Local government responses to ageing communities: an international perspective

Report by
Alley Peck
2005 Churchill Fellow

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Introduction

Together with many other developed countries, Australia’s local communities are ageing. Population projections show that by 2021, the region with the oldest population in Australia will be the Mid-north coast of New South Wales, with 47% of its residents aged 55 years and over. This is an increase of 17% from current levels. The Wide Bay-Burnett region in Queensland, is projected to continue to be the second-oldest region in Australia, with 46% of its population aged 55 years and over in 2021. Gippsland in Victoria, currently with 26%, is projected to have 44% of its population aged 55 and above, making it the third oldest region by 2021. Altogether 29 of the 64 regions are projected to have 35% or more of their population aged 55 years and over in 2021 (ALGA/National Economics).

In response to this demographic change, the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) developed the Australian Local Government Population Ageing Action Plan 2004-2008. The purpose of the plan is to build the capacity of local government to respond to the opportunities and challenges of ageing communities. To achieve this objective, the plan provides a framework that builds awareness, encourages action, fosters partnerships and improves access to information.

A key action area of the plan is to promote innovation as a measure to guide local government’s response to population ageing. This report showcases innovative responses to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing from local government authorities in Japan, England, Canada and New Zealand. This report does not provide ‘the answer’ as to how a local government authority should respond to an ageing population, but rather provides examples of the diversity of possible responses. It is hoped that by providing examples of innovative practice and highlight key learning’s, the report can offer useful information to Australian local government authorities who are considering developing strategies or services, for and with seniors.

Please note the programs and services visited and presented in this report were taken at ‘face value’. Formal evaluations of their effectiveness are not part of this report. Also, the views presented are those of the author and do not represent the views of the Australian Local Government Association.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for providing me with the opportunity to pursue my passions. Many thanks to Chief Executive, Mr Paul Tys and ACT Regional Chair, Sir David Smith.

I’m also extremely appreciative to my employer, the Australian Local Government Association, for allowing me to undertake my Fellowship. And sincere thanks to my Fellowship referees, Mr Ian Chalmers, Mrs Gerda Caunt and Ms Belinda Johnston for their encouragement and assistance.

Special thanks are due to the many individuals and organisations I visited, their enthusiasm and generosity to share experiences and information, was beyond all expectations. Particularly, William Weatherly, Programme Coordinator, Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, for being my interpreter while in Japan.

And importantly, all my family and friends for their continual support particularly my grandparents – the late Elvie Blin (Nan) and Elise Rist (Ma) and Peter Blin (Pop) – thank you for being my seniors of the year.
Executive summary

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Purpose
The aim of the project is to examine a range of solutions and options that international local government authorities have successfully employed to meet the challenges and opportunities of population ageing.

Highlights
Japan – Visiting officials from the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) and site visits to Koshigaya City and Ibaraki Prefecture. United Kingdom – Visiting officials from the UK Department of Pensions and Works, Local Government Association and Better Government for Older People and site visits to Kingston upon Thames, Enfield, Camden, Thurrock, Brighton and Hove and Hammersmith and Fulham. Denmark – Attendance at the International Federation of Ageing 8th Global Conference and addressing conference delegates in a break-out session about ALGA’s approach to population ageing (see appendix one). Canada – Visiting officials from Social Development Canada, Public Health Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and site visits to Ottawa, Toronto, Ontario Seniors Secretariat, Halton and Hamilton. New Zealand – Visiting officials from the Ministry of Social Development and Local Government New Zealand and site visits to Hamilton, New Plymouth and Wellington.

Conclusions
The emphasis of local government efforts aimed at helping seniors is shifting. Learning’s - Notable features of any local government response to population ageing include: changed image and vision for senior residents; strategic approach to population ageing; champions for ageing; investing in ageing development officers; attracting funding; leadership and support from other spheres of government; engaging seniors; and developing value adding partnerships.

Recommendations - Based on my Fellowship experiences I recommend that the following initiatives be considered: National/state governments - Establish partnerships, develop a funding stream, promote best practice and explore opportunities to integrate information delivery. Local government associations - Develop a network, support ageing impact assessments, promote local government’s leadership role and develop appropriate training programs. Local government authorities - Assess the impact of ageing, link ageing to corporate strategies, appoint a champion for ageing, invest in partnerships, engage seniors and develop a policy on age diversity.

Dissemination - The information and learning’s gained from the Fellowship will be disseminated through ALGA’s extensive communication network which includes newsletters, conferences and the Planning for an Ageing Community website.
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<td>Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR)</td>
<td>Yusuke Nakano, Manager Planning Division, General Affairs Department</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Koshigaya City, Saitama Prefecture</td>
<td>Kiyohiko Maeda, Chief, Aging Society Related Policy Formulation Division, Senior Citizens' Welfare and Nursing Insurance Section</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Hiroaki Kurashina, Assistant Manager, Secretarial Section</td>
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<td>Ibaraki Prefecture</td>
<td>Nobuko Hirano, Manager International Affairs Division</td>
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<td>Carly Bode, Coordinator for International Relations, International Affairs Division</td>
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<td>Jeni Bremner, Programme Director, Education and Social Policy</td>
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<td>Better Government for Older People</td>
<td>David Martin, Associate Director</td>
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<td>Department of Works and Pensions</td>
<td>Hugh Pullinger, Director</td>
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<td>Liz Trayhorn, Healthy Kingston Coordinator</td>
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<td>Sue Chick, Human Resource Consultant</td>
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<td>Thurrock Council</td>
<td>Rita Cheatle, Joint Older People’s Planning Officer</td>
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<td>London Borough of Camden</td>
<td>Mary McGowan, Head of Promoting Independence</td>
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<td>Nancy Sesay, Information and Community Development Officer</td>
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<td>Brighton and Hove City Council</td>
<td>Paul Martin, Policy Adviser – Celebrating Age</td>
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<td>The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) 8th Global Conference</td>
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<td>5 - 16 June</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Social Development Canada - Seniors</td>
<td>Mitch Bloom, Director General, Seniors and Pensions Policy Secretariat</td>
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<td>Federation of Canadian Municipalities</td>
<td>John Burrett, Senior Manager, Social Policy</td>
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<td>Public Health Canada</td>
<td>Nicole Delisle, Manger, Intersectoral Collaboration</td>
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<td>City of Ottawa</td>
<td>Dianne Officer, Director Long</td>
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<td>Cheryl McDonald, Policy</td>
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<td>Sue Haggith, Community</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Esteves, Manager</td>
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<td>Lisa Mitchell, Community</td>
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<td>Hamilton City Council</td>
<td>Research and Policy Advisor</td>
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<td>New Plymouth District Council</td>
<td>Leighton Littlewood, Community</td>
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<td>Ministry of Social Development - Office for Senior Citizens</td>
<td>Natalie Lavery, Director Office of Senior Citizens</td>
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<td>Wellington City Council</td>
<td>Helen Walker, Senior Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Government New Zealand</td>
<td>Mike Reid, Manager Governance</td>
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Population ageing: a world wide phenomenon

