low levels of literacy as well as low vision. Council and community service providers should assess their written information for clarity and readability so that it was more meaningful for the recipient. This issue could also be addressed by a project officer skilled in communication techniques which could be extended to community service providers and volunteers responsible for promoting their events and services. A training course for writing in clear and simple language for service providers and Council staff alike would be a good way to start, as writing with clarity is a separate skill-set from service provision.

Priority 3: Community support and health services

Health services were the focus of discussion in this domain with little comment about community support services except for not knowing about them. Finding ways to attract medical practitioners to the area will be a challenge as in many cases it requires a whole family to relocate, not just the practitioner. Advice from the Australian Medical Association and Hunter New England Health Service should be sought on this matter. Publicity and promotion about community support services would assist residents to recognise what is available. Assuming continued population growth future planning should also include provision of infrastructure, services, and affordable housing to attract and retain people of working age who will be required to provide services of all types, particularly for a growing ageing population.

Based on the feedback from residents, these three areas have been highlighted for particular attention as they were considered the most important areas for action. Strategic priorities for all eight domains are set out in the following section.



APPENDIX A

Focus Group Analysis and Findings

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Introduction

This appendix details the discussions and priorities of the individual community member focus groups which were held in Forster, Stroud, Bulahdelah and Tea Gardens and focus groups held with representatives from businesses and community service providers. A full explanation of the methodology is contained within the body of the main report and the overall findings are reported and discussed. This document serves to provide detailed information that emerged from each of the focus group discussions. The quotes in the boxed sections are taken directly from the comments written by participants on the Post-it Notes.

Bulahdelah and District

Profile of the Group

Seven of the nine invited participants attended. The catchment area for invitees included Bulahdelah, Nahiack, Wootton and Coolongolook. Five were community members: one represented the business community, and one a community service worker. Five were female and two were male. The age range was 56 to 79 years; all owned their own homes; three reported a health problem that limited their activities; five reported an education level of bachelor degree or higher; one reported Year 9 and one Year 10.

Discussion

The maintenance of the community hall was considered a valuable asset to the community although somewhat underutilised. This was attributed to the hire fees imposed by Council and issues related to its age and patched in accessibility (ramp and toilets). The group appreciated the efforts by Council to keep the place running and that the cost of hire did not cover the cost of maintaining the building.

The Library was also considered an important facility for the community but needed expansion. Specifically, lack of space to sit and read and space between shelves to manoeuvre particularly with a mobility device. The reading choice was also considered minimal and longer borrowing times were requested.

Transport was also a key issue for people who no longer have access to a private vehicle as many services are located in major centres some 30 to 60 minutes drive away. Specifically requested was a local bus service between Bulahdelah, Nahiack and Forster.

Discussion on Community Services and Health related to the loss of the local hospital and the now unused facilities. There is one visiting doctor in town, but some people travel to Nahiack where there are two doctors. Having a local GP is seen as essential.

Information about services and activities is lacking. Money was raised for a community noticeboard in town, but is yet to be erected. It was believed that rules associated with the use of noticeboard were restricting its placement. The move to Internet information was not considered appropriate for many older people. Regardless, download speeds are too slow.

“In rural towns buildings were often designed and built many years ago. They have many issues with maintenance and access. They are expensive to maintain but absolutely vital to each community.”

“Isolation and loneliness are key issues; need transport and services for shopping; transport services to facilitate connection to larger centres.”

Social participation is reliant on both transport and information. Volunteering was discussed as social participation rather than civic involvement per se. Expansion of the Men’s Shed at Nabiac was considered important.

Housing was not discussed as a major issue as most people appeared to be satisfied with their home (all participants owned their own home). However, they felt the Home Modifications Scheme could be better promoted so that more people could take advantage of the service.

Employment is difficult in the Bulahdelah area for people of all ages and no suggestions other than retraining were offered. It was generally agreed that older people made up the bulk of volunteers in the area, so participating in civic affairs was not considered a problem (other than transport).

At the end of the discussion the group assigned the following priorities.

Priorities

Five stars:

- Investigate a brokerage service to utilise existing transport infrastructure and/or coordinate existing transport across government funded and private services to see if the gaps can be filled
- We need a doctor in town at the hospital building on call 24 hours

Three stars:

- Conduct an audit of current and potential community activities and match with existing infrastructure in the Bulahdelah district
- Conduct an audit of current and potential community activities and use creative thinking to maximise the use of existing assets
- Employ a person to find out how best to communicate information to people

One star:

- Publicise the Home Modification Scheme services
- Council to ensure new housing developments include more housing choice suitable for older people
- Find out what people want in the form of activities and groups
- Extend the Men’s Shed space

The following is a synopsis of the key points made in the focus group discussions in Bulahdelah:

Chart 1: Bulahdelah and district focus group key points

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and buildings	Wade Park is well kept (mown regularly)	Community hall is old and not very suitable for activities	Improve accessibility to buildings.
	Accessibility has been improved (but not enough)	Cost of hall hire is a barrier	Keep community centre viable.

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
	Library is good	Library is not big enough	Increase the size of the library building
			Increase the size of the library collection.
Transportation	Community transport is available for medical appointments	Cost of transport is a barrier to participation	Map existing transport and try to utilise better
	Transport to exercise class on Mondays is good	No local public bus service for shopping and socialisation	Map existing transport and try to utilise better
		Buses not very accessible for people with a disability	State Disability Transport Plan should cover accessible buses
		Need footpaths for walking and suitable for people with mobility aids	Apply footpaths to suit mobility aids when able
Housing	Home modifications scheme is good (but not well known)	People on small acreages cannot sell to realise capital and move	Promote home modification scheme
	Many homes are single level	People not thinking ahead to later life in home design	Education program about home designs for later life renovations
	Retirement villages are available for those who want and can afford them		New developments to have age friendly, universal design features.
Respect and Social Inclusion	Small towns have a culture of respect	There is a divide between the 'locals' and the 'non-locals'	Establishment of a U3A could help minimise the divide between 'locals' and others
	There are many groups operating in which people can get involved	Local pub in Bulahdelah has shown itself not to be age or disability friendly	Education of businesses about being age friendly and meeting requirements under the DDA.
	Shop assistants help older people		
Social Participation	Men's Shed in Nabic is good and has many members	Men's Shed needs expanding to include more people	Investigate feasibility of extending the Men's Shed at Nabic

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
	Many activities available to get involved in.		Find out what other groups people want.
	Street seating encourages informal social interaction		Consider an arts and/or music group
			More seating in streets and open spaces for social interaction as well as resting
Communication & Information	Radio is good for promoting community events	Internet and mobile coverage is poor in this area	Find out the best ways of communicating (with a paid coordinator)
		Too many government services rely on people using the Internet for information	Start up a community newsletter
		There is no community noticeboard	Establish a community noticeboard in Bulahdelah town area
Civic Participation & Employment	Many civic groups operating	Some groups may not be welcoming of new members and volunteers	
		Employment is problematic	Re-training courses are needed
		Council charters may prevent new businesses and expansion of local economy?	Review opportunities to expand the local economy (housing, jobs)
Community and Health Services	Home Care Service is good	Not enough local staff to work for Home Care	Refer staffing issues to Home Care Service
	Pharmacy is very good	Transport to medical appointments is difficult	Refer medical transport to Community Transport?
	Hospital has good facilities unused	We have no doctor in town	Attract a doctor to town to set up GP practice

Forster-Tuncurry

Profile of the group

There were twelve participants in the group which included representatives from nearby areas: Pacific Palms, Coomba Park, Green Point, Halliday's Point, and Diamond Beach¹. Seven participants were female and five male; the age range was 56 to 77 years; six had an education level of bachelor degree or higher, two certificate level, one Year 12, two Year 10, and one Year 9. All owned their own homes. Two lived alone and ten lived with one other person.

Discussion

Rubbish removal, suitably placed toilets, improved access to buildings and open spaces, footpaths and cycle paths were all discussed. Similarly to other focus group sessions, specific places for improvement were identified. Council's Wheel-In-Wheel-Out service and Mobility Map could be better promoted.

There was discussion about a proposed Civic Precinct where the library would be co-located with other services. This was seen as a positive development as the library was now too small to cater for the demand on services. Parking at the library was also considered problematic.

The need to join existing footpaths with existing infrastructure and to ensure that new footpaths join with existing footpaths was discussed. Seating along footpaths for resting and informal socialisation were also discussed. Additional pedestrian crossings are required at places where people want to cross to improve pedestrian safety.

While there are bus services around the town, there are few, if any, services to outlying villages. The need to travel more than 50km to specialist medical services was also an issue. Information dissemination was also a priority area for discussion especially the trend to providing information via the Internet, which is not suitable for many older people and in areas where there is poor connection and download speeds.

Local community support and health services were considered of good quality in good facilities. However, the need to travel between 45 minutes and two hours to specialist appointments and cancer and dialysis treatments was considered inappropriate for this population. For people who live outside the town area, the issues of transport were exacerbated unless they had access to a private vehicle.

There are many clubs and societies in Forster and Tuncurry that provide opportunities for social participation. However social participation is largely dependent upon access to transport and information about events and

"We are car reliant; can use the school bus or community transport bus, but not very convenient. In future, maybe electric bicycles and then we will need re-charging points."

"There seems to be a reasonable amount of community support for older people – such things as clubs, eg Quota, CWA, View, U3A, Rotary, etc., which combine meaningful outcomes, learning experiences, etc., for over 50s – maybe these are not always obvious, so, often people are not aware of them."

¹ Although Halliday's Point and Diamond Beach are geographically located in the neighbouring local government area, residents carry out many of their activities in the Forster-Tuncurry area.

activities. Access to timely information about community services was considered an issue – where to go and what to ask. With ready access and prominence in the town, the Tourist Information Centre was seen as a good place for providing other types of information.

All participants were home owners and satisfied with their current home. However, many observed that other people coming to the area had not considered later life in the choice of their home and felt the Council could do more to educate newcomers about choosing a more suitable place.

Priorities

Seven stars:

- We need someone to pull together information on all public and private transport available and ‘map’ this and work out a solution and make information available

Five stars:

- Tourist Information Centre and the Library should be places of “Town Info”.

Three stars:

- Civic precinct to include passive socialisation (e.g. seating)

Two stars:

- A fridge magnet to promote the 1800 number for the GP Helpline as this is not well known
- Find out where to volunteer – have a Volunteer Expo
- A safe dedicated cycleway out of Forster and to the freeway (in planning phase?)
- Radio is best for communicating with older people but needs a dedicated person to co-ordinate?

One Star:

- Council mobility/disability map needs to be better promoted.
- Assurance of knowing a toilet is nearby when out and about.
- Organise a campaign with the support of local services to educate residents and builders about renovations and designing homes for later life.
- Mayor to go on radio each week and do a talk back session

The following is a synopsis of the key points made in the community focus group discussions in Forster - Tuncurry:

Chart 2: Forster – Tuncurry focus group key points

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and buildings	Library is very good and is very helpful to older people in many ways	Parking a problem. Library is very busy	Increase the size of the library and nearby parking for visitors.
	Public toilets and accessible toilets are available	Insufficient number of toilets in key locations.	Review the roll out of public toilets and create a priority list with feedback from the local community

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
			Upgrade existing toilets to make them accessible and adequately maintained.
	Good walking paths exist especially coastal walks	Some footpaths begin and end nowhere	Install future footpaths with links to existing paths and infrastructure
	Seating is available in many places	More seating along walking paths is needed	Conduct an audit of seating to identify gaps and create a priority list
	Lighting is available in some places	Lighting needed along walking tracks during winter months (due to earlier dusk)	Review lighting requirements along walking tracks and footpaths
	Many public places are accessible	Not all public places are fully accessible or joined by an accessible path of travel	Council Mobility Map to be promoted widely for people to identify the best routes of travel and accessible places
Transportation	Bus services are available around Forster-Tuncurry	Bus services are limited (if present) to outlying villages	Map information on existing transport and utilise better
		Bus services are not well advertised and some people don't know where to go to get timetable information	Make more information about existing bus services available and encourage use (travel training?)
	Train/bus to Newcastle and Sydney is available	No secure parking near the bus station or railway station (Taree)	Investigate feasibility of secure parking arrangements and/or investigate the establishment of a shuttle service.
	Cycle ways encourage safe cycling	Safe cycleways are needed	Cycleways and walkways from Green Point to Forster
	Cost of community transport and taxis can be comparable with car ownership	Community transport and taxis are considered too expensive (luxury)	Education about the true costs of transport
Housing	Many homes in the area are single storey and relatively accessible	More two storey homes are being erected	Education about home design for retirees and builders
	People are generally happy with their homes now	People do not think ahead about the design of their home for the future	Run a campaign to bring community services and business together to educate about future-proofing with home renovations.

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
	There are several retirement villages in the area	Not everyone can afford to enter a retirement village	Council to include affordable and universally designed housing choices in new developments
		Not everyone wants to go to a retirement village	Council to include choice of housing type in planning of new developments
	A Home Modifications Scheme is available	Many people do not know about the Home Mods Scheme	Promote the Home Modifications Scheme with information about costs and benefits
Respect and Inclusion	Respect for older people is generally good in this area	Intergenerational activities could be improved (not just activities for 'seniors')	Place seating at sporting events where families gather to encourage intergenerational activity
	Many groups to join to be 'included' whatever your levels of health	Some younger people do not respect older people or see them as valued members of society	Create more intergenerational activities and events (where older people can also show their skills and experience and mentor younger people)
Social Participation	There are many groups and activities to join in this area	Not everyone wants to join a group activity	Create more informal or casual socialisation opportunities. Place street/park seating strategically (village style).
		Not everyone knows about all the groups and what they do	Promote the available activities (and whether transport is available)
	There are many groups with many differing activities and topics	Groups do not interact or coordinate events/occasions	Events designed to include various groups for more interaction.
	Stockland Mall is a place people go that is not a structured event	Stockland Mall does not have enough seating	Consider a 'Chess in Hyde Park" set at Stockland Mall
		Non-car owners have little access to transport for socialisation	
Communication & Information	Local radio and local newspaper is available for providing information about community events	There is a gap between community events and community services which newspapers don't publicise	Community directory needs to be kept up to date and publicised

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
		Community services are not well known	Radio should have a dedicated person responsible for delivering Council information
			A list of services to be devised and promoted
	Coomba Park has a monthly newsletter, a website and a phone book of local people	Written information is not good for people with low vision	Information needs to be available in a range of formats in a range of places
	Tourists can get good information from the Tourist Information Centre	Information about services and events is not available at this centre	Investigate the feasibility of making the Tourist Information Centre a "town information centre"
Civic Participation & Employment	There are many volunteer organisations for people to volunteer their time	Information about becoming a volunteer is not readily available	Create a "Volunteer Directory" with organisations and available volunteer jobs
		Employment opportunities are limited in this area at all ages	
		Transport to employment is limited	
Community and Health Services	Many good services available to help people to stay at home	The cost of some exercise 'classes' is a barrier for some people	Give a 'pensioner' discount at places where exercise activities are available.
	GP Helpline available on 1800 022 222	Few people know about this service	Create and distribute a fridge magnet with the number for the GP Helpline
	Preventative health information is available	Do people know where to get this?	Encourage more no cost/low cost activities to promote healthy ageing
	Healthy Life sessions were shown to be popular and successful	This funding ends on 30 June 2014 meaning activities cannot continue	Look for funding options to continue to provide or host healthy lifestyle activities
	Hospitals are available at Taree, Newcastle and Port Macquarie	Travel to hospitals is often inconvenient where available, and costly	

Stroud and District

Profile of the group

There were ten participants in this focus group which included 2 service providers and representatives from Girvan and Booral. Of the eight community representatives, six were female and two male; all own their own homes; one had an education level above bachelor degree, two diploma level, one Year 12, two Year 10, and one Year 9². Four reported a health condition that prevented them from some activities, and five said their health was good. Seven participants lived with a spouse and one lived alone.

Discussion

Consistent footpaths and cycle ways that link with the shopping area were discussed as well as pedestrian safety over bridges. The recent mining and logging activity has increased heavy traffic through town and does not always respond to the 50 kmh speed limit. This makes crossing the main road increasingly dangerous especially for people who walk slowly.

While Stroud residents felt they had adequate GP and ambulance services, they were very concerned that they may be lost. The GP practice is an extension of the Gloucester practice which means the presence of a doctor in Stroud is not secure, and the ambulance station is no longer habitable.

Housing was discussed in relation to heritage orders, but concern was raised about farmers not having suitable housing options if they want to move into Stroud. A way around the heritage issues could be found with suitably designed small-scale villa units.

While there is a train/bus service to Newcastle and Sydney there is no safe parking for leaving a private vehicle while away. Resolution of transport issues received the highest priority, with twelve stars being attributed to this domain. Given there were ten participants, this shows how high a priority this has with the group.

It was felt that more could be done for communicating local information among residents and the suggestion was to have a local newsletter with upcoming events placed at the Chemist Shop and the Library. Poor internet and mobile phone coverage makes electronic communication and information seeking very difficult.

The “Kathy Café” run by a volunteer in the library appeared to be popular and plans to extend this “drop-in” type of activity were underway. It encouraged intergenerational socialisation without being formalised and structured. Nevertheless, there are many groups and associations in Stroud, but their activities may not be well coordinated (overlaps) and promoted.

Priorities were clearly marked for domains relating to transport, health services, community information, and housing. The other domains did not receive any stars (votes).

“Fitness equipment for older people; walking tracks, bicycle tracks between villages, e.g. at Booral, no way to get from one side to the other by foot; Bucketts Way also, too dangerous for walking and bicycles...”

“The CountryLink bus is a great bus for going to Sydney, but not convenient for shopping in Raymond Terrace. We need at least 2 buses each day to fit in with shopping or cinema times in Raymond Terrace....”

