

Aged Friendly Communities

Audit Findings and Actions

Acronyms

CAD	Central Activities District
CBD	Central Business District
LLEN	Local learning and employment network
OPRG	Older Persons Reference Group
PCP	Wimmera Primary Care Partnership
U3A	University of the third age – Horsham
WRSA	Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly
WRLC	Wimmera Regional Library Corporation

Transport

Transportation, including accessible and affordable public transport is a key factor influencing older people's health and their ability to participate in social and cultural activities and access health services.

Issues identified in audit:

- There is limited public transport in Horsham – existing infrastructure such as bus stops, seats, shelter at stops and paths to and from bus stops isn't aged friendly. Routes to key facilities such as U3A are not adequate. Hours of operation mean that access to services and facilities in the evening or weekend is limited. Information on timetables and costs is difficult to find.
- Public transport is limited or non-existent for rural dwellers i.e. Jung, Telangatuk, Laharum, Haven
- Trains are the preferred method of travel between Horsham and Melbourne.
- The existing coaches / buses with steep stairs are not age friendly. Increased services would make Horsham more aged friendly.
- Having a car and a licence is essential for mobility within the municipality – not having a car is a major barrier; not being able to drive is a reason some people move to Horsham. Use of vehicles in rural areas is essential.
- Gophers are an important transport method for older people.
- Taxis are good, but affordability is an issue.
- Parking can be difficult for older people. Narrow parking bays are difficult and angle parking bays are preferred. Some areas were noted in terms of difficulty for parking – especially around Lister House, Horsham Base Hospital, Library/ RSL (especially on Probus days)
- A voluntary community transport service is needed. Many people don't know what currently exists or how to access this. Getting checks to be a volunteer driver can be a deterrent
- Road maintenance could be improved – areas noted include Stawell Rd/Golf Course Rd intersection; Searle Street / Dooen Road, Decastella / Wavell Street intersection roundabout at the Wimmera River bridge
- Pedestrian crossings and roundabouts could be altered to enhance their pedestrian friendliness, crossing streets within the CBD can be difficult.

Things that make a positive contribution to the municipality being an aged friendly place:

- The local bus service is reliable, clean, comfortable, affordable and the drivers are courteous
- The timetable and number of services for the train/bus service to Melbourne is improving
- The bus to Ballarat is good enables access and feels safe
- The bus from Horsham / Natimuk, while limited, does allow residents to access services in Horsham
- Gophers mean people can get around
- The taxi service including Maxi Taxis is an asset
- Horsham is easy to drive around

Areas that could be improved

Possible Actions - Transport	Who can help?
<p>1. Public Transport</p> <p>1.1. Return of passenger rail</p> <p>1.2. Bus stop facility review including seats, shelters, lighting and paths and parking</p> <p>1.3. Bus route review to pick up key sites such as U3A</p> <p>1.4. A city circle bus to key places including Lister House, Tristar, chemist, optician, podiatrist, WHCG would improve access</p> <p>1.5. Smaller buses could be OK if they are still accessible</p> <p>1.6. Improve lighting in the Roberts Avenue car park near the bus station – this area is dark at night</p> <p>1.7. Improved display of information on timetables and costs of public transport</p> <p>1.8. Investigate the establishment of a Travellers Aid service in Horsham to help rural people access services</p> <p>1.9. Promote the taxi card</p>	HRCC, Rail Alliance, Public Transport Victoria, Taxi Services, Wimmera Roadways
<p>2. Parking</p> <p>2.1 Increase provision of disabled parking places</p> <p>2.2 Parking – areas such as hospital, Town Hall, Lister House, Matron Arthur, Chemist and the Post office, Tristar. Encourage long term all day parking to be on outside edge of the Central Activities District (CAD) to free up parking in the CAD for shoppers.</p> <p>2.3 Need for drop off points at Lister House and Tristar</p> <p>2.4 Need Gopher parking and recharge facilities</p> <p>2.5 Improvements are needed to drainage near pedestrian crossings especially Lister House and the new Horsham Neighbourhood House site</p>	HRCC
3. Community transport – improved marketing and information re availability and access to service	Centre for Participation
4. Driver education & refreshers for older drivers and raised awareness of safety issues for both cars and gophers	VicRoads, Wimmera Mobility Group
5. Advocate and support establishment of a petrol service in Natimuk	HRCC, Natimuk community