Worldwide the population is ageing. This is an unavoidable consequence of large birth cohorts during the 1950s and 1960s, the rapid fertility decline since the 1970s and the ‘baby boomer’ generation moving into the older age cohorts. Over the coming decades, the world will age to such an extent, that the:

- number of people aged 65 years and over will increase from the current 475 million to 714 million in 2020 and by 2050 will grow to almost 1.5 billion;

- proportion of people aged 65 years and over will double between 2005 and 2050, from 7.4% to 16.1%. In 2020, it is projected that 9.4% of the world’s population will be aged 65 and over; and

- proportion of people aged 80 years and over (the oldest old) will grow from 1.3% in 2005 to 4.3% in 2050. The oldest old are the fastest growing segment of the older population (see table1).

While most countries have an ageing population, the situation varies greatly between countries. In relation to the countries visited on this Fellowship, population ageing is most acute in Japan with 19.5% of its population currently aged 65 years and over. Driven by low birth rates and the highest life expectancy in the world, this rate is expected to grow to 35.9% by 2050. The proportion of the Japanese population aged 80 years and over is also increasing. Fifteen percent of the population is expected to be aged 80 years and over by 2050.

The United Kingdom’s population projections suggest an increase in the population aged 65 years and over, from a base of 9.5 million in 2005, rising to 15.5 million by 2050. The rate of population ageing is occurring to a lesser extent in the United Kingdom. Currently, 16% of the population are aged 65 years and over and will grow to 23% by 2050.

Similar to Australia, Canada and New Zealand are relatively young countries. Nonetheless, seniors constitute the fastest growing population group in Canada. In 2005, 4.2 million Canadians were 65 years of age and over, a figure that is two thirds more than in 1981. As the ‘baby boomers’ age, the seniors population is expected to reach 6.7 million in 2020 and 10.9 million in 2050. In fact, the growth of the seniors’ population will account for close to half of the growth of the overall Canadian population, in the next four decades.

People aged 65 years and over, currently make up 12% of the New Zealand population. This proportion will rise to 16.8% by 2020. By 2050, seniors will make up around 23% of all New Zealand residents. Population projections indicate that by 2050, there will be 442,000 New Zealanders aged 80 years and over, accounting for 9% of the population.
Table 1: World Aged Population Projections – Select Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population aged 65 years and over</th>
<th>Population aged 80 years and over</th>
<th>Median age</th>
<th>Fertility rate</th>
<th>Life expectancy 2005-2010</th>
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<td>Japan</td>
<td>25,268</td>
<td>35,559</td>
<td>40,269</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>28.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>9,525</td>
<td>11,740</td>
<td>15,558</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>4,239</td>
<td>6,720</td>
<td>10,989</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
<td>2,559</td>
<td>4,020</td>
<td>6,641</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>17.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>475,719</td>
<td>714,786</td>
<td>1,464,938</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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Local government: responding to ageing communities

In recognition of the ageing population, local government authorities throughout the world are increasingly aware of their unique role in recognising, understanding and responding to the needs of the growing older population. Many local government authorities are taking active measures to respond to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing and implementing policies, programs and services to meet the changing values, behaviours and attitudes of the growing older population. This section of the report highlights a range of innovative responses to population ageing from local government authorities in Japan, England, Canada and New Zealand.

Japan

Koshigaya City, Saitama Prefecture – Promoting a healthy and active lifestyle for seniors

Koshigaya City is situated in the south east of Saitama Prefecture, 25kms to the north of Tokyo. Today, the city has an estimated population of 317,000 with 15% aged 65 years and over (Statistics Bureau of Japan).

Koshigaya City has invested in a state-of-the-art seniors’ wellness centre as a result of residents’ request and administrations’ desire to advance their commitment to a comprehensive health and wellness program.

The seniors’ wellness centre includes a social area, check-in desk, 25 metre swimming pool, spa, locker rooms, consultation areas, multi-purpose room, integrative therapy room and fitness room. Seniors living in Koshigaya are charged a nominal fee for usage of the centre.

The centre’s health and wellness program incorporates more than 50 classes a week, including: aerobatics, pilates, yoga, table tennis, concerts, art classes, bingo, mah jong, craft, card games, karoke and computer classes. The timetable of classes has been designed specifically to meet the needs of local senior residents and offers a variety of participation levels.

The centre also offers member health checks, which measures basic risk factors such as blood pressure and weight as well as fitness levels such as cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, stability and abdominal strength. Following each health check, an activity program (exercise, nutrition and social development) is developed, specifically aimed at improving that individual’s health and wellbeing.

Recognising the ongoing demographic growth in the older adult market, Koshigaya City is committed to the continuing expansion of the centre and its programs to meet the proportional market growth.
The centre continues to expand to reach new groups and improve its services through collaboration with appropriate local agencies. Evaluation of the health and wellness programs and feedback from participants, families, staff and volunteers indicates that seniors exhibit healthier behaviours, less mental health problems (such as depression) and they have a more positive outlook on life.

**Ibaraki Prefecture – Moving from universal design to universal communities**

Ibaraki Prefecture is located in the north east of the Kanto region, on the main island of Japan. Mito-shi, the capital of the Prefecture, is within 100km of Tokyo. Currently, the population of the Prefecture is 2,991 million with 18.2% aged 65 years and over (Statistics Bureau of Japan).

Ibaraki Prefecture has been quick to pick up on the importance of not just ensuring facilities and amenities are ‘barrier free’ for seniors, but communities are designed with the needs of all residents. As part of a new subdivision, the Prefecture has incorporated universal design principles to develop an age-friendly community. This approach to urban design fits into the Prefectures ageing strategy, developed as part of it’s response to the growing older population.

Key elements include:

- **Housing** - Houses in the development have been designed for adaptability allowing for modification to suit changing circumstances. Universal design elements already included are four-feet wide hallways, a master bedroom on the ground floor, door handles rather than knobs, easily reached light switches and entry into the house that does not have steps.