² One participant stated an inability to read.

Priorities

Twelve stars:

- Coordinated transport services to maintain health and well-being.

Nine Stars:

- Need to keep the ambulance and the doctor.

Seven Stars:

- We need a regular newsletter with upcoming events to be in the Library and the Chemist shop where they can have these on display.

Three stars:

- Council to allow well-designed villa-style development – small scale to fit with surroundings – seniors living.

Following are the key points from discussions from the Stroud and District focus group:

Chart 3: Stroud and district focus group key points

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and buildings	Some seating in the shopping area	Insufficient seating in the shopping area	Increase the number of seats in the shopping area
		Increase the seating at the showground - put around the perimeter not just in one place	Place seating around the perimeter of the showground
	Toilets are available in the shopping area	Toilets are too far away from the eating area	Investigate the establishment of a toilet block in a more suitable location in the shopping area
	Footpaths are available in some areas	There is no footpath over the bridges	Increase the safety for pedestrians over bridges
		Footpaths are not in all areas but are also needed for safe travel by scooter users	Investigate the footpaths with greatest need and priority and set a plan for implementation
		Cycle ways are not present	Investigate the placement of a bicycle path between Stroud and Booral
		No consistent pathway from one end of town to the other	Plan for a pathway
		Heavy vehicle traffic through town and speeding cars	Designated pedestrian crossings in strategic places are required
Transportation	There is a train/bus to Newcastle and Sydney	There is no secure car park for leaving your car (have to drive to	Investigate improvement to security for train station parking

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
		station)	
		There is no local bus service - high reliance on car ownership and driving	Investigate the initiation of a bus service to Raymond Terrace for shopping and recreation
	Community transport service is available	Community transport services could be better coordinated with other services and activities	Investigate the establishment of a paid role to coordinate existing transport services/options
		Community transport is expensive	Education about the cost of transport compared with car ownership
		Transport is not available to John Hunter Hospital Newcastle	
Housing	Most people own their own homes and properties	Heritage issues can cause barriers to design changes	
		There are no suitable homes to move to when coming off a property to retire	
	A retirement village complex is available (Stroud Community Lodge)	Not everyone wants to go to The Lodge	Council to allow small scale villa developments in keeping with the heritage values of the town (SEPP Seniors Living)
	Most homes are single level	No footpaths from homes to the shopping area	Link housing with footpaths in future planning
Respect and Inclusion	Most people feel respected in this area	Some people are impatient with older people	In conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, devise an awareness program for dealing with older customers so they feel welcome and respected
		Inclusion can be hindered by lack of physical access to things	Improve accessibility of places and buildings
		Few intergenerational activities occur	Intergenerational activities to be created
		Seniors Week activities are not accessible due to transport	Consider organising/ coordinating transport assistance where required during Seniors Week

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Social Participation	Many activities happening in the area	Some activities overlap as there is no coordination across events	More cooperation between groups organising events to be encouraged.
			A coordinated social participation program is required
	Library and their volunteers are very good at encouraging social interaction on an informal basis	Not everyone knows about "Kathy's Café" at the library	Expand the success and install a jig saw puzzle and a chess set at the library to encourage people to drop in.
	There is a café for casual socialisation	Eating venues for casual socialisation are minimal (a popular one has closed)	Encourage the opening of another café with extended hours
	There are many opportunities to volunteer	Not everyone wants to volunteer as a social activity	
Communication & Information	There were no positive aspects identified in this domain	Generally communication of information was considered poor	A regular newsletter with upcoming events to be available at the Library and Chemist shop
		Poor internet and mobile phone coverage adds to the issues.	
		Many organisations expect everyone to have Internet connection	Faster connection speeds for the Internet is required (NBN) and improved mobile phone coverage
		Many organisations expect people to get their information from the Internet	Non-electronic forms of information are required. Not everyone is literate or uses a computer
			When promoting events include information about accessibility and transport options
Civic Participation & Employment	There is potential for employment related to tourism	New businesses do not seem to be forthcoming	Council to find ways to encourage small business opportunities in town
	Older people are still working on their farms	Employment is difficult for people at any age in this district	Investigate the need for a 'training space' to capitalise on older people's experience
	There are many opportunities to become involved in the community and to volunteer		Encourage people to volunteer.

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Community and Health Services	There is a medical practice with a GP in town	Stroud medical practice owned by Gloucester practice. Unknown if this will continue	Advocate for the continuation of a medical practice in Stroud
	There is an ambulance service in town	Ambulance building is now derelict and unsure if service will stay	Encourage the continuation of the ambulance service
	Access to nurses is good		

Tea Gardens - Hawks Nest

Profile of the group

There were eight participants, two were service providers, and one was a Councillor. There were three females and five males. Apart from the service providers, the ages ranged from 63 to 77 years. Three had an education level of bachelor degree or above, one a diploma, and one Year 12. They reported their health as good or excellent and one stated that they had a health problem that prevented them from accomplishing regular daily activities. Four participants were from Tea Gardens, two from North Arm Cove and one from Hawks Nest.

Discussion

Participants were keen to retain the fishing village atmosphere of the area which continues to attract new retirees. They believed it was a good place for retirement. Their issues were very similar to the Bulahdelah and Stroud with access to medical services and public transport being key issues along with local footpaths, toilets and adequate seating along walkways.

“Limited hours of community transport: no way for elderly to get from Hawks Nest to Bi Lo in Tea Gardens – that is, there is no shuttle bus.”

It was reported that there is one general practice with six doctors but generally only three are on duty on any one day and none were there every day leading to a lack of continuity for residents who prefer to always see the same doctor. Consequently some residents go to Karuah and Raymond Terrace for medical appointments. There was some concern that being on the boundary between two health regions causes some of the problems for adequate funding.

“Some residents housebound due to steps and can’t get down to street level, no initial forethought for aged living – Meals on Wheels volunteers have to find a way to get meals to people who can’t get down the stairs.”

Communication and information dissemination were also considered problematic especially due to poor Internet speeds and mobile phone coverage. Concern was expressed about residents in North Arm Cove in a catastrophic event as there was only one road in and out of the area. It was suggested that the construction of a boat ramp would assist evacuation of the area if the road was closed off. It was also noted that many older people do not have a mobile phone and will not receive emergency messages via this mode of communication.

Discussion on housing was limited to the need for single level dwellings – there was little concern about other home design features. The local community hall was considered inadequate for the types of activities taking place, especially respite day care.

The highest priorities for this group were improving access to medical practitioners and establishing a bus service between Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest and the outlying villages.

Priorities

Nine Stars:

- We have to find a way of attracting doctors/medical practitioners to the area. Council can liaise with relevant government people and support improvements.

Six stars:

- Shuttle bus (Monday to Friday) for local shopping and recreation- North Arm Cove, Bundabah, Pindamar, Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens.

Three Stars:

- Need a cultural and community centre (to replace the hall) for groups to meet.

Two stars:

- Transport and communications can help improve social participation – these are the keys

One Star:

- Need to find a better way to communicate

The following is a synopsis of the key points made in the focus group discussions in Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest:

Chart 4: Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest focus group key points

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor places and buildings	This area has a friendly fishing village atmosphere	New developments may change the nature of the village atmosphere	Maintain the ambience of the fishing village
	There is a community hall	Community hall not well designed for activities for older people or respite day care	A new purpose built community and cultural centre with suitable amenities for people of all ages is needed. Council to include in planning.
		There is no suitable building to follow artistic pursuits	Ditto
		Cost of venue hire is a barrier to activities	Council to review its hire charge policy
	There are public toilets	Toilets are not always in good locations	Install a toilet block needed closer to Marine Drive

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
			Upgrade existing toilets to make them accessible including paths of travel to and from
	Many good outdoor spaces for passive recreation	Pedestrian crossing are not available or in suitable places	Review pedestrian crossings in town.
	There is street and open space seating available	Insufficient seating along the waterfront	Place more seating along the waterfront
	Library is very good		
	Men's Shed soon to be set up		
Transportation	A bus runs to Raymond Terrace and Newcastle for health services	This service is insufficient	Expand the bus facilities to travel to Raymond Terrace and Newcastle for health services
	There is a local taxi/hire car service to assist with local shopping	Hire car service is expensive. There is no bus service around town to the shopping area (BiLo)	Establish a daily shuttle bus for local shopping and recreation: North Arm Cove-Bundabah-Pindamar-Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens.
	The local club has a courtesy bus service	There are no bus services to villages	As above
	Most people drive their car	Many older people have restricted licences and can't go outside the area	
Housing	The discussion was based on general comments and no recommendations put forward	Everyone seemed happy with their current home so there was no discussion about housing choice or moving	There was a comment about people moving into homes without any forethought to the suitability of the design.
Respect and Social Inclusion		Few opportunities for intergenerational activities (many young people move away for study and work)	Seating at the sports ground might improve intergenerational interaction.
			Create opportunities for older people to share their knowledge and skills with younger people.
			Council to recognise the contributions that older people can and do make

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Social Participation	There are many groups operating that provide opportunities for social participation	Not everyone wants to belong to a group. Recently widowed persons may find joining alone difficult	Develop a community pack for the local area with social activities, clubs and events and also volunteering opportunities
		Transport to activities is poor	Consider transport issues and include information about transport when promoting events
Communication & Information	Internet and mobile communications are available	Internet and mobile services are poor and patchy	Await the arrival of the NBN?
		Community noticeboard was disbanded	Need to find out the best way to communication with and between residents
	A community directory is available	It is not widely distributed	Distribute the community directory more widely
Civic Participation & Employment	It was stated that this is a retirement area and people come here to retire, not gain paid work		
	Many organisations available to join to participation in civic activities		Maintain organised roles for older people to keep them volunteering as long as they want
		There are few jobs available for people of any age	Investigate the feasibility of a 'workshop' type place where an embryonic business could start where older people could be employed. A business mentor is needed for this.
Community and Health Services	There are medical practitioners available locally	Appointment times to see a GP are extended because doctors are part time	Attract more medical practitioners and consider their families' needs as well. Council to liaise with state government
	A new medical centre is being created at Raymond Terrace	Not everyone can get to Raymond Terrace	
	Community nurse service is very good		
		No specialist appointments available locally	Links with community transport

Commonalities between community member groups

All groups wanted improved access to public toilets (not necessarily 'disabled' toilets) but without steps to the toilet block and with a footpath leading to it. They also wanted more toilets strategically located so that when out and about it was not a long walk to the toilet. Proximity to eating places, particularly in Stockland Mall and Stroud shopping area, was also requested.

More seating along walkways for resting and in village style settings in shopping areas to encourage more informal socialisation was requested by all groups. Knowing a seat and a toilet is available encourages confidence in getting out and about. Pedestrian crossings placed where they were needed along natural paths of travel were also important to all groups.

All groups felt that newcomers were not considering later life when purchasing a home in the area and not considering the design of the home or the location in terms of needing to use public transport later. There was no mention in any of the discussions that participants' own situations might be problematic in the future.

All groups expressed concern about getting information about activities and community services. While the Council has a very comprehensive website, not everyone has access to the Internet, knows how to negotiate the site, or what topic names to use when searching.

Forster and Bulahdelah considered the idea of merging the Tourist Information Centre and a "Town Information Centre" together. This would also de-stigmatise any information service and encourage its use by people (not everyone knows the Neighbourhood Centre is a source of information).

All groups wished for more public or community transport with more regular services, particularly village to village. While community and health transport will take people to specific appointments or shopping, it is not flexible enough to respond to social outings or to visit a friend at home, for example. The cost of taxis and hire cars is high because of the long distances people have to travel. It was suggested that ways to support and encourage people to keep their licences for as long as possible need to be found. It was also noted that there are many buses in the area, all owned by different organisations, and that perhaps the best use is not being made of them. A person to map the existing infrastructure and transport needs and trying to match these better was suggested.

All groups suggested that seating at sporting grounds where children play sport might encourage more intergenerational interaction (grandparents and grandchildren). In some cases, people sit in their cars to watch matches and do not interact with anyone. Seating with shade was seen as a way of getting people out of their cars and perhaps doing some walking for exercise.

Bulahdelah and Forster want a larger library and larger collections, and Forster wants more parking places near the library. Library services were appreciated by group members and the efforts to assist with computer skills and literacy.

Business focus group

Profile of the group

There were twelve participants representing a cross section of the business community including a representative from a major shopping mall, police, education, tourism, allied health, and small business. No demographic data was collected for this group. The aim of this focus group discussion was to gather information that could be compared with the community member focus groups, the service provider group and the staff group.

Discussion

The discussion centred on keeping older people active and healthy by encouraging exercise and healthy lifestyle choices. Encouraging confidence to keep active was discussed and this led to comments about making walking easier and more enjoyable, which includes good and consistent footpaths, seating for resting and socialising, and ready access to toilets that are accessible (no steps), and good wayfinding. Setting up a walking group to help people familiarise themselves with the paths was suggested.

Lack of public transport was also discussed as a barrier to active ageing, socialising and attending medical appointments. Designated cycleways to nearby settlements from Forster were suggested as a way to maintain cycling as a healthy pursuit as well as a form of transport. Community transport was considered an excellent service but working at capacity. There was also discussion about newcomers not considering a time when they no longer have a licence when choosing their new sea change/tree change location on retirement.

“For those unable to get around by personal vehicle there is a definitely a void and both at present and future issue. Great need for small local transport.”

Access to community information was considered problematic and discussion ranged from difficulties with new technologies and the Internet to maintaining the Community Directory. It was suggested that Council develop a “Community Activity App” for those that use a smartphone. The idea from the Bulahdelah group of using the Tourist Information Centre for “Town Information” was canvassed and supported as an extension of the “one-stop-shop” concept.

“Plenty of opportunity for social participation, but perhaps limited access to transport to get there.”

Shoppers and visitors to Stockland Mall were observed daily to engage in casual socialisation indicating that a shopping precinct with an accessible environment, seating, shade and toilets offers a good place for people of all ages to sit and socialise. Extending this to other areas was suggested along with a public “Chess Set”.

Respect was discussed from an individual perspective and the need to respect older people’s wishes, particularly in relation to remaining in their own home and not being pressured by family to move to a retirement village or similar. Elder abuse was also mentioned. Inability to manoeuvre in shops was not considered inclusive practice and should be improved.

In terms of housing, education for residents about ‘future-proofing’ their homes was discussed. It was also believed that people were not thinking ahead about their housing needs in later life. Similarly to other groups, the availability of single level dwellings was considered sufficient for ageing in place without concern for other design features. However,

one participant stated that education for 40-60 year olds about showers, bathroom, non-slip tiles, and colour contrast was needed.

Priorities

Nine stars:

- Focus more on prevention – Council can help promote this.

Seven stars:

- A community “i” place for community information – a one stop shop.

Six stars:

- Set up a volunteer driver network for social activities and/or to coordinate trips for 2-4 people instead of just one at a time.

Four stars:

- Improve and extend the coastal walk.

Two stars:

- A big chess set in town or a park could help with getting conversations going.
- Set up walking group or help of some kind to help familiarise people to the walks
- Council should take account of its ageing population and think about home design when considering new developments or ways to educate people about ‘future-proofing’

One star:

- The Council website should have an area for services to help others with information.

The following is a synopsis of the key points made in the Business focus group discussions in Forster - Tuncurry:

Chart 5: Business focus group key comments

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and buildings	Council has done some good work with some walking paths and access to public buildings	Pathways are not consistent and do not connect to other infrastructure.	When planning new footpaths ensure they link with existing works and are not 'stand-alone'
	There are walking paths that are good for keeping active	Not everyone is confident to use them or to walk alone	Coastal walks should be extended and improved
			Set up a walking group to help familiarise people with the walking path and gain confidence in using it/them
	Some wayfinding and signage is good	Poor wayfinding reduces confidence in getting out and about especially in unfamiliar territory	Review wayfinding and signage and devise a strategy for improvement.

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
	Access to most places is good	Access is not always good for people on scooters or using other wheeled mobility devices	Review accessibility of key places and infrastructure to ensure it meets with the Access to Premises Standard.
Transport	Community Transport and Health Transport are very helpful - good service	Not enough transport to help everyone who needs it	Lobby for more community and health transport
		There is limited public transport particularly to outlying areas and villages	Set up a volunteer driver network for social activities and/or to coordinate trips for 2-4 people instead of just one at a time.
	Roads are generally good for a country area	People rely on their car and driver's licence.	Support older drivers to keep their licence - support to take the test and support for a restricted licence
			Educate newcomers (retirees) about life after losing their driver's licence when buying a place out of town
Housing	Quality of housing is good and there are many single level dwellings	Although single level, current stock is not readily accessible or suited to ageing in place	Council planning policy to consider age-friendly house designs in new developments
	There are retirement villages in the area	Not everyone wants to go to a retirement village, or can afford it	Council planning policy to consider more choice of housing types (houses, villas, apartments) at varying price points (affordability)
		Retirees do not think ahead to when they will be older	Educate newcomers about age-friendly designs that can also be fashionable and attractive
			Encourage the local chapter of the Master Builders Association to educate their members about age-friendly designs in new homes and in renovations
Respect and Social Inclusion	Respect for older people is generally good	Store designs can make it difficult to shop - so this is not inclusive or respectful	Devise an education program for retailers about unintended exclusion (see <i>Missed Business</i> publication)

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
		Older people are vulnerable to scams	Continue local education about the different ways people can be cheated out of their money
Social Participation	The community is generally friendly and there are many activities available	The cost of social participation is sometimes a barrier (transport)	Encourage and plan for more free activities or where transport is provided
	There are some opportunities for informal socialisation (Stockland Mall is a good example)	Not everyone wants to be involved in structured groups or activities	Devise more informal socialisation opportunities - village style seating in suitable settings with toilets nearby (Chess set)
Communication & Information	The Council has a very informative website	The website is difficult to navigate to find what you are looking for	Review the design of the website and ensure it meets all standards for accessibility
	Community Information is available at the Neighbourhood Centre and the Library	Not everyone knows about these places or what information they have.	A one-stop-shop for information is required - similar to Tourist Information, that is promoted well and is for everybody (not just the 'needy')
	The library helps people with the internet and mobile phones	Not everyone has access to the internet or is able to use a computer	Communication needs to be inclusive of all types of media.
			Keep the Community Directory up to date.
			Council to develop a "Community Activity App".
Civic Participation & Employment		There are few opportunities for employment	Retraining opportunities need to be created (liaise with TAFE)

Service Provider focus group

Profile of the group

Staff from community service organisations, particularly those providing services to older people, were invited to attend. There were ten participants in this group. No demographic data was collected for this group. The aim of this focus group discussion was to gather information that could be compared with the community member focus groups, the business group and the staff group.

