

## Summary – Community Engagement Outcomes (2018-2022)

One of the fundamental principles of creating an age- friendly community is wide and varied input from the older residents and the involvement of key stakeholders, internal teams in council, community partners and organisations. This community consultation process started in 2018.

<p><b>Growing Older Well in Ballarat - 2018</b></p>	<p>The consultation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A survey (hard copy and online) which was received 1138 responses;</li> <li>• Focus groups with community members (32 participants);</li> <li>• A focus group with local service providers (12 local agencies attended); and</li> <li>• An internal workshop with leaders across 8 areas of council.</li> </ul> <p>Participants: Ranged from 20 years to 90 years of age. 82% of respondents were aged between 60 years and 90 years.</p>
<p><b>Ballarat: Our Future consultation – 2021</b></p> <p><i>(Data analysed and collated into themes based around the WHO Age friendly domains)</i></p>	<p>It involved a two-stage engagement process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Participatory Engagement Process which involved surveys, kitchen table conversations, group huddles, written submissions, Facebook contributions, community conversations in the park. Around 1981 responses were received with over 4000 ideas.</li> <li>• A Community Panel made up of 50 residents from expression of interest process. Panel members took the results from the first stage of the consultation process and created tangible recommendations to council.</li> </ul> <p>Participants: Ranged from 12-17years to 85 years and over. Over half of the respondents were aged 50 years and over.</p>
<p><b>Inclusive Ballarat community engagement – 2022</b></p> <p><i>Survey included specific questions relating to ageing well.</i></p>	<p>The consultation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey which included 236 respondents in total</li> <li>• Mapping spaces and places</li> <li>• Community conversations</li> <li>• Activity sheets</li> </ul> <p>Participants: Ranged from 12-17years to 85 years and over with 49.1% of respondents 50 years and over (29.6% of respondents 60 years and over)</p>
<p><b>Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy - Project Reference Group (2022)</b></p>	<p>One of the roles of the Project Reference Group was to seek input or feedback from the population groups/community group being represented. Members provided initial feedback via a survey process and some members chose to provide copies of the survey (online or hard copy) to collect community views.</p> <p>43 survey responses were received as part of this engagement process.</p> <p>Participants – Age ranges between 40 years and 90 years with 81% of respondents being 60 years and over.</p>

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES:**

Engagement outcomes from the community consultation processes have been analysed and collated into themes based around the World Health Organisation's age-friendly domains.

### **What people love about Ballarat**

Residents love living in Ballarat and appreciate the environment in which they live. Residents told us they love our beautiful city with our historical landscapes and streetscapes as well as the beautiful parks and gardens. Areas around Lake Wendouree and the Botanical Gardens are favourite places for people to spend time.

People also love our range of sporting facilities, walks and walking tracks. Residents appreciate the climate and garden friendly environment and feel that Ballarat is a friendly city with a country feel but with the advantages of a big city. Others like that there is a train service to Melbourne making it easier to travel to the city when needed.

Good access to health services and a range of health practitioners in Ballarat was another positive that many residents reported. Residents also loved our vibrant arts community and the wide range of events, activities and festivals that run all year round in Ballarat. People also mentioned that they appreciated the range of community groups that operate across our city.

## **1. OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS**

Through our community consultation, our residents shared their views on issues and suggestions for our outdoor spaces and community buildings across Ballarat.

### **What our community told us:**

- Strengthening the accessibility of spaces, places and paths is important:
  - There needs to be better access to footpaths and existing footpaths need to be maintained to ensure they are safe for walking.
  - More bridges over bluestone gutters are needed and it is vital that the bridges are wide enough for wheelchairs/walkers to make it more accessible.
  - More seating or resting spots in public spaces are needed - around the city, around the lake and along walking tracks.
  - Ballarat Railway station needs to be more accessible for everyone.
  - Provide facilities such as toilets, seating, lighting so that spaces can be used and accessed – by all ages, not just older people, in a supportive and friendly way
  - More cafes that are accessible
- Consider older people in planning of outdoor spaces and buildings – ensure they are designed so they are accessible and welcoming.
- Safety is an important enabler to encourage people to get out and about in public spaces. This includes feeling safe in the community, providing open spaces that are close by, ensuring appropriate lighting, shade and shelter, and being able to navigate paths safely.

- Provide accessible public and community recreation spaces to enable people to enjoy informal leisure activities, participate in physical exercise and interact socially.
- Provide more community hubs/centres and places for community groups and members to meet and connect.
- Connect with providers to learn more about dementia friendly approaches in outdoor spaces and buildings

## **2. TRANSPORT:**

Addressing issues and barriers related to transport is an important priority for our community and it has been a continuing theme from residents throughout our consultations.