Respect and Social Inclusion

Wellbeing is enhanced when older people feel acknowledged and respected. Older people are consulted, their input is valued and they are partners in decision making.

Issues identified in audit:

- It is important for older people to be consulted and decide on actions affecting them – don't assume others know
- Many older people do not feel consulted or that their input is valued
- Suitability of products - e.g. portion size is an issue in some retail shops in Horsham (due to the increase in single person households)
- Stereotypes of older people in the media
- Opportunities can be enhanced for skills contribution of older people
- Intergenerational opportunities are important
- Need to care for the carers

Things that make a positive contribution to the municipality being an aged friendly place:

- Older people are respected and included
- Events like Grandparent's Day at schools and church chaplains and councillors are positive
- When older people are recognised by their community
- There is a variety of events on offer within Horsham and surrounds
- Events that enable intergenerational interaction

Areas that could be improved

Possible Actions – Respect and Social Inclusion	Who can help?
1. Consultation and engagement 1.1. Enhance consultation processes with and for older people 1.2. HRCC should have an ongoing Older Persons Reference Group / Advisory Group 1.3. Use existing groups for consultations on regular cycles 1.4. Consider employment of a Community Inclusion Officer – ensure Council has a lens which considers impact of programs on older people and ensure programs are inclusive of the needs of older people	HRCC
2. Stereotypes 2.1. Review promotions of older people – ensure that they are positive and not perpetuating stereotypes 2.2. Older person / senior of the month in the paper	HRCC, Media, Centre for Participation, OPRG
3. Advocacy to businesses re needs of older people – e.g. portion size / suitability of products	OPRG
4. Establish a home maintenance / service provider register	HRCC
5. Improve Council communications – consider use of rate notices for information to seniors	HRCC
6. Provide information / training to businesses to improve customer service skills	Council Wimmera Business Centre, Business Horsham
7. Increase knowledge of the Companion Card / Carers card– how to get it and where it can be used	HRCC
8. Advocacy regarding reinstatement of grocery delivery services in Horsham	HRCC

Housing

Appropriate housing is essential to older people's safety, quality of life and maintaining independence. Considerations include accessible affordable structure, design, location (close to community) and choice.

Issues identified in audit:

- Housing affordability, supply and quality
- Home maintenance is an issue as people age. Home maintenance Services – availability and quality; timing; to assist with bushfire preparation
- Ageing in Place is preferred – people consulted hope to continue living where they are now; need to consider how to prepare for ageing in place; cultural significance; the affordability of downsizing is an issue
- Housing diversity in Natimuk – not many options to downsize
- Affordability for single women
- Many people are living alone
- Nursing home / aged care facilities – which some people enjoy them; others find them too regimented and controlling
- Finding Aged Care – people not being able to access aged care facilities close to where they live / or their family lives

Things that make a positive contribution to the municipality being an aged friendly place:

- Housing appears generally well maintained
- Housing near the plaza area for seniors

Areas that could be improved

Possible Actions - Housing	Who can help?
1. Register of approved providers for home maintenance	HRCC
2. Ongoing program for bushfire preparation assistance in the Laharum area with local community and service clubs	CFA, local service clubs
3. Provide information about housing futures - e.g. design, helping think about preparing for ageing - e.g. through website links, information at the planning / building counter	HRCC

Social Participation

Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities helps older people stay engaged, informed and motivated.