Discussion

At the outset, the proposed Civic Precinct that would include the library and co-location of services, a community hall, and community garden was mentioned and was viewed as a positive idea.

In terms of getting out and about, concern was expressed about footpaths to “nowhere” and no pathways where they were needed, insufficient toilets and those available were not easy to access (included a step or no pathway), insufficient seating, poor lighting and wayfinding. Fixed picnic tables were not accessible and needed to be re-designed, and there was a request for an accessible or wheelchair friendly fishing spot. Uneven footpaths were considered a barrier to walking with confidence.

Transport was seen as the key to all the other key issues and concern was expressed about newly-arrived retirees not thinking ahead about access to health and other services, as well as social activities particularly when they can no longer drive. Support for people to keep their driver’s licence was canvassed, and working with private services to maximise the current resources.

“Capacity to utilise a healthy lifestyle (outdoors) that is safe and has access to accessible connections between Civic Precincts – that is, safe walkways and road crossings”

Many clients of community services live in outlying villages and hamlets where there are few, if any, services. Concern was expressed about Residential Parks and manufactured homes that necessarily require stepped access. It was also reported that the rental agreement for the site may continue after a person has entered a residential care facility. There is little choice for downsizing or moving into town from a property, but it was felt that the new high rise developments offered some suitability as they had a lift and level access into the front door.

Employment was discussed as an issue for people of all ages in the area, not just older people. Retraining opportunities were considered as one solution. This issue will become increasingly important as the age at which people can apply for the Age Pension is being extended to 67 years and is likely to be extended further. However, opportunities to volunteer for a community service, service club or other association were plentiful.

Community services were considered to be working at capacity and needed more funding to expand; there is a waitlist for aged care packages. The complexity of the service system was seen as a potential barrier to access and help to negotiate the ‘system’ was viewed as important. Access to a GP was considered relatively good if you live in town, but not good out of town where people are reliant on transport. From Forster, the nearest hospital in Taree is 45 minutes by road (37km), and other specialists are at Port Macquarie (110 km, 90 minutes) and Newcastle (157 km, 2 hours). The discussion about health and community services therefore became a discussion about transport.

Priorities

Four stars:

- More toilets and upgrades, more thought in design of outdoor furniture.
- Links/partnerships between private and public services – working together and with smarter promotion of services
- Need a broker-type person to help connect people to the services they need and to help them navigate the system.

Three stars:

- Council Planning – this is an opportunity to think about ageing and affordability in new developments – think about liveable communities for all ages
- Older people should be recruited to Council committees (Liveable Communities) to provide input into planning and development.

Two stars:

- Village settings with seating to encourage casual conversation.

The following is a synopsis of the key points made in the Service Provider focus group discussions in Forster - Tuncurry:

Chart 6: Service Provider focus group key points

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and Buildings	Public toilets are available	Public toilets are not all accessible (steps to the block or no path of travel)	Stockland Mall needs another toilet block.
			Upgrade existing toilets to be accessible (not just 'disabled' toilets)
			Provide more toilets in strategic locations
			Provide improved wayfinding to toilets
	Some seating is available	Picnic table seating is not age-friendly	Review design of picnic table settings and ensure a footpath leads to it.
			Review designs of all outdoor furniture for age-friendliness
		Lack of pedestrian crossings in relevant places	Create more safe walkways and footpaths including pedestrian crossings
	Library is good. Proposed Civic Precinct should ensure it is age friendly and encourage co-location of services.		Deliver the Civic Precinct.
Transportation	There are various transport services - community, private and public	These services are not well coordinated, insufficient and absent in some places	Develop links/partnerships between private and public services - work together smarter with promotion of services so that more people use them

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
			Develop more coordination and cooperation between health transport providers and community transport
	Many people drive their own cars	Loss of licence is a major setback for many people.	Find ways to encourage people to keep their licences or a limited licence (training for the test to give confidence)
		People do not think ahead to when they cannot drive	Education about planning for later life - choosing location for living
		Lack of footpaths is not good for scooter users	Footpaths to also include kerb ramps that are not steep for pram pushers and scooter users.
	Community transport is available to take people to hospital	Not everyone knows about community transport	Promote community transport services and as need increases, lobby for increased funding
Housing	Council has an aim to be an age friendly local government area	Council is limited by the amount of funds it can raise and attract	Council to integrate ageing into every area of operations including housing
	Some retirement living developments are in the area	Not everyone wants to live or can afford to live in a retirement village	Council to include in its planning policy universally designed homes and also affordable housing
		There is little or no choice available for downsizing	Council to consider liveable communities for all ages
		Some villas available but they are in hilly areas	
Respect and social inclusion	General respect in the community for older people is apparent	Older people do not always have choice in the way their services are delivered	Consumer Directed Care program should improve choice and type of services in the future
			More intergenerational activities would help intergenerational respect and understanding
		It was noted that members of the Aboriginal community were not present although invited. Similarly, members from non-Anglo Australian backgrounds	

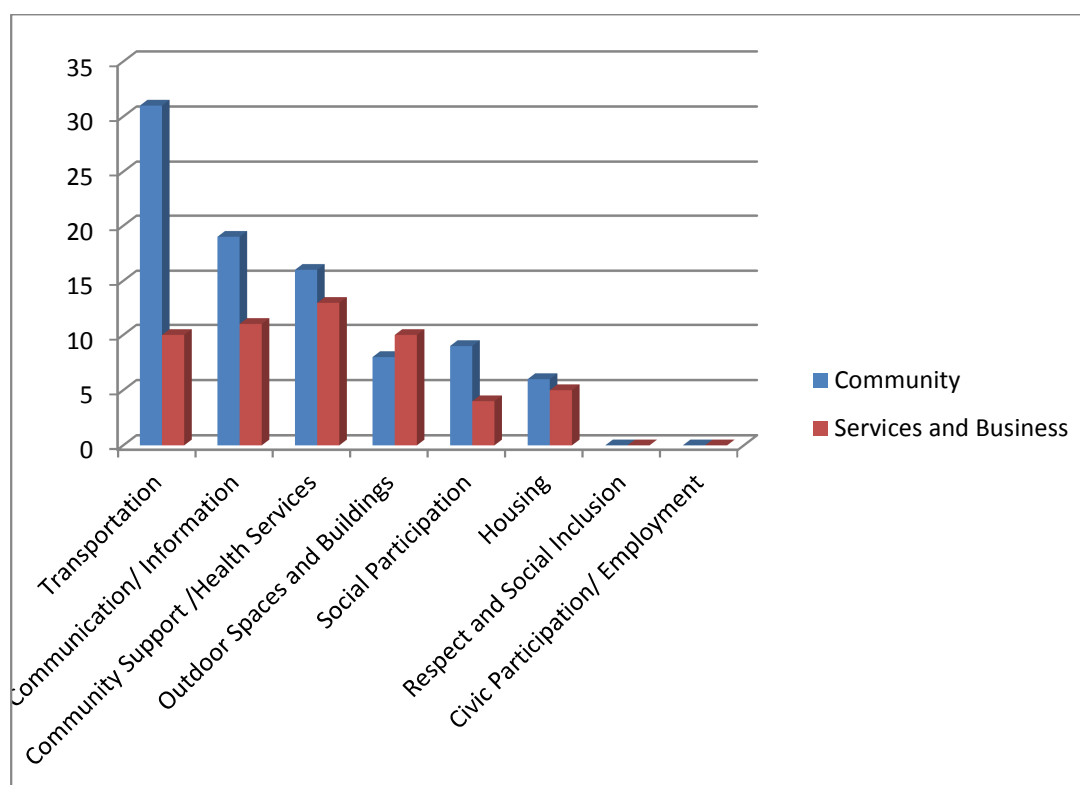
Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Social Participation	There are many groups and social activities in the area	There are few venues that are non-alcohol related. This can be a barrier to participation for some.	More non-alcohol related venues are needed for community meetings and activities (Civic Precinct?)
		Not everyone wants to join a group. Some groups are cliquy. There are few unstructured activities.	Create opportunities for unstructured and casual socialisation in the public domain - strategically placed seating village style can help
	Good outdoor options for the active	Not so much for the less active	Consider installation of outdoor exercise stations
		Lack of affordable transport is a barrier as is travelling at night	
Communication & Information	Information is available	Information is possibly not well coordinated	Information is best delivered by someone who understands what information you need - a real person.
	Library provides good service to assist people with Internet	Not everyone can read or see written material	Information should be available in a range of formats and also caters for those with literacy issues
	Tourist information centre is good for tourists	This does not provide general information about services and events	Establish a "Town Information Centre", perhaps co-located with the Tourist Information Centre
	Courses to help older people with the Internet are available at the Library	Older people struggle with technology and the Internet	Continue support for older people to gain computer literacy skills and confidence in using new technology
Civic Participation & Employment	There are many opportunities to volunteer and become involved in civic life	It costs money to volunteer - travel costs particularly (<i>this seems to apply to community service volunteering rather than hobby volunteering</i>)	Reimbursement for volunteer expenses would help with the overall costs of volunteering
		More volunteers are needed in community services	Actively promote the value of volunteers to the community.
			Older people should be actively recruited to Council Committees to provide input into planning and development.

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
		Some older people want to keep working but can't get a job	Liaise with TAFE about re-training opportunities
Community and Health Services	The community services that are available are good	The way services are promoted is not always easy to understand - poorly designed	Devise a training program for services to better design their information, also in a range of formats.
		There are many services to know about and it is confusing to know which ones to use for what	A broker-type person is required to help connect people to the most appropriate services and help navigate the system.
	The health services that are available are good	Not enough health services locally - many require travel to Taree, Port Macquarie, Newcastle	More coordination of transport to specialist centres out of the area is needed.
	Transport to health services is good	Transport services are not always convenient or available when needed.	Lobby for increased funding for health and community transport.
			Businesses and Council should have a policy on diversity in the workplace and allow for flexibility (many carers are in their 50s and 60s.)
	There are many health services in the area	Health services are fragmented and not designed with the consumer/patient in mind	A central referral service for health services is required.
	Transport to distant health services is available	Transport to health services, is an added cost, not always convenient or available, and time consuming	Lobby for more funding for transport and/or for more specialist services locally

Community groups compared with service and business groups

While the community member focus groups rated Transportation as the highest priority, the business and community service group gave the most votes (13) to Community Services and Health, followed by Communication and Information (11 votes). Transport and Outdoor Spaces and Buildings received 10 votes each. Similarly to the community focus groups, there were no votes for Respect and Social Inclusion and Civic Participation and Employment. The comparative results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Comparison of priorities: community members with service providers and business



Staff focus group

Profile of the group

Representatives from the key operational areas of the Council were invited to participate. There were 11 participants.

Discussion

Footpaths were discussed and similarly to the other groups it was noted that some footpaths appear to be installed in isolation from other footpaths and infrastructure. The proposed solution was to ensure the Program of Works includes accessible features and that footpaths provide a continuous path of travel to other infrastructure. It was suggested that complaints about the availability of parking at the library and other places be partially addressed by timed parking, but this was not the total solution. Accessible seating areas were also discussed and in relation to transport.

Discussion about transport also revealed similar concerns about the lack of transport outside the main town areas of Forster-Tuncurry. Distance to services and medical treatment were of particular concern for those without private vehicles. Emphasis for bus routes tends to be for shopping rather than recreation and socialisation. It was felt there were opportunities for partnerships between transport providers and car sharing arrangements. It was suggested that Manning Community Transport could be more flexible with its rules to allow more people to use the existing services.

Housing was discussed in similar terms to other groups but with more emphasis on incorporating universal design features, and educating home owners and builders about design for ageing in place and planning ahead. It was acknowledged that retirement villages are not an affordable option for everyone. The issue of home design and having safe work places for care staff was also raised.

The popularity of the dog park indicated an ongoing need to create spaces that encourage informal socialisation. Intergenerational activities as well as age-specific activities were raised as a way of giving more choice – not all older people want to go to “senior” events or groups. Lack of transport was seen as a major contributor to isolation.

Similarly to other groups, the Council website was discussed in terms of having a lot of information, but not easy to find what you are looking for. It was noted that Library staff were ready to assist people with computer and smartphone technology. A variety of styles of communication were suggested as a solution for getting messages across the community as well as providing affordable education for people to utilise the electronic communication environment.

It was acknowledged that employment opportunities were minimal in this area. If Council develops a mature worker policy, this might provide a good model for business as well. In terms of community engagement, it was felt that Council was improving but further improvements could be made to become more targeted and more regular so that people will become involved and expect to be involved. It was important to build trust with the community so that they would attend meetings.

Similarly to other groups, health and social services were linked to transport. Much of the discussion centred on the need for expansion of existing services and access to specialist care. Long waiting times to see a GP also featured in the discussion. Other suggestions for improvement were: to reduce the stigma around seeking and receiving services, to emphasise the importance of remaining mobile, and to find a way to help people know “where to start” looking when they need services. The recent preventative health program was considered a success and that Council should build on this. It was also suggested that Council should create a “things to consider as you get older” list and perhaps add this to the wills and power of attorney documents.

Intergenerational activities were not just an issue of socialisation, but a means by which to have each generation appreciating the value of the others. However, some older people feel appreciated and valued with senior-specific events (for example, Seniors Week).

Although this was the first focus group session to be held in the series, the staff group generally identified and encapsulated the key issues raised in all other focus groups that followed.

Priorities:

This group was not asked to vote on suggestions as this discussion was to assist the baseline assessment and to compare ideas with other groups. Chart 7 provides a synopsis of the key points made in the Council Staff focus group discussions in Forster:

Chart 7: Council Staff focus group key comments

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and buildings	The Council is actively working towards accessible age-friendly environments, making improvements where funds allow	Age-friendly aspects are not always a top priority in decision-making	Access works need to be considered more highly in budget allocations
			Program of works should include accessible features and this to be supplemented by a wish list for longer term items (ask residents to prioritise)
	There are numerous outdoor areas and passive recreation spaces	There are not always age-friendly (seating, lighting, footpaths, toilets)	Create more interactive facilities in parklands and include age-friendly features - make more relevant to older people
	Council has actively promoted health promotion	Funding for the health promotion program has ceased	Create more active playgrounds and exercise pathways. Build on the healthy living program
			Footpaths need to be connected with facilities and not placed in isolation from each other
Transportation	Local buses are available around the town area	Bus services are scant out of town	Lobby for more public transport and work with private sector for improvements
	Roadways are generally good	Pedestrian crossings are not always where people want to cross the road	Lobby for pedestrian crossings on state roads; create more pedestrian crossings elsewhere.
	Community Transport Service is available	Service is for shopping and medical? and not for recreation	Work with Manning Community Transport to create more flexibility with rules related to use (also for non-HACC clients?)
	Taxis and Hire Cars are available	Taxis and hire cars are expensive because of the distances people need to travel to get to shops, doctors and social events	Investigate opportunities for partnerships - car sharing of volunteer drivers and cars to take more than one person at a time to appointments and treatments

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Housing	Most homes in the area are single level	There are insufficient single level dwellings in the area and a trend to double storey	Incorporate universal design principles into dwellings so that people can age in place
		People do not think ahead about the appropriateness of their dwelling in later life	Educate people before they retire about design of homes, renovations, and educate builders
Respect and Social Inclusion	Council is showing respect and inclusion by working on the other seven domains	Council has restricted authority over some of the domains	Council to work with other authorities on housing, health and transport
	Council runs and supports Seniors Week activities and transport is arranged where possible	Not everyone in the Council area can get to the activities due to external funding arrangements for this annual event.	Investigate the potential for a more equitable approach to Seniors Week for all older people in the Council area
		Some activities need to be age appropriate and other intergenerational	Include intergenerational activities in the annual calendar as well as Senior specific activities
Social Participation	There are many opportunities for social participation	The cost and accessibility of some activities are a barrier, and also the lack of transport	When promoting events include access and transport information as well
		Not everyone wants to belong to a group or organised activity	Find ways to encourage contact between people informally - can be done by strategic placement of seating for example
			Sports grounds could be more accessible with seating and shelter for grandparents
Communication & Information	The Council website has a lot of information for residents	The website is not easy to navigate for specific information	Re-design the website to make it easier to navigate and to meet International accessibility standards
	There is a lot of information available	The information is often in written form and does not take account of differing capability levels	Information to be provided in a range of formats in clear language and delivered to people cost effectively
	The library is very good at helping people with Internet and mobile phones	Not everyone wants to use the Internet (computer and language literacy may be lacking)	Radio as well as newspapers should be used for disseminating community information

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Civic Participation & Employment	The Council holds regular community meetings and invites residents	Community consultation meetings are not well attended	Assist people to participate in community meetings and encourage them to become engaged in the community - build trust
			Become more targeted with topics and more regular with community meetings so that people know and expect involvement
	There are many opportunities to volunteer	Some people may not be aware of the full range of volunteer activities	Find ways to encourage volunteer effort by older people
	Council is reviewing its human resource policies in relation to older workers	It is difficult for older workers to find work (as it is at any age in this area)	Council's proposed older/mature worker policy might have good examples for business - a workforce management plan to support older workers and maximise their skills and experience
Community Services & Health	Council provides many community services	These services are at capacity	Council to continue providing community services and lobby for increased funding.
	Health services in the local area are of good quality	Access to medical services is reliant on having transport if you live outside the main town area	When travel/transport is required it should be easy to access and convenient to the consumer
	Council has been active in health promotion and healthy living	Healthy Communities program funding has ceased	Continue to emphasise/promote the importance of remaining mobile for general health and well being
	Council is aware of its ageing demographic	State funding and state policies are not always supportive of local government actions in relation to an ageing population	Adopt the Active Ageing Framework - and start with 'young old' and think whole of life and for planning ahead
			Create a "things to consider as you get older" list and perhaps add to the Wills and Power of Attorney leaflet. (home design, location near transport and services)

Participant demographic information

There was a total thirty two community participants in the focus groups. Most participants were between the ages of 60 and 69 (16) years, there were more females (19) than males (13), and most lived with their spouse (27). Two thirds were retired (16) and three quarters said they did not have a disability (25). One participant rated their health status as fair, sixteen rated their health as good, and fourteen as excellent. The demographic information is presented in detail in Figures 2 to 7.