- **Mobility** - Introduction of a community transport scheme, auspiced by the Prefecture that provides subsided transport for the frail elderly to shops, hospitals and entertainment venues as well as opportunities to visit friends and relatives. Also fine street gratings have been introduced in a number of areas to prevent falls and the Prefecture has created a system of clear and easy to understand road signs.

- **Technology** - Introduction of assistive technology to help people remain at home longer and reduce the reliance on hospitals, residential and community care services. A number of homes are fitted with sensors, video screens and memory telephones.

The Prefecture’s effort to incorporate universal design principles into a new subdivision has allowed seniors to be more independent in their everyday activities. Moreover, it has created mixed-use developments providing a variety of housing types and densities to suit a diverse range of needs.
England

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames – *Building an active ageing information service*

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, is the second smallest London Borough (after the City of London) and one of only four Royal Boroughs in England and Wales. The population in the borough is 147,000 residents, with 13% aged 65 years and over (Office for National Statistics).

In 2004, Kingston Council launched *An Active Ageing Strategy for Kingston 2004-2007* which outlines strategies to improve the health of people aged 50 years and over in the local government area. Central to Kingston's Ageing Strategy is the adoption of the World Health Organisation’s “active ageing” framework, which recognise that if “ageing is to be a positive experience, longer life must be accompanied by continuing opportunities for health, participation and security”. The result is the implementation of initiatives that promote mental health and social connections and those that improve physical health status.

A key initiative of the strategy has been the development of the Information Service for over 50’s. Kingston Council, in partnership with Age Concern Kingston upon Thames, provides information for seniors so they can lead full and active lives in Kingston and the surrounding area. The information provided covers housing, consumer advice, social care, crime, health, and benefits. There are also links to other websites that are of interest to seniors.

This website was officially opened in May 2000 as a result of a pilot project under the National Government's Better Government for Older People initiative and was revised in 2004 based on the council’s Active Ageing Strategy. The Information Service for over 50’s is recognised as a valuable community resource, providing senior residents with a variety of health and wellbeing information.

London Borough of Camden – *Promoting independence*

The London Borough of Camden covers an area of 22 square kilometres of inner London, north of the West End. Of the London boroughs, Camden ranks 22nd in population size with 198,027 residents. The proportion of people aged 65 years and over is 12.5% (Office for National Statistics).

Camden Council has developed a multilayered approach to supporting vulnerable and isolated seniors. One current initiative is Careline, Camden’s community alarm service, providing 24-hour rapid response telephone service. This service allows residents to remain independent in their home, yet reassured in the knowledge that help is at hand all year round.

Careline works by residents wearing a Careline button. When the button is pressed an alarm alerts the control centre. Careline staff are able to speak to the person, without them having to lift the receiver, as Careline equipment allows the user to speak to
control centre staff via an amplified speaker system. Careline staff can then contact nominated key holders, such as family, friends or neighbours and if necessary, the emergency services. All calls to the control centre are recorded for safety and training purposes.

The Council has also undertaken wider, preventative 'quality of life' measures to support independence. The Camden Gold program works through seven resource centres for seniors, providing social opportunities, activities and life-long learning. There is a focus on service users from minority ethnic communities and on service users with communication difficulties. Centres are expected to work closely with service users and local communities, to develop new services and partnerships with voluntary bodies.

In February 2001, Camden Council was awarded ‘Beacon Council’ status in recognition of their work to promote independence of seniors. Beacon status is awarded to a council by the National Government with advice from an independent advisory panel. Beacon status is awarded for excellence in a particular service or cross-cutting service area.

**Brighton and Hove City Council – Celebrating age**

Brighton and Hove City Council is located in East Sussex on the south coast of England. The resident population of Brighton and Hove is 247,817 with 20.6% aged 60 years and over and 2.6% aged over 85 years (Office for National Statistics).

During July 2006 the Brighton and Hove City Council sponsored ‘Celebrating Age’ - an international cultural festival, for and by seniors. Celebrating Age highlighted the enormous contribution seniors make to their community and help seniors realise their personal and social aspirations.

The array of events included:

- ‘50 over 50’ - the UK’s first national visual arts prize for artists over 50. Older artists from all over the UK entered the competition, with the top 50 selected by a panel of expert judges and displayed at an exhibition at the University of Brighton.

- A national conference was held which examined the action required to improve services for seniors and change cultural attitudes to ageing.

- ‘Street Elders’ – a project offering the streets of Brighton & Hove as a vast stage for seniors to show off their skills. The project demonstrated that ‘old age’ is a time of creative potential, rather than a period of decline.

- A comprehensive exhibition that showcased the services available to senior residents from central and local government, voluntary sector organisations and private sector providers covering health, social care, housing, financial services, leisure, life-long learning, and community and home safety.
• ‘Wise Words’ – a program of literature events that featured high profile authors.

A key outcome for the Council in sponsoring Celebrating Age was the development of a wide range of local and national partnerships. They included the local health service, Age Concern, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Arts Council, Anchor Housing, Better Government for Older People, the city’s Arts Commission and Pensioners’ Forum.

Thurrock Council – *Framing our Future Together*

Thurrock Council is located along the East Thames corridor in the southeast of England. Thurrock has borders with Greater London to the west, the River Thames to the south, and the county of Essex to the north and east. Thurrock’s population is estimated at 145,000 people, with 18,900 people over 65 years of age (Office for National Statistics).

Thurrock has developed a comprehensive ageing strategy - *Framing our Future Together*, which aims to put ‘older people at the centre’ of all service planning and development in the local government area - ‘nothing about us without us’.

The key elements of the strategy are:

- Why a strategy? – Over the years community expectations have changed and people want to stay healthy and active. Thurrock’s population is changing with an historically young population shifting as people live longer and the numbers of people over 50 increase. Also major national policies such as Opportunity Age will have local implications.

- Who developed the strategy? – The Ageing Strategy Steering Group lead the development and now implementation of the strategy. It is a multi-agency group coming of representatives from Thurrock Council (departmental heads), the Primary Care Trust. Pension Service, Council of Voluntary Service and Thurrock’s Over Fifties Forum.

- Strategy approach – the strategy presents a new holistic approach to wellbeing. Eight themes (values and attitudes, neighbourhoods, social networks, information and access, health and wellbeing, economic wellbeing, transport and mobility and care support) have been identified to ensure that the strategy focuses on the needs of the person.

