

## Overview

# Seniors Count!

2014–2019

## Victoria's Seniors Participation Action Plan

*Seniors Count!* heralds a shift in how we think about ageing and sets a new course for ageing well in Victoria.

The Parliamentary Family and Community Development Committee delivered its report into opportunities for participation of Victorian Seniors in 2012. The Victorian Government, in its response, appointed Victoria's first-ever Commissioner for Senior Victorians and a Ministerial Advisory Committee for Senior Victorians (MACSV). The Commissioner and the MACSV have prepared this action plan together with Victorian Government departments.

Population ageing is set to reshape our world over the next century and is led by four trends:

- People are living longer.
- Seniors are a growing and increasingly diverse population.
- They want to be as healthy as possible in later life.
- They want more personal control over life decisions.

Life expectancy at 60 years has increased since the 1970s, due to advances in medical science. Many of today's young Victorians will live beyond 90, even 100. This longer life span means we can no longer easily divide life

span into rigid segments of education (youth), working age (adulthood) and retirement (old age). In addition to living longer, senior Victorians vary greatly in interests, capacities, aspirations and needs with lives influenced by age, gender, health status, cultural background, social networks, location, sexual orientation, wealth and living arrangements.

Our ageing population is a community asset, not a community burden. Our enjoyment of longer, healthier lives is one of the great triumphs of modern society and health care. The global phenomenon of an ageing population is rewarding seniors with unprecedented opportunities to enjoy better health and to participate in and contribute to their communities. The Victorian Government is committed to empowering seniors to do all this and more.

*Seniors Count!* will support seniors to:

- have their voices respected
- keep healthy and well
- stay active within age-friendly communities
- participate in work, learning and life planning
- share their skills and contribute to the community.

## Setting new directions for ageing well in Victoria

In light of the changing nature of ageing, many seniors are already adapting to the new potential of healthier, longer, creative and more diverse lives. The Victorian Government has set five goals to age well and make Victoria a more age-friendly community. These goals give new direction to current activities and partnerships between the Victorian Government and seniors organisations. They highlight a new challenge for Victorian Government departments to respond creatively and confidently to our ageing future.

### Priority goals

1. Respecting the voices of seniors
2. Keeping healthy and well
3. Promoting age-friendly communities
4. Promoting economic participation and lifelong learning
5. Supporting community participation.

### Priority focus areas

In addition, the Victorian Government will focus on a small number of high level priority areas under each goal. These activities will make a practical difference towards achieving these goals over the next five years, to ensure that seniors count in Victoria.

1. Cyber savvy seniors
2. Healthy and active ageing for life
3. An age-friendly Victoria
4. Supporting the mature-age workforce
5. Life planning for seniors.



## Priority goals

### 1. Respecting the voices of seniors

Government planning and actions must respect and celebrate the voices of seniors, their rights and contributions as paid workers, volunteers, parents, carers, mentors, learners and elders. Seniors also need to be respected in the context of their diversity.

**The Victorian Government will:**

**Actively promote the contribution of seniors** through the Commissioner and Ministerial Advisory Committee for Senior Victorians, Senior of the Year and multicultural awards, festival and events and the Veterans Fund.

**Improve community perceptions of seniors** through promotion of the Victorian Seniors Festival and Commissioner communications in the press and on Seniors Online.

**Promote intergenerational dialogue** by identifying opportunities for intergenerational collaboration and building on successful intergenerational activities.

**Listen to senior Victorians and involve them in decisions** by supporting the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Senior Victorians and encouraging local councils to support the involvement of seniors through local participatory structures and processes.

**Educate the community about seniors' rights** through the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission working with employers, Government and service providers to help them meet their obligations and drive systemic change.

### 2. Keeping healthy and well

While many senior Victorians will experience long periods of good health in their older years, the fact remains that older people will require more health care than other age groups. A renewed focus on healthy and active ageing in both health promotion and health care is needed to adapt to the challenges of ageing well.

**The Victorian Government will:**

**Review health policy and planning frameworks** to ensure they address ageing issues through consideration of the latest research on ageing populations and health systems and the engagement of seniors with health services; and how to improve seniors' health status and care.

**Promote good health for seniors** by strengthening seniors health information on the *Better Health Channel* and promoting the *Health Translations Online Directory* to multicultural services.