Figure 2: Gender of participants

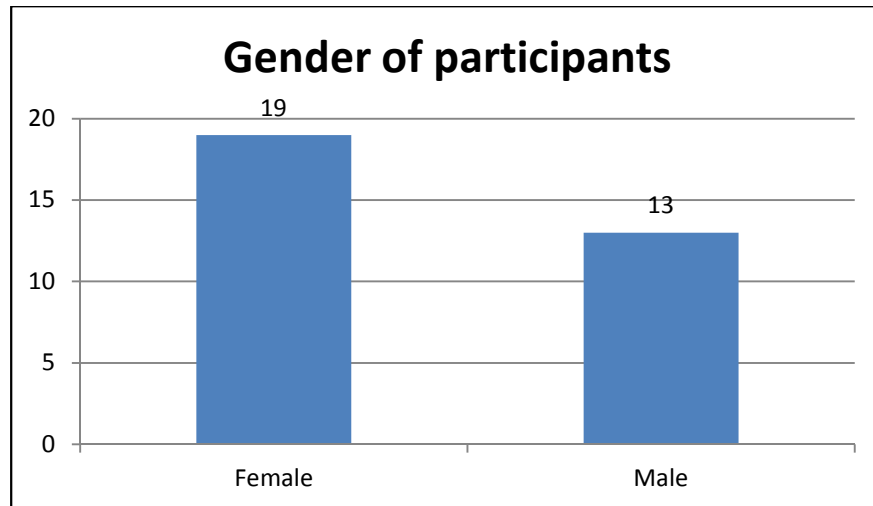


Figure 3: Age of participants

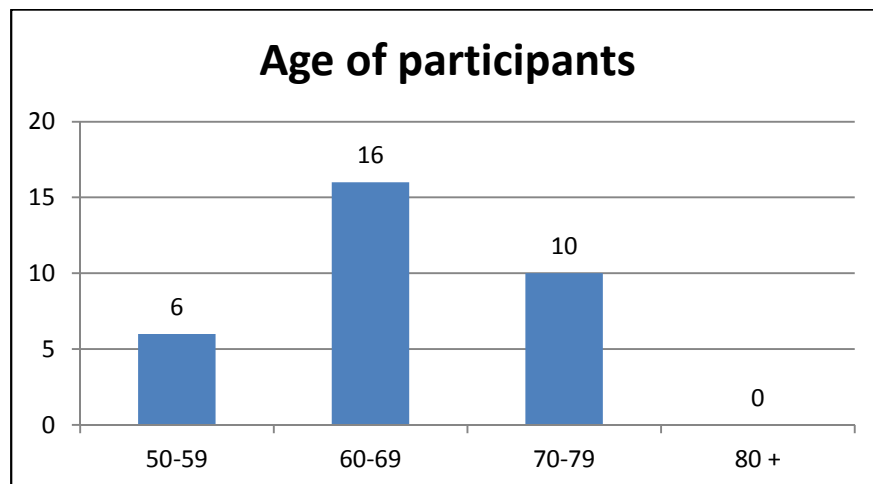


Figure 4: Living arrangements of participants

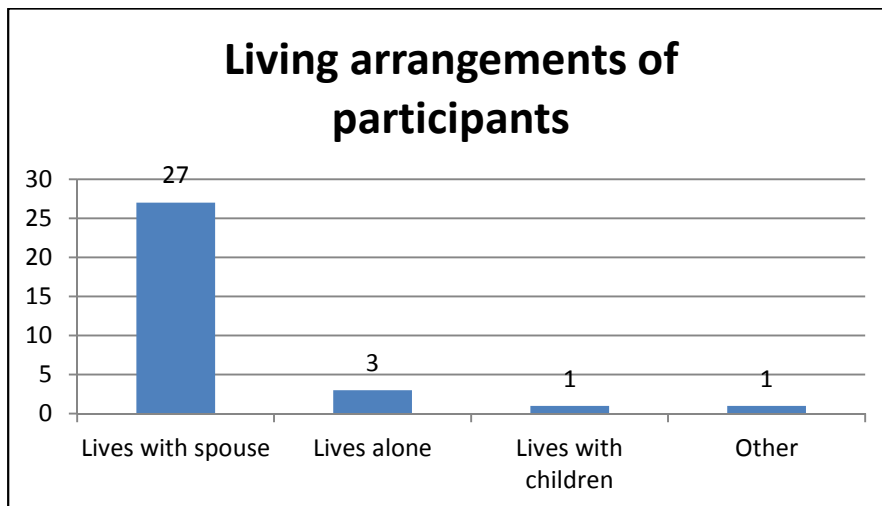


Figure 5: Employment status of participants

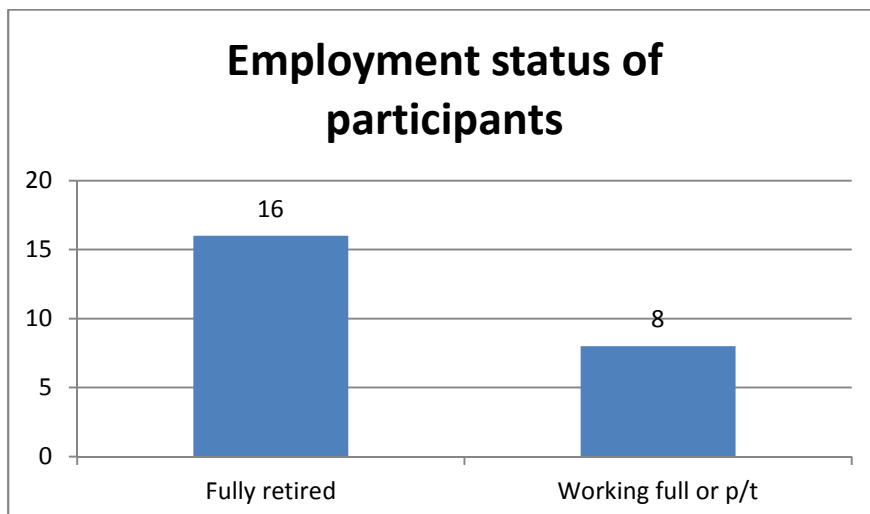


Figure 6: Health rating of participants

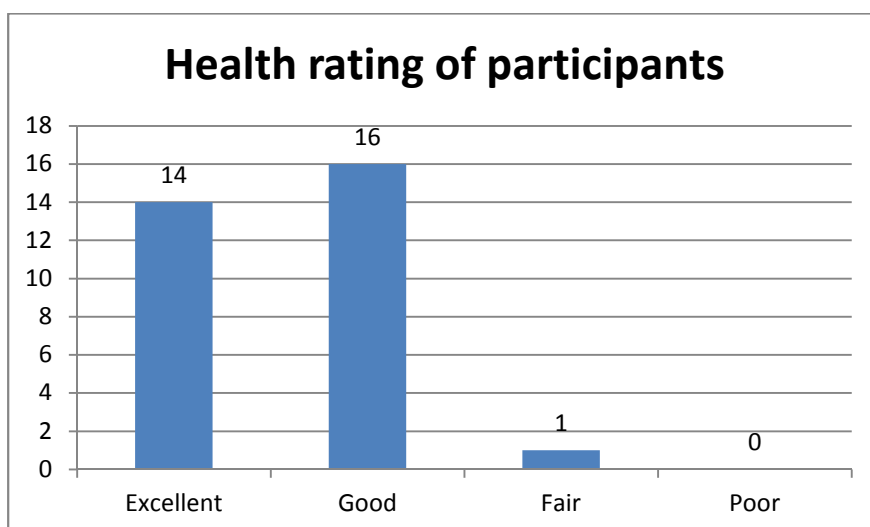
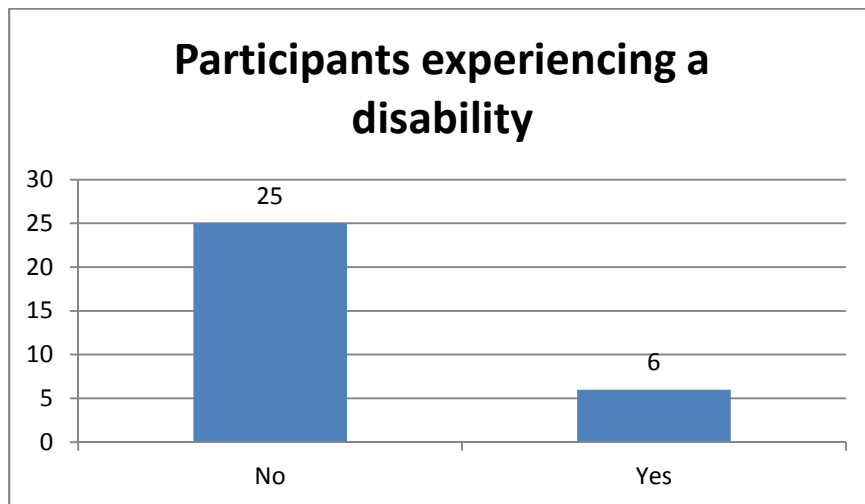


Figure 7: Participants stating they have a disability



APPENDIX B

Survey Comments Analysis and Findings

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The analysis process

The survey responses were analysed after the focus group analysis was completed. The survey responses were then compared with the focus group outcomes for similarities and additional information. The responses were categorised by location of residence to match the locations of the focus groups (Bulahdelah, Stroud, Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest, and Forster-Tuncurry). An additional group, Pacific Palms and Coomba Park, was added in the survey analysis. Issues specific to Pacific Palms and Coomba Park were raised in the Forster-Tuncurry focus group and sufficient survey responses were received to create an additional grouping.

All comments from the survey were entered into an Excel Spreadsheet and the narratives examined for keywords by using the software's "Find" function. The frequency of each keyword was recorded and used as a guide to the level of concern for each issue in each location.

In the charts that follow for each district, the frequency of each keyword occurrence is listed. For consistency, where similarities exist with focus groups comments, the barriers and suggestions for improvements remain the same or similar. Additional suggestions are included where these were provided by respondents. The survey questionnaire did not specifically ask for positive aspects in the same way as the focus group questions. Rather, respondents were asked about what could be improved. Consequently positive remarks are absent from the survey analysis. The survey questions can be found at Appendix E.

Also included for each district are some key comments from survey respondents. Some comments express the overall concerns of respondents, and some comments provide some new ideas for solutions to the issues.

Information from the questions that asked participants to rate the age-friendliness of Great Lakes across the WHO eight domains can be found at the end of this appendix.

Overall, the survey responses confirmed the key issues raised in the focus groups, particularly in regard to transport, information, and local medical services.

It should be noted that some responses cut across domains. For example, cycleways are part of the built environment, but they are also part of transport, and transport is mentioned in relation to health and social activities. Although some responses may technically belong in another domain, they have been left in the domain where they were recorded.

Bulahdelah and Nabiac

20 respondents

Respondents from the Bulahdelah and Nabiac districts listed footpaths, transport services, access to local medical services, and information about social activities and community services most frequently.

Housing:

“It should not be separated. There should be good quality accessible and sustainable housing for all. Older people should remain as integrated members of the community not isolated in separate housing developments. I know it is difficult to provide services on this basis but the aim should be at promoting good primary health care so as to keep people more active. Keeping older people integrated in the community will ensure they remain valued and they can take part in the same activities as everyone else not separate isolating activities.”

Chart 1 reports the Bulahdelah and Nahiack district responses. The bolded cells indicate a similarity with the focus group discussions for this district.

Chart 1: Bulahdelah and Nahiack responses

Domain	Comments	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and buildings	Footpaths 6 mentions Shelter 2 mentions Toilets 2 mentions Seating 2 mentions Lighting 2 mentions Cycleway 4 mentions Fitness track 1 mention		
		Inadequate footpaths, no shelter over seats, toilets in poor condition, insufficient lighting.	More footpaths and cycleways. Seating, picnic settings, shelter over seating ; lighting Upgrade toilets
		Cycleways are needed	Find out where a cycleway would be best placed or some other designated cycle/pedestrian path
		Fitness track	Refer to Health domain
Transportation	Buses 6 mentions Community Transport 4 mentions Grading of roads and road improvements 3 mentions		
		Need footpaths for walking and people who use mobility aids	Apply footpaths to suit mobility aids – see also Outdoor Spaces and Buildings domain

Domain	Comments	Barriers	Improvements
			Investigate provision of a shuttle bus for Bulahdelah 1-2 days a week
Housing	Segregated housing not for everyone 1 mention "Senior specific" 7 mentions	Insufficient housing to suit older people	New developments to have age friendly, universal design features.
Respect and Social Inclusion	Council staff improvements 1 mention		
		Council staff not respectful	Training of Council staff in being age-friendly (respecting and including)
		Suitable activities for older people	See Social Participation
		Lack of roads and paths for people with mobility aids	Refer to transport
Social Participation	Lack of promotion 5 mentions Transport issues 3 mentions Affordability 2 mentions Accessibility 2 mentions Cooperation 1 mention		
		Lack transport, accessibility of venues, affordability of activities, promotion of events, and cooperation between groups	Refer to outdoor spaces and buildings, communication and information, and transport.
		Cost of hire is a barrier	More free/low cost activities
			Consider an arts and/or music group
			Find out what other groups and people want.
			Improve promotion of events – various media
			Improve accessibility of buildings

Domain	Comments	Barriers	Improvements
Communication & Information	Noticeboard 3 mentions Mail 2 mentions Website 2 mentions Newspaper 1 mention Radio 1 mention		
		There is no community noticeboard	Establish a community noticeboard in Bulahdelah town area
		Internet and mobile coverage is poor in this area. Not everyone can use the internet	Find out the best ways of communicating (with a paid coordinator)
			Radio is good for promoting community events
Civic Participation & Employment	Suitable activities 2 mentions	Promotion, accessibility and transport/travel are all barriers	Refer to sections on communication, transport and built environment
Community and Health Services	More local doctors (3 mentions for Bulahdelah) Transport to medical practitioners 3 mentions Emergency department 2 mentions One stop shop for information 1 mention		.
			More doctors and/or better transport to clinics and surgeries
			Information about services to be better disseminated.
			Investigate ways to provide better emergency medical response

Stroud district

4 respondents

Although there was a low response rate from Stroud, many of the issues remain the same – footpaths, transport, information and suitable housing. Similarly to the focus group discussion, medical services did not appear to be an immediate concern.

Social Participation:

“Transport to and from specialist medical appointments in Newcastle/Taree might be an issue for some who no longer drive. If there is transport available I have never heard of it so better publicity may be needed.”

Chart 2 reports the Stroud and district responses. The bolded cells indicate a similarity with the focus group discussions for this district.

Chart 2: Stroud and District responses

Stroud Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and buildings	Footpaths, 4 mentions Seating 1 mention Lighting 1 mention		
		Footpaths are not in all areas but are also needed for safe travel by scooter users	Investigate the footpaths with greatest need and priority and set a plan for implementation
		Insufficient seating	Increase the number of seats in the shopping area
Transportation	Local bus 1 mention Community Transport 2 mentions		
		There is no local bus service - high reliance on car ownership and driving	Investigate improvements to community transport services in terms of coordination with other services and activities
Housing	No housing choice 1 mention Independent living 1 mention Location of housing 1 mention		
		There are no suitable homes to move to when needed	Council to allow small scale villa developments in

Stroud Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
			keeping with the heritage values of the town (SEPP Seniors Living)
Respect and Social Inclusion	Feel respected 1 mention Suitable activities 1 mention		
Social Participation	Transport 3 mentions Indoor activities 1 mention	If transport is available for medical reasons it is not known (no mention of social participation). No activities in Wards River	When promoting events include information about accessibility and transport options
Communication & Information	Newspaper 1 mention iPad 1 mention Range of formats 1 mention		
		Comment: Use of iPad for e-reading – text can be expanded for low vision	Information to be available in a range of formats
Civic Participation & Employment	Opportunities and encouragement to volunteer 2 mentions		
		People may be ready to volunteer, but perhaps need motivation, information or assistance such as transport or transport costs reimbursed	Find ways to encourage people to volunteer.
Community and Health Services	More for rural dwellers (Wards River) Podiatrist 1 mention	Distance to medical services is a barrier	See also transport

Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest

38 respondents

Compared with other districts in the Great Lakes Council area, there was a relatively high response rate from the Tea-Gardens district with many thoughtful comments, several of which are reported below. Some comments are comparable with the focus group discussions, others offer thoughtful suggestions for improvements.

Transport:

“More pedestrian crossings, particularly to access the shopping centre at Myall Quays as the main retirement villages of The Grange and Hermitage are built on the opposite side of the main road to the shopping centre. Pedestrian crossings from ferry in TG across the road to the shops on Marine Dr and Myall Street.”