Thurrock’s strategic response to its ageing community has delivered a number of benefits:

- ageing links into an authority’s broader vision for the local government area and synchronises with other strategic processes such as management and operational plans;
- improving outcomes for people as they grow older in Thurrock; and
• local organisations working together to promote the social and economic wellbeing of seniors in Thurrock.

**London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham – Better Government for Older People**

Hammersmith & Fulham is situated in the centre-west of London on the transport routes between the City and Heathrow airport. Current estimates show that the Borough’s population is 176,800 residents. Nearly 10% of the Borough’s population is aged 65 years and over, which is in line with data for inner London, but lower for outer London (Office for National Statistics).

In 1999, as part of the National Government’s Better Government for Older People program, Hammersmith and Fulham established a pilot project that examined the engagement of seniors in the local government area. Following extensive consultation with a cross section of seniors from across the Borough, the pilot identified the need for a new mechanism to ensure that seniors were involved in every level of decision making, service development and evaluation.

Hammersmith and Fulham’s Better Government for Older People initiative, has now evolved into a partnership between the Council, the health authority, voluntary sector and seniors in the local government area. The initiative focuses on improving the quality of life for seniors in the local government area by: listening to their views, involving them in decisions about local services and recognising the valuable experience, contribution and knowledge of seniors.

The initiative is guided and directed by three main groups:

1. The *Consultative Forum* enables senior residents to have their say, appraise current working practices and influence the policies and decision making process of the local government authority. Councillors and officers from the council and health authority also attend meetings.

2. *Officer Steering Group* is attended by officers from all departments of the council, the health authority and the voluntary sector allowing an integrated approach to understanding local seniors’ needs and priorities.

3. *Deputy’s Panel* is an opportunity for the BGOP group and council representatives to meet formally to review the progress of the initiative and to guide its future development. The panel consists of local councillors, seniors representatives and individual seniors.

The investment that Hammersmith and Fulham Council has made in the Better Government for Older People initiative has been rewarded with a range of benefits.

- built trust in services which has resulted in greater accountability and transparency;
- promoted user's ownership and value of services and decisions;
• created constructive working relationships both with seniors and local government departments;
• improved standards in service delivery and responsiveness to identified needs;
• generated new ideas and strategies;
• protected individual's rights;
• maximised service uptake; and
• improved effectiveness and appropriateness of services which thereby improved cost efficiency.

London Borough of Enfield – Age Positive Champion Employer

Enfield is London’s northern most borough and one of the largest, being home to nearly 300,000 people and having over 10,000 employees. Over 31% of the workforce is aged over 50 and the Council now employs more people over the age of 60 than under the age of 21 (Office for National Statistics).

In 2005, the UK Department of Work and Pensions ‘Age Positive’ Campaign awarded ‘Champion Employer’ status to Enfield in recognition of its age diverse employment policies and practices, which demonstrate commitment to employing people entirely on merit, regardless of age. Over the last two years Enfield has implemented a range of initiatives including:

• **Recruitment** – Age is never a criterion used to determine an individual's suitability for a position, with no age discriminatory language used in recruitment processes. Enfield has eliminated age limits and age ranges in job advertisements and ensured the Council's contracted providers of agency workers adopt age neutral recruitment policies.

• **Promotion** – The Council has introduced internal recruitment to motivate and retain skilled members of staff. This creates an environment where employees have the opportunity to achieve their ambitions, without leaving the organisation enabling development of employees as an investment for the future. Use of secondments enhances the promotion possibilities of all age groups of employees.

• **Training and development** – Enfield ensures all new staff undergo a comprehensive induction program, that includes the promotion of an organisational culture of valuing the contribution of individuals in the workforce regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and disability. The Council also has committed to providing training for employees to ensure they have the skills they need to combat discrimination.

• **Retirement** - The normal retirement age for Enfield employees remains 65 years. However prior to the implementation of Age Discrimination Legislation, an arrangement has been introduced whereby employees can continue to work beyond the age of 65. Currently, 113 employees are over the retirement age, across a diverse range of occupations.
Enfield recognises that it benefits substantially from employing and retaining older workers. Older workers are highly committed, enthusiastic, dedicated and hard working. Particular benefits include high levels of staff retention, helping minimise recruitment costs, recoup investment in training and development and retain valuable knowledge and experience.

Canada

City of Ottawa – Delivering responsive long term care services
Ottawa, Canada's national capital is located in Eastern Ontario on the banks of the picturesque Rideau River. Currently, the seniors’ population is 12% of Ottawa’s population of 774,000. The seniors' population is expected to increase to 21% by 2031 (Statistics Canada).

The City of Ottawa has a long history of collaborating with seniors to provide programs and services that best meet the needs of the community. The City of Ottawa delivers nearly 40 distinct programs and services for seniors.

The City's most recent investment is the Garry J Armstrong Home, situated on the Rideau River, in Central Ottawa. This long term care facility opened its doors in June 2005, replacing the original home, Island Lodge, which opened in 1964. The spectacular river views from a beautiful island setting complement the excellent facility, expert staff, and responsive services provided in this home.

The home offers a wide range of services and programs designed for the well being of all residents. The home features a secure dementia care unit, a faith centre Chapel, a well-equipped therapy room, a country kitchen, a library and a number of multi-purpose rooms for a variety of resident activities and events.

In delivering care to residents at the Armstrong Home, the City of Ottawa has created an environment:

- which allows clients and their families to be partners in care and encourages involvement in care planning and decision-making.
- that is home-like and secure, thus enhancing client quality of life.
- that builds partnerships with the community and educational institutions to improve client quality of life, creating centres of excellence for student placements and clinical education and research that promotes best practices in long term care.
- Facilitates teamwork, encouraging co-operation and communication to create a harmonious and continually improving work environment.

City of Toronto – Mayor’s Roundtable responding to strategic issues
Toronto is located on the north western shore of Lake Ontario and is the provincial capital of Ontario. Toronto is the 5th most populous municipality in North America
behind Mexico City, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago with 2.6 million residents. Approximately 14% of the City's population is aged 65 years and over (Statistics Canada).

The Roundtable, established for the 2003-2006 term of Toronto Council, is a unique intergovernmental and community initiative designed to support the quality of life of seniors in Toronto. The roundtable is an avenue for providing advice to the decision-making process of City Council, focusing on:

- engaging seniors in the actions and investments of Council and the Mayor with respect to policies, programs and services to support the quality of life for seniors in the City of Toronto;

- working with other levels of government, non-profit organisations and the community to facilitate and enhance co-ordination and integration of services for seniors; and

- addressing specific seniors issues such as health, long term care, affordable housing, transportation and recreation; and

The membership consists of 19 government and community representatives from the City, the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, senior service and advocacy organisations, as well as individual seniors.

