

Age-friendly Victoria Partnership and Leadership Declaration

Background

The 2012 *Inquiry into opportunities for participation of Victorian seniors* report by the Family and Community Development Committee recommended strengthening the efforts to foster participation by seniors by State and local government. In response, a Ministerial Advisory Committee was appointed, chaired by the Commissioner of Senior Victorians, to develop a whole-of-government *Seniors Participation Action Plan (Seniors Count!)*.

A specific goal of *Seniors Count!* is to 'promote age-friendly communities across state and local government in Victoria', including giving consideration to dementia-friendly communities. In achieving this, the Victorian Government will build on existing progress towards age-friendly communities, and seek to continue the good work of local government and services, public sector agencies, peak bodies, industry and businesses. Importantly, in adopting this goal, the Victorian Government recognises that age-friendly communities provide environments that optimize opportunities for good health, participation and security driven by and in partnership with older people. Age-friendly communities are respectful, accessible, safe, innovative and promote intergenerational activity – they benefit the whole community.

While local government has done much towards creating and establishing age-friendly communities, particularly through municipal positive ageing planning processes and specific age-friendly projects and initiatives, this Declaration is part of a longer term journey to strengthen and embed sustainable age-friendly practice and outcomes. Victorian Government age-friendly projects include the Seniors Card Age-friendly Partners Program and age-friendly grant programs. While government policy leadership is provided through collaboration between the Victorian Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), this Declaration also acknowledges the important role played by the Council on the Ageing Victoria in supporting this work in state and local government, and community organisations, businesses and other peak bodies.

Policy context

Just like the rest of Australia and much of the developed world, Victoria is ageing, and people are living much longer than previous generations. Victorian men now live to an average 80.3 years, compared with 68.6 in 1971. Victorian women live to an average 84.4 years, compared with 75.2 in 1971. Life expectancy at age 60 has increased since the 1970s and many of today's young Victorians will live beyond 90, even 100, years.

Policy responses to this phenomenon have properly focused on the importance of ageing in place – enabling people to age in their own homes and neighbourhoods, maintain connections to family, friends and neighbours and continue to participate in community life. Ageing in place reduces loneliness and isolation and inspires ongoing participation. Policy development in this area must respond to the needs of seniors for appropriate built environments, community amenity, and access to facilities and services. In the Victorian context, the priority action areas of *Seniors Count!* are to build age-friendly communities; improve understanding of ageing and health; and assist seniors to access the digital world, employment, and information to plan and make life decisions.

International ageing policy development has been largely influenced by the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (1991), the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002) and the World Health Organization's (WHO) policy frameworks on active ageing and age-friendly cities and communities. The Victorian approach is informed by the WHO's Age-friendly Cities policy framework, and the experience of local governments' use of WHO information and tools.

Experience shows that the best way to strengthen the age-friendly capacity of local communities is through partnerships between seniors, governments, communities, businesses, services and support agencies. In partnership with the MAV, the Victorian Government has been supporting local government since 2006 with initiatives aimed at improving their capacity to plan for and support seniors, and to create communities that accommodate seniors. This partnership approach has raised the awareness of ageing across both levels of government, improved knowledge and understanding of international age-friendly cities and communities, and created local age-friendly initiatives. Continuing this partnership will build on these strengths and enable the MAV to continue to support and assist Victorian councils to create age-friendly communities.

Vision

The vision of the Victorian Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria is for better state and local planning for the creation of age-friendly environments. This is the focus of our shared activities on common goals and directions.

Declaration commitment

The Victorian Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria will build the age-friendly capacity of local communities by:

- 1. promoting an age-friendly Victoria** through leadership that encourages councils and stakeholders to adopt the principles of the WHO age-friendly environments directions
- 2. supporting** state and local planning processes to create age-friendly environments and using the knowledge, information and tools available through the WHO's Global Network of Age-Friendly Environments
- 3. providing** local councils with leading advice, expertise, access to networks, policy information and other support to encourage local age-friendly initiatives
- 4. empowering** older people to drive local age-friendly outcomes by encouraging and assisting councils to actively engage seniors through participatory models and structures
- 5. encouraging** seniors to get involved in areas such as volunteering, community participation, community safety, technology access and lifelong learning
- 6. addressing** the built environment, transport (including community transport), housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication, and community support and health services for age-friendly communities based on the 2008 WHO's *Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* and relevant state planning documents
- 7. valuing** stakeholder engagement and working together to promote and strengthen partnerships with peak bodies, community organisations, businesses, retailers and managers of council-owned facilities.



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