“Some system whereby the elderly can get from home to where ever they would like in the village”

“A community bus would be good. In holiday season, hundreds of elderly people visit Tea Gardens by ferry from Nelson Bay. On their arrival you see them get off the ferry, look around and say "What now" There should be a bus or some sort of tour vehicle to show them the wonderful things that Tea Gardens and hawks Nest have to offer other than "have lunch at the pub" which is what the so called information officers at the information office tell them.”

“Local bus transport to link up with ferry arrivals for a hop-on-hop-off trip around Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest showcasing Bennets Beach, golf club, Winda Woppa, Shearwater, Myall Quays, Lime Kilns, Country Club etc.”

Housing:

“I'd like to see more approvals for Over 55's duplex communities, specialised accommodation for older holiday makers, a few homes for Dept of Housing integrated into the community - currently only 3 in our area.”

“Developers to be included in an overall ongoing housing and social plan for older people. Affordability is always going to be an issue however Council could provide certain infrastructure that would relieve developers of providing same therefore developers could offer more affordable older folk housing. ... To enlarge on this a series of think tank workshops should be arranged for the entire GLLGA combining developers, council, real estate agents and community group leaders to create a blueprint of preferred housing types, costs, required infrastructure etc. Personal security is the largest single element with older folk. This subject has not been addressed in this survey and MUST be considered. This subject that has many areas of consideration and if carefully planned will have a profound effect on current residence and potential residence well-being. There is opportunity for GLC LGA to lead the way in this regard.”

Communication and Information:

“More ways of advertising all the available activities, both passive and active, in our area. We need to expand or rename the Tourist Information Office so that we can have a one-stop-shop to hold this ‘local activity’ information. Or if this list of activities can be posted on the LGA website.”

Civic Participation:

“Have regular surveys such as this one on specific topics.”

“Older folk have amazing abilities which are totally under exploited. Many could be encouraged to be involved volunteer work and community affairs by using their particular skills. A register could be created and then a coordinator approach individuals and discuss their opportunities. Many older folk feel inadequate and unable to make the first step to be involved particularly if they have lost their life long husband or wife. Men’s Shed have proved to have an important place in men’s mental health... venues need to be built to encouraged other group activities for men and women, particularly for single older folk, their mental health is critical.”

Health:

“The possibility to build a relationship with the GP of your choice instead of having to see a different GP each time. Myall Coast Health Centre has a fairly high turn-over in GPs. I believe there's even one who is not registered. This practice does not bulk bill either.”

Chart 3 reports the Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest responses. The bolded cells indicate a similarity with the focus group discussions for this district.

Chart 3: Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest district responses

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor places and buildings	Footpaths 23 mentions Lighting 17 mentions Cycle ways 13 mentions Seating 13 mentions Shade shelter 9 mentions Toilets 6 mentions Signage 4 mentions		
		Lack of connectivity between homes, shops and other facilities and services	Footpaths on main roads.
		Insufficient toilets, current toilets are not always in good locations	Install a toilet block closer to Marine Drive? Along the waterfront

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
			Upgrade existing toilets to make them accessible including paths of travel to and from
		Insufficient seating along the waterfront	Place more seating along the waterfront
		Insufficient shelter over seats	Shade/shelter over seating
		Street lighting is poor	Install more street lighting
		Not enough pedestrian crossings	Review pedestrian crossing placement and roll out in town
		Better/bigger street signs	Street signage on main thoroughfares
Transportation	Bus 33 mentions Community Transport 8 mentions Taxi 5 mentions		
		Insufficient bus services to catch trains from Newcastle or or go shopping at Raymond Terrace	Expand the bus facilities to travel to Raymond Terrance and Newcastle for health, shopping and onward transport to Sydney
		There is no bus between Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens	Establish a daily shuttle bus for local shopping and recreation: North Arm Cove-Bundabah-Pindamar-Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens.
		Cannot get to the bus at The Rock on a restricted licence as cannot drive on the freeway.	
		No taxi (hire car available)	A taxi would be good
Housing	Affordable 9 mentions Villas / duplex 9 mentions Retirement Village 2 mentions Rental 4 mentions		
		Affordability of retirement villages	Alternative housing to RVs is needed: Over 55 developments and villas, medium density,

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
			small lots.
		No housing suited to later life	Well sited medium density housing – need to review zoning?
		No affordable rental housing	More low cost housing for older people
Respect and Social Inclusion	Intergenerational activities 2 mentions Transport 2 mentions		
		Few opportunities for intergenerational activities (many young people move away for study and work)	Create opportunities for older people to share their knowledge and skill with younger people.
		Lack of transport is a barrier to being included	
Social Participation	Pool (heated) 8 mentions Transport 7 mentions Community centre 5 mentions Publicity 5 mentions Accessibility 3 mentions		
	There are many groups operating that provide opportunities for social participation	Transport to activities is poor	Consider transport issues and include information about transport when promoting events
		Community hall not well designed for activities for older people or respite day care	A new purpose built community and cultural centre with suitable amenities for people of all ages is needed. Council to include in planning.
		People are not aware of all the activities	Review the way events and activities are communicated
			Upgrade swimming pool for winter use and aqua aerobics
Communication & Information	Newsletter/local newspaper 19 mentions		This is an area that is important to residents in this area, especially with the loss of the NOTA

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
			One stop shop for information about community services
			Need to find out the best way to communicate with and between residents
Civic Participation & Employment	Volunteering 14 mentions Transport 4 mentions	Employment opportunities are minimal in the area	
	Mostly positive comments about the opportunities to volunteer	Not everyone knows about the opportunities or is encouraged to volunteer	Promotion of opportunities could be improved
		Transport to volunteer is not available	Consider transport and transport costs for volunteers
		There are few jobs available for people of any age	Investigate the feasibility of a 'workshop' type place where an embryonic business could start where older people could be employed. A business mentor is needed for this.
Community and Health Services	Stable GP practice/medical centre and wait times 25 mentions Allied health 4 mentions One stop shop 2 mentions Transport/travel to RT 2 mentions	Specifically mentioned throughout was the issue of doctors staying for short times resulting in seeing a different doctor at every visit. Long wait times, up to two weeks were reported as well.	
		Appointment times to see a GP are extended because doctors are part time	Attract more medical practitioners and consider their family's needs as well. Council to liaise with state government
		Doctors do not stay long enough to establish relationships	As above
		Some people go to Raymond Terrace	Perhaps transport to Raymond Terrace might help.

Forster-Tuncurry

69 responses

Most responses were received by residents in the main population centres of Forster and Tuncurry. The comments were similar to those of the focus group. Some of the selected comments reported here provide specific details of places, design issues, and proposed actions. Footpaths, transport, and access to information were most frequently mentioned.

Outdoor spaces and buildings:

“Continuous footpaths with a ramp down to road level. NOTE: continuous footpaths with shallow angle ramps are urgently needed for those who use mobility scooters in Forster/Tuncurry, especially on high traffic routes. Like Cross St, Peel, St, Taree, St, Bent St & Park St, down to Sporties Club. and where footpaths do exist sometimes there are no ramps down to the road, ie cnr Kent St & Barclay Pl, south side, Kent St & Bent St south side & an unnamed lane in cross st between Head St & Lake St directly opposite Manee La St and footpath should exist between Lake St & Strand St as this is an extremely busy street taking traffic from both Club Forster & Forster Bowling Club to the traffic lights at Macintosh & Lake. Council should also look at the approach, and departure angles of footpath ramps as most ramps in town are too steep for mobility scooters which tend to tip over backwards. Sometimes people with mobility scooter use the road in preference to existing footpaths because the roads are smooth whereas the footpaths are poorly maintained with non-level joints, making the ride uncomfortable. The bridge walkway is a good example of no level joints where people stub their toes.”

Housing:

“Like any 'urban' area, I believe it needs to address the needs of everyone - including those who considered legitimately disadvantaged (for a range of reasons). I think the area needs more developments which take account of the needs of an elderly and aging population which respect and acknowledge their right to be independent and offer a range of care options where, as needs increase, people can access higher levels of support without having to move and without overtly stressing their loved ones! ... I believe Forster faces some challenges in how it adequately accommodates and supports the needs of ageing Aboriginal residents and their families - and in this context needs to re-examine how it defines 'older people'. ... Some simple ideas include: no steps! Access to lifts or otherwise ground level. Dwelling shouldn't be SO small that it's horrid. Everyone should be able to see the sky, some trees and have easy access to sheltered, attractive outdoor areas. Our elderly should not be penalised for being poor (if that's how it is) in relation to the type or level of support they can access.

Respect and Social Inclusion:

“... No one has the 'right' to be respected, included and valued just because they're 'older' and a lot of 'younger' people need and would value support too. We need a much more 'inclusive' model which reflects notions of care and reciprocity. If you get

the model right, everyone wins. By this I mean everyone is valued, everyone can access support, everyone can offer support. There are a LOT of people in this community who are in a position to offer support and many of them are older! There are also a lot of people in this community who need and would value support - and a lot of them are very young. Whatever council proposes - sorry ... there have to be some meaningful conversations, consultations etc. While I imagine this survey is just a beginning ... some questions are very biased/misleading and will generate the same kinds of findings. Incidentally ... one more area - I don't see a visible acknowledgement of cultural diversity as an accepted and positive value here - that needs a lot of attention - not just because it should be evident ... but also to better prepare our children and young people for a larger national and world reality where this is the norm”

Civic Participation:

”I haven't looked into this yet because I still work BUT perhaps a central spot when people can find out about volunteering.” “A dedicated volunteer office which acts as a centre for the collection of information and referral for people to volunteer e.g. there is such a place in Townsville which receives requests from the community and refers people looking to volunteer regardless of age or ability”

“A weekly "What's On" inserted into the Advocate. The current info is scattered and not easy for older people to find. Put it all in a one-page insert. Keep it simple.”

Chart 4 reports the responses from Forster and Tuncurry. The bolded cells indicate a similarity with the focus group discussions for this district.

Chart 4: Forster – Tuncurry responses

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor spaces and buildings	Footpaths 42 mentions Seating 25 mentions Toilets 25 mentions Cycleways 23 mentions Lighting 18 mentions Signage 7 mentions Shade/shelter 5 mention Car parking 3 mentions Bike parking 1 mention		
		Some footpaths begin and end nowhere. More footpaths are required	Install future footpaths with links to existing paths and infrastructure.
		More seating along walking paths is needed	Conduct an audit of seating to identify gaps and create a priority list

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
		Insufficient number of toilets in key locations.	Review the roll out of public toilets and create a priority list with feedback from the local community
			Upgrade existing toilets to make them accessible and adequately maintained
		Lighting needed along footpaths and walking tracks	Review lighting requirements along walking tracks and footpaths
		Shade and shelter for seating and bus stops	New seating to be sited in a shady position or with shelter
		Signage for directions and to key facilities	Review wayfinding strategy and consider legibility and placement of signage
Transportation	Buses 35 mentions Parking 9 mentions Community transport 6 mentions Bus accessibility 3 mentions Seating/shade at bus stops 5 mentions Connections with trains at Taree and secure parking 6 mentions Pedestrian safety 1 mention		
		Bus services are limited (if present) to outlying villages	Map information on existing transport and utilise better
		Taxis and buses to run to the train timetable. No taxis to meet the train	As above. Request a review of bus times to Taree railway station.
			Make more information about existing bus services available and encourage use (travel training?)
		No secure parking near the bus station or	Investigate feasibility of secure parking

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
		railway station (Taree)	arrangements and/or investigate the establishment of a shuttle service.
		Safe cycleways are needed	Cycleways and walkways within and from Forster-Tuncurry to nearby population centres.
		Community transport	Lobby for increased community transport
Housing	Single storey/villas 16 mentions Affordable 16 mentions Rental 5 mentions Retirement villages 4 mentions Housing choice 3 mentions Aged care 3 mentions Location 2 mentions		
			Council to include affordable and universally designed housing choices in new developments
			Council to include choice of housing type in planning of new developments
Respect and Inclusion	Intergenerational activities 6 mentions Transport 5 mentions Publicity of activities 2 mentions Affordable activities 2 mentions		
		Intergenerational activities could be improved (not just activities for 'seniors')	Create more intergenerational activities and events (where older people can also show their skills and experience and mentor younger people)
		Lack of transport to activities and affordability of activities can be a barrier	Create more low cost activities and include transport (or transport information)

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
		Knowing what is on is part of inclusion	Refer to communication and information
Social Participation	Publicity/information 20 mentions Affordability 12 mentions Accessibility 6 mentions Transport 6 mentions Location 2 mentions		
		Not everyone knows about all the groups and what they do	Promote the available activities (and whether transport is available)
		Affordability of activities	Create more low cost activities (with transport or consider other locations)
		Accessibility of venues	Progress the implementation of the Disability Action Plan to continue improvement of access to venues
Communication & Information	Easy to understand/large font 9 mentions Newspapers 8 mentions Radio 6 mentions Paper based information in various locations 2 mentions		
		Written information is not good for people with low vision	Information needs to be available in a range of formats in a range of places
		Community services are not well known	Radio should have a dedicated person responsible for delivering Council information
			A list of services to be devised and promoted
Civic Participation & Employment	Publicity 5 mentions Volunteering 22 mentions Being consulted 2 mentions		
		Information about becoming a volunteer is not readily available	Create a "Volunteer Directory" with organisations and available volunteer jobs

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
		Employment opportunities are limited in this area at all ages	A specialist older persons employment officer
Community and Health Services	Access to specialists 10 mentions Emergency Dept 10 mentions Waiting times 7 mentions Transport 4 mentions Information 2 mentions Gym equipment 1 mention		
		Travel to hospitals is often inconvenient where available, costly	Refer to community transport
		The cost of some exercise 'classes' is a barrier for some people	Install exercise equipment along walking paths
			Liaise with HNE Health and lobby for increased medical practitioners and/or transport to doctors and clinics

Coomba Park and Pacific Palms

9 respondents

Although there was no separate focus group for Coomba Park and Pacific Palms, sufficient specific issues arose in focus group discussions to consider the particulars of these districts with these nine respondents.

Outdoor spaces and buildings:

“For kids and mothers they need a footpath to get them down the hill to the skate park and the preschool.” “Not even proper safe cement path to disabled peoples toilet/community Hall Coomba Park. One cannot walk with walking frame on any footpath or foreshore path/ppl etc, even RFS station. No legal ramp access. No vehicle - need 'someone to care' and take one to Coomba Progress Ass Meetings. RFS debriefing (no lift) WRONG. Footpaths BAD, Can't use Walking Frame on them, even if grass lawn level 'would help'”

Transport:

“A ferry to Forster”

“I don't think there are enough people to make community transport viable. Perhaps it should be tested from time to time and see what the uptake is. Young people who don't drive are in just as much need as older people.”

Social Participation:

“Like to see more recognition for U3A. Lifelong learning does not seem to be one of your considerations - a bad omission. U3A provides learning and social activities for older people but does not get the recognition that Men's Shed and similar organisations receive - yet keep older people off the streets, happy and engaged. The retirees in our area have more than enough to do.”

Health:

“An expanded GP service. 3 days per week is not enough, even though the new GP is excellent. It takes a week to get an appointment. We need a public Hospital/triage centre closer than Taree.”

Chart 5 reports the Coomba Park and Pacific Palms responses. The bolded cells indicate a similarity with the Forster Tuncurry focus group discussions where representatives of these districts were present.

Chart 5: Coomba Park and Pacific Palms responses

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Outdoor places and buildings	Footpath 5 mentions Toilet 1 mention Cycle way 1 mention No Shops 2 mentions		
		Lack of footpaths, cycle ways, access to toilet and, no shops – have to travel to Forster	Review the footpath strategy and make a priority for the toilet at Pacific Palms
Transport	Bus 5 mentions Community transport 1 mention		
			Investigate feasibility of some form of transport to Pacific Palms and Coomba Park as the population increases.
Housing	Accessible 2 mentions Affordable 1 mention		
		Insufficient homes without steps (more suitable for older people)	Council to include choice of housing type in planning of new developments

Domain	Age friendly aspects	Barriers	Improvements
Respect and Social Inclusion	Intergenerational activities 1 mention		
			Create more intergenerational activities and events (where older people can also show their skills and experience and mentor younger people)
Social Participation	Transport 3 mentions Affordability 1 mention Lifelong Learning (U3A) 1 mention		
		Transport to activities	Promote the available activities (and whether transport is available)
Communication & Information	Mail 1 mention		
		Not everyone has the internet	Information needs to be available in a range of formats in a range of places
Civic Participation & Employment	Volunteering 2 mentions		
		Perhaps most people go to Forster to volunteer?	Find ways to outreach volunteer activities to Coomba Park and Pacific Palms
Community and Health Services	GP/medical practice 2 mentions Hospital 1 mention Mobile GP 1 mention		
			Plan for more GPs in the area as population increases. Ensure transport is available and that people know about it.

Overall Satisfaction ratings for each domain

The following Figures 1 to 9 provide information about the overall satisfaction rating for each domain, and Figures 10-12 provide demographic information.