The value of the Roundtable is highlighted in the following quotes:
"The Roundtable on Seniors provides a unique opportunity - all three orders of government, the community sector and seniors have committed to work together as partners on seniors’ issues.” said Mayor David Miller.

"This initiative is long overdue. Toronto’s population is getting older and the City of Toronto needs to develop strategies to address the needs of Toronto’s senior population." said Councillor Gay Cowbourne.

Ontario’s Seniors’ Secretariat – creating a multi-jurisdictional seniors portal
The Ontario Seniors' Secretariat supports policy development across all government activities on behalf of Ontario's 1.5 million seniors (Statistics Canada).

The Secretariat is the lead agency for Seniors' Info – the first multi-jurisdictional seniors’ portal in Canada. In 2003, the Federal Government, the City of Brockville and the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat piloted Seniors’ Info. The aim of the project was to provide a new and convenient way for seniors living in their local community, in this case Leeds-Grenville, to access information and services (delivered and funded) from the three spheres of government.
The pilot project won the Diamond Award at Showcase Ontario (September 2004) and a Gold Medal at the Government Technology Exhibit and Conference (GTEC) in Ottawa (October 2004).

Seniors’ Info is now part of the national project – the Collaborative Seniors’ Portal Network. Although the website is still growing, information about federal and provincial government services is now readily available. Information covers topics such as retirement, health services, travel and housing. Over the coming months the network group plan to add a wealth of local information of particular interest to seniors. Currently, over 20 local government authorities provide information.

Seniors’ Info is sponsored by the Canadian Seniors’ Partnership, whose focus is to work collaboratively to improve services for seniors across Canada. The partnership is co-chaired by the Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat and Veterans Affairs Canada.

**Halton Regional Council – Advisory Committee responding to seniors needs**

Halton Regional Council, located in south western Ontario, comprises four municipalities: The City of Burlington and the Towns of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. Halton’s resident population is approximately 375,000 with over 44,000 aged 65 years and over (Statistics Canada).

The Elderly Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) is an advisory body to Halton Regional Council, which promotes the well-being and quality of life for seniors in Halton. A key responsibility of ESAC is to provide information to Regional Council, Halton Regional staff, ESAC members and the public, on issues affecting seniors.

A recent initiative by ESAC is an information resource for local senior residents - *Is Your Home Suitable for You Now and in the Future? A Housing Checklist*. The aim of the checklist is to extend the length of time seniors stay in their home and avoid any unnecessary and stressful moves. Housing developers, builders, real estate agents and buyers can use the booklet to identify problem areas for seniors, therefore, decreasing any risks to the elderly and increasing their independence for as long as possible.

In April 2000, the issue of safe and affordable housing was raised at the region’s Open Space Conference. As a result of this discussion, ESAC organised a survey of over 500 seniors to determine what seniors living in Halton felt were their most pressing concerns and needs. As with the conference, safe and affordable housing remained a major concern for seniors living in Halton. This led to the formation of a specialised task group within EASC who developed the Housing Checklist for Seniors.

The work of ESAC is delivering a range of benefits to the Council and community.
- providing Regional Council with advice on Regional policy issues and services that affect Halton seniors;
- facilitating and receive comments and advice from seniors throughout Halton;
engaging in selected public awareness activities, in collaboration with other
community members, to inform Regional Council, Regional Staff and the public-
at-large on issues affecting seniors; and

developing community partnerships and conduct research, within capabilities
and resources, into community issues affecting seniors.

City of Hamilton – Urban design for an ageing community

Hamilton is a city located in the province of Ontario. It is currently the 8th largest city in
Canada, with a population estimated at 714,000 in the metropolitan area. Within the city
itself the population is 490,000 with 72,000 aged 65 years and over (Statistics Canada).

The City of Hamilton is on the leading edge of planning and designing accessible
footpaths and public spaces with its Urban Braille System. The System, designed for
high pedestrian traffic areas, allows users to navigate through the urban environment as
easily and conveniently as the rest of the population. The system addresses footpaths
and ramp design, curbs and road crossings and street signage. The system is primarily
designed for the visually impaired, the frail elderly and users of a variety of mobility
devices such as scooters and wheelchairs.

System elements include:

- Sensory channels – the sensory channel is replaced with a tactile (sense of
touch) channel. Tactile information is located within a 1.5 metre wide wheelchair
path with handrails where possible. Any street furniture is located outside the w-
path.

- Tactile information system – the system has two (smooth and grooved) textures
which produce up to 10 distinct clues or letters of urban braille, located on
footpaths and other horizontal surfaces.

- Orientation aids – the system communications information of directional change,
hierarchy of pathways, entrance to buildings, footpaths/road boundaries, ramps
vs. raised pedestrian crossings and other information such as underpasses, social
activities and building information.

The “Made in Hamilton” Urban Braille System was developed collaboratively by the City
of Hamilton (Planning Department), McMaster University and the Canadian National
Institute for the Blind.

Hamilton is one of the North-American most accessible cities and well known world-wide
for its efforts to improve accessibility for all citizens. The Urban Braille principles have
been presented at international conferences and generated significant interest from the
planning/urban design processional community.
New Zealand

Hamilton City Council – Celebrating Life

Hamilton City Council, New Zealand’s largest inland city, is located in the Waikato region an hour south of Auckland. Hamilton has a population of 120,000 – around half of all residents are under 30 years of age, with only 10 percent of people in the local government area aged 65 years and over (Statistics New Zealand).

In 2005, Hamilton City Council launched Celebrating Life – a policy to address the current and future needs of seniors in the local government area. The policy was developed by an advisory group which included members from community agencies, service providers and Council staff. An action plan has also been developed to support the ageing policy, detailing specific actions.

Since the launch of the policy, the Council has implemented a number of key initiatives:

- Partnerships in service delivery - Hamilton City Council have established partnerships with community and statutory organisations to enhance service delivery to local senior residents. One of the key partners is Age Concern, who are contracted to provide a number of services to support seniors in the community and in their homes.

- Council of Elders - an advisory body to the Mayor and Councillors. Members are required to contribute to the development of relevant council policies and plans. City Councillors work closely with the Council of Elders, receiving feedback and providing information. There are currently 15 members on the Council of Elders.