Issues identified in audit:

- Interaction with others, family, young people is important for social connectivity
- There is a variety of events and activities in Horsham and surrounds that are of interest and held at convenient times although affordability can be an issue for some. Events include sports, arts, church events, Probus etc.
- Getting information to people re What's On is a key issue – information about events can be improved
- Information about events does not generally include information about accessibility of facilities and transport options
- Access and parking to some venues and at certain times can be difficult e.g. RSL / Library; Cinema Steps
- Seniors Week events and promotion could be improved
- Cost can be an issue

Things that make a positive contribution to the municipality being an aged friendly place:

- There is a variety of events in Horsham and surrounds held at convenient times
- Venues such as the Horsham Town Hall, YMCA and U3A provide important events and opportunities for social connection
- The Weekly Advertiser – free and delivered – is a good source of news and information
- HRCC Page in Weekly Advertiser and the Wimmera Mail Times is good, but could be improved
- Monthly Seniors Films organised by HRCC are good
- Horsham Town Hall and the Art Gallery – affordable, well run and caters well for the elderly
- Men's Sheds are important – Horsham and Natimuk

Areas that could be improved

Possible Actions – Social Participation	Who can help?
1. Venue Improvements 1.1 Use the River more for social events – e.g. markets in summer, music 1.2 Retain and reopen the Wesley PAC for smaller events 1.3 Review opportunities to improve access to and within the Horsham Cinema 1.4 Provide a combined multipurpose facility for U3A and seniors 1.5 Physical access improvements to the Natimuk Men's Shed	HRCC
2. Improve Seniors Weeks events and promotion	HRCC
3. Support lifelong learning opportunities – face to face and online	U3A, Library, Centre for Participation, HRCC, online learning
4. Enhance short term parking near the RSL and Library (e.g. remove all day parking – see Transport action)	HRCC
5. Improve the HRCC Weekly Page in newspapers by enhancing content related to seniors and have some hard copies available. Key source of communication for/with older people	HRCC
6. Consider distribution of information through the Meals on Wheels service	HRCC
7. Explore potential for access to Men's Sheds for women at certain times to learn skills / access equipment	Natimuk and Horsham Men's Sheds, Wimmera PCP
8. Improve information regarding informal recreation and physical activity opportunities	HRCC, YMCA, WRSA, Newspapers

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Safe and accessible outdoor environments and public spaces are important for the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people and affect their ability to age in the community.

Issues identified in audit:

- Entrances to Horsham are not welcoming
- Need more trees and shade in the CBD and in shopping centre carpark
- Footpaths are an issue in that they can limit safe physical activity due to trip hazards and overhanging vegetation; their unevenness and intermittent availability.
- Increased seating along walking paths and in CBD would make Horsham a more aged friendly place
- Crossing Firebrace Street can be difficult for some
- Crossing at Pedestrian Crossings can be a challenge
- Public Toilets – there are some areas such as the Aldi area and along the River where there are a lack of toilets; need access to baby change facilities and unisex toilets are preferred – e.g. so that Grandads can take grandchildren into female toilets
- There is a lack of open / green space in Horsham North
- Lack of Gopher parking
- The River is a fantastic asset but could be used more
- Access to and within some shops with wheelie walkers can be a problem
- During major flood event Natimuk Township can be cut in 2 and staff / residents are unable to get to the Natimuk Nursing Home – can the old railway causeway on little Natimuk Creek (near Station Street) be investigated to enable foot traffic from one side of town to the other?