Figure 1: Public spaces and buildings

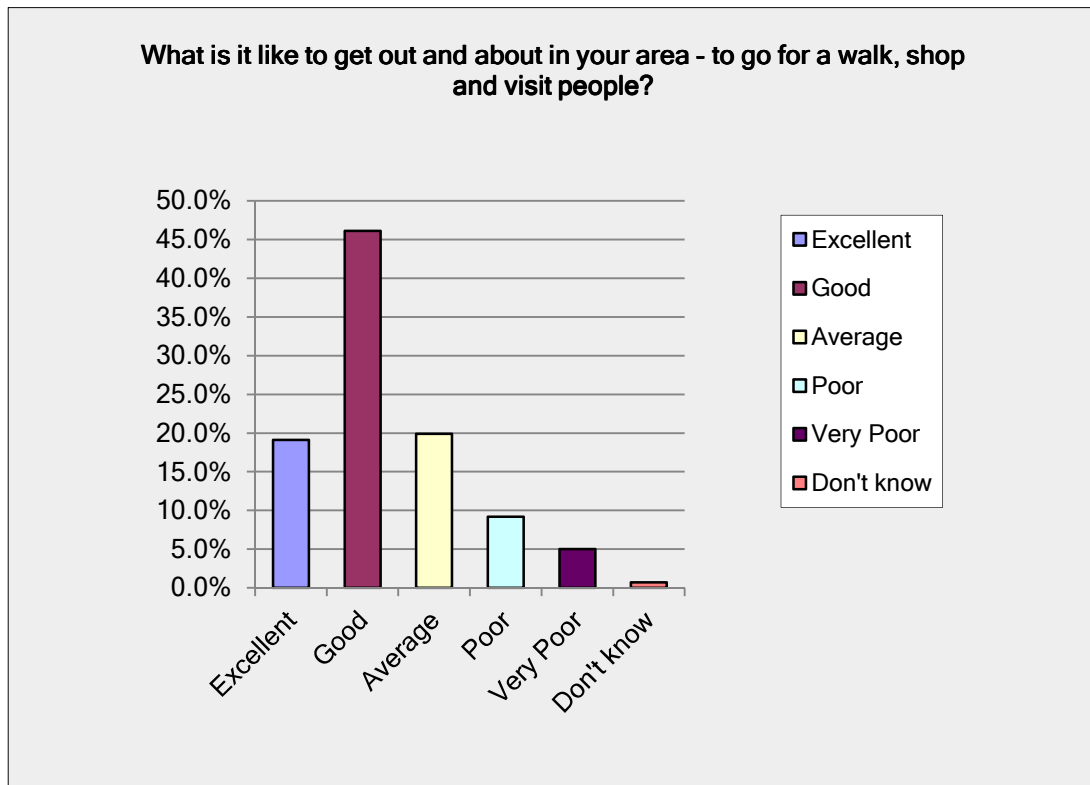


Figure 2: Transportation

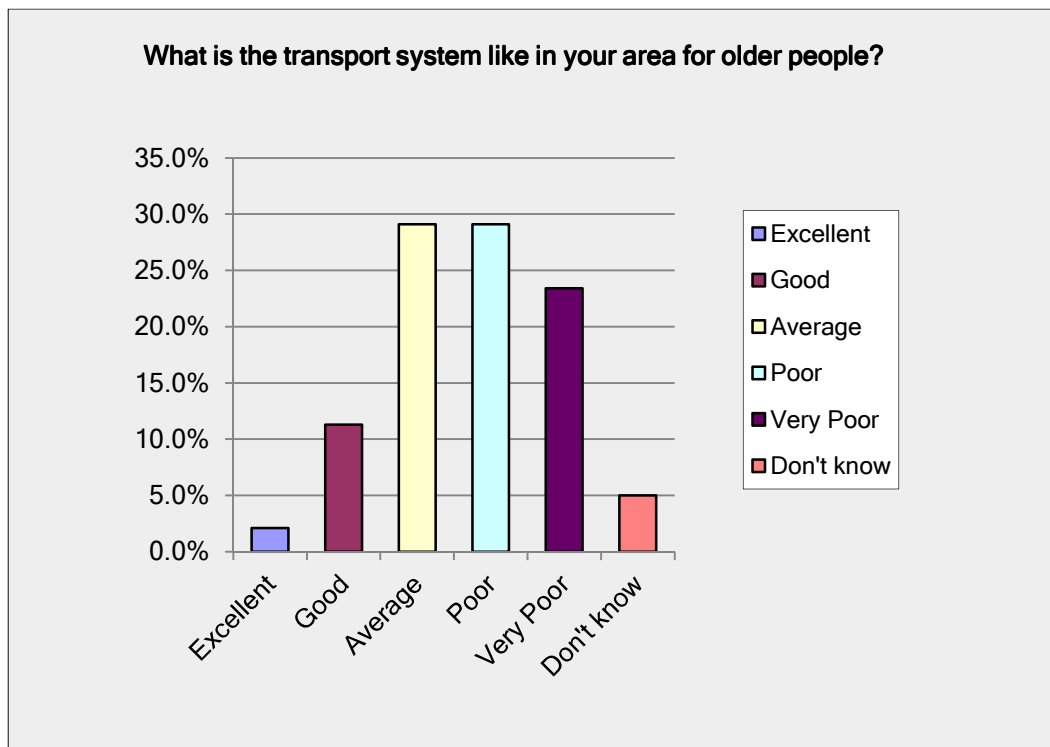


Figure 3: Housing

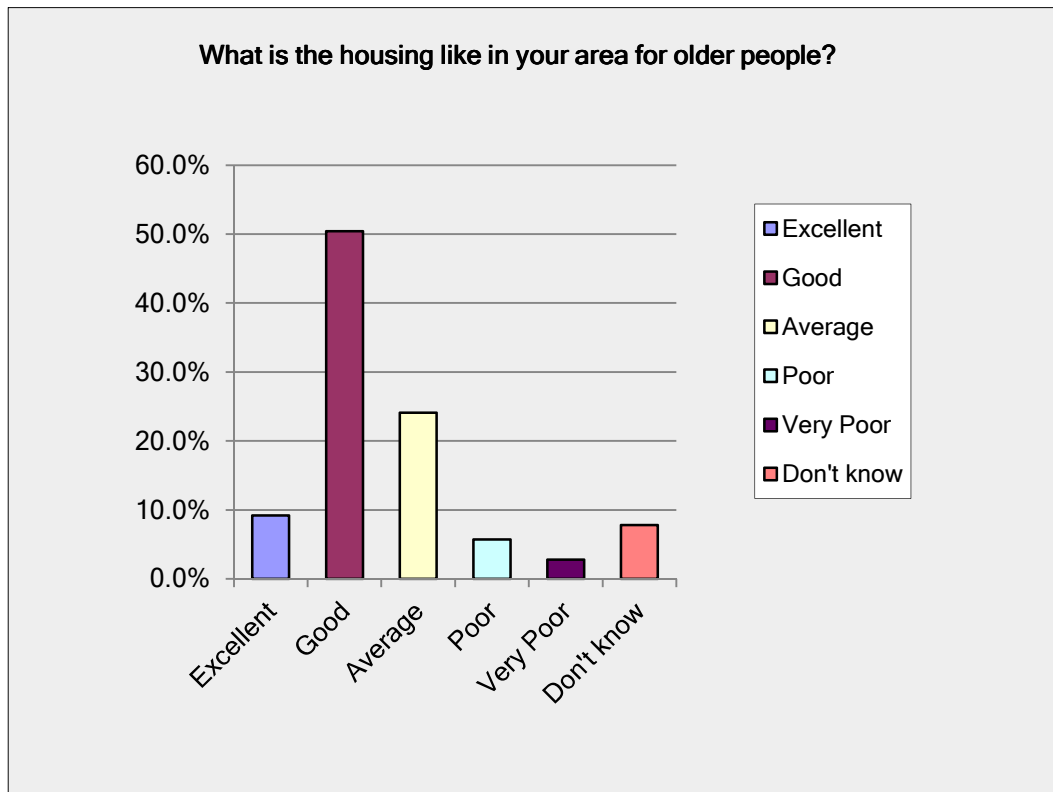


Figure 4: Respect and social inclusion

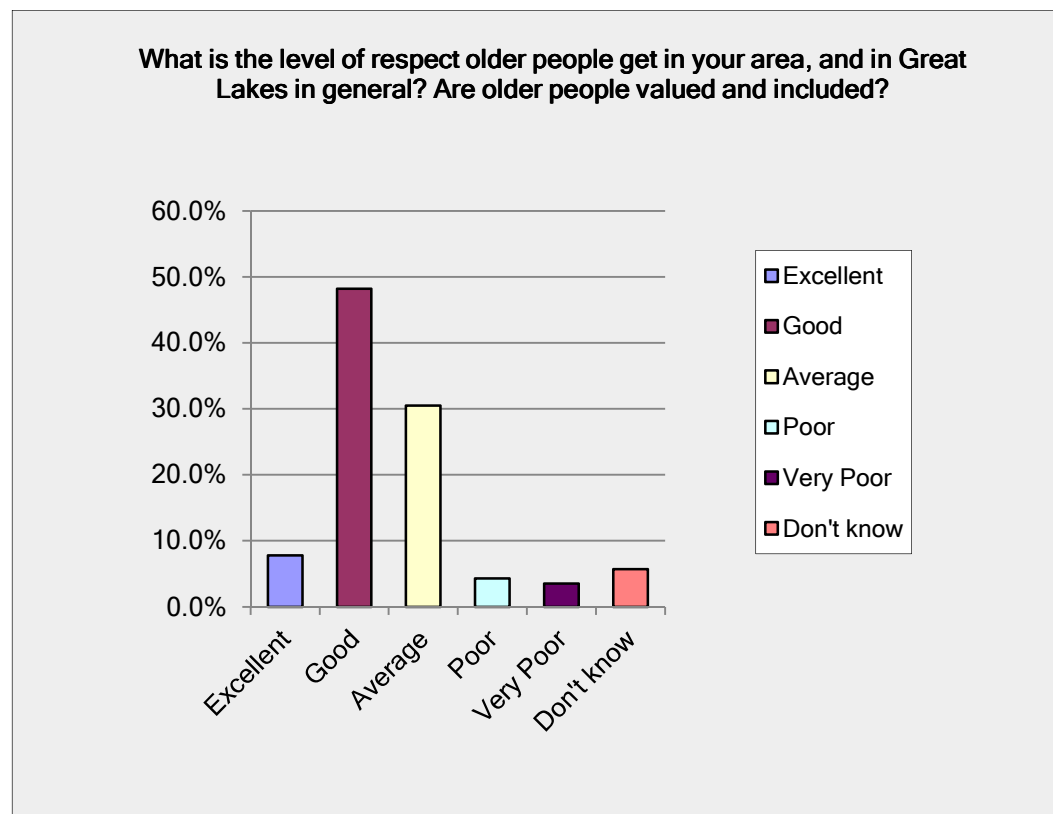


Figure 5: Social participation

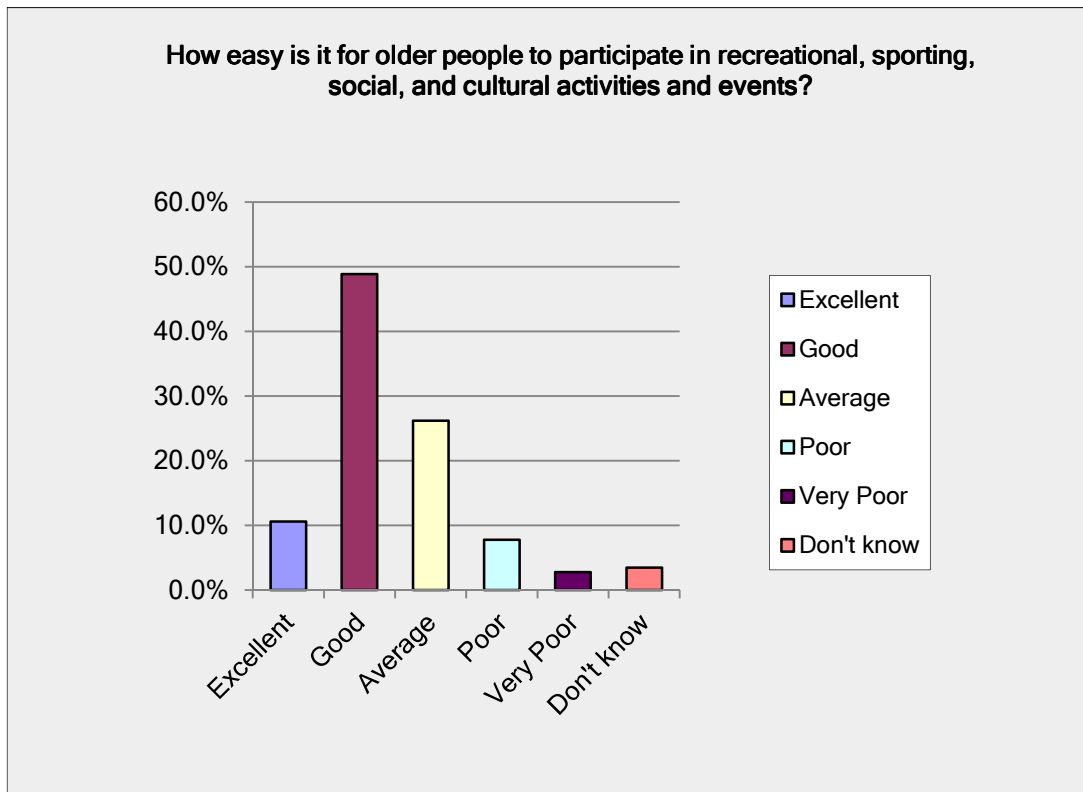


Figure 6: Communication and Information

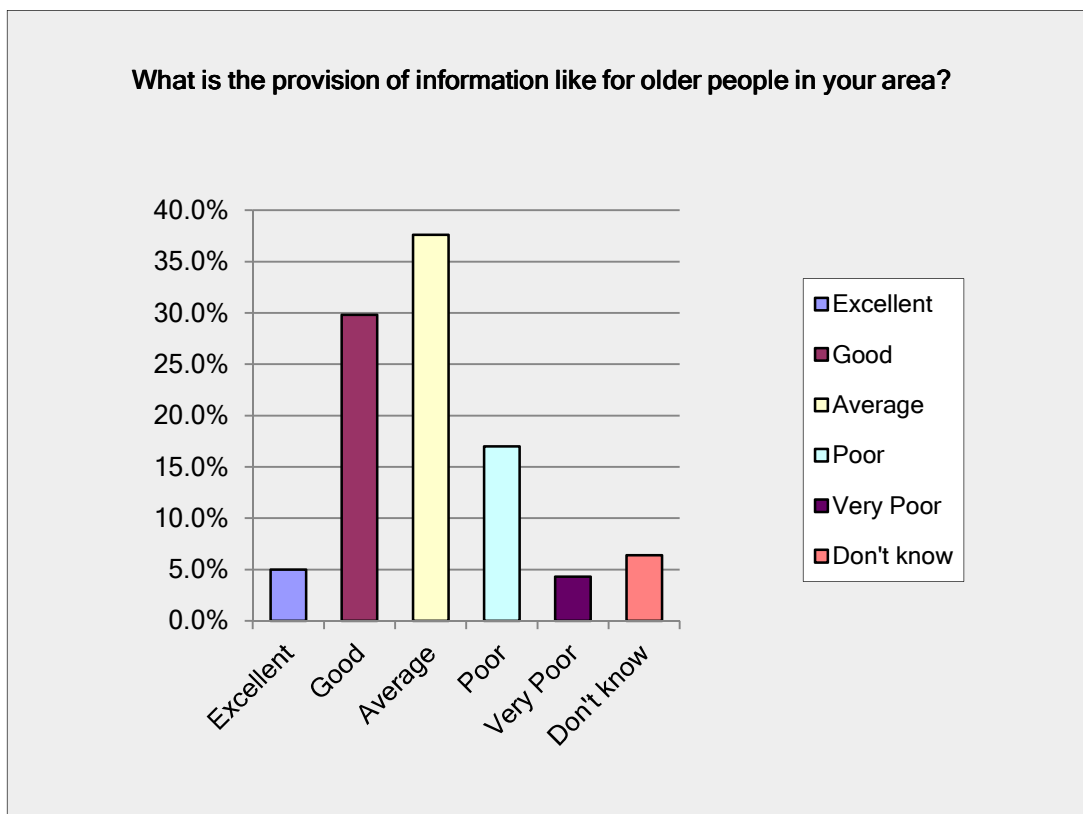


Figure 7: Civic Participation and Employment

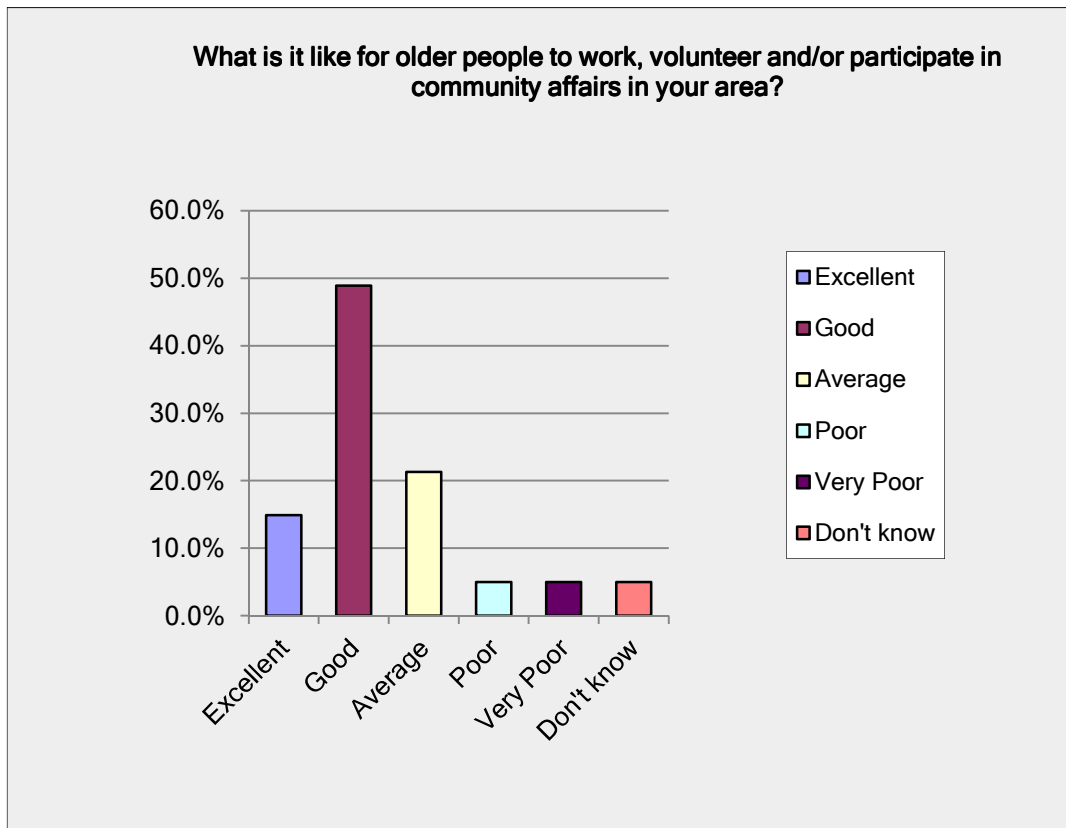


Figure 8: Social and Health Services

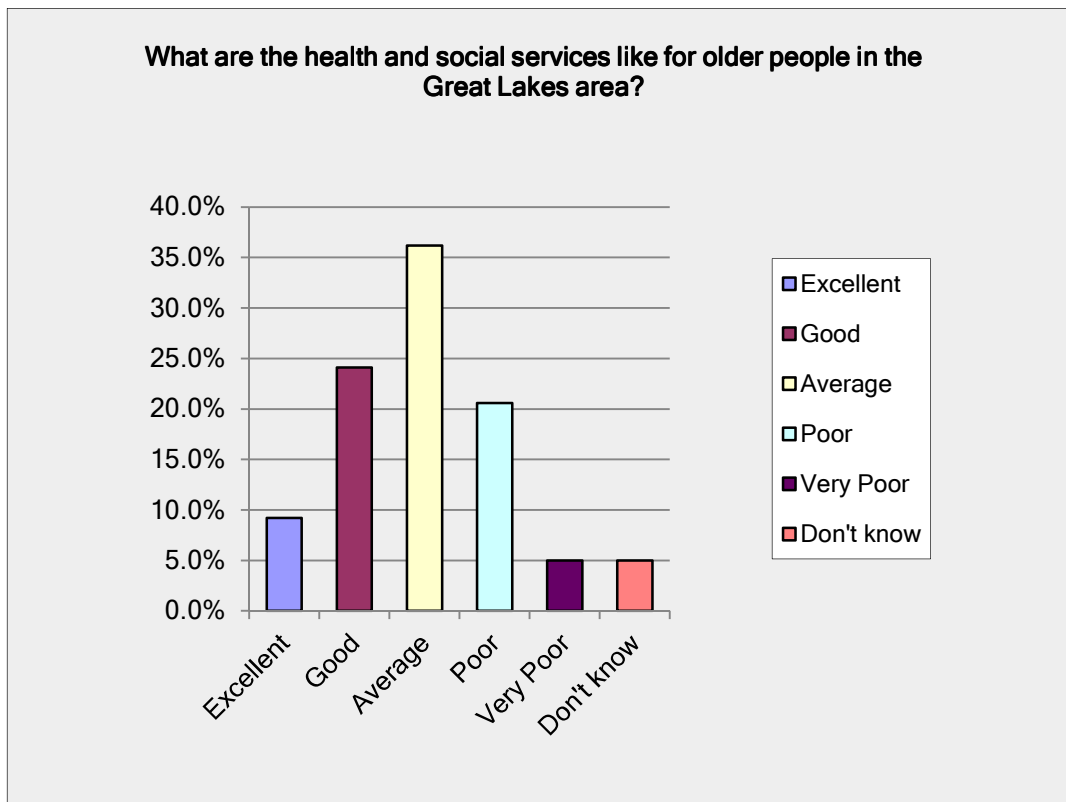


Figure 9: Overall rating of age-friendliness of the Great Lakes Council area

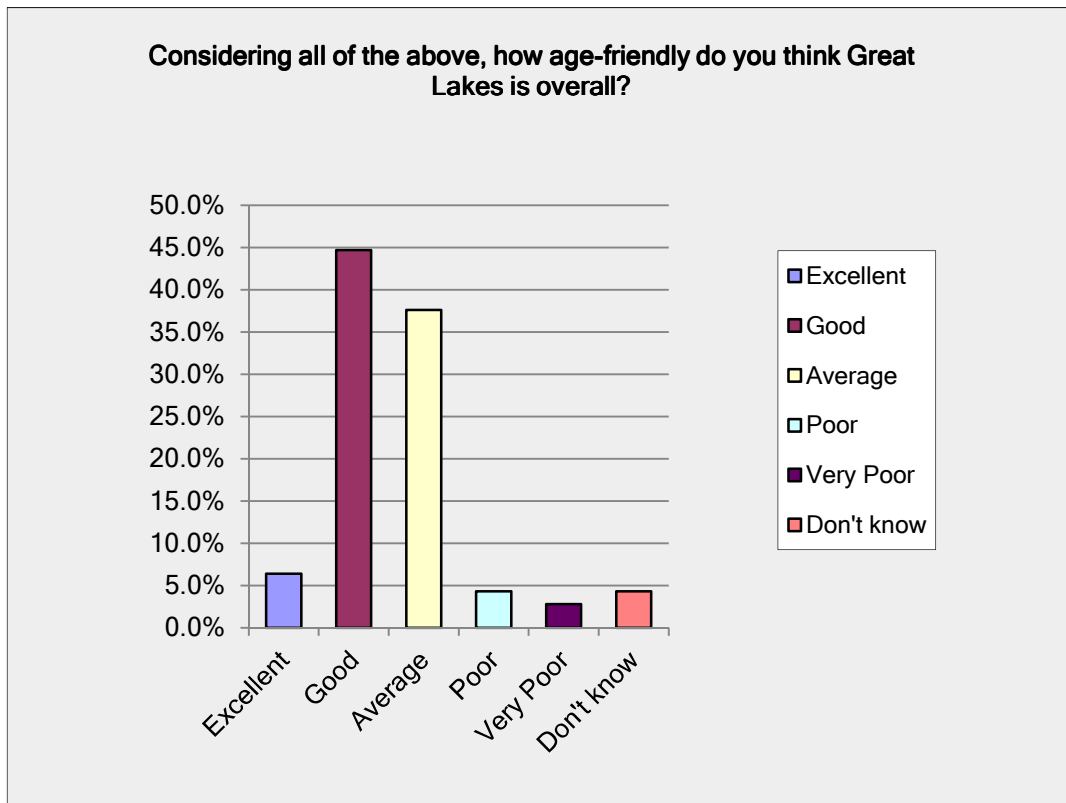


Figure 10: Number of respondents from each area within Great Lakes Council

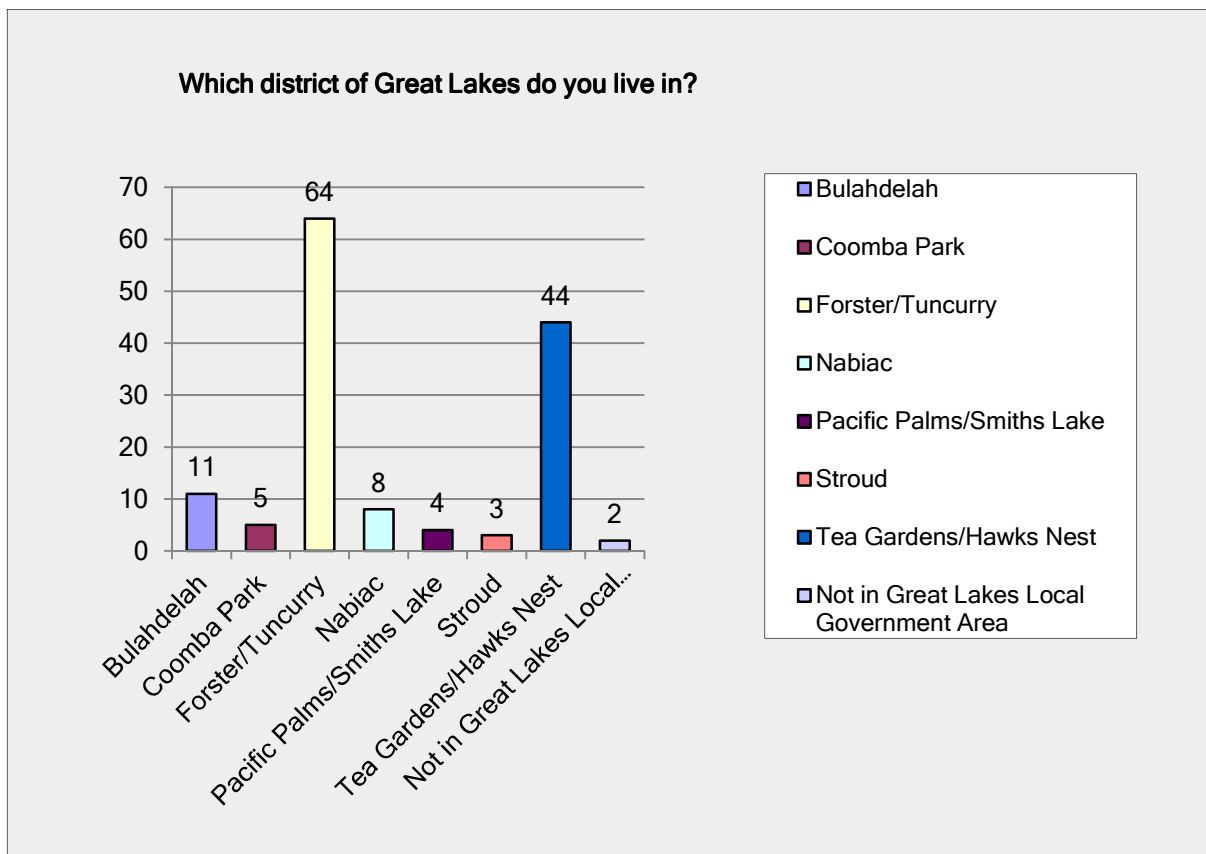


Figure 11: Age of respondents

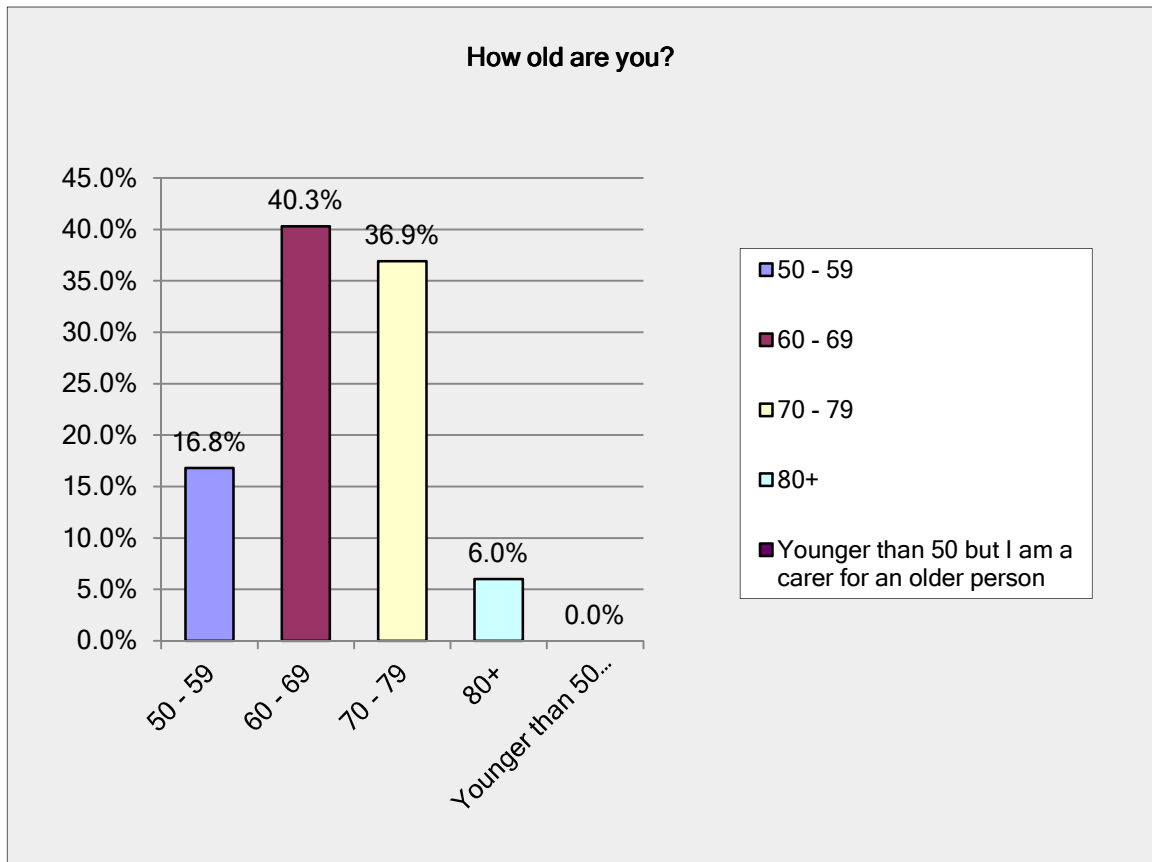
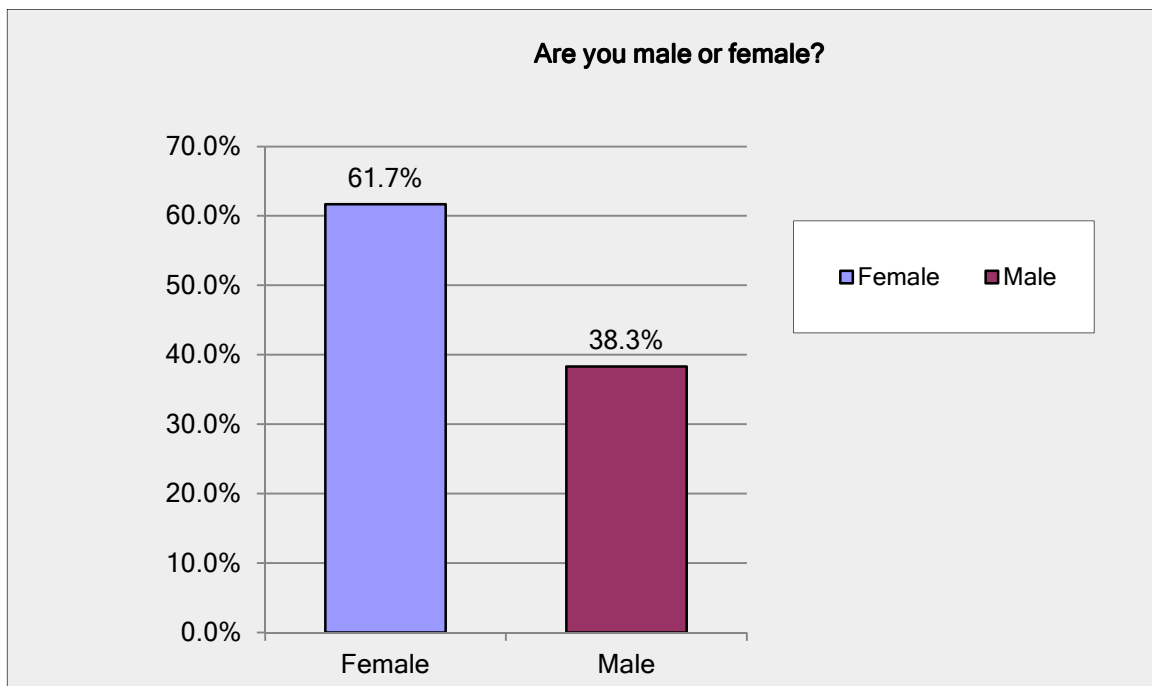


Figure 12: Gender of respondents



APPENDIX C

Summary of improvements linked to WHO eight domains

WHO AFCC Domains	
1	Design and maintenance of public spaces and buildings
2	Transportation infrastructure and services
3	Housing design, affordability and modifications
4	Social participation and interaction
5	Respect, social inclusion, consultation and recognition
6	Civic participation, employment options and opportunities
7	Communication and information in a range of formats
8	Community support and health services including emergency planning

WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities Domain(s)	Improvements
Public spaces and buildings	Proposed new Civic Precinct in Forster to include the Library and sufficient parking for library and users of other co-located facilities and services
Public spaces and buildings	Review lighting requirements along walking tracks and footpaths
Public spaces and buildings	Extend coastal walks and encourage walking groups to help familiarise newcomers to the routes. Also plan for sufficient seating and toilets along walking routes.
Public spaces and buildings	Improve wayfinding for toilets and other places for local residents, not just tourists
Public spaces and buildings	Improve physical access to public buildings in outlying villages and towns
Public spaces and buildings	Increase the size of the library building (Forster, Bulahdelah)
Public spaces and buildings	Conduct an audit of seating to identify gaps and create a priority list
Public spaces and buildings	Install more seating in streets and open spaces for social interaction as well as resting
Public spaces and buildings	Review the roll out of public toilets and create a priority list with feedback from the local community
Public spaces and buildings	Upgrade existing toilets to make them accessible and adequately maintained.