- Celebrating Ageing Centre - a vibrant and thriving focal point for Hamilton's diverse older community, providing and encouraging services and activities for older people. Activities at the centre include: dancing, indoor bowls, concerts, seminars, learning opportunities, fitness classes, cards, advice and support.

The Council’s commitment to its senior residents, articulate through its ageing policy, is delivering results. Specifically, the policy is:
- providing a framework to achieve the vision for Hamilton, as a city that values people of all ages;
- promoting an inclusive approach to decision making, recognising the growing diversity of the local population; and
- informing seniors and other stakeholders about Hamilton City Council’s response to the needs of older persons.

New Plymouth District Council – Positive Ageing Trust

New Plymouth District Council is located in the Taranaki region on the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand. The 2001 Census estimate the resident population of New Plymouth District is 66,600, with 14.9% of people in New Plymouth District aged 65 years and over compared with 12.1% for all of New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand). 
New Plymouth District Council has made a 10-year commitment, through the Community Development Plan, to support the needs of older people in the district, in particular the Positive Ageing Trust Group. The purpose of this group is to work closely with agencies, organisations and the New Plymouth community, to create a district where older people are able to live positive lives. The group does this by responding to the needs identified in the council's positive ageing policy. Members are from the main older persons’ organisations such as Grey Power and Age Concern, as well as other key agencies.

A key element of the group's work is the development of local and national partnerships to help facilitate positive ageing. These partnerships form a cornerstone of the Trust’s work because they represent the mechanism through which many of the goals are met.

- **Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT)** - WITT have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Positive Ageing Trust and the New Plymouth Council to work in partnership to develop a Positive Ageing Centre of Excellence - a centre of excellence to undertake research into issues affecting the quality of life of seniors within the New Plymouth District and wider Taranaki region.

- **District Health Board** - the District Health Board operates a Health of Older Persons Strategy steering group, a group of experienced professionals, including members of the Trust, who are working to ensure that health services in the District meet the needs of older people. In addition, the group regularly presents at the Trust's local forums to ensure that the wider public is kept up to date with developments from the Health of Older Persons Strategy.

- **Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)** - ACC have become active partners with the Council and Positive Ageing Trust to develop initiatives to promote general safety and injury safe practices with older people. For instance, ACC have worked with Council’s housing team to implement their national falls prevention program. This program involves education and physical modifications to reduce the risk of older people experiencing a fall.

The Positive Ageing Trust Group has been promoting positive ageing for a number of years and has developed and organised many local initiatives. These include:

- Positive Ageing Trust Group meetings to consider positive ageing issues;
- held a range of public seminars on issues related to positive ageing;
- reviewed, updated and distributed to key stakeholders the five-year positive ageing policy to define and promote positive ageing in the district;
- through the Positive Ageing Centre of Excellence, run a seminar series on issues related to retirement;
- organised a program of events for older people on 1 October (International Day of the Older Person); and
- continued to work in partnership with ACC to inform tenants of the council's Housing for the Elderly units about falls prevention.
Also the knowledge and experience of partners has proved fundamental to the development of an enhanced understanding of positive ageing in the local government area. The Group’s continued energy and wisdom will ensure that the Positive Ageing Trust is a sustainable reality within the area.

**Wellington Council – A champion for positive ageing**

Wellington is New Zealand’s centre of government and the world’s southern most capital city. With 163,000 residents, Wellington City ranks 6th in size out of the 74 territorial authorities in New Zealand. Nearly 9% of people in Wellington City are aged 65 and over, with the median age of 32.8 years (Statistics New Zealand).

Wellington City Council has employed an officer to act as a change agent and champion for positive ageing. The officer’s remit is to undertake the leadership role with regard to implementation of the Council’s Older Persons’ Policy. In particular:

- addressing the housing needs of an ageing population;
- supporting affordable and accessible transport options;
- ensuring a two way flow of information between seniors and council;
- supporting access to health services;
- promoting safety of seniors;
- showing Council can positively value seniors’;
- promoting cultural diversity; and
- supporting employment opportunities for seniors.

In addition, the officer promotes a more active and effective engagement of seniors in community planning and local government decision making processes. The officer ensures the needs of seniors are at the forefront of any local issue – not just linking with the issues of human services and health care, but ensuring that the Council recognises the positive contribution that seniors can make to their local communities. This includes issues such as leisure, transport and neighbourhood renewal.

The benefits for the local authority in appointing a positive ageing adviser include: a single point of access regarding seniors issues; working with seniors in the local community; promoting ways for seniors to be active in their local community; and integrating seniors/ageing issues across Council functions.
Learning’s: New approach to age-old challenge

Local government’s response to ageing issues is considerable. Councils throughout the world provide a wide range of aged related services such as long term care, health promotion programs, recreation and leisure facilities and seniors’ centres. Many authorities are establishing formal consultation structures aimed at seniors and combined with these activities, employing mature-aged workers. It is also clear that the emphasis of local government efforts aimed at helping seniors is shifting. This section of the report highlights the learning’s from my Fellowship - the characteristics of this new approach to ageing issues.

Changed image and vision for senior residents

A notable feature of any local government response to population ageing is the development of a changed image and vision for senior residents. The result is that local government authorities are moving away from a welfare approach, which regards ageing as a human services issue, to a community development approach that makes seniors active participants in programs to help them live more active lives – both physically active and active within their communities. This builds on the recognition that the preferred option of seniors is to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible and until their changing circumstance necessitates a move to an assisted care environment.

Creating communities for all ages: Local government and older New Zealanders

This report was produced in 2000 by the 40+ Project Group, which is part of Victoria University of Wellington’s Positive Ageing and Intergenerational Relations research program, in partnership with Age Concern. The report concluded that Local Government Council’s had a key role to play in improving the quality of life of older people:

“Local Government in New Zealand has a unique position of influence over many areas of life in local communities. The challenge for New Zealand Local Government and for all New Zealanders, young and old, will be to continue to find innovative, practical and flexible approaches to maximise their ability to lead independent, positive and satisfying lives at all ages. By developing partnerships with community groups and older individuals themselves, by supporting factors that enable older people to maintain a sense of control over their lives and by providing opportunities for influence over the decisions that affect them, Councils can develop strategies and services with older people that are effective and empowering.”

Website http://www.ageconcern.org.nz/?/whatwedo/communities

Strategic approach to population ageing

In response to the opportunities and challenges presented by population ageing, local government authorities are developing a strategic approach. The experiences of the local government authorities visited on this Fellowship, highlight that a strategic
approach has a number of important components: building an information base to understand seniors views, needs and priorities; developing an action plan that ensures links to all services and cross-cutting policies; and translating the plan into action, ensuring accountability and best value is achieved for both the local government authority and residents. Investing in a strategic approach to population ageing has resulted in better integration and co-ordination of planning efforts, both within the local government authority and with other spheres of government, maximised available resources and expertise and improved co-operation.