**Implement national changes to home and community care** to ensure older people age well, are supported to remain independent and engaged in society and are supported to make informed decisions about care that they may need.

**Support seniors at home, in the community and in hospital** and through the Victorian Dementia Action Plan, address improvements to support, and services for people with dementia and their carers, and reduce risk factors for dementia.

**Support residential aged care services** and continue to advocate to the Commonwealth for quality aged care services, including assessment services, residential and community aged care services, including assessments to be delivered in Victoria.

## Priority goals

### 3. Promoting age-friendly communities

The World Health Organization's Guide to Age-friendly cities provides a context for planning age-friendly cities and communities. There has already been a significant amount of work undertaken by local government with support from the Victorian Government to implement age-friendly planning and projects in local communities.

The Council on the Ageing Victoria has actively encouraged local councils to adopt the World Health Organization's Age-friendly Cities and Communities policy approach and checklist and has contributed to advancing the age-friendly cause in Victoria.

#### The Victorian Government will:

**Develop an age-friendly Victoria** through an Age-friendly Victoria policy statement and an Age-friendly partnership and leadership declaration with the Municipal Association of Victoria.

**Support the safety of seniors in their communities** and address the particular needs of vulnerable seniors who live alone or are socially isolated in the communication messages of heatwave strategies.

**Encourage the development of a diverse range of housing for seniors** through a review of housing options and needs for seniors to be undertaken by the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Senior Victorians.

**Support accessible and age-friendly transport** through information provision to seniors during the Victorian Seniors Festival and trialling improvements designed to ensure Transdev services are accessible for seniors and appropriate to their needs.

### 4. Promoting economic participation and lifelong learning

Our ageing population will change the world of work which will result in more seniors working for longer and contributing valuable skills to workplaces. Fundamental to workforce, economic participation and participation more broadly is access to ongoing education and the opportunities it provides for sustainable, alternative employment.

Our ageing population offers a wealth of skills and experiences across all sectors and a willingness to remain engaged in the community as workers, mentors and volunteers.

#### The Victorian Government will:

**Support increased workforce participation by seniors** through support for mature-age workers skills development and provision of tools and advice to employers.

**Promote lifelong learning** through funding support to seniors participation organisations such as Neighbourhood Houses, Universities of the Third Age and Life Activities Clubs Victoria, and through a funded digital literacy program, Tech Savvy Seniors and Seniors Connect partnerships with Telstra.

**Assist with cost-of-living pressures** through a range of concessions for eligible concession card holders and through the discounts available through the Seniors Card program, including the Seniors Card discount energy plans in partnership with AGL. A new Seniors Business Discount Card will be made available to all seniors aged over 60 who are permanently residing in Victoria, offering access to seniors card business discounts.

## Priority goals

### 5. Supporting seniors' community participation

Seniors make an ongoing and tireless contribution to many Victorian community groups that serve both seniors and the wider community. Seniors are outstanding volunteers in the community with older people rating 'helping the community' more highly than any other reason for volunteering.

Over the next decade 650,000 Victorians will turn 60, representing enormous potential for ongoing volunteerism. Most volunteering happens in the not-for-profit sector and challenges faced by these organisations include creating new opportunities that meet the changing expectations of new volunteers; providing ongoing services; and sustaining and regularly refreshing volunteer governance structures and training.

The Victorian Government will:

**Support opportunities for seniors volunteering** by making governance tools available to strengthen community groups, including small and culturally diverse community organisations.

**Continue to work in partnerships to encourage seniors' participation** including partnerships with the Municipal Association of Victoria and local government to support libraries, HACC and senior citizens groups.

**Foster participation of seniors in their local communities** and work through the Victorian Multicultural Commission to assist with delivery of actions outlined in *Seniors Count!* where they impact on the lives of culturally and linguistically diverse seniors.

**Provide information to support planning and decision-making** through the *Life Planning for Seniors* initiative offering online tools, how-to guides, information and links to support and information agencies.



## Priority focus areas

The Victorian Government will focus on a small number of high priority areas which relate to the goals of *Seniors Count!* and in addition to existing

resources, has allocated a further \$5 million over the life of the plan to support delivery of the initiatives.