### **What our community told us:**

- Transport is vital to allow people to remain active and engaged in our community and maintain independence. Accessing transport for shopping, attending social outings, visiting cemeteries, and health care appointments is important.
- Transport needs to be accessible and close to home.
- Affordability is a significant issue - for some people half price taxis are still too expensive.
- In relation to public transport:
  - Distance to bus stops for people is a common problem and buses are not frequent enough in some areas.
  - Access to seating and shelter while waiting is important.
  - As the city grows, transport routes are changing and the distance to access services is growing – making it harder for people to access.
  - Catching a bus can be challenging – *‘drivers don’t wait for you to sit before they drive away’*
- Supporting people to access public and other transport was raised frequently:
  - Maintaining mobility without relying on a car is challenging and moving around Ballarat gets harder as you grow older, so public transport and other forms of transport are critical.
  - The entire city should allow older people to get around easily via electric scooters, mobility scooters, wheelchairs - smooth transition from gutters to footpaths is needed.
  - Some form of customised door to door public transport for older persons who can no longer drive or cope with traffic would be helpful.
  - Information about transport options and support on how to access these would be helpful
- Safety on roads and crossings is an important priority:
  - Street design especially at crossings, curbs and channels, and intersections could help people move around more easily.
  - Consider traffic management and better safety for pedestrians
  - Consider extending the timings of pedestrian crossings so people aren’t at risk when crossing the roads – *‘because I take a little longer these days’*

- More 'stop and go' drop off points with bench seating nearby would be helpful especially near shopping precincts, supermarkets, medical centres so that passengers can be dropped off safely and close to the service whilst the driver finds a parking spot.
- Parking is a regular theme:
  - The current parking system in Ballarat is not inclusive. It is difficult for people to navigate and assumes a level of technical skill.
  - More parking is needed across the city that is easier to access, especially for those with visual or mobility issues and for older people.
  - Better more convenient parking out the front of services is needed including meter free short-term places - *'for 10-15mins to post a letter or deliver a parcel'*

### **3. HOUSING**

Many people want to continue to live in their communities as they get older, that is, to age in place. Feedback highlighted that housing is an issue that is considered a high priority for our residents.

#### **What our community told us:**

- Housing/rental affordability is a significant issue in our community.
- Housing needs to be affordable, safe and keep people in their communities.
- It is important that there are a range of housing types and choices
- Well designed, accessible and more affordable housing types and stock that enable people to downsize or share housing in an affordable and connected way is needed
- Older people want to be able to remain independent and stay living in their own homes and within their communities for as long as possible.
- Assistance with home maintenance and modification, and support in and around the home is important to sustain independent living, including things like financial counselling.

### **4. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**

A vital part of ageing well is to be active and connected to others. A high priority for our residents is to have opportunities to be active and engaged in the community and to be able to access and participate in a range of affordable and accessible events and activities.

#### **What our community told us:**

- Making friends as you get older, especially if you are new to an area, is a challenge.
- More support to join community activities for older people is needed.
- Providing and promoting a variety of opportunities for social interaction that are local, available & affordable is important including:
  - based on a range of interest including opportunities to cycle, walk, access outdoor gym equipment, exercise classes/programs, education, craft and intergenerational activities – *'a way of connecting people with like interests'*

- A greater focus on The Arts and cultural experiences – live theatre, dancing, music, galleries, festivals, events that are affordable and accessible (with more seating at exhibitions)
- Provide events and programs to promote physical and mental wellbeing and social connection through participation in low-cost or free activities.
- The social aspect of sharing a meal is important - *I'd really like somewhere to be able to meet, read the paper and have a coffee*
- It would be useful to have more information and coordination of activities available in the community and information on the range of community groups and clubs in Ballarat, particularly for new residents
- Ensure events are well planned so that they are accessible and have supports to enable and encourage older people to participate. This could include ensuring good transport to help people connect and join in activities and events or as simple as having adequate seating in the park.
- It is important to ensure information is provided in a variety of ways as it is hard for people to finding out about what is on if they don't have access to the internet
- Being able to access community meeting places is important:
  - Provide and promote places and spaces including meeting places and venues that enable older people to be present and participate, that welcomes older people and so creates connections and reduces social isolation and loneliness.
  - There are not enough suitable venues to meet or knowing where they can meet, at affordable prices and in varying sizes to cater for all groups.
  - A multicultural drop-in centre that is accessible for all ages would be good.

## **5. RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Our residents want to feel valued, respected, included and recognised for their valuable services and ongoing contributions.