**Champions for ageing**

The successful development and implementation of a strategic response to ageing depends heavily on the leadership and support given to it by elected representatives, senior managers and community leaders. For instance, where an elected representative acted as champion, with a supportive senior management team, ageing was viewed as a corporate priority – often articulated in the local authority's corporate plan. Project directors were also significant actors for change but needed the support of the leadership group to ensure that the approach to ageing was strategic rather than program specific.

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**A toolkit for older people’s champions: A resource for non-executive directors, councillors and older people acting as older people’s champions**

The toolkit was produced by the United Kingdom Department of Health - Older People and Disability Division in 2004. The toolkit is intended to be a:

“Practical guide for lay people who are older people’s champions – that is, for those who are not clinical or practice champions, but are champions because they are interested and involved in issues of concern to older people”

Website [http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/08/59/24/04085924.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/08/59/24/04085924.pdf)

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**Investing in ageing development officers**

Investment in a full-time ageing development officer was identified as one of the most effective measures in influencing the ageing agenda – both within the local government authority and in the community. The officer serves as a single point of contact in organising the information-gathering process, facilitating partnership and communicating progress and results. It was also acknowledged that the specific skills of community development practitioners were required to implement the ageing strategy.
Attracting funding

A strategic response to ageing issues requires the investment of a small operating budget. However practitioners agreed that the ability to attract external funding, either from government agencies or other partners, was the most effective way to drive corporate and strategic change. In some instances, extra funding has produced highly successful improvements in services.

Leadership and support from other spheres of government

Key national and/or state government policy statements, frameworks or strategies related to the implications of an ageing society, have undoubtedly lead local government authorities to examine the issues within their community. Another important driver for local action on ageing is the financial, staff and information resources provided by other spheres of government.

New Horizons for Seniors Program - Social Development Canada

The New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) supports the Government of Canada in its commitment to strengthen the country’s social foundations and promote the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The program provides grants of up to $25,000 to support a wide range of community-based projects across Canada that encourage seniors’ active living, social participation and helps them to contribute to their communities. Program objectives are: to harness seniors’ skills, experience and knowledge through volunteerism, mentorship and civic leadership; and to create opportunities for seniors to actively participate in their communities; and to develop new life skills so that the risk of isolation in later years is reduced.

Website [www.sdc.gc.ca](http://www.sdc.gc.ca)

Engaging seniors

Engagement of seniors is also important. Engaging seniors, through a variety of techniques, creates an opportunity for the discussion of different issues and an appreciation of the actions required. The result of this active participation for a local government authority is a better planning process, a quality ageing strategy and ownership of the ageing action agenda. The engagement of seniors also increases the knowledge, skill and resource base of the local government authority.
Volunteer Community Co-ordinators – New Zealand Office for Senior Citizens

In 1999, the New Zealand Office for Senior Citizens developed the Volunteer Community Co-ordinators (VCC) programme. The network of 40 VCCs is a key link between the community, the Office for Senior Citizens and the Minister for Senior Citizens. VCCs bring together people from different cultures and backgrounds, representatives from rural and urban areas, community organisations, local and central government and individual older people to participate in projects that contribute to policy development.

“I won’t take the credit for the work we do for our community. I just get people together and help get them pointed in the right direction”. Ruby Aberhard, Volunteer Community Co-ordinator with the Office for Senior Citizens.

Website http://www.osc.govt.nz/

Developing value adding partnerships

One of the marks of a successful ageing strategy is the extent of ownership and participation of local ageing, welfare and community organisations. As such, an effective response to population ageing issues, requires broad participation by those involved in seniors’ issues in the community. Partners will come from interest groups, community organisations, ethnic groups, clubs, church groups, education organisations, media, business and industry, other spheres of government, elected officials, staff and interested individuals and families. Partnerships can also yield other advantages including funding. By partnering with a range of public and private organisations, a local government authority could gain access to financial and other resources.
Conclusion

Population ageing represents important opportunities for local government, as older people make an enormous contribution to local communities. But population ageing also has a range of impacts, which will present challenges.

In response to these opportunities and challenges, local government authorities in Japan, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand have successfully implemented a range of innovative policy and program initiatives.

By showcasing this innovative practice, it will hopefully encourage and inspire local councils throughout Australia to be active and forward thinking in responding to population ageing.

The information and learning’s gained from the Fellowship will be disseminated through ALGA’s extensive communication network which includes:

- ALGA news, a weekly electronic newsletter circulated to over 2000 local government practitioners.
- 2006 National General Assembly of Local Government, which brings together over 600 delegates from councils across Australia, to debate issues of national significance to local government.
- Planning for an Ageing Community website, which links councils to resources, and to one another, to plan for an ageing population.
Recommendations: What’s needed next?

The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and the ALGA have established a highly distinctive partnership to build the capacity of local government to respond to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing. However, further action is required at national, state and local levels to build on and to sustain this progress. Based on my Fellowship experiences I recommend that the following initiatives be considered:

National/state governments

- Establish and sustain partnerships with local government to promote ageing and seniors’ issues.
- Develop a sustainable funding stream for local government authorities to build on innovation and good practice.
- Recognise and promote best practice responses to population ageing by local government.
- Explore opportunities to develop a multi-jurisdictional information directory for seniors, possibly delivered through the Australian Seniors Portal.

Local government associations

- Develop a network to support change agents and champions of ageing.
- Encourage and support local government authorities to assess the impact of population ageing on operational and community activities.
- Promote and explain the community leadership role of local government in responding to the growing older population.
- Develop appropriate training programs for elected representatives and managers on the opportunities and challenges of population ageing.

Local government authorities

- Assess the impact of population ageing on local government functions and community services.
• Link activities on ageing and seniors to community and corporate strategies.

• Appoint a champion for ageing – ideally an elected representative or officer.

• Invest in partnerships to facilitate community wide responses to seniors and ageing issues.

• Explore opportunities to engage seniors and the community on ageing issues.

• Develop a policy on age diversity to encourage employment and training for all age groups.
References


Appendix one: Address to IFA 8th Global Conference

An Australian local government response to ageing communities

Address by Alley Peck to the International Federation on Ageing (IFIA) 8th Global Conference, Bella Centre, Copenhagen, Denmark

Many thanks for joining me today.