## Priority focus areas

### 1. Cyber savvy seniors: Bridging the digital and generational divide

*Cyber Savvy Seniors* will create new opportunities for older and young Victorians to work and learn together. It will offer seniors one-on-one information technology skills training provided by young, skilled volunteers in local settings. Young people will be supported to help seniors learn about the internet and start internet accounts that will allow them to take advantage of online services such as internet banking, online shopping, making online bookings, video-chatting, starting a Facebook page, using apps in everyday life and searching for reliable information, while protecting their privacy. In addition, there will be opportunities for the young people to gain an understanding of, and learning from, seniors themselves.

*Cyber Savvy Seniors* utilises intergenerational learning to build a bridge across the digital and generational divide faced by older people who are not internet connected or IT savvy.

### 2. Healthy and active ageing for life

Our ageing population is a major consideration for the Department of Health and health and community services, and the Department is strengthening its focus on the benefits of healthy and active ageing.

*Healthy and active ageing for life* will increase the recognition of seniors as health clients, create health-focused data analysis of ageing and refocus programs on the needs of seniors. The preparedness of the health system and its workforce to tackle the ageing population challenge will be reviewed, and policy frameworks and practices in critical areas of seniors' health and wellbeing will be strengthened.

### 3. An age-friendly Victoria

Creating an age-friendly Victoria involves building on existing age-friendly work by state and local government. We will develop, lead and coordinate an *Age-friendly Victoria policy* to continue the good work of public sector agencies, local government and services, peak bodies, industry and business.

An *Age-Friendly partnership and leadership declaration* between the State Government and local government through the Municipal Association of Victoria will promote and provide leadership of shared activities, common goals, future directions and guiding principles for the development of age-friendly communities in Victoria. Local councils will be encouraged to support the Declaration by signing on. The ongoing support of peak bodies, such as Council on the Ageing Victoria, in the development of age-friendly communities will be important.

The Seniors Card will expand the *Age-Friendly Partners* program in partnership with interested councils, traders and trader organisations, business and seniors to promote age-friendly services in shopping locations, public libraries and other locations.

The Victorian Government will work with the *Neighbourhood House* sector to recognise and advance its important role in supporting older people.

The Transport Accident Commission, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Municipal Association of Victoria and supported by VicRoads and Victoria Walks, will develop *age-friendly road safety and older pedestrians' safety strategies*, including a demonstration project.

## Priority focus areas

VicRoads in partnership with the Transport Accident Commission, with support from the Department of Health and other key agencies, will develop a *multi-faceted communication strategy* targeting older people, their families and health professionals.

### 4. Supporting the mature-age workforce

There is an increasing interest in mature-age workers being able to remain in the workforce, and yet the needs of these workers to continue working are not well understood. In addition, there needs to be an increasing focus on the ability of businesses to respond with flexible working conditions that assist mature-age workers to fulfil their workplace potential.

Support for mature-age workers skills development, and provision of tools and advice to employers will assist mature workers who want to continue working.

#### The Victorian Government will support:

Skills maintenance and training opportunities for older workers by improving training for up-skilling and skills diversification; ongoing monitoring of the *Recognition of Prior Learning* system to ensure appropriate access for mature-age workers; and addressing barriers and opportunities for older workers vulnerable to industry restructuring, including funded demonstration projects targeting those industries.

- Improved recognition and utilisation of the knowledge and skills of mature-age workers by supporting employers to adopt flexible and productive age-friendly employment practices through online tools and communication strategies.

- Industry development support including ongoing industry analysis, skills projections and forecasts for mature-age participation, providing business leadership for employers through a business leaders age-friendly employers' forum and education programs for employers and employees on workplace rights and responsibilities.
- Improving perceptions of older people in the workplace by tailoring OHS training programs on injury prevention to target key industries and older workers; creating education tools and resources to dispel myths about injury, illness and unreliability of older workers; and clarifying and communicating seniors' compensation entitlements.

### 5. Life planning for seniors

*Life planning for seniors* will encourage and assist Victorians over 60 to take control of later life decision making by providing relevant and timely information about critical issues for older people.

*Life planning for seniors* will offer online life-planning tools, how-to guides, rights information, and links to support and information agencies. Key topics include: transitioning to retirement, volunteering, downsizing the family home, relinquishing a driver's licence, appointing a power of attorney, undertaking advance care planning, and getting help to stay at home.

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