Public spaces and buildings	Keep existing community centres viable (Bulahdelah, Stroud)
Public spaces and buildings	A new purpose built community and cultural centre with suitable amenities for people of all ages is needed in Tea Gardens. Council to include in planning.
Public spaces and buildings	More non-alcohol related venues are needed for groups to meet

WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities Domain(s)	Improvements
Public spaces and buildings	Review design of picnic tables so that they are more accessible (paths and concrete aprons allowing for mobility aids to reach the table).
Transportation	Review footpath planning and coordinate with existing infrastructure. Ensure footpaths are wide enough for people using mobility aids.
Transportation	Install future footpaths with links to existing paths and infrastructure
Transportation	Increase the safety for pedestrians over bridges
Transportation	Review pedestrian crossing and pedestrian safety plan to apply crossings in places where people want to cross the road
Transportation	Investigate the initiation of a bus service to Raymond Terrace for shopping and recreation and health and on to Newcastle for health services
Transportation	Establish a daily shuttle bus for local shopping and recreation: North Arm Cove-Bundabah-Pindamar-Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens.
Transportation	Make more information about existing bus services available and encourage use (travel training?) and include information on the true costs of running a private vehicle as a comparison to other transport modes
Transportation	Investigate the establishment of a paid role to coordinate existing transport services/options and map existing transport infrastructure and services and try to utilise better
Transportation	Advocate for more accessible buses to be brought to the area. (State Disability Transport Plan should cover this)
Transportation	Establish cycle ways and walkways from Green Point to Forster
Transportation	Establish a cycle way between Stroud and Booral
Transportation	Investigate feasibility of secure parking arrangements and/or investigate the establishment of a shuttle service for bus and train stations (Taree, Gloucester)
Transportation	Consider transport issues and include information about transport when promoting events
Housing	Run a campaign to bring community services and business together to educate about future-proofing with home renovations. Education program could be in conjunction with the local chapter of the Master Builders Association (both need education which can be done by the State Home Modifications organisation)
Housing	Council to encourage developers to provide age friendly, universal design features within the homes as well as the public domain. Use SEPP Seniors Living and Liveable Housing Design Guidelines (Commonwealth) as guides.

WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities Domain(s)	Improvements
Housing	Council to include affordable and universally designed housing choices in new developments
Housing	Council to allow small scale villa developments in Stroud in keeping with the heritage values of the town (SEPP Seniors Living)
Social participation	Encourage and support volunteers to establish arts and music groups in other locations
Respect and social inclusion	In conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, devise an awareness program for dealing with older customers so they feel welcome and respected
Civic Participation and Employment	Liaise with education providers about establishing re-training courses specifically for mature age workers
Civic Participation and Employment	Investigate the need for a 'training space' to capitalise on older people's experience
Civic participation and employment	Review opportunities to expand the local economy (housing, jobs, tourism). Encourage small business opportunities in towns other than Forster-Tuncurry
Communication and information	Faster connection speeds for the Internet is required (NBN) and improved mobile phone coverage
Communication and information	Investigate the best ways of communicating with older people (paid staff member or project officer is required)
Communication and Information	Devise and promote a list of local services
Communication and information	Establish a community noticeboard in each of the villages, particularly Bulahdelah
Communication and information	Investigate the feasibility of making the Tourist Information Centre a "town information centre"
Communication and information	Support Forster Neighbourhood Centre to publicise and maintain the community directory
Communication and information	Radio information should have a dedicated person responsible for delivering Council information
Communication and information	Provide community information in a range of formats and in a range of places as the Internet is not used by everyone
Communication and information	Review design of Council website for accessibility for a wider range of people – needs streamlining so that information is easier to find

WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities Domain(s)	Improvements
Community Support and Health Services	Encourage businesses and Council to give a 'pensioner' discount at places where exercise activities are available.
Community Support and Health Services	Create and distribute a fridge magnet with the number for the GP Helpline
Community Support and Health Services	Encourage more no cost/low cost activities to promote healthy ageing
Community Support and Health Services	Install exercise stations on walking paths
Community Support and Health Services	Seek funding options to continue to provide or host healthy lifestyle activities
Community Support and Health Services	Attract more medical practitioners and consider their families' needs as well. Council to liaise with state government
Community Support and Health Services	Liaise with NSW Health and the AMA to find ways to attract more doctors to the Great Lakes area on a permanent basis, particularly outlying districts particularly Tea Gardens and Bulahdelah
Public spaces and buildings, Social participation, Community support and health services	Investigate feasibility of extending the Men's Shed at Nabiac
Public spaces and buildings, Social participation, Community support and health services	Council to review its hire charge policy for meeting places/halls
Public spaces and buildings, Social participation	Liaise with Stockland about installing a 'Chess in Hyde Park' set at Stockland Mall
Public spaces and buildings, Social Participation, Respect and social inclusion	Place seating at sporting events where families gather to encourage intergenerational activity
Public spaces and buildings, Transportation, Communication and Information, Community support and health services	Council Mobility Map to be promoted widely for people to identify the best routes of travel and accessible places
Transportation, Social participation, Respect and social inclusion	Find ways to help people keep their drivers licences: liaise with RMS and specialised occupational therapists who do driver training.
Housing, Communication and Information	Publicise the Home Modifications Scheme with information sessions for community groups as well as other forms of promotion. Promote the benefits

WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities Domain(s)	Improvements
Social participation, Communication and Information	Develop a community pack for local areas with social activities, clubs and events and also volunteering opportunities
Social participation, Communication and information	Find ways to better coordinate social activities/events between groups (to reduce date clashes)
Social Participation, Respect and social inclusion	Create more intergenerational activities and events (and where older people can also show their skills and experience and mentor younger people)
Social Participation, Respect and social inclusion	Devise more events to include various groups for more interaction and whether transport is available and the level of accessibility
Social participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic participation and employment	Chamber of Commerce to promote the "Missed Business" booklet to encourage businesses to be more age-friendly in their service and building design.
Social participation, Civic Participation, Communication and Information	Create a "Volunteer Directory" with organisations and available volunteer jobs
Social participation, Respect and social inclusion, Community Support and Health Services	Investigate the feasibility of extending U3A groups to other areas (Bulahdelah). Encourage and support volunteers to set up in other areas (or provide transport)
Civic participation and employment, Communication and information	Encourage and support volunteers to start and maintain a community newsletter in their local area

APPENDIX D:

Focus Group Informed Consent Form

Focus Group Participant Information Form



Declaration of Consent

To participate in the Great Lakes Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Study

You have been chosen to take part in an important study. The purpose of the study is to better understand how Great Lakes Council can help older people live healthy and active lives.

During the discussion you will be asked to share your experiences of living in the Great Lakes area and to share your ideas for improving the area for older people.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If, for any reason, you do not wish to participate for the whole meeting, you can choose to withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

The meeting will be recorded on a digital voice recorder to capture all the information from participants. All the material from the recordings will be reported without names or any other identifying information.

The written information about yourself will be combined with others and will only be used to describe the group in general. Your name will never be reported.

Do you agree to participate in the study? Yes No

Name: Date:

Participant Information

We need some information about you so that we can describe the overall characteristics of the people who attend the focus group. Your individual personal details will not be disclosed to anyone or written up in any report.

If you have any concerns or questions about this form, ask the group leader.

Age last birthday _____ years.

Are you female or male

Are you retired from the workforce working full time working part time

What is your occupation, or what was your occupation if you are retired? _____

How would you assess your overall health right now? Excellent Good Fair Poor

Do you have any health problem that limits your ability to do your regular daily activities?

Yes No

What is the highest level of education you completed?

Year 9 Year 10 Year 12 Certificate Diploma

Bachelor Degree Post graduate certificate or diploma

Master Degree or higher

Do you pay rent or own your own home (or paying a mortgage)

Who lives with you?

I live alone

I live with a spouse/partner

I live with children How many over 18? _____ How many under 18? _____

I live with other relatives How many? _____ (relationship, eg, mother) _____

I live with non-relatives How many? _____ (relationship, eg, boarder) _____

Total number of people in your household _____

Name of your neighbourhood _____

APPENDIX E:
Survey Questionnaire

Survey Questionnaire

Introduction

Great Lakes Council is preparing an “Age-Friendly Great Lakes” strategy which will promote active ageing, well-being, and a good quality of life for older people. An age-friendly community is one where the area is good for older people to live, work and visit. It is also a good place for their children and grandchildren – that is, places for older people are generally good for people of all ages.

The survey covers eight topic areas: outdoor spaces, streets and buildings, transport, housing, respect and inclusion, social participation, communication and information, civic participation and employments, and health and social services.

If you are over 50 years of age you are invited to complete this survey.

Q. Which district of Great Lakes do you live in?

Q. What is it like to get out and about in your area – to go for a walk, shop and visit people?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. What would you like to see improved in your outdoor areas, streets and buildings to make them more age friendly? Consider things like footpaths, steps, parks, cycleways, lighting, seating, shelter, toilets, and signage.

Comments box

Q. What is the transport system like in your area for older people?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. What would you like to see improved to make it more age friendly? Consider access to buses, trains, taxis, community transport, roadways for driving, and parking.

Comments box

Q. What is the housing like in your area for older people?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. What improvements would you like to see in terms of suitable housing for older people? Consider availability of suitable housing, choice of dwelling type, the design, location, affordability, ease of maintenance.

Comments box

Q. What is the level of respect older people get in your area and in Great Lakes in general? Are older people valued and included?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. What would you like to see improved so that older people are respected, included, and valued? Consider politeness, helpfulness, suitable activities, and activities for people of all ages.

Comments box

Q. How easy is it for older people to participate in recreational, sporting, social, and cultural activities and events?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. What would you like to see improved to enable participation in activities and events in your area and in the Great Lakes area in general? Consider affordability, frequency, accessibility, location, times, publicity.

Comments box

Q. What is the provision of information like for older people in your area?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. What would you like to see improved to make your area and Great Lakes generally, to make it more age friendly. Consider ease of reading, suitable formats, usefulness, availability, easy to understand.

Comments box

Q. What is it like for older people to work, volunteer, and/or participate in community affairs in your area?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. What would you like to see improved so that older people can work, volunteer and participate in community affairs. Consider volunteer opportunities, workplace discrimination, employment choices, being consulted, workplace accessibility.

Comments box

Q. What are the health and social services like for older people in the Great Lakes area?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. What improvements would you like to see to health and social services in the Great Lakes area? Consider the types of services available, affordability, accessibility, and responsiveness.

Comments box

Q. Considering all of the above, how age-friendly do you think the Great Lakes area is overall?

Excellent Good Average Poor Very Poor Don't know

Q. How old are you?

50-59

60-69

70-79

80+

Q. Are you Female? Male?

Appendix F

**Great Lakes Council Active Ageing Strategy:
Strategic Priorities in the WHO AFCC Domains**

WHO AFCC Domain	Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Transportation	Housing	Social Participation
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes access to facilities and spaces for leisure, recreation, arts, entertainment and shopping, and enjoyment of the natural environment	Includes public and community transport, road safety, licence retention, parking, footpaths, shared pathways and roadways.	Includes housing choice and affordability, home modifications, ability to age in place, and conveniently located.	Includes a diversity of activities, accessible information about events and activities, lifelong learning, being involved and not isolated.
WHO AFCC recommendations	Outdoor spaces are clean, pleasant, accessible and safe. There is sufficient seating, lighting, and outdoor toilets, and well maintained dedicated footways free of obstructions. Pedestrian crossings are safe and sufficient in number. Buildings are well signed with sufficient seating and toilets. Services are situated together and are accessible.	Public transport is reliable and regular, with conveniently located and accessible stops. Community transport is available for people unable to use public transport. Parking and drop-off areas are safe. Sufficient accessible parking spaces are provided. Roadways are free of obstructions that block driver vision. Information about costs, routes and times, is available and accessible.	Sufficient affordable housing is available close to services and the rest of the community. Interior spaces and level surfaces allow freedom of movement throughout the dwelling. Home modification options are available and affordable. Supported accommodation is available and affordable for older people who are frail or have a disability.	Venues are conveniently located, accessible and easily reached by public transport. Events are held at times convenient for older people and are affordable. Information about events is provided including accessibility and transport options. Outreach to isolated people is consistent. A variety of activities that appeal to a diverse population are available.
NSW Ageing Strategy	Encourage age-friendly communities so that older people can live active lives	Develop initiatives to improve pedestrian safety. Improve transport planning and accessibility	Encourage housing choice for older people	Enhance cultural, creative, sporting and recreational opportunities for older people
Goal	Outdoor spaces and buildings support active ageing and are easy to access, easy to find, and easy to use.	Residents move around the community safely and easily and travel to places when and where they want to go.	Older residents have access to housing that enables them to age at home and they are informed about options available if needs change	Older residents have opportunities to participate in social activities and maintain relationships
Strategic Priorities	Apply universal design principles to the public domain, facilities and open spaces.	Advocate for improvements to affordable and accessible transport options	Planning for new housing developments incorporates design features that suit people across their lifespan	Activities and events are held at times and places that suit older people
	Ensure full compliance with legislation and regulations for accessibility of the built environment as a minimum.	Increase knowledge and awareness of road and pedestrian safety including users of mobility devices	Encourage developers to build homes to suit the whole of lifespan	Activities and events are promoted widely and include information about accessibility and transport options
	At least one staff member will undertake industry recognised training in access to the built environment	Establish a transport coordination group to better utilise existing transport infrastructure and options	Support people to age safely in their own home	Outreach to isolated older residents continues through existing volunteer groups and community services
	Promote access to and protection of the natural environment.	Provide an education campaign about licencing and testing for older drivers	Encourage the supply of affordable housing suitable for older residents	Utilise volunteer activities as a means of social participation
	Public amenities will be easy to access and in locations suited for people of all ages	Review footpath plan and consult with older people about priorities for new footpaths and footpath upgrades	Planning for older-age specific developments will be located close to amenities, services, and transport	The public domain is designed to encourage informal socialisation
Great Lakes 2030 Objectives	Objectives 7, 8 and 13	Objectives 7, 8, 12 and 13	Objectives 9	Objectives 8, 10, 13

WHO AFCC Domain	Respect and Social Inclusion	Civic Participation and Employment	Communication and Information	Social Support and Health Services
WHO AFCC domain overview	Includes consultation, positive imagery and depiction, and intergenerational activities and events	Includes volunteering, involvement in community decision-making, and non-discriminatory employment practices.	Includes information in a range of formats, Internet access, suitable placement and timeliness.	Includes staying healthy, home support services, health services, and emergency planning.
WHO AFCC recommendations	Older people are consulted on how to serve them better. They are depicted positively in the media without stereotyping. Community events attract all generations and older people are included in activities for families. Schools encourage involvement of older people and to learn about ageing. Less well-off older people have access to public and community services.	Options for volunteering are available with training, recognition and compensation for personal costs. Decision-making bodies encourage and facilitate membership of older people. Age discrimination in employment is not practiced and the qualities of older people are promoted. Workplaces are adapted to meet the needs of older people.	Regular and widespread distribution of information is coordinated and reaches residents of all ages. Print and spoken communication uses familiar words in short, straightforward sentences. Printed information has large lettering. There is easy access to computers and the Internet in public places such as libraries and community centres.	Health promotion services are available. Home support services are available. Services are conveniently located and accessible. Clear and accessible information is provided about health and social services. Services are coordinated and administratively simple. Emergency planning takes account of the capacities and vulnerabilities of older people.
NSW Ageing Strategy	Encourage age-friendly communities so that older people can live active lives	Increase opportunities for older people to be involved in their communities and neighbourhoods	Provide up to date information including information about government funded services	Keep people healthy and out of hospital. Support people who care for others.
Goal	Older residents are consulted on issues. Intergenerational activities are encouraged and organised.	Older residents participate in local decision-making and volunteering. Employment opportunities exist.	Information is available in various formats and a range of locations, and is easy to read and understand.	Residents know how to access community services and health prevention and care services
Strategic Priorities	<p>Community consultations will ensure the involvement of older people</p> <p>Community events will be devised in ways to ensure older people can participate</p> <p>People from all backgrounds have an opportunity to participate in activities</p> <p>Media and imagery presents active and involved depictions and descriptions of older people</p> <p>Language and terminology is respectful and represents the diversity of older people</p>	<p>An older persons' reference group/advisory panel will be established and consulted in decision-making and policy development</p> <p>Older residents are informed about volunteering options</p> <p>Age discrimination in employment is not practiced</p> <p>Council's employment policy on mature workers is used as a model for other businesses</p>	<p>Social events will be promoted widely in a range of formats in locations frequented by older people</p> <p>Community services will be promoted widely in a range of formats and in locations frequented by older people</p> <p>Internet services will be available to all at an affordable rate and in convenient places</p>	<p>Extend opportunities for health promotion</p> <p>Provide public open space and recreation facilities that encourage older people to participate</p> <p>Advocate for the expansion of community support services where a shortfall exists</p> <p>Residents know how to access community services and health prevention and care services</p>
Great Lakes 2030 Objectives	Objectives 5, 6 and 10	Objectives 5, 6, 13 and 15	Objectives 8, 9, 13, 14 and 15	Objectives 12, 13 and 16

Great Lakes 2030 Key Directions and Objectives

Key Direction 1 Our environment

Objectives

- 1 Protect and maintain the natural environment so it is healthy and diverse
- 2 Ensure that development is sensitive to our natural environment
- 3 Prepare for the impact of sea level rise and climate change
- 4 Sustainably manage our waste

Key Direction 2 Strong local economies

Objectives

- 5 Promote the Great Lakes as an area that is attractive for residents and visitors
- 6 Establish and maintain a supportive business environment that encourages job opportunities
- 7 Provide transport infrastructure that meets current and future needs

Key Direction 3 Vibrant and connected communities

Objectives

- 8 Provide the right places and spaces
- 9 Plan for sustainable growth and development
- 10 Increase and improve access to education for all ages
- 11 Encourage a positive and supportive place for young people to thrive
- 12 Develop and support healthy and safe communities
- 13 Build on the character of our local communities and promote the connection between them

Key Direction 4 Local leadership

Objectives

- 14 Deliver Council services which are effective and efficient
- 15 Strengthen community participation
- 16 Represent the community's interests through regional leadership