My name is Alley Peck and I work for Canberra based ALGA – the national representative organisation of local government in Australia.

My presentation will focus on ALGA’s response to ageing communities.

I’m at the conference as part of a Winston Churchill Fellowship - an opportunity to travel overseas to study an issue that cannot be readily undertaken in Australia.

It’s fair to say that ageing and demographic change are rapidly becoming high priorities for many councils across Australia.

And it’s easy to see why.

Seniors - of course - are a significant and growing part of local communities.

As Australia’s population ages, regional populations will also age - some more than others.

Demographers tell us that older populations will continue to be concentrated in local government areas that are located along the Australian coastline - particularly in Queensland.

By 2019, the local government area with the oldest population in Australia is expected to be Queensland’s Bribie Island.

Around 37% of residents are expected to be aged 65 years and over. This is an increase of 9% from current levels, and almost 20% higher than the projected national average.

Bilinga in Queensland will maintain its place as the nation’s second oldest local government area with 35% of residents in this age group by 2019.

And Victor Harbour in South Australia will have 33% of its population aged 65 and above, making it the third oldest LGA.

In total, it is expected that by 2019, one-in-eight local government areas will have at least 25% of their population aged 65 years and over.
That's a dramatic change which brings with it both opportunities and challenges for local government.

And we do see significant opportunities.

Older people offer rich life experience, well-honed skills, knowledge and wisdom. These qualities significantly contribute to the social fabric of local communities.

Older people - for example - make a major contribution to local communities by being involved in voluntary work.

Population ageing also offers many opportunities for local councils to encourage the development of employment opportunities and enterprise creation, which older people can contribute to and benefit from.

But population ageing will impact on planning and service delivery, spelling real and growing challenges for Australia's 673 local government authorities.

These challenges were detailed in the recent Productivity Commission study on the economic impact of an ageing Australia on all three spheres of government.

It found that the delivery of human services now represents nearly 50% - 49% to be exact - of total local government expenditure.

As such, councils are more likely to face budgetary pressures from population ageing than from traditional activities such as road and infrastructure provision and maintenance.

The main demands are expected to found in:
- health and aged care
- home support services
- subsidy of medical services
- community transport; and
- a range of cultural and recreation services

At the same time, local government faces potentially significant demands on revenue. The Productivity Commission found that:

- There is likely to be an emerging fiscal deficit at the local government level under current policy settings.

- Local government rate revenue will come under pressure from the increasing proportion of pensioner households.

- Local government revenue is unlikely to increase at a greater rate than the growth in GDP, and some components such as financial assistance grants will grow at slower rates.
The Productivity Commission also found that much of local government will face increasing pressure relating to the suitability of infrastructure. Much of this infrastructure - of course - was built in the post-war era without particular consideration for ageing populations.

Changing demographics will require a proactive and innovative approach to population ageing that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all Australians.

The Australian Government has developed the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia, which provides a framework for responding to demographic change. The National Strategy concluded that the implications of population ageing affect more than just aged care services.

It said that an effective response to population ageing requires a whole-of-government approach, including leadership by local government.

Local government is uniquely positioned to have a positive impact on the growing older population.

Local government

- has an intimate knowledge of the local community and the diversity of older people.
- ensures the physical, social and economic environment of the local community is conducive to the overall wellbeing of older people.
- provides services and programs that are flexible and locally appropriate to the needs of older people.
- enables community participation in local decision-making and supports the development of community networks.
- are strong advocates on behalf of the local community with other government and non-government organisations.

These community roles cement local government's relationship with older people in the community. They also place councils in a unique position to recognise, understand and respond to the needs of older people.

Throughout Australia, local government authorities have begun to respond in a variety of ways to the opportunities and challenges of an ageing Australia.

Nillumbik Shire Council in Victoria - for example – in 2003 won the inaugural 'Planning for an Ageing Community' award - for its Homewise kit.
The kit - part of Nillumbik’s "Ageing in Your Home Project" - provides ideas and considerations for builders and residents to make their home design more age-friendly.

It also helps older people to live independently - in their place of choice - for longer.

To assist in the formulation of the kit the Council interviewed a range of people – residents, builders, architects and the planning department.

The second example of innovative practice and also a winner of the National Planning for an Ageing Community Award – this time in 2005 – is the Rural City of Wangaratta’ Community Meals for Older Women – Adopt a Friend.

The Community Meals program has a principal focus on older women, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The project targets the need to provide an alternative, accepting environment for women at risk of becoming gamblers with alternative social and recreational activities.

The format for each community meal involves exercise, a guest speaker, live theatre and music and also a two course meal in a social setting.

Over the past 12 months speakers have covered topics including: wellbeing, support services, finance, volunteering, caring and falls prevention.

The project has exceeded all expectations.

For the first community meal, the Council anticipated 150 participants – 230 attended. Subsequent events have been a “sell out” and yet only one promotional campaign has been engaged.

The popularity of the program is highlighted when ticket sales are fully booked within two days of going on sale. Participants experience a range of benefits including a nutritious meal, social interaction, exercise, education and community connectedness.

The project has also been extremely successful through the development of partnerships with Department of Justice, The Centre for Continuing Education, Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GoTAFE), Ovens & King Community Health, North East Health, Gamblers Help North East and many smaller agencies and the private sector.

For our part, the Australian Local Government Association – has placed a high priority on assisting councils to address ageing issues.

To this end, we have developed an important partnership with the Australian Government.

At the national level, ALGA has developed a four-year-plan to help engage local government in a coordinated approach to population ageing issues.
The plan is designed to provide a flexible framework that builds awareness of population ageing within local government.

It encourages action by local government and fosters partnerships to support a more collaborative approach to population ageing.

And it seeks to improve access to regional information on population ageing and future demographic shifts.

The plan complements other national ageing strategies and builds on the work already undertaken across the country.

Since we launched the Plan in July 2004, ALGA has been actively building the capacity of local government.

We now have a comprehensive ageing website and have an ageing forum to go with it.

We've conducted our first two awareness and action surveys.

We're showcasing the excellent work that councils are undertaking.

We've published a guide to assist local government to make further progress in planning for an ageing community.

And produced a range of publications on specific issues such as finances and built environment.

We're continuing to compile a council ageing strategy register.

And we are developing an online 'toolbox' that will provide councils with the tools, resources and contacts to integrate population ageing issues into all aspects of local government operations.

I encourage you all to take a flyer and visit our website. Its being update all the time.

Thank you