Things that make a positive contribution to the municipality being an aged friendly place:

- Horsham Plaza has good access to shops and is comfortable
- Natimuk has good public spaces
- The yellow markings on footpaths and tactile tiles assist with safely using footpaths
- There are adequate parks in Horsham – except for Horsham North
- There are good walking tracks – e.g. on the River
- YMCA
- The Botanic Gardens and the trees in Roberts Avenue
- Fitness stations and walking tracks

Areas that could be improved

Possible Actions – Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Who can help?
1. Entrance treatments for major routes into Horsham including landscaping and lighting	HRCC
2. Develop a strategy to improve facilities and use of the Wimmera River – include paths; seats; toilets; activity areas and events	HRCC
3. Improve shade for CBD streets and carparks	HRCC, Carpark owners – e.g. Safeway's, Coles, Aldi, Horsham Plaza
4. Advocate / write to Safeway's re access improvements to the entrance of the supermarket	Safeways
5. Increase seating in CBD and along walking paths including along the Wimmera River	HRCC
6. Improve maintenance at Dudley Cornell Park and install CCTV	HRCC
7. Improve opportunities and awareness to Gopher and driver education – use the HRCC column in the paper	HRCC
8. Footpaths: 8.1 Footpath Maintenance – near Horsham post office; Natimuk – Main Street – deep gutters; 8.2 Footpath extensions / upgrades - Natimuk – Station Street to Nursing Home; River Road, Winfred Street, Robin Street; Caroline Street; Landy Street; Albert Street; Madden St near Tristar 8.3 Improve and repair the Natimuk Bike Path especially within the township area	HRCC
9. Improve information from Council to residents regarding footpath maintenance and works	HRCC
10. Establish a Horsham to Natimuk Bike Trail	
11. Review Natimuk Soldier's Memorial Hall building access	HRCC
12. Review opportunities to make the Firebrace Street median strip more visible and easier to cross in the main blocks of the CBD	HRCC
13. Pedestrian Crossings – Natimuk across Main Street	VicRoads, HRCC
14. Develop a public toilet strategy. Include the distance between toilets	HRCC
15. Redevelop Horsham rail-yards as open/green space	HRCC
16. Raise awareness of shop layout for wheelie walkers (e.g. Open for Business)	HRCC, OPRG, Business Horsham
17. Improve facilities for the U3A and Horsham Neighbourhood House	HRCC, DHHS
18. Advocate for access improvements within Natimuk to enable staff / resident access to and from the Natimuk Nursing Home (e.g. via the railway causeway)	Council's MEMPC
19. Support establishment of a suburban garden group that can enhance streetscapes / open space areas	HRCC

Civic Participation

An age friendly place has opportunities for older people to contribute to employment, voluntary work and political process, should a person so choose.

Issues identified in audit:

- There are many opportunities for volunteering. This is important for service delivery, enhancing liveability and for social connection. Some indicate the process to become a volunteer is difficult
- In terms of employment there were different views expressed – some have been able to access and maintain employment; others have not been able to and /or faced discrimination due to age. Access to employment is critical as people live longer.
- Red tape can be an issue that deters older people from being a volunteer
- Important to have lifelong learning opportunities
- Volunteering preferences are changing

Things that make a positive contribution to the municipality being an aged friendly place:

- There is a good range of opportunities for people to be involved in volunteering and to contribute to their communities
- U3A provides a vast range of opportunities

Areas that could be improved

Possible Actions – Civic Participation	Who can help?
1. Profile older people working, volunteering and participating in the community, as well as the benefits of older people as workers	HRCC, Media
2. HRCC have an Older Person's Reference Group	HRCC
3. Investigate opportunities to harness and share the skills of older people	Service Clubs, Centre for Participation, LLEN
4. Invite HREOC to have a forum in the region to educate businesses re age / discrimination associated with age	HRCC, Wimmera Business Centre
5. Support historical societies	HRCC
6. Ensure that there is adequate information regarding options for postal voting at elections	HRCC, Electoral Commission

Community and Health Services

Older people require ease of access to an adequate range of services for promoting maintaining and restoring health.