### **What our community told us:**

- The challenge of ageism/ageist attitudes and the respect, dignity and choice challenges that face people growing older across the community needs to be addressed.
  - People want to be listened to, heard and seen - *I feel like I am invisible, I feel not listened to when I am trying to explain my challenges.*
  - Being valued and recognised as an equal community member is important. – *'Respect is sometimes hard to find and feel'*
  - Raise awareness of the value of older people - *older people still have a lot to contribute and society do not acknowledge it (even though they know it exists)*
- There is an increasing focus on connecting across generations including:
  - intergenerational events and opportunities to build understanding, community building opportunities, skills and knowledge exchange, mentoring and wisdom sharing
  - Intergenerational thinking, planning and engaging in all areas and more opportunities to bridge the gap between older and younger generations – *'I love the idea that all ages can play Pickleball together - grandkids right through to grandparents'*

- Promoting equality and inclusion is needed across the community- including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, people identifying as LGBTIQ+ and people from diverse cultures and religions - *I'd like to see better access and availability of cultural food locally*
  - Promote visibility and value – explore the stories and achievements of a wide range of older people, of diverse socio economic and cultural status, via schools and community initiatives
  - Encourage cultural competency training to all retail businesses to assist with better communication
  - The increasing use of technology and the rapid rate of change in technology is a barrier for many people – *'I'm concerned about being left behind technology wise'*
  - It is important to remember that many older people do not want to use technology e.g., they still prefer to use bank books for their finances.
  - Not everyone has a computer to access information online
  - It is important for older people to have one on one support to help accessing of IT services, volunteers can assist, some age groups can assist others, just need the accessible spaces to do it.
  - People need more support to find ways to use and understand technology to be connected

## **6. CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

Many older people want to be able to keep working, learning, and building their skills and to be involved in community decision-making processes. Our residents confirmed that opportunities to be actively involved in the community is important to them.

### **What our community told us:**

- People are looking for more opportunities to be active in their communities including in employment, volunteering and participating in community decision making.
- Residents want to see active communities where people can take an interest in their neighbourhoods, be part of planning for their community and city and participate in Council decision-making.
- Economic participation is also a priority for some:
  - Working is important for older residents to continue to have a role and be valued in economic participation and contribution – *'Provide and promote the importance of work opportunities for people of all ages and all abilities'*
- Opportunities to connect with others in a meaningful way and to contribute through a wide range of volunteering options is also important which acknowledges years of experience and skills that should be valued and can be shared in a variety of settings - hobbies, retail, skill-based tasks.
- Residents also suggested that more support for volunteers is needed.
- Residents want to see stronger community participation in Council decision-making processes and provide opportunities to engage more diverse voices in decision making and events

## **7. COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION**

Access to information is another important priority for our residents. People want to stay informed so that they can make decisions about what is important to them and remain active and independent members of the community. Our older residents also reported being less likely to have regular access to a computer.

### **What our community told us:**

- Information and communication are vital to staying connected, participating in life and for people to access services where and when they need them
- Information & support to navigate an increasingly complex and technical service system is currently critical and will become more so as systems move to digital channels and pathways and involved less human interface.
- Information helps people to maintain independence and make choices because we don't know what we don't know
- Building health literacy across the community helps to ensure informed choice, awareness and informed decision making.
- People want to be able to access information and advice that I can understand - *My aged care is too confusing – too hard, I need help to get the services I need.*
- People would like to see more communication for older people on social connection and wellbeing activities (including exercise classes) in the community
- It is important to ensure community contact is easy/available. Residents feel Council has a role in sharing information about services available through Council and in the community. This is especially important for new residents as well.
- Provide opportunities to share information on various aspects of staying healthy as people grow older, such as community meetings to provide knowledge of ageing issues around Ballarat and dementia friendly approaches and forums to allow people to discuss ideas.
- Not everyone has access to the internet which makes it hard to access information on services available or about the range of community groups and social activities available across the community - *It is important to understand that we are not all tech savvy*

## **8. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES**

Access to health services and community support systems is important to enable people to stay healthy, active and independent.

### **What our community told us:**

- Residents appreciate the access to and range of health and community services available in Ballarat however some residents are concerned about the ability of existing health and community services to meet the need of the growing community, including in emergency departments and to see specialists.

- Access to available health services and continuous work to build capacity of health services to best meet the need of diverse communities of need and growing demands as population ages is vital
- Residents want to be able to access services and support so they can keep their independence and stay in their own home.
- Some residents are reluctant to access support services & assistance for various reasons
- Some residents raised concerns about access to quality food, access to shops to buy ingredients and affordable food options. Support for community food initiatives such as community gardens and community meals option are welcomed.
- More support for carers is vital - *understanding the pressures and opportunities that being a carer or having an active grandparent role can provide*
- It is important for people to have knowledge or to be able to access information on what support and service are available in the community to assist people to access health services and assistance in the home.
- Some residents find it difficult to engage outside trades to assist with issues around the house.

## **9. LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY**

Through our consultations we heard that our residents are keen for City of Ballarat to demonstrate leadership and advocate on their behalf across many aspects of living in Ballarat.

### **What our community told us:**

- Well-founded collaborations and communications are important. There is an existing array of community-based organisations with an age friendly focus. It is important to highlight and link these organisations for improved participation and funding for community led responses - *Help the people who are already trying to make Ballarat more age friendly.*
- There is a need for strategic and individual advocacy for older people and the issues and events impacting their life experience.
- It is important that council is responsive to the needs of all the broad demographic groups in the local community.