Issues identified in audit:

- Aged Care Assessment works well
- Home Help is good but there are restrictions on what staff can do (some of which seem over the top)
- GP retention in the region and limited specialists is an issue of concern
- Some services such as X-Rays and scans are not bulk billed in Horsham, yet they are in Ballarat
- Access is limited - Parking and drop off areas at Health Facilities is an issue – at Wimmera Health Care Group, Lister House, Tristar, pathology, X-Ray, pharmacies
- Not everyone knows about the systems and services that are available and how to access them e.g. My Aged Care, NDIS
- Public Dental Service in Horsham – long wait, whilst private dental care is expensive
- Older people and emergency preparedness / emergency planning
- People want to maintain independence as hearing / vision / mobility decline
- Not all services can be claimed online for Medicare and access to make a Medicare claim for rural residents can be an issue – no toilets at Centrelink office yet people often have to wait for some time
- Some specialists/treatments can only be accessed in Ballarat or Melbourne
- Nursing Home facilities in Horsham don't meet people's expectations – they're old and outdated
- People are 'relocated' for Nursing Home care isolating them from family and friends
- Access to information is limited when its online
- Financial constraints to access private allied health
- Hearing and visual impairment are barriers to access

Things that make a positive contribution to the municipality being an aged friendly place:

- There is a good range of services in Horsham
- Aged Care Assessment works well
- Home Care through HRCC and Wimmera Community Options is very good
- Services in Natimuk are very good for the size of the town
- Meals on Wheels

Areas that could be improved

Possible Actions – Community and Health Services	Who can help?
1. Home Care Services – review the range of cleaning and outdoor work that these services can provide	HRCC
2. Register of private providers that are able to do “work around the home”	HRCC
3. Have a dedicated Seniors Page on HRCC website	HRCC
4. Better training for medical staff on services available for older people	Health Services
5. Advocacy for specialists service and GP recruitment & retention Promote Wimmera lifestyle, Consider targeting senior GPs	HRCC and others
6. Raise awareness of the need for co-ordination of medical services (e.g. appointment times) to reduce wait times and travel demands for older people	Health Services
7. Information in new Residents Pack in terms of services and social opportunities for older people	HRCC
8. Promotion of, and education, regarding the My Aged Care website and the aged care assessment process	HRCC, Wimmera Health Care Group
9. Advocacy re aged care facilities that: - Meet community expectations - Avoid relocating residents away from family and friends	HRCC

Communications and Information

Older people require accessible and practical information to manage life, meet personal needs and stay engaged with the world.

Issues identified in audit:

- There are different communication preferences – Radio, hard copy, local paper, online, social media
- Computer skills and internet access is an issue for some people affecting their ability to access information
- There are black spots in some rural areas affecting connectivity
- People need information on services available and how to navigate the health and aged care system
- Vision and hearing impairments are barriers
- The Online My Community Directory is not working for many older people. Hard to access, set-up and maintain

Things that make a positive contribution to the municipality being an aged friendly place:

- The local newspapers including the free Weekly Advertiser are a good source of information about what's on – includes the HRCC weekly column as a key source of information for older people
- The Natimuk Noticeboard – physical and Facebook – and local Progress Press are good sources of information
- Local newsletters / newspapers in other towns are good
- Local Radio is good
- Library is a good source of information which is often untapped and a good social space
- Council is a good source of information

Areas that could be improved

Possible Actions – Communication and Information	Who can help?
1. Use Meals on Wheels service as a means of distributing information	HRCC
2. Improve communication re physical works, consultations and consultation outcomes, including improving information in the weekly newspaper column.	HRCC
3. Expand Wi-Fi sites and internet hubs – e.g. at the new Neighbourhood House in Horsham North	HRCC, Neighbourhood House
4. Hold / host informal internet cafés for over 55's to learn skills	HRCC, WRLC, Centre for Participation, U3A, Others
5. Continue enhancements to the library service	WRLC
6. Simplify HRCC website	HRCC
7. Ensure hard copy is an option and is provided in an accessible form considering font size and short straight forward sentences	HRCC
8. Dedicated library time for older people that has staff assistance available to use the internet	WRLC
9. IT refresher / update courses	Centre for Participation, WRLC